



**Transforming
Fragilities, Inc.**

Bridging the Divide: Finding Common Ground

An Interfaith Dialogue Training Module for Mindanao Grassroots Peacebuilders

This training course is designed to equip participants in Mindanao with the skills and mindset necessary for effective interfaith dialogue, moving from a foundation of mutual understanding to concrete, collaborative action for peace.

MODULE DEVELOPER

Ahmed Harris R. Pangcoga

www.transformingfragilities.org



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October 2025

Ahmed Harris R. Pangcoga

Transforming Fragilities, Inc.
Cotabato City
Philippines

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Content	Page
Foreword	7
Preface	8
Course Outline	9
SETTING THE STAGE AND INTRODUCTION ACTIVITY	11
SESSION 1: Preliminaries	11
Activity 1: Opening Program	11
Activity 2: Getting To Know You - "Two Truths and a Wish"	13
Activity 3: Building a Learning Community - "The Human Web"	14
Activity 4: Expectations Check and Group Covenant	15
CHAPTER 1: THE FOUNDATIONS OF UNDERSTANDING AND EMPATHY	16
SESSION 2: The Lived Experience of Faith	16
Activity 5: My Sacred Story	16
Activity 6: "Speedfaithing"	18
SESSION 3: Confronting Prejudice and Trust	22
Activity 7: What My Faith is NOT	22
Activity 8: Dialogue of the Heart	29
Activity 9: Day-1 Reflection and Closing	31
CHAPTER 2: TOWARDS AUTHENTIC DIALOGUE	32
SESSION 4: Navigating Difficult Conversations	32
Activity 10: "Tough Comments" Workshop	32
Activity 11: The Mindanao Case Study	35
SESSION 5: Contextual Application and Skill Practice	41
Activity 12: Role-Play Scenarios	41
Activity 13: My Sacred Space	44
Activity 14: Day-2 Reflection and Closing	45
CHAPTER 3: BUILDING A CULTURE OF INTERFAITH DIALOGUE	46
SESSION 6: Discovering Unity in Beliefs	46
Activity 15: Finding Common Ground	46
SESSION 7: Action Planning	50
Activity 16: The Dialogue of the Hands - Action Planning	50
SESSION 8: Sustaining The Path Forward	52
Activity 17: Presenting The Path Forward	52
Activity 18: Sustaining Peace Beyond the Module	54
Activity 19: Closing Program	56
REFERENCES	57
About the Module Developer	60

FOREWORD

The pursuit of lasting peace in Mindanao is not just a political or economic endeavor; it is, at its core, a deeply spiritual and relational commitment. For generations, this region has been shaped by the vibrant confluence of Catholic, Protestant, Muslim, and Indigenous (Lumad) beliefs. Yet, misunderstanding—or the fear of it—too often prevents genuine solidarity.

It was this realization that inspired the founding of **Transforming Fragilities, Inc. (TFI)**. Our mission is to move beyond mere tolerance to foster authentic respect and cooperation, transforming historical fragilities into lasting strengths. We know that effective dialogue requires more than good intentions; it demands structured learning, honest vulnerability, and practical tools.

This interfaith dialogue training module, ***Bridging the Divide: Finding Common Ground***, is a direct result of that conviction. Developed by our Executive Director, **Ahmed Harris R. Pangcoga**, this module leverages his decades of experience in peacebuilding and organizational development across Mindanao. The module is inspired by our TFI team—a diverse group of Catholic, Protestant, Muslim, and Indigenous experts, staff members and field teams, who collectively embody the unity we promote.

This three-day course is intentionally designed to be practical. It is a journey from the "**dialogue of the heart**"—where we share personal stories and address prejudices—to the "**dialogue of the hands**"—where we build peace through collaborative action.

We believe that by mastering the skills of active listening and empathetic engagement, you will be empowered to become a profound catalyst for change in your own communities. May this training strengthen the bonds of brotherhood and sisterhood across Mindanao, turning shared belief into shared peace.



Judith Joy G. Libarnes
Managing Director
Transforming Fragilities, Inc.

PREFACE

To my fellow peace advocates and community leaders,

My journey in the development and peacebuilding sector across Mindanao has consistently reaffirmed one truth: the foundation of resilient communities is trust, and trust is built through genuine dialogue. For too long, the narrative of our home has been dominated by conflict and difference. We have allowed our theological uniqueness to overshadow our ethical commonalities—the shared values of justice, compassion, and human dignity that are central to every faith tradition.

I created this interfaith dialogue module, ***Bridging the Divide: Finding Common Ground***, as a response to that challenge. This is not a theoretical exercise in comparative religion. It is a pragmatic, skills-based program designed specifically for practitioners working in the dynamic and sensitive context of Mindanao. We focus on tools you can use immediately, such as:

- **"Affirming, Storytelling, and Asking Questions"** to respond to prejudice.
- **"Dialogue of the Heart"** to share fears and build empathy.
- **"Dialogue of the Hands"** to move from talk to tangible, collaborative action.

The module's strength comes from the very diversity of the **Transforming Fragilities, Inc. (TFI)** family—our staff and field experts are a collective of Muslims, Catholics, Protestants, and Lumad. We understand the nuances and sensitivities of this work because we live them every day.

My deepest hope is that this training provides you with the courage to be vulnerable, the humility to listen, and the confidence to take the lead in building sustainable peace. Let us move forward, united not by uniform belief, but by a shared purpose.



Ahmed Harris R. Pangcoga
Module Developer
Transforming Fragilities, Inc.

COURSE OUTLINE

Course Title: Bridging the Divide: Finding Common Ground

Course Description: This three-day training module is designed to equip participants in Mindanao with the skills and mindset necessary for effective interfaith dialogue, moving from a foundation of mutual understanding to concrete, collaborative action for peace. The curriculum is intentionally structured to be a journey of the head, heart, and hands, acknowledging the deep and multifaceted context of the region's diverse communities. The success of this initiative is profoundly dependent on the use of local facilitators who understand the community's context and can model the empathy and respect required for honest and meaningful conversation.

TIME	SESSION		ACTIVITY
Day 1:			
Morning Session			
8:30 AM - 12:00 PM	1 - Preliminaries	Activity 1: Opening Program	
		Activity 2: Getting to Know You – “Two Truths and a Wish”	
		Activity 3: Building a Learning Community – “The Human Web”	
		Activity 4: Expectation Check and Group Covenant	
	Chapter 1: The Foundations of Understanding and Empathy		
	2 – The Lived Experience of Faith	Activity 5: My Sacred Story	
		Activity 6: Speedfaithing	
		Lecturette 1: Unique Characteristics of Faiths: The Core of Our Beliefs	
12:00 PM - 1:30 PM	Lunch Break		
Afternoon Session			
1:30 PM - 5:30 PM	3 – Confronting Prejudice and Trust	Activity 7: What My Faith is NOT	
		Lecturette 2: Unpacking Misconceptions: What My Faith is NOT	
		Activity 8: Dialogue of the Heart	
		Activity 9: Day-1 Reflection and Closing	
End of Day 1 Session			
Day 2:			
Morning Session			
8:30 AM - 12:00 PM	Chapter 2: Towards Authentic Dialogue		
	4 – Navigating Difficult Conversations	Activity 10: “Tough Comments” Workshop	
		Lecturette 3: Deepening on Emotional and Relational Challenges in Mindanao	
		Activity 11: The Mindanao Case Study	
12:00 PM - 1:30 PM	Lunch Break		
Afternoon Session			
1:30 PM - 5:30 PM	5 – Contextual Application and Skill Practice	Activity 12: Role-Play Scenarios	
		Activity 13: My Sacred Space	
		Activity 14: Day-2 Reflection and Closing	
End of Day 2 Session			

Day 3: Bridging the Gap from Plan to Practice		
Morning Session		
8:30 AM - 12:00 PM	Chapter 3: Building A Culture of Interfaith Dialogue	
	6 – Discovering Unity Beliefs	Activity 15: Finding Common Ground
		Lecturette 4: A Tapestry of Shared Beliefs
	7 – Action Planning	Activity 16: The Dialogue of the Hands
12:00 PM - 1:30 PM	Lunch Break	
Afternoon Session		
	8 – Sustaining the Path Forward	Activity 17: Presenting the Path Toward
		Activity 18: Sustaining Peace Beyond the Module
1:30 PM - 5:30 PM	9 – Commitment, Synthesis, and Closing	Activity 19: Closing Program
End of Day 3 Session and Training		

SETTING THE STAGE AND INTRODUCTION ACTIVITY

SESSION 1: PRELIMINARIES

This session sets the non-negotiable standards for the training environment. Through icebreakers, participants build immediate rapport and establish the "Human Web" of interconnectedness. The session culminates in the collaborative creation of a Group Covenant to ensure a safe, brave, and respectful space for all faiths.

ACTIVITY 1: OPENING PROGRAM¹:

This session sets the tone and provides a foundational framework for the entire training. It is crucial for fostering an inclusive atmosphere and ensuring all participants feel acknowledged and prepared.

- **Opening Prayer:**
 - Request a representative from each identified faith group present to lead the opening prayer, one at a time.
 - Note to the facilitator: It is important to be culturally sensitive. Do not ask a female Muslim to lead the prayer if there are Muslim males present, as the former can only lead in the absence of the latter.
 - Thank the representatives for their prayers.
- **Playing the National Anthem:**
 - Ask the participants to remain standing after the prayer for the National Anthem.
 - You have the option to play a video clip of the National Anthem or ask for a volunteer to lead the group in singing.
 - If applicable to the context of the training, play other institutional hymns after the National Anthem.
- **Welcome Message from a Ranking Official:**
 - Allow the participants to sit comfortably.
 - Request a ranking official from your organization or a local elder to give a brief welcome address.
 - Introduce your guest properly to the participants.
 - Thank the guest immediately after their remarks.

¹ Adapted from the Preliminaries Section of the Panagtagbo sa Kalinaw Manual

- **Course Overview:**

- Present the general description and objectives of the module to the participants.
- Post the training schedule and lead the participants in a walkthrough of the planned activities.
- Use this opportunity to compare the program with the participants' consolidated expectations to see if all expectations can be met by the lineup of activities.
- For any expectations that fall outside the training design, explain why it is not included or how it might be indirectly related but is a separate topic on its own.
- Ask the participants if they have questions or suggestions for amendments to the schedule.

"My fundamental belief is that all religious traditions have the same potential to make better human beings, good human beings, sensible human beings, compassionate human beings."

His Holiness the Dalai Lama

ACTIVITY 2: GETTING TO KNOW YOU - "TWO TRUTHS AND A WISH"

This exercise is a simple and engaging icebreaker that allows participants to share personal details in a low-pressure environment. It encourages active listening and helps the group find common ground.

Objective: To help participants discover personal commonalities and build initial rapport in a fun, non-confrontational way.

Procedure:

1. Ask each participant to think of two things about themselves that are true, and one thing that is a wish they have for the future. The truths can be about their life, experiences, or beliefs. The wish can be personal or related to peace in their community or in Mindanao.
2. Each participant will then share their "two truths and a wish" with a small group.
3. After each person shares, the group will guess which of the three statements is the wish.
4. After the small group discussions, have one or two participants share a surprising truth or a powerful wish they heard from someone in their group with the whole plenary. This can lead to a discussion about shared hopes and surprising connections.

"It seems to me that the world's religions are like siblings separated at birth. We've grown up in different neighbourhoods, different households, with different songs, stories, traditions and customs. But now, we've been reunited, and, having found each other after so many years apart, we look into each other's faces and we can see the family resemblance. We're back together again, and it's very good."

Richard Watts

ACTIVITY 3: BUILDING A LEARNING COMMUNITY - "THE HUMAN WEB"

This dynamic, physical activity helps participants visualize their interconnectedness and a shared sense of purpose. It's a powerful metaphor for how individual actions and connections contribute to a larger, stronger community.

Objective: To visually demonstrate the group's interconnectedness and establish a sense of shared responsibility for the learning journey.

Materials:

- A large ball of string or yarn

Procedure:

1. Ask the participants to stand or sit in a large circle.
2. Start with a participant who holds the end of the string. Ask them to share their name and one hope they have for the training.
3. After sharing, they hold on to a piece of the string and gently toss the ball to another participant across the circle who hasn't spoken yet.
4. The new person introduces themselves, shares a hope, and then tosses the ball to another person, holding on to their section of the string.
5. This continues until every participant has had a turn, creating an intricate web of string that connects everyone in the circle.
6. As the web forms, reflect on how each person's contribution makes the entire web stronger. Gently shake the web and note how every piece is affected when one part moves, demonstrating their interconnectedness in the group's journey.

"If God had so willed He would have made you a single people but (His plan is) to test you in what He hath given you: so strive as in a race in all virtues."

Surah Al-Ma'ida 5:48

ACTIVITY 4: EXPECTATIONS CHECK AND GROUP COVENANT

This two-part activity ensures the training is relevant to the participants' needs and that they feel a sense of ownership over the learning environment. It sets a foundation for open and respectful dialogue.

Objective: To align the training's content and process with the participants' needs and to co-create a set of guiding principles for the group.

Procedure:

1. Expectations Check:

- Ask participants to form into small groups.
- Provide each group with a set of colored cards, with each color representing a category:
 - **Content** (topics they hope to learn)
 - **Process** (activities or methods they expect)
 - **Facilitators** (qualities they hope for)
 - **Co-participants** (how they hope their peers will behave).
- Groups discuss and write down one idea per card using keywords.
- Groups post their cards on a wall under the correct category. The facilitator clusters similar ideas and leads a discussion to "level off" the expectations.

2. Creating the Group Covenant:

- From the "Co-participants" cards, the facilitator guides a discussion to distill a few core principles. This is the **Group Covenant**. For an interfaith module, this might include principles such as "Listen to understand, not to respond," "Respect all beliefs and traditions," and "Agree to disagree with respect."
- The covenant should also explicitly address cultural and historical sensitivities relevant to the Mindanao context.
- Once the principles are agreed upon, they should be written on a large sheet of paper and signed or stamped by all participants, symbolizing their commitment to a safe and respectful learning community.

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God."

Matthew 5:9

CHAPTER 1: THE FOUNDATIONS OF UNDERSTANDING AND EMPATHY

This foundational chapter focuses on the "Dialogue of the Heart" by establishing trust and personal connection among participants. We move beyond abstract theology to share individual stories of "lived religion" and clear the air by directly addressing common prejudices. The goal is to create the psychological and emotional safety required for honest and meaningful dialogue to thrive.

SESSION 2: THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF FAITH

This session is dedicated to sharing the personal dimension of belief, moving the focus away from doctrine and toward humanity. Participants engage in "My Sacred Story" to build vulnerability before gaining fundamental religious literacy through the "Speedfaithing" exercise. This process grounds theological concepts in relatable, human experience.

ACTIVITY 5: MY SACRED STORY

This activity is designed to help participants connect with each other on a personal and spiritual level by sharing their individual faith journeys. It moves beyond abstract theology to a more human, relatable understanding of belief.

Objective: To facilitate a "dialogue of the heart" by inviting participants to share personal stories of their "lived religion" to build relational trust and foster a deeper, more human understanding of faith. This approach helps establish a safe and empathetic space for future dialogue.

Materials:

- A comfortable, semi-circular seating arrangement or a large circle of chairs.
- One "talking piece" or sacred object (e.g., a smooth stone, a small wooden carving) to be passed from speaker to speaker.
- A whiteboard or manila paper and markers to capture emerging themes

Procedure:

1. Introduce the activity, emphasizing that the purpose is to listen with the heart, not just the head. Explain that the focus is on personal narrative and experience ("lived religion"), not on theological debates or arguments. The facilitator will also introduce the talking piece and its purpose: when a person holds it, they have the floor, and everyone else listens respectfully and without interruption.
2. Model the activity by sharing their own personal "sacred story" first. This sets a vulnerable and open tone, inviting participants to follow suit. The story should be brief, authentic, and focused on a personal experience of their faith or spiritual path in their daily life.
3. Invite participants to share their stories. Remind them that there is no pressure to share and that a brief story is just as meaningful as a long one. Remind the group to listen to one another's stories as sacred gifts, focusing on the shared humanity and emotions behind the narratives.
4. Once the stories are shared, the facilitator will ask the group to reflect on what they heard. The goal is to identify common themes or feelings, such as a sense of peace, the importance of family, or the role of ritual. The facilitator will write these themes on the



manila paper, demonstrating that despite different backgrounds, the group shares fundamental human experiences.

5. Close the activity by thanking everyone for their vulnerability and honesty. Reinforce that these shared stories have built a foundation of trust that will support the rest of the training.

Note to the Facilitator: This activity can be adapted based on the comfort level of the group. If the group is hesitant, begin in smaller sub-groups and then bring the emergent themes back to the full plenary. The key is to create an environment where participants feel safe to be vulnerable.

ACTIVITY 6: “SPEEDFAITHING”²

This interactive session is designed to provide participants with foundational knowledge about different faith traditions directly from members of those traditions. It promotes religious literacy and encourages a direct, human-centered approach to learning about others' beliefs.

Objective: To provide a framework for "informational learning" by allowing representatives of different faith traditions to present on the unique characteristics and core practices of their religion. This activity promotes religious literacy, builds a relational understanding of diverse beliefs, and encourages participants to learn directly from primary sources.

Materials:

- Manila papers
- Markers
- A pre-written list of prompts or questions for facilitators to guide the conversation
- A timekeeping device (e.g., a mobile phone timer or a bell)
- PowerPoint Presentation “The Core of Our Beliefs”

Procedure:

1. Introduces the activity, explaining the concept of "Speedfaithing." Clarify that this is an opportunity for **informational learning** and respectful inquiry. Emphasize that the goal is not to debate or compare beliefs but to listen and learn about what is unique and meaningful to each faith. Introduce the representatives from different faith traditions and explain the ground rules: each representative will have a set amount of time (e.g., 5-7 minutes) to share, and then the group will have time for questions.
2. The groups remain in their clusters, while the faith representatives rotate from table to table. Each representative will briefly present on the unique characteristics, core beliefs, and key practices of their religion.
3. Participants are encouraged to ask respectful and open-ended questions. Guide this portion to ensure questions are focused on learning rather than challenging.
4. Once the rotations are complete, bring the whole group back to the plenary. Guide a brief discussion to debrief the experience.
Questions can include:
 - What was one new thing you learned that surprised you?
 - What was a common theme or practice you heard across different religions?
 - How did it feel to learn directly from a person of faith?
5. Present Lecturette: “The Core of Our Beliefs.”

Note to the Facilitator: The success of this activity depends on having prepared, articulate, and welcoming faith representatives. Ensure the representatives understand the format and the spirit of the exercise, which is to build bridges, not walls. The debrief session is crucial for synthesizing the new information and helping participants reflect on their own assumptions and biases.

² Interfaith America. (n.d.). *How to hold a speedfaithing event*.

LECTURETTE 1: UNIQUE CHARACTERISTICS OF FAITHS: THE CORE OF OUR BELIEFS

This lecturette is a topic synthesis that follows the "Speedfaithing" activity. It's designed to formalize the knowledge gained from direct interaction and provide a clear, structured overview of the unique characteristics and core practices of three major Abrahamic religions.

Understanding Shared Roots and Unique Paths

The religions of **Islam**, **Roman Catholicism**, and **Protestantism** are all part of the Abrahamic tradition, sharing a foundational belief in one God and reverence for figures like Abraham and Jesus. However, they each have distinct beliefs, practices, and structures that shape the daily lives of their adherents. The "Speedfaithing" activity provided a glimpse into these differences, and this lecturette will now formalize that learning.

Islam – It is the world's second-largest religion, with a core tenet of submission to the will of God (**Allah**). Its followers, known as **Muslims**, believe that Muhammad is the last and final prophet of God.

- **Core Beliefs:** The central beliefs of Islam are encapsulated in the **Six Articles of Faith**³:
 - Belief in one God (has no offspring, is not born)
 - Belief in the angels
 - Belief in the holy books
 - Belief in the prophets
 - Belief in the Day of Judgment, and
 - Belief in God's divine decree.

The most fundamental of these is **Tawhid**, or the absolute oneness of God.

- **Core Practices:** The practices of Islam are guided by the **Five Pillars of Islam**⁴:
 - **Shahada:** The declaration of faith.
 - **Salat:** Performing prayer five times a day.
 - **Zakat:** Giving to charity.
 - **Sawm:** Fasting during the month of Ramadan.
 - **Hajj:** A pilgrimage to Mecca if one is able.
- **Sacred Texts:** The **Qur'an** is considered the direct word of God, revealed to Muhammad. The **Hadith** is a collection of the sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad.
- **Clergy/Leadership:** There is no centralized clergy in Islam. Religious leaders (**Imams**) are respected for their knowledge of Islamic law and traditions, leading congregational prayers and providing spiritual guidance.

Roman Catholicism - is the largest Christian denomination, with a rich history and a highly structured hierarchy. It holds a unique position within Christianity due to its distinct beliefs and traditions.

- **Core Beliefs:** Catholics believe in God as the **Holy Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit)**⁵, with Jesus Christ being both fully human and fully divine. Central to Catholic belief is the veneration of the Virgin Mary and the saints, and the belief in the seven sacraments, which are seen as channels of divine grace.

³ BBC Bitesize. (2024, May 14). *Six articles of faith (Sunni Islam) - Key beliefs in Islam*.

⁴ Harvard University Pluralism Project. (n.d.). *The Five Pillars*.

⁵ Church Life Journal. (2021, January 27). *The best guide for understanding the Trinity*.

- **Core Practices:** Catholic life is centered around the **liturgy** and the **Seven Sacraments**⁶.
 - **Sacraments of Initiation:** These sacraments initiate individuals into the Church.
 - Baptism
 - Confirmation
 - Eucharist
 - **Sacraments of Healing:** These offer spiritual healing and comfort.
 - Penance (or Reconciliation)
 - Anointing of the Sick (Extreme Unction)
 - **Sacraments at the Service of Communion:** These serve the community
 - Marriage
 - Holy Orders

The **Mass** is the central act of worship, which culminates in the Eucharist, where Catholics believe the bread and wine become the actual body and blood of Christ.

- **Sacred Texts:** The **Bible**, consisting of both the Old and New Testaments, is the primary sacred text.
- **Clergy/Leadership:** The Catholic Church has a strict and hierarchical structure, with the **Pope** as the spiritual head. He is followed by cardinals, bishops, and priests. Priests are responsible for administering the sacraments and leading local parishes. Ordained priests have a unique role as mediators, or **intercessors**, on behalf of the faithful through the sacraments, especially the Eucharist.

Protestantism - is a diverse branch of Christianity that emerged from the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century. It encompasses a wide range of denominations, from Baptists to Methodists and Pentecostals.

- **Core Beliefs:** While beliefs vary, Protestants share a few common principles. A central tenet is **Sola Scriptura**, or the belief that the Bible alone is the ultimate authority for faith and practice. They also hold to **Sola Fide**, the belief that salvation is achieved through faith alone, rather than through good works or sacraments⁷.
- **Core Practices:** Protestant worship is generally centered on a sermon and hymns. The two primary sacraments are **baptism** and **communion**, though they are interpreted differently across denominations.
- **Sacred Texts:** The **Bible** is the sole sacred text and final authority on all matters of faith.
- **Clergy/Leadership:** Protestant churches do not have a centralized hierarchy. Clergy members, often called **pastors** or **ministers**, lead their local congregations and are responsible for teaching and preaching the Bible.

⁶ Britannica. (2025, August 5). *The Seven Sacraments of the Roman Catholic Church*.

⁷ Protestantism.co.uk. (2016, February 29). *The Five Solas*.

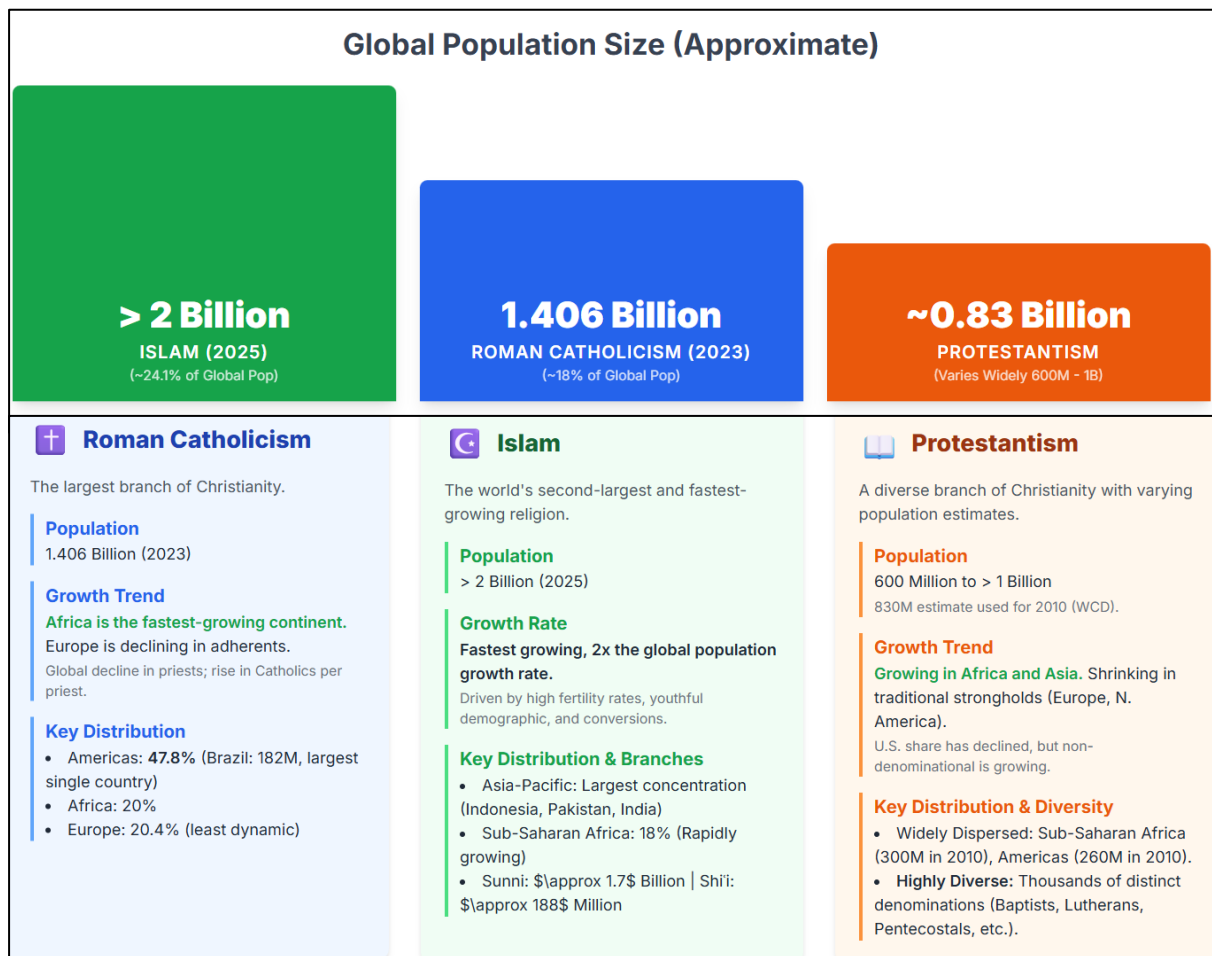


Figure 1. Global Faith Statistics.

Synthesis of Learnings - The "Speedfaithing" activity revealed that while all three religions share a common spiritual lineage, they diverge significantly in their understanding of God, their sacred texts, and their daily practices. Understanding these differences is not about judgment but about building a foundation of religious literacy that enables respectful and meaningful dialogue. This knowledge is the starting point for addressing the deeper issues and misunderstandings that can arise between these communities.

SESSION 3: CONFRONTING PREJUDICE AND TRUST

Building on new relationships, this session courageously addresses the core obstacles to dialogue: stereotypes and historical mistrust. Participants directly clarify common misconceptions about their faith before engaging in a "Dialogue of the Heart" to share the emotional impact of prejudice in the Mindanao context.

ACTIVITY 7: WHAT MY FAITH IS NOT

This activity is designed to directly confront and dismantle common stereotypes and misconceptions about different religions. It provides a safe space for representatives of each faith group to clarify what their religion is *not*, thereby addressing prejudice and misrepresentation head-on.

Objective: To provide a platform for faith representatives to correct common misconceptions and stereotypes about their religions, modeling honest and vulnerable dialogue. This activity aims to foster deeper understanding by moving past prejudices and establishing a foundation of truth and clarity.

Materials:

- A semi-circular seating arrangement or a large circle to encourage open dialogue
- A whiteboard or manila paper and markers
- Pre-written "misconception cards" with common stereotypes to prompt discussion
- PowerPoint Presentation "Unpacking Misconceptions: What My Faith is Not"

Procedure:

1. Introduce the activity with sensitivity, acknowledging that confronting stereotypes can be uncomfortable. Emphasize that this is a safe space for learning and unlearning, and that the goal is to correct misrepresentations, not to shame anyone⁸⁹¹⁰¹¹. Set a tone of vulnerability and courage, encouraging participants to be open to new information.
2. Model the activity by addressing a common misconception or stereotype about a broad group, such as "all facilitators are boring." This light-hearted example shows the group how to approach the topic with grace and honesty.
3. Invite representatives from each faith group to present on a few key misconceptions they've heard about their religion, especially those common in the Mindanao context.
4. After each representative speaks, open the floor for questions from the plenary. Guide this session, encouraging questions based on curiosity, not judgment.
5. Deepen the discussion by presenting Lecturette 2: "Unpacking Misconceptions: What My Faith is Not"
6. Ask the group to reflect on what they heard. What was a surprising or new insight they gained? How does this new understanding challenge their previous assumptions?

"Through interfaith dialogue, we can unite in common cause to lift the afflicted, make peace where there is strife, and find the way forward to create a better world for ourselves and our children."

U.S. Pres. Barack Obama

⁸ University of Venice. (2019, April 5). *Guidelines on Prejudices and Stereotypes in Religions*.

⁹ KAICIID. (n.d.). *Interreligious Dialogue Resource Guide*.

¹⁰ Tri-Faith Initiative. (2020, April 13). *Our Approach to Desperate Times: Step Two, Dismantle Stereotypes*.

¹¹ Greater Good Science Center. (n.d.). *Bridging Differences Playbook*.

MISCONCEPTION CARDS FOR "WHAT MY FAITH IS NOT" WORKSHOP

Please note: These statements are designed to be provocative stereotypes commonly heard in real-world contexts, particularly in mixed communities. Their sole purpose in the training is to be identified, addressed, and ultimately dismantled.

Category A: Roman Catholic Misconceptions (10 Cards)

Card #	Stereotype / Misconception (What My Faith Is NOT)
RC 1	"Catholics earn their way to heaven through good works and rituals; they don't believe in salvation by grace."
RC 2	"The Pope is infallible and always right about everything, no matter what he says."
RC 3	"Catholic priests and nuns are all wealthy and live disconnected from the poor."
RC 4	"Catholics worship statues, like the Virgin Mary and the saints, which is idolatry."
RC 5	"The Catholic Church is totally anti-science, especially when it comes to evolution and space."
RC 6	"Catholics don't read the Bible themselves; they just listen to what the priest tells them."
RC 7	"The Church is systematically misogynistic and keeps women from holding any real power."
RC 8	"Confession is an 'easy way out' for sinners because they just confess and go repeat their sin."
RC 9	"All Catholic priests are secret pedophiles, and the Church protects them."
RC 10	"Catholics believe the bread and wine at communion is only symbolic, not truly the body of Christ."

Category B: Islamic Misconceptions (10 Cards)

Card #	Stereotype / Misconception (What My Faith Is NOT)
I 1	"All Muslims support terrorism and are inherently violent people."
I 2	"Muslims don't believe in Jesus or the prophets of the Bible; they only recognize Muhammad."
I 3	"The Hijab is a symbol of total oppression and forced silence of Muslim women."
I 4	"Islam encourages men to marry four wives, even if they can't afford to treat them equally."
I 5	"Muslims worship Muhammad, who is seen as a divine figure, not just a prophet."
I 6	"The term 'Jihad' is strictly translated as 'holy war' against non-believers."
I 7	"Islamic law (Sharia) is barbaric and calls for cruel and unusual punishments."
I 8	"All Muslims are Arabs; it's an ethnic religion, not a universal one."
I 9	"Islam is intolerant and believes its followers should kill all 'infidels' (non-believers)."
I 10	"Muslims pray to a different god than Christians; they do not worship the God of Abraham."

Category C: Protestant Misconceptions (10 Cards)

Card #	Stereotype / Misconception (What My Faith Is NOT)
P 1	"Protestant faith is 'easy mode' Christianity with no real spiritual discipline or tradition."
P 2	"Protestants reject all church history and traditions; they only believe the Bible."
P 3	"All Protestants are right-wing extremists and completely anti-science."
P 4	"Protestants reject the importance of works; they can sin freely because they are saved by faith alone."
P 5	"Protestants believe Martin Luther and other reformers were infallible figures, like saints."
P 6	"Protestant churches are financially greedy and their leaders only care about getting rich (prosperity gospel)."
P 7	"Protestant Christianity is too fractured, with too many small denominations, to have any real authority."
P 8	"Protestant worship is just loud, spontaneous singing with no real liturgy or reverence."
P 9	"Protestant leaders and members are inherently anti-Catholic and constantly promote anti-Catholic myths."
P 10	"Protestants believe in Biblical literalism and reject any form of reasoned scholarship or interpretation."

LECTURETTE 2: UNPACKING MISCONCEPTIONS: WHAT MY FAITH IS NOT

This lecturette is a topic synthesis following the "What My Faith Is NOT" activity. It's designed to formalize the learning from that session by providing a structured overview of the most common and controversial misconceptions associated with major Christian denominations and Islam. These stereotypes often arise from a lack of direct experience with these faith communities, media portrayals, historical conflicts, and the human tendency to oversimplify complex religious traditions. Understanding these misconceptions is crucial for fostering better interfaith dialogue and reducing religious prejudice.

Roman Catholic Faith: Misconceptions by Other Religions - The Catholic Church faces numerous misconceptions from both Protestant Christians and other faith groups.

Most Common Misconceptions

- **Catholics Worship Mary and Saints¹²:** This is a widespread misunderstanding. Catholic doctrine clearly differentiates between **worship (latría)**, which is reserved for God alone, and **veneration (hyperdulía)**, which is given to Mary, and **honor (dulía)**, which is given to saints. Catholics ask for their intercession, much like asking for prayers from living friends.
- **Catholics Don't Read the Bible¹³:** This misconception persists despite the fact that Catholic Mass includes multiple Scripture readings from the Old Testament, Psalms, Epistles, and Gospels. Over a three-year cycle, Catholics hear most of the Bible during Mass. The Church actively encourages Scripture study and has produced extensive biblical scholarship.
- **Catholics Earn Their Way to Heaven¹⁴:** Many believe Catholics practice works-based salvation, but the Church teaches that salvation is a free gift of God's grace through Jesus Christ. Good works are seen as a response to grace and cooperation with it, not as a means of earning salvation.
- **Catholics Worship Statues and Practice Idolatry¹⁵:** Critics view Catholic veneration of images as idol worship, but the Church teaches that statues and icons are visual reminders that help focus prayer on the persons they represent, not objects of worship themselves.
- **The Pope is Always Right/Infallible¹⁶:** Many misunderstand papal infallibility as meaning the Pope is never wrong about anything. In reality, papal infallibility only applies when the Pope speaks *ex cathedra* on matters of faith or morals with the intention to bind the whole Church—which has occurred very rarely.

Most Controversial Stereotypes

- **Catholic Priests as Pedophiles¹⁷:** The sexual abuse scandals, particularly exposed by *The Boston Globe* in 2002, have created a lasting association between Catholic clergy and child abuse. While these cases represent serious institutional failures, they involve a minority of clergy, yet the stereotype persists and affects public perception significantly.

¹² The Jesuit Post. (2023, October 9). *Catholic 101: Do Catholics Worship Mary?*

¹³ Catholic Voices. (2020, June 18). *Seven Myths about Catholicism*.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Christian Catholic Media. (2023, December 29). *10 Common Myths About Catholicism—And What the Church Actually Teaches*.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

- **The Church as Anti-Women/Misogynistic¹⁸:** Critics point to the male-only priesthood, opposition to contraception, and historical treatment of women as evidence of systemic misogyny. Former Irish President Mary McAleese called the Church "an empire of misogyny." The Church's teachings on traditional gender roles contribute to this perception.
- **Anti-Science Stance¹⁹:** The Galileo controversy continues to fuel perceptions that the Catholic Church opposes scientific progress. Despite the Church's significant contributions to science and formal reconciliation with Galileo in 1992, this stereotype remains influential, particularly regarding evolution and other scientific theories.

Islam: Misconceptions by Other Religions - Islam faces extensive misconceptions and stereotypes, particularly from Christian communities and Western society.

Most Common Misconceptions

- **Muslims Worship Muhammad²⁰:** Many non-Muslims assume Islam follows a similar pattern to Christianity, with Muhammad replacing Jesus as an object of worship. In reality, Islamic doctrine teaches that Muhammad was a prophet of Allah, not divine, and worship is reserved for Allah alone.
- **Muslims Don't Believe in Jesus^{21,22}:** Contrary to popular belief, Muslims consider Jesus one of the greatest messengers of God and believe in his virgin birth and many miracles. The main difference is that Muslims don't believe Jesus was God.
- **Islam is Intolerant of Other Religions²³:** The misconception of a "kill the infidel" ideology persists, but Islamic law historically granted protection to "People of the Book" (Christians and Jews) and established principles of religious tolerance.
- **All Muslims are Arabs²⁴:** This widespread misconception ignores that the majority of Muslims are non-Arab, with large populations in Indonesia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, and Central Africa.
- **The Quran is Nothing But Fiction²⁵:** Even non-Islamic scholars who are familiar with the Quran concede that it contains numerous historically verifiable facts and truths.

Most Controversial Stereotypes

- **Muslims are Violent Terrorists²⁶:** This is identified as the biggest misconception about Islam. The stereotype that Muslims are inherently violent or support terrorism affects the vast majority of peaceful Muslims. Post-9/11, this association has led to widespread discrimination and hate crimes. Studies show most Muslims are among the more hospitable and gracious people one can meet.
- **Muslim Women are Oppressed/Hijab as Oppression²⁷:** The hijab is often viewed in Western societies as a symbol of oppression, but many Muslim women consider it liberating and a form of resistance against objectification. This misconception stems from conflating cultural practices with religious requirements and colonial-era narratives about "saving" Muslim women.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Catholicism Coffee. (2021, January 8). *5 Myths Surrounding the Catholic Church*.

²⁰ Studio Arabiya. (2024, July 13). *10 Misconceptions About Islam*.

²¹ Ibid.

²² ING. (2024, December 16). *Answers to Frequently Asked Questions About Islam and Muslims*.

²³ Communities Inc. (2025, June 23). *6 Myths About Islam & Muslims*.

²⁴ Studio Arabiya. (2024, July 13).

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Communities Inc. (2025, June 23).

- **Islamic Extremism/Violent Jihad²⁸:** The concept of **jihad** has been widely misunderstood and misrepresented. While extremist groups have distorted its meaning, traditional Islamic interpretation emphasizes the "**greater jihad**" as an internal spiritual struggle, with physical jihad being defensive and bound by strict rules protecting civilians.
- **The Controversy of Marrying Four Wives²⁹:** The Quranic verse allowing a man to marry up to four wives is often taken out of context. Traditional Islamic scholars assert that this permission is conditional. It was revealed in a specific historical context to protect orphaned women and was meant to ensure that the man could treat all wives with absolute equality and justice—a condition that is extremely difficult to fulfill and is often interpreted as a deterrent. The verse is seen by many scholars as more of a restriction on the unlimited polygamy of pre-Islamic times rather than an encouragement of it.

Protestantism: Misconceptions by Other Christian Denominations - Protestant Christianity faces misconceptions primarily from Catholic and Orthodox Christians, though some stereotypes come from secular sources.

Most Common Misconceptions

- **Sola Scriptura Means "Bible Only"³⁰:** Catholics and Orthodox often misunderstand this doctrine as meaning Protestants reject all authority except the Bible. In reality, **sola scriptura** teaches that Scripture is the only infallible rule of faith, while acknowledging subordinate authorities like church teaching offices, creeds, and councils.
- **Protestants Don't Have Liturgy or Tradition³¹:** Many assume Protestant worship is entirely spontaneous or informal. However, many Protestant denominations, particularly Lutheran and Anglican churches, have rich liturgical traditions and formal worship services.
- **Protestants Worship Martin Luther or Other Reformers³²:** Some Catholics and Orthodox believe Protestants venerate the Reformers as Catholics venerate saints. Protestants generally reject this characterization, viewing the Reformers as fallible humans who pointed back to Scripture and Christ.
- **All Protestants are the Same³³:** There's a tendency to generalize all Protestant denominations based on American evangelical megachurch stereotypes, ignoring the vast diversity within Protestantism, including Lutheran, Reformed, Anglican, Methodist, and other traditions.
- **Protestants Reject Saints and Church History³⁴:** While Protestants have different views on sainthood than Catholics, they don't reject the concept entirely. Many Protestant traditions honor saints and study church history extensively, though they don't give the Church Fathers the same authority as Catholics do.

Most Controversial Stereotypes

- **Fundamentalist Extremism³⁵:** Protestants, particularly evangelicals, are often stereotyped as right-wing fundamentalist extremists who are homophobic, anti-intellectual, and intolerant. The fundamentalist stereotype includes being anti-science, anti-gay, and rigidly literalistic in biblical interpretation.

²⁸ ING. (2024, December 16).

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Credo House. (n.d.) *Six Myths About Sola Scriptura*.

³¹ History for Atheists. (2021, August 10). *The Great Myths 11: Biblical Literalism*.

³² Protestantism.co.uk. (2016, February 29).

³³ History for Atheists. (2021, August 10).

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

- **Anti-Catholic Bigotry³⁶:** Protestants are sometimes characterized as inherently anti-Catholic, promoting conspiracy theories about Catholic Church history. This includes myths about Catholic persecution of Bible translators and claims that the Catholic Church started under Constantine.
- **Biblical Literalism and Anti-Intellectualism³⁷:** Protestants, especially evangelicals and fundamentalists, face stereotypes of being anti-intellectual, rejecting science and education in favor of blind faith. They're portrayed as rigid biblical literalists who reject reason and scholarship.
- **"Easy Mode" Christianity³⁸:** Some Orthodox and Catholic critics characterize Protestant Christianity as lacking rigor or spiritual discipline compared to their traditions, viewing Protestant theology as overly simplified or permissive.

³⁶ History for Atheists. (2021, August 10).

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Protestantism.co.uk. (2016, February 29).

ACTIVITY 8: DIALOGUE OF THE HEART

This activity is designed to move beyond intellectual discussion and into the realm of shared human experience. It creates a safe space for participants to vulnerably share the emotional and relational challenges of engaging in interfaith dialogue in a context as complex as Mindanao.

Objective: To facilitate a "dialogue of the heart" by providing a safe, small-group setting for participants to share personal feelings, fears, and emotional challenges related to interfaith encounters. The goal is to build empathy and relational trust by practicing active listening and vulnerability³⁹.

Materials:

- Manila papers
- Markers
- "Discussion Prompts" handouts with open-ended questions

Procedure:

1. Introduce the activity by acknowledging that dialogue is not just about words and ideas but also about emotions and relationships. Emphasize that this is a safe space for honest sharing, where feelings—even difficult ones like fear or frustration—are welcome and will be met with respect. Model vulnerability by briefly sharing a personal experience of a challenging interfaith encounter, focusing on the emotions involved.
2. Divide participants into small, mixed-faith groups. Distribute the "Discussion Prompts" handout, which includes questions designed to evoke personal reflection and sharing.
3. Remind participants that the focus is on listening, not on responding or correcting. The goal is to understand the speaker's emotional experience. Encourage the use of phrases like, "I hear you saying that you felt..." and "Thank you for sharing that with me."
4. Bring the whole group back to the plenary. Guide a debrief session, focusing on the shared themes that emerged. The discussion will not be about specific details but about the universal human experiences of feeling judged, misunderstood, or a sense of hope and connection. Capture these themes on white board, highlighting the commonality of human emotions across different faiths.
5. Close the session by affirming the courage it took for participants to be vulnerable. Reiterate that this "dialogue of the heart" is the foundation for all meaningful interfaith work, allowing the group to move forward with a deeper sense of empathy and trust⁴⁰.

"Once you truly find God, you are open to all faiths."

Karen Armstrong

³⁹ Abrahamic Faiths Peacemaking Initiative. (2012). *Principles and Guidelines for Interfaith Dialogue: Compassionate Listening*.

⁴⁰ Interfaith Mediation Centre. (2019). *Reflective Structured Dialogue: A Dialogic Approach to Peacebuilding*.

ACTIVITY DISCUSSION PROMPTS

Note: You do not need to run through all of the discussion points. Use enough to trigger personal reflection and sharing among all participants through the initial exchanges.

1. What is one fear you have about engaging in dialogue with people of a different faith?
2. When have you felt misunderstood or misrepresented in a discussion about your beliefs?
3. What is a personal belief or practice that you feel is often judged or presented in a one-sided way by others?
4. What is an example of a time when a simple act of kindness or a conversation changed your perception of someone from another faith?
5. What is one thing you privately fear might be misunderstood or misinterpreted about your faith by someone in this room? Focus on the emotion that fear creates.
6. Describe a time when you felt deeply judged or had your religious beliefs presented in a one-sided, unfair way by a non-believer or someone from another faith. How did that moment feel?
7. Which stereotype or common generalization about your community (religious or ethnic) causes you the most day-to-day frustration or pain?
8. Has the pressure to maintain peace or manage tensions ever forced you to silence or hide an important part of your spiritual or cultural practice in a public setting?
9. When interacting with large external groups (NGOs, government, donors), do you ever feel that your faith/culture is treated as a "problem" to be managed rather than a resource to be leveraged?
10. What is one deep hope you hold for your children's future in Mindanao that you believe is shared by every parent in this room, regardless of their faith?
11. Is there a specific word or phrase related to your faith (e.g., Jihad, Evangelism, Maratabat) that you feel is constantly misused by the media or outsiders, causing genuine emotional harm?
12. What is the one quality (e.g., humility, honesty, consistency) you believe is essential for someone from another faith to possess for you to

"O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise each other). Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of God is (he who is) the most righteous of you."

Surah Al-Hujurat 49:13

ACTIVITY 9: DAY-1 REFLECTION AND CLOSING

This activity is designed to provide a comprehensive review of the day's learning, reinforce key takeaways, and set a clear, motivating direction for the training's next phase. It encourages individual reflection and bridges the gap between the day's conceptual work and the practical application to come.

Objective: To encourage individual reflection on the day's learning, synthesize the key themes and "aha" moments, and foster a sense of shared purpose as the group prepares for the next day of the training.

Materials:

- Manila papers
- Colorful markers
- Metacards or metacards (two per participant, in different colors)
- Masking tape

Procedure:

1. Distribute two small cards or metacards to each participant. Instruct them to take a moment of quiet reflection on the entire day's training. On the first card, they should write down one key takeaway or an "aha" moment that stood out to them. On the second card, they should write down one concrete, actionable step they will commit to applying to their daily interactions or personal understanding of others' faiths.
2. Ask participants to form small groups and share their key takeaways and commitments. This allows for a more intimate exchange and reinforces the day's learning in a less intimidating setting.
3. Invite volunteers to share their takeaways and commitments with the large group. The facilitator will capture these on a manila paper, clustering similar ideas. This process creates a visual record of the group's collective learning and dedication to applying the principles of dialogue.
4. The facilitator will then walk the participants through a brief, high-level recap of the day's journey, connecting the activities to the core themes. The recap will highlight how the day progressed from building relational trust (dialogue of the heart) to applying intellectual understanding (dialogue of the head).
5. The facilitator will briefly set the stage for the next day by outlining what's to come, building anticipation and ensuring participants leave with a sense of purpose and a clear path forward. The day concludes with a final thank you to all participants for their active engagement and commitment.

*"If it is possible, as far as it depends on you,
live at peace with everyone."*

Romans 12:18

CHAPTER 2: TOWARDS AUTHENTIC DIALOGUE

This chapter shifts the learning toward the "Dialogue of the Head" by focusing on intellectual clarity and practical application skills. Participants practice techniques for handling "tough comments" and apply structured analysis to complex, identity-driven conflicts in Mindanao. The aim is to build confidence and skill in navigating high-tension scenarios with empathy and neutrality.

SESSION 4: NAVIGATING DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

This session applies the emotional lessons of Day 1 to practical problem-solving. Participants engage in the "Tough Comments" Workshop to practice using non-confrontational, empathetic responses to prejudice. The session concludes with the analysis of complex Mindanao Case Studies, shifting the conversation to the root causes and multiple perspectives of conflict.

ACTIVITY 10: "TOUGH COMMENTS" WORKSHOP⁴¹⁴²⁴³

This activity is designed to confront common misconceptions and prejudices about other religions in a safe and structured manner. By addressing "tough comments," participants will learn how to respond to difficult situations with empathy and constructive dialogue, rather than defensiveness or correction.

Objective: To provide participants with the skills to address and reframe "tough comments" or common prejudices about other religions in a non-confrontational way, modeling how to respond with affirming, storytelling, and asking questions to foster genuine understanding.

Materials

- Metacards (three per participant).
- Pens or markers.
- Two large collection boxes or bowls labeled "Tough Comments."
- A whiteboard or manila paper
- PowerPoint Presentation "Deepening on Emotional and Relational Challenges in Mindanao"

Procedure:

1. Introduce the activity by acknowledging that interfaith dialogue can be challenging and that we often encounter difficult questions, comments, or stereotypes. Emphasize that this is a non-judgmental space to work through these challenges together.
2. Distribute three metacards to each participant. Ask them to anonymously write down one "tough comment," question, or misconception they have heard about a religion other than their own. Remind them that the comments should be ones they've genuinely heard or encountered, not ones they've invented. Have them fold the cards and place them in the collection boxes.

⁴¹ Voice of Salam. (2023, March 29). *Building dialogue: 4 ways to engage in interfaith dialogue in your local community*.

⁴² Peace, Jennifer. Or Rose & Gregory Mobley, eds. (2012). *My Neighbor's Faith: Stories of Interreligious Encounter, Growth and Transformation*.

⁴³ Learning for Justice. (2019). *Speak Up Guide: How to Respond to Everyday Prejudice, Bias and Stereotypes*.

3. Select a few comments from the box and model the appropriate response. Read a comment aloud, and instead of defending or scolding, will demonstrate the following techniques⁴⁴⁴⁵⁴⁶.
 - **Affirming:** Find a piece of common ground or a shared value. ("I hear that you're concerned about..." or "That's a very common question, and it's a good one because...").
 - **Storytelling:** Share a personal story or a factual anecdote that illustrates a more nuanced perspective, humanizing the issue.
 - **Asking Questions:** Turn the comment into a question to open up dialogue. ("I wonder if the person who said that knew that..." or "How does that perspective affect your own view?").
4. Divide participants into small, mixed-faith groups. Give each group a stack of comment cards from the collection box. Instruct each group to choose three comments and practice responding to them using the "affirming, storytelling, and asking questions" model they just learned. Encourage them to take turns playing the role of the person receiving the comment and the person responding.
5. Bring the whole group back to the plenary. Ask a few groups to share one of the comments and how they responded to it. Facilitate a discussion on what felt difficult and what felt effective about the exercise. Synthesize the key learning points, emphasizing that the goal is to build bridges of understanding, not to win arguments.
6. Synthesize the discussion by presenting Lecturette 3: "Deepening on Emotional and Relational Challenges in Mindanao."

"Say: 'O People of the Book! Come to common terms as between us and you: that we worship none but God; that we associate no partners with Him; that we erect not from among ourselves Lords and patrons other than God.' If then they turn back say: 'Bear witness that we (at least) are Muslims (bowing to God's will)'"

Surah Al-Imran 3:64

⁴⁴ Kings University College, Centre for Jewish-Catholic-Muslim Learning. (n.d.). *Principles and Guidelines for Interfaith Dialogue: "How to Dialogue"*.

⁴⁵ Council of Europe. (2016, Oct 27). *Tackling Prejudice and Engaging with Religious Minorities*.

⁴⁶ McGill University MORSL. (2024, Aug 7). *Importance of Storytelling in Interfaith Dialogue*.

LECTURETTE 3: DEEPENING ON EMOTIONAL AND RELATIONAL CHALLENGES IN MINDANAO

This lecturette is designed to formalize the learning from that session, which focused on the emotional and relational challenges of interfaith dialogue, particularly in Mindanao's context.

The Realities of Dialogue in Mindanao - The intellectual exercises in this training are important, but they only get us so far. In a region like Mindanao, with its deep and often painful history of conflict, dialogue cannot remain purely academic. The "Dialogue of the Heart" activity allowed us to touch on the emotional realities that underpin our work. These aren't just abstract issues; they are part of the daily lived experience of many Christians, Muslims, and Lumads⁴⁷.

The Power of Vulnerability and Empathy - Our activity demonstrated that true dialogue requires vulnerability. When we allow ourselves to share a personal fear or a time when we felt judged, we create a space for empathy. Empathy, from the Greek *empathos*, meaning "feeling into," is the ability to understand and share the feelings of another⁴⁸. It is the crucial bridge that allows us to move from:

- **Stereotype to Story:** Instead of seeing a Christian farmer or a Moro woman through the lens of a historical conflict, we see them as individuals with their own stories, fears, and hopes.
- **Defense to Dialogue:** When a sensitive topic arises, our first instinct is often to defend our own belief system. When we listen with our hearts, the need to correct or win an argument falls away, and genuine connection becomes possible.

Addressing the Unique Challenges of Mindanao - In Mindanao, the emotional baggage of history is heavy. For generations, narratives of land disputes, historical injustices, and armed conflict have shaped our communities. These narratives are not just historical facts; they are emotional truths passed down through families. For a dialogue to be meaningful, it must acknowledge this pain without getting stuck in it⁴⁹. The "Dialogue of the Heart"⁵⁰ allows us to:

- **Recognize and Acknowledge Pain:** It creates a space where historical and personal pain can be seen and heard. By acknowledging a person's feelings about a historical event, we validate their human experience, which is the first step toward healing.
- **Reframe the Relationship:** When we discover that we share common emotions—the fear of a loved one's safety, the hope for a child's future—the historical identity of "the other" begins to shift. They are no longer a member of a rival group but a fellow human being.

This activity is not just about sharing feelings; it's about building a foundation for peace that is based on genuine human connection. This connection will be the bedrock upon which our intellectual discussions about justice, land rights, and governance can stand. The dialogue of the head is about the problem; the dialogue of the heart is about the people. We need both for lasting peace.

"He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?"

Micah 6:8

⁴⁷ Academia.edu. (2015, April 21). *Interfaith Dialogue in Mindanao: Sharing a Common Hope and Mutual Fears*.

⁴⁸ Ateneo de Zamboanga University. (2014). *Interfaith Dialogue & Education Toward a Culture of Peace*.

⁴⁹ Gaspar, K. M. (2009). *Theories and Practices of Inter-Faith Dialogue in the Philippines Context*.

⁵⁰ Montiel, C. J. (n.d.). *The Moro Struggle in Southern Philippines*.

ACTIVITY 11: THE MINDANAO CASE STUDY

This activity provides a practical, real-world application of the interfaith dialogue principles learned in the module. By analyzing a case study from a Mindanao context, participants will engage in a "dialogue of the head," applying theoretical knowledge to a specific and complex challenge.

Objective: To enable participants to apply the principles of interfaith dialogue and peacebuilding to a real-life scenario from Mindanao. Participants will analyze the situation and propose a solution that respects all parties, thereby translating abstract concepts into a concrete, context-specific strategy.

Materials:

- Printed "Mindanao Case Study" handouts (one per group), each detailing a different scenario
- Manila papers and markers (one set per group)
- A whiteboard or manila paper for the plenary debrief

Procedure:

1. Introduce the activity, emphasizing that this is a "dialogue of the head," requiring critical thinking and problem-solving. Explain that the case studies are inspired by real events in Mindanao, designed to be complex and multi-layered. Remind participants to draw on the principles of respect, empathy, and active listening established in previous sessions.
2. Divide participants into small, mixed-faith groups. Distribute the case studies to each group. Each case study details a scenario involving multiple religious or ethnic groups. Each group should:
 - Read the case study carefully and identify the core issues, focusing on the role of religious and cultural identities.
 - Using manila paper, map out the different stakeholders and their perspectives.
 - Brainstorm and discuss potential solutions, ensuring each solution respects the dignity and identity of all parties involved.
 - Select one proposed solution and prepare to present it to the plenary.
3. Each group will have a set amount of time to present their case study analysis and their proposed solution. They should clearly articulate how their solution addresses the religious and cultural dimensions of the conflict.
4. After all presentations, guide a final debrief. The discussion will focus on the common challenges and lessons learned across the different case studies. Synthesize the key takeaways, highlighting how dialogue and mutual understanding are essential tools for peacebuilding and conflict resolution in Mindanao and beyond.

Note to the Facilitator: It is crucial to select case studies that are realistic and nuanced, avoiding overly simplistic narratives of "good vs. evil." The facilitator should be prepared to manage discussions and ensure that the focus remains on respectful analysis rather than on assigning blame. This activity is a powerful tool for demonstrating the practical value of interfaith dialogue in

CASE STUDY 1: THE CASE OF THE SACRED SPRING (HANDOUT)

In Barangay Maligaya, located on the border of a predominantly Christian municipality and a Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) controlled area in Maguindanao, a conflict has been simmering for years over a single, natural spring. The spring, locally known as "**Tuburan sa Kalinaw**" (**Spring of Peace**), is a vital water source for both communities.

The Christian community, who settled the area generations ago, views the spring as a gift from God, a place where their ancestors first found refuge and built their homes. They have built a small, humble chapel near the spring and hold an annual "Festival of the Holy Waters," which they believe blesses their harvests. To them, the spring is a symbol of their faith, resilience, and connection to the land.

The Moro community, who moved to the area following a peace agreement, holds an equally deep reverence for the spring. Their oral traditions speak of a sacred covenant between their forefathers and the land, with the spring serving as a crucial site for ritual cleansing and spiritual renewal. For them, it is a "**Wadi al-Jannah**" (**Valley of Paradise**), a physical manifestation of divine provision. They use the spring for ablution (wudu) before prayer and for other significant religious rites.

The conflict began when a private company, with the support of the Christian barangay chairman, proposed building a small-scale water bottling plant at the spring's source. The company promised to provide jobs and a portion of the profits to the barangay.

- The **Christian community** saw this as an opportunity for economic development and progress. They felt that since they were the original inhabitants and had the official barangay leadership on their side, they had the right to make a decision that would benefit everyone.
- The **Moro community** was deeply offended. They feared the commercialization would desecrate the sacredness of the site and feared losing access for their religious practices. They also felt excluded from the decision-making process, arguing that the spring belongs to all who live there, not just to those with political power.

Tensions escalated when a youth group from the Moro community organized a protest at the spring, which was met by a counter-protest from the Christian community. The fragile peace in Barangay Maligaya is now at risk of breaking down.

Your Task:

1. Analyze the case study and identify the core issues. What are the underlying religious, historical, and economic factors at play?
2. Identify all stakeholders involved. Who are they, and what are their respective perspectives, interests, and fears?
3. Propose a solution that moves beyond a simple economic decision. Your solution should:
 - Protect the sacredness of the spring for both communities.
 - Address the economic needs and fears of the community.
 - Create a genuine, inclusive process for decision-making.

CASE STUDY 2: THE CURRICULUM AND THE HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

In the town of Datu Salamat in Maguindanao, a newly integrated public high school is implementing the revised national curriculum. The history department is using textbooks that present the arrival of Islam and the establishment of the sultanates in Mindanao as the region's defining historical and cultural foundation.

The Conflict:

- **The Muslim Community** (Majority Population): The community supports the curriculum, seeing it as a long-overdue recognition of their history, *Bangsamoro* identity, and self-determination struggle. They see it as essential for decolonizing education.
- **The Christian Community** (Long-time Settlers/Teachers): A group of respected Christian teachers and parents (mostly Protestant and Catholic) organized a protest. They argue the curriculum marginalizes their families' history, specifically their historical contributions as pioneers in farming and business. They believe the textbooks implicitly portray Christian migrants as "intruders" and demand equal representation of their narratives.
- **The Lumad Community** (Indigenous People): Lumad elders and leaders express disappointment that the curriculum is primarily framed as a **Moro vs. Christian** issue, overlooking the fact that the history of the **Lumad** people predates both. They argue that the focus on the sultanates and Christian settlement silences their own creation myths, traditional governance systems, and ongoing struggle for ancestral domain.

Tensions escalated after a Christian teacher posted a critique of the curriculum on Facebook, which sparked a heated, factional debate among students. The Principal, a Muslim, is now under pressure to either suspend the history class or fire the Christian teacher.

Your Task:

1. Analyze the case study and identify the core issues. What is the fundamental conflict of **identity and narrative** at play?
2. Identify all stakeholders (including the students and the Principal). What are the **core needs and fears** (beyond the curriculum itself) of each of the three groups?
3. Propose a solution for the Principal and the local LGU that moves beyond simply choosing one textbook. Your solution must respect the historical truth of each group and create a framework for **shared historical learning**.

CASE STUDY 3: THE INTER-FAITH HIRING DILEMMA

In a city recovering from conflict, an international NGO (INGO) has launched a major youth livelihood training program. The project focuses on giving small business grants and technical training to 100 young entrepreneurs. The INGO has decided to hire a Program Coordinator and five Field Staff locally.

The Conflict:

- **The Muslim Community** (Displaced Residents): They argue that since the project is funded for **post-conflict recovery** following the siege, the majority of staff (at least 60%) and grant beneficiaries must come from the heavily affected Muslim population to address historical injustice and unemployment.
- **The Catholic/Christian Community** (Host Residents): They argue that the host community suffered economic damage during the conflict, too, and that the hiring must be **merit-based** and **50/50** (Christian/Muslim), regardless of the origin of the conflict. They worry that preferential hiring will lead to Muslim elite capture of the project.
- **The INGO's Management (External)**: The INGO management has prioritized hiring only highly educated, university-trained candidates for the Field Staff, which strongly favors applicants from the Christian-dominated university system in the provincial center, reinforcing a historical **educational divide**.

The selection of the Program Coordinator—a highly qualified Muslim woman from the city center—has sparked outrage among the host Christian CSOs, who feel they have been systematically excluded. They are threatening to withdraw their cooperation and publicly accuse the INGO of institutional bias.

Your Task:

1. Analyze the core issues. How do **historical grievance, identity, and economic opportunity** clash in this hiring process?
2. Identify the **interests** of the three main parties (Displaced Muslims, Host Christians, and the INGO).
3. Propose a detailed **mitigation strategy** for the INGO that addresses the need for **impartiality, merit, and equity** simultaneously, thereby turning the hiring process from a Divider into a Connector.

CASE STUDY 4: RIDO, RESTORATIVE JUSTICE, AND RELIGIOUS LAW

In a municipality with strong traditional governance, a tragic case of **rido** (clan feud) has been reignited. A young man from Clan A (a Muslim family) killed a young man from Clan B (a Protestant family) over a debt dispute.

The Conflict:

- **Clan A (The Perpetrator):** The elders immediately invoked traditional *Maratabat* (honor) and Muslim customary law. They are prepared to pay the traditional compensation (*Diyya*, or blood money) to settle the feud and prevent further bloodshed, as is customary in the region.
- **Clan B (The Victim):** The family is deeply influenced by their Protestant church's teachings on **Restorative Justice and Forgiveness**. The lead pastor insists that money cannot atone for the sin of murder. They demand the perpetrator be surrendered to the **formal State court** for imprisonment and reject the *Diyya* payment, which they see as corrupt and non-Christian.
- **The Local Police/Formal Court:** The formal system sees this as a straight criminal case. However, the local police chief (a Catholic) is reluctant to intervene forcibly, knowing that arresting the young man will violate the customary settlement process and likely trigger a massive, region-wide escalation of the *rido*.

The conflict is now stalled between **traditional/religious law** and **formal state law**, with the threat of violent retaliation looming if either side is disrespected.

Your Task:

1. Analyze the case study and identify the core issues. How do **religious values (forgiveness vs. honor)** and **legal systems (customary vs. state)** create an intractable structural conflict?
2. Identify the **interests and core needs** of both Clan A and Clan B (beyond the obvious).
3. Propose an **integrated solution** that involves a respected interfaith or inter-clan council. Your solution must find a way to honor Clan B's **need for justice and moral integrity** while still respecting Clan A's need for **honor and traditional settlement**.

CASE STUDY 5: THE MARKET AND THE PRAYER TIME

The central, multi-ethnic public market in a large city is the economic heart of the community. The market is owned and managed by the local LGU, but a majority of the permanent stall owners are Christian (Catholic and Protestant), while the majority of the seasonal vendors and porters are Muslim.

The Conflict:

- **The Muslim Vendors (Porters/Seasonal):** They requested the LGU build a small, simple *Musalla* (prayer room) near the central loading bay to allow them to observe their mandatory daily prayers (*Salat*) conveniently, especially the afternoon prayers during busy hours. They feel their religious needs are ignored.
- **The Christian Stall Owners (Permanent):** They fiercely oppose the *Musalla*. They argue that the LGU land is scarce, and the space should be used for another permanent stall, generating revenue for the LGU and providing jobs. They fear that granting space for the *Musalla* will lead to a broader "Islamization" of the market space and threaten their economic dominance.
- **The LGU (Local Government Unit):** The LGU, facing pressure from both sides, is paralyzed. The Mayor fears losing the Christian business vote if the *Musalla* is built, but risks public protests from the Muslim porters if it is denied.

Tensions are high, with the Christian owners refusing to allow Muslim porters to temporarily use a corner of their stall space for prayer, leading to a visible increase in verbal clashes and economic non-cooperation.

Your Task:

1. Analyze the core issues. How does **religious practice clash with economic interest** and the concept of **shared public space**?
2. Identify the fundamental, intangible **needs** (beyond money/space) of the Muslim and Christian groups.
3. Propose a **multi-layered solution** for the LGU that honors the religious needs of the Muslim vendors without compromising the economic space of the Christian owners, using a principle of **shared use or creative infrastructure**.

SESSION 5: CONTEXTUAL APPLICATION AND SKILL PRACTICE

This session translates analysis into action through structured role-play and creative sharing. Participants rehearse dialogue techniques in high-tension scenarios to build practical conflict navigation skills. The sharing of "My Sacred Space" reinforces the connection between faith, culture, and the physical environment of Mindanao.

ACTIVITY 12: ROLE-PLAY SCENARIOS

This activity is designed to translate the principles of interfaith dialogue into practical skills through structured role-play. By engaging in these scenarios, participants will build confidence and gain hands-on experience in navigating complex and sensitive situations in a safe environment.

Objective: To provide a framework for practicing the skills of dialogue in a safe environment, using role-play scenarios based on common, sensitive issues in Mindanao. The goal is to build confidence and practical skills for navigating real-life situations involving cultural and religious differences.

Materials:

- Pre-written "Scenario Cards" with detailed roles and background information (one card per participant in a group)
- Facilitator's guide with key questions and potential turning points for each scenario
- A whiteboard or manila paper and markers for the debrief

Procedure:

1. Introduce the activity, emphasizing that role-play is a tool for learning and not a test of performance. Explain that the scenarios are simplified representations of real-life situations in Mindanao and that the goal is to practice using the tools of **"affirming, storytelling, and asking questions"** in a live setting. Reassure the group that this is a low-stakes environment to try new skills and make mistakes.
2. Divide participants into small, mixed-faith groups of two to three people. Each person will be given a "Scenario Card" with a specific role. The cards will provide a brief character description, their perspective, their interests, and their fears.
3. Instruct the groups to begin their role-play. Circulate to observe the dynamics and provide subtle, real-time guidance if needed. Encourage participants to fully embody their roles and react as authentically as possible. The goal is to let the situation unfold naturally, allowing participants to discover for themselves which dialogue techniques are most effective.
4. After the role-play, bring the small groups together for a debrief.
5. Synthesize the key learnings from the debrief, connecting the experience back to the core principles of the training. Highlight how active listening, reframing a

"Interfaith dialogue is a must today, and the first step in establishing it is forgetting the past, ignoring polemical arguments, and giving precedence to common points, which far outnumber polemical ones."

M. Fethullah Gülen

perspective, and finding common ground are not just theoretical concepts but practical skills that can defuse tension and lead to constructive outcomes. Conclude by affirming the courage it takes to engage in this kind of practical work.

PRE-WRITTEN ROLE-PLAY SCENARIO CARDS FOR FIVE BREAKOUT GROUPS

These cards provide a framework for five different groups to engage in structured role-play activities. Each card details a distinct scenario from a Mindanao context, along with roles for a facilitator and two participants.

Group 1: The Land Dispute

- **Scenario:** A Catholic community in North Cotabato has been farming a plot of land for generations. Recently, a group of Moro settlers arrived, claiming the land belongs to their ancestral domain, citing historical documents from the pre-colonial era. Tensions are rising, with both sides refusing to back down.
- **Role 1: The Christian Farmer (Maria).** You believe the land is rightfully yours because your family has cultivated it for decades and holds legal titles. You see the Moro settlers as a threat to your livelihood and way of life.
- **Role 2: The Moro Settler (Hassan).** You believe the land is rightfully yours based on your community's oral history and ancestral claims. You feel that your people have been historically marginalized and that this land is part of a broader struggle for self-determination.
- **Role 3: The Inter-Religious Dialogue Facilitator.** Your goal is to mediate the discussion. You must help Maria and Hassan move beyond their legal and historical claims to hear each other's fears and hopes for the future.

Group 2: The School Curriculum Conflict

- **Scenario:** A local government unit (LGU) in a mixed-faith town has been developing a new peace education curriculum for elementary schools. The curriculum includes a module on the history of the Moro and Lumad peoples. A group of Protestant Christian parents complains, arguing that the curriculum is biased and undermines their faith-based values.
- **Role 1: The Protestant Parent (Pastor Daniel).** You believe the curriculum is a form of cultural indoctrination. You are concerned that it focuses too heavily on Moro history and may cause your children to question their Christian faith.
- **Role 2: The Education Officer (Mr. Aslan).** You are a Muslim and a key member of the curriculum committee. You believe the curriculum is essential for promoting historical awareness and preventing future conflict. You feel the Christian parents' concerns are rooted in prejudice.
- **Role 3: The Inter-Religious Dialogue Facilitator.** Your goal is to help Daniel and Aslan understand the importance of historical education while also addressing the parents' concerns about religious values.

"And dispute ye not with the People of the Book, except with means better (than mere disputation), unless it be with those of them who inflict wrong (and injury): But say, 'We believe in the Revelation which has come down to us and in that which came down to you; Our God and your God is one; and it is to Him we bow (in Islam).'"

Surah Al-Ankabut 29:46

Group 3: The Social Media Misunderstanding

- **Scenario:** A social media post from a Christian youth organization's page makes an offhand joke about a traditional Islamic practice. A young Muslim leader sees the post and publicly calls it out as a religious insult, leading to a heated online exchange that has now spilled over into a real-life community park.
- **Role 1: The Christian Youth Leader (Clara).** You see the post as a harmless joke that was taken out of context. You feel hurt that your intentions were misinterpreted and that a public shaming has put your organization at risk.
- **Role 2: The Muslim Youth Leader (Amina).** You feel the post was a deeply disrespectful religious insult. You believe it's important to take a strong stand against prejudice, especially in a public forum where many young Muslims are vulnerable.
- **Role 3: The Inter-Religious Dialogue Facilitator.** Your goal is to de-escalate the tension. You must help Clara and Amina find a way to communicate directly, apologize for the hurt, and find a path toward forgiveness and mutual understanding.

Group 4: The Workplace Miscommunication

- **Scenario:** A Lumad employee, named Bae, is a skilled weaver in a Christian-owned crafts shop. She has been absent from work on several occasions without a clear explanation. Her Christian supervisor, Mr. Lopez, is frustrated by the absences and threatens to terminate her employment, unaware that Bae has been attending to sacred rituals at her ancestral land.
- **Role 1: The Christian Supervisor (Mr. Lopez).** You are frustrated because Bae's absences are affecting production targets and team morale. You see her actions as unprofessional and a sign of disrespect for the workplace.
- **Role 2: The Lumad Employee (Bae).** You have a deep spiritual and cultural connection to your ancestral land. Your attendance at the rituals is non-negotiable and essential for your well-being. You feel that Mr. Lopez does not understand the importance of your sacred duties.
- **Role 3: The Inter-Religious Dialogue Facilitator.** Your goal is to bridge the communication gap. You must help Mr. Lopez understand the cultural and spiritual significance of Bae's absences and help Bae find a way to communicate her needs more clearly in the future.

Group 5: The Sacred Site Conflict

- **Scenario:** A Catholic diocese is planning to build a new church on a hillside that is considered a sacred burial ground by the local Lumad community. The diocese has obtained legal permits but has not consulted with the Lumad elders, who are now protesting the construction.
- **Role 1: The Catholic Priest (Father Gabriel).** You believe the church is essential for the spiritual needs of your congregation. You see the legal permits as a validation of the project and are frustrated by the protests, which you view as an obstacle to God's work.
- **Role 2: The Lumad Elder (Datu Lakay).** You are a spiritual leader and the guardian of your community's traditions. You believe the hillside is sacred and should not be disturbed. You feel that the diocese's actions are a profound act of disrespect and a violation of your ancestral rights.
- **Role 3: The Inter-Religious Dialogue Facilitator.** Your goal is to mediate the discussion. You must help the priest see the deep spiritual significance of the land to the Lumad and help the Datu understand the needs of the Catholic congregation. You must facilitate a discussion that prioritizes mutual respect and finds a solution that honors both spiritual traditions.

ACTIVITY 13: MY SACRED SPACE

This activity is designed to help participants contextualize faith in the physical world and deepen understanding of religious practices by sharing a sacred space or object from their tradition. It is a powerful way to move beyond abstract beliefs and connect with the tangible expressions of faith in the daily lives of others.

Objective: To provide participants with an opportunity to share a tangible aspect of their faith—a sacred space or object—in order to deepen understanding of religious practices and build a more holistic, human-centered appreciation for diverse traditions.

Materials:

- A projector or large monitor to display photos (if available)
- A whiteboard or manila paper to capture emerging themes or keywords
- A camera or phone for participants who wish to take photos during the activity
- Markers

Procedure⁵¹⁵²⁵³:

1. Introduce the activity by emphasizing the link between faith and the physical world. Explain that sacred spaces and objects are not just structures or items but are often imbued with deep personal and communal meaning. Encourage participants to share a photo or simply describe a space or object that is sacred to them.
2. Invite participants to take turns sharing. Provide guiding prompts to help them articulate the significance of their chosen space or object. Questions can include:
 - What is this space or object and what does it look like?
 - What is its historical or personal significance?
 - What feelings or memories does it evoke for you?
 - How does this space or object connect you to your faith or community?
3. Encourage the group to practice respectful, active listening. After each person shares, allow for one or two clarifying questions from the group. Remind them that the purpose is to understand, not to challenge or compare.
4. After the sharing session, the facilitator will lead a brief debrief. Ask the group to reflect on the common themes that emerged. Was it the feeling of peace? The sense of community? The connection to ancestors? Capture these shared themes on the manila paper, highlighting that while the outward expressions of faith may differ, the human experiences and feelings they evoke are often similar.

Note to the Facilitator: This activity can be adapted depending on the time available and the size of the group. If the group is large, consider breaking into smaller clusters. If a participant does not have a photo, encourage them to share a descriptive story from their memory. The focus is on the story and the meaning behind the sacred space, not the image itself.

⁵¹ Sharing Sacred Spaces. (2020, May 13). *About*.

⁵² Cambridge Interfaith Programme. (2021, March 20). *Shared Sacred*.

⁵³ The Interfaith Observer. (2018, July 3). *Sacred Storytelling*.

ACTIVITY 14: DAY-2 REFLECTION AND CLOSING

This activity is designed to provide a comprehensive review of the day's learning, reinforce key takeaways, and set a clear, motivating direction for the training's final phase. It encourages individual reflection and bridges the gap between the day's conceptual work and the practical application to come.

Objective: To encourage individual reflection on the day's learning, synthesize the key themes and "aha" moments, and foster a sense of shared purpose as the group prepares for the next day of the training.

Materials:

- Large manila papers or a whiteboard
- Colorful markers
- Metacards (two per participant, in different colors)
- Masking tape

Procedure:

1. Distribute two metacards to each participant. Instruct them to take a moment of quiet reflection on the entire day's training. On the first card, they should write down one key takeaway or an "aha" moment that stood out to them. On the second card, they should write down one concrete, actionable step they will commit to applying to their daily interactions or personal understanding of others' faiths.
2. Ask participants to form small groups and share their key takeaways and commitments. This allows for a more intimate exchange and reinforces the day's learning in a less intimidating setting.
3. Invite volunteers to share their takeaways and commitments with the large group. The facilitator will capture these on a manila paper, clustering similar ideas. This process creates a visual record of the group's collective learning and dedication to applying the principles of dialogue.
4. Walk the participants through a brief, high-level recap of the day's journey, connecting the activities to the core themes. The recap will highlight how the day progressed from building relational trust (dialogue of the heart) to applying intellectual understanding (dialogue of the head).
5. Briefly set the stage for the next day by outlining what's to come, building anticipation and ensuring participants leave with a sense of purpose and a clear path forward. The day concludes with a final thank you to all participants for their active engagement and commitment.

CHAPTER 3: BUILDING A CULTURE OF INTERFAITH DIALOGUE

This final chapter focuses on the "Dialogue of the Hands" by translating empathy into tangible, collaborative action. We conclude the intellectual journey by finding common theological ground before moving into practical action planning for community projects. The ultimate goal is to equip participants with the strategies needed to sustain momentum and network-building long after the module is complete.

SESSION 6: DISCOVERING UNITY IN BELIEFS

This session marks a pivotal shift by moving from discussing differences to identifying profound theological unity. Participants collaboratively map shared concepts, such as prophets, angels, and eschatological beliefs, across the three faith traditions. The objective is to build a powerful consensus that their faiths are unified by a core moral and ethical foundation.

ACTIVITY 15: FINDING COMMON GROUND

This activity is designed to help participants discover the core beliefs and concepts that unite them across different faith traditions. By collaboratively identifying and articulating shared theological commonalities, the group will see how their faiths, while distinct, share a common foundation of values, prophets, and ultimate realities.

Objective: To guide participants in identifying and articulating core beliefs and concepts shared across their diverse faith traditions, thereby building a foundational understanding of their common theological heritage and providing a platform for respectful dialogue.

Materials:

- One large sheet of butcher paper or a whiteboard.
- Colorful markers
- Small metacards
- A pre-drawn mind map with the three faith traditions as branches from a central circle labeled "Our Shared Beliefs"
- PowerPoint Presentation "A Tapestry of Shared Beliefs"

Procedure:

1. Introduce the activity by acknowledging that while Day 1 focused on differences, Day 3 will focus on shared foundations. Explain that this session will seek to find common ground not just in values, but in core theological concepts. draw a central circle on the main sheet of paper labeled "Our Shared Beliefs" with three branches for Islam, Roman Catholicism, and Protestantism⁵⁴⁵⁵⁵⁶.
2. Ask each participant to take a few metacards and write down one core belief or concept that is central to their faith. Encourage them to think of concrete theological ideas, such as:
 - **Prophets:** Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus (Isa), and other revered figures.
 - **Spiritual Beings:** Angels, Satan (Iblis), or other spiritual entities.

⁵⁴ Islamic Spain. (2019). *The Abrahamic Faiths: God, Prophets, and Revelations Over Time*.

⁵⁵ Interfaith America. (2025, July 28). *Shared Values Facilitation Guide*.

⁵⁶ Islamic Spain. (2020, November 30). *God and Prophets*.

- **Moral Concepts:** Sin, repentance, doing good, or forgiveness.
 - **Ultimate Realities:** The Day of Judgment, heaven, hell, or eternal life.
3. Invite participants from each faith tradition to share their core beliefs. The facilitator will group these concepts on the large paper, connecting them to their respective faith branches and, crucially, to the central "Our Shared Beliefs" circle where they overlap. As participants share, the facilitator can guide the discussion with questions like:
 - "You mentioned the Day of Judgment. What is your faith's understanding of that concept?"
 - "Does anyone else have a similar belief in their tradition? How is it similar or different?"
 - "How does the shared belief in the prophets or angels influence the way you view the world?"
 4. Once all the metacards are in place, the facilitator will connect the clusters of words with the central theme, clearly demonstrating how shared beliefs form a web of commonality across the different traditions. The facilitator can also use different colors or symbols to highlight the unique aspects of each faith.
 5. Present the Lecturette 4: "A Tapestry of Shared Beliefs."
 6. Close the activity by affirming the powerful realization that, despite historical or theological differences, the group is unified by a shared theological and ethical foundation. Reiterate that this common ground will be the starting point for addressing more complex topics in the future.

"When we meet another person in interfaith dialogue, we know for sure we are encountering someone who is clearly and unambiguously other than who we are. This encounter can produce either recognition or estrangement. In the happy event of mutual recognition and identification, the meeting in dialogue brings forth both the acceptance of the other and the recognition that this acceptance is integral to the recognition of the otherness within the self."

Dr. M. Darrol Bryant & Dr. Frank Flinn

LECTURETTE 4: A TAPESTRY OF SHARED BELIEFS

This lecturette is a topic synthesis following the "Finding Common Ground" activity. It's designed to formalize the learning from that session, which focused on the theological and practical commonalities of the major Christian denominations and Islam⁵⁷. This activity reveals that despite theological differences, these faiths are unified by a profound set of shared beliefs and practices.

Christianity: A Unified Foundation

Despite historical divisions, major Christian denominations like Roman Catholicism, Protestantism, and Orthodox Christianity share a profound theological foundation⁵⁸. This unity is rooted in their core doctrinal beliefs and practices.

Core Doctrinal Beliefs⁵⁹

- **The Trinity and God's Nature:** All Christian traditions universally affirm the Nicene Creed's declaration of one God in three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
- **Jesus Christ's Divine and Human Nature:** Christians universally believe that Jesus is both fully God and fully human, conceived by the Virgin Mary, crucified, and resurrected on the third day. The Resurrection is considered the central event of the Christian faith and the basis for salvation.
- **Salvation Through Christ:** While they may differ on the exact mechanics of salvation—Catholics emphasize grace through sacraments, Protestants stress faith alone, and Orthodox focus on theosis—all denominations agree that salvation is found solely through Jesus Christ's atoning work.
- **Scripture and Revelation:** All Christian traditions view the Bible as divinely inspired and authoritative. They share the practice of reading Scripture during worship and personal devotion.
- **Eschatological Beliefs:** Christians universally believe in Jesus' second coming, the final judgment, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal life.

Core Practices and Observances

- **Sacraments:** All Christians practice **baptism**, which serves as an initiation into the Christian community, and **communion**, which commemorates Christ's last supper.
- **Liturgical Calendar:** All denominations observe the same major festivals, including **Christmas** and **Easter**, and follow the same liturgical seasons of Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter.
- **Corporate Worship:** Sunday worship services universally include prayer, Scripture reading, singing of hymns, and the proclamation of the Gospel.

⁵⁷ Islamic Spain. (2020, November 30). *Beliefs and Common Stories*.

⁵⁸ Church of England. (2017, October 31). *The Apostles' Creed*.

⁵⁹ Britannica. (2025, September 17). *Nicene Creed | Christianity, History, Councils, & Text*.

Christianity and Islam: Shared Abrahamic Roots

As Abrahamic faiths, Christianity and Islam share remarkable theological and practical commonalities that often surprise adherents of both traditions⁶⁰.

Theological Commonalities

- **Monotheism:** Both religions worship one God and reject polytheism. They believe that all humans are children of God and that faith in the one true God is fundamental to salvation.
- **Shared Prophetic Tradition:** Islam and Christianity revere the same prophets, including Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, and John the Baptist, with Abraham being particularly honored as the father of faith in both traditions.
- **Jesus Christ's Significance:** Both faiths regard Jesus as the Messiah who performed miracles and was born of the Virgin Mary, and both believe he will return at the end times. However, Muslims do not believe in his divine nature.
- **Eschatological Beliefs:** Christians and Muslims share beliefs about Satan's reality and evil influence, the Day of Judgment, a literal heaven and hell, and Jesus's role in end-time events.

Shared Practices and Values

- **Prayer and Fasting:** Both religions mandate regular prayer as fundamental worship, and both practice ritual fasting followed by joyful feasting.
- **Charitable Giving:** Both faiths mandate care for the poor through systematic giving, such as Islamic **zakat** and Christian almsgiving.
- **Community Worship:** Both religions emphasize congregational worship, Muslims on Friday and Christians on Sunday, which include scripture reading and prayer.
- **Ethical and Social Values:** Both faiths emphasize God's mercy and call believers to practice compassion, justice, and care for the vulnerable. They also both regard family as foundational to society and teach similar ethical principles, including honesty and hospitality to strangers.

These extensive commonalities demonstrate that religious differences often overshadow the substantial common ground that exists between believers across denominational and interfaith boundaries. The 66 documented commonalities between these traditions reveal far more unity than division, providing a strong foundation for mutual understanding and collaboration in addressing human challenges.

⁶⁰ Ismaili Gnosis. (2015, December 8). *Judaism, Christianity & Islam: Forgotten Shared Beliefs of the Abrahamic Faiths*.

SESSION 7: ACTION PLANNING

This session introduces the critical concept of "**Dialogue of the Hands**" by moving the discussion to concrete, joint action. Mixed-faith groups brainstorm a community project designed to address a shared problem (e.g., environment, social cohesion). The focus is on strategically utilizing the shared values identified in the previous session to co-design the plan.

ACTIVITY 16: THE DIALOGUE OF THE HANDS⁶¹

This activity is designed to move participants from dialogue to action. By introducing the concept of "dialogue of the hands," participants will learn that building peace is a collaborative, ongoing process that is best achieved through concrete, community-based projects that address shared societal challenges in Mindanao.

Objective: To introduce the concept of "dialogue of the hands" by enabling mixed-faith groups to collaboratively develop a preliminary action plan for a community-based project. This activity translates the principles of dialogue into tangible actions that address shared challenges in Mindanao, such as social cohesion or environmental preservation.

Materials:

- A whiteboard or manila papers and markers.
- Large sheets of butcher paper.
- Metacards.
- A "Project Idea" worksheet for each group.

Procedure:

1. Introduces the activity by explaining that the final stage of dialogue is not just about talking or understanding, but about acting together. Explain that "dialogue of the hands" is the practical application of the empathy and understanding they've built over the last two days. It is about building peace side-by-side, through collaborative action.
2. Divide participants into mixed-faith groups. Distribute a "Project Idea" worksheet to each group with a central theme, such as environmental preservation, social cohesion, or peace education. Instruct the groups to brainstorm a specific, achievable project that addresses this theme. Remind them to think about projects that can be done with limited resources and that rely on the strengths and traditions of all faith communities involved.
3. Once the groups have a project idea, they will work together to develop a preliminary action plan. They should outline the following on their butcher paper:
 - **Project Title:** A simple, inspiring name for their project.
 - **Problem Statement:** A brief, one-sentence description of the problem the project will solve.
 - **Project Goal:** The desired outcome or impact of the project.
 - **Key Activities:** A list of three to five concrete steps they will take to implement the project.
 - **Shared Values:** A list of the shared values (e.g., compassion, justice, unity) from Day 3 that will guide their project.

⁶¹ Abu-Nimer, M. (2001). *Framework for nonviolence and peacebuilding in Islam*. Journal of Law and Religion, 15(1/2), 217-265.

4. Each group will briefly present their project idea and their action plan to the whole group. The facilitator will capture the most promising ideas and themes on the main whiteboard, creating a collective vision of what "dialogue of the hands" can look like in Mindanao.
5. The facilitator will close the activity by affirming the powerful realization that their shared values and newfound understanding can be translated into tangible action for peace and development in their communities.

Group Project Design Template

Project Component	Instructions for Your Team
Project Title	Create a simple, powerful, and inspiring name for your collaborative project.
Problem Statement	Describe the single, specific, shared problem your project will solve (e.g., "Lack of safe, neutral spaces for youth" or "Environmental degradation along a shared riverbank").
Project Goal	State the desired positive outcome or impact of the project in one clear sentence. What will be different when you succeed?
Target Group & Faith Mix	Who are the primary beneficiaries, and what are the two main faith groups that must work together?
Shared Values	(CRITICAL STEP) List 3-5 of the core moral/ethical values that your respective faiths share (e.g., Compassion, Forgiveness, Justice, Unity, Care for Creation). These values must guide your action plan.

"But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you."

Matthew 5:44

SESSION 8: SUSTAINING THE PATH FORWARD

This forward-looking session ensures the momentum and relationships built during the module translate into long-term impact. The focus is on providing participants with practical tools for network building, identifying resources, and understanding the role of ongoing evaluation. This creates a sustainable path for post-module interfaith cooperation.

ACTIVITY 17: PRESENTING THE PATH FORWARD

This activity is designed to help groups share their collaborative action plans, reinforcing a sense of shared ownership and highlighting the concrete potential of interfaith cooperation. By presenting their project plans, participants will see how their newfound understanding can be translated into tangible, positive change in their communities.

Objective: To provide a platform for each mixed-faith group to present their community project plan, thereby fostering a sense of shared ownership, celebrating the collaborative process, and highlighting the potential for sustained interfaith cooperation in the region.

Materials:

- Large manila papers or butcher paper with the groups' action plans
- Markers
- A projector or monitor for presentations (if groups have a digital format)
- A small bell or timekeeping device

Procedure:

1. Introduce the final activity of the training. They will emphasize that this is a moment to celebrate the journey from dialogue to action. The focus is not on perfect plans, but on the potential for collaboration that the groups represent. Set a time limit for each presentation (e.g., 3-5 minutes) to ensure all groups have a chance to share.
2. Each action group will present their community project plan. They should briefly describe:
 - The **problem** they identified.
 - The **project idea** they developed.
 - The **shared values** that guided their collaboration.
 - The **key activities** they plan to undertake.
 - Encourage groups to speak from the heart.
3. After each presentation, the facilitator will open the floor for a brief question-and-answer session (1-2 minutes).
4. After all groups have presented, guide a final collective reflection. Questions can include:
 - "What was a recurring theme you noticed across the different projects?"
 - "What project stood out to you and why?"

"Let there be no compulsion in religion. Truth stands out clear from error; whoever rejects evil and believes in God hath grasped the most trustworthy hand-hold that never breaks."

Surah Al-Baqarah 2:256

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- "How did the process of collaboration change your perspective on what is possible in Mindanao?"
5. Close the session by affirming the powerful realization that their shared values and newfound understanding can be translated into tangible action for peace and development in their communities. Take a moment to thank all participants for their active engagement and commitment.

ACTIVITY 18: SUSTAINING PEACE BEYOND THE MODULE

This activity is designed to help participants translate the momentum and relationships built during the training into long-term, sustainable peacebuilding efforts. It bridges the gap from the theoretical and practical work of the past three days to the continued work of peacebuilding in their communities.

Objective: To equip participants with the knowledge and tools to sustain the relationships and momentum built during the training, covering topics such as creating local interfaith networks, identifying resources, and understanding the importance of ongoing evaluation for continued learning and impact.

Materials:

- Large manila papers or a whiteboard
- Markers
- Handout with a list of local and national peacebuilding organizations in the Philippines
- Handout with a high-level overview of a simple monitoring and evaluation framework for community projects

Procedure:

1. Introduce the activity by emphasizing that this training is not the end of the journey, but the beginning. Acknowledge the courage and trust that have been built and frame this session as a critical step in turning a momentary experience into a lasting force for change.
2. Lead a discussion on how to maintain the relationships formed during the training. Brainstorm with the group practical ways to stay connected. Highlight the importance of shared networks for mutual support and collaboration.
3. Introduce participants to various resources available for their future projects. This includes a discussion on:
 - **Organizational Support:** Introduce local and national organizations that can provide technical support, funding, or mentorship.
 - **Skills-Based Resources:** Point to online courses, toolkits, and guides that can help them develop their skills in areas like project management or proposal writing.
 - **Community Resources:** Remind them that some of the best resources are already within their communities, such as local leaders, elders, and youth groups.
4. Introduce the core principles of evaluation in the context of peacebuilding. Emphasize that evaluating a project is not about finding blame, but about learning. Explain that ongoing evaluation is a way to ensure that their projects are adaptable and effective. This will include a brief discussion on how to:
 - **Listen to Feedback:** The importance of creating channels for community members to provide feedback.

- **Measure Success:** Simple ways to measure the impact of their projects, even if it's just through anecdotal stories or photo documentation.
 - **Adapt and Learn:** The importance of being flexible and willing to adjust their plans based on what they learn from their evaluations.
5. Close the session by affirming the participants' commitment to being agents of peace. Reiterate that peacebuilding is a long-term endeavor that requires patience, humility, and ongoing effort. End the session by asking everyone to make a final personal commitment to one concrete action they will take when they return to their communities.

"The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt; I am the Lord your God."

Leviticus 19:34

SESSION 9: COMMITMENT, SYNTHESIS, AND CLOSING

This final session formalizes the learning journey and the participants' commitments to peace. The module concludes with a simple, dignified Closing Program that celebrates the commitment to bridging the divide.

ACTIVITY 19: CLOSING PROGRAM

This activity concludes the three-day training module with a final reflection and a simple ceremony. It is designed to honor the diversity of the group while celebrating the new friendships and the collective commitment to peace and dialogue.

Objective: To provide a comprehensive review of the entire training, reinforce key learning points, and set a clear, motivating direction for the participants as they return to their communities. It aims to create a sense of closure and celebrate the journey from learning to commitment.

Materials:

- Certificates of participation or completion (one for each participant).
- A copy of the three-day training agenda.
- A large manila paper with the "**Our Shared Values**" and "**Our Shared Beliefs**" mind maps.
- A small bowl of water and a plant.

Procedure

1. A host from the organizing agency will take the lead. The facilitator will invite three to four participants to share a brief testimony about their experience and their key learning from the three-day training. This reinforces a sense of shared community and allows participants to hear from their peers about the impact of the module.
2. A ranking official from the organizing agency is invited to give a closing message. The official will congratulate the participants and reinforce the importance of applying their new knowledge in their communities. The official and the facilitator will then distribute the certificates of participation or completion to each participant, acknowledging their commitment and hard work.
3. The facilitator will lead a brief, non-denominational ceremony to symbolize the group's commitment to peace. Participants can be invited to stand in a circle. The facilitator can light a candle or have a small bowl of water and a plant at the center. The facilitator will explain that the light or the water represents the shared human and spiritual values that connect them. Each person can be invited to share a single word of commitment (e.g., "peace," "justice," "dialogue") before the group is officially closed.
4. The facilitator will ask for a volunteer from the participants to lead a closing prayer. This honors the diversity of faiths and beliefs within the group and closes the ceremony with a final moment of shared reflection.
5. The facilitator can briefly mention that this is the first of a four-stage training series, building anticipation for the next phase. This ensures participants leave with a sense of purpose and a clear path forward. The training officially ends with a final thank you from the facilitators to all participants for their active engagement and commitment.

"Indeed, those who believe and the Jews and the Sabians and the Christians—whoever truly believes in Allah and the Last Day and does good, there will be no fear for them, nor will they grieve."

Surah Al-Ma'ida 5:69

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ABOUT THE MODULE DEVELOPER



Ahmed Harris R. Pangcoga is an international development professional with over 23 years of experience in program management, research, and capacity development. He serves as the founder and Executive Director of Transforming Fragilities, Inc. (TFI), and, from March 2021 to March 2025, he was Country Director for Equal Access International (EAI) in the Philippines.

Pangcoga has contributed to numerous peacebuilding and humanitarian initiatives through roles in leading organizations such as Transforming Fragilities, Inc., Equal Access International, and the United Nations. His expertise lies in designing and managing programs focused on conflict sensitivity, civil society engagement, crisis response, and preventing violent extremism, impacting thousands across conflict-affected areas.

Beyond field-based peacebuilding, Pangcoga is recognized for his prolific work as a module writer and lead trainer in peace and development capability building. He has authored more than 20 comprehensive training modules and facilitated over 300 workshops covering peace education, community resilience, and gender empowerment, working closely with government agencies, civil society, and international partners. His evidence-based, culturally grounded training materials have been instrumental in mainstreaming peacebuilding frameworks within local institutions and grassroots networks. His legacy as a trainer and thought leader is further strengthened by his research contributions and his active mentoring of emerging peacebuilders.

Mr. Pangcoga has authored and co-authored numerous research reports, policy briefs, and articles on topics including child marriage, peacebuilding, and women's empowerment. He frequently applies his expertise by developing and facilitating peace-based trainings and workshops for government and non-government entities in the Mindanao. This training module is a product of that extensive field and research experience, designed to provide practical, foundational interfaith dialogue-ing skills to grassroots peacebuilders working to advance sustainable peace and development in Mindanao.