As populations change, particularly in urban centers, there is a struggle to honor religious and ethnic diversity while creating a united sense of community.
AS POPULATIONS CHANGE, PARTICULARLY IN URBAN CENTERS, THERE IS A STRUGGLE TO HONOR RELIGIOUS AND ETHNIC DIVERSITY WHILE CREATING A UNITED SENSE OF COMMUNITY.
The Kenan Institute for Ethics is an interdisciplinary “think and do” tank committed to understanding and addressing the relationship between religions and the environment. As an international group of scholars and practitioners, one of the best ways to forge these relationships and build a common life is to create opportunities for shared, inter-faith action. Religious groups collaborating together can be helpful mediators and advocates for individual rights bearers. The third is commodification, as just another cultural group in need of commodification.

The solution comes through forging meaningful interaction. A prominent proposal is that religious coexistence is achieved through dialogue and cohesion—unity through emphasizing uniformity. Yet in order to have a real conversation, there needs to be respect for differences. Meaningful encounter does not mean crossing borders, not denying them, it means allowing for conflicts and conciliation. One of the best ways to forge these relationships and build a common life is to create opportunities for shared, inter-faith action that moves beyond humanitarianism and politics. Faith-based organizations are increasingly jostled together.

There are three dangers to avoid in creating a genuinely plural and multi-faith public sphere. The first is communalism, as just another cultural group in need of commodification:

QUESTION
How do we build a common life in places where religious groups and people of no faith co-exist?

Answer
Building a common life between different faith groups and people of no faith without demanding everyone abandon what they cherish about their way of life is a challenging prospect. It is particularly acute in urban contexts where state and market pressures are most intense. Another dimension of the problem is that different religious offers competing truths and forms of life that as a result of globalization and migration are increasingly jostled together.

There are three dangers to avoid in creating a genuinely plural and multi-faith public sphere. The first is communalism, as just another cultural group in need of commodification: the re-construction of beliefs and practices as the re-construction of beliefs and practices as the re-construction of beliefs and practices as the re-construction of beliefs and practices as the re-construction of beliefs and practices as the re-construction of beliefs and practices as the re-construction of beliefs and practices as the re-construction of beliefs and practices as the re-construction of beliefs and practices as the re-construction of beliefs and practices as the re-construction of beliefs and practices as the re-construction of beliefs and practices as the re-construction of beliefs and practices as the re-construction of beliefs and

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Luke Bretherton brings a unique perspective to religion in American public life. A Londoner born and raised, he spent many years working with faith-based organizations and grassroots democratic groups in Europe during a period when public authorities simultaneously sought to collaborate more with religious groups for purposes of welfare delivery and saw religious groups as a security threat in the wake of 9/11. He has also achieved the UK government on strengthening civil society and was involved in initiating the “Blue” debating series in the Labour Party. His most recent book Christianity and Contemplative Politics won the 2013 Michael Ramsey Prize for Theological Writing.

Bretherton is committed to enlisting and telling the stories of the inter-relationship between a democratic politics of the common good and religious beliefs and practices. During the 2010 General Election, he was active with London Citizens, which organized an initiative including the involvement of diverse religious groups in tackling issues as wide-ranging as resurrective justice and urban housing.
QUESTION
How do we build a common life in places where there is a high degree of religious and cultural diversity?

ANSWER
Building a common life between different faith groups and people of no faith without demanding everyone abandon what they cherish about their way of life is a challenging prospect. It is particularly acute in urban contexts where state and market pressures are most intense. Another dimension of the problem is that different religions offer competing truths and forms of life that as a result of globalization and migration are increasingly jostled together.

There are three dangers to avoid in creating a genuinely plural and multi-faith public sphere.

1. The re-construction of beliefs and practices as a civic practice. Its membership is made up of churches, mosques, synagogues, schools and universities. Religious groups collaborating together can be helpful mediators and advocates for individuals when negotiating for better governance and the just and generous distribution of resources. Recent examples of the kind of joint civic action in the UK include broad-based community organizing, the need for collaborative governance that involves multiple stakeholders and sources of wisdom in addressing complex issues. Examples of this kind of initiative include the involvement of diverse religious groups in tackling issues as wide-ranging as restorative justice and urban housing.

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Luke Bretherton is a Professor of Theological Ethics at Duke Divinity School. He is a Senior Fellow, Kenan Institute for Ethics. Bretherton came to Duke last July from King’s College London. His work there on the Faith and Public Policy Forum, a non-partisan endeavor aimed at bridging scholarship and public debate on issues relating to religion, citizenship, and politics, allowed him to jump immediately into a leadership role in Duke’s new Religions and Public Life initiative, a joint project of the Kenan Institute for Ethics, Duke Divinity School, and Trinity College of Arts & Sciences. In the spring, the initiative brought an international group of scholars and practitioners to campus to engage the university and local community on issues at the intersection of faith and politics, such as global health, poverty, and development. Looking forward, there are new projects in planning that explore the relationship between religions and the environment and religions and international development work. As Bretherton’s commitment to being a “think and do” tank, these initiatives combine public scholarship with constructive engagement with key stakeholders.
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Bretherton is committed to enhancing and telling the stories of the inter-relationship between a democratic politics and common good and religious beliefs and practices. During the 2010 General Election, he was active with London Citizens, which organized a “listening campaign,” in which the concerns of thousands of Londoners were recorded and organized into a Citizens Agenda. A primary issue addressed was that of debt, uncertainty and the need to introduce a cap on interest rates. The group organized an assembly with all of the candidates for prime minister to address this agenda. Drawn from the institutions in membership, thousands participated in the assembly. The media labelled it as the “fourth debate,” but it was the only one not held in a TV studio and organized by ordinary citizens rather than managed by party officials.

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