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At a farewell interfaith gathering at the Sternberg Centre in North London, Dr. Carey said that the interfaith dimension had been a large and unexpected aspect of his ministry. 'You may have heard me say it before, but I cannot resist saying again how surprised I would have been, when I became Archbishop over eleven years ago, to know just how much of my time was going to be spent in developing understanding, friendship and co-operation between the different faiths.'

Dr. Carey also paid tribute to the distinguished contribution to interfaith relations made by Sir Sigmund Sternberg, and spoke appreciatively of their friendship and co-operation since they first met at the World Council of Churches conference at Canberra in 1991.

Dr. Carey repeated his sadness that the Church of England General Synod's debate on Christian Witness had been misinterpreted as a drive for conversion. 'What our debate affirmed was that as Christians we have a responsibility to share our faith sensitively and respectfully; the Christian message includes a gracious invitation to others to hear the words of Christ. But that is a very different thing from crusading belligerence, or any attempt to coerce others to believe what we believe.'

Dr. Carey said that the friendships that have grown between the different faith leaders had been pivotal for his work as Archbishop. 'We have learned that there is no substitute for personal contact in encounters which lead to firm friendships; no substitute for hospitality, graciously given and gratefully received; no substitute for wisdom and learning, shared amongst us; no substitute for differences honestly expressed and courteously heard. But above all, as we struggled to cope with the challenge of September 11th and all that it has meant for our different faith communities; no substitute for standing together when one of us is threatened.'

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