



**The Inter-Religious Organisation, Singapore (IRO)** was founded in 1949.

### Logo

The IRO logo is a symbol of religious harmony and understanding in Singapore. Ten religions are represented in the [IRO](#), namely Hinduism, Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Taoism, Jainism, Christianity, Islam, Sikhism and the Baha'i Faith.

The idea for an interfaith organisation grew over the course of several meetings, and the Inter-Religious Organisation of Singapore and Johor Bahru was officially inaugurated at the Victoria Memorial Hall on 18 March 1949. The event, which included the organisation's first public lecture, was attended by more than 2,000 people. Representatives of the various religions in Singapore spoke on the role that religion plays in contributing to peace.

### Organisational aims

The IRO aims to promote the spirit of friendship and cooperation among leaders and followers of different religions for the good of mankind. It also seeks to accord followers of different religions mutual respect, and provide them with assistance and protection so as to foster close cooperation within its membership for the common good of the community.

It originally represented six religions: Hinduism, Judaism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam and Sikhism. Over the years, it expanded to include Zoroastrianism, Taoism, the Bahá'í Faith and Jainism.





The IRO is registered under the Societies Act, and is a non-governmental organisation with no legal powers or authority.

### Functions of the IRO

Since its humble beginnings, IRO has worked quietly to promote peace and religious harmony in Singapore. The IRO has been involved in many local activities and events, and has played an important role in educating the Singapore public about different religions. It also organises public exhibitions and regularly offer prayers at public and national events.

This prayer is prayed at IRO meetings.

#### **Invocation**

O Lord, increase in us understanding and knowledge and set us free from the bondage of greed, hatred and ignorance, so that we may awake, arise and advance until the goal is reached, giving our bodies to work and our minds to the Lord.

May we work vigorously keeping within spiritual discipline to bring peace in our hearts. peace in our families, peace in our cities, peace in our planetary home, the world.

May we learn to master ourselves, sublimate our combative energies into creative channels, and freely offer ourselves in the service of our fellowmen, and our Lord.

Help us, O Lord, to ever strive to keep on these lines to promote peace on earth and goodwill among men.

By Thy grace, may we all prosper.

### IRO Women of Faith Wing (WOF)

The IRO Women of Faith Wing (WOF), which is made up of female members of different religions, meets monthly to deepen the understanding of the different faiths of the participants and to share different aspects of their lives according to their beliefs. The core members organise an annual event to celebrate International women's Day.

The WOF, headed by Sr Maria Lau, has also an ongoing array of fun and meaningful activities each month, including the *Walking the Path of our Culture and History* series where visits are organised to places of worship.

In addition, the WOF have organised forums and symposiums on these themes:

- Women and Prayer from the different faith perspectives.
- Drawing inspiration from Religious Saints or Religious Women from different faiths.
- Against all odds – how one's faith and belief in the goodness of people gives hope in times of suffering and difficulties in life.
- Using film followed by sharing interfaith stories as a means of reflection and dialogue.
- Sharing food that has meaning to different faiths during their religious festival celebrations.
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Celebrating the gift of Women

(17 May 2025 at the Harmony in Diversity Gallery)

### **Celebration of the International Day of Women 2024**

On the afternoon of March 9th, at the Catholic Centre in Cana, the Maria Magdalena classroom on the third floor was filled with the sounds of laughter and joy. This was not just any gathering; it was a deliberate assembly of nearly 50 individuals from diverse racial and religious backgrounds—including Catholicism, Protestantism, the Bahá'í Faith, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikh, and Taoism—who came together to celebrate International Women's Day. The session, around the theme of "happiness," featured an engaging "laughter yoga" led by an expert demonstrator and was organised by the "Women of Faith" core group (WOF), part of the Singapore Inter-Religious Organisation. The event also welcomed several male participants, highlighting its inclusive nature.

Sr Maria Lau, Chairperson of WOF and a member of the Holy Infant Jesus Order, opened the event with a heartfelt welcome. She spoke about the unique genesis of WOF, recalling her realisation of the male-dominated leadership within the Singapore Inter-Religious Organisation and her subsequent determination to ensure women also had a significant voice. This led to the establishment of WOF in 2009, a group dedicated to fostering interfaith understanding and cooperation.

The core group of WOF which comprises women from different religious faiths meets regularly, not just to share their personal stories and backgrounds but to build a deeper understanding and mutual respect across religious divides. Sr Maria celebrated the progress they've made: "After years of dedication and through individual and community encounters, we've developed mutual respect and trust, allowing us to explore our differences and share our religious experiences openly. This open dialogue and the celebration of life enriches us all."

To further this mission of cross-cultural and religious understanding, WOF organises varied activities open to the public. This year, their initiatives included visits to significant religious sites like the Catholic Church of St. Alphonsus and the Ba'alwie Mosque, alongside other culturally enriching activities such as movie screenings, retreats, seminars and walking tours. These events serve as practical platforms for dialogue and learning, drawing diverse community members into meaningful conversations about faith.

Sr Maria underscored the approach taken during these interactions: participants share from their personal perspectives without trying to represent or convert others. She detailed the four levels of dialogue within WOF: sharing personal and communal life experiences, engaging in community service, participating in joint prayers, and discussing religious doctrines with insights from various faith leaders.

The day's event was both light-hearted and profoundly connecting; it included not only "laughter yoga" but also group discussions and a quiz competition with questions drawn from the inventions and contributions of men and women that was as educational as it was entertaining. Participants left with a deeper appreciation of each other's views and a sense of collective joy.

Mahnoor, a Muslim visitor from Pakistan, expressed her appreciation for such interfaith initiatives, noting, "Every religion is like a light illuminating life, and there should be no competition but only cooperation between them." She found the atmosphere of the event akin to a supportive learning circle, where everyone could contribute and grow.

Aidil, one of the few male attendees, reflected on the experience, "The group discussions were incredibly enriching. The chance to connect on such a personal yet universal level made this one of the most relaxed and enjoyable gatherings I've participated in."

This gathering was more than a celebration; it was a purposeful convergence that strengthened bonds, broadened understanding, and deepened respect across diverse religious and cultural lines.

(Written by Agnes Toh in Chinese for the Hai Seng Pao, a Chinese Catholic newspaper for a Catholic audience-  
Translated using Google Translate and edited by Sr Maria)



*Participants at the 2024 International Women's Day*



*Women of faith group at the Buddhist Temple*



*At an IRO function*



*With ex-President Halimah*

[Interfaith Resources from Toronto ... read more](#)

## Archdiocesan Catholic Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue (ACCIRD)

This [ACCIRD](#) Council was set up to foster bonds of friendship, mutual understanding, respect and collaboration between Catholics and followers of other religious traditions through dialogue.

### What is Interreligious Dialogue?

Interreligious dialogue is a meeting of people of differing religions, in an atmosphere of freedom and openness, in order to listen to the other, to try to understand that person's religion, and hopefully to seek possibilities of collaboration. It is hoped that the other partner will reciprocate, because dialogue should be marked by a two-way and not a one-way movement. Reciprocity is in the nature of dialogue. There is give and take. Dialogue implies both receptivity and active communication.

Cardinal Francis Arinze, *Meeting Other Believers* (1997), 5.

The objective of the [Federation of Asian Bishops' Conference \(FABC\)](#) is to bring a Christian dimension to all communication activities and develop 'Social Communication' within the Asian Catholic community in order to support Christian living and the service of the Gospel.

The ACCIRD arm of the Catholic Church organises the Christmas party for members of the IRO every year.



ACCIRD hosted the Christmas party in Dec 2016 at the Cathedral of the Good Shepherd



*IROACCIRD members at the Christmas celebration at St Joseph's Church (BT) in 2019*



*IROACCIRD members at the Christmas celebration at St Joseph's Church (Victoria St) in 2023*



*Members of IRO/ACCIRD at the Christmas celebration at Holy Spirit Church in 2024*