

Central Florida Commission on Religious Freedom

Mission Statement, Philosophy and Goals



Mission Statement

The mission of the Central Florida Commission on Religious Freedom is to increase awareness and to facilitate respectful, thoughtful, candid conversation between people of diverse beliefs concerning the nature, role and importance of religious freedom in our community, state, nation and world.

Philosophy

The pursuit of truth, the search for meaning and the desire for freedom to live according to the dictates of conscience are not unique to any particular group. Rather, these are common human aspirations. One does not have to be religious to be moral and an advocate of religious freedom. Nor does one need to be non-religious to recognize that religious freedom, like all freedoms, has limitations.

We all occupy the same public space. We all want the same right both to voice and to practice our beliefs safely and securely. Thus, it is imperative that we all understand that religious freedom involves responsibilities to others as well as rights for ourselves. Religious freedom must seek the common good. It must protect the minority as well as the majority.

Such freedom operates on two major fronts: As law, the First Amendment ensures both non-establishment and the free exercise of both religion and by inference non-religion. As social norm, it fosters respect for all, including those with whom we disagree. It both entitles and obligates—because the respect and freedom we seek for ourselves must in turn be granted to others.

A highly effective and rewarding way to understand how public policies and social norms affect people of differing viewpoints is to get to know such people personally and listen as friends when they share their perspective on the issues.

Engaging in conversations about religious freedom does not require a compromise of one's faith or perspective. It simply allows for a deeper appreciation for how policies and norms can affect different groups in radically different ways. Talking about the issues helps us better understand our differences, develop empathy, and explore how we can more effectively work together through our differences.

Organizational Goals

- Advance the public's understanding of the value of religious freedom for all persons.
- Remove barriers and bring together groups with differing views on religion and religious freedom.
- Educate one another on the human impact when religious freedom is denied.
- Explore how religious freedom is differently perceived by those of differing religious perspectives.
- Provide opportunities for leaders of religious and non-religious communities to engage in one-on-one and small group dialogue about religious freedom.
- Create an annual event at which experts in First Amendment law give presentations and facilitate conversation about religious freedom, the separation of religion and government, and current high-profile religious freedom issues.
- Act as a resource to the community when issues of religious freedom arise. Provide guidance on appropriate responses to events from a broad and inclusive perspective.