



**Milwaukee
Jewish
Council**

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Position of the Milwaukee Jewish Council regarding proselytizing targeted at the Jewish community:

The Milwaukee Jewish Council calls on followers of each faith to respect those who adhere to different religions. Tolerance, harmonious relationships, and mutual respect can be the only basis for life in a world which has such great diversity in the religions of its citizens. A premise of mutual tolerance provides a context for true freedom of religion.

We oppose proselytizing efforts which are targeted at the Jewish community for many reasons, including:

1. Such efforts implicitly demean Judaism by suggesting that it is either not a legitimate faith or is not as valid a faith as that of the proselytizer and that special efforts must be made to convert its adherents.
2. Such efforts heighten fears within the Jewish community given the historical pattern tying conversion efforts to persecution of Jews such as during the early period of the Christian faith, the Inquisition and the pogroms.
3. The effect of such proselytizing efforts harms Christian-Jewish relations by adding tension to that relationship. We have strongly supported efforts to improve relations between the Jewish community and various Christian denominations. However, this dialogue and opportunity for joint action is impaired when the Jewish community feels under siege by proselytizers from some specific denominations.
4. We are offended by the misuse of Jewish traditions and symbols by these proselytizers. Such deceptive use of elements of our faith demeans and cheapens the very symbols and traditions which have inspired us throughout our three thousand year history.

While we oppose all proselytizing efforts which are targeted at the Jewish community we especially denounce the efforts of the

so-called "Jews" for Jesus, messianic "Jews," and "Hebrew" Christians. These groups engage in inherently fraudulent and misleading efforts. They claim that a person can be both Jewish and a believer in Jesus as the messiah. This is false. A person can either be Jewish or believe in Jesus as the messiah, but not both. We are offended the misuse of Jewish symbols, traditions, songs and words by these groups in their efforts to mislead others in accepting a fraudulent view of Judaism.

We call upon local synagogues and churches to enhance their efforts to be good neighbors, through direct synagogue to church contacts, organizations of area clergy, and interfaith organizations of area congregations. Such efforts, premised on mutual respect, can lead to:

- a better understanding of each other's beliefs;
- an enhanced sensitivity by Christian clergy and their congregations of why the Jewish community reacts so strongly to such targeted proselytizing programs; and
- an understanding of the Jewish viewpoint concerning the so-called "Jews" for Jesus, messianic "Jews," and "Hebrew" Christians.