

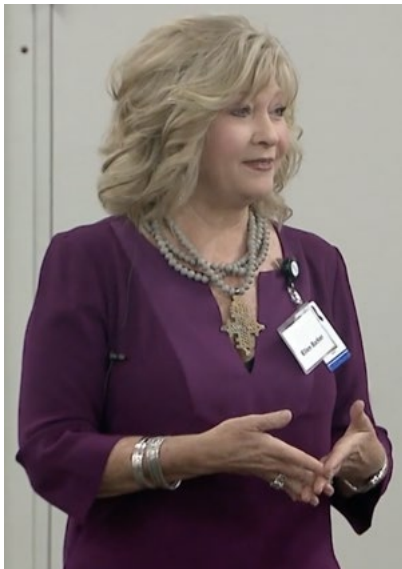
Bring Your Faith to Work

Ellen Barker, Senior Vice President & CIO, Texas Instruments

This is a lightly edited transcript of [Ellen Barker's address](#) at the Religious Diversity & Inclusion [event](#) at Texas Instruments (TI) HQ, May 6, 2019, which was cosponsored with the Religious Freedom & Business Foundation (RFBF). Transcript by RFBF research fellow [Giulia Nembrini](#).

* * *

Samantha Dwinell provided a [terrific introduction](#) to what we do here at TI when we think about diversity and inclusion. It is core of what we do to have faith-based initiatives for almost 20 years; it is really exciting when I think about it. In fact, I don't really think about it because it is part of what we do here at TI and has been for a very, very long time.



Many people in our TI workforce are faith-based. Their faith informs their work, and when their faith informs their work, they are much better at work. So, we want them to bring their whole selves into work. That's why we promote faith-based initiatives here at TI.

I have been blessed to be at this company and to celebrate and be involved with many faith-based initiatives. I have plenty of personal stories along the way. In fact, one happened last week.

Last week was the National Day of Prayer, and at TI, there were 10 different locations around the nation where people of faith gathered at our flagpoles, in front of our buildings, and in conference rooms to pray. To pray for our nation, to pray for our company, to pray for our leaders, and to pray for one another. And I can tell you how humbling it is for people to pray for you. They prayed for me in the circle that I was in. It's truly amazing to be so humbled by people praying for you.

And I can tell you that the person that led our prayer of National Day of Prayer was a 23-year-old new college grad that just started at TI. He talked about the Scriptures, and read a verse, talked about his own personal testimony, and told me one of the reasons he came to work at TI (because many people wanted him), was that he could live out his faith at this company. And he said, "This is why I came." He said "On my intern presentation, I could put that one of my hobbies was reading the Bible. I cannot do that just anywhere".

Because TI has a Code of Conduct and our Code of Conduct has Core Values which are Integrity, Innovation and Commitment. And people of faith really resonate with that. They

live out their own core values through our TI Core Values, and it's exciting when those two things align. Core Values of the company that align with the Core Values of people means that you get a stronger workforce. Period. That's what you get.

I know some of you are thinking "I can't believe you have been talking about religious diversity at TI for twenty years." There is a ton of cynicism and a ton of distrust out there when it comes to faith. Think about all the denominations just in Christian faith, and then you add to that the Jewish people, the Muslim people, the Hindu people, the Sikhs and every other faith ~~that is around~~ that makes up our global company.

And perhaps, you get to a place and say, "I cannot go there". We can distrust each other and be cynical, but I believe when we have open dialogues and we share our faith, ~~that~~ we start to trust each other more. We start to understand that maybe we are even more similar than we are different. And when we embrace those similarities, we learn from each other and we begin to give respect to each other.

Our truths are different, I get that. But there are some similarities that we can really embrace and learn from each other. I think about what I overheard in a conversation the other day at my office: one of the young college grads had just shaved his head.

And so the conversation was, "Mohammed, why did you shave your head?" He said, "I went on my pilgrimage to Mecca." So we talked about what that means, just like we are talking now and about the fact that today is the first day of Ramadan. And it's important for us to understand when we ask, "what does it mean for you"? What does it mean for you to make a pilgrimage to Mecca?

My best friend from high school is Jewish. We are still friends today and it's been many, many years. And we are still really good friends. We talk about the tenants of our faiths and the similarities and what they mean.

I'm heading to Israel for the first time in a few months and she was the first person that I called to ask what I should do and see there. I know what I want to do as a Christian, but "tell me what you would like me to do so we can come together further, as a Jewish person and a Christian person."

This is what our company allows. I also have a colleague who is a Sikh and wears a turban. He is an awesome, very faith-based person. Somebody dear in his life is going through chemotherapy, and she will lose her hair. We talked about the importance of hair in the Sikh religion, what it means and if he is worried.

So, they've decided to cut her hair before she loses it, and they are going to make a wig out of her own hair, because that's important to them. It's one of their religious tenets. These are the conversations that we have to bring us together rather than to divide us. I encourage you to talk about those conversations, to get some general understanding about other people, because when people can bring their whole selves into the workplace, they can do really extraordinary things. When they are not worried about checking a big part of themselves –

their faith at the door – and they can just bring it in, they can live boldly in it. And that is what we want for our people at TI. And that’s why these Employee Resource Groups have developed allowing us to partner together.

It’s really exciting for us to think about where we are headed.

I also think about does it divide us. There are challenges, I don’t want you to leave here saying, “It’s always been a perfect picture. Everybody of different faiths agree.” That’s not true, we don’t. Some people voice it and say, “I don’t agree with that.” In fact, in my group, we had a challenge. One of my team members had a Bible verse in their email signature – just the citation to the verse – not the quote.

We do not disallow that at TI, in fact people put inspirational quotes all the time on their signature.

Another one of the people on team said, “That verse is kind of offensive to me. I do not necessarily agree with it and I see it everywhere because I have to collaborate with this person.”

So, what do you do? That was a challenge, right?

So, my great HR Manager came up with a plan and basically talked to the people: this person is offended by this Bible verse, we don’t disallow it, what should we do? And the person just said, “Let me change the verse! It’s a big book, I’ve got plenty!”

But he understood what the concern was, and he did something about it. And this person said, “Yes, I was heard.” People want to be heard. They just want people to understand what is different and to be sensitive to that.

I encourage you to think about that as you meet today and discuss and hear many more success stories besides my own at the workplace and being able to celebrate the way we do.

I’ll tell you one other story. This is a really personal story because sometimes, as we all are very, very busy, there are plenty of things for us to do. There was an Easter praise and worship, and as a leader for the Christian Value Initiative, I felt like I needed to be there as the sponsor.

So, I started working my calendar and finally said I need to be there. What I realized is that I did not need to be there for the team, I needed to be there for me. And I was blessed beyond words in that Easter Praise and Worship by just being able to live out my faith here at work. And what was really interesting about it was that we were in a room such as this, we were playing our praise music over lunch.

There was another conference room right over here and it was a group of people working on strategy for their particular business. And as we started to amplify our singing, they were like, “Oh, wow.” They all came out, looked around like “What’s going on?” [laughter]

They saw me, they relaxed and saw that it was all good. But they came away touched by just the fact, regardless of their faith, that TI allowed this, that TI lets people sing praises. And they said "Every time we were talking about our power business you were singing about *Power in His Mighty Name*," and we were like "YES!" [laughter]

It was really, really exciting to see that you touch other people when you live out your faith. People ask about things. I think it is really important – for me personally I am touched – when I can have these conversations with people about their faith and about what makes them tick.

Today you are going to hear some great stories, and you are going to see people that have come together in their faith journey.

One of the profound ones that happened recently was that when the terrible massacre happened in the Jewish temple. There is something about people of faith that worship together, that know where their holy space is, and we all feel their pain and we all came together to support one another. There were multiple religions and probably some not faith-based people that came to support our brothers and sisters of the Jewish faith, just to show encouragement, and that we understand, and that we hate Evil as well.

So, you are going to hear those kind of success stories today from TI'ers. You may also hear some challenges as well, and I hope you embrace it. I want you to listen to those stories. I want you to take them back to your companies, your places of business, wherever you and whatever you are here for, and say "Let's choose courage over fear, let's not be fearful about this." We disagree every day on business matters. I have conflicts every day that arise and we disagree. But we then commit to do something about it. So, let's not worry about disagreement and discord and really understand where we are headed as an organization, as a company.

Because what I believe is that ordinary people can do extraordinary things when they can bring their faith into work. Thank you.