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| | Historical List of IARF Congresses | | | |
|---------------------|------------------------------------|--|--|--|
| 1901 | London (UK) | Proceedings published as Liberal Religious | | |
| | | Thought at the Beginning of the Twentieth | | |
| | | Century. | | |
| 1903 | Amsterdam (Netherlands) | Congress of Religious Free-thinkers | | |
| 1905 | Geneva (Switzerland) | Congress of Religious and Progressive | | |
| | | Christians | | |
| 1907 | Boston (USA) | Fourth International Congress of Religious | | |
| | | Liberals | | |
| 1910 | Berlin (Germany) | World Congress of Free Christianity and | | |
| | | Religious Progress | | |
| 1913 | Paris (France) | International Congress for Religious Progress – | | |
| | | Progressive Christians and Free Religious | | |
| 1000 | | Believers | | |
| 1920 | Boston (USA) | *1 | | |
| 1922 | Leiden (Netherlands) | *2 | | |
| 1927 | Prague (Czech Republic) | Seventh Congress of Free Christians and Other | | |
| 1000 | | Religious Liberals | | |
| 1930 | Arnhem (Netherlands) | 11th Laternational Commune of Delivirus | | |
| 1934 | Copenhagen (Denmark) | 11 th International Congress of Religious | | |
| 1937 | Oxford (UK) | Liberals Liberal Christianity: The World's Need | | |
| 1957 | Amsterdam (Netherlands) | | | |
| $\frac{1949}{1952}$ | Oxford (UK) | The Mission and Message of Liberal Religion Authority and Freedom in the Modern World | | |
| $\frac{1952}{1955}$ | Belfast (UK) | Liberal Religion in an Age of Anxiety | | |
| $\frac{1955}{1958}$ | University of Chicago | Today's Religions Can Meet the World's Needs | | |
| 1990 | (USA) | Today | | |
| 1961 | Davos (Switzerland) | The Unity of Mankind in Our Divided World | | |
| 1964 | The Hague (Netherlands) | A Religion for the World of Tomorrow | | |
| 1966 | London (UK) | The Spiritual Challenge of Mankind Today and | | |
| 1500 | | Our Response | | |
| 1969 | Boston (USA) | Religious Encounter with the Changing World | | |
| 1972 | Heidelberg (Germany) | Man, His Freedom and His Future | | |
| 1975 | Montréal (Canada) | Our Unity in Diversity | | |
| 1978 | Oxford (UK) | The Limits of Toleration Today | | |
| 1981 | Noordwijkerhout | The Tide of Religion | | |
| | (Netherlands) | | | |
| 1984 | Tokyo (Japan) | Religious Path to Peace: Eastern Initiative & | | |
| | | Western Response | | |
| 1987 | Stanford CA (USA) | World Religions Face the 21st Century | | |
| 1990 | Hamburg (Germany) | Religions Co-operating for the World | | |
| 1993 | Bangalore (India) | Living our Faiths, Working Together for Peace | | |
| | | and Justice | | |
| 1996 | Iksan City (Korea Rep) | Spirituality . Responsibility . Cooperation | | |
| 1999 | Vancouver (Canada) | Creating an Earth Community: A Religious | | |
| | | Imperative | | |
| 2002 | Budapest (Hungary) | Religious Freedom: Europe's Story for Today's | | |
| | | World | | |
| 2006 | Kaohsiung (Taiwan) | Dignity in Diversity | | |
| 2010 | Kochi (India) | From Conflict to Reconciliation: The Challenge | | |
| | | of the 21 st Century | | |

Message from the outgoing president, Most Rev. Mitsuo Miyake (2010-2014)



I warmly welcome all of you together here in Birmingham from all over the world attending the 34th World Congress of IARF.

Four years have passed since the last World Congress in Kochi, India, where we welcomed HH the 14th Dalai Lama as keynote speaker. In this period, the situation surrounding the world has changed dramatically.

When we saw authoritarian regimes in North Africa which had been in place for decades broken abruptly by the people's energy called "the Arab Spring", all driven by the rapid global spread of social media, we hoped that religious freedom would start being manifested much more widely.

However, instead these new digital tools have led to a situation in which our personal information (our thought and behavior) is becoming monitored and controlled indirectly by multinational corporations and state institutions, through these exciting media

that should have brought freedom to the people.

In the same way our wishful thinking was shattered quickly by endless ethnic divisiveness and sectarian conflict, rather than the "harmonious society without ideological struggle" that we had hoped would emerge after the socialist regimes in the Eastern Europe collapsed like a domino a quarter-century ago.

In this sense, the theme of this Congress – "Challenges for Religious Freedom in the digital age" – is a very important issue for us all. Will we safeguard religious freedom more effectively using the fruits brought by the digital age? Or, to the contrary, will religious freedom be suffocated by multinational corporations and the state? We are at a crucial turning point.

Today, we're gathering here from all over the world. I hope you will exchange your views about this Congress theme, and will make, or reaffirm, some long-standing friendships as we look to an ambiguous future.

Please enjoy the 34th World Congress of IARF.



Message from the president-elect, Rev. Drs. Wytske Dijkstra (2014–2018)



Dear Friends in IARF

My first experience of IARF was in the mid '80s, when a delegation of Japanese students paid a visit to the Remonstrant seminary in Leiden. I have since come to love IARF for the opportunities it provides to engage with people from different cultures in an atmosphere of freedom and friendship.

Mutual respect is fundamental to the peaceful coexistence of faith communities, yet this is an empty phrase when not put into practice during private visits, meetings, conferences and congresses. Whatever we have learnt to practice in IARF when we were young will stand us in good stead when we assume responsibilities later in our lives.

My present-day experience of IARF concerns itself chiefly with one of its other key objectives: to promote religious freedom for every faith community in all countries in the world. I feel it as a great privilege to be given the opportunity to represent IARF at government functions, in European parliament lobby groups, and at the United nations. An ever-increasing number of people will be looking to organisations like IARF to assist them with obtaining the rights which we, founding member groups of IARF, have too long taken for granted.

We must now in earnest assume the responsibility that we adopted nearly 100 years ago when our founding fathers, women among them, took a major role in creating the League of Nations in the capital city of my country, The Netherlands, and later, when the UN was being formed.

All that our ancestors have contributed to the present world, and all that we have enjoyed at IARF events, will continue to support us as we assume new responsibilities as IARF officers and active members all over the world. In the best tradition of IARF, doing so, we are conscious of being carried by the free spirit of our own religion – the spirit in which we are all united.

God's blessing be on all of us.



General information -

Orientation on campus

You can orient to the centre of the campus from the **central clock tower (see the map in the colour centrefold here)**...

From here it's a five-minute walk to/from **University Station**, which takes you to New Street Station in the central city in around ten minutes. City buses are also available nearby.

Access to our main venue, the **Avon Room** (top floor of the *University Centre building*): There is a lift beyond the ground floor eateries and grocery shop area (it's a little hard to find, but be assured it's there!).

Once on the top floor, you can have easy access (three minutes, by connecting passage) to the top floor of *Staff House building*, for our other-building venue, the **Tippet Room**.

Meals & Refreshments

Mid-morning coffee at 10.15 and 4pm **afternoon tea** is served in the Avon Lounge - the circular foyer to the Avon Room.

(Note: Both beverages are available at both times, for any nonconformists).

Lunch is also in the Avon Lounge, 12.30 to 1.30.

Internet

There is wi-fi access in both University Centre (Avon Room) and Staff House (Tippet Room).

Belfast Seminar

If you are interested in a post-event seminar happening in Belfast, please approach an event organiser.

Information and Emergency contact details

Please call (or message on WhatsApp) Robert Papini, +44 07988 498 1441.

Program

Devotional Spaces

After breakfast for a half-hour (8 to 8.30) you can choose between a **Morning Meditation** led by Sister Georgina of the Brahma Kumaris (Tippet Room), and a **Service Exposition** from a new IARF member group - a different one each morning: Shinto, Hawaiian, Bektashi Sufi. The Noticeboard will tell you where each will take place.



The main program begins at 8.45, giving you time to reach the Avon or Tippet Room.

Circle Groups

After lunch

This is an old IARF tradition whereby all participants are randomly allocated to a group of approximately ten, to encounter fellow participants and discuss issues of belief.



Your Circle Group number is written on your name badge.

The Noticeboard and signs will indicate where your group meets on Monday and Tuesday after lunch.

Visits to Faith Centres in Birmingham

Please listen for notifications and reminders from the MCs at the end of each day's main program. The coaches' pick-up point is outside the Barber Institute, at the times notified when you joined.

| Sunday morning 24 th August | | | | |
|---|---|--|--|--|
| New Testament Church of God | | | | |
| Sunday evening 24 th August | | | | |
| Option 1 | Singers Hill Synagogue | | | |
| Option 2 | Buddhist Maha Vihara | | | |
| Monday evening 25 th August | | | | |
| Option 1 | All Saints Church and Green Lane Mosque | | | |
| Option 2 | Ramgarhia Sikh Temple and Jain Ashram | | | |
| Option 3 | Sri Venkateswara (Balaji) Temple | | | |
| Tuesday evening 26 th August | | | | |
| Gurudwara Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak / | | | | |
| | Nishkam Civic Association | | | |

General Meeting

This is the quadrennial members' meeting of the association.

Congress participants who are not members of IARF will find an alternative program event available on Tuesday morning – see page .

The alternative for Wednesday is intended mostly for our young adults, but anyone with a special interest in the subject could attend as observers, with the agreement of the workshop leader. Otherwise, this early slot is your opportunity to get some shopping done in Birmingham.

Session 1

Keynote address:

Karen Armstrong, 'Religious Problems and Imperatives of Our Age'

Session 2

PLENARY 1: Animations

Prof. Kathy Matsui

Religious Values and Teachings: Promoting Nonviolent Ways of Conflict Transformation through Animation

Religious teachings offer guidance towards resolving issues non-violently in challenging moments. The present digital age makes the use of animation as teaching resource material. The presentation will display the impact of animation in learning processes. Images could be more powerful than words.

Images can be used to influence people or educate people to become active citizens who can make changes in their community or the world. The present digital age makes the use of films and animation as teaching resource material more easily and conveniently. In peace education, it is important to offer opportunities of learning that compels students to take action to change from the culture of war to the culture of peace. Peace education is education for transformation. To encourage students to take action for change, peace education courses need to offer programs that are cognitive to raise students' awareness and understanding of the issue, and affective to help students to respond and feel concerned. In other words, educational methods should offer impact that would not only touch the mind but to touch the heart as well. Animation can be used as educational resource material to touch the heart of the learners so they can, not only understand the problem, but feel it. Through this process, the problem no longer is an issue of the others but an issue of their own. From there, animation leads learners to take action, to genuinely change the world to a better place.

Keywords: Animation, Peace Education, transformation, cognitive, affective, action

Aston Walker

The talk is based around Aston Walker's journey from a suburb in Birmingham to working for a global marketing company as a systems analyst, to finally becoming an award-winning film maker and Shi'a convert working with creatives who have worked on hit Hollywood movies.

Cynthia Capey

"A lucky break and a digital dilemma"

In the spring of 1998 a SIFRE group went on a study tour to Israel. Shocked at the blinkered outlook of people we met, whether inhabitants, tourists or pilgrims, we decided to create a board game which would challenge players to grapple with their own backgrounds and agendas while taking on board the context in which they found themselves. This game was to be called "Pilgrimage".

Towards the end of the tour we visited Jericho, within Palestinian territory. At the foot of the Mountain of Temptations, I slipped and broke my ankle. After emergency treatment in Jericho and Jerusalem I eventually reached Ipswich hospital where confined to bed for several weeks and in plaster for 19 weeks I

started work on "Pilgrimage" with help from SIFRE colleagues.

My hospital experience highlighted more problems. The religious and cultural traditions of staff and patients were not considered and even their basic human needs were often ignored. We put "Pilgrimage" to one side in order to develop a training game to address these issues but the scope was soon enlarged to provide an opportunity for everybody to become sensitised to, and equipped for, the challenges of living and working in our increasingly multi-faith and multi-cultural society. Named "Diversity" this interactive training game soon made its way into the public domain. It has made a great impact on us, on our customers and on the community at large.

"Pilgrimage" is still under development. Is it appropriate to digitise these two games?

Key Terms: "Diversity" Game, inter-faith, multi-faith, multi-cultural, animation, Suffolk Inter-Faith Resource, SIFRE, "Pilgrimage" Game, personal identity, spiritual paths, cultural diversity.

Session 3

Minority rights & digital media

Dr. Violaine Hacker

The presentation deals with the notions of the common good and unity in diversity, and illustrates concrete action toward those ends via a Web Radio. This medium raises the question: What is the status of religious freedom within a national or language-specific internet? And what are the boundaries of 'education without borders'?

The Web Radio will be in French and English in order to reach a large audience, so the question arises of how to communicate worldwide while respecting the French tradition of "République indivisible and laïque" with regard to religious freedom and human rights – specifically, the distinction between the public and the private space as regards religion.

Two projects are presented as the substantive material of the radio's programming content: in France, The Common Good Forum - a "do- and think-tank", a hub whose role is to be a bridge-builder between thinkers and practitioners in local and global communities, for innovative commons-based solutions (the Radio's aim is to showcase the Forum's thinkers and practitioners working on the notion of common good in philosophy and theology, to help promote cross-cultural understanding and cooperation among local and global communities); and, in collaboration with the United Nations (UNAOC) and with 22 countries in four continents, 'Unity in Diversity – World Civil Society', a project aiming to contribute to innovative ways of integrating the UNAOC vision into the implementation framework of the post-2015 United Nations Development Agenda with a French perspective (the notion of 'Laïcité').

Caecelia van Peski

The Faith Factor: how unequal Elections disadvantage Religious Minorities

Elections represent formal decision-making processes by which a population chooses one or several individuals to hold elected status and hence, public office. Elections have been the usual mechanism by which modern representative democracy has operated since the 17th century. Through elections, positions are filled in offices in the legislature, sometimes in the executive and judiciary, and in regional and local government. The universal use of elections as a tool for selecting representatives in modern democracies is in contrast with the practice in many developing nations that are faced with a democracy that has not yet reached higher maturity. It is in these nations that often the electoral rights of national minorities - including that of religious minorities - is under threat. The presentation sheds light on the rights and

position vis-à-vis elections of members of religious minorities, more specifically, religious minorities in Iraq (Iraqi Kurdistan) and in Ukraine (Crimean Tatars).

Key terms: Advantage, Ballots, Computerized Data Collection, Conflict, Crimea, Democracy, Democratic Development, Disadvantage, Discrimination, Disenfranchisement, Elections, Electoral Cycle, Electoral Reform, Electoral System, Electronic Processing of Electoral Data, Equal Representation, Exclusion, Freedom of Expression, Freedom of Religion, Fundamental Human Rights, Human Rights, Inclusion, International Standards for Elections, Iraq, Kurds, National Minorities, Peacebuilding, Plebiscite, Politics, Referendum, Religious Minorities, Representation, Ukraine, Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Rosanna Smith

Internet as a space for false accusations and propaganda

The Bahá'í Faith, founded in Iran in the mid-19th century, is an independent world religion. Its progressive teachings include the oneness of humanity, the equality of women and men and the harmony of science and religion. Despite these peaceful teachings, the Bahá'í Community in Iran have been violently persecuted since the very beginning of the faith. After the Islamic Revolution in 1979, the persecution became government policy and Bahá'ís have since been subjected to systematic, state-sponsored and wide-ranging persecution. This presentation will explore the ways in which the internet has created a space where false accusations and propaganda can be promoted by those who oppose the Bahá'í Faith but has also provided a medium through which Bahá'ís in Iran can practice a constructive resilience and the worldwide Bahá'í community can raise awareness of the situation and garner support from prominent voices willing to call on Iran to change its treatment of the Bahá'ís.

Between extremes

Rev. George Beach

Religious Freedom and Spiritual Freedom

IARF upholds freedom of religion around the world and brings together diverse voices of liberal faith. Today this mission is severely challenged by religious fundamentalists and anti-religious secularists alike those who see their faith as superior to and incompatible with other faiths, and those who see religion itself as a source of conflict and oppression. One side sees religion as a contest for dominance, while the other seeks not "freedom of religion" but "freedom from religion."

The urgent task of IARF today is to open a way between these extremes. We can only do this if we know and proclaim what we stand for. Beyond "freedom of religion" we need to stand for the liberal way in religion—openness to and positive appreciation of the faiths and ethical concerns of others. At the heart of this "liberal way" lies what Channing and others call "spiritual freedom"—the inward capacity of people to feel, think, and act with creativity and compassion for the common good.

My experience tells me that this vision of human possibility is found in every religious tradition. If this is true for you, how so? Electronic communication media give us the means to build consensus on basic commitments of faith and action. Vigorous discussion will deepen our commitment to religious freedom itself, and we will be able to say to the world: The spiritual freedom we experience and affirm within our own faith tradition moves us to welcome, to learn from, and to enjoy the people of other faith traditions. Join us in this liberal way in religion.

Key words: religious freedom, spiritual freedom, fundamentalism, secularism, faith traditions, consensus building, the liberal way in religion

Rev. Kinga-Reka Szekely

Why can't liberal faith become a dominant culture?

I would like to focus on the moral and religious issues regarding our Unitarian spirituality. Being a liberal religious person involves being present in the everyday life. Being present in your family, but also in your wider community. We believe that God sustains life on Earth, but do we sustain that life, or rather destroy it? And do we also work hard to find religious and spiritual arguments to sustain that way of life? Are moral values transient or they can be permanently true? Is our human attitude toward life depending on given social and political circumstance? What are the disadvantages of individualism and how can we counterbalance them? Why is empathy the highest moral value?

Dr Shlomo Alon

Education for Pluralism & Religious Freedom in the Middle East

Our responsibility, as adults, is to do whatever is possible to guarantee the security of the young generations. We are responsible for their education, for their social security, for their freedom of thinking, freedom to express their opinions and their feelings, freedom to follow their patterns of life, religion and belief, to protect their human rights, and to facilitate the best possible ways to maximize their chances in the future. In our tradition, in Judaism, we are asked to maintain our responsibility towards our elderly people, our young children, our disabled, and to be accountable toward the neighbour and the other, the different.

In education, we try to build bridges between the pupils and the external and unknown world. In IARF we are looking for Religious Freedom and Interfaith Encounter between people from various backgrounds, regions, states and walks of life.

Our Congress here in Birmingham is devoted to Media and Responsibility. It is concentrating on two main sub-topics: 1-What are the limits of responsibility? 2-What are the Media Ethics? And what are the interactions among Public Opinion, Religious Freedom, Governance and the Public Sphere.

Keywords: Education; Knowing the Other; Building Bridges; Judaism; The Limits of Responsibility; Media Ethics; Accountability; Freedom of Speech; Freedom of Religion; Human Rights

Session 4

Heritage of Freedom

Jaume de Marcos Andreu

"A little light shining online": Experiences and strategies for liberal religious initiatives to become visible and relevant in the digital age

Liberal religion has often had visibility problems in traditional media and in society at large. Its nonmissionary approach has had demobilizing efforts on many of its members. The new online media raise new issues and also new opportunities for liberal religionists to explain and propagate their initiatives, particularly for small and emerging new groups. We will examine two online projects working in that direction: the Servetus Tour project, and the online presence of the Spanish-speaking Unitarians.

Kumu Glen Kila with Rev. Dr. Jonipher Kwong

Kanenuiakea: Becoming visible in the Digital Age

Abstract KILA:

Kane-nui-akea is a religion worshipped by the first settlers in the Hawaiian archipelago. Kane is the paramount god in the pantheon of Hawaiian gods and is represented in the qualities of the environment. Kane is manifested through 400,000 deities that are characterized in specific elements of nature. Key manifestations of Kane are the sun, clouds and rain which together produce life. Kane-nui-akea with Papa (Mother Earth) manages and embrace all life. In the Hawaiian perspective, human beings are metaphors of nature as it is our progenitor. Kane meaning God also means man. Through Kane and Papa, comes Kaanani-au, the epistemology of Kane-nui-akea. Kaanani-au provides a method of acquiring knowledge. It answers the question, "How do we know? It encompasses the concepts of nature to create abundance and ultimately- thrive. The concept of Kaanani-au is defined as Kaa, which means managing or rolling, Nani, which means beauty, and au, which means a current, time or the pronoun "I". Collectively, it is translated as "Managing the beauty of rolling time.

During the late 17th century, Hawaii experienced massive societal change influenced by the introduction of western concepts. In 1893, the United States illegally occupied the Hawaii and the Hawaiian language was banned in public and in schools. This resulted in further degradation of the Hawaiian culture and its religions. However, Kane-nui-akea was passed down traditionally by families who continued the traditions despite the circumstances of time.

Abstract KWONG:

Dr. George Williams was the one who helped introduce Kanenuiakea to the First Unitarian Church of Honolulu through the Social Justice Council. The partnership between these two religious communities has blossomed over the years. After a historic joint worship celebration between the First Unitarian Church of Honolulu and Kanenuiakea on January 29, 2012, the real work began. There are several challenges that indigenous people of the Hawaiian Kingdom face—namely the preservation of sacred sites (wahipana), the degree of self-rule, and the repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery. This presentation explores how social justice can be achieved through hikes, grants, but most importantly, transformative conversations. *Key Terms KWONG:* Kanenuiakea; Wahipana; Sovereignty; Doctrine of Discovery; Social Justice; Unitarian Universalist; Hula

Jim Nugent

What Worked, What Didn't, and the Digital Future

To fully participate in the digital world, religious institutions need to re-vision organizational structures and adopt new communication strategies for the digital age. Our presence in the ether is becoming more important than our physical—bricks and mortar—presence. The contents—ephemeral patterns of information—encoded in our texts, filing cabinets, and structures are important; not the physical structures themselves. The digital devices, program code, and communication networks of this "digital age" are about rich communication, in real time, with an increasingly larger percentage of the world's people.

This marketplace of ideas is crowded, competitive, and open to all. How can our organizations rewrite job descriptions, utilize e-mail and e-news, incorporate multimedia, provide for multiple platforms, engage technical partners, use Creative Commons licensing, adopt open systems, enhance institutional memory, and utilize services like Google and Wikipedia to increase communication effectiveness? How can we reinterpret, and re-purpose our past to make it relevant in the present and useful in the future?

The value of our religious organizations is contained in the texts, ideas, and concepts that we have created and the services that we provide. We need to be nimble and embrace innovation. How can we forge teams of savvy technicians, the spiritually aware, and sensitive communicators to create and sustain new patterns of religious expression in the ether?

Keywords: Creative Commons, open journal, digital job description, re-vision, Google, Wikipedia, open systems, domain, Uniform Resource Locator, URL, hosting, innovation, communication, AIDA formula (attention-interest-desire-action), North America, Dictionary of Biography, Unitarian Universalist

Building Respect: Scripture, Culture

Dr. Ali Reza Bhojani

Divine Wisdom in diversity; learning through difference

Interfaith engagement at all levels has been, and continues to be open, to concerns as to its theological purpose and value. To what extent, either consciously or unconsciously, is our engagement with 'others' rooted in a missionary or proselytizing mindset is a question that any reflective subscriber to religious or ideological commitment should be faced with. What ethic of engagement ought a committed adherent to any particular tradition bring to their engagement with diversity?

In light of such questions this paper will seek to outline a Qur'anic ethic for engagement across difference, through a fresh reading of Hujjarat:13 and its implications for understanding divine purpose in diversity. It will be argued that the observable fact of diversity and difference allows for understanding beyond the particularity of individual horizons that are necessarily limited by constraints such as time, place, gender, culture, and tradition. It will be argued that the Quran points to the purpose of diversity and difference as being a necessary means to allow for understandings that can go beyond the necessary limits of the particular. Recognition of this ought to demand a moral disposition of an 'epistemic humility' that allows for an ethic of engagement which is always open, and in fact seeks, to learn through difference. *Keywords:* Difference, Diversity, 'Divine wisdom', 'ethic of engagement', Qur'an 49:13, 'epistemic humility', 'learning through difference'.

Dr. Kishan Manocha

Advancing Religious Freedom

In a world beset by much conflict and suffering – much of it sadly perpetrated in the name of religion - freedom of religion or belief (not freedom from religion) is a foundational right. To advance it we need to tease out two main elements: political, and social or cultural. For true religious freedom to exist, individuals and communities need to work together to create the conditions in which it flourishes.

A belief in the oneness of humankind enables justice and equality. A vision of the organic wholeness of the human race, where members of the human family are fundamentally inseparable and interdependent parts of a larger creation, implies a process that takes us beyond mere tolerance to a meaningful, fuller embrace of the other.

Legal mechanisms alone cannot engender the commitment and mutual understanding required to sustain a culture of peaceful co-existence. The practice of advancing religious freedom will be a gradual and organic process that develops through dialogue between and among individuals, within communities, and at the institutional level of laws and policies. It includes change at the level of culture.

Forces of history now challenge every person of faith to identify spiritual principles within his or her own scriptures and traditions that answer the difficult questions posed by an age hungering for unity and justice in human affairs, in which each individual is accorded freedom to search for truth.

Dr. Shetha Al-Dargazelli

Happiness and Religious Freedom: the case of Muslim Women in Britain

The Muslim Woman faces many restrictions on her religious freedom which are at times imposed by the woman's own family and community (internal factor) and at times by the wider society (external factor). These restrictions detrimentally impact the woman's happiness and wellbeing.

For my recent MA degree I researched the correlation between religiosity and happiness among Muslim women in Britain. The research showed various cultural and social factors that affected the woman's level of happiness. The interviews I conducted also indicated a significant impact of religious freedom issues, such as the choice of dress code which makes Muslim women the target of abuse due to their indicative appearance.

In separate recent research I found another internal issue restricting women's religious freedom within the Muslim community which is the lack of places allocated for women in British mosques. For example, in Birmingham nearly one third of the 65 mosques do not provide a place for women and out of the 50,000 places in mosques only 17% are for women. I shall discuss this issue with evidence from Islamic literature written by Muslim scholars in the past and the present.

Key terms: Gender, Happiness and Wellbeing, Islamophobia, Mosques in Britain, Muslim Women in Britain, Religiosity, Religious Freedom.

Session 5

Proximities

Helen Zhao You

Boundaries of Education without Borders? THE TOUCH

If the Education without Borders here is confined to an idea describing the open educational resources on the Internet nowadays, which is different from that of bringing people together to meet, to share ideas and to help each other like what some NGOs have been striving to do, there must be boundaries, especially given the impossibility of transforming a screen into a warm hand, of dwelling within the same space and time with others, even though we all have been greatly benefited from the large amount of information transmitted through this invisible gate. We can read and see images; we can at the same time enjoy the scents and tastes if we would like to; but we can hardly touch another one and the space in between through the screen, where our embodied existence find itself faded in the whole picture.

Touch, having been neglected for a long time in the studies on senses, recently becomes a curious topic. Theories inspire that the engagement with works of art or other representations of all sorts of themes including the religious ones is so essential to the comprehension. Furthermore, touch, as a crucial part of religious rituals, getting palms together, kneeling, holding others' hand, and measuring the sacred space by encircling the icon, has never played a less effective role than the icon itself. The idea or virtual experience of space is not only realized through eyes, but also through our bodies. Therefore in the religious education, it is important to be present in person, with our skin and bones exposed to tangible religious environment.

Key Words: Tactile Sensation, Digitalization, Embodied Cognition, Imagination, Memory, Ritual, Spatiotemporal, Place of Worship, Pilgrimage, Buddhist Philosophy, Contemporary Buddhism, Chinese Religions, Religious Education, Individualization and Community.

Fr. Ignacio Marques

The Importance of 'The Face To Face'

One of the world's worst forms of human rights violation is the denial of religious freedom. The Pew Forum reported in 2010 that nearly 75% of the world's population lives in countries with high restrictions on religious freedom. May the cyber world and his digital media help enjoying and improving religious freedom?

The response is "yes", but actually the face-to-face is still more important. Different motivations are highlighted and explained according to the study of the Pope Francis ministry throughout cyber technologies and the authors' experience in his pastoral work with immigrants and Spanish gypsies. Religious freedom is talked about more than it is protected. At the base is the "inter-life", which includes the "inter-faith". Let us dialog: that means to be secure that the other has something good to say, to accept his point of view, his proposals. To dialog doesn't mean to renounce to your own ideas and traditions. But it means to refuse to pretend to impose them to others.

Keywords: Presence; Witness; Immigrant; African; Gipsy; Inter-life; Inter-faith; Inter-religion; Bible; Digital Age

Dr Yehuda Stolov

Holy Land Peace through Interfaith Encounter – Digital & Human Connections

Usually the quest for peace is perceived as a pursuit for a political agreement between leaderships. Reconciliation or overcoming prejudices are left for a later stage. Similarly, issues of freedom are perceived as issues related to the judicial system, which is again determined by political leaderships.

Interfaith Encounter Association (IEA) believes that non-political aspects of both the way to sustainable peace and true respect for human rights need special efforts and are the keys for their success. These efforts should include all those who are aware of the reality of different people living together and of the need to do it peacefully and respectfully, regardless of their political views.

IEA also believes that religion is not the problem of the Middle East but can and should act a major role in the solution. Therefore, IEA emphasizes in its activities interfaith dialogue and tries to include all parts of respective societies.

The most efficient way to achieve the desired transformation is not through preaching or theoretical study but through experience and direct dialogue. Therefore, the main focus is not on joint listening to learned lectures, but on direct conversations between participants in small groups, which maximize opportunity for participants to speak sincerely and freely to one another and deeply reconnect with each other. Our approach is most powerful thanks to three important qualities: (1) It invites participants, whether religious or not, to share their deeper, existentially significant, selves; (2) It helps reveal many similarities between the religions; and: (3) It enables constructive conversation on differences.

Keywords: Peace, Holy Land, interfaith encounter, interfaith dialogue, human rights, religious rights, religion, conversation, inter-communal relations, psychological transformation, overcoming prejudices.

Session 6

Interfaith Tour presentation

Ismael Medjoub & Victor Grezes

Abstract:

Between July 2013 and June 2014, five young students from different faith (christian, muslim, jew, agnostic and atheist) decided to undertake a journey for interfaith initiatives. This project was initiated by Coexister (the French interfaith youth movement) at a time when religions are more and more subject to fundamentalism and used to pursue political objectives.

During this tour they had one goal: meet people already involved in InterFaith and understand who they are and what are their best practices. After 10month around the world through 50countries, they encountered 435 interfaith initiatives that they shared along on their website and social networks. Then they went for a 2month France Tour to present their outcomes and organized more than 90 conferences and reached about 9,000 people.

They understood that InterFaith is not only an ends but really a means to build better understand and social cohesion. They now will implement all their new ideas in France through their movement and more than 25 organized "Coexister" youth groups all over France.

Keywords: InterFaith; World; Youth; Social Cohesion; Understanding; Peace; Atheist; Believers; Good Practices; Means vs End

New chapters: Kenya and Ghana

Pastor Lawrence Adera Otieno (Kenya)

Pastor David Botchway (Ghana)

Both speakers will explain the process by which faith groups in their countries have formed a chapter of IARF (the first in the African continent), and their reasons for doing so.

Session 7

Panel: Media and Responsibility

How best to articulate and report on religion and religious freedom in open and restrictive media environments

Ahsan Ahmedi, Brian Pellot, Derek McAuley, Shubranshu Choudhary, Dr Andrew Davies

Brian Pellot: Reporting between religious red lines

Around the world, traditional and online media outlets share a legacy of inadequate and incomplete coverage of religion, religious freedom and faith-based conflict. Emotive language, omission biases, stereotypical imagery and other shortcomings have been known to stoke intercommunal tensions and to reduce religious freedoms in many contexts. Coverage of sensitive religious issues is also affected by local

media's inability or unwillingness to report freely about diverse faiths. These obstacles often result in binary faith coverage that focuses too heavily on violence and tensions. With the interactive nature of often anonymous online media, journalists must also confront the challenge of moderating online conversations that include religious hate speech without unduly restricting freedom of expression. How do we move reporters' mindsets beyond easy conflict narratives, helping them to report more nuanced stories about the role faith and secularism play in conflict, government policy, culture, community identity and cohesiveness? And how do we ensure that our work and online interactions around it do not inadvertently lead to religious freedom violations and conflicts?

Ahsan Ahmedi: The state of broadcasting today is summarised by words from author Toba Beta: "News told, rumors heard, truth implied, facts buried". And of course by Mark Twain's immortal "Get your facts first, and then you can distort 'em as much as you please". But it has always been like that. Sometimes it is not what is said , but what is omitted.

In the past, before the age of the internet, we believed whatever was told to us from the national broadcasters of the countries we live in, to be the truth. During WW2, Germans believed whatever they heard on their TV to be the truth, and here in the UK we had an opposite perspective and believed that to be the truth. Both lied to some extent to convince us. What happened in Iraq and Afghanistan clearly taught us how what was omitted was sometimes more telling than what was being told, and this because on the internet we saw and we read what was being omitted painted a totally different picture. Tony Blair is now more popularly known as Tony BLiar.

What is happening to the Palestinian people likewise, has put Israel under pressure about what they are really doing. Could we have come to similar conclusions if this had happened 50 yrs ago? We would have to believed whatever the BBC and the pro-Israel government wanted us to see here in the UK. Thanks to other news and the internet, thankfully the opposition to Israeli actions has grown dramatically. As an Ahmadi Muslim myself, I can tell you that is exactly how things were in Pakistan for the Ahmadi Muslim community. For many years there, at the behest of the Muslim clerics of Pakistan, the Ahmadiyya Muslim community was subjected to much state-sponsored persecution. Mob rule and government silence was the order of the day.

But since the Lahore bombings in 2010, and this month's burning of 8 Ahmadi houses killing 4 women in Gujranwala, where the victims included a pregnant mother and her 7-year-old daughter, the Pakistani people and the news have questioned what is going on. This has happened because despite early attempts from state-run/-controlled media to give inaccurate accounts, the internet has brought forth the true accounts of how the police encouraged the attacking mob to do what it did. Thank God, there are changing times in Pakistan - slow, but nevertheless a change is beginning to take place.

Thanks to the power of the Internet, for it has taken control away from those who wish to mislead us for their own vested interests. It appears that the words of Mark Twain and of Toba Beta, alas may not now hold water, and I'm sure they will be highly satisfied to know that.

Derek McAuley: How does an individual or an organisation begin to engage with social media on issues of religious freedom? Is social media just another communication channel? How do you maintain boundaries? These are some of the questions to explore in relation to the digital age. I will highlight in particular the relationship between religious freedom and LGBT rights as they emerged in the UK during the debates on same sex marriage.

Andrew Davies: Social Media and Religious Freedom

Social media's democratisation of communication is a means of empowering the average person – giving them a platform earned by nothing other than celebrity, notoriety or controversy. Sometimes it gives incredible power for very little reason with minimal justification. This has been the case particularly with issues around religion. Many people take it upon themselves to speak for their faith; in other cases people

with no real responsibility or right to speak for their faith are taken out of context and credited with authority they don't deserve. The autonomy social media offers individuals can be disempowering to leaders, who generally haven't managed social media all that well.

With that freedom to speak comes incredible responsibility, which isn't always wisely used. The impersonality of social media makes abuse and insult easy and makes people of faith easy prey. Religious abuse has become commonplace, ranging from gentle mockery to hate speech.

But the risk of restricting freedom of expression in the field of religion in particular outweighs other risks. The freedom to offend is an important liberty, as is the freedom to be offended.

Perhaps religious leaders have a new responsibility – lead by influence rather than control. And perhaps the academy, in conjunction with religious leaders, has a responsibility to teach people to be critical readers and responsible citizens – just as relationship is the surest vaccine against prejudice, so a new digital intimacy and interdependence is the only defence against tribalist extremism (from those hostile as well as those committed to faith).

Sensitizing Networks

Rev. John Rex

Cultural Intelligence: The Key to Right Relationship

As we live in the digital age, it seems appropriate that through research initiated by IBM, we learn of the mind as a kind of computer, which is programmed with something called "culture." Scientific research of culture using modern technology began in the 1960s and 70s. Such cultural data originally became a tool of multinational corporations to increase profits: "If we can understand how other people think, we can make more money." In recent years, masses of data on world cultures have been published, and a relatively new academic discipline has emerged: "Cultural Intelligence." This is the result of the scientific analysis of key cultural dimensions and of the dynamics that exist as various different cultures interact. Clearly, culture and religion are inseparable. Both are learned, and neither can be understood without knowledge and appreciation of the other. As we strive for "Right Relationship" among the peoples and religions of the world, we must learn to recognize how wonderfully different our cultures are in how we perceive and respond to the world around us. We are not alike. We need to understand how best to relate to "the other." We need Cultural Intelligence.

Barbara Beach

Women's Work": Convocations, Digital Communication, and Action for Change

The International Women's Convocation (IWC)—founded in 2009—combats global poverty and injustice through face-to-face convocations, decision making, and digital collaboration. Its foundational principles are those of its member religious communities, including: authority of reason and toleration, the worth and diginity of each human being, and the ethical application of religion. Its tactics include gathering large groups of women who learn to participate in "the global sisters process"--used in India, Philippines, United States, and Transylvania/Romania. The process teaches participants the skills of consensus decision-making and leadership, and affirms their autonomy to select and act on projects. It establishes the foundation on which to build collaborations within a home-country and through networks of world-wide friends. Skype, Powerpoint, cell phone, and email sustain projects through effective communication and access to resources.

Keywords: Empowerment; autonomous project development; consensus decision-making; leadership; convocations; global sisters process; inter-religious grounding; community capacity building; development through collaboration; Philippines; NE India; United States; Transylvania/Romania.

Pejman Khojasteh

How to express conflicts in belief in the digital age

The talk aims to examine the circumstances where free expression of one group's respective belief conflicts with another group's belief. In this context belief is inclusive of religion, faith and spiritualty. The recommended approach to conflicts in belief goes beyond creating tolerance and understanding, and is aimed at creating respect and trust between instigator and recipient group of such expression. In the digital age, given the anonymity and ease which such expression can be made and read by a large potential audience size, if it causes offence it can result in compounding reciprocal action. Therefore the need to have a standard by which to guide such freedom of expression is acute and urgent. Such a standard can be adopted by personal and social websites and endorsed by users reporting concerns or proactively by website owner or moderator. Websites implementing this standard should make their Do's and Don'ts and possible consequences for infringements easily accessible.

Session 8

PLENARY 2: Digital Utopianism

Bishop Angaelos

Social media as a global platform

Social media has increasingly become a global platform and a primary means of communication for so many in our world today. It is essential we find ways to make use of the opportunities it presents, while also tackling the challenges it poses, realising its obligations and responsibilities. Advocating for international religious freedom and human rights based issues via social media has become an effective means to facilitate discussion about matters of interest to the world's digital community and has even prompted governments to react and take positive action in certain cases for the betterment of society. There is however the other side of the argument that has seen a clampdown on freedom of expression, and has prompted a much more negative reaction. The question remains however as to what our responsibility as religious leaders is to advocate for those whose voice is either ignored or never featured in the mainstream media, and who may need our assistance to raise awareness to their plight and suffering. If the only outcome as a result of voicing our views on social media is that we stand in solidarity with, and offer support for, the cause of those whose God-given right to freedom of faith and belief is denied, then at least we have provided hope and comfort to those who are in desperate need of it.

Alaeddine Touhami

Roots and Modernity: how to guide the digital era (Bringing harmony between the feminine and its opposite)

The digital age: where will it lead? Is there a possibility for us to use the digital science and tools to enhance a culture of peace? What is the inspiration of the digital science? What was the intention in the initiation of this science? Is it possible that we're estranged from the original motives and the essence? What aspects should be (re)considered?

In our dehumanized world, it has become essential to reflect on the meaning of human and universal values. Is it the technological and digital science that humanizes the world, and is it the solution for the problems that we are facing? How can we highlight the values and wisdom shared by all, in order to build

together a world at peace? Because peace... we all talk about it, and each of us wants it. But peace is not just the absence of conflict; it is a state of being that implies reconciliation with oneself, with others, and with nature – an ever-present challenge. Peace is a reality that touches everything.

Reviving the feminine and bringing it into harmony with the masculine in society, and in us, is crucial for the future. But what is the feminine? And why is it crucial? How can we build the foundations for a culture of peace based on the values and secrets the feminine conceals? Let us ponder together how we might construct a culture of peace in this era that will benefit all humanity and life on earth.

Key terms: Feminine; Masculine; Culture of peace; Arabic word 'AR-Rahim'; Sufism; Quran; Khwarizmi; Algebra; Unity of the entity/existence; Unity of the evidential knowledge/ witnesses; Materialise; Womb; The virtues of ethics; The soul; Appropriating; Animal nature of humans; Culture of peace; Sperm; Humanity in both senses (human values and mankind); Spirituality and the spirit.

Dr Harriet Crabtree

Digital utopianism from the perspective of interfaith work

Session 9

University of Birmingham Department of Theology & Religion

Prof. David Parker

'The World's Oldest Bible: How technology shapes belief'

Codex Sinaiticus (see http://www.codexsinaiticus.org/), copied in the middle of the fourth century, is both the oldest surviving Christian Bible and one of the first to be made. David Parker describes this beautiful and remarkable manuscript, discusses the religious significance of the technological revolution from which it emerged and suggests parallels with other momentous moments in the history of the book which have shaped belief. These include materials, format, production methods and capacity, and lead to questions about the authority of religious books and the way in which the mediums chosen have profoundly influenced the development of different religious traditions.

Prof. David Thomas

The history of Christian-Muslim relations. Can we learn anything?

In more than fourteen hundred years of encounters, Christians and Muslims have developed a great range of perceptions of one another, some accurate but many not so. By tracing the outlines of this history, underlying attitudes can be detected that have influenced relations from the earliest times. Can anything be learnt from this history? If so, what? How can the lessons be put into practice in the present and future?

Alba Fedeli

Early Qur'ānic Manuscripts: Accessing Artefacts in the Digital Age

In their actual situation, early Qur'ānic manuscripts are mainly single leaves and quires rather than complete manuscript copies of the Qur'ānic text. Among the variety of materials used for writing it, the majority of early fragments we have nowadays were written on parchment, a strong material suitable for being reused by scrubbing the first writing. Multispectral imaging and interpretation of images by using image-processing software permit their digital enhancement for reading these recycled parchments, called palimpsests.

The hypothetical retracement of the underwriting of the Qur'anic palimpsest held in Cambridge and

Birmingham has been possible through its multispectral imaging and its digital enhancement thus allowing access to such a difficult artefact because of poor conditions of the parchment as revealed by the noise edited by Alphonse Mingana and Agnes Smith Lewis in their 1914 edition. The access to the underwriting leads to a new reception of this palimpsest.

Keywords: Qur'ānic manuscripts; deposits of early Qur'ānic fragments; scattered fragments; parchment; palimpsests; Cambridge-Birmingham palimpsest; Alphonse Mingana; Agnes Smith Lewis; multispectral imaging; image processing; under-writing's retracement.

Images of the Divine

Fr. Roby Kannanchira

Digitized Experience of The Divine in the Indian Context

Man in this world is always in search of the Divine, Who is innate in his being. The time and space of his life in this earth is limited, and he is searching out God in order to transcend his very limited being, to attain the great experience of Unity. And he experiences God in and through Nature.

The creatures are the different forms and names of the Creator. Man realizes that the Divine Spirit is allpervading, and he is trying to understand it through knowledge. He gets concepts about what he perceives; when he sees a mountain, he gets the concept of the mountain into his mind, but he cannot take the entire mountain into his mind. He collects all information and knowledge, and this collecting cannot be damped, though his knowledge is limited by time and space. He has to categorize the various information he gets, so he has to digitize all he captures from the entire Nature, so as to advance his knowledge of the Divine. The multilingual and multi-religious culture of India is always mixed with numerous Gods. Since arithmetic is the basis of the entire Nature, man counts everything. Experience cannot be measured, but man with his limited capacities tries to define the ultimate experience of the Divine as measurable. The understanding of God in the Indian concept is mixed with numbers. It says there are thirty-three crore Gods and Goddesses; it believes in triune God; and all religions in India have this kind of belief. So Indian concepts of the experience of the Divine can be articulated as 'digitized'.

PLENARY 3: Liberation Technology

"New technologies are changing how and when we learn about events and choose to respond to them. Mobile phones and the internet have altered how we engage with the world. With technology usage expanding rapidly in the developing world, new avenues of participation, engagement, and accountability are emerging. Globally, more people now have the opportunity to actively make use of these tools to participate in processes that impact their societies. This opportunity for participation is also an opportunity for engaging in new ways with peacebuilding processes". - Anne Kahl and Helena Puig Larrauri, *Stability: International Journal of Security & Development*, 2(3)

Opening address: Bhai Sahib Bhai Mohinder Singh Ji, Chairman and spiritual successor of GNNSJ - Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha

Shubranshu Choudhary

Journalist Choudhary is the brain behind CGNet Swara (Voice of Chhattisgarh) a mobile-phone (no smartphone required) service that allows citizens to upload and listen to local reports in their local language. It is a vital tool giving people deprived of a voice and platform in mainstream media, on the wrong side of the digital divide, a chance to have a say on, and learn about, the issues that affect them the

most. Furthermore, CGNet Swara also manages to circumvent India's strict broadcast licensing laws. Choudhary estimates some 100 million indigeneous people in India have no access to mainstream methods of communicating news, representing a serious barrier to their socio-economic development, as they are not updated on stories of importance to them, and their views, grievances and demands are not voiced and addressed.

CGNet Swara aims to solve this problem. It is a voice-based portal, freely accessible via mobile phone, that allows anyone to report and listen to stories of local interest. 'Reporters' call a Bangalore number to upload a news item, and reported stories are moderated by journalists and become available for playback online as well as over the phone. They get around 500 messages per day. Fifty are recorded and about five are broadcast. The moderators are elected by the community, and therefore represent them. "We are providing a new platform which the villagers can use to talk to each other and the outside world about issues that are important to them". For creating this egalitarian news platform, Shu received the 2014 Digital Activism Award from the UK-registered charity Index on Censorship chaired by the British writer and broadcaster Jonathan Dimbleby.

Shu is working in the front line and can give a sense of what's possible with today's technology. In addition to addressing the plenary on Liberation Technology, he will hold a workshop with IARF's young adult network RFYN on how to do Citizen Journalism using mobile technology. He will talk about CGNet's work, and how RFYN might learn from it.

Rubab Mehdi Rizvi

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IARF RFYN-India presentation of Human Rights Education work 2010-2014

Young adults of RFYN (IARF's youth wing) in India have built a network over the past years through which Human Rights Education (HRE) trainings have been held across the country, involving thousands of youth, in line with the UN's Decade for Human Rights Education. This presentation showcases how they do it, with little funding in difficult conditions, and their plans for the logical next step – HRD (Human Rights Defence).

SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES (alphabetical by surname)

Dr. SHETHA AL-DARGAZELLI



Shetha Al-Dargazelli was born in Baghdad/ Iraq. She obtained her BSc and MSc in Physics from Baghdad University and her PhD in Elementary Particle Physics from Durham University, UK. She recently obtained an MA in Islamic Studies from the Theology and Relig ion Department at Birmingham University, UK.

Shetha taught at Iraqi universities and obtained professorship before migrating to Britain in 1992. She worked as a research fellow at Durham University and Aston University.

She is currently the Students Standard Manager at Al-Furqan Community College (Boys) in Birmingham. She has also contributed to many interfaith and women forums inside and outside Britain. She has authored more than 60 peer-reviewed scientific articles and several books about Physics, Spirituality and the status of women in Islam.

Key terms: Gender, Happiness and Wellbeing, Islamophobia, Mosques in Britain, Muslim Women in Britain, Religiosity, Religious Freedom.

AHSAN AHMEDI



Born in Nairobi, Kenya, came to the UK in 1968 and studied in Gingham in Kent before going to Leicester Polytechnic (now De Montford University) to study HND in Computer Science. A keen student of politics and religion, I took active part in both at the University and became the chair of the Asian Society and it's spokesman at inter-University events. This interest helped in my role as Regional Ameer (President) of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community UK supporting 8 communities from Oxford, Bournemouth and Crawley and including the communities around Guildford, Reading and Woking.

I also became a press spokesman for the community appearing on several National TV and Radio programs speaking on matters relating to Islam including SKY News, BBC Radio 4 and studio guest with Nicky Campbell on the prestigious Radio 5 your call phone in show.

Aged 55, happily married with growing and quite independent children.

Dr. SHLOMO ALON



A member of IARF International Council since 2002, Dr. Shlomo Alon has served as IARF Vice-President for the last four years. He served also as the Vice-Chair of URI. Graduated from the Hebrew University with a PhD in Arabic, he was an educator for 45 years as an Arabic language expert. He served as the National Inspector for Arabic in Israel for 26 years. He wrote textbooks and dictionaries for the Hebrew-Arabic Encounter. His involvement in Interfaith Dialogue began more than 35 years ago. He was one of the founders of IEA in the Middle East and serves until now in the Task Team of URI in the Middle East. His mother tongue is Hebrew, but Arabic became his language for bridging gaps between people in the Middle East, through encounter and dialogue. Dr. Alon is a father and grandfather and cares deeply about the future of IARF.

His Grace Bishop ANGAELOS



His Grace is General Bishop of the Coptic Orthodox Church in the United Kingdom, the ancient Church of Egypt founded by Saint Mark the Apostle around 55AD, and the largest Christian denomination in the Middle East.

HG Bishop Angaelos was born in Cairo, Egypt and emigrated to Australia during his childhood with his family. He later obtained a degree in Political science, Philosophy and Sociology, continuing on to postgraduate studies in law while working in the same field.



In 1990 he returned to Egypt to the monastery of St Bishoy in Wadi-El-Natroun where he was consecrated a monk by the late Pope Shenouda III and served as his private secretary, until 1995 when he was delegated to serve a parish in the United Kingdom. With a pastoral ministry that spans almost two decades, HG Bishop Angaelos travels extensively around the world to speak at various youth conferences and conventions.

Since being consecrated a General Bishop for the United Kingdom in 1999, HG Bishop Angaelos has been ecumenically active at local, national and international levels, while also working extensively in the area of inter-religious relations. Specialising in initiatives relating to advocacy, human rights and development work, HG Bishop Angaelos is a member of, and chairs, numerous local, national and international bodies dealing with these matters.

His Grace is currently: Chair of the Council of the Oriental Orthodox Churches in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland; Cochair of the Anglican-Oriental Orthodox Regional Forum; Member of the Anglican-Oriental Orthodox International Commission; Cofounder and Co-chair of the Catholic-Oriental Orthodox Regional Forum; Scholar-Consultant on the Christian-Muslim Forum; Co-founder and Co-chair of the Lausanne-Orthodox Initiative; Director of Churches Together in England; Trustee of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland; Moderator of the Churches' Inter-Religious Network for Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CIRN) which is a network of CTBI that brings together the inter-religious officers of all Christian churches across the four British nations; Member of the Church of England General Synod; Member of the Anglican-Oriental Orthodox International Theological Commission ; Member of the Global Council of the United Bible Society; Member of the Coptic Delegation to the World Council of Churches

His Grace is patron of: Christian Solidarity Worldwide; Christians Aware; The Ecumenical Society of the Blessed Virgin Mary; The Apostolic Order of St Hadrian of Canterbury; The SAT 7 Trust UK; British Egyptian Public Affairs Committee; Embrace The Middle East; Awareness Foundation

Advocacy work includes the periodical release of press statements, published articles, news interviews, and briefings to both governmental and non-governmental sectors on matters of international justice, human rights and religious freedom.

Additionally HG Bishop Angaelos engages with the Foreign & Commonwealth Office on matters of concern in Egypt, and with the Home Office on asylum policy as founder member of the Asylum Advocacy Group. Through his work, the Coptic Orthodox Church in the United Kingdom is also a supporter of the All Party Parliamentary Group on International Religious Freedom or Belief.

Committed to relief and development, Bishop Angaelos is the founder of the Saint George Benevolent Fund, established in 2007. The fund works passionately for international development and poverty reduction and caters for a number of activities that include annual ministry trips to visit and serve those in need in Egypt, supporting orphanages and households with their basic needs, and more specifically the establishment of a dialysis unit in one of Egypt's most impoverished governorates.

The Fund has also responded to a variety of other international humanitarian crises. As director of the Media and Communications Office in the United Kingdom and Europe, Bishop Angaelos frequently issues statements and comments relating to current religious and minority issues with his particular focus on dialogue, conflict resolution, and reconciliation. In recent years, the views of Bishop Angaelos on matters relating to the Church in Egypt, the Middle East and North Africa have been increasingly sought by the local, national and international community.

KAREN ARMSTRONG



KAREN ARMSTRONG is the author of numerous books on religious affairs ~ including A History of God, The Battle for God, Holy War, Islam: A Short History, The Great Transformation, The Bible: the Biography, The Case for God, and, most recently, Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life. She has also written two memoirs, Through the Narrow Gate and The Spiral Staircase. Her work has been translated into over fifty languages. She has addressed members of the US Congress on three occasions, lectured to policy makers at the US State and Defence Departments; participated in the World Economic Forum; addressed the Council on Foreign Relations in Washington and New York, is an ambassador for the UN Alliance of Civilizations, and speaks regularly in Muslim countries, most notably in Pakistan, Malaysia, Singapore, Turkey and Indonesia. In 2007, she was awarded a medal by the Egyptian government for her services to Islam,

under the auspices of the prestigious Al-Azhar madrassah, the first foreigner to have been awarded this decoration. She was presented with the Four Freedoms Medal for Freedom of Worship by the Franklin & Eleanor Roosevelt Institute and the Dr Leopald Lucas Prize at Tubingen University, in 2009. In 2013, she will be the inaugural recipient of the British Academy Nayef Al-Rodhan Prize for Transcultural Understanding. She is a Trustee of the British Museum and a Fellow of the Royal Academy of Literature. In February, 2008, she was awarded the TED Prize for her vision of a Charter for Compassion

(www.charterforcompassion.org), which was crafted by leading thinkers in six of the world's religions as a cooperative effort to restore not only compassionate thinking but, more importantly, compassionate action to the center of moral and political life, and is now being implemented practically, realistically and creatively in countries, cities, schools and religious communities throughout the world.

BARBARA KRES BEACH



Barbara Kres Beach is founding president of the International Convocation of Unitarian Universalist Women (now IWC, the International Women's Convocation), a founder of the Unitarian Universalist Partner Church Council, and a former Board member of the International Council of Unitarians and Universalists and the IARF US Chapter. At the time of her retirement 2 years ago, she was Executive Director of Strategic and External Relations for Management Concepts, Inc., one of the largest US training, consulting, and publications firms for government executives and managers, located outside Washington, DC. She has taught English, directed dance companies and taught dance, and developed a television program on the arts for children. She is a co-author of the Art Museum as Educator (University of California Press, 1978) and author on books on dance and museums. She is president of the Madison County Education Foundation and a board member of IWC.

A graduate of Oberlin College, she has an advanced degree in education from Harvard University.

Rev. Dr. GEORGE KIMMICH BEACH

George Kimmich Beach is a Unitarian Universalist minister, retired after 40 years' serving congregations in Massachusetts, Texas, and Virginia, and an urban ministry in Ohio. He is a graduate of Oberlin College (AB),



Harvard Divinity School (STB, ThM) and Wesley Theological Seminary (DMin). He is the author of several books, including Transforming Liberalism: The Theology of James Luther Adams (2005), Questions for the Religion Journey (1995), and The Seminal Gospel: Forty Days with Mark (2013), and the editor of three collections of essays by the noted Unitarian Universalist theologian and ethicist, James Luther Adams. He has been an active participant in international Partner Church programs and in the IARF, serving on its U. S. Chapter board and attending IARF Congresses in Netherlands, Japan, and India.

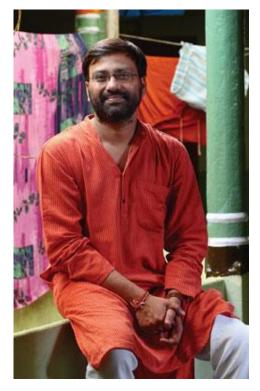
ALI-REZA BHOJANI



Ali-Reza holds a PhD from Durham University in Islamic Legal theory for research conducted on the relationship between Morality and Shari'a with particular reference to the role of independent rationality as a source of religious regulation in Shi'I Islam. His PhD research was supported by a scholarship from the Centre for the Advanced Study of the Arab World through which he also read for an MA in Research Methods at Durham. Prior to his time in Durham, Ali-Reza graduated from the Al-Mahdi Institute's Four Year Hawza Programme in Arabic and Islamic studies and has since continued his traditional Islamic studies through regular sabbaticals to the seminaries of Qum and Masshad as well as

under senior faculty at the Al-Mahdi Institute. Ali-reza is also a fully qualified and practicing Optometrist. Current research interests center around developing the ideas tackled in his doctoral work and developing the implications and possibility of an 'Adliyya moral reading of Shari'a in a wide range of applied areas of contemporary concern. His current teaching ranges across uşūl-al-fiqh, ilm al-kalam, fiqh and the Methodological Issues in the Study of Islam. He serves as a member of the Al-Mahdi Institutes Education and Research Board and is a council member for the British Association of Islamic Studies (BRAIS). He is also actively involved in a range of outreach work, both within Muslim and intra-faith contexts.

SHUBHRANSHU CHOUDHARY



Knight International Journalism Fellow and the founder of CGNet Swara, Shubhranshu was a BBC South Asia bureau TV and radio producer for more than 10 years, a reporter for *The Guardian*'s South Asia bureau for two years, and a reporter for five years at the Hindi-language Daily Deshbandhu. He also has served as a media trainer for the BBC World Service Trust, the United Nations and Indian universities. He produced the first television coverage of foreign militants operating in Indian Kashmir and conducted the first television interview with the chief commander of the Kashmiri militant organization. http://cgnetswara.org/about.html#contact

Dr. HARRIETT CRABTREE



Dr Harriet Crabtree OBE is the Director of the Inter Faith Network for the UK. IFN links faith community representative bodies and inter faith bodies in the UK and works with them to promote good inter faith relations. Before coming to work for IFN she studied and worked in the States, living at the Center for the Study of World Religions at Harvard Divinity School (from which she received her doctorate in theology) and teaching there and in the Faculty of Arts & Sciences of Harvard University and at U Mass Boston.

CYNTHIA CAPEY



Cynthia Capey MA studied Classics and Theology at Cambridge University and then trained as a Religious Education specialist. She spent most of her professional life as a member of staff at Suffolk College in Ipswich where she set up a Department for Religious Studies and laid the foundations for Suffolk Inter-Faith Resource (SIFRE).

Cynthia has co-authored and edited many of SIFRE's publications, including its popular Handbook of Faiths and she devised and developed the nationally acclaimed game Diversity. Since she retired from the College 17 years ago, Cynthia has been working for SIFRE in a voluntary capacity and also for the East of England Faiths Agency (EEFA).

In 2006 Cynthia received the Annemarie Schimmel Award for Excellence from the Muslim News for her work with Muslims. She was also the 1st

recipient of the Symmachus Award from Ipswich Pagan Council. Cynthia is passionately concerned for the growth of understanding between people of all faiths and none, and for the care of asylum seekers and all marginalised people. She and her husband, David, have a multi-racial family of 8 children and thirteen grandchildren.

Dr ANDREW DAVIES



Andrew is Senior Lecturer in Biblical Interpretation at the University of Birmingham and Director of the University's new Centre for the Public Understanding of Religion. His teaching and research interests focus around the relevance of religion for the contemporary world, including particularly work around the cultural impact of the Bible and on religion and social and political engagement (included a long-term funded study of social engagement in London's megachurches). A Pentecostal minister himself, he is supervising a number of research students working on Pentecostal approaches to the Bible, hermeneutics and culture.

ALBA FEDELI



Alba Fedeli is a scholar of early Qur'anic manuscripts. A pupil of the late Professor Sergio Noja Noseda, Fedeli taught at the University of Milan (Università degli Studi di Milano) from 2004 to 2012 and she was appointed Director of the Fondazione Ferni Noja Noseda from 2004 to 2008. She has been involved in various projects on Qur'anic manuscripts as the Yemeni mission of digitisation of manuscripts of Dar al-Makhtutat in 2006 and 2007 and the survey of the manuscripts discovered in the Great Mosque of Sanaa in 2007.

After having discovered a Qur'anic palimpsest fragment among the Mingana Collection in 2011, Fedeli moved to the University of Birmingham in that she has received a scholarship from the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council to undertake her PhD research into the

Qur'anic manuscripts of the Mingana Collection by using the tools of digital philology, under the supervision of Professor David Parker.

VICTOR GREZES



Born in Vichy, Victor Grezes travelled abroad for the first time when he was 16. He spent one year in South Africa thanks to the Rotary Club's exchange program, where he was trained to manage humanitarian projects. A talented speaker, he was awarded the 1st Prize of the Speech and Drama Diploma by South Africa College. This cosmopolitan student was born to be a savvy traveller. After his one-year experience in Africa, Victor seized the opportunity to represent French high school and college students in the main EU organizations, and all across Europe. In the process, this young man saw how cross-cultural issues are a major component of international exchanges and conflicts.

Victor describes himself as an 'Atheist' but started to think about faith and

belief-related issues, and about intercultural projects a few months ago. Always abreast of current news, he realized that the media play a significant role in international conflicts' resolution (or lack thereof). Victor was seduced by the concept of Sparknews, which aims at promoting a new and promising treatment of information by the media. He himself would like to take up all of the projects that could improve and brighten up the planet's future, as opposed to constant war or confrontation.

Victor is definitely an open traveller, for he wants to discover the world, to explore new cultures and to get rid of what he calls 'the France-centered trap'. A born artist – he played drama and piano at the Conservatoire for 10 years –, an advanced trilingual young man (English, French and Spanish), but not only that: an open-minded spirit who craves to cross borders, whether mental or geographical.

VIOLAINE HACKER



Violaine Hacker holds a PhD in Law and Public policy (Sorbonne), as well as a Master degree in Political Philosophy, focusing on Identity and the Building of Communities. Now she is both consultant in public policy and head of the network Common Good Forum. She has been working for public institutions (European Commission, Universities, Research Centres) and in the private sector (think tanks, and then NGOs dedicated to the Education to Health and Environment).

In that respect, she developed both an intellectual and pragmatic vision of the philosophy of the Common good as well as the governance of the Commons. She love building bridges between experts and practitioners, notably within the Common Good Forum, - the French County Chapter of

the project 'Unity in Diversity', in collaboration with 20 countries and the United Nations Alliance of Civilisations.

She is also very interested in the process of Social Charters, and is preparing a collaboration with the Earth Charter Initiative in France, for instance with a Webinar from October 2014.



Fr ROBY KANNANCHIRA

A Carmelite priest of the Congregation of the Carmelites of Mary Immaculate (CMI), he has done his PG in English, Theology, and is now doing his PhD in Inter-Religious Dialogue. Fr. Roby is an orator, a writer specializing in social issues, Inter-Religious Dialogue, human psychology and literature. He has been in the forefront for many campaigns, like anti-Tobacco campaign, anti-AIDS campaign . While in Munnar Fr. Roby started a non-governmental organization "Karmodaya". As the Director of Chavara Cultural Centre, a voluntary non-sectarian non-political institution devoted to the development and synthesis of culture, he has been able to contribute much in the field of Knowledge, Charity and Culture. The centre under his leadership arranges programmes in connection with various occasions

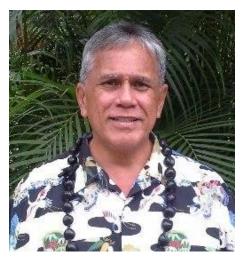
such as National Festivals, Cultural Celebrations, Interfaith conferences, Seminar, Symposiums, Theatre workshops, and Lectures on topics of Inter religious harmony and topics of contemporary relevance and importance.



PEJMAN KHOJASTEH

Pejman formally represents British Computer Society members on the British Standards Institution Risk Management Committee. He has published papers on risk management in international conferences, and produced risk management assignments for MBA students at Templeton College, University of Oxford. He has advised the former Director General in Information Communication Technology for the British Ministry of Defence, and presented papers on Science and Religion at The Ian Ramsey Centre, Oxford University.

Kumu GLEN MAKAKAUALI'I KILA



Kumu (Religious Teacher) of Kanenuiakea, a Hawaiian Indigenous Religion; Retired Principal and Teacher with the Hawaii Department of Education.

Glen was selected from birth to carry on the Hawaiian religion Kanenuiakea by his elders. Living with his grandmother till age seven, he was taught the beliefs and values which became the foundation for his religious training on the 2,000 year old Hawaiian belief system. In 1978 Glen was chosen by the Hawaiian *kahuna* (high priest) Imilani to carry on the Kanenuiakea religion. She was the granddaughter and successor of the high priest Kupihea of King Kalakaua. Being her only student, Glen studied and lived under her care until her passing in 1988.

Carrying on the worship and practices of the Kanenuiakea religion was *huna*, hidden, because of the conservative attitude of Christianity in the Hawaiian Islands. As a principal, teacher and community leader, Glen's actions were in line with the values of Kanenuiakea. He converted Kamaile Elementary School into a K-12 Hawaiian focused charter school, reinstituted the 500 year old traditional Hawaiian cultural learning center Marae Ha`a Koa, and has become a major consultant for the federal, state and city government in protecting, preserving and perpetuating the Hawaiian culture. For the past 40 years, Glen has taught over 20,000 people in the values of Kanenuiakea.

His Professional and Organizational Service Memberships: .Kahu (Priest) of Kukaniloko and Kaneilio Temples; Executive Director of Marae Ha`a Koa Cultural Learning Center; Member of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs' Native Hawaiian Historic Preservation Council; Cultural Consultant for the Asian Pacific Center for Securities Studies; Cultural Presenter at the 14th Congress of the International Society of Ethnobiology in Bhutan; Retired Principal of Kamaile Academy; Former Chairperson of the Waianae Coast Neighborhood Board; Former member of the State of Hawaii Governer's Council on Children and Youth; Former lecturer for Leeward Community College on Hawaiian Religion and Culture.

In 1999 he was awarded Excellence in United States Federal Government Award for Exceptional Service and Outstanding Contribution to the Federal Community in Hawaii during the year 1998;



Rev. Dr. JONIPHER KŪPONO KWONG

Dr. Kwong is an ordained minister with the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) and is the Settled Minister of the First Unitarian Church of Honolulu since 2011. He serves as co-chair of the UUA's Journey Toward Wholeness Transformation Committee. Rev. Kwong also serves on the Advisory Board of The Interfaith Alliance of Hawaii and Equality Hawaii. Jonipher currently resides in Honolulu, Hawai'i and was the first same-gender couple to marry his then-partner of 15 years on December 2, 2013 at 12:08 a.m..

Born and raised in the Philippines, most of Jonipher's adult life was spent in California and Hawai'i. Dr. Kwong was the Executive Director of the Counseling & Spiritual Care Center of Hawai'i and API Equality-

LA. Jonipher founded 'Ohana MCC in Honolulu, served as interim minister at Resurrection Beach MCC, and

consulting minister at Sepulveda Unitarian Universalist Society and the Temecula Valley Unitarian Universalist Community. Raised in an ecumenical background, Dr. Kwong values his pluralistic upbringing – from Evangelical to United Methodist, Episcopalian to Calvary Chapel. He was christened at a Gospel church and baptized as a Chinese Mennonite. In Hawai'i, Jonipher was a member of the Honolulu Mindfulness Community, a sangha influenced by Zen Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hahn. Dr. Kwong obtained his Master of Divinity and Doctor of Ministry degrees from Claremont School of Theology. He graduated with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Film Studies from the University of California at Santa Barbara. Prior to getting "the call," Jonipher worked in the film industry for three years, followed by two years as a Graphics Specialist at McKinsey & Company in Los Angeles.

Dr. KISHAN MANOCHA



Kishan Manocha initially studied medicine at the University of London and trained as a psychiatrist and is a Member of the Royal College of Psychiatrists. He subsequently switched to law and holds undergraduate and postgraduate law degrees from the University of Cambridge. He practised as a criminal barrister before his election as General Secretary of the national governing council of the Bahá'í community in the UK in April 2005, a post which he held until July 2010. He subsequently served as the Director of the Bahá'í community's Office of Public Affairs until May 2014.

He has worked on various occasions at the United Nations in Geneva as well at the UN-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone. He has also been a Visiting Research Fellow at the Carr Centre for Human Rights Policy at Harvard University, a Fellow of the Montreal Institute for Genocide and Human Rights Studies, and a consultant to a number of

international human rights organisations. He has also taught constitutional law and public international law at the University of East London.

Dr Manocha is active in inter faith efforts at the national, regional and local levels, and is currently serving as a Vice Chair of the Inter Faith Network for the UK, a Vice Chair of the Faiths Forum for London, and Chair of the British Chapter of the International Association for Religious Freedom.



JAUME DE MARCOS ANDREU

Jaume was born June 25, 1961, in Barcelona, Spain. He has a B.A. in Anglo-Germanic Philology (1987) and a Master in History of Religions (2005), both from the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB). Professionally he works as a freelance translator and software tester. In 2000 he started the Unitarian Church of Barcelona. He became a counsellor of the Michael Servetus Institute in 2004. He has been involved in interfaith dialogue for many years and is the current President of the Board of trustees of the UNESCO Association for Interfaith Dialogue. From 2005 to 2009 he was also a member of the Executive Committee of the International Council of Unitarians and Universalists.

He has published several books and articles, including "Erasmus'

influence in Michael Servetus' works" (2006), "Servetus Revi(sit)ed, A Study of his influence in Transylvania" (2011), and a Spanish language handbook on Unitarian Universalist Worship (2007), and has co-authored other publications such as "Religions and the Millenium Goals", a collection of essays on a religious perspective of the United Nations Millenium Goals project, published by UNESCO in 2009.

Fr. IGNASI MARQUÉS



Fr. Ignasi was born in Barcelona (Spain) in 1950. As a RC parish priest, he has always worked at the "outskirts", as Pope Francis says. He founded in Mataró (1984) the "Sant Pau Centre" which is now recognized as the first Welcome Centre opened in whole Spain to help the Sub-Saharan people. He was for 10 years "Episcopal Delegate for Migrants and Gypsies" in his Archdiocese of Barcelona.

He has spent many summer-holidays visiting missionaries in Africa (Senegal, Gambia, Morocco, Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda and Cameroon), Asia (Gujarat, Maharashtra, Goa, Kerala, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu in India) and South America (Mexico, Chile, Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay) in order to know the places his migrant friends come from. Through the C.C.I.T. (Catholic Committee International Travelers") is in relationship with "gypsies" from all Europe (from Portugal to Ukraine).

Now Fr Ignasi works in Santa Coloma de Gramenet (Barcelona), city with 120.000 inhabitants proceeding from 127 countries, trying to improve the Inter-Faith Dialogue. Living with Muslims, Buddhists, Sikhs, Christians from all denominations he does his best in order to make easier their life in a foreigner country and their worship to the only one God.

Prof. KATHY MATSUI



Kathy R. Matsui, Ph.D is Professor at the Department of Global Citizenship Studies, Seisen University (Tokyo, Japan) and teaches courses on conflict resolution and peace- related subjects. Her research concerns are development of capacities for conflict resolution and reconciliation. She works with peace researchers and educators internationally in International Institute on Peace Education, Conflict Resolution and Peace Education Working Group of Global Partnership for Prevention of Armed Conflict and Peace Education Task Force, Peace Research Institute, women's Executive Committee of Religions for Peace. She is currently an advisory board member for Hague Appeal for Peace, Global Campaign for Peace Education. She is also active in her participation in interfaith cooperation and dialogue as the President of International Association for Liberal Religious Women (IALRW), a council member

of International Association for Religious Freedom (IARF). Among her publications, her recent book is Lessons From WW II Comfort Women: The Role Of Peace Education In Developing Capacities For Forgiveness And Reconciliation, Lambert Academic Publishing: Saarbrücken, Germany.

DEREK MCAULEY



Chief Officer of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches (GAUFCC, the British Unitarians), Derek is an Executive Committee member of the Inter Faith Network of the UK and a member of the Committee of the British Chapter of IARF. He has written on blasphemy laws and religious freedom.

ISMAEL MEDJOUB

Ismael Medjoub is 20 years old, he's from the suburbs of Paris and he's

a student in Arabic and International Relations in Paris. He joined Coexister, the French interfaith young movement two years ago after the Mohamed

Merrah case, when a young terrorist killed 3 Jewish kids and 4 persons who were Jewish, Christian and Muslim. He was also the Muslim member of the interfaith Tour team, traveling around the world between July 2013 and April 2014, He's a member of a European program call 12 Cities Network who gather youth from 12 countries to fight against the rise of Islamophobia in Europe.



RUBAB MEHDI RIZVI



Rubab Mehdi is the Chair of International Imam Hussain Council based in UK and Pakistan, Chairperson International Human Rights Association; Corporate Lawyer, interfaith leader, human rights campaigner and a mother to a seven year old. Rubab belongs to a philanthropic background and was the Chief European Co-Ordinator/Spokeswoman Ministry of human Rights Pakistan. She is a qualified British lawyer and was taught at BPP Law College and Holborn College of Law. In Pakistan she assisted Barrister Wasim Sajjad (Acting President of Pakistan, Chairman Senate & Advocate Supreme Court of Pakistan) in formulation of Federal laws and also took on cases ranging from civil litigations to criminal prosecutions involving family disputes, regulatory compliance,

corporate frauds and contracts. Even though Rubab was trained in corporate law, it did not fulfil her spirit or aligned with what she saw as her purpose in life serving humanity by protecting their basic rights. Rubab Mehdi organised her first Interfaith Programme in Pakistan when she was just 13 years old, under the auspices of the late Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto. Her passion for interfaith and inter sectarian harmony made her a renowned diplomatic presence: not only was her insight developed much beyond her years, but her unique ability to bring unlikely personalities from across the spectrum together, gained her the support and admiration of governments, ambassadors and faith leaders alike. Over the years, she worked systematically and quietly on a number of significant human rights issues in Pakistan: ranging from female education, orphan care/rehabilitation, disability equality, domestic violence and police torture. Her passion

and confidence to speak out regarding the country's misnomers and taboos has been stated by many as the catalyst through which they themselves entered political/campaigning life.

JIM NUGENT



Jim Nugent is a writer and designer living near Chicago, Illinois. He served on the board of the Unitarian Universalist History and Heritage Society (UUHHS), as administrator of the Unitarian Universalist (UU) history chat-list, and managing editor of the Dictionary of Unitarian and Universalist Biography (DUUB). Before retirement, Jim worked as a communication & media specialist with behavioral psychologists, criminologists, mathematicians, in the offices of Buckminster Fuller, and with the University of Illinois. Jim, his wife Becky, and their three children have been members of Unitarian Universalist Churches in Peoria, Springfield, and Chicago, Illinois. Current interests include writing, design, history, and cycling.

Pastor LAWRENCE ADERA OTIENO



Born in 1972 August 2nd, I grew up in a family of six children in Homa Bay county, Nyanza region, Kenya. After work in hotels and restaurants as waiter, supervisor and manager, in 2006 I was trained by USAID-KENYA as Community Social Worker. I am a trained industrial relations officer in Labour Laws. In 2008 I became Officer, Child Labour Section, Tom Mboya Labour College for Industrial Labour, and 2006-2008 worked with USAID-APHIA II Nyanza as community animator in health research. In November 2008 I joined the Kenya Union of Journalists, of which I am now an Administrator.

In 2005 August I started ministering as a scripture teacher in a local church. On 30 August 2009 I was ordained as a pastor by

International Christian Ambassadors of God (ICAG), and studied theology in different religions and church ministries such as Yahweh Ministries and World Bible School. I took Hebrew lessons through home schooling, and gained a Bachelor in Theology in Bible Studies from Northwestern Christian University. I am currently doing a research on inter-religion of Hebrews and Christianity learning.

In addition to being General Secretary of the new IARF Kenya Chapter, I am Secretary General of Flaming River Church, and National Coordinator of the United Christian Ambassadors Association. I am married to Mildred Adera with three children: two boys and a girl.

Prof. DAVID PARKER FBA FSA



David is Edward Cadbury Professor of Theology and Director of the Institute for Textual Scholarship and Electronic Editing at the University of Birmingham, which carries on research on the text and manuscripts of the New Testament and develops software to study them in new ways. His publications include The Living Text of the Gospels (Cambridge UP, 1997), Codex Sinaiticus. The Story of the World's Oldest Bible (British Librar y and Hendrickson, 2010) and Textual Scholarship and the Making of the New Testament Oxford UP, 2012).

BRIAN PELLOT



Brian Pellot is director of global strategy at Religion News Service (RNS), a Washington-based newswire and NGO. Before joining RNS, Brian was digital policy advisor at Index on Censorship in London and online editor at Free Speech Debate in Oxford, UK. He speaks and writes regularly about religious freedom, freedom of expression and internet rights. Brian is currently based in London.



Rev. JOHN REX

Rev. John Rex is a Unitarian Universalist minister, now retired, living in Buffalo, New York, USA.

After graduating from Bowdoin College in 1962, John joined the US Peace Corps and served as a teacher in a rural secondary school in Ethiopia for two years. In 1993-94, while he was a student at Starr King School for the Ministry, John spent nine months doing "independent study" in India, working under the direction of UUA Project India. During that time he traveled to South India, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan on behalf of the Unitarian Universalist Association to

meet with groups interested in Unitarian Universalism.

He was an observer representing the UUA at the meeting in 1995 that resulted in the formation of the International Council of Unitarians and Universalists, and later that year he was on the staff of a leadership program of the ICUU held in Sri Lanka. In 1998-99, he had a six month ministry with the Unitarians of North East India, whom he has visited a number of times. After retiring from ministry in 2003, John served as Peace Corps teacher in Namibia.

In recent years, John has traveled widely, through much of Central and South America, Africa, Europe and Asia, this year in Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, and Cambodia.

ROSANNA SMITH



A member of the Bahá'í Faith who lives in Barnet, London. She serves as a diplomatic officer for the Office of Public Affairs of the UK Bahá'í Community. She and her colleagues are learning how the Bahá'í community can participate in and contribute in a meaningful way to the discourses of British society at the national level. Her work also involves raising awareness of the violations of the human rights of Bahá'ís in Iran among the UK government, parliament, civil society and the media and taking diplomatic action in defence of Iran's Bahá'ís. She is a singersongwriter in her spare time.



Dr. YEHUDA STOLOV

Executive Director of the Interfaith Encounter Association - an organization that works since 2001 to build peaceful inter-communal relations in the Holy Land by fostering mutual respect and trust between people and communities through active interfaith dialogue -Dr. Stolov has lectured on the role of religious dialogue in peacebuilding throughout the world, including Jordan, India, Indonesia, Turkey, South Korea, North America and Europe. He also published many papers on related issues. In 2006, he was awarded the Immortal Chaplains Foundation Prize for Humanity, which honors those who "risked all to protect others of a different faith or ethnic origin." Among other activities, Dr. Stolov is a member of the International Council of the International Association for Religious Freedom and was a member

of the steering committee for the United Nations Decade of Interreligious Dialogue and Cooperation for Peace. He holds a B.Sc. and an M.Sc. in Physics and a Ph.D. from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He is married and father of three children, living in Jerusalem.



Rev. KINGA RÉKA SZÉKELY

I'm a Unitarian minister in Transylvania, Romania, Eastern Europe. I graduated the theological school in Kolozsvar/ Cluj in 1995. Since then I have been active in many areas of the church life. I have been vice president of the Frances David National Youth Organization, I have been president of the Ministers Association, I have been on the Board of the church for many years. Since 2012 I'm also serving as advisor of the Board on faith development and mission. In 2010 I have edited a lovely volume of prayers, these days we are using the third edition of it. Together with two other editors we published a volume containing

Transylvanian prayers and sermons in English. My mission is to find the golden middle road between tradition and modern, between occult and secular. I assume in this way I can be progressive. I have been married for fourteen years, I'm a mother of four wonderful children.

Prof. DAVID THOMAS



Professor of Christianity and Islam, Nadir Dinshaw Professor of Inter-Religious Relations School of Philosophy, Theology and Religion University of Birmingham



ALAEDDINE TOUHAMI

Alaeddine studied European Studies in The Hague University. He is active in the field of interreligious dialogue in the

Netherlands. He is also committed to participate in the building of a culture of peace. He is putting effort into Muslim-scouting in the Netherlands and the International Sufi Alawiyya Association (AISA-INGO). Since 2013 AISA-INGO is acknowledged by the United Nations with a special consultative status at the ECOSOC. AISA-INGO aims primarily "to work for the emergence of a society of living well together," drawing on a spiritual and humanistic heritage and working in the fields of peace, human dignity, bringing people together, and worldwide brotherhood.

Currently, Alaeddine is assisting in the translation of a Sufi lecture on the healing of the soul alongside with a Benedictine monk. The book aims to propose an alternative therapy for those working in psychology, psychotherapy and pedagogical professions. Alaeddine launched in 2011 together with friends a musicproject in the Netherlands to promote French music and to inspire young people achieving their dreams, by simply sharing them. The project made it to national television and newspapers. He cooperated frequently in the domain of communication and PR for socially involved venues. As son of immigrants he could perhaps be a bridge between the many cultures and nationalities the Netherlands possesses.

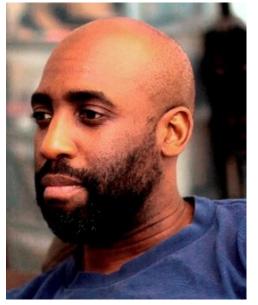


CAECILIA VAN PESKI

Caecilia van Peski is a Dutch national who spend her childhood in Switzerland. She stems from a family of clergymen and diplomats, her father being a Minister of distinction in the Dutch Remonstrant Church. Recipient of the 'Ambassador for Peace' Award granted by the Dutch Ministry of Social Affairs and Education in 2010, Caecilia van Peski is regarded as being among the most influential women of her generation in the Netherlands - listed as one of the top 400 by Women's Magazine 'Viva' (2009) and among the top 100 of 'Opzij' (2010). In the same year she was appointed United Nations Special Representative for her country, addressing the 65th United Nations General Assembly in New York with her statement 'Deepening Democracy'. Subsequently, she stood for elections at the 2012 Parliamentary Elections in the Kingdom of the Netherlands. May 2014, she was a candidate for European Parliament.

In her capacity as an independent diplomat and senior expert on International Relations and Foreign Affairs, Ms Van Peski has displayed above average expertise on Democratisation, Elections and Human Rights. She has worked with various governmental and non-governmental organizations (UN, European Commission, Council of Europe, OSCE) in over thirty (post)conflict countries. At present, Ms Van Peski is deployed to the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine.

ASTON WALKER



Aston Walker was born in the early 70's in London. His father who was a civil rights activist moved the family to Birmingham where Aston grew up.Early on Aston began acting, writing poetry and dancing, his father teaching him from an early age how to read and write. His mother taught Aston and his brothers a love for learning. Coming from a very large family there was always lots of love and family gatherings, but like most teenagers in the 80's Aston got involved with violent street gangs and a life-long connection to urban street culture which relied heavily on digital computing.

In his early 20's Aston became a Muslim and was recruited by Green Lane Mosque where he took a very large and significant number of fellow converts to also practice and follow their extremist understanding of Islam based on a bias towards Umayyad partisanship, Kharijite ideology and Saudi official

policy. After reading a book called 'Albani Unveiled' and being horrified at the 'fatwahs' to kill the author, whom Aston defended after a violent attack outside a Birmingham mosque, Aston headed to Damascus to see Islam in its natural and blessed environment.

On returning to the UK Aston went to university for a year and then pursued a career in IT in London 1997. At the time a new form of urban music was exploding on the scene called 'House and Garage' and Aston became one of the early pioneers of urban music promos which aired on Trouble TV.

After working with house and garage innovators DEA Project and producing the website for the MOBO awards in 1997, Aston went on to work with iconic punk band X-Ray Spex. During this time Aston met John Priest at a film making networking event in Birmingham. John Priest had worked for the BBC and on many Hollywood blockbusters as a practical effects technician and animator.

Aston has completed his first feature film called 'Khawarij: The Movie' about Islamic extremism after being in prison for looting during the 2011 riots. He has won many awards for his music videos.

Aston is currently based at the Big Peg in the Jewellery Quarter where he is working on an animation and computer game with Sean Stone who is the son of the Oscar winning director Oliver Stone. Aston sings for the 'Choir with No Name' which is a choir for people who are or have experienced homelessness.

HELEN ZHAO YOU



PhD Candidate, Peking University.

Born into a non-belief family with only one Buddhist, I was not fully exposed to religion until the final year of my undergraduate studies when Buddhist philosophy totally impressed me with its width and depth after I had been studying the Western-derived phenomenology within a whole year. But the hidden drive of an emotional and spiritual quest later became evident in the reflection of both studies. Now I am doing a research on the lay Buddhist identity among Chinese through an influential historical text titled Vimalakīrtinirdeśa whose major role was a householder and his exclusive visualization in China. The problem of religious identity and its relationship with a narrative frame, both textual and visual, is currently my main concern.

Acknowledgements

This event has come together under difficult conditions, due to the extraordinary efforts of a number of dedicated souls with integrity.

They know who they are, and the thanks of the whole association go to them. They are the sort who will make possible the kind of future for the realisation of which this association was founded.



Former Chair of IARF British Chapter Rev. Dr. Richard Boeke, meeting **Bhai Sahib Bhai Dr Mohinder Singh Ahluwalia**, *Mukhi-Sewadar* (main volunteer), current chairman and spiritual successor of the Sikh organisation Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha (GNNSJ).

A ground-breaking event in inter-faith relations involving the Catholic Church and the Sikh faith took place on Sunday 22 April 2012, during a special Mass and Investiture at the Metropolitan Cathedral and Basilica of St Chad, Birmingham, of Bhai Sahib-Ji as Knight of the Pontifical Order of Pope St Gregory the Great.

