



# Peace Charter for Forgiveness and Reconciliation

‘The vision of the Peace Charter for Forgiveness and Reconciliation is that the process of forgiving is vital if healing and reconciliation are to take place, as part of our collective efforts to seek justice, harmony and sustainable peace.’



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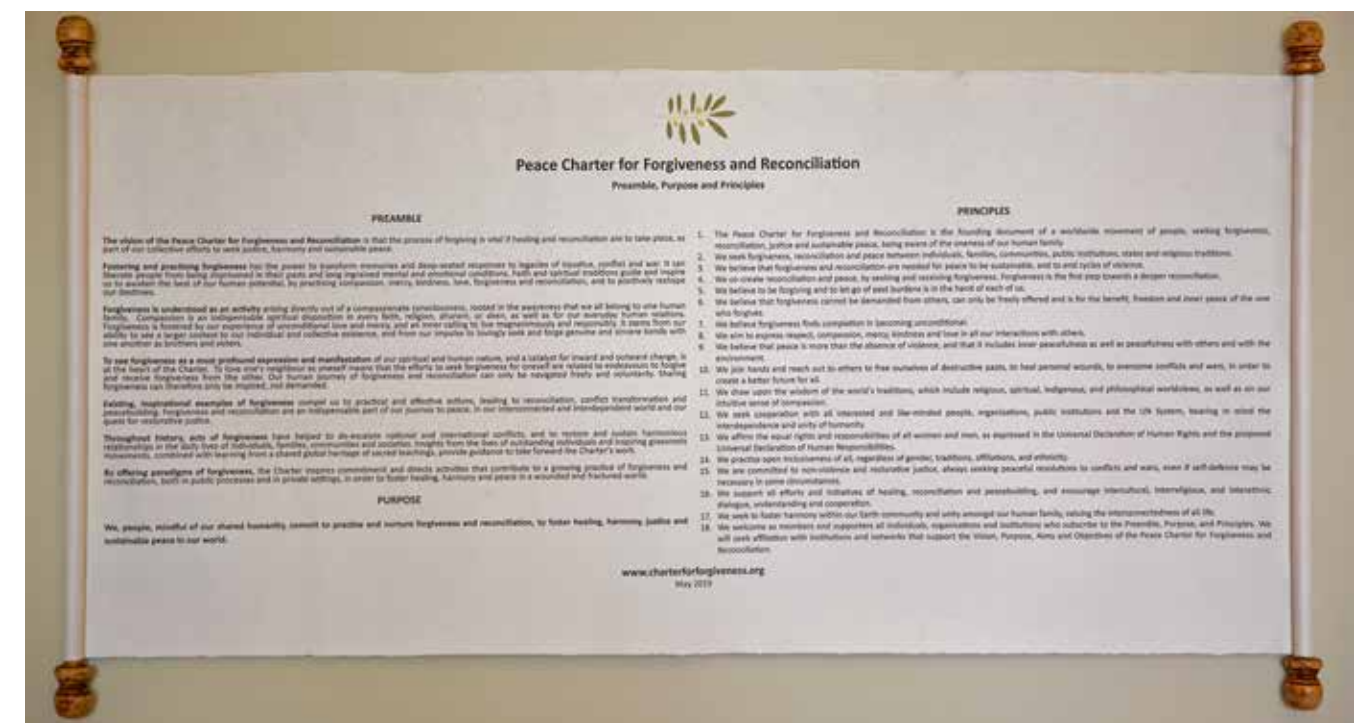
Peace Charter adopted at 10<sup>th</sup> World Assembly of Religions for Peace  
*in Lindau, Germany, on 20 August 2019*

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[Photo] The Peace Charter Scroll

‘The Peace Charter for Forgiveness and Reconciliation is an international initiative to inspire, foster and strengthen forgiveness, reconciliation, restorative justice and peace worldwide.

Forgiveness and Reconciliation are closely related values and necessary to achieve sustainable peace between individuals, communities and states.’



## 1. The Peace Charter Text

### Charter Preamble, Purpose and Principles

#### Preamble

The vision of the Peace Charter for Forgiveness and Reconciliation is that the process of forgiving is vital if healing and reconciliation are to take place, as part of our collective efforts to seek justice, harmony and sustainable peace.

Fostering and practising forgiveness has the power to transform memories and deep-seated responses to legacies of injustice, conflict and war. It can liberate people from being imprisoned in their pasts and long ingrained mental and emotional conditions. Faith and spiritual traditions guide and inspire us to awaken the best of our human potential, by practising compassion, mercy, kindness, love, forgiveness and reconciliation, and to positively reshape our destinies.

Forgiveness is understood as an activity arising directly out of a compassionate consciousness, rooted in the awareness that we all belong to one human family. Compassion is an indispensable spiritual disposition in every faith, religion, dharam, or deen, as well as for our everyday human relations. Forgiveness is fostered by our experience of unconditional love and mercy, and an inner calling to live magnanimously and responsibly. It stems from our ability to see a larger context to our individual and collective existence, and from our impulse to lovingly seek and forge genuine and sincere bonds with one another as brothers and sisters.

To see forgiveness as a most profound expression and manifestation of our spiritual and human nature, and a catalyst for inward and outward change, is at the heart of the Charter. To love one's neighbour as oneself means that the efforts to seek forgiveness for oneself are related to endeavours to forgive and receive forgiveness from the other. Our human journey of forgiveness and reconciliation can only be navigated freely and voluntarily. Sharing forgiveness can therefore only be inspired, not demanded.

Existing, inspirational examples of forgiveness compel us to practical and effective actions, leading to reconciliation, conflict transformation and peace building. Forgiveness and reconciliation are an indispensable part of our journey to peace, in our interconnected and interdependent world and our quest for restorative justice.

Throughout history, acts of forgiveness have helped to de-escalate national and international conflicts, and to restore and sustain harmonious relationships in the daily lives of individuals, families, communities and societies. Insights from the lives of outstanding individuals and inspiring grassroots movements, combined with learning from a shared global heritage of sacred teachings, provide guidance to take forward the Charter's work.

By offering paradigms of forgiveness, the Charter inspires commitment and directs activities that contribute to a growing practice of forgiveness and reconciliation, both in public processes and in private settings, in order to foster healing, harmony and peace in a wounded and fractured world.

#### Purpose

We, people, mindful of our shared humanity, commit to practise and nurture forgiveness and reconciliation, to foster healing, harmony, justice and sustainable peace in our world.

#### Principles

1. The Peace Charter for Forgiveness and Reconciliation is the founding document of a worldwide movement of people, seeking forgiveness, reconciliation, justice and sustainable peace, being aware of the oneness of our human family.
2. We seek forgiveness, reconciliation and peace between individuals, families, communities, public institutions, states and religious traditions.
3. We believe that forgiveness and reconciliation are needed for peace to be sustainable, and to end cycles of violence.
4. We co-create reconciliation and peace, by seeking and receiving forgiveness. Forgiveness is the first step towards a deeper reconciliation.
5. We believe to be forgiving and to let-go of past burdens is in the hand of each of us.
6. We believe that forgiveness cannot be demanded from others, can only be freely offered and is for the benefit, freedom and inner peace of the one who forgives.
7. We believe forgiveness finds completion in becoming unconditional.
8. We aim to express respect, compassion, mercy, kindness and love in all our interactions with others.
9. We believe that peace is more than the absence of violence, and that it includes inner peacefulness as well as peacefulness with others and with the environment.
10. We join hands and reach out to others to free ourselves of destructive pasts, to heal personal wounds, to overcome conflicts and wars, in order to create a better future for all.
11. We draw upon the wisdom of the world's traditions, which include religious, spiritual, indigenous, and philosophical worldviews, as well as on our intuitive sense of compassion.
12. We seek cooperation with all interested and like-minded people, organisations, public institutions and the UN System, bearing in mind the interdependence and unity of humanity.
13. We affirm the equal rights and responsibilities of all women and men, as expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the proposed Universal Declaration of Human Responsibilities.
14. We practise open inclusiveness of all, regardless of gender, traditions, affiliations, and ethnicity.
15. We are committed to non-violence and restorative justice, always seeking peaceful resolutions to conflicts and wars, even if self-defence may be necessary in some circumstances.
16. We support all efforts and initiatives of healing, reconciliation and peacebuilding, and encourage intercultural, interreligious, and interethnic dialogue, understanding and cooperation.
17. We seek to foster harmony within our Earth community and unity amongst our human family, valuing the interconnectedness of all life.
18. We welcome as members and supporters all individuals, organisations and institutions who subscribe to the Preamble, Purpose, and Principles. We will seek affiliation with institutions and networks that support the Vision, Purpose, Aims and Objectives of the Peace Charter for Forgiveness and Reconciliation.

## 2. Co-convenors / Director / Co-Chairs (Profiles)



**Bhai Sahib, Bhai Mohinder Singh Ahluwalia, OBE, KSG**  
*Co-convenor and Co-Chair, Peace Charter for Forgiveness and Reconciliation*

Bhai Sahib took early retirement in 1989 after working for 27 years as a civil/structural engineer and housing expert in East and Central Africa, to devote the rest of his life to selflessly serving humanity.

Since 1995 he is responsible for the day to day running of probably the biggest Sikh place of worship in Europe where he spends on average some 12 hours a day.

He received in 2010 the official religious title of *'Bhai Sahib'* from the Sikh fraternity's apex organisation, in recognition of his work in faith propagation through intra and interfaith fields, coupled with his outstanding contribution towards conservation and restoration of Sikh historical shrines. This is the first time in history that a British Sikh has been conferred this award.

Bhai Sahib is a visionary in the fields of faith propagation, education, intra and interfaith. A recipient of the Juliet Hollister Award from the Temple of Understanding, he is also a Trustee of Religions for Peace International (RfP) and one of its fifty Co-Presidents, as well as President of Religions for Peace UK. Bhai Sahib is a member of the Elijah Board of World's Religious Leaders (EBWRL), a former member of the Fetzer Institutes's Advisory Committee (FAC) on Religions and Spiritualities, a member of the European Council of Religious Leaders (ECRL) and member of the Department for International Development's (DFID's) Faith Working Group. He is Chair and Trustee of the Museum of World's Religions (MWR-UK) Working Group, Patron of United Religions Initiative (URI - UK), member of Birmingham Faith Leaders Group (BFLG). Bhai Sahib is also an ambassador for the Globalisation for Common Good Initiative and received its third annual award in 2014.

In 2012 he was made a Papal Knight Commander of the Order of St Gregory the Great in recognition of his dedicated work for Roman-Catholic Sikh relations and for his enthusiastic commitment to working for peace among people of all faiths. In 2015 he was made an Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (OBE) by H.M. Queen Elizabeth II in recognition of his unstinting and inexorable work over forty years to promote peace and coexistence by bringing people of different faiths together to contribute to the common good of humanity.

He has been awarded Honorary Doctorates from Birmingham City University in 2002, the University of Birmingham in 2006 and the University of Aston in 2014 for services to religious faith propagation, community service, education and research.



**Dr. William F. Vendley**  
*Co-convenor and Co-chair, Peace Charter for Forgiveness and Reconciliation*

Dr William Vendley is the Secretary General Emeritus of Religions for Peace, the world's largest and most representative multi-religious coalition advancing common action for peace by working to advance multi-religious consensus on positive aspects of peace as well as concrete actions to stop war, help eliminate extreme poverty and protect the earth. He is a member of its World Council which consists of 60 senior religious leaders from all continents. He coordinated the activities and projects of Religions for Peace's 92 national and 5 regional councils. Dr. Vendley is a pioneer in advancing multi-religious cooperation to help resolve conflict and has been engaged in multi-religious peacemaking efforts in Syria, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Liberia, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Iraq, and other countries. Dr. Vendley has been an advisor to a number of governments on matters related to religion and peace. He advised US President Barack Obama through his service on the Multi-religious Cooperation and International Affairs Task Force of the White House Faith-Based Council. He was appointed by US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and re-appointed by Secretary Kerry as one of ten members of the US State Department's Advisory Committee on Strategic Partnership with Civil Society and he was a Co-chair of the State Department's Religion and Foreign Policy Working Group. Dr. Vendley is a recipient of the UNICEF Lifetime Achievement Award.

**Dr. Azza Karam**

*Co-convenor and Co-chair, Peace Charter for Forgiveness and Reconciliation*



Prof Azza Karam is Secretary General of Religions for Peace International and is a Professor of Religion and Development at the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam, in The Netherlands – of which she is a citizen. She served as a Senior Advisor on Culture, at the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA); and as Coordinator/Chair of the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Religion and Development; where she coordinated engagement with members of a Global Interfaith Network for Population and Development with over 600 faith-based organizations from all regions of the world, representing all religions and interreligious affiliation. She is the Lead Facilitator for the United Nations'

Strategic Learning Exchanges on Religion, Development and Diplomacy, building on a legacy of serving as a trainer cum facilitator of inter-cultural leadership and management in the Arab region as well as Europe and Central Asia.

Professor Karam has served in different positions in the United Nations since 2004, as well as other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations since the early 1990s, such as International IDEA, and Religions for Peace. Simultaneously, she lectured in various academic institutions in Europe, in North America (including the United States Military Academy/West Point), Africa and the Middle East.

Her Ph.D. in 1996, focused on Political Islam, and became her first book in Arabic (her mother tongue) and in English. She has since published widely, and in several languages, on international political dynamics, including democratization, human rights, peace and security, gender, religious engagement and sustainable development. She was born in Egypt, and now lives in the United States.

**Dr Josef Boehle**

*Director, Peace Charter for Forgiveness and Reconciliation*



Dr Josef Boehle is a Research Fellow at the University of Birmingham, UK. He received a postgraduate degree in Theology from the University of Tuebingen, Germany and received his PhD from the University of Birmingham in 2001 for his thesis on Inter-religious Co-operation in a Global Age.

He has worked for international interreligious organisations and helped to organise major conferences and summits addressing interreligious, intercultural and intercivlisational issues. From 2005-2010 he was a member of a UK Government (DFID) sponsored Research Consortium on 'Religions and Development'.

Dr Boehle previously participated in a 4 year process of developing the United Religions Initiative Charter (1996-2000). He was the European Coordinator of the URI from 1997-2000. The URI Charter has been distributed and is actively consulted in many countries around the world. Dr Boehle was also a coordinator of the development of the Concept Note of the Interactive Hearing with Civil Society of the 2007 High-level Dialogue of the UN General Assembly on Interreligious and Intercultural Understanding and Cooperation for Peace. His work and teaching focuses now on Religion, Politics and Peacebuilding.



## Co-Chairs (Profiles)



**Rabbi David Rosen CBE**

*Co-chair, Peace Charter for Forgiveness and Reconciliation*

Rabbi David Rosen, former Chief Rabbi of Ireland, is the International Director of Interreligious Affairs of the American Jewish Committee (AJC) and Director of its Heilbrunn Institute for International Interreligious Understanding. He is a past chairman of IJCIC, the International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations, the broad-based coalition of Jewish organizations representing World Jewry to other religions. Rabbi Rosen is Honorary Advisor on Interfaith Relations to the Chief Rabbinate of Israel; serves on its Commission for Interreligious Dialogue, and represents the Chief Rabbinate on the Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land.

He is an International Co-President of Religions for Peace; a Honorary President of the International Council of Christians and Jews (ICCJ); and is a member of the Elijah Institute's World Board of Religious Leaders. He is a founder of the Interreligious Coordinating Council in Israel that embraces some seventy organizations in Israel involved in interfaith relations (ICCI).

In November 2005 he was made a papal Knight Commander of the Order of St Gregory the Great for his contribution to promoting Catholic-Jewish reconciliation and in 2010 was made a CBE (Commander of the British Empire) by H.M. Queen Elizabeth II for his contribution to interfaith relations.



**Rev Kosho Niwano**

*Co-chair, Peace Charter for Forgiveness and Reconciliation*

Rev Kosho Niwano is President-designate of Rissho Kosei-kai and Co-Moderator of Religions for Peace. She serves on the Executive Committee of Religions for Peace. President-designate Kosho Niwano was born in Tokyo as the first daughter of President Nichiko Niwano. After receiving a law degree from Gakushuin University, she studied at Rissho Kosei-kai's Gakurin seminary.

She is currently devoted to studying the teachings of the Lotus Sutra and shares the teachings with members who visit the Great Sacred Hall for worship services and special events. She also actively promotes interreligious cooperation domestically and internationally in her capacity as president-designate of Rissho Kosei-kai attends interfaith congresses.

She is a councilor of Shinshuren (Federation of New Religious Organizations of Japan), a board of director of Religions for Peace Japan, co-moderator of Religions for Peace International and a member of the board of directors of KAICIID (The King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Center for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue).



**Shaykh Abdallah Bin Bayyah**

*Co-chair, Peace Charter for Forgiveness and Reconciliation*

Shaykh Abdallah Bin Bayyah is Chairman and Founder of the Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies, Abu Dhabi, and Co-Moderator of Religions for Peace. He serves on the Executive Committee of Religions for Peace. As a life-long advocate for peace, Shaykh Abdallah Bin Bayyah is the President of the Forum of Peace in Muslim Societies and one of today's most well respected Islamic scholars.

He was born on 1935 in eastern Mauritania. He studied sacred sciences in the Mauritanian centers of learning known as Mahadhir. He then studied law at the Faculty of Law in Tunisia and was trained in Tunisian courts in 1961. Shaykh Abdallah Bin Bayyah has served in many distinguished positions over the years, including but not limited to Judge at the High Court of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, the first Minister for Islamic Affairs and Education, Minister of Justice and Official Holder of the Seals. He is currently the Chairman of the Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies, Member of the European Research & Fatwa Council, Member of the Muslim League's International High Council of Mosques and lecturer at the King Abdul Aziz University in Saudi Arabia.

Shaykh Abdallah Bin Bayyah has published numerous writings and has been distinguished in a variety of ways for his work in Islam, interreligious dialogue and peace building. He was named one of the most Influential Muslims from 2009-2013. Shaykh Abdallah Bin Bayyah has received numerous awards for his work as an Islamic scholar and advocate for peace.

## 3. Editorial Panel Members 2016-2018 (Profiles)

In 2016 we established an Editorial Panel to oversee the drafting and writing of the Charter text. Religious leaders, academics and leaders of International NGOs agreed to join the Editorial Panel to ensure:

- that the Charter text will have the envisioned high quality and global appeal
- that the Charter text will be an authentic expression of the values inherent in the sacred teachings of the major World Religions.

Editorial Panel Members were:



**1. Bhai Sahib Mohinder Singh Ahluwalia**

Co-convenor, Peace Charter for Forgiveness and Reconciliation (Profile on page 6).



**2. Dr William F. Vendley**

Co-convenor, Peace Charter for Forgiveness and Reconciliation (Profile on page 6).



**3. Dr Josef Boehle, Director**

Peace Charter for Forgiveness and Reconciliation and Editorial Panel Director (Profile on page 7).



**4. Rabbi David Rosen**

International Director of Interreligious Affairs, AJC, Israel (Profile on page 8).



**5. Rev. Kosho Niwano**

President Designate of Rissho Kosei-kai, Japan (Profile on page 8).



**6. Professor Pal Ahluwalia**

*Vice-Chancellor and President, The University of the South Pacific*

In January 2020, Professor Ahluwalia joined the University of the South Pacific as Vice-Chancellor and President. Professor Ahluwalia holds a Bachelor and Master of Arts from the University of Saskatchewan, and completed his PhD at Flinders University. Previously, Professor Ahluwalia was at the University of Portsmouth as Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) and prior to that, he was at the University of Adelaide for 14 years, finishing as Professor of the Politics Department. Professor Ahluwalia has previously been a Visiting Professor at the University of California, and Professor with the Goldsmiths College at the University of London, where he was also Director of the Centre for Postcolonial Studies. His main research interests lie in the areas of African studies, social and cultural theory, in particular, post-colonial theory and the processes of diaspora, exile, migration, and the complexities of identity formation. His work is internationally renowned for breaking down disciplinary boundaries and challenging orthodoxy. In October 2008, Professor Ahluwalia was appointed a UNESCO Chair in Transnational Diasporas and Reconciliation Studies, a position he held until 2017.



**7. The Rt Rev Dr Bishop Christopher Cocksworth**

*Bishop of Coventry, UK*

The Right Reverend Dr Christopher Cocksworth was consecrated as the 9th Bishop of Coventry on 3 July 2008. Prior to becoming Bishop he was the Principal of Ridley Hall, Cambridge. The Bishop of Coventry is the senior leader of the Church of England in Coventry and Warwickshire. He read Theology at the University of Manchester and received his PhD in 1989. Bishop Christopher has served in parochial and chaplaincy ministry and in theological education, latterly as Principal of Ridley Hall, Cambridge. In 2010 he was awarded an honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity by the University of London for his services to education. He has written a number of books and articles in the area of Christian theology and worship with his last book, Holding Together: Gospel, Church and Spirit being shortlisted for the 2011 Michael Ramsey Prize. Bishop Christopher is Co-Chair of the Joint Implementation Commission of the Anglican-Methodist Covenant, and is Chair of the Faith and Order Commission of the Church of England. He entered the House of Lords in January 2013.



### 8. Dr Marius Felderhof

*Museum of World's Religions (UK), University of Birmingham, UK.*

Dr Marius Felderhof was born in Holland and emigrated with his parents, brothers and sisters to Nova Scotia, Canada aged 9. He studied Philosophy and Theology in Canada and Scotland, and received a Ph.D. in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Wales, Swansea. He is a licentiate of the Church of Scotland and served in the parish of Burntisland for one year before returning to teach Systematic and Philosophical Theology at St. Mary's College, The University of St. Andrews. He then went to Westhill College, Selly

Oak, Birmingham and served for a number of years as Head of Religious and Theological Studies at Westhill College. The College and his department were integrated into the University of Birmingham and its department of Theology and Religion in 2001. In 2005 he was seconded by the University to the City of Birmingham to act as the drafting secretary to the Agreed Syllabus Conference which devised the groundbreaking 2007 Syllabus for Religious Education. This syllabus committed all the major faiths found in the City to supporting teachers in developing 24 dispositions in young people on the basis of their scriptures, traditions and practices. He has published many articles relating to Theology and to Religious Education and is responsible for authoring and editing four books. He advised the City of Birmingham on its RE provision as a member of its Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education. Dr Felderhof is an Honorary Senior Research Fellow in the Department of Theology and Religion and was the Executive Director of the Museum of World Religions project in Birmingham.



### 9. Dr Omnia Marzouk

*President Emeritus, Initiatives of Change International, UK.*

Originally from Egypt and having lived most of her life in Australia and Britain, Dr Omnia Marzouk has been working as Consultant in Paediatric Emergency Medicine for 22 years at the UK's busiest Children's Emergency Department – Alder Hey Children's NHS Trust in Liverpool. She served as Clinical Director of the Emergency Department for 7 years and also more recently as Associate Medical Director of the hospital for 5 years.

Omnia was introduced to Initiatives of Change (IofC) while at school in Australia and has been actively involved since. For many years, she has been particularly engaged in intercultural and interfaith dialogue within the UK as well as taking part in similar initiatives in Europe, the Middle East, Asia and Africa. Dr Marzouk was elected at the first woman President of Initiatives of Change International in 2011 and served in this role until 2016. Previous Presidents include Professor Rajmohan Gandhi (India), Ambassador Mohamed Sahnoun (Algeria) and Mr Cornelio Sommaruga (Switzerland) who remains Honorary President. Initiatives of Change International (IofC International) is a non-governmental organisation (NGO) working for peace and human security worldwide by building trust across the world's divides. It has Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations and Participatory Status at the Council of Europe in Strasbourg. It is a world wide movement of people of diverse cultures and background, committed to addressing world needs focusing on the link between person change and global change. Its programmes focus on three areas: Trust building, Ethical leadership and Sustainable living.



### 10. Professor Anantanand Rambachan

*Professor of Religion, St Olaf College, USA.*

Professor Anantanand Rambachan is Professor of Religion, Philosophy and Asian Studies at Saint Olaf College, Minnesota, USA, where he has been teaching since 1985. Prof Rambachan has been involved in the field of interreligious relations and dialogue for over twenty-five years, as a Hindu participant and analyst. He has contributed to numerous consultations and discussions convened by national and international organizations concerned with interreligious issues. He is very active in the dialogue programs of the

World Council of Churches, and was a Hindu guest and participant in the last four General Assemblies of the World Council of Churches in Vancouver, Canada, Canberra, Australia, Harare, Zimbabwe and Puerto Alegre, Brazil. He is also a regular participant in the consultations of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue at the Vatican and an educator on interfaith issues in Minnesota. Prof Rambachan has served on the Advisory Board of the Center for the Study of Religion and Society, Victoria University, Canada, and as a member of the Consultation on Population and Ethics. He is currently an advisor to the Pluralism Project (Harvard University), a member of the International Advisory Council for the Tony Blair Faith Foundation, and a member of the Theological Education Committee of the American Academy of Religion. In April 2008, Professor Rambachan, at the invitation of the Archbishop of Canterbury delivered the distinguished Lambeth Lecture at Lambeth Palace, London. He has contributed as a Hindu scholar to the joint United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) – Global Network of Religions for Children project (GNRC) "Children in World Religions." He was awarded the Chaconia Gold Medal (1989) by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago for his public service. Prof Rambachan is the author of several books, book-chapters and articles in scholarly journals.



### 11. H.E. Prof Dr Din Syamsuddin

*Chairman of Advisory Council, Muhammadiyah;  
Moderator of Asian Conference of Religions for Peace, Indonesia.*

Professor Dr Din Syamsuddin is a prominent Muslim leader from Indonesia. He is a professor of Islamic Political Thought at National Islamic University, Jakarta. He served as President of Muhammadiyah, the largest modernist Islamic organization in Indonesia from 2005 to 2015, as well as President of the Indonesian Council of Ulama (MUI) during

2014-2015, and now (2015-2020) acting as Chairman of its Advisory Council. He has been active in interfaith dialogues and cooperations, as he initiated the creation of and becoming Presidium of Inter Religious Council – Indonesia. He is currently acting as President-Moderator of Asian Conference of Religions for Peace (ACRP), Co-President of Religions for Peace International, as well as Chairman of Center for Dialogue and Cooperation among Civilizations (CDCC), and Chairman of World Peace Forum based in Jakarta. He is also member of Group for Strategic Vision Russia – Islamic World, and member of Leadership Council of the United Nations Sustainable Development Solution Network (UNSDSN). He recently initiated the creation of Indonesia's Movement to Save the Earth (Indonesia Bergerak Selamatkan Bumi) and acts as Chairman of the Movement's Steering Committee. He obtained both Master and Doctoral degrees from the Interdepartmental Program in Islamic Studies, University of California Los Angeles (UCLA), USA, in 1998 and 1991 consecutively.



### 12. Professor Garrett Thomson

*CEO, Guerrand-Hermes Foundation for Peace, UK and USA.*

Professor Garrett Thomson is the Guerrand-Hermes Foundation for Peace CEO as well as Director of Research. He received his DPhil from Oxford University. Currently he is Compton Professor of Philosophy at the College of Wooster, USA. He was formerly the CEO of the World Subud Association in 2005-2010. Garrett is the author of numerous books including Needs; Kant; Introduction to Modern Philosophy; and a series of introductory texts on Descartes, Locke, Aristotle, Kant, and Leibniz. He co-edited the six-

volume The Longman Standard History of Philosophy. His other recent works include Una Introduccion a la Practica de la Filosofia, On Philosophy and On the Meaning of Life. Most recently, Garrett has co-authored books as part of the GHFP's research team.



### 13. Maria Voce, President Emeritus (2014 -2021)

*Focolare Movement, Italy.*

Maria Voce was elected president of the Focolare Movement on 7 July 2008 by the General Assembly of the Focolare. She is the first focolarina to succeed the founder, Chiara Lubich, who died on the 14th of March of the same year. She was born in Ajello Calabro, Cosenza, Italy, on 16 July 1937, the first of seven children. Her father was a doctor; her mother a

housewife. During her last year of law school in Rome (1959) she met a group of focolarini at the university and was fascinated by their Gospel witness. Upon completion of her studies, she became the first woman lawyer in her city's court system. Later she studied Theology and Canon Law. In 1963, she felt the unexpected and "overwhelming" call of God to follow in the way of Chiara Lubich and she immediately responded. From 1964 to 1972 she was in Sicily, in the Focolare Centres of Syracuse and Catania. From 1972 to 1978 she belonged to Chiara Lubich's personal secretariat and for the following ten years she lived in the Focolare Centre of Istanbul where she established ecumenical and interreligious relationships, especially with the then Patriarch of Constantinople, Demetrius I, and with numerous metropolitans including the now Patriarch Bartholemew I, as well as with representatives of various Churches. As a law expert, from 1995 she was a member of the Abba School, the Centre for Interdisciplinary Studies chaired by Chiara Lubich. From 2000 she was also co-responsible for the international commission, "Communion and Law," a network of academics and professionals involved in law. From 2002 until their approval, which came in 2007, she worked directly with Chiara Lubich in updating the General Statutes of the Movement. On 24 November 2009 Benedict XVI appointed her as a Consultor for the Pontifical Council for the Laity. Maria Voce was re-elected as President of the Focolare Movement for a second consecutive term in September 2014.



## 4. Charter Development Chronology:

- In 2011, the proposal of developing a Charter for Forgiveness was first raised by Bhai Sahib Mohinder Singh Ahluwalia OBE, KSG, Chairman, Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha, in a series of conversations between Bhai Sahib and Dr Josef Boehle (University of Birmingham). In these meetings the initial idea, vision, concept and project proposal for a Charter for Forgiveness were developed.
- After gaining the support of the Guerrand-Hermes Foundation for Peace (UK) (in 2011) and the Fetzer Institute (USA) (in 2012) for the initial project development phase, additional organisations were approached to seek their support, most prominently Religions for Peace International. In the early Charter development phase, Forgiveness and Reconciliation were identified as being closely related values and both being necessary to achieve sustainable peace between individuals, communities and states.
- Dr William F. Vendley, Secretary-General of Religions for Peace International, lovingly embraced the Charter idea, vision and project, and joined Bhai Sahib Mohinder Singh Ahluwalia as Co-convenor of the Charter project in Spring 2014. Bhai Sahib Mohinder Singh and Dr William F. Vendley as Co-convenors, and Dr Josef Boehle as Director, have since formed the core leadership team.
- Rabbi David Rosen (International Director of Interreligious Affairs, AJC, Israel), Rev Kosho Niwano (President Designate of Rissho Kosei-kai, Japan) and Shaykh Abdallah Bin Bayyah (President of Forum for Peace in Muslim Societies), World Council and Executive Committee members of Religions for Peace International, agreed to be Co-chairs of the Charter
- A very successful International Symposium on Forgiveness and Reconciliation was held at the Nishkam Centre in Birmingham on 2nd April 2014, bringing together 30 international experts, leaders and practitioners.
- A Statement of Vision and Purpose was developed by a working team and aided by contributions from the participants in the 2014 Symposium. This Statement summarised succinctly the core aims, principles, values and objectives of the proposed Charter for Forgiveness and Reconciliation. This Statement of Vision and Purpose then formed the basis on which the Preamble of the Charter was written.
- An Editorial Panel with 13 members was formed in 2016 to jointly develop the Charter text and to promote universal ownership, open inclusiveness and ensure a high-quality Charter from the beginning. The Editorial Panel consisted of the two Co-convenors, Bhai Sahib Mohinder Singh and Dr William F. Vendley, 10 Editorial Panel Members and the Director of the Editorial Panel, Dr Josef Boehle:

**After a two year period of revisions the Charter text was completed in early 2018 and consists of a Preamble, Purpose and Principles section. The Charter text has received very positive feedback and appreciative responses and has been welcomed by a wide diversity of audiences internationally.**

- A Plan of Action and Development Stages were outlined in the Charter brochure, which included the now completed Charter drafting process, the outreach to relevant organisations and the wider public, the development of Charter related activities, as well as the planned engagement with public bodies, international institutions and the United Nations System which is progressing and expected to be accelerated after a global presentation in August 2019.
- On 4th February 2017 the Inaugural Annual Peace Forum on Forgiveness and Reconciliation was held by the Charter for Forgiveness and Reconciliation at the Nishkam Centre in Birmingham, as part of World Interfaith Harmony Week. On 4th February 2018 the 2nd Annual Peace Forum on Forgiveness and Reconciliation took place at the Nishkam Centre in Birmingham.

- The finalised Charter text on a scroll and the Charter Project was presented to His Holiness Pope Francis and the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue on 2nd May 2018 in Rome. HH Pope Francis was delighted to learn about the Charter Text and Project and joyfully blessed the Charter scroll. During a second meeting on occasion of this Rome visit, the Charter Text and Project was presented to a group of senior leaders of the Focolare Movement who expressed their appreciation and support. Maria Voce, President of the Focolare, has been a member of the Editorial Panel.
- The Charter was presented to an Interreligious Peace Pilgrimage and Conference attended by approximately 90 leaders and activists during 26-29 June 2018 in Assisi, Italy.
- A conference for the development of a teaching module on forgiveness, to be incorporated into the school curriculum, was hosted by the group of Nishkam Schools with over 150 teaching staff. After the morning plenary session which included presentations and discussions on forgiveness, staff started to work on developing a syllabus for pupils aged 4 to 18. This work will lead to a key area of impact for the Charter in the education field and it is planned to share the developed modules as fully resourced modules with all interested schools.
- The Charter text was presented to the Birmingham Faith Leaders Group (BFLG) and blessed by them on 11 September 2018. The BFLG was supportive of the Charter from the beginning.
- The Charter for Forgiveness and Reconciliation web site was redesigned and relaunched in November 2018, to be easily readable on computers and on mobile phones. [<http://www.charterforforgiveness.org>].
- A very successful Seminar on Forgiveness and Reconciliation: *Perspectives from the World's Religions* was held with 140 participants on 2 November 2018 at the Parliament of the World's Religions in Toronto, Canada.
- Bhai Sahib Mohinder Singh gave a keynote address at the 2018 Parliament of the World's Religions in Toronto, Canada, and highlighted the Charter's contribution to seeking a more peaceful world.
- The Charter for Forgiveness and Reconciliation scroll and project was presented to UN Under- Secretary-General Adama Dieng on 8 November 2018 at UN Headquarters, New York.
- The Charter for Forgiveness and Reconciliation scroll and project was presented to Shaykh Abdallah bin Bayyah, a Co-chair of the Charter, on 8 December 2018 in Abu Dhabi.
- The Charter name was decided to be *Peace Charter for Forgiveness and Reconciliation* in May 2019, to highlight the interconnected 3 core values (Peace, Forgiveness and Reconciliation) of the Charter together.
- The Peace Charter was presented to Maria Voce, President of Focolare Movement, during a visit of Focolare members to GNNSJ, at the Nishkam Centre, Birmingham, UK, on 30 June 2019.
- A workshop on Sustainable Peacebuilding: Understanding and Supporting Processes of Forgiveness and Reconciliation was convened by the Peace Charter at the 10th World Assembly of Religions for Peace on 22 August 2019.
- **The Peace Charter for Forgiveness and Reconciliation was adopted and globally launched at the 10th World Assembly of Religions for Peace on 20 August 2019 in Lindau, Germany, completing 8 years of organisational development which included a year of preparation for this global event.**

Please read the launch press release on the next page.



## 5. Peace Charter for Forgiveness and Reconciliation adopted by 10th World Assembly of Religions for Peace

Lindau | Germany | 20 Aug 2019

Press Release

by some 900 global religious leaders and delegates. Religions for Peace International is the world's largest and most representative coalition of religious and indigenous communities and operates in over 90 countries.

The concluding declaration of the World Assembly stated, "We are grateful for 49 years of determined focus on building peace and on speaking for those most in need. We are an alliance of care, of

resolution work."

The Peace Charter was presented to the 10th World Assembly by the co-convenors of the Peace Charter, Bhai Sahib Mohinder Singh Ahluwalia KSG, OBE (Chairman of Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha, UK, and Co-President of Religions for Peace) and Dr William F. Vendley (outgoing Secretary-General of Religions for Peace), and by the Peace Charter's Director Dr Josef Boehle (University of Birmingham, UK). The Peace Charter's organisational development began in 2011 and has received support from a wide range of religious, political, academic and civil society leaders.

The Guerrand-Hermes Foundation for Peace (UK), the Fetzer Institute (USA), Religions for Peace International, the Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha (GNNSJ), UK, and the Nishkam Centre, Birmingham (UK) were amongst the early core group of supporting organisations.

### The Preamble of the Peace Charter begins with the following introduction:

'The vision of the Peace Charter for Forgiveness and Reconciliation is that the process of forgiving is vital if healing and reconciliation are to take place, as part of our collective efforts to seek justice, harmony and sustainable peace. Fostering and practising forgiveness has the power to transform memories and deep-seated responses to legacies of injustice, conflict and war. It can liberate people from being imprisoned in their pasts and long ingrained mental and emotional conditions. Faith and spiritual traditions guide and inspire us to awaken the best of our human potential, by practising compassion, mercy, kindness, love, forgiveness and reconciliation, and to positively reshape our destinies.'

compassion, of love. ... We adopt The Peace Charter for Forgiveness and Reconciliation, convinced that transforming violent conflicts requires the healing of historical wounds and painful memories, forgiveness, and reconciliation. We commit to integrating efforts for healing into all our conflict



The Peace Charter for Forgiveness and Reconciliation was adopted by the 10th World Assembly of Religions for Peace (RfP) which convened from 20-23 August 2019 in Lindau, Germany. The World Assembly, opened by the President of Germany Frank-Walter Steinmeier on 20 August 2019, was attended

### The Peace Charter was introduced to the World Assembly with the following explanation:

There is an urgent and profound need for reconciliation in communities in conflict and coming out of conflict. Experience shows that conflict settlements and peace accords tend to be short-lived; and that conflicts resume in the absence of reconciliation, which includes addressing deep wounds, injustices, distrust, fear and hatred. Without reconciliation, painful memories remain under the surface and are not brought out into the open to be slowly healed. In conflict situations, very often urgent efforts to end the physical violence do



[Photo] Co-convenor of the Peace Charter, Dr William F. Vendley (outgoing Secretary-General of Religions for Peace).

not address the important process of reconciliation, which needs to be advanced through truth telling, accepting responsibility, embracing repentance and transacting forms of restitution. This absence of reconciliation compromises peace settlements and thwarts true positive Peace. Religions for Peace (RfP) has repeatedly experienced the absence of reconciliation among people and communities struggling to come out of situations of destructive violence and oppression. In these situations, RfP has long recognized that a deeper process of forgiveness and reconciliation is profoundly



[Photo L to R] Co-convenor of the Peace Charter Dr William F. Vendley (outgoing Secretary-General of Religions for Peace), the Peace Charter's Director Dr Josef Boehle (University of Birmingham, UK) and co-convenor of the Peace Charter, Bhai Sahib Mohinder Singh Ahluwalia KSG, OBE (Chairman of Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha, UK, and Co-President of Religions for Peace).

needed to achieve positive Peace. Moreover, RfP knows well that religions have profound and unique resources that can - if mobilized and creatively adapted - contribute to reconciliation.

Adopting the Peace Charter will help to equip the RfP global family of affiliated multi-religious bodies for the important work of reconciliation by raising awareness, deepening understanding, and increasing reflection on the crucial role of forgiveness and reconciliation in sustainable positive peacebuilding. The Peace Charter is a tool that can lovingly inspire, educate and provide guidance in processes of forgiveness, reconciliation and peace building amongst persons, communities of all types and nations. Importantly, it can also be a resource for healing painful historical memories within religions' various histories. It will also make a vital contribution to value-led peace education in

formal and informal settings, thereby strengthening ever more the foundation for more just and peaceful persons, communities and nations.



### Dr Josef Boehle, Director Peace Charter for Forgiveness and Reconciliation

Nishkam Centre 6 Soho Road, Handsworth, Birmingham, B21 9BH, United Kingdom



## 6. Declaration of the 10th World Assembly of Religions for Peace

The Peace Charter for Forgiveness and Reconciliation was adopted and globally launched at the 10th World Assembly of Religions for Peace on 20 August 2019 in Lindau, Germany. This global assembly comprised of 900 delegates from 125 countries.

The following declaration was released at the 10th World Assembly.

Religions for Peace 



### DECLARATION OF THE 10<sup>TH</sup> WORLD ASSEMBLY OF *RELIGIONS FOR PEACE* (23 August 2019 | Lindau, Germany)

#### PREAMBLE

We – 900 women, men, and youth – have gathered in Lindau, Germany, coming from 125 countries for the 10<sup>th</sup> World Assembly of *Religions for Peace*. We are grateful for 49 years of determined focus on building peace and on speaking for those most in need. We are an alliance of care, of compassion, of love. We represent a far greater, ever growing, and ever-radiating alliance of “common action” that *Religions for Peace* gladly serves. In that light we acknowledge with sorrow the ways – subtle and gross – that we and our religious communities have fallen-short. Our hearts grieve over the misuse of our faiths, especially the ways they have been twisted to fuel violence and hate. Our alliance honors our religious differences, even as it serves the peace for which the human heart hungers. We gather in hope, convinced that the sacred calls all humanity into shared responsibility for our common good, care for one another, the earth, and its entire web of life.

The burdens of the human family are well-known to us. We know too well war, how it kills, maims, and destroys the lives of the innocent. We know the crushing weight of extreme poverty, how it stunts, humiliates, and plunders. Ten percent of our human family is desperately poor. We know that more than 70 million of us no longer find shelter in the sanctuary of their homes. They are refugees, internally displaced, and persons forced to be on the move. We know we have entered a terrifying new arms race, one that includes modernizing nuclear arms, weaponizing space and artificial intelligence, and new energy weapons. These burdens are profoundly exacerbated by the cataclysmic heating of the earth, decimation of the rainforests, poisoning of the seas, and choking of the web of life.

We are also experiencing what we call a “meta-crisis” of our modern order, which lies behind the United Nations and the agreements our states have made on human rights, the rule of law, and international trade. Freedoms of all kinds, the protections of minorities, and the fabric of our connection have come under attack around the world. On the economic front, a meager handful of the richest persons have more wealth than four billion persons. Adding to the political and economic dimensions of this meta-crisis of modern order, there is today a “meta-crisis” of truth, which challenges the notion of “truth,” while “fake news” is tailored for political or commercial gain. Today, we are buffeted between inconvenient truths and convenient fabrications. The hour is late: we are called to urgent action.

#### CARING FOR OUR COMMON FUTURE: ADVANCING *SHARED WELL-BEING*

Our heart’s inner-most experiences of the sacred and our outer-most social lives cry out to be connected in a state of *positive* peace that *Religions for Peace* calls, “*Shared Well-Being*.” Our different experiences

of the sacred make clear that we are, at root, relational: radically related to the sacred and to all that is caused or embraced by the sacred. As fundamentally relational, our well-being is intrinsically shared. Helping the other, we are helped; injuring the other, we wound ourselves. We fully acknowledge the invaluable roles of women and youth among us and will continually mainstream their irreplaceable contributions. Our different traditions make clear that the sacred establishes us as both responsible for and dependent upon each other and the earth that sustains us. *Shared Well-Being* calls us to commit to all the ways the modern order supports our human dignity. It also calls us to offer in a constructive spirit any complementary contributions from our religions. We affirm the modern order’s recognition of the foundational importance of freedom. At the same time, we are called to show by example the sacred grounding of freedom. It leads through the despair of nihilism, rejects the narcissism of mindless consumerism, and expresses itself as radical care for all.

To our commitment to the importance of human rights, we add our foundational concern for the cultivation of virtues, those habitual orientations to value that sculpt our human potentials. These include our potentials for the most elevated states of mercy, compassion, and love. For us, the labor to become virtuous is not a solitary act; rather, it is an act of “solidarity;” one that can only be achieved by generosity and mutual love. The cultivation of virtue tackles the ignorance, individual egoism, and group egoism that mutilate authentic community.

*Shared Well-Being* also calls for a robust notion of the “common good” that can serve all of us in our efforts to virtuously unfold our rights-protected human dignity. The supreme good for us is the sacred, even as we understand it differently. The common good includes the earth with its air, water, soil, and web of life. The common good also includes just institutions that help each to develop her or his human dignity. These call all of us to a shared and grateful responsibility. Each person is to draw from the common good; each is to help build it up.

Advancing *Shared Well-Being* is concrete. We commit to advancing *Shared Well-Being* by preventing and transforming violent conflicts, promoting just and harmonious societies, nurturing sustainable and integral human development, and protecting the earth.

#### *Preventing and Transforming Violent Conflicts*

We commit to preventing violent conflicts by advancing peace education – from early childhood to adults across our religious communities – focusing on shared values, religious literacy, and narratives of peace. We will build skills in conflict management that address the drivers of conflicts non-violently. Our commitments to transforming violent conflicts are actualized in our Assembly by the religious leaders from Myanmar, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Central African Republic, Nigeria, and South Sudan. Our commitment is also expressed in the religious women represented by those from the Middle East and North African Region in the Assembly plenary. Here, also, religious persons from North and South Korea have worked to construct conditions for peace on the Korean Peninsula. These religious leaders have convened privately in the Assembly to strengthen one another as partners, peacemakers, and healers. We commit to supporting their efforts in their respective countries and regions. We adopt *The Peace Charter for Forgiveness and Reconciliation*, convinced that transforming violent conflicts requires the healing of historical wounds and painful memories, forgiveness, and reconciliation. We commit to integrating efforts for healing into all our conflict resolution work.

To renew our commitment to nuclear disarmament, we pledge to be a full partner of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons. We condemn the existence of nuclear weapons, affirm our support for the *Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons*, and will educate, mobilize, and engage religious communities toward these ends. We also call for immediate steps toward general disarmament including all weapons of destruction – conventional, nuclear, chemical, biological, and those newly emerging.

#### *Promoting Just and Harmonious Societies*

We take heart that multi-religious actors and institutions are working to build just and harmonious societies with a vibrant spirit of care and commitment to justice. We commit to continued common action to tackle injustices, including the large-scale displacement of persons, and resulting challenges from the migration crises – both for refugees and migrants and the societies where they settle. We will make the global forced migration crisis a priority for action. We will lead by example in “welcoming the other.” We commit to instilling the respect, mutuality, and solidarity that are essential to promote, build, and sustain just, harmonious, and diverse communities. A cross-cutting commitment can be education, including religious literacy, from early childhood to adults, that focuses on shared civic virtues and appreciation for social diversity. We will develop an *Alliance of Virtue* based on a declaration of virtues widely shared across religious traditions and other virtue heritages.

We pledge to protect children, vulnerable individuals and communities and advocate for their human rights and well-being in the face of grave suffering. We will speak up forcefully and take action against corruption and for good governance. We commit ourselves to caring and determined effort to address the causes and reality of widespread abuses and violence, especially against women and children. We also commit to common efforts within our communities, with civil society partners and governments to ensure principled freedom of religion worldwide. We, persons of faith, yearn to protect holy sites and feel safe within them. We will preserve and protect holy sites against violence and desecration, partnering with the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations to form living rings for peace around them.

#### *Sustainable and Integral Human Development and Protecting the Earth*

We commit to human development as set forth in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We will foster sustainable and integral human development by promoting the justice, inclusive citizenship, and equal opportunities interwoven through the SDGs. We will champion personal accountability for sustainable consumption, the dignity of labor, and equitable distribution of wealth. We will honor the insights of science and steward progress in digital technology toward the good of all. We will advance universal access to education. We will continue to promote the role of women and youth in society and their leadership in institutions at the local, national, regional, and global levels.

We commit to urgent action against the climate crisis. We will mobilize religious communities to protect the earth – including the promotion of “green congregations.” Leaders and partners in the fight against environmental degradation, our Indigenous brothers and sisters remind us, “when Mother Earth suffers, human beings suffer; when human beings suffer, Mother Earth suffers.” We, guardians and caretakers of earth, endorse the *Faiths for Forests Declaration*. We commit to raise awareness about tropical deforestation and to educate our religious communities about the dire spiritual and sustainability crisis. We will take action to live ecologically balanced and sustainable lifestyles and advocate for government

policies to protect rainforests, defend the rights of Indigenous peoples, and fulfill their pledges to the Paris Agreement on climate change.

#### **CALL-TO-COMMON-ACTION**

Guided by the principles of our own religious traditions, and respectful of religious differences, we personally commit to fostering *positive* peace as *Shared Well-Being*. We will be partners with sincere believers of other religions and all women and men of good will to:

- produce *positive* peace materials and workshops for multi-religious contexts with the Institute for Economics and Peace;
- develop tools and training on the positive roles of women in preventing and transforming conflicts, and on the issue of violence against them;
- acknowledge past hurts – including across religious traditions – and foster public acts of forgiveness and reconciliation;
- work for the well-being of refugees and migrants and develop programs of accompaniment and support;
- urge religious communities to invest their resources in alignment with achieving the SDGs;
- raise public awareness about deforestation with the *Interfaith Rainforest Initiative* and through the acceptance and promotion of the *Faith for Forests Declaration*, take action against climate change in general, and advocate for policies that protect the earth;
- advance reconciliation as a vital dimension of *positive* Peace within persons and among communities and nations as per *The Peace Charter for Forgiveness and Reconciliation*;
- commit to being a full-partner to support the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons;
- forge an *Alliance of Virtue* based on a declaration of virtues widely shared across religious traditions and other virtue heritages.

We speak with humility, asking for support and blessings.



Lindau, Germany



## 7. Peace Charter Development Highlights



**Symposium on Forgiveness and Reconciliation**  
(Nishkam Centre, Birmingham UK, 2 April 2014)



**1st Peace Forum on Forgiveness and Reconciliation**  
(Nishkam Centre, Birmingham, UK, 4 Feb 2017)



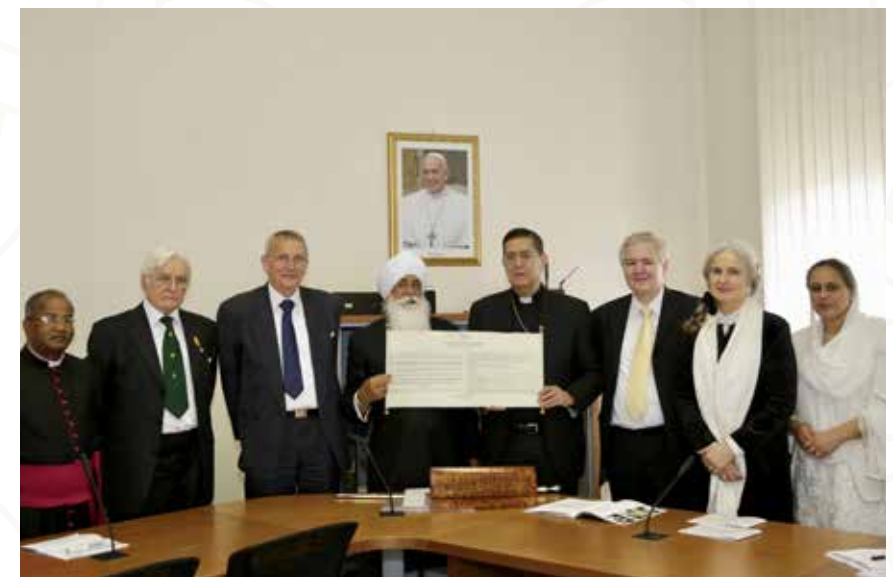
**2nd Peace Forum on Forgiveness and Reconciliation**  
(Nishkam Centre, Birmingham, UK, 4 Feb 2018)



**UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres** discussing the Charter  
(London UK, 10 May 2017)



**His Holiness Pope Francis** blessing the Charter scroll  
(Rome, Italy, 2-3 May 2018)



**Charter Meeting with Members of Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue**  
(Rome, Italy, 2-3 May 2018)

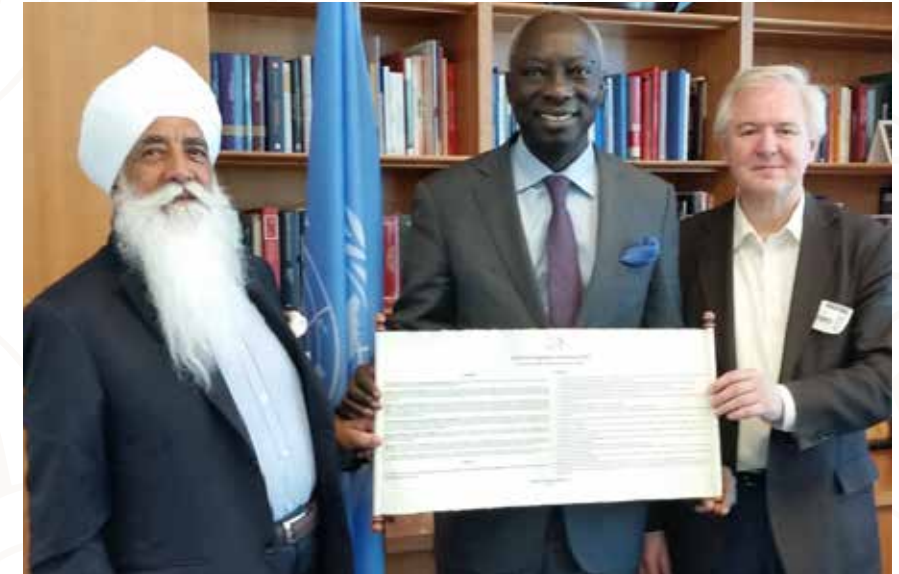
[L to R]  
Father Santiago,  
William Ozanne,  
Dr Marius Felderhof,  
Bhai Sahib Ji,  
Bishop Ayuso,  
Dr Josef Boehle,  
Brigitte van Baren,  
& Dr Gopinder Kaur





**Charter Meeting with Focolare Members**  
*Rome, Italy, 2-3 May 2018*

Dr Josef Boehle,  
 Dr Francisco Canzani,  
 Gloria Duarte,  
 Tim King,  
 Nicoletta Bernasconi,  
 & Bhai Sahib Ji.



Bhai Sahib Ji, **Adama Dieng - UN Under-Secretary-General** & Dr. Josef Boehle  
*UN Headquarters, New York, USA, 8 Nov, 2018*



**Birmingham Faith Leaders Group**  
*Nishkam Centre, Birmingham, UK, 12 Sept, 2018*

Rabbi Yossi Jacobs,  
 Archbishop Bernard Longley,  
 Amrick Singh Ubhi,  
 Rabbi Margaret Jacobi,  
 John Beard,  
 & Bhai Sahib Ji.



Dr. Josef Boehle, **Canon Sarah Snyder- Archbishop's Advisor for Reconciliation,**  
 & Bhai Sahib Mohinder Singh Ahluwalia  
*Lambeth Palace, London, UK, 25 Oct 2018*



Presenting and praying for The Peace Charter at **Peace Pledge Pilgrimage and Conference in Assisi,**  
*Basilica Santa Maria degli Angeli and Portiuncula, Assisi, Italy, 28 June 2018*



Seminar on Forgiveness and Reconciliation  
**7th Parliament of the World's Religions, Toronto, Canada, 2 Nov 2018**

Prof Mohammed Abu-Nimer,  
 Bhai Samrath Singh(GNNSJ),  
 Rabbi David Rosen,  
 Dr Josef Boehle,  
 Sadhvi Bhagawati Saraswati,  
 Bhai Sahib Ji,  
 Delegate of Parliament,  
 Dharma Master Hsin Tao,  
 & Jathedar Singh Sahib,  
 Giani Iqbal Singh Ji





Dr. Josef Boehle, Bhai Sahib Ji and **Bishop Bill Swing**  
 - **President and Founder of the United Religions Initiative (URI)**  
*Toronto, Canada, 2 Nov 2018*



Bhai Sahib Ji, **Hon. Uhuru Kenyatta - Kenyan President**  
 & **Hon. Raila Odinga - Opposition Leader**  
*Kisumu State House, Kenya, Africa, 18 Jan, 2019*



Dr. Josef Boehle, **Dr. William F. Vendley**  
 - **Secretary General of Religions for Peace International** & Bhai Sahib Ji  
*Abu Dhabi, UAE, 8 Dec 2018*



Dr. Josef Boehle, **Prof Robin Mason**  
 - **Pro-Vice-Chancellor (International), University of Birmingham UK** & Bhai Sahib Ji  
*Nishkam Centre, B'ham, UK, 23 Jan, 2019*



Dr. Josef Boehle, Bhai Sahib Ji & **Sheikh Abdullah Bin Bayyah**  
 - **President of the forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies**  
*Abu Dhabi, UAE, 8 Dec, 2018*



**Delegation of Chief Rabbinate Council (Israel)**  
 Visits Gurudwara served by Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha  
*GNNSJ Head-Quarters, Birmingham, UK, 25 March 2019*

Bhai Sahib Mohinder Singh  
 Mr Oded Wiener  
 Rabbi David Rosen  
 Rabbi Prof. Avraham Steinberg  
 Rabbi Rasson Arousi  
 Rabbi Moshe Dagan  
 Dr Brinder Mahon  
 Rabbi Yossi Jacobs  
 Dr Josef Boehle &  
 Rabbi Eliezer Weiss





**Phaldip Singh, Bhai Sahib Ji & Rt Hon. Theresa May,**  
**Prime Minister of the United Kingdom and Leader of the Conservative Party (2016-2019)**  
*10 Downing Street, Westminster, London, UK, 8 May 2019*



**Maria Voce, President of Focolare Movement**  
*Nishkam Centre, Birmingham, UK, 30 June 2019*



**Audrey Kitagawa - Chair, Parliament of the World's Religions**  
*10th World Assembly of Religions for Peace, Lindau, Germany 20 August 2019*



**Dr. Josef Boehle, Mrs Diana Crabtree,**  
**Mr John Crabtree OBE - West Midlands Lord-Lieutenant & Bhai Sahib Ji**  
*The Great Hall, University of Birmingham, 10 August 2019*



**David Eastwood - Vice Chancellor University of Birmingham UK**  
**& Bhai Sahib Mohinder Singh Ahluwalia**  
*University of Birmingham, Edgbaston Campus, August 2019*



**Participants of the Peace building workshop**  
**with the Peace Charter scroll**  
*10th World Assembly of Religions for Peace, Lindau, Germany 22 August 2019*





**Cardinal Michael Fitzgerald**

[President of the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue from 2002 to 2006.]  
 Visits Gurudwara served by Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha  
 Pictured here at the Nishkam Centre with Peace Charter Director, Dr Josef Boehle.  
*GNNJS Headquarters & Nishkam Centre, Birmingham, UK, 15 November 2019*



**The Most Revd Justin Portal Welby**

105th Archbishop of Canterbury and the most senior Bishop in the  
 Church of England with Bhai Sahib Ji.  
*Rising Global Peace Forum, 11 November 2021, Coventry Cathedral, UK*



**Head of Akal Takhat, Singh Sahib Giani Harpreet Singh Ji**  
 Visits Gurudwara served by Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha  
*GNNJS Head-Quarters, Birmingham, UK, 12 January 2020*

The Akal Takhat  
 (meaning throne of  
 The Timeless One)  
 is pre-emptive of the  
 Five Takhats -  
 Seats of Spiritual  
 and Temporal Power  
 of The Sikhs



**The Very Reverend John Whitcombe (Dean of Coventry Cathedral)**  
*Rising Global Peace Forum, 11 November 2021, Coventry Cathedral, UK*





**Charter for Forgiveness and Reconciliation**  
Draft of Charter for Forgiveness, Reconciliation and Reconciliation

**PREAMBLE**

The Charter for Forgiveness and Reconciliation is the fruit of a worldwide movement of prayer and reflection, which has gathered the hearts of millions of people from all continents, cultures and religions. It is a response to the call of the Holy Spirit, who has inspired the hearts of the faithful to seek reconciliation and peace in the face of the suffering and pain of the world. This Charter is a gift to the Church and to the world, a sign of hope and a path towards a more just and fraternal society.

His Holiness Pope Francis blessing the Peace Charter scroll  
(St. Peter's Square, Rome, Italy, 2-3 May 2018)



## 8. Article (Excerpts): Dr Josef Boehle, Forgiveness, restorative justice and reconciliation in sustainable peacebuilding: contemporary debates & future possibilities.

(Introduction, Section 3 Peace Charter, and Conclusion of article (research article pages 103-105 and 119- 123).

The full article is online at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14781158.2021.1910226>

GLOBAL CHANGE, PEACE & SECURITY  
2021, VOL. 33, NO. 2, 103–123  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14781158.2021.1910226>

 **Routledge**  
Taylor & Francis Group



### Forgiveness, restorative justice and reconciliation in sustainable peacebuilding: contemporary debates and future possibilities

Josef Boehle 

School of Philosophy, Theology and Religion, University of Birmingham, Birmingham, UK

#### ABSTRACT

Since the mid 1990s, growing attention has been given in the scholarly debate and in the public sphere to forgiveness, restorative justice and reconciliation in peacebuilding. These concepts have been reflected upon and highlighted as core components of restoring right relationships and in sustainable peacebuilding: at first focusing mainly on individuals and relations between them and later as well on relations of communities and states in the public sphere. Attempts to better understand forgiveness and reconciliation in relation to peacebuilding have to address also the critical issue of how to safeguard and integrate processes of justice into peace processes. After first clarifying the distinction between retributive and restorative justice, this article considers core findings of Daniel Philpott, John Paul Lederach and Leonel Narvaez in their peacebuilding studies and considers selected, contemporary reconciliation and peace initiatives. The article argues that forgiveness, restorative justice and reconciliation processes should be further mainstreamed and integrated as part of any standard response to major conflicts and wars by national political bodies, religious communities and religious/secular NGOs, international organisations, agencies and institutions: in order to positively and sustainably resolve and transform conflicts, wars and violence between groups, and to build sustainable peace.

#### ARTICLE HISTORY



Received 22 July 2019  
Accepted 7 March 2021

#### KEYWORDS

Forgiveness; restorative justice; reconciliation; peacebuilding; religion; public policy

#### Introduction

Over the past decades, forgiveness and reconciliation have been increasingly reflected upon and highlighted as core components of healing and peacebuilding in a multitude of studies and publications: in a first phase focusing mainly on individuals and relations between them, and later as well on relations between communities and states in the public sphere. Amongst the pioneering and leading scholars and practitioners are Robert Enright and Everett Worthington, both with a psychology background and with a focus on the personal

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dimension.<sup>1</sup> Since the mid 1990's growing attention has been given in the scholarly debate and in public policy to the contribution forgiveness and reconciliation can make in peacebuilding and to processes of restorative justice in the public sphere. Reference works like the proceedings of a major 'Forgiveness and Reconciliation' Symposium<sup>2</sup> (funded by the Templeton Foundation) in 2001 and the 'Handbook of Forgiveness'<sup>3</sup> in 2005 have been published in the first decade of the twenty-first century, providing good introductions and an overview of the scholarly debate of the many aspects, conceptual definitions, diverse disciplinary approaches and contexts of forgiveness and reconciliation.

#### *Forgiveness, restorative justice, reconciliation and peacebuilding*

This article focuses on the question of forgiveness and reconciliation in peacebuilding, in contemporary scholarship and in the public sphere over the past 25 years. Any attempt to better understand forgiveness and reconciliation in relation to peacebuilding has to address, at the same time, the critical issue of how to safeguard and integrate processes of justice into peace processes. It is necessary to include justice processes for peace processes to be sustainable and to retain the support of victims of atrocities, large-scale violence and crimes. After first clarifying the distinction between retributive and restorative justice, this article reviews core findings of two selected, leading scholars, as exemplars of the current debate of critical issues in forgiveness, restorative justice and reconciliation scholarship: Daniel Philpott (University of Notre Dame, with a Political Science background) and John Paul Lederach (University of Notre Dame, with a Sociology, Mediation and Conflict Transformation background).<sup>4</sup> These scholars have studied and analysed *private and public aspects* of forgiveness, restorative justice and reconciliation *in relation to peacebuilding*, as well as having included a reflection on the *religious and secular contexts* in their research.

This academic reflection is expanded and contextualised by considering briefly two selected, contemporary examples of peace and reconciliation initiatives in the public

- <sup>1</sup>Robert D. Enright and Joanna North, eds., *Exploring Forgiveness* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998).  
Robert D. Enright, *Forgiveness is a Choice* (Washington, DC: APA Books, 2001).  
Robert D. Enright, *The Forgiving Life* (Washington, DC: APA Books, 2012).  
Robert D. Enright, *8 Keys to Forgiveness* (New York: Norton, 2015).  
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John Paul Lederach, *Building Peace. Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997).

sphere, in the light of the preceding arguments: the work of Leonel Narvaez (a Catholic Priest and social reformer in Colombia)<sup>5</sup> and the Schools of Forgiveness and Reconciliation he founded in Colombia (in Chapter Two) and the Peace Charter for Forgiveness and Reconciliation initiative (in Chapter Three).<sup>6</sup>

In addition, the question is considered why *liberal peacebuilding* overall has been reluctant to integrate forgiveness into its standard practices, whilst restorative justice and reconciliation processes have been increasingly acknowledged and integrated in peacebuilding, conflict resolution and transformation. The article concludes with the recommendation that forgiveness, restorative justice and reconciliation processes (ideally all three processes combined in an integrated process) should be further mainstreamed and more equitably and sensitively implemented as part of any standard, comprehensive response to major conflicts and wars by national political bodies, national and international NGOs, as well as international organisations, agencies and institutions, in order to positively and sustainably resolve and transform conflicts, wars and violence between groups.

The concepts of forgiveness and reconciliation are, not surprisingly, understood and defined in a variety of ways by different scholars, across such diverse disciplines as philosophy, psychology, theology, political science and law, focusing on a range of aspects of these values and describing their varied impact on individuals, communities and societies. In the main, and documented through the examples in this article, forgiveness is seen as an *internal process* or activity of a person, letting-go of a harmful state of mind, and thereby finding freedom and peace of mind and heart. Reconciliation is seen, in the main, as a *process between persons and/or communities* that can take place in private or in public settings, *re-establishing right relationships*. Contemporary discussions and scholarly research concerning *forgiveness* are linked to the closely connected question of its relation to *justice and reconciliation*, whether and how these values are related, if there is an interdependence and interconnectedness between them, if they can be achieved separately and what, in the long-term, could be the most promising route to restore broken relationships and foster healthy and peaceful individuals, families, communities and societies.

### Restorative justice and retributive justice

In any reflection concerning the relation and potential interdependencies between forgiveness, reconciliation and a holistic view of justice the distinction between *retributive justice* and *restorative justice* needs to be taken into consideration, a distinction that was developed in scholarship and practice since the 1980s.

*Retributive justice* seeks punishment for crimes that were committed and assumes that the imposed punitive judgements and sentences serve as a deterrent for the offender not to re-offend and for potential offenders to consider the severe consequences before they engage in criminal activities, thereby preventing crime and unlawful behaviour. Defenders of *retributive justice* consider it to be essential for upholding the rule of law, from

<sup>5</sup>Leonel Narvaez, ed., *Political Culture of Forgiveness and Reconciliation* (Bogota: Fundación Para La Reconciliación, 2010) (English Edition).

<sup>6</sup>Peace Charter for Forgiveness and Reconciliation. See its website: [www.charterforforgiveness.org](http://www.charterforforgiveness.org)

End of first excerpt (pp. 103-105).

Start of second excerpt (pp. 119-123).

of seeking forgiveness and reconciliation, without, at the same time, abandoning the quest for truth and justice, is at the heart of the current debates concerning the peace and reconciliation process in Colombia. Whilst former President Juan Manuel Santos has launched and strongly supported a peace and reconciliation process in 2015, there was a substantial opposition led by former President Álvaro Uribe Vélez and his political party *Partido Centro Democrático* (*Democratic Center Party*) against the Peace Agreement. It was finally ratified by both houses of Congress on November 29–30, 2016, with abstention from the supporters of former President Uribe. The opposition is against implementing, in their view, a premature and unjust peace agreement with the FARC and other armed guerrilla groups. The demand to ensure that justice is maintained and that crimes committed during the civil war in Colombia are prosecuted is central for the opposition to the Colombian peace process. Former President Uribe himself was supporting in 2005 the Justice and Peace Law which was meant 'to create a legal framework that would permit the reintegration of illegal armed groups into society.'<sup>57</sup> In his and his supporter's judgement, apparently, the conditions are not yet given for a just peace, for the upholding of law and a succeeding reintegration of guerrillas into Colombian society. The current President of Colombia, Iván Duque, is seeking to reform and adjust the Peace Agreement, without rejecting it completely.

### 3. Peace Charter for Forgiveness and Reconciliation: an example of a contemporary initiative

In addition to the scholarly debates and political processes on a national level, the public discourse and argument concerning forgiveness, reconciliation and restorative justice are advanced also through a variety of national and international NGOs and peace initiatives, in national and international settings. One such recent initiative, the *Peace Charter for Forgiveness and Reconciliation (PCFR)*<sup>58</sup> was started in 2011 in Birmingham, UK.<sup>59</sup> It is a public and multi-religious initiative that aims to raise awareness for the critical issues that have been debated above and advance the private and public understanding and engagement with forgiveness, reconciliation and peacebuilding. It also aims to make a contribution to a growing recognition and further mainstreaming in national and international public settings for the need to include *forgiveness and reconciliation* in the default, standard responses, formal processes and tools of diplomacy that state actors, NGOs and international agencies offer and apply for the resolution and transformation of conflicts and war. The Peace Charter's global and public launch took place at the *10th World Assembly of Religions for Peace International*<sup>60</sup> on 20 August 2019 in Lindau, Germany where it was

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., 210, 211.

<sup>58</sup>For further information, see the web site of the Peace Charter for Forgiveness and Reconciliation: [www.charterforforgiveness.org](http://www.charterforforgiveness.org).

<sup>59</sup>In 2011, the question of developing a Charter for Forgiveness was raised by Bhai Sahib Mohinder Singh, Chairman, Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha, in a series of conversations between Bhai Sahib Mohinder Singh and Dr Josef Boehle (University of Birmingham). They have co-led the Peace Charter project and organisational development since then. In 2014, Dr William Vendley, former Secretary-General of *Religions for Peace International*, embraced the Charter idea, vision and project and he joined as Co-convenor the Peace Charter project. A Charter Editorial Panel with 13 members was set up in 2016 to jointly develop the Charter text and to safeguard universal ownership and a high-quality Charter. <https://www.charterforforgiveness.org/processes/> See Peace Charter Information Brochure (accessed February 18, 2021).

<sup>60</sup>For further information on Religions for Peace International, see its web site: [www.rfp.org](http://www.rfp.org) For information on the 10th World Assembly of Religions for Peace, see: <https://www.rfp.org/10th-world-assembly-of-religions-for-peace/> (accessed December 11, 2020).



formally adopted by the World Assembly as Action Point 1 and it was subsequently included in the 5 year strategic plan (2020–2025) of Religions for Peace International.

The Declaration of the 10th World Assembly of Religions for Peace, announced on 23 August 2019, stated: “We – 900 women, men, and youth – have gathered in Lindau, Germany, coming from 125 countries for the 10th World Assembly of Religions for Peace. We are grateful for 49 years of determined focus on building peace and on speaking for those most in need. We are an alliance of care, of compassion, of love. ... . We adopt The Peace Charter for Forgiveness and Reconciliation, convinced that transforming violent conflicts requires the healing of historical wounds and painful memories, forgiveness, and reconciliation. We commit to integrating efforts for healing into all our conflict resolution work.”<sup>61</sup>

The *Peace Charter* and the 10th World Assembly of Religions for Peace is mentioned here as an example of the growing public awareness and public discourse that is considering the indispensable contribution forgiveness and reconciliation processes can make to transform conflicts, restore justice for all and secure sustainable peace.

Forming a consensus on how to integrate forgiveness and reconciliation remains challenging however, and critical issues that need to be addressed in multi-religious, public initiatives like the Peace Charter include: the challenge to balance religious and secular language and religious and secular worldviews; gaining and maintaining acceptance in religious and secular environments, amongst religious communities, spiritual movements and in secular, public institutions; avoiding the appearance of religious syncretism and giving no single religious tradition a preferred or pre-eminent status; and retaining a focus on shared, universal values, such as forgiveness, reconciliation, justice, peace.

A concise statement reflecting on the multiple challenges on the path of inter-religious peacebuilding was given by Pope John Paul II three decades earlier, responding to similar concerns and necessities of equitable partnerships, when he addressed senior leaders of diverse religions, and the world at large, during the World Day of Prayer for Peace on 27 October 1986 in Assisi, Italy:

The fact that we have come here does not imply any intention of seeking a religious consensus among ourselves or of negotiating our faith convictions. Neither does it mean that religions can be reconciled at the level of a common commitment in an earthly project which would surpass them all. Nor is it a concession to relativism in religious beliefs, because every human being must sincerely follow his or her upright conscience with the intention of seeking and obeying the truth. Our meeting attests only – and this is its real significance for the people of our time – that in the great battle for peace, humanity, in its very diversity, must draw from its deepest and most vivifying sources where its conscience is formed and upon which is founded the moral action of all people.<sup>62</sup>

#### 4. Conclusion and outlook

The argument proposed here in this article is that (1) forgiveness as well as political and communal reconciliation after conflict are very much needed on community and national

<sup>61</sup>Declaration of the 10th World Assembly of Religions for Peace, 23 August 2019, Lindau, Germany. <https://www.rfp.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Declaration-of-the-10th-World-Assembly-of-Religions-for-Peace-FINAL-2-1.pdf> (accessed December 10, 2020).

<sup>62</sup>Pope John Paul II, Address to Heads and Representatives of the Christian Churches and Ecclesial Communities and of the World Religions, Assisi, Italy, 27 October 1986. [https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/1986/october/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_spe\\_19861027\\_prayer-peace-assis.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/1986/october/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19861027_prayer-peace-assis.html) (accessed May 20, 2018).

levels *and* that (2) local and national reconciliation and peacebuilding benefits from being supported and strengthened by national and international organisations, wherever possible, through *national and international norms, practises and formal processes*. Such norms, practises and processes on the issues of forgiveness and reconciliation are still being further developed and discussed, and there is no widely accepted, *standard response*. It is important to keep in mind, however, the widespread consensus amongst conflict resolution and peacebuilding practitioners and scholars that resolutions of local and national conflicts and restoration at community level have to be created by the local and national concerned parties *themselves* and that *insider mediation* is key.<sup>63</sup> Any international support from the outside can only *assist* the local and national actors: with external expertise and collected depositories of past learnings, with the intention to help the conflict parties in achieving their reconciliation and peacebuilding goals, through facilitation and mediation, by creating safe spaces, by being a witness, by providing funds and by adding contextual and historical insights.

There are many local and national initiatives to advance forgiveness and reconciliation as part of post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding. Best known amongst these are the many ‘Truth (and Reconciliation) commissions’ (different authors have counted between 40–50 national commissions) that have been set up in many countries after major conflicts over the past 40 years. These are seen by some as an emerging new international norm for processes of national reconciliation, democratisation, and post-conflict reconstruction.<sup>64</sup> However, these national initiatives, organisations and commissions are in general not focused on advancing these values and practises beyond their national contexts and spaces. There is therefore a substantial and timely need to further raise awareness, deepen understanding and advance the public discourse concerning forgiveness, restorative justice and reconciliation inside international agencies and institutions, as well as in the international public sphere, aiming to create and mainstream international norms and standards in response to these critical issues.

Initiatives such as the Peace Charter for Forgiveness and Reconciliation (PCFR) aim to address this institutional and public challenge by working at local, national and global levels. They seek to advance the public and political discourse on these three inter-related values (forgiveness, reconciliation and peacebuilding) in the contexts of international agencies and institutions, and in the formulation of international norms and policies.

A variety of international non-governmental organisations and networks, government departments, as well as academic research centres are considering the contribution that forgiveness and reconciliation processes can make for building sustainable peace and are engaged in reconciliation work.<sup>65</sup> Reconciliation processes are increasingly and more

<sup>63</sup>*Supporting Insider Mediation: Strengthening Resilience to Conflict and Turbulence*, UNDP Report, 2014. <http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/crisis%20prevention/Supporting-Insider-Mediation--Strengthening-Resilience-to-Conflict-and-Turbulence--EU%20Guidance%20Note.pdf> (accessed June 3, 2018).

<sup>64</sup>Michal Ben-Josef Hirsch, Megan MacKenzie, and Mohamed Sesay, ‘Measuring the Impacts of Truth and Reconciliation Commissions: Placing the Global “Success” of TRCs in Local Perspective’, *Cooperation or Conflict* 47, no. 3 (2012): 386–403.

<sup>65</sup>For example, see the research reports: ‘Mapping on Approaches to Reconciliation’ (March 2019) written by Prof Simon Keyes for the Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers: <https://live-peacemakersnetwork.pantheonsite.io/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Mapping-on-Approaches-to-Reconciliation.pdf> (accessed December 11, 2020). ‘Pathways for Peace : Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict’ published by the World Bank (2018): <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/28337> (accessed December 11, 2020).

widely accepted, whilst forgiveness processes are still often considered to be fraught with difficulties and to be a matter first of all for each individual victim to address. This reluctance to engage more formally and institutionally with forgiveness is observable especially in secular contexts and settings. For reconciliation and peace processes to succeed and to be sustainable, all constituencies and communities that are part of a conflict and have suffered from it need to be engaged.

In large parts of the world this includes religious and indigenous communities. Respect for religious and secular diversity, and the uniqueness of the 'other', as well as the challenge and necessity for all citizens to develop a shared understanding in public discourse and in public institutions across very diverse worldviews, are critical concerns that need to be taken seriously if forgiveness and reconciliation are to be better integrated into the highly secular international institutions of our time. A genuine understanding of these critical concerns is therefore essential for inter-religious, inter-cultural, public initiatives that seeks public endorsement and support in pluralistic societies in a post-secular world.

Jürgen Habermas, one of today's best known and leading public intellectuals, expressed succinctly in his reflections on *Religion in the Public Sphere* the common challenge of seeking mutual understanding in the public sphere, requiring openness as well as the ability to communicate from both secular and religious citizens:

Moreover, religious citizens must develop an epistemic stance toward the independence of secular from sacred knowledge and the institutionalized monopoly of modern scientific experts. ... ..

Finally, religious citizens must develop an epistemic stance toward the priority that secular reasons enjoy in the political arena. This can succeed only to the extent that they convincingly connect the egalitarian individualism and universalism of modern law and morality with the premises of their comprehensive doctrines. ... ..

However, secular citizens are likewise not spared a cognitive burden, because a secularist attitude does not suffice for the expected cooperation with fellow citizens who are religious. ... .. Instead, the insight by secular citizens that they live in a post-secular society that is epistemically adjusted to the continued existence of religious communities first requires a change in mentality that is no less cognitively exacting than the adaptation of religious awareness to the challenges of an ever more secularized environment.<sup>66</sup>

Better integrating forgiveness and reconciliation practices with international peacebuilding therefore means ensuring the participation of a diversity of communities and cultural and religious traditions, finding language that is acceptable across many different worldviews and cultures, engaging religious and secular citizens, reaching out across a multitude of interests, constituencies and communities, and engaging with private individuals and public officials. Openness, respect and inclusiveness are essential qualities

See also: The Winchester Centre for Religion, Reconciliation and Peace at the University of Winchester: <https://www.winchester.ac.uk/research/building-a-sustainable-and-responsible-future/centre-for-religion-reconciliation-and-peace/>  
The Jena Center for Reconciliation Studies at the Friedrich Schiller University Jena: <https://www.jcrs.uni-jena.de/>  
The Mary Hoch Center for Reconciliation at George Mason University: <https://carterschool.gmu.edu/research-and-impact/centers/mary-hoch-center-reconciliation>

<sup>66</sup>Jürgen Habermas, 'Religion in the Public Sphere', *European Journal of Philosophy* 14, no. 1 (2006): 14,15.

See also Jürgen Habermas, 'Notes on a Post-secular Society' (2008). English version online at <http://www.signandsight.com/features/1714.html> (accessed May 21, 2018).

(German original first published as: 'Die Dialektik der Säkularisierung', *Blätter für Deutsche und Internationale Politik* 4 (2008).

for processes of healing, for restoring broken relationships between individuals and communities, when seeking sustainable peace and when safeguarding justice, and while searching for unity in diversity, locally, nationally and globally. These are the complex and often conflicting demands of the concrete work of forgiveness, reconciliation and restorative justice, especially in increasingly pluralistic societies.

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# Peace Charter for Forgiveness and Reconciliation

## Preamble

The vision of the Peace Charter for Forgiveness and Reconciliation is that the process of forgiving is vital if healing and reconciliation are to take place, as part of our collective efforts to seek justice, harmony and sustainable peace.

Fostering and practising forgiveness has the power to transform memories and deep-seated responses to legacies of injustice, conflict and war. It can liberate people from being imprisoned in their pasts and long ingrained mental and emotional conditions. Faith and spiritual traditions guide and inspire us to awaken the best of our human potential, by practising compassion, mercy, kindness, love, forgiveness and reconciliation, and to positively reshape our destinies.

Forgiveness is understood as an activity arising directly out of a compassionate consciousness, rooted in the awareness that we all belong to one human family. Compassion is an indispensable spiritual disposition in every faith, religion, dharam, or deen, as well as for our everyday human relations. Forgiveness is fostered by our experience of unconditional love and mercy, and an inner calling to live magnanimously and responsibly. It stems from our ability to see a larger context to our individual and collective existence, and from our impulse to lovingly seek and forge genuine and sincere bonds with one another as brothers and sisters.

*[First three paragraphs of the Preamble]*

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