2018 PARLIAMENT REPORT

THE PROMISE OF INCLUSION, THE POWER OF LOVE:
Pursuing Global Understanding, Reconciliation, and Change

November 1 - 7
125 Years of the Parliament

1893

Chicago, USA | Attendees: 4,000+

Hosted as part of the World Columbian Exposition on the shores of Lake Michigan, the World’s Parliament of Religions marks the first formal gathering of representatives of Eastern and Western spiritual traditions. Today, the 1893 Parliament is recognized as the birthplace of formal interreligious dialogue worldwide.

1993

Chicago, USA | Attendees: 8,000

A century later, in 1993, the Parliament of the World’s Religions was convened in Chicago with people from all over the world coming together to celebrate diversity and harmony. At the 1993 Parliament, an assembly of religious and spiritual leaders gave its assent to a groundbreaking document, Towards a Global Ethic: an Initial Declaration.

1999

Cape Town, South Africa | Attendees: 7,000

In cooperation with local partners, the Parliament hosted the second modern day Parliament of the World’s Religions in Cape Town, South Africa in December 1999. At the 1999 Parliament, the Parliament presented a new document, A Call to Our Guiding Institutions - addressed to religion, government, business, education, and media - to invite these institutions to reflect on and transform their roles at the threshold of the next century.

2004

Barcelona, Spain | Attendees: 9,000

The 2004 Parliament of the World’s Religions welcomed 9,000 participants from 74 countries to the site of Barcelona’s Universal Forum of Cultures. This unique gathering, held July 7-13, was organized by the Council for a Parliament of the World’s Religions in partnership with the Universal Forum of Cultures—Barcelona 2004 and in association with the UNESCO Centre of Catalonia.

2009

Melbourne, Australia | Attendees: 7,000

A sustainable, healthy world was a major theme of the Melbourne Parliament bringing energy from all corners of the earth to address environmental issues. The Australian Government chose to issue a national apology to the aboriginal groups at the Parliament which convened elders of the Indigenous worldwide.

2015

Salt Lake City, USA | Attendees: 10,359

Hosted at the Salt Palace and inspired by the theme “Reclaiming the Heart of Our Humanity,” attendees heard challenging and illuminating words from spotlighted groups; Indigenous Peoples, Emerging Leaders, and Women. War and Violence, Climate Change, and Income Inequality were discussed at length in plenary sessions. The Inaugural Women’s Assembly focused on the goals, struggles, and triumphs of faithful women throughout the world.

2018

Toronto, Canada | Attendees: 8,324

The world’s oldest and most diverse global interfaith event marked its 125-year anniversary by bringing together leaders and followers of more than 118 spiritual and secular traditions to “pursue global understanding, reconciliation, and change” in the world’s most culturally diverse city. In total 8,324 individuals from 81 countries participated in the Toronto Parliament reflecting on the theme, “The Promise of Inclusion, the Power of Love: Pursuing Global Understanding, Reconciliation, & Change.”
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Our Mission

The Parliament of the World’s Religions was created to cultivate harmony among the world’s religious and spiritual communities and foster their engagement with the world and its guiding institutions in order to achieve a just, peaceful, and sustainable world. To accomplish this, we invite individuals and communities who are equally invested in attaining this goal.

Our Vision

The vision of the Parliament of the World’s Religions is of a just, peaceful, and sustainable world in which:

• Religious and spiritual communities live in harmony and contribute to a better world from their riches of wisdom and compassion.
• Religious and cultural fears and hatreds are replaced with understanding and respect.
• People everywhere come to know and care for their neighbors.
• The richness of human and religious diversity is woven into the fabric of communal, civil, societal and global life.
• The world’s most powerful and influential institutions move beyond narrow self-interest to realize common good.
• The Earth and all life are cherished, protected, healed and restored.
• All people commit to living out their highest values and aspirations.

Our Approach

The Parliament of the World’s Religions seeks to promote interreligious harmony, rather than unity. The problem with seeking unity among religions is the risk of loss of the unique and precious character of each individual religious and spiritual tradition; this understanding is key to our framework. Interreligious harmony, on the other hand, is an attainable and highly desirable goal. Such an approach respects, and is enriched by, the particularities of each tradition. Moreover, within each tradition are the resources (philosophical, theological, and spiritual teachings and perspectives) that enable each to enter into respectful, appreciative and cooperative relationships with persons and communities of other traditions.
November 1, 2018 marked the opening of the seventh global convening of the Parliament of the World’s Religions in Toronto.

The 2018 Parliament joins a 125-year legacy of innovations and breakthroughs in global interfaith dialogue and relationships across the gulfs of spiritual, ethnic, and national identities, in search of a common humanity and shared ethic. This forum, unlike any other, is designed to create a framework for all to fill with visions of a new future informed by deep commitments to faith and conscience.

The seventh convening of the Parliament of the World’s Religions was held in Toronto, Ontario, Canada November 1-7, 2018. It was appropriate that the most inclusive interfaith organization in the world met in what the United Nations has called the “most diverse city” on earth.

Three critical issues – addressing climate change, promoting justice, and countering hate, violence, and war – and three constituencies – Indigenous peoples, women and girls, and the next generation of emerging leaders – were the themes that anchored the program. Eight and a half thousand participants from more than 70 countries and 50 religions gathered for the week that featured 10 plenaries, 1,000 breakout sessions and workshops, music and dance performances from around the world, art galleries, a film institute, a cultural and educational exhibition hall, and free, daily langar meals for all attendees.

Highly engaged, creative task forces vetted hundreds of topic proposals, presenters, and plenary speakers to craft an outstanding curriculum of global experts and practitioners. Many evaluations of the event praised the program and rated it superior to previous Parliaments. This success can be attributed to the time, energy, thought, and prayer offered by scores of task force members of multiple faiths and backgrounds.

What may have been appreciated the most, however, were opportunities to engage individually and casually with persons of other ethnicities, nationalities, cultures and religions. One such meeting can perhaps represent thousands of meaningful interactions during the week.

From her Kansas City home, Carrah Quigley came to Toronto. She is the daughter of Robert Bechtel, who in 1955, long before Carrah was born, walked into his dormitory at Swarthmore College with the intent of murdering fellow students. Having suffered severe bullying all of his young life, including in his college dorm, the 22-year old entered the room of a random student - not one of his bullies - shooting and killing 18-year old freshman Francis Holmes Strozier. Shocked at what he had done, Becktel emptied his gun in the hallway as he fled, later
surrendering to police. Found not guilty by reason of insanity, he was sentenced to life confinement in the Fairview State Hospital for the Criminally Insane. There, Robert began reading the story of Mahatma Gandhi and contemplating Gandhi’s teaching on non-violence, which changed his life. Five years later, a judicial panel - following psychiatric recommendation - determined Bechtel was no longer insane nor a threat to society, and he was released. A graduate degree, strong marriage, birth of two daughters and a 34-year acclaimed career as a psychology professor at the University of Arizona followed.

Carrah was 19 before her father told her of his youthful crime of rage, but also how Gandhi’s message of peace and nonviolence transformed his life. So, she decided to go to Toronto to see Arun Gandhi, the Mahatma’s grandson. When they met, she - the daughter of a man who had murdered another, and he - the grandson of a man who was murdered by another, shared an emotional conversation as Carrah recounted how the life of Arun’s grandfather had saved her father’s life.

I am proud of the work that trustees, staff, and volunteers contributed to make this international conference so memorable. It was a privilege for me to serve the Parliament as chair of the board of trustees, and personally enriching to make new friends of many religions in all the places where I represented the 125-year old interfaith organization. I will always look back on my experiences with the Parliament of the World’s Religions, especially in Toronto, with fondness and gratitude.

Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Parliament of the World’s Religions at the 2018 Parliament in Toronto

Robert P. Sellers
THE PROMISE OF INCLUSION & THE POWER OF LOVE: Pursuing Global Understanding, Reconciliation, & Change

As the light of dawn rose in the horizon on Thursday, November 1st in Toronto, 8,300+ people began to gather at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre (MTCC) for the seventh Parliament of the World’s Religions.

People from 81 nations, representing 118 diverse religious and faith traditions joined the Parliament from November 1 - 7, 2018 in pursuit of global understanding, reconciliation, and change.

The theme of the 2018 Parliament highlighted the critical belief that notions of understanding, reconciliation, and change are only made possible when the world’s religious and spiritual communities, and the guiding institutions within these, live up to the promise of inclusion and the power of love that are rooted in the theologies of religious and spiritual traditions.

The theme was also inspired in part by the character of its host city. In Toronto, advancing civic partnerships among faiths and guiding institutions to work for economic, climate, or racial and sectarian justice means solving conflicts in ways that reflect the Parliament’s methods: increasing the roles of the world’s next generations, women and girls, Indigenous communities, and minority communities, including immigrants and refugees.
What I think is wonderful about the movement created by the Parliament is that it provides us with an opportunity to reflect and to remind ourselves of certain basic things that we need to understand and, that in fact, require us to change. It is not that change is an option, it’s that change is the ONLY option.

**Dr. Larry Greenfield,**
Executive Director of the Parliament in 2018

Those of you who have made a decision to attend, to participate in, give up your time and money and energy to be part of a gathering devoted to something as radically idealistic but as practically necessary that is the claim that there is greater promise for ourselves and our world in being as inclusive as possible in all that we do, rather than being divided and excluding.

And to the even more radically idealistic but practically necessary claim that love is the most powerful instrument to sustain our lives, to enrich all of our lives, and to bring about the change in the world that we sense is needed.

**Bob Rae,**
Special Envoy of Canada to Myanmar
THE CRITICAL ISSUES, OUR CRITICAL CONSTITUENCIES

Under the leadership of programmatic Task Forces, made up of members of diverse regional, national, and religious backgrounds, the 2018 Parliament program was designed to provide guests with unique learning, networking and engagement opportunities.

Eight signature tracks made up the majority of the programming at the 2018 Parliament of the World’s Religions and highlighted key critical issues facing the global interfaith movement.

CLIMATE ACTION: CARE FOR OUR EARTH, RESPONSIBILITY FOR OUR FUTURE
Human experience and scientific evidence reinforce the conviction of the Parliament of the World’s Religions that the reality and basic causes of climate change are settled science. We are also convinced that the evidence for the danger posed by human-caused climate change is irrefutable.

For all persons of good faith, 2018 was a year of action to reduce human-caused greenhouse emissions and to prepare for and address the inescapable consequences of the changes we’ve already imposed upon the planet.

COUNTERING WAR, HATE & VIOLENCE: PEACE AND LOVE: NOT WAR, HATE & VIOLENCE
Religion’s role within humanity is a storied history with war, hate, and violence. Religion has been properly used to promote peace, tolerance, compassion, and love among peoples, believers and non-believers alike. Unfortunately, religions have been (mis)used by some to obstruct justice and harmony, to practice intolerance and violence against the “others.” The Countering War, Hate & Violence Task Force’s assembly on Peace and Love: Not War, Hate and Violence examined how people and communities of faith and principle can work together to move the world toward peace, love, justice, and inclusivity.

JUSTICE: ADVANCING CONCRETE CHANGE TOWARD A JUST, PEACEFUL, AND SUSTAINABLE WORLD
The Justice Assembly featured a diverse array of speakers and performers from around the world.

The three parts of the assembly focused on understanding, reconciliation, and change, with a strong call to action on behalf of a more just, peaceful, and sustainable world.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES’ PROGRAM: THE SPIRITUAL EVOLUTION OF HUMANITY & HEALING OUR MOTHER EARTH
The Indigenous Peoples’ Program offered a platform for the esteemed leadership of Indigenous Nations to share traditional knowledge systems with the public in a sacred manner to forge relationships that can shape the consciousness of humanity and in doing so, set the course of the future for the next 7 generations.
Adopted by the Parliament in 1993, the Global Ethic expresses the shared ethical commitments of the world’s religious, spiritual, and secular traditions. It was expanded in 2018 with language elaborating a commitment to a culture of sustainability and care for the Earth. The program highlighted the relationship between the work in which presenters are engaged and the Global Ethics’ five ethical directives: respect for life, economic justice, truth and compassion, women’s rights, and care for the Earth.

Today we are at a watershed moment for women’s rights and human dignity. From the historic women’s marches to sexual harassment scandals and social media campaigns such as #MeToo, women have been speaking out in bold new ways and serious attention is being given to women’s issues worldwide. Women’s empowerment took center stage and the 2018 Parliament served as a major voice in this expanding movement.

In addition to the Parliament’s eight signature tracks, the full program also featured a Sacred Space track, a Science & Religion track, a Canada track, and a specially curated track by interfaith partner, the Charter for Compassion.

Additional tracks were organized by Fetzer Institute, Faith of Life, and Guru Nanak Darbar Gurudwara Dubai UAE. Explore the 2018 Parliament programming by track on the Parliament app!
The Opening of the 2018 Parliament of the World’s Religions began with the lighting of a Sacred Fire and a traditional procession hosted at Olympic Park, led by leaders from Ontario’s First Nations communities: the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Six Nations of the Grand River, and Haudenosaunee Confederacy.

Indigenous leaders and Parliament attendees offered invocations to the Sacred Fire, asking the Creator for guidance during the gathering and acknowledging the Beings in creation, giving thanks and gratitude for life.

Once all participants entered the Exhibit Hall, Chiefs Ava Hill and Stacey Laforme welcomed attendees to their spiritual and ancestral lands. Both speakers expressed excitement at getting to showcase Indigenous spiritual practices throughout the coming week. Chief Laforme emphasized individual uniqueness, reciting a poem that declared that human beings “are complex creatures dreamed in the mind of the creator.”
Toronto is a place unlike any other, a cosmopolitan city considered to be the home of the most diverse communities in the world. The gateway to numerous regions, Toronto is Canada’s largest city and the home of host First Nations, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy and the Mississaugas of the Credit.

The city joined a unique cohort of diverse hosts that have welcomed the historic Parliament of the World’s Religions and the global interfaith movement.

Canadian leaders welcomed the 8,300+ attendees with special messages ingrained with the city’s motto, “Diversity: Our Strength.”

This city of Toronto was the traditional gathering place for many Indigenous peoples and today serves as the gathering place of all of you who represent our global religions.

MINISTER AHMED HUSSEN
Canadian Minister of Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship

In our differences, despite our differences, through our differences, we discover a common search for the divine, a common will to build a better world, a common struggle for a sustainable planet, and a common bond to fight for social justice.

COUNCILLOR JOE MIHEVC
Toronto City Councillor
Keynotes

Minister Ahmed Hussen is the Canadian Minister of Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship and MP for York South-Weston.

Gobinder Singh Randhawa is the Chairman of Ontario Sikh and Gurdwara Council (OSGC) and Toronto Sikh community elder.

The Honourable Elizabeth Dowdeswell is the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, viceregal representative of the Queen in Right of Ontario.

Karen Hamilton is the former General Secretary of the Canadian Council of Churches (2002-2017) and Co-Chair of the Toronto Planning Committee for a PoWR.

Councillor Joe Mihevc serves as midtown area councillor for the city of Toronto.

Rev. Dr. Karen Hamilton

Zul Kassamali is the President of the Toronto Area Interfaith Council & the National Alliance for the Advancement of Pluralistic Societies and served as Co-Chair of the Toronto Planning Committee for a PoWR.
As thousands of attendees marveled at the heartfelt messages of welcome from representatives of the First Nations of Canada, government officials, and community representatives, Parliament organizers shared their own welcome with an opening plenary on “The Promise of Inclusion, the Power of Love.”

In the keynote speeches, internationally recognized faith and spiritual leaders highlighted efforts to be more inclusive and how these efforts helped forge mutual understanding between them and others.

Wande Ambimbola recognized that many Africans practice religions like Christianity or Islam along with Indigenous religious traditions. This influence only strengthens the reach and popularity of Indigenous spirituality. Similarly, Doctor Simran Jeet Singh galvanized all to recognize that they are divinely connected and to adopt more accepting worldviews.
Keynotes were sure to challenge attendees to look beyond the basic definition of inclusion and love. Parisa Khosravi emphasized this in a heartfelt reflection, “We need to know the facts, reach across borders and barriers, marvel at our sameness and find compassionate solutions for the less fortunate. Inclusion and compassion, values which this gathering is all about and our world needs much more of these days.”

Rev. Jim Wallis galvanized the audience to take immediate action against policies they thought were unjust, and emphasized the importance of stepping out of interfaith silos, “How do we take all of what is in this room...and take all of that to the streets these days?”

The ceremony concluded with a message from His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, delivered via video recording, and prayer delivered by Dharma Master Hsin Tao. Asking attendees to ruminate on their dependence on the Earth, Dharma Master Hsin Tao called for urgent action on climate change. He also requested the Parliament to accept a new global ethic focused on ecological impact.

Energetic, uplifting performances by Ernie Tollar, the Six Vocalists, Move the World, and Neha Shah kept up the positive energy in the Exhibit Hall. The plenary was emceed by Veena Howard and Maduba Ahmad, who confidently led the proceedings throughout the night.

Thousands of attendees left the Plenary that night, ready to continue the discussion in the days ahead.

REWATCH THE FULL PROGRAM
Keynotes

Dr. Robert P. Sellers
served as the Chair of the Parliament of the World’s Religions at the 2018 Parliament.

Wande Abimbola
is the Ifa spokesperson, former Vice-Chancellor of Obafemi Awolowo University, and founder of the Ifa Heritage Institute.

Parisa Khosravi
is a strategic adviser, veteran journalist, and former news executive at CNN.

Dr. Robert P. Sellers

Wande Abimbola

Parisa Khosravi

Dr. Simran Jeet Singh
is the Assistant Professor at Trinity University, Senior Religion Fellow for the Sikh Coalition, and Fellow at the Truman National Security Project.

Rev. Jim Wallis
is the President and Founder of Sojourners, public theologian, and social activist.

Lobsang Nyandak
is the President of The Tibet Fund.

Dr. Simran Jeet Singh

Rev. Jim Wallis

Lobsang Nyandak

H.H. the 14th Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, is the spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhism and was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989.

Bruce Knotts
is co-chair of the UN NGO Committee on Human Rights, the chair of the NGO Committee on Disarmament, Peace and Security, and a member of the Board of Trustees of the Parliament.

Dharma Master Cheng Yen
is a Taiwanese Buddhist nun and founder of the Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation.

H.H. the 14th Dalai Lama
Via Video Address

Bruce Knotts

Dharma Master Cheng Yen
Via Video Address
We need to adopt a worldview where there is no other. Everything is a part of ourselves because we are all connected by divinity.

“DR. SIMRAN JEET SINGH
Sikh Activist & Assistant Professor in the Department of Religion at Trinity University
Indigenous ideas and spirituality were on full display during Friday morning’s assembly, where Indigenous leaders from around the world spoke about the importance of supporting Indigenous communities and protecting the natural world. Emcees Bob Goulais and Trina Moyan began the event by acknowledging Indigenous peoples’ ancestral claims to Toronto and the impact First Nations have had on the area. Two First Nations children then recited a thanks-giving invocation in their native language, a greatly moving moment lauded by speakers and attendees alike, for its emphasis on intergenerational knowledge and the critical preservation of Indigenous cultures, languages, and lands.

Indigenous advocates reminded attendees that the spiritual values promoted by Indigenous people have greatly influenced our societies, although Indigenous people lack the political representation and rights to participate fully in our societies. For example, Chief Perry Bellegarde mentioned that preserving the planet is a central tenet of Indigenous spirituality and that climate activists can gain a lot from adopting an Indigenous worldview. Chief Sidney Hill emphasized the moral imperative of climate change, stating that, “our mandate as leaders is to make sure that all that we have is still there for the next generations.” Meanwhile, Margaret Lokawua advocated that the international community create more policies that protect Indigenous people in the face of widespread discrimination and violence.

Canada’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission was prominently highlighted during the assembly to both emphasize Indigenous communities’ resolve and to call attention to flaws in the process. Grand Chief Wilton Littlechild noted that for a process like the Reconciliation Commission to be successful, officials must implement the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People in addition to embracing love and inclusion. Dr. Debra Harry notes that pursuing reconciliation between Indigenous and state governments is
difficult - prejudiced beliefs are embedded into the laws of many nations - but it is necessary for a more harmonious relationship between the two entities.

Many speakers emphasized the unique role women can play in revitalizing and advocating on behalf of religious communities. As part of a special panel featuring Indigenous women from Canada, Hawaii, and Nigeria; Naomi Leleto Lanoi described how Maasai women exercise leadership in their communities, and that involvement of her sisters and other Indigenous women in decision-making is critical to stopping problems many Indigenous communities face. Dr. Manulani Meyers, in this same panel, spoke about how significant women are in Indigenous Hawaiian culture, and shares the importance of sisterhood and acknowledging the trauma faced by our communities and transforming them into action-based change.

Attendees were not only exposed to Indigenous voices from around the globe, but were also treated to performances from Indigenous artists like Red Sky Ensemble and Lyla June Johnson, representing different First Nations.

Indigenous communities have much to teach the world about peace and sustainability and Indigenous people must be included in all interfaith efforts to make lasting change. Attendees left this morning assembly with a better understanding of the critical work Indegenous communities are leading in the world and an acknowledgment of the ways in which communities of faith must serve as better allies in the critical fight for truth, justice, and reconciliation.
Keynotes

Chief Perry Bellegarde (Cree Nation) is the National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations.

Chief Sidney Hill is a member of the Onondaga Nation and international Indigenous rights activists.

Margaret Lokawua is the Director of the Indigenous Women Environmental Conservation Project and former member of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

Chief Jim Dumont is an Ojibway-Anishinabe of the Waubezhayshee (Marten) Clan and professor at the University of Sudbury of Laurentian University.

Grand Chief Littlechild is a Cree chief, residential school survivor, and lawyer who has worked with the UN to advance Indigenous rights and Treaties.

Dr. Debra Harry is an Indigenous rights activist and expert on Indigenous involvement in biotech development.

Naomi Leleto Lanoi is a member of the Indigenous Maasai community of East Africa and manager of a land and property rights project based in Kenya.

Dr. Manulani Meyer is a Native Hawaiian and scholar dedicated to Hawaiian education.
This gathering is so important, this Parliament of the World’s Religions... people that pray, people of spirit.

“CHIEF PERRY BELLEGARDE
Cree Nation, National Chief
How can people of faith establish camaraderie with practitioners from other faith traditions? What are the benefits of interfaith cooperation? How can members of the interfaith community channel their common values into action? These questions and more were posed by speakers at the Faith and Interfaith evening plenary on Friday, which stressed how interfaith action can bring about radical change.

To better understand others, speakers encouraged the crowd to look beyond their identities and see commonalities in others. Swami Tyagananda stressed how living according to our values helps us find our true identities, and that “our true identity connects us with everyone.” Dr. Robert Sellers, serving as Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Parliament, acknowledged that although some religious people believe they should proselytize, sharing their “correct spiritual path, all spiritual paths are equally valid and must be accepted by interfaith leaders”. Valarie Kaur, addressing the audience via video recording, advocated for the adoption of a global ethic focused on revolutionary love and inclusivity. One of the ethic’s primary tenets is to love others, including strangers, the way they want to be loved, in all their differences. She also encouraged attendees to view the setbacks and challenges facing our communities as the “darkness of the womb, not the darkness of the tomb” and continue to strive for a social movement not of resistance, but of rebirth.

The world faces many challenges, but presenters noted that the interfaith community is well equipped to address global issues. As Rachel Parent indicated, cultures of love and understanding help interfaith activists view climate action as a moral imperative - a necessity to sustain life. Despite adversity, religious communities persevere. Rev. Victor Kazanjian encouraged us to deepen our understanding of trauma and allow ourselves to weep and grieve, “...for the loss of life and suffering and then we go back to meeting that hate, that violence, with revolutionary love and radical inclusion.”
Leaders galvanized the audience to act on several issues of critical importance. Many speakers indicated that the proliferation of hate speech and terrorism with the rise of social media usage is a significant problem. Cardinal Blase Cupich not only called for religious people to call out indifference in response to tragic events but to also “strengthen the conviction that we are one single human family.” His Holiness the Gyalwang Karmapa, via video address, recommended that the interfaith community work in tandem with scientists to promote a moral and technical approach to saving the environment. Another frequently mentioned issue was the unequal involvement in religious and secular spaces - religious leaders must support women’s rights.

Coming away from this plenary, it was apparent to all that interfaith cooperation can be revolutionary if only people of faith understand and accept others as equals. His Holiness the Karmapa summed it up best when saying that we, “should not only uphold and preserve our religious traditions - we also have the responsibility to increase peace and happiness in the world. We must not forget that we all live together on this Earth.” The plenary set a precedent for addressing major issues later on in the Parliament.

Dr. Tarunjit Butalia took the lead on this night serving as the emcee, and performances from the Unity in Diversity choir and singers led by Ruth Broyde Sharone, the creator of Interfaith: The Musical, put attendees in a joyous mood before they left the Parliament.
Keynotes

Swami Tyagananda is the head of the Vedanta Society in Boston and the Hindu Chaplain at Harvard and MIT.

Dr. Robert P. Sellers served as the Chair of the Parliament of the World’s Religions at the 2018 Parliament.

Rachel Parent is the founder of Gen-Earth and environmental youth activist.

Swami Tyagananda

Dr. Robert P. Sellers

Rachel Parent

Valerie Kaur is the founder of the Revolutionary Love Project, a Sikh civil rights activist and faith leader.

Rev. Victor Kazanjian serves as the Executive Director of the United Religions Initiative.

Cardinal Blase J. Cupich serves as the ninth archbishop of the Archdiocese of Chicago.

Valerie Kaur Via Video Address

Rev. Victor Kazanjian

Cardinal Blase J. Cupich

His Holiness the 17th Gyalwang Karmapa, is the head of the 900 year old Karma Kagyu Lineage and guide to millions of Buddhists around the world.

HH the 17th Gyalwang Karmapa Via Video Address
Faith must be linked incontroversibly to interfaith. In a world such as ours, we no longer have the luxury of staying in our own religious silos.

“ROBERT P. SELLERS
Chair of the Board, Parliament of the World’s Religions
The Women’s Dignity Assembly opened with a special video message from Her Majesty Queen Rayna of Jordan and built on the momentum from the first Women’s Assembly in 2015. The 2018 Women’s Task Force Chair, Dr. Elizabeth Ursic, gave an overview of the projects initiated by the members of the 2018 Women’s Task Force that included: the 1,000 Women in Religion Wikipedia campaign, the Dignity of Women Sacred Teachings project, and the International Declaration by Religious and Spiritual Leaders and Advocates to End Sexual Violence. She then introduced a free downloadable poster created for the event titled, Dignity of Women Across the World’s Wisdom Traditions, with young women reading scriptures from their respective faith traditions with female elders from the traditions standing at their side.

This Women’s Assembly proved to be as historic as the 2015 inaugural assembly.

The first female chair of the Parliament, Audrey Kitagawa, was announced during the program and performances by Dance to Change the World, singer Roula Said, and Friends of the Red Tent movement performed throughout the assembly, refreshing everyone’s spirits. Female practitioners of all major faith traditions were represented during several of these performances.

The 2018 Assembly called for the end of violence against women and more female representation in faith and interfaith leadership circles. Members of this women’s movement recognized that they have made progress in their efforts but that there is still much work to do.

In all faiths, women’s participation enriches communities’ experiences and traditions, yet, some people seek to restrict women’s rights in the name of religion. All speakers called for an end to violent practices.
rooted in sexism by appealing to the belief in human dignity for all, shared by most religions. Phyllis Currott who organized the inaugural Women’s Assembly in 2015 said that “we shifted the moral compass by collectively declaring that the justification of discrimination and violence against women and girls on the grounds of religion is unacceptable.” The 2018 speakers shifted that compass even further.

Having women in leadership positions in every part of society is, as Reverend Susan Johnson describes, an affirmation of women’s personhood. When women assume powerful positions, their unique views enrich decision-making and make their organizations more representative of 51% of the global population. And yet more often than not, young women are socialized to believe that leadership is a “male” descriptor. Kiran Bali emphasized the critical importance of female leaders believing in themselves, “And if we have that self believe, that conviction, and that fearlessness, no barrier or no prejudice can halt our journey.”

Throughout the world, individuals are working to undo the sexist systems that keep women from achieving their potential. From Margaret Lokawua’s Ugandan Indigenous women’s organization to Hugh Locke’s Haitian small-holder farms initiative to Armene Modi’s Indian bicycle bank for young girls, people of faith have worked in their communities to enfranchise women and girls.

Ultimately, the assembly motivated women and allies to work on their projects to promote women’s rights in their communities and stand up for their beliefs despite the durability of misogyny.

REWATCH THE FULL PROGRAM
Queen Rayna of Jordan is the wife of H.M. King Abdullah of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

Karma Lekshe Tsomo is a Professor and Scholar of Buddhist Studies at the University of San Diego.

Kiran Bali serves as the global chair of the United Religions Initiative.

H.M. Queen Rayna of Jordan
Via Video Address

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Karma Lekshe Tsomo

Kiran Bali

Rabbi Mariam Margles serves as the Rabbi for Toronto’s Danforth Jewish Circle in Toronto and a Jerusalem Fellow at the Mandel Leadership Institute.

Bani Dugal is the Principal Representative of the Bahá’í International Community to the UN and Vice Chair for the UN Security Council’s NGO Working Group Steering Committee.

Rev. Susan C. Johnson is the first female National Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC).

Rabbi Mariam Margles

Bani Dugal

Rev. Susan C. Johnson

Rabbi Mariam Margles

Bani Dugal

Rev. Susan C. Johnson

Margaret Lokawua serves as the Director of the Indigenous Women Environmental Conservation Project and former member of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

Azza Karam served as the Senior Advisor on Culture at the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

Armene Modi is the Founder of Ashta No Kai (ANK) and social activist.

Margaret Lokawua

Azza Karam

Armene Modi
We cannot have progress in humanity through the oppression, suppression, depression, and ignoring the voices and participation of women across the board.

"AUDREY KITAGAWA
Chair-Elect of the Board of Trustees, Parliament of the World’s Religions
We can pursue mutual understanding in a variety of ways, but we must be willing to listen. Although featured speakers talked about achieving understanding through the lens of their unique faith traditions, they all acknowledged that the first step in fostering understanding is to reach out to people who were different from them. Once we achieve mutual understanding, leaders can build strong communities and advocate for shared principles around the world, in pursuit of radical change.

Speakers connected their personal stories of experiences with diverse audiences to their calls for interfaith action on promoting values and tackling challenges. Rabbi David Rosen spoke about his efforts to establish an interreligious partnership between Jewish and Christian communities in Cape Town and how he learned that “in order to truly be understood, I need to understand.” Reverend Elijah Brown talked about his visit to the Ukraine “gray zone,” where Russian and Ukrainian forces repeatedly butted heads and in the meantime religious groups made tangible efforts to understand both sides by providing humanitarian assistance to civilians in the zone. His experiences with these communities shaped his call to action to return to our own communities and become, “…those people of faith who work to ensure that the religious minorities in our communities also have the right to live according to the dictates of their conscience?”

Others talked about how we can change our mindsets to become better listeners. Dr. Karen Armstrong encouraged all to let go of their egos to better look after others’ interests, stating that “if we want a viable world, we must give to our so-called enemies today.” Dr. Ingrid Mattson conveyed that “the reality of the human state is that we cannot know even ourselves without the other.” She reminded us that the forces that shape our personal development are often imperceptible to us. Rabbi Rosen also promoted the idea of
“spiritual envy” in the interfaith movement, in that interfaith activists should find aspects of other faiths that they deeply admire.

The interfaith community also used this forum to debate how it can cooperate to solve shared challenges. Dr. Weiming Tu urged the crowd to adopt spiritual humanism. Interfaith activists all share the belief that human life is precious and has meaning. Dr. Mattson warned that fear is, “the greatest source of irrational violence in the world today,” because it is manipulable. To counter instances of violence and hatred, we must recognize that these events are the product of power and dominance. People of faith must rise to this challenge by valuing humility and acting with compassion.

This plenary featured performances from internationally-renowned artists including Lucina Yue, Pei-Wen Liao, Agnė Radzevičiūtė, Morley, Daniel Nahmod, and Carolina. Parliament Trustee, Andras Corban-Arthen served as an expert emcee.

The Plenary on Understanding marked the halfpoint of this week-long transformative gathering. Thousands of attendees connected with like-minded people ready to change the world. They bonded over their unique, spiritual experiences during the presentations, workshops, activities, and langar meals. And as the participants would see in the forthcoming days, the opportunities to practice radical love and inclusion would equip them with the tools to be agents of change.
Keynotes

Dr. Weiming Tu is a scholar of Neo-Confucianism and Confucian culture.

Dr. Ingrid Mattson is a scholar and Windsor Community Chair at Huron University College and former Director of the Center for Christian-Muslim Relations at Harford Seminary.

Rev. Dr. Elijah M. Brown serves as the 9th General Secretary of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA).

Dr. Karen Armstrong is a religious historian and former member of the High Level Group of the UN Alliance of Civilizations.

Rabbi David Rosen serves as the International Director of Interreligious Affairs of the American Jewish Committee and member of the Chief Rabbinate of Israel’s Committee for Interreligious Dialogue.
To stand above the other, and therefore to assume superiority over the other, is the fundamental barrier to understanding itself.

“DAVID ROSEN
International Director, Interreligious Affairs of the American Jewish Committee
Climate change is real. And the guiding principles of the world’s religious and spiritual traditions reaffirm the importance of caring for the Earth. The Climate Change assembly led by emcee David Hales, Chair of the Climate Action Task Force, reaffirmed this principle and challenged communities of faith and conscience to care for others whose homelands may be destroyed by the impacts of global warming including rising sea levels and natural disasters. From Greenland to the Marshall Islands, speakers from different continents highlighted how quickly the environment is changing in their regions. There is no Planet B - if people of faith want to change the world, protecting our planet is an urgent priority.

Many speakers decried past inaction by discussing the disastrous impact climate change has already wrought. Elder Angaangaq Angakkorsuaq noted that ice melt in the Arctic threatens the livelihoods of Indigenous peoples living there. Reverend Rachel Mash reminded us of all the water restriction efforts needed to pull Cape Town out of its drought in early 2018. Davi Kopenawa Yanomami asked the audience why societies have destroyed ecosystems in vital locations like the Amazon basin for economic benefit when they could look to Indigenous people for guidance. For thousands of years, native peoples have been responsible stewards of their lands.

The audience was, thus, called upon to reimagine its relationship with nature so humans may live more sustainably. But what is required of humanity to enact these changes? First, we must “melt the ice in the heart of man,” per Elder Angakkorsuaq’s guidance. We need to remember that we are tied to the Earth and that caring for it helps us care for others. Second, we must work with institutions to reduce or stop practices with serious environmental impact. For Vandana Shiva, this means that the financing, extraction, and use of fossil fuels must stop. For Wande Abimbola, people must protect the world’s flora and fauna.
from the effects of global warming.

We were reminded that living conditions will only worsen without immediate climate action. Father Joshtrom Isaac Kureethadam indicated that “the early and disproportionate victims of the ecological crisis...are the poor, who have contributed least to causing the crisis in the first place.” The wealthiest 10 percent of people are responsible for half of the world’s greenhouse gas emissions. Kathy Jetnil-Kiljner’s poem “Dear Matafele Peinem” prompted us to think about those who may be stateless in the future because they are from an island or low-lying nation. Christiana Figueres and Reverend Dr. John Chryssavgis eloquently reiterated the moral necessity of action, calling on all of us to adapt or face future catastrophes. Ms. Figueres declared that we must “ensure that generations to come have the livelihood and wellbeing we have been able to enjoy on Mother Earth.”

Performances from Six Nation Drummers, Mark Masri and Amoy Brown, Nemo and Daniel, Buddhist monks, and Ernie Tollar lifted attendees to their feet. And a recitation of the Fifth Directive of the Global Ethic at the conclusion of this assembly by members of the Board of Trustees recognized that humanity’s relationship with Mother Earth should be forged by respect and gratitude. We must alter our lifestyles to reduce our environmental impact on others.

Enthusiasm spread like electricity throughout the Exhibit Hall as attendees rededicated themselves to joining the global faith climate movement, guided by the Fifth Directive’s foundational text and the inspiring calls to action of the featured speakers.
Angaangaq Angakkorsuaq is a Greenlandic Elder, Shaman, and environmentalist.

Reverend Rachel Mash serves as the Environmental Coordinator of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa and member of the steering committee of the Anglican Communion Environmental Network.

Davi Kopenawa Yonomami is a Yanomami spokesman, shaman, and advocate for Indigenous land rights.

Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner is a poet and climate change activist from the Marshall Islands.

Christiana Figueres is the Former Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and organizer of 2015 Paris Climate Agreement.

Vandana Shiva is the founder of Navdanya and a world-renowned environmentalist & activist.

Dr. Ingrid Mattson serves as a scholar and Windsor Community Chair at Huron University College and former Director of the Center for Christian-Muslim Relations at Harford Seminary.

Rev. Dr. John Chryssavgis serves as the Archdeacon of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and Theological Advisor to the Ecumenical Patriarch.
We are running out of time to do the right thing. We are running out of time to do what is not just morally responsible, but perhaps even more importantly the only morally acceptable thing to do in our generation, which is to ensure that generations to come have the livelihood and wellbeing we have been able to enjoy on Mother Earth.

CHRISTIANA FIGUERES
Former Executive Secretary, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
Nimo Patel and Daniel Nahmod are frequent singer/songwriter collaborators with a humanitarian background.


Aviva Chernick is an award-winning singer, singing in Hebrew, Ladino, and English.

Nimo and Daniel

Red Sky: First Nations Contemporary Dance Ensemble

Aviva Chernick

Shahid Ali Khan Ensemble is led by a Canada based singer in the Qawwali genre, a musical tradition that dates back over 700 years.

ReBorn is an ensemble of singer/songwriter that came together to participate in the 2018 Parliament.

Roula Said is a multi-faceted vocal artist, percussionist, and one of Canada’s leading lights in the world of bellydance.

Shahid Ali Khan Ensemble

ReBorn

Roula Said

Keertani Jatha of Sikh Youth Alliance of North America is a group of Sikh young adults from the US and Canada, whose recital will create a feeling of shared humanity and mutual respect.

Unity in Diversity Choir is a choir organized by Jack Lenz, a passionate humanitarian, acclaimed composer, producer, and musical director.

Jon Anderson is a British-American singer, songwriter, and multi-instrumentalist known as one of the most recognizable lead voices in progressive rock and the creative force behind the band Yes.

Keertani Jatha of Sikh Youth Alliance of North America

Unity in Diversity Choir

Jon Anderson
This night of Sacred Music inspired, uplifted, and created a feeling of awe and reverence through the music of the world’s religions. It represented old and new, traditional and modern, male and female, and provided a sense of community and sacred experience. The night began with a prayer from Dharma Master Hsin Tao and a special welcome from Gillian Gonda, Program Director of Fetzer Institute, followed by moving performances from diverse artists representing faiths, cultures, and traditions around the world.

Sunday, Nov. 4

SACRED MUSIC NIGHT

Meerambika Kulkarni and Shiv Nadkarni partnered together to share a Kathak dance, an Indian classical dance.

Yael Deckelbaum is an award-winning Israeli/Canadian singer/songwriter, activist, and founding member of Habanot Nechama.

Lixin is a creative spirit with a commitment to art as healing. Lixin's started the Journey of Harmony Project, a series of concerts, workshops, and cultural events across China and the globe promoting dialogue and harmony.

The Toronto Sacred Music Night was made possible with the support of the Fetzer Institute and the musical direction of Jack Lenz.
Building off of the wisdom shared at the Plenary of Understanding, the Justice Assembly instructed all on how communities of faith can take action and create a more peaceful world. The Assembly was organized around the three stages of justice: understanding/acknowledgment, reconciliation, and action, with three panels of knowledgeable leaders in human rights and law work each addressing one stage. Pursuing justice is a demanding but necessary process, one that as attendees learned challenges us to look within our own principles and communities for systemic change.

Speakers during the first part of the Assembly discussed the past and present injustices faced by people, throughout the world, particularly by Indigenous communities. They also spoke about ways they are advocating for change in their own communities or questioning pre-existing norms. Njeri Kabeberi elaborated on the work Greenpeace Africa is doing in Sub-Saharan Africa to combat environmental corruption. During the panel on justice and injustice, leaders talked about how they created sympathy for their cause among people with little knowledge of it. Naresh Jain defined the Jain concept of ahimsa, which calls on practitioners to be respectful of others and reuse and share resources, to stress how religious values can help us understand what is just. Dr. Miguel de la Torre mentioned how Christianity in the West is influenced by Colonialism and encouraged participants to question the cultural values embedded in their religious traditions.

Addressing their experiences with reconciliation, panelists noted that unjust ideas are as embedded in systems, like laws and cultural norms, as they are in individuals. Laws and norms must be challenged, and the marginalized must assist in creating legislation. Payam Akhavan stated that “we need to
understand that beyond having the right laws and institutions, we need to have the social forces that ensure that we speak truth to power and that those laws are realized.” Ponyum Sunim elaborated on his work advocating for the dignity of North Korean refugees among South Koreans, remarking that he only made progress when he got South Koreans to look beyond their political apathy for their neighbors and learn about the plight of refugees. Isabella Alexander described her experiences in refugee camps in Northern Africa, quoting a woman she worked with on a documentary, Mama DuSalu: “I do not need to believe everything that you believe in order to respect you and your rights to the basic things that all humans desire...but I do need to believe that what you believe doesn’t strip me of those same things.”

Informing the audience on the different types of action they have taken to establish justice movements, panelists indicated that spreading information about injustice and discrimination to both marginalized and privileged people helped them gain support. Mohammed Lamin Saidykhan expressed that “we need to educate the masses to be aware and be conscious of their rights.” John Cobb Jr. closed the event by calling on the crowd to not only pursue political activism but to support the work of others, acknowledging that all activism aimed at creating peace and justice is intertwined.

Based on the sage words of the Assembly speakers, Vy Vu created and showcased a painting about the redemptive power of reconciliation and justice. The Red Sky Ensemble, Mazare Rogers, an Amazonian choir, and a youth choir offered uplifting performances. Phillip Clayton served as the panel moderator and emcee, deftly guiding the conversations.

REWATCH THE FULL PROGRAM
Keynotes

Njeri Kabeberi

Njeri Kabeberi is the Executive Director of Greenpeace Africa and social justice and women’s rights activist.

Margaret Lokawua

Margaret Lokawua serves as the Director of the Indigenous Women Environmental Conservation Project and former member of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

Naresh Jain

Naresh Jain is the Co-founder of Educare Foundation in New Jersey and International Jain Sangh; Parliament Trustee Emeritus.

Isabella Alexander

Isabella Alexander serves as a visiting Assistant Professor in the Departments of Anthropology and Film & Media Studies at Emory University and documentary filmmaker.

Miguel De La Torre

Miguel De La Torre serves as Professor of Social Ethics and Latinx Studies at the Iliff School of Theology and Executive Director of the Society of Race, Ethnicity, and Religion.

Eriel Deranger

Eriel Deranger is the Executive Director and Co-Founder of Indigenous Climate Action (ICA) and Denesuline Indigenous woman.

John Borrows

John Borrows (Anishinaabe) is a Canadian academic and jurist. He is a full professor of law at the University of Victoria Faculty of Law, where he holds the Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Law.

Payam Akhavan

Payam Akhavan serves as Professor of International Law at McGill University and is a member of the Permanent Court of Arbitration.

Ponmyum Sunim

Ponmyum Sunim is the Founder and Guiding Zen Master of Jungto Society; Founder of the Join Together Society and Good Friends.
I continue to struggle not because I think I’m going to win, probably I won’t, but I continue to struggle because in the struggle I discover my own humanity and I discover my own faith.

— MIGUEL DE LA TORRE
Executive Director, Society of Race, Ethnicity, and Religion
As attendees gathered for the fifth night of the Parliament in Toronto, it was not lost to them how extraordinarily fitting it was to explore the notion of “truth and reconciliation” as Canada grapples with its own process. This plenary delves deeply into the experiences of Indigenous communities and people around the world in overcoming divisions to create greater justice and peace. Reconciliation may take different forms in different contexts, but successful reconciliation processes create more harmonious relationships between entities. Plenary speakers provided insight into the actions Canada has taken to apologize to Indigenous residential school victims. Others talked about contemporary human rights issues still plaguing the world and urged political and faith leaders to stop harmful practices.

Chris Peters, this plenary’s emcee, recognized at the beginning of the event that “there can be no justice on stolen land.” That view was expressed by leaders on the panel of Indigenous women on reconciliation, who indicate that First Nations not only had most of their lands taken away from them but that narratives about Canada do not accurately reflect the contributions of First Nations people. The truth and reconciliation process helps Indigenous people better understand their relationship with and place in Canada and the rest of the world. The panelists also recognized that the meaning of reconciliation differs for everyone, but noted that it involves creating a more equitable and inclusive society. Jessica Bolduc, one of the featured panelists, called upon all of us to “be radical explorers of truth.”

Vernon Masayesva described how the Hopi nation is facing the potential desecration of its holy sites and reminded plenary participants to fight for the injustices they experience, especially when people’s rights
are attacked. Dharma Master Hsin Tao asked us to live in peaceful coexistence with the Earth, in response to rampant environmental degradation throughout the world, “We need to move towards coexistence and diversity in order to achieve true reconciliation and peace.”

Phyllis Curott spoke of the abuse and violence women and girls face globally, often in the name of religion, and galvanized religious leaders to condemn these practices. She added that violence against women often goes against many faiths’ core values and asserted: “the world’s religions can no longer allow the domination, subjugation, and violation of half of humanity.” Chaplain Tahera Ahmad recounted her experiences growing up Muslim in Chicago and hearing from an Afghan boy during a goodwill mission to his country. These experiences attracted her to reconciliation work, but she struggles with helping those dealing with trauma grow and thrive. She learned that “we need to be...healers for each other because reconciliation starts...with listening to the story.”

In the world’s most culturally diverse city, where there is a large degree of religious and civic harmony, participants at this plenary became more mindful about how to achieve lasting and sustainable change and create more inclusive societies in their contexts. As Beverly Jacobs said during the panel of Indigenous women: “As human beings, we are part of all creation. If we are part of all creation, we have the responsibility to take care of her and everyone around her.”

Abraham Jam and Anwar shared uplifting musical performances this evening.

REW WATCH THE FULL PROGRAM
Keynotes

**Eriel Deranger**
is the Executive Director and Co-Founder of Indigenous Climate Action (ICA) and member of the Denesuline First Nation.

**Beverly Jacobs**
is a practicing lawyer in the Six Nations of the Grand River Territory and Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Law, University of Windsor.

**Jessica Bolduc**
serves as the Executive Director of the 4Rs Youth Movement and member of the Batchewana First Nation.

**Vernon Masayesva**
is the leader of the Water Coyote Clan, Hopi Independent Nation, Executive Director of the Black Mesa Trust, and Former Chairman of the Hopi Tribal Council.

**Dharma Master Hsin Tao**
is the founder of the Wu Sheng Buddhist Monastery and the Museum of World Religions.

**Phyllis Curott**
served as the Vice Chair Emerita of the 2015 Parliament and one of America’s first public Wiccan Priestesses.

**Tahera Ahmad**
serves as the Associate Chaplain and Director of Interfaith Engagement at Northwestern University.
The word reconciliation is something that everyone wants to define as being one thing, and it’s important to recognize that the word and the process of reconciliation means something different, and we have a lot to draw from in our teachings.

“Jessica Bolduc
Executive Director, 4Rs Youth Movement
Throughout world history, religion has been used to both justify and condemn conflict and violence. The Countering War, Hate, and Violence assembly explore the critical role of communities of faith and spirituality as an antithesis to conflict, hate speech, and growing violent movements. Speakers at this assembly addressed the contemporary impacts of war, emphasized religion’s positive role in curbing violence over its negative uses, and outlined how spiritual values can be used in conflict resolution.

Many speakers discussed how modern warfare violates people’s dignity and human rights, including Father Joshtrom Isaac Kureethadam, who provided an overview of different Catholic Popes’ treatises on peacebuilding. He quoted Pope Francis when saying: “Let’s never tire of repeating: the name of God cannot be used to justify violence. Peace alone is holy.” Dr. Matthew Bolton reviewed the different risks nuclear weapons pose to humanity; the destruction of lands, potential misfires, fatal illnesses for survivors. Dr. Emily Welty talked about how she was able to succeed in nuclear disarmament advocacy when she framed nuclear weapons as an affront to moral values. She shared her mission statement: “If our holy texts say we need to love our neighbor, that we are obligated to engage in the repair of the world, that there is something fundamentally sacred about human dignity, then we cannot support any notion of security that is based on nuclear deterrence.”

After seeing his two daughters die during the Syrian Civil War, Dr. Izzeldin Abuelaish shared his inspiring decision to become the voice of innocent people in conflict-affected regions. Sakena Yacoobi, an Afghani humanitarian, divulged about her heart-rending work in war zones, at one point stating: “every one of us has the
Leaders identified two main causes of violence: hatred and disinformation. Dr. PL DeSilva quoted Voltaire: “If we believe in absurdities, we shall commit atrocities.” He frames the cultivation of hatred as a power grab by particular leaders and implores the audience to adopt nonviolent action, rule of law, democratic norms, and human rights. Shilapiji Maharaj Sadhviji mentioned how discussing and reading about conflict exaggerates conflict because if we think in more extreme ways, we become more extreme. Swami Agnivesh cited the 1984 anti-Sikh riots in Northern India when noting that minorities in most societies typically receive the brunt of violence because the majority is told to hate them. To bring an end to conflict proliferation, Agnivesh said that, “the power of love should mean standing up to those who are brazenly in love with power.” Indeed, the Reverend James Lawson reiterates this point by demonstrating how effective nonviolence is in resisting the forces of greed and domineering power. Ms. Sadhviji revealed how she approaches nonviolent practice, saying that “nonviolence does not just mean not committing violence. The proactive practice of peace, love, compassion, and tolerance for everyone is crucial.”

Women can also play a key role in stopping violence. Dr. Abuelaish noted that women have been left out of decision-making for too long and, with their participation in institutions, the world can become peaceful. Ms. Yacoobi concurred: “once the women are included, the peace will take place.”

The morning assembly was emceed by Parliament Trustee, Thomas Lemberg.
Payam Akhavan is Professor of International Law at McGill University, Member of the Permanent Court of Arbitration, and a former UN prosecutor at The Hague.

Arun Gandhi, grandson of Mahatma Gandhi is an author, journalist, public speaker and agent of change in the philosophy of nonviolence.

Shanta Premawardhana serves as the President of OMNIA Institute for Contextual Leadership.

Payam Akhavan is a Professor of International Law at McGill University, Member of the Permanent Court of Arbitration, and a former UN prosecutor at The Hague.

Arun Gandhi, grandson of Mahatma Gandhi is an author, journalist, public speaker and agent of change in the philosophy of nonviolence.

Shanta Premawardhana serves as the President of OMNIA Institute for Contextual Leadership.

Father Joshtrom Isaac Kureethadam is Coordinator of the Sector of Ecology and Creation at the Vatican Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development.

Dr. Matthew Bolton is the Director of the International Disarmament Institute and Associate Professor at Pace University.

Dr. Emily Welty is a Professor and Director of Peace and Justice Studies at Pace University and Vice Moderator of the World Council of Churches Commission on International Affairs.

Dr. PL DeSilva is the Executive Director of the Institute for Strategic Studies and Democracy, former combatant in the Sri Lankan Civil War.

Dr. Izzeldin Abuelaish is a peace activist, healthcare professional, and author of I Shall Not Hate.

Sakena Yacoobi is the Founder and Executive Director of the Afghan Institute of Learning (AIL).
Have we all become so atomized and brutalized that we are numb, paralyzed, unable to mobilize and engage in nonviolent direct action to bring about justice, the rule of law, and the strict adherence to the Geneva Conventions and the laws of war and the promotion of democratic values, norms, and civil and human rights? What kind of legacy are we bequeathing to the next generations of humanity?

“DR. PL DE SILVA
Executive Director, Institute for Strategic Studies and Democracy
People under the age of 25 make up about 42% of the global population, yet are left with the brunt of the responsibilities and repercussions of issues facing the world while being kept from the decision making processes aimed at addressing them. Youth have repeatedly shown that they are mobilizing and taking action, recognizing that they cannot wait for older leaders to speak for them. The next generation of leaders represented in the interfaith movement call on faith and community leaders to be more intersectional and inclusive in our actions; matching both policy and practice. Assembly speakers highlighted the work done by activists within the interfaith movement on topics including climate change and Indigenous rights. They demanded that youth be granted a voice in institutions and that challenges facing young people be taken seriously.

The only evening assembly of the seventh Parliament of the World’s Religions opened with a moving performance from Solaris.

Next Generation Task Force co-chairs Sara Rahim and David Lewis-Peart, serving as the evening’s emcees, emphasized the importance of the conversations occurring at the Assembly and Parliament in bringing about healing and engagement across divides. Lewis-Peart encouraged everyone to think about the impacts of their work, saying that “the collective work we all in this room endeavor to do is...fraught with instances of complication and challenge.”

Maria Montejo offered a special welcome from First Nation youth and discussed the Indigenous values passed down to her and how we are all capable of making radical change. She galvanized the audience and got them on their feet, sharing that: “...you are so divinely designed that your being can meet that free will head-on and you have the capacity to create worlds.”

Abubakar Khan shared a story about how the Vancouver interfaith community worked together to help the homeless population after a snowstorm and how, like these
specific faith communities, we can cooperate by contributing our distinctive values, identities, and worldviews to a collective movement. He concluded his speech with this statement: “If we can just choose love over fear, if we can connect with someone...we’re going to end up changing and there’s going to be a massive ripple effect. And I know that then we can move forward and we can be better together.” Jessica Bolduc spoke of her work in First Nations communities, where she helps reframe the historical narratives Indigenous people are taught. She notes that “the context of our history and how we understand history matters, because it forms the foundation of what we are meant to believe about ourselves and each other.”

The last assembly of the week ended on a high note, as three global leaders shared their stories of creating radical change. Frank Fredericks, the founder of World Faith, talked about how he is using data to improve sustainable peacebuilding outcomes. Habiba Dahir shared lessons from working at the local level in gender and security at the grassroots level in the horn of Africa to spur others to take action and urged the inclusion of all generations in decision-making processes. Eboo Patel, the founder of Interfaith Youth Core (IFYC), highlighted the ways in which collective action is most effective when people are empowered to realize how they can best contribute to the cause. He noted the power of movements guided by religion, stating: “We don’t inherit traditions, we work to make ourselves worthy of them.”

The young people represented at this assembly reminded us that the interfaith movement is in good hands and that, across the identity spectrum, people are committed to promoting inclusion and taking an action-oriented approach to building bridges.
Keynotes

Maria Montejo
(Deer clan) is a member of the Jakaltec/Popti (Mayan) community of Indigenous people who reside in the Xajla territory of Guatemala.

Abubakar Khan
is the Co-Founder of The Chosen Khan and Member of Vancouver Helping Hands.

Jessica Bolduc
is the Executive Director of the 4Rs Youth Movement and member of the Batchewana First Nation.

Frank Fredericks
is the Founder of World Faith and Mean Communications.

Habiba Dahir
serves as the Program Officer for Women in International Security - Horn of Africa (HoA).

Eboo Patel
is the Founder and President of Interfaith Youth Core and former Participant in President Obama's Inaugural Faith Council.
Young people need to be heard... not to be spoken for and not to be spoken to. Instead, we need to establish an inclusive mechanism, intergenerational conversation. We must learn of the wisdom of our elders to create a path for young people to build the future they want.

“HABIBA DAHIR
Program Officer, Women in International Security - Horn of Africa (HoA)
The final plenary of the 2018 Parliament catalyzed attendees to take the knowledge they accumulated throughout the week and apply it in their communities and institutions. We can end the division that splinters our societies and work with our neighbors to promote collaboration and peace. The interfaith movement is greater than ourselves, and although the world faces many challenges, we can overcome them by drawing on the wisdom from numerous faith traditions that emphasize the powers of inclusion and love. Speakers reminded us of how major themes interwoven throughout the Parliament harkened back to the desire for radical change that connects us all.

Toronto Mayor John Tory thanked the Parliament for holding the 2018 gathering in the city and stressed how bringing people with different backgrounds together was especially important during a time when nationalism was on the rise around the world. Larry Greenfield, Executive Director of the Parliament, believes that the world’s religions can play a major role in creating radical change, but only if we urge our religious institutions to change in tandem. Lady Kanwaljit Kaur described how regarding everyone as equals helps us to better build a more cohesive society and challenged attendees to discover what the theme of the night means in their everyday lives, “If we truly believe in the promise of inclusion and the power of love, we should be prepared to live to our ideals, no matter what the cost.”

Bob Rae reminded us how change is not only something to which we should just aspire but that it is necessary for the present, given the seriousness of global challenges. He quoted former Canadian Prime Minister Wilfred Laurier, saying: “Never forget that faith is stronger than doubt, and love is stronger than hate.” Reverend William Barber, addressed the Parliament via audio, calling on us to challenge five injustices pervasive in cultures around the world, noting that they can be resolved when faith communities make moral appeals to leaders.
Several leaders representing differing organizing bodies of the Parliament read the Fifth Directive of the Global Ethic, one of the major outcomes of the 2018 gathering focused on climate action and environmental justice. His Holiness Pujya Swami Chidanand Saraswati also focused on climate, challenging attendees to motivate others to assume a global consciousness and advocated for swift climate action, stating: “We can have a plan A and a plan B, but there’s no planet B.”

Audrey Kitagawa, the incoming chair of the Parliament’s Board of Trustees, concluded the speaking portion of the event, reflecting on how the 2018 gathering encouraged us to share our experiences with one another and moreover be inspired by others’ differences. Joyce Shin, served as Emcee, expertly guiding the audience on the last plenary of the week. The plenary featured performances from Abraham Jam, Aviva Chemik, Solaris, and Carolina Fonseca.

With the conclusion of the plenary, attendees enjoyed a special closing ceremony as organizers took turns to thank and acknowledge attendees, volunteers, presenters and the local committee members who made the seventh Parliament of the World’s Religions possible. Chair of the Board, Dr. Rober Sellers marveled at the work that had been done and the palpable excitement that was felt in the air that day.

Seven inspiring days culminated in the ultimate call to action, leaving the seventh Parliament of the World’s Religions having explored understanding, reconciliation, and change, and returning home with the power of love and the promise of inclusion in making a difference in the world.
Keynotes

Mayor John Tory is a Canadian politician who has served as the 65th and current mayor of Toronto.

Larry Greenfield has served as the Executive Minister of the American Baptist Churches of Metro Chicago and Executive Director of the Parliament.

Molly Horan served as Communications Director for the Parliament.

Lady Kanwaljit Kaur serves as the President of Global Sikh Council, Deputy Director for Education for the Network of Sikh Organisations, and President of the Sikh Women’s Support Group.

Bob Rae is the Canadian Special Envoy for the Rohingya Crisis and Professor at the University of Toronto.

Molly Horan

Rev. William Barber is the President & Senior Lecturer of Repairers of the Breach, Architect of the Moral Monday Movement, and Co-Chair of the Poor People’s Campaign.

H.H. Pujya Swami Chidanand Saraswati is the President of Parmarth Niketan, Co-Founder of Global Interfaith WASH Alliance, and Founder of Ganga Action Parivar.

Audrey Kitagawa serves as the current Chair of the Parliament and President of the Light of Awareness International Spiritual Family.
The underlying values that form the foundation of almost all if not all of the world’s faiths, small and big, are the same and they have to do with treating people with a certain degree of respect and humanity and compassion.

“MAYOR JOHN TORY
Mayor of the City of Toronto
The life-changing experiences of attendees at each of the Parliament of the World’s Religions is made possible by the commitment, support, and hardwork of local, regional, and international organizers who curate exhibits, galleries, programming, and cultural engagements on a daily basis.

Explore some of the attendee favorites!

The Exhibit Hall

The Exhibit Hall at a Parliament of the World’s Religions provides a unique opportunity for vendors, faith communities, and attendees to gather in an exchange of information and knowledge.

The Toronto Parliament Exhibit Hall featured over 139 exhibitors and was the home of the Interfaith Family Festival, the Lodge of Nations, and a variety of art & cultural exhibits through the week of November 1st through November 7th.

Explore the complete list of our exhibitors at ParliamentOfReligions.org/2018
The Lodge of Nations

The Lodge of Nations was the centrepiece to the Parliament’s Indigenous programme and was a beautiful and important Indigenous sacred space. A first-of-its-kind at the Parliament, the Lodge is the home away from home to many Indigenous traditional leaders and Faith Keepers who carry the sacred knowledge from the many Indigenous spiritual ways from around the world. This sacred space featured morning ceremonies, tobacco offerings, pipe ceremonies, and programs from various Indigenous traditional societies.

The Lodge was designed to be an intermingling of designs of the Haudenosaunee (Six Nations) people and the Anishinaabe people, two of the host Nations for the Toronto Parliament.

It is the home for the Spirit; a place to share sacred Indigenous knowledge, traditional teachings, and ceremonies of many Indigenous Nations.
Langar

Langar is the Sikh word for “open kitchen.” It was started by the first Sikh Guru, Siri Guru Nanak Sahib, and today represents the principle of equality between all people regardless of religion, caste, color, creed, age, gender or social status. In addition to the ideals of equality, the tradition of Langar expresses the ethics of sharing, community, inclusiveness, and oneness of all humankind.

The Langar at the 2018 Parliament marks its third offering at the global interfaith convening, and was organized by the Ontario Sikh and Gurdwara Council in collaboration with the Canadian and international Sikh community. A heartfelt thank you to our Sikh brothers and sisters who provided meals throughout the week.
The 2018 Parliament of the World’s Religions in Toronto marked many firsts and one of the most exciting new elements was the introduction of The Interfaith Family Festival, which for the very first time brought interfaith programming and education for families and kids of all ages to the convention halls.

The Parliament commissioned Spiritual Playdate, an interfaith educational program for kids and families to deliver 5 days of fun, interactive and uplifting programming for littles, middle schoolers, tweens, teens, parents and grandparents, to all enjoy together.

Many thoughtful programs that were designed for the IFF were created with the intention of exposing the beauty, culture and many important messages that come from the myriad of faith traditions that live and breathe on this planet. The Parliament’s first Interfaith Family Festival played host to over 2,500 kids from the youngest participant at just 6 months to masses of middle schoolers and high schoolers.

Learn more at ParliamentOfReligions.org/2018
The Red Tent Movement is an international grassroots initiative that is open to women of all faiths, beliefs and backgrounds and is a sacred place which honors and supports our womanhood journeys and leadership.

The Red Tent at the 2018 Parliament marks the second time this initiative has been hosted by the global interfaith conference. This beautiful sanctuary space served as a place of homecoming where one can come to rest, renew, share collective wisdom, hold and be held. Attendees offered music, song, dance, gathered in circles, met with others, all while some meditated, slept or reflected on the day’s activities.
Anniversary Banquet

Commemorating both the first World’s Parliament of Religions at the 1893 Columbian Exposition – the birth of the interfaith movement – as well as the convening of the first modern Parliament in Chicago in 1993, the Anniversary Banquet at the 2018 Parliament in Toronto featured the participation of Swami Sarvapriyananda, who heads the Vedanta Society of New York and is a dynamic figure in the Ramakrishna Order, and Dr. Lawrence Sullivan, a world-renowned historian of religions, Senior Fellow and President Emeritus of the Fetzer Institute.
Sacred Spaces

The world’s faith and spiritual traditions are well represented at Parliament convenings. At the 2018 Parliament, the Sacred Space Task Force curated a diverse series of religious and spiritual expressions, spaces, and lived experiences to emphasize the critical importance of sacred space to people of faith.

In partnership with Sacred Space International, the Sacred Space Task Force featured the Morgan Model Collection, a collection of architectural models showing the interior and exterior features of the First Saint Paul’s Evangelical Lutheran Church, the Assumption Greek Orthodox Church, Holy Family Catholic Church, St. Benedict the African Catholic Church, Atash Kadeh Zoroastrian Temple, Unity Temple, and KAM Isaiah Israel. The Collection was displayed at the MTCC for attendees to enjoy throughout the week.

This partnership also organized the Sacred Spaces: Excursions Around Toronto where attendees had the opportunity to join walking and bus tours of faith spaces in the city of Toronto. Saint Michael’s Cathedral Basilica, Metropolitan United Church, the Church of the Holy Trinity, and St. Andrew’s Church are located near the MTCC and were kind enough to share their faith spaces with the walking tours. Participants traveled from the convention centre to the Jain Society of Toronto (JSOT), Beth Tzedec Congregation, Jaffari Community Centre, First Unitarian Congregation of Toronto, Vishnu Mandir, Mehraban Guiv Darbe Mehr, Cham Shan Temple, St. Gabriel’s Passionist Church, Gurdwara Sikh Sabha Gurdish, and the Baps Shri Swaminarayan Mandir as part of the bus tours. Breakfast and lunch were kindly provided at several of the places of worship. The excursions were organized on the first day of the convention before the start of the program and on the last day after the closing ceremony. This was to allow maximum participation by the attendees in the daily Parliament programming.

Additionally, faith and spiritual communities also came together to create “faith spaces” for attendees to connect with each other throughout the week and share special services for the benefit of all attendees. A prayer wall, where attendees were encouraged to leave and take a prayer, and a labyrinth near the entrance of the convention centre were one of the few interactive sacred spaces participants enjoyed during the week of the Parliament.

Explore the full Sacred Tours Program at ParliamentOfReligions.org/2018
Art & Film

Art exhibits and films are a critical aspect of the Parliament experience. Communities of faith and individuals from around the world come together to showcase their talent and provide unique experiences to thousands of attendees.

At the 2018 Parliament, the official Film Festival featured over 40 films and documentaries. Among them were documentary films like The Gate from SpringGreen Films, a sponsor of the Parliament, Portraits of Faith and Sacred, Feminine, Rising.

Explore these and more films at ParliamentOfReligions.org/2018
Towards a Global Ethic (An Initial Declaration), or the Global Ethic, became a foundational document for the organization upon its adoption in 1993. The Global Ethic calls for a change of consciousness and expresses four ethical directives elaborating a commitment to a culture of:

1. respect for life
2. economic justice
3. truth and compassion
4. women’s rights

From the start, the Global Ethic was intended to be a living document. Since 1993, the Parliament has been paying attention to shifts in agreement between the world’s traditions. It noticed their growing concern for the environment and made another audacious decision: to expand the Global Ethic with an ethical directive elaborating this shared sense of responsibility to the well-being of the planet and its ecosystems. To elaborate this directive, it launched a months-long, collaborative process during which it consulted (as it had, twenty-five years earlier) with scholars and leaders from various traditions and regions.

In July of 2018, the Parliament’s Trustees approved a final version of the expanded Global Ethic whose fifth directive spells out a commitment to a culture of:

5. care for the Earth

The 2018 Parliament marked the official release of the fifth directive before the global interfaith movement. Throughout the week-long convening, the Global Ethic and the Parliament’s commitment to care for the Earth were prominently highlighted on the main stage and daily programming.

Read the Fifth Directive and the Parliament’s Global Ethic at parliamentofreligions.org
The 2018 Awards

In September 2018, the Parliament of the World’s Religions opened applications for the 2018 Parliament of the World’s Religions Awards that would be presented as part of the programming at the 2018 Parliament in Toronto.

Hundreds of applications were received for six Parliament awards:

1. The Paul Carus Award
2. The Global Ethic Award
3. The Ahimsa Award
4. The Interfaith Engagement with the World Award
5. The Justice Award
6. The Ecological Flourishing Award

The Parliament gathered award committees for each award and members were tasked with selecting the winner or winners that best embodied the award.

After an extensive review process, the review committees selected eight winners for the six awards. The Paul Carus Award was shared by three winners. Among the winners are internationally recognized activists and faith leaders.

Read exclusive interviews with the honorees at parliamentofreligions.org
The diversity of programs at a Parliament of the World’s Religions is difficult to describe. From experiential art and performances, grassroot panels and keynote led discussions, attendees enjoy access to over a thousand programs. Amongst these programs, Parliament task forces and interfaith partners organized special “In Focus” programs offering unique panels and presentations featuring leaders from around the world.

Friday, Nov. 2

**Compassionate Cities at Work**
The individuals on this panel joined in dialogue about what it means to be a compassionate city.

**Climate, Science, and Faith**
Panelists shared the latest findings regarding climate impacts above a 1.5 degrees Celsius world to set the stage for major themes of the 2018 Parliament.

**Citizen Engagement: How Democracies Can Thrive in the Age of Populism**
John Ralston Saul, Canada’s leading intellectual on democracy and citizenship, shared his reflections and advice in these portentous times.

**Youth Voices for Change: Arts, Academia & Activism**
This session will highlight Interfaith Youth Core, A Common Word Among the Youth, and Faiths in Tune as interfaith organizations that are making waves in the realms of academia, activism, and arts through youth engagement.
The Next Steps: Truth & Reconciliation and the UN Declaration

This workshop offered firsthand perspectives by Dr. Grand Chief Littlechild on the nature of the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada and the Canadian implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Role of Women in the Revitalization of Indigenous Communities

Prof. Jacobs discussed the traditional role of women and their rights in Haudenosaunee society, the violence against Indigenous women expressed in the National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, and the roles of women leading the revitalization movement underway in First Nations.

Hindu Heritage Month Celebration and Diwali

Marking a first of its kind at a Parliament convening, Diwali was celebrated in Toronto in special observance of Hindu Heritage Month. Organized by Dr. Bhadra Shah and Dr. Budhendranauth Doobay, the celebration featured a special keynote from Swami Nikhileswarananda. Attendees enjoyed music, dance, and vibrant presentations from speakers honoring Hindu traditions and luminaries throughout North America and the world.

The evening showcased Diya Dance, Lakshmi Pooja, Garba, and more.

Change Agents: Activists on the Frontlines

From gun control to racial justice, young people aren’t just fighting to fix our world’s most pressing issues: they are the ones leading the way to a better future for everyone. The young people on this panel are on the front lines of justice around the world.

Buddhism, Compassion, and Gender Leadership

The challenges facing humanity today are well acknowledged. All our collective energies, skills, and resources are needed to tackle these critical issues in skillful and creative ways. This talk presents compassion and loving kindness, along with a healthy dose of wisdom, as an ethical framework for transforming gender injustice in myriad forms.
Weaving Traditions and Wisdom For the Advancement of Women In Afghanistan

Sakena Yacoobi shared about long-held traditions concerning the roles of women in Afghanistan and how, with education and wisdom, Afghan women are beginning to transform their communities by using their traditions to help bring peace to Afghanistan and elevate the lives of women and girls.

Why Women of Faith Matter for Global Leadership

This presentation addressed what a global institution like the UN has done to engage with diverse faith leadership in the last decade. The necessity for leadership by women of faith to serve as a moral compass for current developments around the nexus of religion and foreign affairs were covered along with current global trends around engaging religious actors.

Half the Sky, Half the Land: The Role of Women Farmers in Transforming Agriculture

Close to half of all farmers throughout the developing world are women. Gender alone denies them equal access to agricultural resources, training, and leadership opportunities. It is now widely recognized that this pervasive oppression holds us all back from achieving global food security. Hugh Locke has helped to develop a revolutionary social business model that is unlocking the potential of smallholder women farmers in Haiti.

The 2015 Inaugural Women’s Assembly Major Speakers Legacy Session

Hosted by 2015 Women’s Task Force Chair Phyllis Curott, this legacy session was a celebration of the Inaugural Assembly and a roundtable conversation with major speakers from the 2015 Assembly. The discussion measured women’s challenges and progress since 2015, reflected on new goals, and celebrated the powerful bonds of camaraderie within the assembly.

Transforming Lives: Empowering Marginalized Women and Girls with Dignity, Agency, and the Wings to Fly

This session covered the experiences of Ashta No Kai, a non-profit in rural India addressing the challenges marginalized women face on a daily basis and the efforts the organization has made to promote the empowerment of women and girls.

The Equality of Women and Men: Divine Imperative for an Age of Transition

This session addressed the equality of women and men not merely as an expression of contemporary opinion, but as a divinely-ordained principle applicable to all peoples and populations at the current stage of human history.
The Rise of Populism - How We Can Stem the Tide

Today, millions of people are on the move around the world. Driven by war, opportunity, displaced by disaster or compelled by disease, refugees and immigrants alike are testing the ability - or willingness - of states to accept them. Senator Ratna Omidvar explored this moment in history, about the rise of populism and about the role Canada might play in a better, more inclusive future.

Sunday, Nov. 4

Parliament of World’s Religions Panel on Earth Charter

The Earth Charter arose from the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, also known as the Rio Earth Summit. It is a living document of moral principles and practices designed to bridge the tensions between environmental protection and economic development. This panel explored the significance of the Charter as a civil society document that represents inclusivity and interdependence.

White Supremacy: Its Origins and Contemporary Perils

A Sikh social scientist documented the breadth of the startling and terrifying rise of contemporary white supremacy, while a Catholic theologian sees the problem woven deeply in the nation’s history, making the claim that white supremacy has its origins in Christian supremacy.

Zoroastrian Fire Ceremony

Fire is seen as the supreme symbol of purity in Zoroastrianism. Zoroastrian places of worship (known as Atashkadeh or Fire Temples) maintain sacred and consecrated fires that are never extinguished. The oldest continuously burning fire in one of the Zoroastrian temples is believed to be over 1,500 years old. This ceremony, organized by members of the Zoroastrian community, offered reverence for the sacred fire and blessings for a successful and productive Parliament of the World’s Religions.

Monday, Nov. 5

From Worship to Wash: Religious Leaders of India Come Together for Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene for a Sustainable World

More people perish each year due to lack of clean water than from all forms of violence combined. By 2040 the world will have only half the water it needs. Countless millions will be displaced from their homes, suffer, and die. Global Interfaith WASH Alliance (GIWA) leaders from India showcased the crucial shift amongst religious leaders in bringing about a revolution in water and sanitation.
**The Genocide Convention and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 70 Years Later: What Have We Learned? What Must We Do?**

Participants hear from renowned human rights expert, Professor Irwin Cotler, in his analysis of the world’s human rights achievements – and shortcomings – in the seven decades since the landmarks of the Genocide Convention and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

**Nonviolence in a Violent World: The Sweeping, Surprising Effectiveness of King and Gandhi**

The grandson of Mahatma Gandhi, Dr. Arun Gandhi, and the major tactician of the American Civil Rights Movement, Rev. James Lawson Jr., discussed the continuing contributions of these titanic figures to modern methods of peacemaking, resistance, and change.

**Integral Ecology and Justice**

As Pope Francis states, “We are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental.” Such is the heart of Integral Ecology. This session explored the interconnection of environmental and social problems, and the most promising ways religions can work for integral justice.

**Climate Change and Women: A Conversation with Margaret Atwood**

“This isn’t climate change – it’s everything change.” Margaret Atwood is renowned as a literary icon by way of her poetry, novels and environmental activism. Participants joined Margaret Atwood and Dr. Lucy Cummings in a conversation that explores the intertwined nature of climate change, conflict, and violence against women.

**Interactive Dharma**

Indigenous spirituality has been challenged in many ways in North America. In this interactive Dharma Q&A session, Ven. Pomnyun Sunim took questions from the audience and engaged the questioner in a dialogue that examines and explores the true nature of the problem. The format followed the interaction that the Buddha had with people from all walks of life on their suffering, eventually leading them into enlightenment.

**Working Toward Economic Justice: Systemic Issues**

This panel of experts reflects on economic justice, not in isolation, but rather through its connections to the environment, to legal structures, and to national borders. Drawing from their decades of experience as activists, organizational leaders, and scholars, they shed insight on the opportunities and problems with existing systems and which changes could reap the greatest improvements.
Why We Still Need the Goddess: Religions and the Abuse of Women and Girls

Carol P. Christ’s activism helped to found the study of Women and Religion in the academy, her widely published keynote address “Why Women Need the Goddess” helped to launch the Goddess movement, and her first book “Womanspirit Rising” brought new ideas to a large audience.

The Moral, Spiritual, Legal, Practical Response to Humanity’s Greatest Threat: Nuclear Weapons

The major nations of the world pursue the security of people and nations by threatening to annihilate humanity. This is morally questionable and practically unstable. Participants heard from General Roméo Dallaire, who has the practical and moral standing to address this issue head-on, followed by responses from knowledgeable and inspiring speakers.

Tuesday, Nov. 6

Interreligious Coexistence in the State of Israel - Challenges and Achievements

Members of the Council of the Heads of Religions in Israel, a diverse group of many faiths, discussed the nuances, challenges, and achievements of interfaith cooperation and coexistence in a complicated context.

Consciousness, Well-being and Vedanta - A Conversation with Swami Sarvapriyananda

The benefits of meditation are many and already well known. Swami Sarvapriyananda discussed a cognitive meditation approach drawn from the Advaita Vedanta tradition which is deep and rational, yet easy to practice with profound implications for our self image and individual and social welfare.

Welcome the Stranger

Cardinal Thomas Collins reflected on the origins of the Archdiocese of Toronto and its long-standing history of welcoming those in our midst.
A Dynamic Dialogue with the Right Honourable Kim Campbell

Participants in this session enjoyed a dynamic dialogue with Hon. Kim Campbell and Jonathan Granoff followed by responses by two of Canada’s wisest leaders, General Roméo Dallaire, and Senator Douglas Roche. This special session delved into what wise leadership, values, vision, and policies look like on the personal, national, and global level.

Protecting the Future

A presentation based on the Amicus Brief filed by the Parliament of the World’s Religions in support of the plaintiffs in the Juliana case, a youth-led legal trial currently before the United States Supreme Court to seek justice for the harmful consequences of climate degradation on current and future generations and the planet.

Interfaith in Review: An Intergenerational Conversation Looking Back and Leaning Forward

Age is not a prerequisite for interfaith leadership; nor is it a measure of experience and commitment within the global interfaith movement. In this session, the Next Generation task force brought together both emerging voices and well-seasoned interfaith leaders for a unique intergenerational experience.

FULL PROGRAM RECORDINGS AVAILABLE EXCLUSIVELY AT THE PARLIAMENT MEMBER HUB

Become a Member Today! Learn more at ParliamentOfReligions.org/membership
IN THE PRESS

Media is a powerful institution around the world and at the 2018 Parliament of World’s Religions, local and international news joined the global interfaith movement to hear and share the stories, experiences, and power of individuals and communities of faith and spirituality.

The 2018 Parliament was made possible with the support of our media partners from Yes TV, a Canadian commercial television station committed to positive, family-friendly, entertainment programming, and Spirituality & Health, a multi-media platform that provides inspiration for conscious living, healthy diet and lifestyle, social action, spiritual wisdom, and sustainability.

The Parliament made headlines in a variety of media, including:
From the time of the announcement of the 2018 Parliament to the day the last person leaves the Metro Toronto Convention Centre on Wednesday, November 7th, a generous band of volunteers work tirelessly to ensure the Parliament’s success. Whether registering attendees or speakers, setting up the festival stage or writing press releases, engaging the next generation of interfaith leaders or supporting full inclusion of all attendees, over 300 volunteers have come together from sunup to sundown offering their time and talent to make the Parliament possible.

Here are a few of the many individuals who made the 2018 Parliament of the World’s Religions possible.

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LOOKING FORWARD

Between Parliament summits, the Parliament serves as a steadfast convener of peoples of faith and the interfaith movement through dynamic and engaging programs. Our ongoing programs, grass roots events, and virtual broadcast have continued to engage and highlight the critical role of the interfaith movement in the world.

In 2019, the Parliament has engaged spiritual communities by:
• Inaugurating the Climate Commitments Project, which coordinates knowledge sharing and collaboration among faith-based climate initiatives. The project’s web hub offers a number of tools for this purpose, including a global map of faith groups mobilizing their communities to act on climate.
• Becoming a founding member of the Interfaith Rainforest Initiative, uniting people of all faiths to end tropical deforestation.
• Serving as an important role as a convener and source of expertise through the Global Conversations series, Faith and Climate webinar series, and Climate Action Webforum.
• Becoming accredited as an observer organization to the UN Environment Program and works closely with the UN’s Faith for Earth Initiative.
• Becoming a member of the UN Multi-Faith Advisory Council and attending the G20 Interfaith Forum in Tokyo.
• Partnering with the University of Chicago to host a two-day conference, Grappling with the Global Ethic.
• Developing, with the support of a planning grant from the Global Ethic Foundation, the Global Ethic Project, a resourced-based project aimed at incorporating ethical education within civic courses at the elementary and high school levels.
• Actively partnering on programming with the Commission on the Status of Women, United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, and the UN-DPI Annual Conference.
• Hosting local interfaith community events in observance of 2019 UN World Interfaith Harmony Week.
• Developing a hub of resources for organizations looking to host their own UN WIHW events and serving as a strategic programmatic and marketing partner for grassroots organizers around the world.
• Fostering the engagement of women leaders and faith leaders on the Declaration for the Dignity and Human Rights of Women and the International Declaration Against Sexual Violence.
• Launching the 1,000 Women in Religion Project which seeks to add over 1,000 names and contributions of religious/spiritual/wisdom women to Wikipedia, the largest encyclopedia in the world. Partnering with the Women’s Caucus of the American Academy of Religion and Society of Biblical Literature, this project highlights women’s contributions to religious, spiritual, and wisdom traditions worldwide.
• Revamping the Membership Program and digitizing Parliament archives to create an expanding interfaith digital archive.

In 2020, the Parliament has engaged spiritual communities by:
• Inaugurating the Climate Prayer Map, which features faith, spiritual, and interfaith leaders from around the world sharing their unique prayers for the conservation and protection of
the Earth.

- With the support of UN Environment, republishing *Faith for Earth*, a seminal work on religion and the environment, in the fall of 2020.
- Partnering with the UN Environment Faith for Earth Initiative, United Religions Initiative, and Bhumi Global to publish a special report on faith-based progress on the UN Sustainable Development Goals, entitled *Faith Action on the UN Sustainable Development Goals: Progress and Outlook*.
- Hosting a Chicago based interfaith fair in observance of the 2020 UN World Interfaith Harmony Week, featuring the participation of local faith and interfaith communities.
- Developing engagement campaigns for organizers and partnering with them to observe the 10th anniversary of World Interfaith Harmony Week.
- Fostering the engagement of women leaders and faith leaders through a special observance of Women’s History Month.
- Hosting online webinar series on LGBTQ+ inclusion in faith communities, nuclear disarmament, and multigenerational conversations led by the Next Generation.

These are only a few of the countless activities the Parliament is engaged in locally, regionally, globally, and across guiding institutions like the United Nations.

Keep up to date with ongoing programming and activities through our bi-monthly newsletter. Learn more at parliamentofreligions.org
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OUR MEDIA PARTNERS

Spirituality & Health
BY THE NUMBERS

8,324
TOTAL PARTICIPANTS

59.2% Female Participants
39% Male Participants

30.3% >65 years-old
50.2% 35-64 years-old
16.8% 18-34
2.8% <18

2,055
Presenters

855
Students

118
Spiritual Traditions

81
Countries

1,352
Programs

16
Program Tracks

13
Major Plenaries

6,214
Devices

56.3% Female Participants

A SPECIAL THANK YOU

The 2018 Parliament Report was made possible by the financial support of Dr. Manohar Singh Grewal. On behalf of the Parliament of the World's Religions, we extend our heartfelt gratitude for Dr. Grewal’s continued support of the global interfaith movement and his commitment to the Parliament’s legacy.

Dr. Manohar Singh Grewal

Dr. Manohar Singh Grewal is the founder, former president, and former chairperson of the New England Sikh Study Circle, Inc., of Boston. He was president of the World Sikh Organization, chairperson of World Sikh Council from 2006 and 2011, and a member of the Regional Council of WSC-AR from 2006 - 2008 and 2010 -2012.

Dr. Grewal served as a member of the Board of Trustees of the Parliament of the World’s Religions during the 2015 Parliament in Salt Lake City and the 2018 Parliament in Toronto. He currently serves as a member of the Climate Action Task Force at the Parliament.