



A Call to Compassionate Action:
Convening the Interfaith Movement Virtually

2021

ANNUAL REPORT

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ADVANCING OUR VISION

**A WORLD OF PEACE,
JUSTICE AND
SUSTAINABILITY**

LIVING OUR MISSION

To cultivate harmony among the world's religious and spiritual communities.

To foster their engagement with the world and its guiding institutions to address the critical issues of our time.

A MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Dear Friends,

I am writing to you now for the first time in my new position as Executive Director. After nearly a decade of service to this movement, I am honored to be selected as the Executive Director at a time where the Parliament and its work is more important than ever.

I don't have to tell you that the world is at a crossroads. We have a global pandemic, our earth and its inhabitants continue to suffer from human-caused climate change, people are divided, and there has been dishonesty on these issues from the institutions that should be leading us.

We needed to gather the people of faith and conscience of the world to convene a Parliament. There is too much at stake. It was so important that we did not wait for the pandemic to end this year. For the first time, the Parliament convened virtually and it was a tremendous success. We took advantage of the reach and access of the internet. We committed to be as inclusive as possible. We had speakers from six continents and more faiths and spiritualities represented than ever before. For the first time, we had regional symposiums at appropriate time zones for Africa, South Asia, and Southeast Asia.

I hope you have heard the great news about the founding of our new Circle of Patrons. And that in 2023, after 30 years away, the Parliament of the World's Religions will be returning home to convene the religions of the world in Chicago at a time of great hardship for humanity, and together we can bring about the dream of a better world.

In 1893 Charles Bonney, the President of the first Parliament in Chicago,

said “the influence which this Congress of the Religions of the World will exert on the peace and the prosperity of the world is beyond the power of human language to describe. For this influence, borne by those who have attended the sessions of the Parliament of Religions to all parts of the earth, will affect in some important degree all races of men, all forms of religion, and even all governments and social institutions.”

We know that, just as in 1893, many left the sessions of the virtual Convening this year and spread peace through their own influence. In this report, you will read about how in 2021 the Parliament as an organization continued to exert this influence in the areas of climate action, the dignity of women, girls, and the next generation; peace, justice, and through our signature declaration on the Global Ethic. But we need to do more. The vision of a peaceful, just, and sustainable world needs to grow beyond those we have already reached and be set forth “into all parts of the world” as Mr. Bonney described in 1893. We can’t expand without your help.

We know you want a better world for all of its inhabitants and we need your help to continue this work. As we close 2021 and begin our work for 2022 and beyond, we are asking you to give what you are able: \$50, \$100, \$500, or more. Give online at: www.parliamentofreligions.org/donate, or mail a check to us at 70 E. Lake Street, Suite 230, Chicago, IL 60601.

Thank you for your commitment to the vision and mission of the Parliament. Best wishes to you and your loved ones in the new year.

Warmest regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Stephen C. Avino".

Rev. Stephen Avino
Executive Director



The Circle of Patrons is a group of generous supporters and interfaith leaders who wish to help ensure the strength and sustainability of the Parliament's vision of interfaith understanding and partnership working to bring into being a world of peace, justice and care for the Earth.

In 2021 the Parliament of the World's Religions announced the founding members of the new Circle of Patrons.



Bhai Sahib Bhai Mohinder Singh Ahluwalia OBE KSG

Bhai Sahib Mohinder Singh is the Spiritual Leader and Chairman of Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha, UK, a charitable organization with its headquarters in Birmingham.



The Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation

A worldwide humanitarian and educational organization established in 1966 by Dharma Master Cheng Yen, a Taiwanese Buddhist nun.



The Circle of Friends for VRG Vision

A group of Jains inspired by the vision of Virchand Raghav Gandhi (VRG), who represented Jainism at the historic World Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893 and brought Jainism into a dialogue with other faiths which has continued ever since.



The Guru Nanak Interfaith Committee

A group of Sikhs inspired by the Sikh vision to create a world order in which all human beings are equal and empowered to serve and uplift the marginalized and the oppressed.



OUR PROGRAMS, OUR APPROACH

THE WORLD'S PREMIER INTERFAITH CONVENER, MEETING ONLINE

2021 began much like 2020 ended, with the world and communities grappling with the continued ravages of the COVID-19 pandemic, non-governmental and religious organizations working remotely to safely continue their work, and a growing restlessness as hard earned progress on social justice issues seemed to backtrack.

At the Parliament of the World's Religions, the challenges of 2020 and 2021 meant proactively adjusting our approach to promoting interreligious harmony. While we had shifted a number of our programs online in 2020, the lessons from the previous year drove our organization to consider how to best serve as the world's premier interfaith convener.

After much reflection and deeply empowered by the continued support of the global interfaith movement, the Parliament set out once again to make history. As our thematic programming continued, the Parliament set out to host the 8th global Convening, and this time it would be virtually.

THE 2021 PARLIAMENT CONVENING

October 16 - 18

2021

PARLIAMENT
OF THE WORLD'S RELIGIONS
VIRTUAL

Opening Our Hearts to the World: Compassion in Action



The 2021 Parliament of the World's Religions convened thousands of interfaith activists and people of faith from around the world to explore the theme of "Opening Our Hearts to the World: Compassion in Action."

The 8th Global Convening of the Parliament was hosted for the first time virtually, with live programming from October 16-18. A digital report of the 2021 Parliament Convening will be published in the Spring of 2022.

BY THE NUMBERS - 2021 PARLIAMENT



19,379,499

**VIRTUAL
IMPRESSIONS**



4,317

**GLOBAL
ATTENDEES**



583+

**PROGRAMS
FEATURED**



244

FAITHS



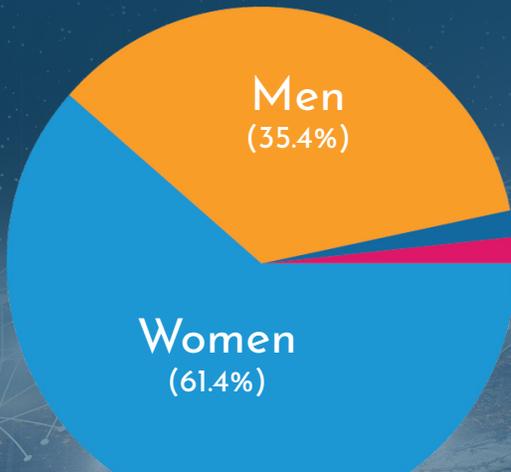
79

COUNTRIES



21

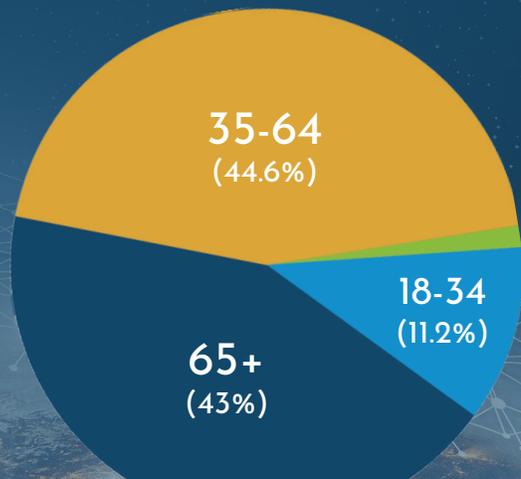
LANGUAGES



GENDER

Not Specified
(1.6%)

Non-Binary
(1.4%)



AGE



Interfaith Climate Action

In 2021, the Climate Action Initiative built on past successes, deepened partnerships, and significantly raised its profile. With partners, the Initiative worked on four new projects this year - *the Faith Action on the SDGs*, *Faith and Food Coalition*, *the Vatican Ecology Working Group*, and *the Faith and Biodiversity Coalition*.

Climate Action Highlights:

- 3 Faith & Climate Summits in conjunction with the UK COP26 Presidency
- 2 Buddhist-Catholic Dialogues on Climate Change
- 2 Earth Day events
- At least 3 major universities utilizing Faith for Earth in their curriculum
- 5 dialogues with the Faith + Food Coalition
- Over 50 breakout sessions, workshops, and plenary speakers at the virtual convening related to climate change
- “The Turning Point” Climate Visual Statement endorsed at 2021 Parliament of the World’s Religions

Looking forward, the Parliament is well-positioned to create more impact through ongoing projects and by continuing its role as a facilitator, knowledge-sharing convener, and mobiliser.

Towards a Global Ethic

The Global Ethic is a landmark declaration of the Parliament of the World's Religions stating the universal values and principles shared by the world's religious, spiritual, and cultural traditions. This year the Parliament developed featured programming around the landmark declaration and a special track for the 2021 Parliament of the World's Religions.

Global Ethic Highlights:

- Interreligious seminar program uses Global Ethic Declaration for training
- Over 19 breakout sessions and workshops at the virtual convening related to Towards a Global Ethic

The Parliament remains committed to the advancement of the Declaration, planning programming and activities for 2022 and the 2023 Parliament in Chicago.





The Next Generation

Continuing its work from 2020, the Parliament fostered opportunities for intergenerational and intersectional conversations by hosting virtual discussions in the lead-up to the 2021 Parliament of the World's Religions.

NextGen Highlights:

- 3 intergenerational webinars on World Interfaith Harmony Week, COP26, and World Democracy Day
- Over 27 breakout sessions and workshops at the virtual convening related to youth and the next generation

In 2022, the Parliament aims to expand their work by engaging youth representatives from diverse faiths and offering additional opportunities to connect through intergenerational conversations in the lead-up to the 2023 Parliament Convening in Chicago.

Peace & Justice

The pursuit of justice and a more peaceful world are key tenets of the Parliament's vision. In 2021, the Parliament focused on curating an action driven Peace & Justice track at the 2021 Parliament of the World's Religions.

Peace & Justice Highlights:

- 3 "Together We Heal" programs hosted in observance of a City of Chicago campaign by the same name
- Over 76 breakout sessions, workshops, and plenary speakers at the virtual convening related to peace and justice

Looking forward, the Parliament is working to engage diverse organizers in the pursuit of peace and justice in 2022 and strengthen this mission-driven program in 2023.





Women's Dignity

In 2021, the Parliament's Women's Dignity Initiative continued its advocacy for the dignity of women across religious and spiritual traditions. The Initiative focused primarily on curating action-driven programming for the 2021 Parliament of the World's Religions, hosting diverse voices as part of the Women's Track, the Women's Sacred Space, and the thematic plenaries.

Women's Dignity Highlights:

- Parliament Trustee recognized as part of UN Women's Generation Equality
- Together We Heal dialogue hosted with female leaders in Chicago in special observance of Women's History Month
- Pre-Parliament Event assembles women
- Over 56 breakout sessions, workshops, and plenary speakers at the virtual convening related to women and girls

In the lead up to the 2023 Parliament Convening in Chicago, the Parliament is set to host diverse opportunities to connect virtually on the critical issues facing women and girls across the world's religious and spiritual traditions.

UN World Interfaith Harmony Week

The Parliament of the World's Religions serves as a global partner in the observance of UN World Interfaith Harmony Week (WIHW). In 2021, the Parliament observed the yearly commemoration of interfaith harmony in the world with virtual observances at the local and international level.

WIHW Highlights:

- Partnered with 2020 prize winners for a special "Keeping the Faith" observance
- Chicago-focused "Together We Heal" event celebrated UN WIHW
- Hosted intergenerational conversation in observance of WIHW
- The World Interfaith Harmony Week initiative joined the 2021 Parliament as a sponsor

While the work of the Parliament with the WIHW initiative will change in the next global observance, the organization remains committed in advocating for and advancing the joint mission of interfaith harmony.



OUR LEADERSHIP

The work of the Parliament is made possible by the steadfast and heartfelt dedication to our mission from members of the Board of Trustees, staff, and task force members.

2021 BOARD OFFICERS



Chair of the Board
Nitin Ajmera



Vice-Chair of the Board
Dianne Dillon-Ridgley



Vice-Chair of the Board
Dr. Dolly Dastoor



Secretary
Rev. Charline Manuel



Treasurer
Imam Saffet Catovic

2021 MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Nitin Ajmera
Naeem Baig
Rabbi Michael Balinsky
Kehkashan Basu
Debra Boudreaux
Imam Saffet Catovic
Rev. Phyllis Currott

Dr. Dolly Dastoor
Dianne Dillon-Ridgley
David Hales
Swami Ishatmananda
Bruce Knotts
Rev. Charline Manuel
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James Lynch Jr.
Prof. John Pawlikowski
Dr. Kusumita Pedersen
Ven. Dhammadipa Sak
Dr. Manohar Singh Grewal
Rev. Dr. Scott Stearman
Michael Terrien
Dr. Michael R. Trice

2021 PARLIAMENT STAFF



Executive Director
Rev. Stephen Avino



Director of Climate Action
Joshua Basofin



Development Associate
Emma Pittsley



Communication & Program Manager
Miriam Quezada



2021 Virtual Convening Associate
Kaleb Nyquist



Staff Accountant
Jesse Smith

PARLIAMENT TASK FORCES

Climate Action Task Force
Chair in 2021: David Hales

Next Generation Task Force
Chair in 2021: Kehkashan Basu

Peace & Justice Task Force
Chair in 2021: Bruce Knotts

Women's Task Force
Chair in 2021: Phyllis Curott

2022 BOARD OFFICERS

In 2022, the Board welcomes the following elected officers.



Chair of the Board

Mr. Nitin Ajmera is a senior management professional and practitioner of the Digambar Jain tradition. He is Chief Financial Officer at New York Sports Club and its family of brands. He also teaches at Drexel University. He has been associated with the Jain Center of America-New York and Jain Samaj of Long Island in many capacities ranging from a teacher in Jain Sunday School, committee chair, to the President. Nitin is the Chair of the Board of the Parliament of the World's Religions.



Vice-Chair of the Board

Rev. Dr. Scott Stearman has served as a pastor in the Christian (Baptist) tradition for over 3 decades. His experience includes congregations in Athens, Greece and in Paris, France. Most recently he has been pastor in New York City where he represents the Baptist global body at the United Nations (supported by the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and the Baptist World Alliance).



Vice-Chair of the Board

Mr. James A. Lynch, Jr. is a Dharma Teacher as authorized by the lay Buddhist Organization Rissho Kosei Kai. He is an official representative for their outside affairs in the New York City area as well as an official representative for Rissho Kosei Kai to the United Nations.



Secretary

Rev. Charline Manuel is an ordained Unity minister serving as Senior Minister of Unity Center of Miami for the past 20 years. In addition to seminary studies, Charline holds bachelor's of arts degrees in Sociology and Urban Studies, and a master's of arts degree in Human Resources Development. Charline also serves as online adjunct faculty instructor for the Unity Urban Ministerial School located in Detroit, Michigan.



Treasurer

Imam Saffet Abid Catovic is a GreenFaith Muslim Fellow and serves as their Senior Muslim advisor. He is the Co-founder and Chair of the Green Muslims of New Jersey (GMNJ); a founding committee member of the Islamic Society of North America's (ISNA) Green Initiatives; a consultant to the Drafting Committee of the Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change (2015); a founding member of the Global Muslim Climate Network (GMCN); a member of the scholars Drafting team of "Al-Mizan - Covenant for the Earth" organized under the auspices of the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) - Faiths for Earth and the Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ICESCO).

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The work of the Parliament of the World's Religions is made possible through the ongoing support of donors, members, and foundation grants.

MEMBERSHIP

**Sustaining and Cornerstone members receive a benefit of public acknowledgement.*

Sustaining Members

Buddhist Tzu Chi
Foundation
Helen Cooluris
Larry Greenfield
Manohar Grewal

Isabelle Gunning
Katharine Harvey
Naresh Jain
Shirley Knight
Hoang Le
Charles McDonald

Robert P Sellers
Narithookil Xavier

Cornerstone Members

Nitin Ajmera
David Hales
Liz Mirante

GRANTS & SPONSORS



LOOKING AHEAD - 2023 PARLIAMENT

At the close of the 2021 Parliament of the World's Religions in October, Parliament Chair Nitin Ajmera announced that the City of Chicago will serve as the host for the next in-person convening of the global interfaith movement.

The 9th global Convening of the Parliament of the World's Religions will take place on *August 14-18, 2023*, returning to the birthplace of the modern interfaith movement.



Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot addressed the 2021 Convening stating, "In 2023, Chicago is reaffirming its commitment to its history as the birthplace of this movement and to the mission of the organization making this possible, to cultivate harmony among the world's religious and spiritual communities and to foster their engagement with the world and its guiding institutions to address the critical issues of our time..."

Registration and the Call for Programs for the 2023 Parliament of the World's Religions will open in 2022. [Join our mailing list for the latest updates!](#)

SUPPORT OUR WORK

DONATE

By contributing to the Parliament, you will be supporting interfaith harmony, combating climate change, resisting hate and intolerance, and promoting ethical religious literacy.

BECOME A MEMBER

Parliament Members are annual supporters of the Parliament's ongoing work, join a global community, and gain access to our full database of media.

With RoundUp App you can donate your spare change from purchases at the end of each month! It's an easy and fun way to support interfaith harmony every day.

ROUNDUP YOUR CHANGE

Support the Parliament when you shop online. Platforms like DealAid.org, PayPal, AmazonSmile, and eBay provide you with an easy opportunity to donate to the causes your care about.

SHOP FOR GOOD

LEAVE A LEGACY

Planned giving offers a number of ways you can contribute to the sustainability of the Parliament in the long-term. Consult with your financial advisor to discuss the tax benefits of bequests, life income gifts, and more.

DONATE STOCK

You can donate to us by transferring stock. Donating appreciated stock will usually have tax benefits for you. If you'd like our brokerage information, contact us.

www.parliamentofreligions.org/give

With the 2023 Parliament of the World's Religions just around the corner, the Parliament is commemorating the successes of 2021 and is preparing for the work ahead in 2022. We invite you to commit to the future of the global interfaith movement by supporting the work of the Parliament of the World's Religions.

Want to recommend the Parliament to a foundation in your network? Want to explore ways to give? Connect with our Development Associate today at emma@parliamentofreligions.org



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