

UPF and IAPD UK: The Role of Inter-Religious Wisdom in Public Discourse

Robin Marsh
November 21, 2023



November 21st, 2023 43 Lancaster Gate, London, W2 3NA and Online featuring:

[David Rennie: Milton Keynes Interfaith Administrator - Candle Lit Silent Prayer](#)

[Sheikh Dr. Hojjat Ramzy: Director, Oxford Islamic Information Centre](#)

[Canon Cllr. Ann Easter: Councillor of the London Borough of Newham, Commissioner for Interfaith and Inter-religious Dialogue](#)

[Rev. Dr. Datto Sumana Siri: Buddhist Cardinal of U.K. and Europe, Global Buddhist Realist Movement](#)

Robin Marsh: UPF UK Secretary General - UN Reform and the Possible Role of Religious and Spiritual Wisdom Within a Bi-Cameral Structure



Audience Questions and Answers

Universal Peace Federation UK (UPF) convened an interfaith conference titled, "The Role of Inter-Religious Wisdom in Public Discourse."

The event was an enlightening and enriching experience. At this conference, we explored the profound impact of inter-religious wisdom on shaping meaningful conversations in the public sphere. Distinguished speakers from various faith backgrounds shared their insights and experiences on how the rich tapestry of religious traditions can contribute to fostering understanding, empathy, and collaboration in our diverse society. There was an engaging panel discussion featuring experts from different faith communities as well as thought-provoking talks on the role of inter-religious wisdom in contemporary public discourse.



We had wide-ranging contributions from the audience both online and in-person audience.

[David Rennie: Milton Keynes Interfaith Administrator - Candle Lit Silent Prayer](#)

David Rennie led a period of representatives of different faiths lighting candles and silent prayer for the suffering people involved in the many conflicts in the world. He explained that he helped to organise a similar interfaith prayer meeting in Milton Keynes recently.



[Canon Cllr. Ann Easter: Councillor of the London Borough of Newham, Commissioner for Interfaith and Inter-religious Dialogue](#)

Canon Cllr Ann Easter talked about listening in her role with constituents and how to develop relationships that form the bedrock of community harmony. She spoke of Newham as a lovely Borough where almost everyone has a faith. There is a Muslim woman Mayor, Roxzana Fiyaz, in Newham. She had invited Canon Ann Easter to be the Commissioner for Interfaith Engagement. Her engagement began in the local faith forums where there is a chance to listen, learn and share. The faith forums just started before Covid 19 emerged and those forums were useful to tackle issues that arose during Covid lockdowns. Endless Faith Forum zoom calls occurred about safety and vaccinations etc. Faith Forums also discussed age expectancy. Urban centres have lower life expectancy than the suburbs but faith members have a longer life on average. Gambling was another issue as well as women's experience in faith traditions. Representatives are usually male so she has often been a minority. End of life issues have also been discussed. Differences between the faith cultures arose in those discussions. Very important issues arose in very local forums. 60 people from the Borough attended many of those discussions.

This was very good local level dialogue about practical issues using the inter-religious wisdom of all their traditions. The common refrain is that 'we have so much in common'.



[Sheikh Dr Hojjat Ramzy](#) perceives religion as playing a vital role in today's society. Inter-religious and interfaith cooperation is developing in the UK with mutual respect and cooperation. He emphasised that mutual respect is needed to work together successfully to promote the dignity and life of human beings as well as aid the vulnerable in society. Religions can also work together to protect the rights and responsibilities of each other and caring for all creation.

The importance of inter-religious dialogue, he understands, is that it brings together all religions but does not create a uniformity of religious groups. Dialogue maintains religions and does not seek to change their individual faiths. Nations without fear of religious supremacy can seek inter-religious dialogue to maintain respect peace and justice both within its borders and with its neighbours. Those multi-faith nations extend respect to many different places of worship and their communities. Those communities then integrate within their nations and show a peaceful model to the wider world.

He highlighted that 'this dialogue and understanding will eradicate any type of phobia'.

He spoke of the former US Secretary of State, John Kerry who said that one of the 'interesting challenges' of international diplomacy is to understand how the wide range of religious traditions across the world impact on foreign affairs. Kerry commented that he would study Comparative Religion rather than Political Science if he had the choice again.

Sheikh Ramzy concluded saying that the protection of religious freedom should be the priority of all democratic countries and that as a 40 year practitioner of inter-religious dialogue and interfaith relations, he understands its potential to bring both peace and justice.