

# **UNITED FOR PEACE**

## **Three Counties United Against Extremism**

**A Service with readings interspersed with silent  
reflection and music**



**Wednesday, 20<sup>th</sup> April 2016  
6.30pm for 7.00pm-9.15pm**

**Dorney Lake, off Court Lane, Dorney, Windsor, SL4 6QP**

**An initiative of The Oxford Foundation delivered in partnership with  
The Lord-Lieutenancies of Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire,  
Oxford Diocese, and Oxford Muslim College**





**Mr. James Puxley, Her Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant for the Royal County of Berkshire**

**Sir Henry Aubrey-Fletcher, Bt., Her Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant for Buckinghamshire**

**Mr. Tim Stevenson OBE, Her Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant for Oxfordshire**

These are difficult times indeed for the effort to reconcile differences and find common ground. Especially we need to harness goodwill, imagination and creativity in order to present a united front in the face of the activities of minority groups of extremists. This third United for Peace Service, following those already held in Oxford and Birmingham, brings together those of all faiths and none from across the three counties of the Thames Valley to celebrate and reinforce our common approach to the cause of peace.

As Lord Lieutenants for the counties of Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire we are very grateful to all those who have made this occasion possible and feel privileged to be able to support it.

**The Rt Hon David Cameron, MP**  
**The Prime Minister**



Over generations, we have built something extraordinary in our country – a successful multi-racial, multi-faith democracy – and we will never let anyone destroy that.

The extremists who claim to act in the name of religion, hijack religion for their own sickening ends. But we will not be cowed by their ideology of hatred. Together as people of every faith and none, we will fight their ideology in every part of our society. We will contrast their bigotry, aggression and theocracy with our values and we will stand up for those values with confidence and pride.

Throughout our history, the courage and resolve of the British people has triumphed over those who would seek to destroy our way of life. We will succeed again – and events like United for Peace play an important role in helping us to do so.

As you gather for this service, let us think of those who are held captive against their will. Let us remember all victims of terrorism and extremism in the world today. And let us also stand together in support of the loved ones who are left behind and help to give them the strength to carry on with love and unity in their hearts.

Together, united for peace, we will defeat the extremists and build a stronger and more cohesive country for our children, our grandchildren and for every generation to come.

**Sarah Taylor**  
**High Sheriff of Oxfordshire**

It is a great achievement that, thanks to the Oxford Foundation, we unite here today to pray that humankind throughout the world may learn to live in peace and understanding. We pray that we may lead by example and always have the humility to compromise with others and be tolerant of their religions, views and ways of life.

**Sir Nicholas Pearson, Bt.**  
**Chairman, Advisory Board, The Oxford Foundation**

I want to thank all those who have shown an interest in the work of The Oxford Foundation and in particular, thank all those who have volunteered their time and good will to bring this Service to fruition. To all of you who come today to celebrate our determination to be unified in the face of terrorism and extremist violence, I also give our sincere welcome and thanks. We really do mean to show that these islands are not called the United Kingdom for nothing!

In these pages you will find, from many diverse sources, a constant and underlying call for peace and tolerance in the face of the extremist currents that buffet our world. These currents can so easily push us into extreme positions ourselves and it is this we need to guard against.

While we can never concede to the aims or the principles of violence, we need also to understand how and from where this arises. It is one of the aims of The Oxford Foundation to do this by working with young men and women who, out of the ground of their own situations, find themselves angry, alienated and revengeful towards both their own families and the country at large.

By identifying these cases early, we hope to be able to allow these young men and women to air their grievances in a secure and creative manner which may, in time, allow them to re join the ranks of all who strive to add something to this truly wonderful country in which we are all lucky to live.

Thank you for your support and please continue to give us all the help you can.

**UNITED FOR PEACE**  
**Three Counties United Against Extremism**

**Welcome**

**Sir Henry Aubrey-Fletcher, Bt.,  
Her Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant for Buckinghamshire**

**Cllr Mohammed Rasib  
Mayor of Slough**

**Cllr Eileen Quick  
Mayor of the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead**

**UNITED FOR PEACE**  
**Readings, Silent Reflection and Music**

**Address by Imam Monawar Hussain**  
**Founder, The Oxford Foundation**

**The Rt Revd Bishop Colin Fletcher OBE, Acting Bishop of Oxford**

Dear Lord,

We thank you for bringing us here together. Thank you for the chance to worship and pray for peace and understanding between all religions and all people. Give peace to all the aching hearts of mankind, stir us all to seek thy compassion in every thing we do and so establish a way of life that is according to Your kingdom and Your love.

Lord in your mercy,           **hear our prayer.**

Dear Lord,

Help us to unite against all types of extremism in whatever form they take. Help us to lift our eyes above the torment of this broken world and ensure that we never forget the innocent victims whose lives have been torn apart by war or terror. May we always be aware of the role we play as individuals of faith to tread the path of respect and understanding and ensure that love triumphs over hatred, and peace over war.

Lord in your mercy,           **hear our prayer.**

Dear Lord,

Guide the leaders of all nations, of all religions and of all educational backgrounds to help justice prevail. May they receive from you the gift of wisdom to fight all wrong and support all those who suffer from fear and conflict. May those in authority recognize that with the privilege of leadership comes the responsibility to spread the message of peace and reconciliation. Guide them with purity of heart to lead us all to become peace keepers and peace makers.

Lord in your mercy,           **hear our prayer.**

Dear Lord,

Finally, help each and every one of us become instruments of your peace. Give us the power and understanding to stand strong in the face of evil, as we put our faith in You, the source of all life and hope.

By the power of Your Spirit, may peace, which is founded on love and righteousness, be established throughout the whole world and let Your glory shine over all the earth for evermore.

**Amen.**

## **Mike Haines, A Family Member's Response to Extremist violence**

I would like to thank The Oxford Foundation for inviting me here to speak with such an important audience this evening. I would ask your forgiveness in my reading this speech, I find public speaking difficult.

This country we live in, where we have made our homes, where we have brought up our children, where we practice our faith, is in danger. Not only from the bullets and bombs of terrorists, but from the far more insidious fear and suspicion that the terrorists seek to sow. Our communities are being pushed apart and we cannot let this happen. We cannot let them win.

In this country of ours we have close to 270 nationalities, practising some 170 different faiths. The faiths represented here today in this august company account for millions of people. What is the one thing that we all want, we want safety. Terrorists whatever their political or religious make up seek to destroy our way of life. They want to turn community against community, they want people to commit hate crimes. The trouble is that it is working. There has been an increase in all kinds of intolerance. It has got so bad that there is a presidential candidate calling for actions that are reminiscent of the early days of the Nazi party. So what can we do?

Some say bomb them, some say soldiers on the ground, some stop their money, and others cyber attack them. I don't have the knowledge or learning to make judgements on these issues. But what I DO believe is that the most powerful ways of challenging these terrorists is by what we are doing here today.

Our country Great Britain, has many many ethnic groups living here. We have such a great opportunity to learn from each other. To explore our different cultures and religions. By creating lines of communication between our communities we can overcome the fear that terrorists seek to sow. By reaching out and talking to someone from a different faith or background we can break down these walls that they seek to build.

My father was an aircraft engineer, and when I was a youngster I can always remember him telling me that an alloy of metal is stronger than a base metal. I am not saying that we should throw all our cultures and beliefs into a melting pot and everyone come out the same. As some of you may have noticed I am Scottish, and I am fiercely proud of my heritage. We can in our society stay proud and true to our various heritages whilst learning of others and accepting that they are proud of theirs.

I came into contact with a Redbridge Imam Shahnawaz Haque. Shahnawaz and I have a wonderful friendship where both of us are learning so much from each other. I have stayed at his home and gone to Mosque with him on many occasions. I have been accepted and welcomed into the local community and talked with many people from it. Our relationship is built on knowing that we want to learn more. We have an understanding that we can ask questions of one another without causing offence. Our backgrounds and history's are very different and in normal circumstances we would never have come into contact with each other. There is not a day goes past where I am not thankful of our friendship, Alhamdulillah. I truly believe that our friendship and ones like it can do more to fight against the hatred and fear than bombs and bullets.

My brother was killed by terrorists in Syria in 2014. He was a humanitarian worker, there to help people in need. His murder was splashed across the internet and the media for all to see. Since his murder I have travelled across our nations and abroad visiting schools, mosques, churches, youth groups, organisations. I talk of unity, tolerance and understanding and how important it is that we fight this hatred and fear. How important a hand of support and friendship can be. This

fight against terrorism, and by that I mean all terrorism, is so important, not for some far off country but for us here and now.

I find going into schools and talking with the students surprisingly refreshing and hopeful for the future. They can often get to the heart of the matter more quickly than we old fogies. They ask the questions that adults are afraid to ask because of possible emotional pain and or fear of giving offence. One of the most popular questions is why do I not hate. My answer to them is if I hate they win. I will not let hatred enter into my life. I will fight to my dying breath against the fear and discord they seek to sow.

Thank you for inviting me here. Standing with you all, extending the hand of friendship, the willingness to learn from one another makes me proud and filled with hope of what we can achieve. Most of all thank you for the opportunity to make a stand with you against hatred.

I would like to finish with a quote from Kofi Anan:

“Ignorance and prejudice are the handmaidens of propaganda. Our mission, therefore, is to confront ignorance with knowledge, bigotry with tolerance, and isolation with the outstretched hand of generosity.”

### ***A pause for silence and personal reflection***

#### **Choir, Eton College**

#### **Make me a Channel for your Peace, based on the prayers from St Francis of Assisi**

Make me a channel of your peace:  
Where there is hatred, let me bring you love;  
Where there is injury, your pardon, Lord  
And where there's doubt, true faith in you.

Make me a channel of your peace:  
Where there's despair in life let me bring hope;  
Where there is darkness, - only light,  
And where there's sadness, ever joy.

O Master, grant that I may never seek,  
So much to be consoled as to console,  
To be understood as to understand,  
To be loved as to love with all my soul.

Make me a channel of your peace.  
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,  
In giving to all that we receive,  
And in dying that we're born to eternal life.



## **Jonathan Paull, Jewish Tutor, Eton College**

Great is peace, for it outweighs all other blessings.

The whole Torah exists only to establish peace, as it says, 'Its ways are ways of pleasantness and all its paths are peace.'

The world rests on three pillars: justice, truth and peace. That is, between nations and between individuals.

May it be Your will, O God, that war and bloodshed shall vanish from the earth, and that a great and glorious peace may reign forever in the world. Let every human being realise and understand the basic truth that we have not been created for strife and discord, hatred and envy but only so that we may come to know You to whom all praise is due for ever.

### **Song (Based on verses from Micah chapter 4) Sung by Alexander Massey, Oxford**

And everyone 'neath his vine and fig tree  
Shall live in peace and harmony  
And everyone 'neath her vine and fig tree  
Shall live in peace and harmony.

And into ploughshares beat their swords,  
Nations shall make war no more  
And into ploughshares beat their swords,  
Nations shall make war no more.

## **Shaida Akbar, Muslim Community Representative**

In the name of God, the Infinitely Good, the Most Merciful  
Praise be to God. Oh my Lord You are the Most Kind, the Most Compassionate,  
the Ever-Forgiving, the Most Merciful of the Merciful.  
Oh my Lord, please bring peace where there is conflict and bloodshed.  
Oh my Lord, please bring healing where there is injury and pain.  
Oh my Lord, please bring reconciliation where there is division, hatred and enmity between your  
creation in different parts of the world.  
Oh my Lord, please grant us as a community of communities, to be voices of peace, love and  
reconciliation for all creation.  
Oh my Lord, strengthen those who are working for peace, reconciliation and healing wherever  
they may be in the world.  
Oh my Lord, bless this beautiful city of ours with every blessing and make this event today an  
inspiration for others, to be voices of love and peace.  
Oh my Lord, grant us always to be united against the voices of hatred, division and violence.

### ***A traditional supplication repeated after prayer:***

O God, You are Peace, From you comes Peace,  
And to You returns Peace, Enliven us with Peace, Our Lord.  
Enter us into Paradise - the abode of peace.  
You are the Most Blessed, Our Lord,  
Most Exalted, Possessor of Glory and Nobility. O Most Merciful of the Merciful,  
Have Mercy upon us. Pardon us, O You, Who are the Most Generous.

**AMEEN.**

## **Younis Ghulam-Nabi sings the Kalam of Hazrat Bulleh Shah [1680-1757].**

**[Hazrat Bulleh Shah is a world renowned Muslim Sufi poet and Sufi Master from the Punjab. His message is universal, steeped in deep spirituality, love and he speaks to the human soul].**

Parh parh ilam hazaar kitaaban, apna aap na pareya  
You have read a thousand books and gained vast knowledge, But, you never read your own  
Self

Ja ja varda mandir masjid, na mann apne vich vareya  
You earnestly enter Mosques and Temples, But, you never entered your own heart

Larde rai ho naal shaitana, nai nafz apne naal lareya  
You fight with Satan, Oh human being, But, you never fought with the evil within your own Self

Pehle apne aap nu par, phir Mandir masjid var  
First read your own heart, then visit the Temples and Mosques

Jidoun nafs jave tera Mar, phir naal shaitana larr  
When you control your own Soul, then you can fight with the satan

Aakhe paya peer Bulleh Shah, aasmani pharna e, Jera mann vich vasda eh...tu onu parya nai  
Says Peer Bulleh Shah, you want to find the one in the heavens, But, you never found the one  
who resides within you

Masjid dha de, mandar dha de, Dha de jo kuj dehenda  
Demolish the Mosque, demolish the Temple, Demolish whatever you can

Par kise da dil na dhaanvi, Rabb dilaan vich rehenda  
But, do not demolish any person's heart, For God dwells in hearts

Ohda rabb vi rusda nai, Jihnu yaar manauna aunda  
His Lord is not disappointed, He who knows how to please his Friend

Ohnu makke jaan di lor vi nai, yaar vekheyaan jidda hajj hunda  
He need not journey to Mecca, [He] who witnesses his Friend completes his Hajj (pilgrimage)

### **Ahmad Nawaz, Survivor, Peshawar Military School, Pakistan**

In the name of ALLAH, the most Merciful and the Most Beneficent.

16th December 2014 was an unforgettable moment of my life. I lost 132 friends of mine including my dear younger brother Haris Nawaz and 16 teachers. 16<sup>th</sup> December is the day of those shining stars who gave their life for education and their nation.

The morning of 16th December was not a normal morning. My brother Haris's words still echo in my mind to this moment when he was repeatedly telling me that he didn't want to go to school that day but I insisted and forced him to go.

And he was right..... We shouldn't have gone to school that day. I wish I'd listened to him...But I didn't. Who was to know what lay ahead on that fateful day.

I was in first aid training with my schoolmates. Those happy moments of laughing, joking and talking to my close friends did not last for long.

A group of men with guns and bombs in their hands entered our school and fired bullets one after another, with no mercy. It was an astonishing moment of my life. I thought school was always a safe place, not a place where children will be brutally massacred. All I could see was blood and killing. And soon I realized I too was hit by a bullet and I was lying on the ground, bleeding heavily. Every next moment was worse than the past.

I was surrounded by dead bodies of all my friends with whom I was laughing and playing a few minutes ago. Bombing and firing did not stop for a long time and I thought I could be the next one to be killed. I saw my teacher burnt alive. I wanted to help her but I couldn't. My wounds did not let me to help her.

The terrorists were merciless. They would shoot the students until they died. My school uniform was red in blood. I pretended to be dead so that the terrorists did not notice that I was still alive otherwise they would have shot me until I died.

Two hours later, I was brought to a hospital. It gave me hope that I may survive. I saw brutally killed and badly injured students. That was a horrible scene.

In that tragic situation, I had forgotten about my brother. After my surgery, when I saw my parents they looked very sad. I asked them, "Where is Haris? My parents while convincing me said he is in another hospital. However, soon, after 15 Days I found out from my friend that Haris was killed. I was shattered that day. I lost my dear brother. I was feeling even worse and guilty thinking of that morning when he insisted that he did not want to go to school and I pushed him to go.

What strengthened me was the support and prayers of people. I am very thankful to the hospital in Pakistan and to the Queen Elizabeth hospital in Birmingham for all their care.

I miss my brother and friends but they lost their lives for our country and education therefore I am proud them. Whenever I feel or see my injured hand I am proud of what I have sacrificed for our country and education.

My survival in that massacre is a miracle. This is my second life and now I am determined to continue my own education and work for the education of all those children who are deprived of the fundamental human right of education. That's why, I started a campaign for education and I want to continue spreading this great message throughout the world. Because only by education we can defeat terrorism.

Today, on this special occasion I want to convey a very special message to all Pakistani People and all of you that we should never forget the sacrifice of the people who suffered and lost their lives for the right of getting education.

I dream of peace, safety and education for every child. I dream no child has the fear of being killed for learning. I dream every school stays safe for children. I dream of love, harmony and peace in this world.

Once again, thank you very much and I hope that you all will join me in this great cause.

***A pause for silence and personal reflection***

## **Professor Vijay Gupta, Hindu Community**

In The Riga Veda the Mantra reads:

“Only One God exists eternally BUT wise persons call Him by Many Names.”

### **Rig Veda 1:164:46**

The diversity of religious traditions among human societies reflects this simple but profound idea. Human beings pray to the Lord in whatever form they are most comfortable visualising Him in. Hence tolerance for people with faiths other than your own is an essential part of being human.

#### ***So a short prayer***

Oh Lord,

May all be happy.

May all be free from misery and sickness.

May all be in harmony and friendship and

may all be free from pain.

#### ***And a prayer for peace***

O Lord, Let there be peace in the Heavens; Peace in the Atmosphere;  
Peace on Earth;

Let the waters be cooling, the herbs healing and the plants enhancing Life.

Let there be Harmony between, and peace for, all beings in the Universe.

With perfection in Knowledge let peace pervade everywhere.

May this Peace be within me as well!

Om Shaantih, Shaantih, Shaantih, Om (O, Peace; Peace; Peace)

## **Mrs. Rani Bilkhu, Sikh Community**

The Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji, the living Guru and poetic scripture of the Sikhs, provides wisdom for all humanity and guides us to the ultimate truths that prevail in the troubled world we live in. The universality of these truths is beautifully manifested in the Sikh scriptures - by the inclusion of Shabads (hymns) composed by sages of other traditions.

The Shabad that we are about to hear was composed by Bhagat Kabir Ji. He was a 15 century Muslim poet and saint. And like many others, his writings are recorded in the Sri Guru Granth Sahib. The essential truth portrayed in this hymn is that we are, for all our differences, all fashioned by the same Creator. The image of the common Potter and his multifarious pots of humankind poses the profound question; how can we call some good and others bad when we are all creatures of a common light? Whether we refer to that Creator as Waheguru, Allah, Ram or any number of other honorific names, Sikhism proclaims the essential unity of humankind and exposes the futility of castigating ‘others’ on grounds of caste, creed or colour.

### **Reading and Shabad (Hymn) from the Sikh tradition entitled, “Awal Allah Noor Upaya”**

**The shabad is to be performed by Miss Preet Kundhi from Shardha Music**

First, God created the Light; then, by His Creative Power, He made all mortal beings.

From the One Light, the entire universe welled up. So who is good, and who is bad?

O people, O Siblings of Destiny, do not wander deluded by doubt.

The Creation is in the Creator, and the Creator is in the Creation, totally pervading and permeating all places.

The clay is the same, but the Fashioner has fashioned it in various ways.

There is nothing wrong with the pot of clay - there is nothing wrong with the Potter.

The One True Lord abides in all; by His making, everything is made.

Whoever realizes the Hukam of His Command, knows the One Lord. He alone is said to be the Lord's slave.

The Lord Allah is Unseen; He cannot be seen. However the Guru has blessed me with this sweet molasses (blissful understanding).

Says Kabeer, my anxiety and fear have been taken away; I (now) see the Immaculate Lord pervading everywhere.

### **Michael Gammage, Thames Valley Baha'i Community Representative**

Be generous in prosperity, and thankful in adversity.

Be worthy of the trust of thy neighbour, and look upon him with a bright and friendly face.

Be a treasure to the poor, an admonisher to the rich, an answerer of the cry of the needy, a preserver of the sanctity of thy pledge.

Be fair in thy judgement, and guarded in thy speech.

Be unjust to no man, and show all meekness to all men.

Be as a lamp unto them that walk in darkness, a joy to the sorrowful, a sea for the thirsty, a haven for the distressed, an upholder and defender of the victim of oppression.

Let integrity and uprightness distinguish all thine acts.

Be a home for the stranger, a balm to the suffering, a tower of strength for the fugitive.

Be eyes to the blind, and a guiding light unto the feet of the erring.

Be an ornament to the countenance of truth, a crown to the brow of fidelity, a pillar of the temple of righteousness, a breath of life to the body of mankind,

an ensign of the hosts of justice, a luminary above the horizon of virtue,

a dew to the soil of the human heart, an ark on the ocean of knowledge,

a sun in the heaven of bounty, a gem on the diadem of wisdom,

a shining light in the firmament of thy generation, a fruit upon the tree of humility.

*(From the Baha'i Writings)*

### **Robert Harrap, Buddhist Community**

On behalf of SGI-UK, I am delighted to support this important event. One of the fundamental principles in all Buddhist traditions is the idea of the Middle Way which describes the path that rejects extremes but rather transcends and reconciles the duality that characterises many ways of thinking. Ultimately the Middle Way is the pursuit of a way of life that promotes the dignity of all life and relieves the world of suffering. The practice of Buddhism provides individuals with the ability to reveal the qualities of the Buddha in our own lives: compassion, courage, wisdom, creativity and life-force. Buddhism encourages the individual to take responsibility for his or her own life and to transform inequality into equality, disrespect into respect and disharmony into harmony, and thereby see a transformation of the wider world. Nichiren, the founder of the Buddhist tradition which we in SGI-UK follow, wrote in the 13<sup>th</sup> century: "If the nation is destroyed and people's homes are wiped out, then where can one flee for safety? If you care anything about your personal security, you should first of all pray for order and tranquillity throughout the four quarters of the land, should you not?" Prayers based on the Middle Way of

reverence for the dignity and sanctity of life, making the welfare of people and the planet the starting point and final goal of every human endeavour, provide such a way to challenge and respond to extremism.

**John D White, Chair, Oxford Humanists**

Humanists try to adopt a rational approach to life as social human beings, and seek to encourage society - as a whole - to respect both those with religions and those without. So, speaking on behalf of all the Humanists within our three counties (plus many of those who support the concept of a secular state), I am opposed to any form of discrimination, be it sexual, racial, religious or political. Thus, it goes without saying that I strongly support the “United for Peace: Three Counties United Against Extremism” initiative – and welcome the opportunity of standing alongside of everyone else whom the Imam Monawar Hussain has invited.

*A pause for silence and personal reflection*

## **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

**Sir Nicholas Pearson Bt., Chairman, Advisory Board, The Oxford Foundation**

### **A PLEDGE FOR PEACE**

**Led by Corporal Elizabeth Copsey  
Lord-Lieutenant’s Cadet for Oxfordshire**

**[All stand]**

We have come together today as citizens of the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth.

We pledge to stand united  
against those who propagate hate and violence towards others.

We pledge to stand united  
against all forms of violent extremism.

We pledge to live by the values that are inherent within our traditions –  
values of compassion for the needy, love for the neighbour  
and respect for one another.

We pledge to do all we can  
To promote understanding, respect and mutual love for all.



***Please move to the Food Hall for refreshments and conversation***

## **MESSAGES OF SUPPORT AND PRAYERS**

**Adam Afriyie MP**  
**Member of Parliament for Windsor**

When confronted with bigotry or extremism we must show unity. The actions of a minority of extremists serve to highlight our shared values of compassion, charity and empathy. United for Peace deserve rich praise for promoting fellowship over hostility, peace over conflict and co-operation over disunity.

We must never complacently tolerate intolerance but confront it with understanding, education and reason.

The United for Peace evening has my very best wishes and support in bringing people together with a powerful message that is more than welcome in the Three Counties.

**Alok Sharma MP**  
**Member of Parliament for Reading West**

Religious extremism, in whatever form, is one of the major global threats in the world and we need to do everything, in our collective power, to combat it by promoting the values of tolerance, compassion and peace.

Encouraging inter-faith dialogue, bringing about cultural exchanges and listening to the voices of harmony, particularly those of young people, is absolutely a key part of overcoming extremism and building a better world.

The United for Peace service today is a powerful vocalization for goodwill and peace across nations and my grateful thanks to The Oxford Foundation for the incredibly important work it does, to build bridges and friendships across religions and diverse communities.

There is no doubt that initiatives like United for Peace help to make for a better, safer and more united world community.

**The Right Honourable Fiona Mactaggart MP**  
**Member of Parliament for Slough**

Living in a diverse town like Slough is a daily reminder of the richness which diverse heritages bring to any community. Sadly this diversity is too often regarded as a source of shame rather than strength. We need to work at bridging the differences between our different experiences, we need to pay attention to the stories and beliefs of others so that we can learn from them and when I do that I am reminded that we have more in common than not.

Human beings need love, we need to understand the world which surrounds us, we want to connect with other people. When these needs are used and perverted by those who direct them to violent ends we all suffer. Challenging the ideologies which do that starts by celebrating beliefs which reject hatred, division and violence, and I strongly welcome this initiative to do just that in the Thames Valley.

**Cllr John Sanders**  
**Chairman, Oxfordshire County Council**

It is good that we have this organisation that promotes tolerance among the many religions, nationalities and ethnic groups that make up our community. These are difficult times and it is vital that we all stand together as one people and the only way to do this is by speaking and listening to one another.

This is how we overcome preconception and prejudice and thus turn a light on racism, religious intolerance and xenophobia. Only by the understanding that comes from dialogue can we hope to bring an end to discrimination, persecution and sectarianism and that is why United for Peace is such an important concept – striving to open minds and hearts to our common humanity.

This mutual understanding is a vital message that we must bequeath to our youth in each generation so that we maintain a civilised world for the future.

**Cllr Bill Chapple OBE**  
**Chairman, Buckinghamshire County Council**

Our newspapers, radio and television news, and social media bristle daily with reports of conflict around the world.

Never before have we had access to such a wide choice of images and words describing the atrocities one human inflicts on another. We can see and hear, often as it happens, and technology now brings the reality of atrocity disturbingly into our homes and our lives.

There's nothing new about conflict between nations, tribes, factions . . . even neighbours: history overflows with these stories. Yet the question with which I struggle is why we, as humankind, have not learned from history to live in peace with one another, reconciling our differences, and exploring what unites us rather than being drawn to a focus on that which divides.

These differences, fuelled by extremist indoctrination, polarise to breed the terrorism we all abhor and condemn. So I warmly welcome our three Lord-Lieutenants' invitation to draw people together in harmony to reinforce our common approach to encouraging peace and a stand against extremism and terrorism.

The journey towards peace starts with willing intentional steps by each individual, and as we reflect at this *United for Peace* service, the words of the prayer of Francis of Assisi will be at the front of my mind: 'Lord make me an instrument of your peace.'

**Cllr Eileen Quick**  
**Mayor of the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead**

When we stand together shoulder to shoulder and remain united in our resolve to fight against extremism, we defeat the enemy. We are many and they are few and today we must send a clear message to extremists. Their violence and desire to control people, born out of a twisted version of religion will not overcome our love of freedom and our right to live in peace and harmony.

All the great religions have much in common, we are taught that God is love and his message to us is to love God and one another. Holy scriptures do not command followers to kill and terrorise innocent people.



In our communities we must continue to foster good relations between people of all faiths, cultures and races. Young people must be nurtured and the vulnerable supported, to help them see the wrongness of the message proclaimed by extremists. We must not be afraid to go about our daily lives, we must stand up for what we believe and be an example to others.

Events like today remind us of the importance of life long education and that we should share our fight against extremism with others.

**Cllr Rae Humberstone**  
**Lord Mayor of Oxford**

To be *United for Peace* we must also be united in our quest to find a lasting solution to the problems that lie at the very root of so much of the unrest in the world. We must be united in the fight to end poverty, to end discrimination, whether it be on faith, racial or gender grounds. In a modern world no one should be fearful of practicing their chosen faith or be discriminated against because of the colour of their skin. Everyone, regardless of gender, should be free to enjoy all of life's opportunities. We must be united in the struggle to narrow the gap between the poorest in our society and those who have never known and never will know poverty. We can supply the questions but the answers must come from the ones who have the power to change this world and, most importantly, have the will to make those changes.

**Cllr Sarah Hacker**  
**Mayor of Reading**

The threat to us all posed by extremist views must be met by solidarity of approach from those of all faiths and none. We need to try and understand the cause of intolerance and learn from our mistakes in the past. In this way we can hope for a world where all religions hold peace and respect for all people as their core teaching.

**HE Sayed Saheb Al-Khoei**  
**Secretary-General, Al-Khoei Foundation**

In a world with increasing conflicts that often use religion as justification, we should remember that all religions emphasise on mercy, compassion, and peace. The Holy Quran states: "O mankind! Lo! We have created you male and female, and have made you nations and tribes that ye may know one another. Lo! the noblest of you, in the sight of Allah, is the best in conduct...". [49:13]

This verse highlights a significant point that not only should we embrace one another, regardless of our beliefs, race or gender, but also it is our righteous acts rather than our differences that define us. The separation and division of nations, communities and individuals creates space for extremists to threaten our global security and peace. It is the sincere oneness of humanity that will remove violence and hate.

It is important that through the human values of freedom, respect, tolerance and peace, which are shared amongst all individuals of faith and belief, that we celebrate our diversity and show compassion and mercy towards one another.

Initiatives that bring a range of religions and communities together, such as the 'United for Peace' initiative, can have long-term positive impacts and we should use them to secure peace for ourselves and the future generations for, as articulated by Imam Ali, we are either brothers in faith or equals in humanity.

**The Rt Revd Dr Alan Wilson**  
**Bishop of Buckingham**

In an age of fear and heightened public anxiety, it is more important than ever to focus on everything that makes us more aware of our God-given human dignity and helps us to act towards our neighbours with integrity and love. Jesus teaches that all the law and the prophets hang on the commandments to love God and love our neighbour. Indeed, the Christian scriptures point out that if we think it is possible to love the God we have not seen without loving the neighbour we have, we deceive ourselves. We need to take every opportunity we have to rekindle our passion for all that affirms life in its fullness, diversity and joy. Such a response to being alive opens our eyes, ears and hearts to one another, and provides a better safeguard against violence and hatred than mere containment. Jesus warns us how foolish it is to cast out demons and leave an empty space for them to return — we need intentionally to take the life-affirming path, actively seeking out what is of God in one another, firm in our faith as we have received it and firm in friendship together.

**Alexander Norman**  
**Director, Dalai Lama Centre for Compassion, Oxford**

As His Holiness the Dalai Lama has said: *“Until comparatively recently, communication between different cultures, even different communities, was slow or non-existent. For this reason, sympathy for other faith traditions was not necessarily very important. But this attitude is no longer viable. In today’s increasingly complex and interdependent world, we are compelled to acknowledge the existence of other cultures, different ethnic groups and, of course, other faiths.*

*“I believe that the best way to overcome ignorance and bring about understanding is through dialogue with members of other faith traditions. It is also tremendously helpful when ordinary but practising followers of different religions meet together, share their commitment to peace and pray together.”*

**Professor Alistair Fitt**  
**Vice Chancellor, Oxford Brookes University**

For many years the UK has enjoyed a global reputation as one of the most multicultural nations in the world today. Our country is known for its religious tolerance and we celebrate the wide range of faiths, beliefs and opinions that can be found within our shores. Extremism of any kind threatens this and must be challenged wherever it occurs. The *United for Peace* initiative seeks to promote peace, understanding and tolerance. In today’s difficult and unpredictable circumstances, it is therefore particularly welcome.

At Oxford Brookes University we welcome staff and students from all over the world. We celebrate the broad range of religious and cultural backgrounds that pervades our University. We are therefore proud to stand together to unite for peace and to oppose all forms of extremism and intolerance.

**Professor Anthony Glees**  
**Director, Centre for Security and Intelligence Studies (BUCSIS)**  
**The University of Buckingham**

As a professor at the University of Buckingham and director of its centre for security and intelligence studies, I offer the 'United for Peace: three Counties United Against Extremism' project my support.

The vast majority of British citizens, whatever their background and whatever their faith (if any),

are united by a common set of values. We cherish life and liberty. Were we to permit extremists of whatever variety to undermine or seek to destroy these values we would be throwing away our liberty and very possibly our lives as well. All people of goodwill must stand together to make sure that the country we pass on to children is safe and free.

For every ordinary citizen there can be few better ways of working out rational responses to challenging times than through an evening of peaceful and quiet reflection. I offer you my respectful congratulations for doing just this.

**Dr Iqtidar Karamat Cheema**  
**Advisory Board Member, The Oxford Foundation**

Terrorism is often over-simplified as a religious, fundamentalist or irrational act. Terrorism is best seen as a dynamic and ever-changing phenomenon—but one that is best organised through a multi-dimensional lens. Since the last decade of the twentieth century, terrorism has often become embedded in a religious process, it is hard to separate from other contexts. While some see the new terrorism as primarily driven by religious ideology, other experts (Esposito, 1999) have noted that radical Islamic terrorism is first and foremost a political and psychological response to contemporary political issues and does not reflect the essence of Islam. Armstrong (2005) contends "fundamentalism is often a form of nationalism in religious disguise," and suggests one should not over-generalize that such atrocities are caused by Islam or that the entire motive for terrorism is religious. Religion can serve as a justification and can even help motivate the terrorists, but not all terrorism is inspired by religious ideology and religious fundamentalists. Even religious fundamentalism is unlikely to be a single cause of terrorism, but it may reflect other aspects of group and personal dynamics (Borum, 2004).

However, terrorism by certain Muslims is still only one of countless forms of terrorism today, including revolutionary, political, nationalist, cause-based, environmental, criminal, religious, enforcement, maverick, splinter, and even psychotic or lone-wolf terrorism. Islam and Muslim countries are not a monolithic entity, and we must educate ourselves on the nuance of its plurality, internal dynamics, and historical complexities. Our national policies, laws and counter-terrorism strategies should reflect this fact. We must appreciate that Islam as a religion is not the problem but the people who have become fanatic perverting the religion of Islam for political and ideological reasons. That is why the work of The Oxford Foundation is absolutely critical as it focuses on young people, taking a holistic approach, that challenges the extreme religious interpretation of terrorists claiming Islamic legitimacy but that also seeks to build the character of young Muslims through 1-2-1 mentoring, art, music and drama, thereby enabling them to be strong British citizens making an important contribution to our great country.

The use of Islam as a category for defining terrorism is a poor practice. The *United for Peace: Communities United Against Extremism* is a powerful movement that seeks to unite United Kingdom's communities on shared values of love, compassion, peace and understanding – values that guarantee the ultimate defeat of violent extremists.

**The Venerable Olivia Graham**  
**Archdeacon of Berkshire**

There has never been a golden age of peace and tolerance between the religious faiths of the world, and today we live in usually troubled times. But the message of this gathering is the message of hope; it is the message that we do not accept hatred and intolerance as a legitimate operating system; it is the message of belief that by standing together against the forces of evil, we can make a difference. We approach the Almighty, the Higher Power, in ways which harmonise with our cultural backgrounds and belief systems, but we do it with a shared humility

and respect for each other. This message of this gathering is the message of hope to a broken and hurting world.

**Rabbi Dr Jonathan Romain MBE  
Maidenhead Synagogue**

One of the main Jewish prayers that is said, not only every day, but three times-a-day, is the Amidah. It ends with the line (and you'll recognize a couple of the words):

Oseh shalom bimromav, hoo ya'aseh shalom, alenu v'al kol yisrael v'vimru amen  
*May God who makes peace in heaven helps us to make peace on earth.* Okay, very nice, you might think - but there's more: it's all too easy just to utter pious words and think good - but that's not enough, you also have to do good and be good. And to remind us of that, when we say that prayer, we take three steps backwards - why?

To indicate that peace doesn't happen if you insist you are right and others are wrong, refuse to budge, refuse to give way. Instead, peace only comes if you are prepared to step back, to see the other person's perspective, make room for their point of view, create space for compromise. And so we take three steps backwards to encourage our actions to match our words, our deeds to parallel our prayers. You might also have come across the Jewish greeting *Shalom alechem/peace be to you* – very similar to the Arabic greeting *salam alekum* meaning exactly the same. But what's fascinating is the response:

One person says: *Shalom alechem/peace be to you*  
And the other person replies: *Alechem shalom/to you, peace.*

In other words, they reverse it. Why? Because responding exactly the same: *Shalom alechem - Shalom alechem* would imply that we are exactly the same. By changing it slightly *Shalom alechem – alechem shalom* it says we are different, but there can still be peace between us. We have our divergences, but that shouldn't get in the way of our common humanity.

**The Revd Dr Marcus Braybrooke  
President, World Congress of Faiths and Co-Founder, Three Faiths Forum**

We say together

May the spirit of compassion help us to feel the suffering of the peoples and all creatures of the world

May the spirit of love melt the cold hearts that trample on human rights

May the spirit of beauty help us to preserve the unique splendours of each country

May the spirit of wisdom help us to treasure the mystical insights of all religions

May the spirit of patience and endurance strengthen those who are oppressed and exiled from their homes

May the spirit of courage strengthen those who speak for those who have no voice

May the spirit on Nonviolence bring healing peace and justice to all people's of the world

May the spirit of unity help us to recognize people of every nation as brothers and sisters and our unity with all creation.

**Gregorios, Archbishop of Thyateira and Great Britain**

As Orthodox Christians, we share in the condemnation of any form of Extremism, Fanaticism or Intolerance, whether religious, racial, social or cultural. We are all aware of the recent events in the Middle East and northern Africa which have led to horrendous actions (images of which have been flashed across the world), and which have affected the lives not only of the people

living in those areas whose only wish is to live in peace and unity with their neighbours (and who include our greatly-suffering fellow Orthodox and other Eastern Christians), but also families in the United Kingdom. Sadly, the perpetrators frequently invoke 'religious belief' to justify their actions and objectives. The Message of Christianity is that of 'Peace', emphasised by our Lord Jesus Christ, hymned by the angels as 'Prince of Peace' on Christmas night, and one which resounds throughout the worship and teachings of the Orthodox Church.

**Nigel Cohen**  
**Maidenhead Synagogue**

Fear, poverty and self-interest are at the root of almost all of the appalling conflicts around the world. True religions calm the hatred by helping us to care for each other, and interfaith activities by helping us to understand each other and make new friendships. *United for Peace* shines brightly by bringing together people from all faiths, whether in God or in Human Kindness, from three counties at the heart of the UK.

**Cllr Surinder Dhesi, Banbury**  
**[Reading from Sikh Sacred Holy Scripture, p. 1299]**

I have totally forgotten my jealousy of others (happiness), since I found the Company of the Holy. ||1||Pause|| No one is my enemy, and no one is a stranger. I get along with everyone. ||1|| (Now,) whatever God does, I accept that as good (for all). This is the beautiful wisdom I have obtained from the Guru. ||2|| O Nanak! (Say- since meeting the Company of the Holy, it is as if) I see the One God's Holy Presence pervading in all beings, (and for this reason) I blossom with happiness when I see all around me. ||3||8||

**Canon Bede Gerrard**  
**Chair, South East England Faiths Forum**

When I look at what is being done in the world in the name of religion the thought crosses my mind that 'God is not like that'. I am sure many others, of very different religious backgrounds, have the same feeling. For whatever faith tradition we come from if we believe in a supreme being, in God, we relate the feeling that we have to God with the feelings we ought to have for each other. If God is a God of love and creator of all, we ought to have within us a similar love and a desire to preserve what God has created.

This year is the 1,400 anniversary of the Medina Charter. In this document the Prophet Muhammad himself lays down for his followers the feeling of respect they ought to have for people of different beliefs. The recent Marrakesh Conference held earlier this year emphasises that this is the face that Islam should be showing the world not the perverted visage of Daesh. People of other faiths should also bear in mind that they too need to have respect for the differences that exist in our society. 'Do as you would be done by' is an aphorism that we could well each have in our dealings with our neighbours. When we begin to work for peace in the world the point where we begin should be within our own hearts.

Our prayer for peace should be; God grant me peace in my heart, in my family, in my city, in my country and throughout the world. Uniting for Peace should be as natural for us as breathing and as such it will be life giving.

**Dr Prem Sharma OBE**  
**Patron, South Asian Development Partnership**

**‘A World of Peace’**

Let's all come together and build a World of Peace  
A happy co-existence, a harmonious order  
Where there is no need for sectarian walls,  
Dividing us by religion, caste, class or gender.  
Let's all come together and build a Happy World of Peace.

A world where every home is prosperous,  
Every courtyard is lighted with a ray of hope;  
Where everyone's dream comes true,  
Where families are strong, united.  
Let's all come together and build a Tolerant World of Hope.

We are all in the same boat,  
With one boatman charting our course.  
We'll journey together, brothers and sisters,  
Living for others, without hatred.  
Let's all come together and build a Democratic World of Freedom.

Where do we find this happy world?  
We are far from God and far from peace.  
It will take our effort, our love and sacrifice;  
Forgiving wrong, overcoming evil with good.  
Let's all come together and build a Truthful World of Love.

**Penny Faust**  
**Chair, Oxford Council of Faiths**

On behalf of the Oxford Council of Faiths I would like to express our full support for this initiative. We aim to promote good relationships and respect between people who come from Oxford's rich variety of faith communities. And we also want to foster friendship, trust and mutual understanding between peoples of all ages, all backgrounds and all faiths and none.

An evening like this can only reinforce these aims and bring them to the attention of the wider world. Over the years we have learned that there are real benefits both to our own faith groups and to society at large when we stand together in faith for what we know to be right. We have more in common than in our differences, and we all have concerns for the fabric of society, for mutual support and for respectful social interaction through love, respect and our common humanity.

We know that initiatives such as this do make a difference. By offering our support, we hope to enhance relationships between all of us and demonstrate our future commitment to working in trust and harmony together.

**Professor Jonathan Bard**  
**President, Oxford Jewish Community**

The Hebrew word for peace is *shalom* and a similar word for peace is found in Arabic (*salaam*), in Maltese (*silem*), in Syriac (*shlama*) and in Ethiopian (*sālam*). They all come from a much earlier proto-Semitic root S-L-M that may have meant *whole*: if humans are not at peace, they are not whole.

Peace is, and we feel it today particularly, the last and the greatest of the blessings that Aaron, the high priest of Israel more than 3000 years ago, asked God to bestow on his people. May it be bestowed on all the peoples of the world.

May the Lord bless you and keep you.  
May the Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you.  
May the Lord lift up His face to you, and give you peace.

**The Revd Dr Liz Carmichael**  
**St John's College, University of Oxford**

O God of love, we pray thee to give us love:  
Love in our thinking, love in our speaking,  
Love in our doing, and love in the hidden places of our souls;  
Love of our neighbours near and far;  
Love of our friends, old and new;  
Love of those with whom we find it hard to bear,  
And love of those who find it hard to bear with us;  
Love of those with whom we work,  
And love of those with whom we take our ease;  
Love in Joy, love in sorrow;  
Love in life and love in death;  
That so at length we may be worthy to dwell with thee,  
Who art eternal love. Amen.

*[A Prayer by Archbishop William Temple 1881-1944]*

**Younis Ghulam-Nabi Haqqani**  
**Muslim Musician, Banbury**

Islam is a religion revealed to mankind with the intention of presenting a peaceful life where the infinite compassion and mercy of God manifests on earth. God calls all people to live by the moral values He sets so that compassion, mercy, peace and love can be experienced all over the world.

O You who believe! Enter absolutely into peace (Islam). Do not follow in the footsteps of satan. He is an outright enemy to you.” (Holy Quran: 2, 208)

In the verse above, Islam fundamentally calls for peace and fosters a life in absolute sincerity and honesty before God. Therefore, it is vitally important for an individual to believe in God with his own will and aspiration, and observe God's commands and advice through personal conscientious contentment.

The Quran provides an environment where people can fully enjoy freedom of thought and freedom of religion and allows people to live by the faith and values they believe in. According to Islam, everyone has the right to live freely by his beliefs, whatever they may be. Anyone who wants to support a church, a synagogue or a mosque must be free to do so. In this sense,

freedom of religion, or freedom of belief, is one of the basic tenets of Islam. There is always freedom of religion wherever the moral values of the Qur'an prevail.

**Katy Jennison**  
**Oxford Pagan Circle**

As a Pagan and a Wiccan, I celebrate all Life on this Earth: rocks, plants, animals and people. We are all atoms from the same star, so how can anyone be my enemy? Everyone is a part of me, and we are all a part of each other.

I wish the warm breath of the wind, the joy of running water, the clear light of the Sun, moon and stars, and the deep peace of the Earth to you all.

**Nazar Lodhi**  
**Chairman, Mustaqbill (Future) Foundation**

We are members of the most diverse country in the world where people from different ethnic and religious background co-exist and respect each other's beliefs and religion. Evil is trying to divide us by acts of terrorism, extremism and hatred. But it has opposite effect as it brings people of different faith and beliefs closer. This event is an example as to how these acts are bringing us together. It is a small minority which is trying to divide us and create an environment of fear and mistrust. Our prayers are with families of those targeted by this hatred. We being together is a proof that these acts of terrorism and extremism cannot control our minds and hearts. We believe in peace and freedom, and no matter what, we will stand together. I believe that there shall be more events like this as it is a source of unity, peace and harmony.

**Kaleem Hussain**  
**Representative for West Midlands & Buckinghamshire**  
**The Oxford Foundation**

The *United for Peace: Communities United Against Extremism* is a national initiative set up by The Oxford Foundation seeking to demonstrate how the key stakeholders in the United Kingdom from across the faith, non-faith, civic and political spectrum all have a role and duty to play in addressing the root causes of extremism in our society by affirming the values that unite us (love, respect, peace and compassion) as opposed to those that the extremist advocate (division, hatred and violence). This initiative was successfully launched in Oxford (Oxford Spires Academy) and has travelled to Birmingham (University of Birmingham) and is now taking place representing the 3 Counties of Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxford at Dorney Lake, Windsor. This is a ground-breaking initiative bringing the diverse communities of the United Kingdom together and during these testing times it is paramount that it is rolled out across multiple towns and cities in the United Kingdom.

**Karnail Pannu MBE**  
**Chairman, Windsor and Maidenhead Community Forum**

Sharing our religious or cultural traditions in an atmosphere of respect leads to mutual enrichment and transformation. The inter-faith movement contributes to conflict transformation, supports religious freedom, acts for poverty eradication, environmental balance, social harmony and peace.

WAMCF believes that we can only be safe and secure in a society that practices tolerance, cherishes harmony and can celebrate difference.



**Prof. Chauhdry Shafique MBE**  
**Chair, Council for Christian and Muslim Relations, High Wycombe**

I'm delighted to be supporting the United for Peace initiative. It's timely and increasingly important that we have spaces for dialogue, understanding and unity. This is also precisely what the Council for Christian and Muslim Relations in High Wycombe does. We meet regularly to work together to address the challenges facing our communities and through that process of mutual co-operation, we also build bonds of durable friendship based upon deeper understanding and mutual respect. If we are to defeat those advocating hatred, division and violence, we will only do so when we stand united together as a fully integrated society.

**Anouar Kassim**  
**Founder, Islamic Arts Heritage and Culture, Milton Keynes**

God is beautiful and loves beauty (*Inn Allaha jameel wa-yuhibbu l-jamaal*)  
[A tradition of the Prophet Muhammad (s) in *Sahih Muslim* 1.93:91].

Extremism has no boundaries. Milton Keynes experienced this when its mosques were petrol bombed a few times and caused damage. Islam teaches the messages of tolerance, respect for all religions and human kind and to search for the middleway in your affairs, as there is beauty in all of us.

Milton Keynes Islamic Arts & Culture stands united for peace and by me personally as the founder of MKIAC. By working towards UNITY with all faiths and non-faiths in Milton Keynes, working against those whose extremism would seek to exclude or to divide communities and to stop the numerous acts of violence and hatred carried out in the name of religion.

"Calligraphy is the tongue of the hand, the delight of the conscience, the ambassador of the mind and the spirit of geometry, the inheritor of the thought, the weapon of knowledge, the companion of absent friend."

'...The pen is mightier than the sword' was coined by Edward Bulwer-Lytton in 1839 for his play *Richelieu*.

But 1400 years ago In the Quran it says

"Read, and your Lord is the most Generous"  
"Who taught by the pen"  
"Taught man that which he knew not."  
(Holy Qur'an 96:1-5)

Calligraphy (as seen by the Muslims) is a visible expression of the highest art of all; the art of the spoken word - the transmittal of thoughts and of history. In Islam, the most important document to be transmitted orally is, of course, the Qur'an. Proverbs and complete passages from the Qur'an can be seen today in Arabesque and geometric patterns were used to visually connect spirituality with science and art, both of which were key to Islamic thought, "the unity underlying things" as each is "generally constituted from a single element, a single rope or a single line, which comes endlessly back upon itself".

**Cllr Mohammed Ilyas**  
**Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead**

One of the primary sources of guidance for Muslims is the Holy Quran. In many of its verses, God guides humanity on its responsibility towards each other. One such verse guides Mankind as follows:

“O Mankind We have made you from a single pair of a male and a female. And made you into nations and tribes so that you may recognise each other, to know each other, not to despise each other. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of God, is the one who is the most God-conscious. And God has full knowledge and is well Acquainted (with all that you do).” [Qur’an, 49:13]

From the above Qur’anic verses we deduce that Islam teaches in the unity of all humans and preaches peace, justice and equality. Indeed, in the messenger of God, Muhammad (may God’s peace and blessings be upon him) Muslims have the best example to follow. He treated all people equally, He conveyed the message through his character. His honesty was recognised by many, including his wife Khadijah, who was a Pagan and reverted to Islam after meeting him. When the people of Makkah called him, he would rush to them because he was so concerned for their goodness and their turning to the worship of one God. In the earlier days, many were abusive to him, tortured and harmed him, but he did not respond in the same way. When they treated him badly, he treated them well. When they harmed him, he prayed for them and forgave them.

On one occasion, in a place known as Ta’if, the Prophet was harmed so much that every part of his body was bleeding excessively from head to toe. As he was driven out of Ta’if, angel Jibreel came to him and told him that if he desired, he would destroy the people of Ta’if for what they had done to him. The Prophet Muhammad (may God’s peace and blessings be upon him) replied that, “I have been sent as a mercy to the people and not to punish them.” So he prayed for them, saying, “O Allah I ask you to guide their offspring if guidance is not written for them..”

The Prophet (Peace be upon him) signed a treaty with believers of other faiths so that they could live peacefully within their own faiths. Fulfilling the rights of each other, not harming each other.

**Shaida Akbar**  
**Founder, Upton Lea Unity - Promoting Unity through Sports, Slough**  
**Vice President, Pakistan Welfare Association, Slough**

As human beings we must respect all religions and it is the religions that bring us together in prayers. These are sources of comfort and inspiration in the community. Prayers are believers weapon against extremism and hate crimes.

The media far too often portrays Muslims in a negative way, associating the religion with what are clearly bad individuals, doing bad things - thereby tarnishing a whole community with the same brush. The Muslims are seen as extremists and not part of British society. The media rarely shows successful Muslims in our great country - doctors, teachers, solicitors, armed forces personnel, civil servants, police officers and so many other professions, all contributing to our beautiful country.

I feel very blessed to live in the United Kingdom. Let us pray together and stand united against extremism.

**Professor Vijay Gupta,  
President, Hindu Cultural Society and Hindu Temple, Slough (2008-2010)**

United for Peace: Three Counties United against Extremism, is an excellent initiative which offers all religions to come together to enhance goodwill and harmony in the UK. Such congregations serve a very useful purpose at troubled times like these.

A popular poet of partition India wrote in a famous poem that religion doesn't teach us to be hostile to each other. This Service underlines the message in ample measure. Such initiatives go a long way in building a humane, harmonious and caring global society cognizant of the need for human dignity for all.

I hope and pray that this gathering of men and women of goodwill will prove to be a mile stone in creating a tolerant community. The UK as a country is one of the most tolerant and welcoming countries in the world. It is host to a large section of population belonging to a number of countries. Such events serve a very useful purpose in bringing together diverse strand of thoughts and help appreciate the glory and importance of different faiths.

I offer my very best wishes for the success of this initiative.

**Amarjeet Bhamra, Slough**

There is one God  
Eternal Truth is His name.  
He is the Creator and pervades all His Creation.  
Devoid of Fear  
Devoid of Enmity  
Immortal, who is beyond time.  
Unborn  
Self Existent  
He is known and realized only by the Guru  
*Guru Nanak Dev*  
*Founder of Sikh Faith*

**The Oxford Foundation  
gratefully acknowledge the kindness and support of:**

**Mr. James Puxley, Her Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of the Royal County of Berkshire**  
<http://www.berkshirelieutenancy.org/index.html>

**Sir Henry Aubrey-Fletcher, Her Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant for Buckinghamshire**  
<http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/about-your-council/council-structure/lord-lieutenant>

**Mr. Tim Stevenson OBE, Her Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant for Oxfordshire**  
<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/public-site/oxfordshire-lieutenancy>

**Cllr Mohammed Rasib, Mayor of Slough**

**Lord-Lieutenants Cadets for the three counties**

**Eton College**  
<http://www.etoncollege.com/>

**Oxford Diocese**  
<http://www.oxford.anglican.org>

**Oxford Muslim College**  
<http://www.oxfordmuslimcollege.com>

**Dorney Lake**  
<http://www.dorneylake.co.uk>

**Muslim Hands**  
<https://muslimhands.org.uk>

**St Michael's at the North Gate**  
<http://www.smng.org.uk>

**Organisation Unlimited**  
[www.organisationunlimited.uk](http://www.organisationunlimited.uk)

**All the wonderful volunteers for their support and help – thank you!**

**The Oxford Foundation is a not for profit company limited by guarantee.  
(Company Registration No. 6880287)**

[www.theoxfordfoundation.com](http://www.theoxfordfoundation.com)

<https://www.facebook.com/communitiesunitedagainstextremism>