

UNITED FOR PEACE

Birmingham's Communities United Against Extremism

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



**Wednesday, 20th May 2015
6.30pm for 7.00pm-9.00pm**

**St Francis Hall Multi Faith Chaplaincy
University of Birmingham
B15 2TT**

**An initiative of The Oxford Foundation delivered in partnership
with
the Chaplaincy team, University of Birmingham**



Paul Sabapathy CBE
Her Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant for the West Midlands

I was approached by my colleague Tim Stevenson OBE the Lord-Lieutenant of Oxfordshire to enquire if I would support this excellent initiative being organised by Imam Monawar Hussain DL from The Oxford Foundation, it was a huge success when it was held in Oxford last year.

Without much further thought I agreed straightway to fully support this event. I am actively supporting this initiative as it is much needed at this time, when there is so much discord and disharmony because of a lack of knowledge and true understanding of what the different faiths truly teach. The problem we face is one of ignorance and misrepresentation by a few people who very often have their own personal interests and agenda rather than the interests of the common good.

Currently we face a threat because of aggressive and intolerant views propagated by a tiny minority who try to force these fanatical views on others by implying that if you do not agree to their extremist views you are a deviant. This tiny minority are willing to use force and coercion to impose their will which ignores the God given rights and freedoms of others to exercise their judgement and decide what is right and what is wrong.

We need to face this threat by standing shoulder to shoulder, regardless of faith, race or social standing by challenging these unfounded extremist views collectively in a peaceful manner with patience, courage and forbearance. We need to try and understand what feeds these extreme views and counter them by addressing the causes of these grievances.

That understanding may help us to better meet the threat that we face by starting with the premise of peace, harmony and love, which is at the heart of all mainstream religion and humanism and is a better way forward than the violence and hatred which will ultimately lead to discord and human destruction.

Here in the West Midlands tremendous work has been taking place over many years all across the region in furthering peace and reconciliation with the city of Coventry, which suffered huge destruction during the blitz, majoring on peace and reconciliation as the City of Peace and Reconciliation.

This event will bring a new and added perspective of building on the values of peace, harmony, tolerance and accepting the human rights of everyone to be treated with dignity and mutual respect regardless of gender, race, beliefs, and social standing.

It is important that this initiative spurs us all to greater heights of working together in the future in promoting peace harmony and mutual respect, and making the world a better and more peaceful place for all.

In conclusion can I thank Imam Monawar Hussain DL, Kaleem Hussain from The Oxford Foundation and Revd Dr Catherine Shelley, and all those at the Chaplaincy at Birmingham University for organising this important event.



The Rt Hon. David Cameron, MP
The Prime Minister

When people commit acts of terrorism, extremism and hatred, they are trying to divide us. But the result is the exact opposite: it actually brings us closer together. The multi-faith service here in Birmingham demonstrates that. It shows that when the values the British people stand for are threatened – values of freedom, tolerance, fairness, compassion – then we stand together, and we stand stronger.

That unity matters. Throughout history, humanity has defeated its greatest foes when we have come together. Think of the Second World War. It wasn't just one nation that rose up against fascism; it was millions of men and women from many different colours, creeds and countries. It's the same with extremism. There isn't one faith that will defeat this threat; it's everyone, those of all faiths and none.

So let's carry on doing what we do so well in this country. Let's meet division with unity. Let's follow weakness with strength. Let's turn fear into resolve. And let's come together – whichever faith we follow – and pray that we can consign the evil of extremism to history.

UNITED FOR PEACE
Birmingham's Communities United Against Extremism

Welcome

Revd Dr Catherine Shelley, Chaplain, University of Birmingham

Paul Sabapathy CBE
Her Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant for the West Midlands

Councillor Ray Hassall
Lord Mayor of Birmingham

UNITED FOR PEACE

Readings, Silent Reflection and Music

Address by Imam Monawar Hussain
Founder, The Oxford Foundation

In the name of God, the Infinitely Good, the Most Merciful

Lord-Lieutenant, Lord Mayor, Ladies and Gentlemen
Peace be upon you!

On behalf of The Oxford Foundation and the Chaplaincy Team, University of Birmingham, a very warm welcome to you all! Thank you for taking the time to join us at such a significant and important event. We have today people joining us from across Birmingham and beyond – from Oxfordshire, London, and Coventry and across the West Midlands. There are a number of individuals and families who have lent their support to this event and who have sadly been direct victims of both far right and extremist religious violence – thank you so much for joining us.

In particular, I want to welcome in friendship and solidarity – Mike Haines, the brother of David Haines, who has travelled from Dundee to be with us, Mohammed Nawaz, whose young sons were victims of the Peshawar attacks and Taraq Jahan who is father of one of the three young men who lost their lives during the 2011 riots. Mike, Mohammed and Taraq, we are so privileged to have you with us – thank you.

This event is an outcome of dedicated partnership building and the tremendous support of the Lord-Lieutenant from the very instant he heard about this national initiative. We are so honoured to have you as our Lord-Lieutenant and thank you so much for all your help in connecting us with Faith and Civic Leaders' from across Birmingham and West Midlands – we are greatly indebted to you. But as many of you will know, these events require great commitment, determination and energy and we have had that in abundance in a local man - Kaleem Hussain, the foundation's representative for Birmingham. Kaleem, with colleagues from Broadway School attended our first event in Oxford and again, from the very first instant took the baton of unity, love and peace and has brought it to this beautiful city. This baton has been embraced so warmly by the Chaplaincy Team at this great University – I thank every one of you for your immense support. This event is a collaboration from across the communities, colleagues from every walk of life, culture and creed, coming together – *United in Peace: Communities United Against Extremism*. I extend my deepest gratitude and love to you all.

Why this event and why now? First, for the families whose loved ones have been either killed or are being held hostage by the terrorist group – the self declared 'Islamic State.' It's unimaginable to comprehend the pain and hurt families must be going through, who find themselves in such distressing

circumstances. However, I hope our coming together today demonstrates that they are not on their own, that so many of us from across the city and the country have the families and the hostages in our thoughts and prayers. May I please, at this point, therefore ask all of us to have a moment of silence and reflection; and in particular, offer prayer for the families and their loved ones being held hostage and those who are suffering in places of war and conflict.

(One minute silence and personal reflection)

Thank you. Secondly, we live in one of the most beautiful, kind and compassionate countries in the world. Our country is a great example of mutual respect and co-existence between people from diverse ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds. The aim of The Oxford Foundation is to work to deepen understanding between this rich cultural and religious diversity, and at the same time to challenge and confront the narratives of both the far-right extremists who have been gaining in strength in mainland Europe and also here at home. For example, the brutal killing of Mohammed Saleem, an 82-year-old pensioner walking home from the mosque, brutally stabbed in Birmingham in 2013. His killer said he wanted to create racial conflict in our country. In addition, there has also been a rise in anti-Semitism; for example, early this year, BBC quoting the Community Security Trust (CST), a charity set up to protect Britain's Jewish community reported that the number of anti-Semitic "incidents had more than doubled to 1,168 in 2014." <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-31140919>.

On the other hand, extremists claiming Islamic legitimacy have been committing the most barbaric and wicked acts, unleashing indiscriminate violence on innocent people going about their daily lives. The violence of IS and their affiliate groups, far too often against fellow Muslims but also against minorities, is used by far-right and Islamophobic groups to spread hatred against all Muslims and Islam, in general, thereby tarnishing a whole community. Extremism feeds off extremism.

I want to quote here from an *Open Letter*, to which I am a signatory with 125 Islamic scholars from across the Islamic world. This *Open Letter*, point by point, undermines the shared theology, a theology of separateness, that all modern-day terrorist groups claiming Islamic legitimacy follow. The *Open Letter* to IS concludes by stating: "The Prophet, who was sent as a mercy for all the worlds, summarized a Muslim's dealings with others by saying: '*He who shows no mercy, will not be shown mercy*'; and: '*Have mercy and you will be shown mercy.*' But, as can be seen from everything mentioned, you have misinterpreted Islam into a religion of harshness, brutality, torture and murder... this is a great wrong and an offence to Islam, to Muslims and to the entire world." (p. 25).

I wish to acknowledge the courage and support of key Muslim Faith and Civic leaders' from Birmingham who have endorsed the 24 points outlined in the *Open Letter* to the leader, fighters and followers of the self declared Islamic State, and who have made a commitment to disseminating these 24 points to their respective communities through sermons and teachings in mosques and madrasahs. This has been made possible through the efforts of Dr. Khurshid Ahmed CBE, CEO, Sultan Bahu Trust, to whom I'm most grateful and I hope these are steps that will lead to embedding the 24 points of the *Open Letter* in our communities.

Thirdly, what can we do in the face of those advocating hatred, sowing the seeds of distrust and using violence to impose their will upon the vast majority of decent people? I believe that the most powerful message we can send to advocates of hate, who seek to harm community relations and sow discord, is through being absolutely united in the values of love, compassion and respect for one another. This service demonstrates that these are values we all share, values that endure, values that will always overcome the narratives of hatred and violence.

I hope you enjoy the rest of the Service, and will join us for a meal at the conclusion of the event. Thank you.

**Revd Dr Catherine Shelley, Dr Una Coogan,
Fr Patrick Mileham and Revd Andrew Brazier
University of Birmingham Multi-faith Chaplaincy**

Loving God,

We pray for the City of Birmingham as one community and in all the diversity of its communities. We ask your blessing on all gathered here to celebrate that community, as leaders, people of prayer, students and educators and all who are the future of this City. We pray that we may continue to grow in unity and peace.

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

Compassionate God,

Forgive us when we see difference as division rather than gift. Help us to model in our lives and communities joy in diversity and so bless our uniting against all extremism whatever its form or source. May we always tread the path of respect and understanding and seek to ensure that love triumphs over hatred and peace over war in all aspects of our lives.

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

God of peace,

Guide the leaders of all nations and religions to lead with wisdom, seeking justice and peace at all times. May those with the authority and privilege of leadership in all parts of this City and this country spread the message of peace and reconciliation in all aspects of their work. May we not just leave it to the leaders but become leaders ourselves in supporting initiatives to build bridges, resolve tensions and challenge those who seek to foster and exploit divisions, difference, hatred and extremism.

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

Merciful God,

We commit ourselves to service of God and neighbour, recognizing that all are our neighbours. We pray for those of all faiths and none, for those who come from

nations across the world, for those who come to study at our universities, for those who come seeking refuge from war and persecution and we continue to pray for the peace of the city and for all who work for peace.

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 throughout the earth for evermore.

Amen.

University of Birmingham Students, Chaplains and Edgbaston Church Choir

Make me a Channel for your Peace, based on the prayers from St Francis

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.

**Rabbi Margaret Jacobi, Progressive Jewish Chaplain
University of Birmingham**

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*).

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.

A pause for silence and personal reflection

Dr Khurshid Ahmed CBE, Muslim Community

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 Most Generous.

Aa'shiq Al Rasul (Lovers of the Prophet (pbuh) Nasheed Group

Call to prayer

I hear a cry in the silent night
It fills my soul with strange delight,

'Ere the dawn breaks cold and grey:
Though it sounds so far away

Chorus

**Allah, Hu Akbar! Comes the call
Allah, Hu Akbar, one and all**

**Allah, Hu Akbar, there!
Ye faithful come to prayer!**

Again 'tis heard at the noontide hour
It seems that bird and tree and flow'r

When Nature's bright and gay
Burst forth in roundelay

Again I hear it as day declines
Its echoes stir the lofty pines

And the labourer's task is o'er!
And above the city's roar.

When the sun goes down 'tis heard again
When the weary seek their rest,
When clouds fly past, and a sound of rain
Comes sobbing from the west;

By night and day, by eve and morn,
The call rings in mine ears:
It can admonish, it can warn,
Can rouse, or calm our fears.

**Allah, Hu Akbar! Comes the call
Allah, Hu Akbar, one and all**

**Allah, Hu Akbar, there!
Despise the call who dare!**

Celebrate

He sent us His beloved to show us
Ways of contentment and goodness
So that we may live our lives to our fullness
With joy and happiness.

Chorus

**Celebrate ALLAH's endless favours,
Celebrate ALLAH's never ending Mercy
Oh Oh ALLAH's endless favours,
Oh Oh ALLAH's never ending Mercy**

With food of all types we eat and live
Friends and family, our health
We read, we see, all we know
To remember Him is 'r greatest treasure

Our greatest thanks we must give
He gave us abundance of wealth
Thinking of Him makes our hearts glow
All we seek is His pleasure

All things that His blessed Nabi taught
His teachings simple and pure
All you have to do is trust and submit
Blessings surround and cover you

Endless happiness they brought
Easy to follow and adore
Keep following and don't resist
Angels assist you through and through

Allah gave us life to worship Him
He wants us to be full of happiness
Showing us ways back to Him

To seek eternal blessings
Not to chase dunya and darkness
To eternity and bliss

Dr VP Narayan Rao, Chairman, Shri Venkateswara Balaji Temple

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

Om Shaantih, Shaantih, Shaantih, Om (O, Peace; Peace; 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!

A pause for silence and personal reflection

Dr Piara Singh Boghal, Chair, Birmingham Council of Gurdwaras

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.

In this Shabad, composed by Bhagat Kabeer Ji, the essential truth portrayed 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"

First, Allah 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.

Dr Peymane Adab, Baha'i Community, Birmingham

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)

Sinhavacin, Birmingham Buddhist Centre

In order that I may be skilled in discerning what is good,

in order that I may understand the path to peace,

Let me be able, upright, and straightforward, of good speech, gentle, and free from pride;

Let me be contented, easily satisfied, having few duties, living simply, of controlled senses, prudent, without pride and without attachment to nation, race, or other groups.

Let me not do the slightest thing for which the wise might rebuke me.

Instead let me think:

“May all beings be well and safe, may they be at ease.

Whatever living beings there may be, whether moving or standing still, without

exception, whether large, great, middling, or small, whether tiny or substantial,

Whether seen or unseen, whether living near or far,

born or unborn; may all beings be happy.
Let none deceive or despise another anywhere.
Let none wish harm to another, in anger or in hate.”
Just as a mother would guard her child, her only child, with her own life,
even so let me cultivate a boundless mind for all beings in the world.
Let me cultivate a boundless love for all beings in the world,
above, below, and across, unhindered, without ill will or enmity.
Standing, walking, seated, or lying down, free from torpor,
let me as far as possible fix my attention on this recollection.
This, they say, is the divine life right here.

Translated and adapted by Bodhipaksa from the Pali Metta Sutta

Shireen Avari, Chairperson, North West Zoroastrian Community (Sister Organisation to Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe)

*“athā ahu vairyo athā ratush ashāt chit hachā
vangheush dazdā manangho shyaothananām angheush Mazdāi
khshathremchā ahurāi â yim dregubyo dadat vāstārem”*

Translation:

*“The will of the Lord is the law of righteousness.
The gifts of the Good Mind to the deeds done in this world for Mazda.
He who relieves the poor makes Ahura king.”*

“A prayer which is based on **Humata, Hukhta, Huvarshta** (good thoughts, good words and good deeds), protects the man from all evil things and bad persons. O Lord Zarathushtra kindly protect the man who has established friendship with you through prayers, from enemies having bad thoughts.”

“God in His Wisdom has willed the many religions and beliefs to suit the diverse needs of different souls. It's like the five fingers of our hand - they function best since they are not uniform. Every religion has something of its own to give to its followers, which need not necessarily harmonize with the prescription of other religions and faiths.”

We thank you for this opportunity to be a part of your initiative and wish you success in all future endeavors. Throughout history we have seen many examples of human persecution and extremism against those who are of different faiths, and those are considered weak or unable to defend themselves. Through education and learning all faiths must work together to bring peace to the world.

Broadway Academy Singing Ensemble, Perry Barr, Birmingham

Heal The World

Spoken:

Think about the generations and say we want to make it
a better World for our children and our children's children.
So that they know it's a better world for them;
and think whether they can make it a better place.

There's a place in your heart
And I know that it is love
And this place could be much
Brighter than tomorrow.
And if you really try
You'll find there's no need to cry
In this place you'll feel
There's no hurt or sorrow.
There are ways to get there
If you care enough for the living
Make a little space, make a better place.

Chorus

Heal the world
Make it a better place
For you and for me and the entire human race
There are people dying
If you care enough for the living
Make a better place for
You and for me.

If you want to know why
There's a love that cannot lie
Love is strong
It only cares for joyful giving.
If we try we shall see
In this bliss we cannot feel
Fear or dread
We stop existing and start living
Then it feels that always
Love's enough for us growing
Make a better world, make a better world.

Chorus

Heal the world
Make it a better place
For you and for me and the entire human race.
There are people dying
If you care enough for the living
Make a better place for
You and for me.

A pause for silence and personal reflection

A PLEDGE FOR PEACE AND CONCLUDING REMARKS Led by Kaleem Hussain

First, I want to say thank you to all those who have made this event possible, especially to:

- Mr Paul Sabapathy CBE - Her Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant for the West Midlands
- Revd Dr Catherine Shelley, the Chaplains and support staff at the Multi-Faith Chaplaincy at the University of Birmingham. I hope that this is the beginning of a long collaboration between the Chaplaincy team and The Oxford Foundation.
- Dr Khurshid Ahmed CBE, Chief Executive, and his team at Sultan Bahu Trust, who was instrumental in working with the local Muslim community for the endorsement of the *Open Letter* in Birmingham
- Dr Iqtidar Karamat Cheema, Director, Institute for Leadership and Community Development, Birmingham, who has also been a passionate advocate of this event
- Nahid Saiyed, Head of Institutional and College Support, University of Birmingham
- Waqar Ahmed MBE, Birmingham City Council
- Birmingham University Choir, Broadway Academy Singing Ensemble and Aashiq al-Rasul, one of the leading International nasheed groups
- Jenny Gerrard for her eye to detail to help with this Service booklet and to the Very Revd Bob Wilkes, Priest in charge, St Michael at the North Gate, Oxford and former Dean of Birmingham Cathedral for printing this Service booklet
- Maryam Hussain for the beautiful design of the United for Peace poster
- Thank you to you all for taking the time to attend this event and for making it a huge success
- And above all, Imam Monawar Hussain whose inspiration it was, and who has worked tirelessly to ensure that this service has happened.

It is all too easy in today's world to deplore extremism, and agonise over terrorist threats. The constant news of violence and fanaticism becomes overwhelming and debilitating. The sorrow and trauma for victims and their families are unending.

The difficulty is to know what one person or one community can do to give voice to the majority of the people who want to live peaceful lives with their neighbours.

I am not for one minute suggesting that this event will change the world, but by being here we have articulated our desire to ensure that Birmingham remains a peaceful city, one in which we can share friendship and respect between our communities, between people of different faiths or none. We know that intolerance has no place in our relationships with each other. By coming together today, we can demonstrate solidarity, mutual respect and our deep desire to maintain inter community cohesion and our connections with each other.

The 18th century philosopher Edmund Burke said, and I paraphrase slightly: “All that is necessary for evil to succeed is for good people to do nothing.”

Today’s event is a small start to **doing** something. Thank you all so much for coming.

PLEDGE FOR PEACE

Tariq Jahan, Birmingham

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

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 our 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

Councillor Sir Albert Bore, Leader, Birmingham City Council

Birmingham is a vibrant and youthful city, home to one of the most diverse set of communities in the United Kingdom, a diversity that is celebrated as a rich tapestry of ethnicities, faiths and cultures that make the city a wonderful place to live and work. This diversity also means that our communities have longstanding familial links all across the World including areas today considered as having many challenges from extremism and terrorism. Indeed Birmingham itself has been victim to terrorism in the past.

Extremists seek to divide communities by spreading fear and anxiety. Initiatives like this aim to strengthen the resolve of our communities to stay united and provide a legitimate and credible platform to challenge distorted narratives and misguided ideologues. It is easy to retreat into fear and suspicion of each other. Birmingham's communities have continuously shown that we will not be defined by intolerance and prejudice and are an example in showing how uniting for peace and working to break barriers helps our diversity to thrive.

We fully welcome this initiative to Birmingham and endorse the messages of peace and unity being promoted.

The Rt Revd David Urquhart, Bishop of Birmingham

As Bishop of Birmingham I am proud of the way different faiths in Birmingham live together and work together for the common good of our city. I welcome this event organised by The Oxford Foundation that will help us to continue the work being done in our city. Tackling violence and extremism in all communities is a vital task for all of us and as people of faith we should take the lead on being peacemakers in our city. Becoming peacemakers requires us to go on building friendships across different faiths whilst being confident in our own identity and beliefs, it's when we are confident in our differences that we can, humbly, discuss difficult issues and start on the process to reconciliation and living well together. I welcome this initiative that will encourage to keep on with this task.

Dr Andrew Davies, Executive Director, The Edward Cadbury Centre for the Public Understanding of Religion, University of Birmingham

Confronting extremism is not the responsibility of just one faith community. It requires the united effort of people of all faiths and none to recognise and privilege the common humanity that draws us together despite our differences. As a Christian and follower of Jesus Christ the Prince of Peace, I am honour-bound to commit myself to work alongside my brothers and sisters from other religious and non-religious backgrounds who seek the 'shalom' of the world as God works with us by the power of his Spirit. As an academic, I believe better understanding comes through constructive, critically-reflective engagement with the issues we

face in a positive, interdisciplinary context. And as a human being, I cannot stand by whilst others suffer without rising to take my stand against those who would harm us all. For these reasons I am glad to add my voice to the millions that speak against extremism and for global freedom of religion or belief. Together we choose to leave repression behind and pursue liberty.

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.

Professor Adam Tickell, Provost and Vice-Principal University of Birmingham

The University of Birmingham is rightly proud of its diversity, both of students and staff, who are drawn from communities here in Birmingham, across the UK and across the globe. They are from a wide range of religious and cultural backgrounds. The University seeks to be a secular university, in the best sense of the word, in which beliefs are respected and accommodated in a spirit of openness and learning. The commitment to standing united for peace, against those whose extremism would seek to exclude or to divide communities is, therefore, shared by all at this university and by me personally as a member of the leadership team.

Canon Dr Andrew Smith, Director, Interfaith Relations for the Bishop of Birmingham

Working together to build peace and to tackle extremism, wherever it is found, is a vital task for all faith communities. This initiative is a good way for people from all backgrounds to come together and be peacemakers, a task which is rarely easy but brings many blessings. I'm sure the United for Peace Service will encourage those working for peace in Birmingham and inspire others to get involved in this most urgent of tasks.

**Professor Ray Linforth, Vice-Chancellor & Principal
University College Birmingham**

All too often, we choose to believe that the threats facing the World are someone else's problem. After all, extremism manifests itself on distant shores and destroys the lives of people we do not even know. Those who take that view have obviously forgotten, or chosen to ignore, the troubles in Northern Ireland, the Birmingham pub bombings, the 7/7 attacks and the murder of Fusilier Lee Rigby in London. How easily they forget when it is someone else's child who is enticed to travel to Syria in the mistaken belief that they are joining a noble cause. In truth, wherever and however it manifests itself, extremism is a massive threat to us all. It attempts to eat away at our core values of tolerance, freedom of speech and expression, mutual respect, fairness and our shared belief in the sanctity of human life.

At University College Birmingham we have students drawn from seventy four different countries around the World. We value and benefit from a diverse learning community of different ethnicities, cultures and faiths, where members willingly come together in pursuit of knowledge, skills and a better future. Intolerance has no place within our learning community. For this reason we welcome the opportunity to support the United for Peace initiative. We are proud to stand alongside others from so many different communities and faiths to demonstrate the power of our united stance against those at home and abroad who would want to undermine our shared values.

**Christina McCann, Roman Catholic Chaplain
Birmingham City University**

Extremism is inherently confined to the margins of society, supported by a tiny minority of any community. Despite this reality its impact can be profound, its effects on the way we live and how we think all too often disproportionate to its otherwise peripheral existence.

As a consequence extremism enters mainstream debate, belying a truth its exponents prefer not to consider – that so many communities live in relative harmony.

It is a reality we know well in our own city of Birmingham and that we understand clearly from education too. Social, cultural, racial and faith-based interaction is innate in many of our universities. Differences may be apparent but instead of being stoked, feared or exacerbated, they form part of the education our students receive.

This event offers a welcome chance to pause and reflect on these realities. Bringing together communities and faith groups, it is a positive opportunity to focus on what unites the vast majority instead of the discord a tiny minority endeavours to sow.

**Professor Peter Lutzeier, Vice-Chancellor
Newman University, Birmingham**

We are called to love our neighbour and to serve one another. In such a world violence and extremism has no place and differences have to be recognised through respectful dialogue.

I fully support the initiative of The Oxford Foundation and hope that the Service '*United for Peace*' will be a model of a world we have to aspire to.

**Professor Dame Julia King DBE FR Eng.
Vice-Chancellor, Aston University**

Living and working in Birmingham, Europe's youngest and most diverse city, is an immensely stimulating and rewarding experience. Our 'city of 1000 trades' is now a city of many faiths and none, with the Churches, Mosques, Temples and Gurdwaras telling a story of many communities living side by side in tolerance and respect. In a place we all call home.

But the future prospects for the young people in our city are not even. Unemployment, underemployment and skills shortages are too common and affect some areas and communities more than others. Those with uncertain futures can become targets for people and organisations that preach doctrines of bigotry and ultimately violence. It is for all of us, especially those of us involved in Education and with young people, to offer a strong message of hope – and to demonstrate that no matter where you start in life you can succeed, and that the support is here, in our city, to help you do so. By working with local schools, recruiting students from the most disadvantaged groups in Birmingham, and ensuring that they go on to graduate careers in business the professions and public service, Aston University is working as part of 'team Birmingham' to provide that support and to ensure that there is a better future.

Clare Short, former Labour Party MP, Birmingham

United and treasuring the core values of all the world's great religions - peace, justice, care for the poor, dignity for all, we can unite and take the world forward and bring a better life for all. But if we go on as we are, there will be more hate, division, bitterness and bloodshed. All will suffer and the world will become more dangerous and nasty. All sides are guilty for this mess. We must all change, particularly western foreign policy. If we all stand up for truth and justice, we can achieve the change that is needed.

**Dr Rebecca Catto, Research Fellow
Centre for Trust, Peace, and Social Relations, Coventry University**

My research to date has demonstrated to me the importance of improved empathy, understanding, and dialogue between differently religious people and the religious and non-religious. Hence, I welcome this initiative and wish it every success in developing and strengthening positive relationships.

**Roger Godsiff
Labour Parliamentary candidate for Birmingham Hall Green**

I am happy to support this initiative to strengthen the relationship between different groups. Birmingham's diversity is one of our city's greatest strengths, and we should work together to improve our understanding of each other.

**Waheed Saleem
Chairman Lunar Society**

I am delighted to support this important initiative, it is important that we celebrate and promote peace and harmony amongst our diverse communities and faiths. Peace, honour and respect are values that all decent humans cherish whatever their religious background and beliefs and it is important that we take time to remind ourselves of our shared values and what bind us together, especially at a time where we face significant conflict and destruction across the world.

Dr Iqtidar Karamat Cheema FCMI, Director, Institute for Leadership and Community Development, Birmingham

The United Kingdom, along with other European states, is seeing a notable rise in the growth of radicalism. The initiative of United for Peace campaign is very appropriate, important and timely. The Muslim world is going through a great turmoil as the world sees what is happening in Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Pakistan and in other parts of the world, and what few groups and individuals are doing under the name of Islam to malign the Muslim faith in the eyes of the world.

The rise of the barbaric terrorists of ISIS is yet another stigma on the name of Islam. These maniacs have already killed thousands of Muslims, destroyed the holy shrines, exterminated Shia Muslims and non-Muslim communities Christians, Mandeans and Yazidis. These tremendously perilous, vicious, fanatics are the part of a particular cult who have camouflaged themselves wearing the cloak of Islam. The vast majorities of Muslims follow a religion of peace, mercy, and forgiveness, and have nothing to do with the violent events that have become associated with some Muslims.

Islam believes in the sanctity of the human life and this is why Islam considers the safety and peace of individuals to be the very core of the religion. Islam directs its true followers towards the attainment of peace in human life and society. This

directive is not only theoretical advice but also a concrete establishment of principles, rules, and regulations, by means of a revelatory knowledge that can be counted on to lay down the right solution to solve all disputes between both individuals and societies.

In light of core Islamic texts, the act of inciting terror in the hearts of defenceless civilians, the destruction of building and properties, the bombing and defacement of innocent men, women, and children, are all forbidden and are culpable, hateful acts. The fanatics wearing the garb of Islam must be dealt with firmly and human rights of all must be upheld to the fullest extent.

Rt Hon. Andrew Mitchell MP

I fully support the work being done by the Oxford Foundation to tackle extremism in all its forms. A key part of Birmingham's unique character is its diversity and community cohesion, and I applaud the work done by faith leaders in the City to promote this.

Canon Noel Beattie United Nations Association Shropshire South Shropshire Inter Faith

To all of you who are engaging in this event I send my greeting of support. To do what you are doing on 20th May is so important for this country and the world. We need a great swelling of people all over the world who pledge to abandon all extremism, in all faiths, politics and cultures and who call for peace upon the earth. Thank you for setting this vision before us and let us all stand together to make peace, justice and liberation happen wherever it is needed and wherever we can.

Daniel Dalton, MEP for the West Midlands

I cannot think of a better reflection of the proudly diverse history of the people of Birmingham and the West Midlands than this service of unity and reconciliation. At a time when, throughout the world, we are facing examples of religious intolerance, events like this bringing together different faiths and communities in peace are a shining example to us all.

So let us celebrate our common values of peace and tolerance, and stand against the forces of extremism, which seek to destroy our freedoms.

Bernard Longley, Archbishop of Birmingham

I am most grateful for this opportunity to offer my support for the 'United for Peace' Service being held today. The human family is a precious gift given to us by Almighty God. With every gift there also comes a responsibility to uphold and safeguard the dignity of every human being as we live alongside and cherish one another.

In his message to the world in celebration for the World Day of Peace, Pope Francis offers an important reflection on how this might be achieved through promoting the value of the human family and how the bonds of fraternity establish understanding and promote peace.

'Fraternity...embraces variety and differences between brothers and sisters, even though they are linked by birth and are of the same nature and dignity. As brothers and sisters, therefore, all people are in relation with others, from whom they differ, but with whom they share the same origin, nature and dignity. In this way, fraternity constitutes the network of relations essential for the building of the human family created by God.'

As Pope Francis reminds us, it is through showing mutual respect and friendship toward one another that the desire to work for peace is fostered and this must always be at the heart of our life together, particularly in those communities where we live.

Vicky Duckworth, Dudley South Parliamentary Candidate for the Green Party

Thank you to every person that has been a part of making this United for Peace service happen. It is a great testament to all involved that in the face of adversity you choose to stand united as a community for a common good.

There are many types of extremism that thrive on the dehumanisation of groups of people through labelling and stigmatisation. By working together through events such as this, we can showcase the value of cultural diversity and encourage individuals to reconnect with people as people.

Together, we can tackle isolation and prejudice and work towards a more equal world that provides positive opportunities for those in society that may otherwise turn to extremism.

Malcolm M Deboo, President Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe

Zoroastrians are the followers of the great Iranian prophet Zarathushtra, who received his divine revelation from the One God over 3500 years ago in the mountains of Northern Afghanistan and North Eastern Iran. Known as Zartosht or Zardosht by the Kurds, Turks and others in the Near and Middle East and Zoroaster by the Greeks, the Zoroastrians formed the largest faith community in

Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Pakistan and Central Asia for over 1000 years and yet other faith communities were allowed to practice their faith freely. Following the Arab conquest of these countries in the 7th century, the Zoroastrian population started to decrease. Religious extremism in the last millennium against Zoroastrians resulted in their marginalisation because of intense religious persecution. Today, the religion of the prophet Zarathustra is one of the oldest revealed religions in the world to believe in the One God and has influenced all the Abrahamic religions, but it is not officially recognised as a religion in most countries of the Middle East. In Iran the Zoroastrians are recognised as a religious minority, but they are second class citizens. If the One God wanted only one religion, then the One God would not have sent us the various prophets down the ages. It is because the One God wants religious diversity therefore the world has known various prophets down the ages, who have received their divine revelation from the One God. Religious extremists who are violently persecuting other religious communities are perpetrating a grave sin. Their violent actions are against the wishes of the One God! Hence the One God will never allow their souls to enter the gates of paradise.

The Zoroastrian community is the oldest established Asian faith community in the United Kingdom. They have total religious freedom to practice their Zoroastrian religion in this country. Zoroastrians, like all other Asian faith communities, continue to work for the betterment of the United Kingdom. The first three Asian MPs elected to the House of Commons for the Liberal in 1892, Conservative in 1895 and Labour parties in 1922 were all Zoroastrians. Like all Asian faith communities, the Zoroastrians assisted this country during both World Wars. In the same way they were united with all faith communities in the United Kingdom and Commonwealth in challenging the Nazis and the far right, which witnessed 'Victory in Europe' 70 years ago, the Zoroastrians will stand united with others to challenge the far right and violent religious extremists in the United Kingdom today.

Professor Richard P Tuckett, FRSC, FInstP, University of Birmingham

Do you respect that of God in everyone though it may be expressed in unfamiliar ways or be difficult to discern? Each of us has a particular experience of God and each must find the way to be true to it. When words are strange or disturbing to you, try to sense where they come from and what has nourished the lives of others. Listen patiently and seek the truth which other people's opinions may contain for you. Avoid hurtful criticism and provocative language. Do not allow the strengths of your convictions to betray you into making statements or allegations that are unfair or untrue. Think it possible that you may be mistaken.

**Revd Ian Howarth, Chair of Birmingham Methodist District
Free Church leader on the Birmingham Faith Leaders Group**

I am delighted to offer my support and good wishes for this important initiative by the Oxford Foundation. It is only by people of different faiths coming together to share our key values of love, peace and hope and developing relationships of trust that the evils of extremism that dehumanise the 'other' will be overcome. I pray that this event and others like it will help the message of peace to become a reality in places of division and hatred.

Maurice Irfan Coles, CEO, The COED Foundation

The early years of the 21st century birthed a small but significant miracle—the miracle of major compassionate change being brought about not by governments or by an individual charismatic being— but by small groups of people determined to do good against all the odds. As Thich Nhat Hanh, the great Buddhist thinker put it, 'The next Buddha may be a sangha,' a community practicing loving kindness. Though from a different tradition, Imam Monawar Hussain's Oxford Foundation is just that. A small group of individuals determined to combat violent Islamic extremism. We can only thank God for Monawar's efforts and for his closely argued rational and profoundly Islamic refutation of the distortions of such a great religion by men of darkness. The *Open Letter* serves as a clarion reminder that Islam is a religion of love and of mercy. Governments need to act now to ensure that this message is received and understood by all adherents and all those who spread hate and discord.

Dr VP Narayan Rao, Chairman, Shri Venkateswara Balaji Temple

We must have peace at home, peace in the community, peace in the country and finally we must have peace within ourselves. Such a peaceful person will understand the true meaning of community cohesion, unconditional love and is always near to God.

**Dr Piara Singh Bhogal,
Chair, Council of Sikh Gurdwaras, Birmingham**

Humanity is living through an Age which Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji, the founder of the Sikh religion, described (translated) as follows:

*The Dark Age is the knife, and the kings are butchers;
Righteousness has sprouted wings and flown away*

In today's discourse, whether it is the work of state or non-state actors, the wanton atrocities we witness reflect this terrible reality. Sikhs, as a nation, stand ready to resist injustice wherever it may be. In doing so we make no distinction as to the identity of the perpetrators or the victims, as our tenth master, Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji, instructed us to:

Recognize the whole human race as one

The Birmingham Sikh community welcomes this initiative by The Oxford Foundation to bring together people of all faiths (and none), so that we may together - as one - tackle the evil of injustice, whether that manifests itself through religious bigotry, fascism, genocide or colonialist aggression. We must vigorously promote human rights and stand united against all those who breach internationally accepted norms of civilised behaviour.

Jess Brandler, Education & Outreach Manager, OneVoice Europe

Our mission as an international mainstream grassroots movement is to amplify the voice of Israeli and Palestinian moderates, empowering them to seize back the agenda for conflict resolution and work with their elected leaders to achieve a two state solution. It is our mission to counter extremism on an international scale and empower those who are so often silenced and overshadowed by the voices of the extremists. In the UK we run educational programmes and youth leadership courses, giving young people the tools to facilitate interfaith dialogue and conflict resolution in a constructive manner and sending the message that non-violent activism is the only way to achieve progress and peace.

We would like to take this opportunity to express support for the work of Imam Monawar Hussain along with the faith and civic leaders who have endorsed the *Open Letter* to the self-declared Islamic State. We hope that his letter will promote discussion within Islam and help deter young people from adopting extremist views.

Kaleem Hussain, Representative *United for Peace: Birmingham's Communities United against Extremism*

Being a resident of Birmingham, the UK's second city it is an immense honour to be part of one of the most diverse cities in the UK encompassing many faith and non faith traditions and cultures. Recent trends whereby Far Right groups have begun to propagate the messages of extremism, hate and violence is a cause of grave concern. This narrative of violent extremism has also filtrated into the poisonous propagation of the self-declared group under the name of IS which is causing pillage and destruction in foreign lands and using it's well drilled media machine to lure susceptible youths to join their cause from these shores.

As a British Muslim residing on these shores and in this wonderful city of Birmingham, one feels duty bound to reject the poisonous narrative that extremism ejects in whatever guise it manifests. The path of extremism leads to a dark trodden path of hate, insularism and on many occasions indiscriminate violence against the other. This is an anathema to the principles and teachings espoused by the world's great religions and our core British values which are those of moderation and respect for the other. *The United for Peace:*

Birmingham's Communities United against Extremism Service organised under the auspices of The Oxford Foundation and in partnership with the Chaplaincy at the University of Birmingham is an initiative to show that the residents, civic, faith and non-faith leaders across the city of Birmingham are united in their quest to promote the messages of peace, love and humanity. By the communities in Birmingham projecting a unified united message for peace and strong stance against extremism demonstrates our practical-symbolic solidarity and uniform belief that it is by working collectively together as one family, we can dispel the negative currents that extremism brings and not be hijacked by the divisive doctrine that such extremist groups bring to the table but achieve our goals as equal shared stakeholders and citizens in this wonderful city of Birmingham.

**Endorsement by the Muslim Faith and Civic leaders' in Birmingham
of the twenty-four Points of the *Open Letter* addressed to the leader,
fighters and followers of the self-declared "Islamic State"**



We the undersigned, representing diverse sections of Birmingham's Muslim communities fully endorse the twenty-four points of the *Open Letter* addressed to Dr Ibrahim Awwad Al-Badri, alias 'Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi', and to the fighters and followers of the self-declared 'Islamic State.' We pledge to:

- ✓ Support the launch of the *Open Letter* at the *United for Peace: Birmingham's Communities United Against Extremism* event on 20th May 2015, 6.30pm-9.00pm, at the University of Birmingham by attending the event ourselves or appointing a representative to attend on our behalf
- ✓ Disseminate this *Open Letter* to our respective congregations and communities in the city of Birmingham
- ✓ Deliver sermons throughout our respective mosques/places of worship in the city of Birmingham on the twenty four points articulated in the *Open Letter*
- ✓ Utilise the *Open Letter* in our madrassahs and schools so as to empower our young people against the narrative of violent extremists

No.	NAME	POSITION	ORGANISATION
1	Pir Fiaz ul Hassan Qadri	Chair	Sultan Bahu Trust International
2	Dr Khurshid Ahmed CBE	Chief Executive	Bahu Trust
3	Dr Iqtidar Karamat Cheema	Director	Institute for Leadership and Community Development
4	Syed Zaffar Ullah Shah	Chief Imam	Hazrat Sultan Bahu Trust
5	Imam Hamid Qudoos Hashmi	Secretary	The Black Country Sunni Ulema Council
6	Councillor Choudhary Abdul Rashid JP	Councillor and former Lord Mayor	Birmingham City Council

7	Councillor Waseem Zaffar	Councillor	Birmingham City Council
8	Councillor Zaffar Iqbal	Councillor	Birmingham City Council
9	Councillor Mahmood Hussain	Councillor and former Lord Mayor of B'ham	Birmingham City Council
10	Councillor Shafique Shah	Councillor and former Lord Mayor of B'ham	Birmingham City Council
11	Councillor Muhammad Afzal	Councillor	Birmingham City Council
12	Councillor Mohammed Idrees	Councillor	Birmingham City Council
13	Mufti Yar M Khan	Mufti and Chief Imam	Al Furqan Education Centre
14	Moalana Shuoab Ahmed Mirpuri	Imam	Markazi Jamiat e Ahle Hadith UK
15	Imam Mohammad Talha Bukhari	Imam	Birmingham Central Mosque
16	Mufti Rasool Baksh Saeedi	Mufti & Chief Imam	Faizan e Rasool Education Centre
17	Allama Ramzan Raza	Imam	HSBT Ward End
18	Nadeem Malik	Director	Islamic Help UK
19	Mohammed Saleem	Media representative	Media representative
20	Raja Saleem Akhtar	General Secretary	Confederation of Sunni Mosques (Midlands)
21	Makhdoom Chishti	Chairperson	Sufi Trust
22	Zahida Krisjawki	Secretary	Birmingham Pakistan Sports Forum
23	Muhammed Abdullah	Chief Executive	Balsall Heath Forum Birmingham
24	Muhammed Ali	Administrator	Birmingham Central Mosque
25	Councillor M Aikhlaq	Councillor	Birmingham City Council

Further endorsements for the *Open Letter* against the self-declared “Islamic State” by the Muslim Faith and Civic leaders’ in Birmingham will continue after the *United for Peace: Birmingham’s Communities United Against Extremism Service*.

NEWS FROM THE OXFORD FOUNDATION

Birmingham's Communities Unite Against Extremism

Imam Monawar Hussain, Founder, The Oxford Foundation has issued the following statement relating to a Multi Faith Service entitled, *United for Peace: Birmingham's Communities United Against Extremism* to be held on 20th May 2015, 6.30pm-9pm at St Francis Hall Multi Faith Chaplaincy, University of Birmingham, B15 2TT. This event is delivered in partnership with the Chaplaincy Team, University of Birmingham. It will be an evening of readings interspersed with silence and music with a diverse audience including families of those who have been victims of extremist violence. Imam Monawar Hussain stated:

“I am delighted that this national initiative launched in Oxford is now being hosted by the Chaplaincy Team at the University of Birmingham and that it has been so warmly received and supported by communities from across Birmingham.

“The idea underpinning this national initiative is simple. It is to affirm the core teachings of all our traditions - the teachings of love, compassion, peace, understanding and respect for each other as opposed to the ugliness of violence, division and hatred advocated by extremists of all persuasions - religious and secular.

“We will defeat violent extremism through our unity and through firmly holding on to and living out these core teachings.

“In particular, I wish to acknowledge the courage and support of key Muslim Faith and Civic leaders' from Birmingham who have endorsed the 24 points outlined in the Open Letter to the leader, fighters and supporters of the self declared Islamic State, and who have made a commitment to disseminating these 24 points to their respective communities through sermons and teachings in mosques and madrasahs.”

ENDS

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www.wmlieutenancy.org

The Chaplaincy at the University of Birmingham
<https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/as/studentservices/chaplaincy/index.aspx>
for providing today's venue and partnership for the Service.

Network 2.8 Media/The Rewind Group
<http://rewind-media-group> for videoing the event

Sultan Bahu Trust
www.bahustrust.org

Birmingham University Students, Chaplains and Edgebaston Church Choir

Broadway School Music Ensemble
www.broadway-academy.co.uk

Council of Sikh Gurdwaras, Birmingham
www.sikhcouncilbirmingham.org

Aashiq Al Rasul
www.aashiqalrasul.com

Institute for Leadership and Community Development
www.ilcd.ac

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