

Ahmadiyya Muslim Association - Edinburgh & Fife:

PEACE CONFERENCE 2016 - Saturday 12 November - Gibson Craig Hall -
Edinburgh

"Methods of Establishing Peace in Society"

Address by Rev. Brian Cooper, Inter-Faith Secretary, Uniting for Peace

Friends: I am very grateful to Dr. Abdul Hayee, President of the Edinburgh & Fife Ahmadiyya Muslim Association, and his colleague Mr.H.Rahman, for very kindly inviting me to address this important conference for peace. It is an honour for Uniting for Peace to be involved in this occasion: in UfP, we deeply respect the Ahmadiyya community for its unwavering commitment to peace.

Rev. Marcus Braybrooke, President of World Congress of Faiths, in his anthology *1000 World Prayers*, writes: *"It is significant how many people of prayer have also been active in the struggle for peace and justice, and in service of those in need.... Prayer brings us into the presence of the Divine, and as we begin to see the world as God sees it, we become more aware of the injustice and suffering which afflict so many people....Turning to God should result in renewed turning to the world in compassion and service."* On the now controversial issue of living in a globalised world, he wrote: *"Only as people come together in the presence of the Divine and sense their spiritual oneness, will we discover resources to redeem globalisation from the strife and economic injustices which it seems to entail."*

So the challenge to all faith communities [those represented here today and those unable to be with us] is to see how our God-awareness, our dwelling in the Divine, can move from the confines of our communities,

our worship, our beliefs, to make our society more peaceful - a peace based on social justice and right relations, the peace the Bible describes as the divine 'Shalom', harmony within society and with God. This is what Jesus meant when he spoke of 'building the Kingdom of God', of God's will "being done on earth as in heaven", shown in his compassionate deeds.

Society is 'un-peaceful' when it is disfigured by poverty, gross inequality, homelessness and injustice of all kinds. All this recognises readily across our world today, and here in Britain, in Scotland - and faith communities can help tackle these social ills. It may be by political lobbying, on issues from welfare benefits to provision of social housing. Individuals of faith can get into politics, at Westminster & Holyrood. Faith communities can work with specialist pressure groups, for beneficial social change. Faith communities can - indeed should - form alliances to help build social peace: faith groups working together, and with non-faith groups with similar aims. *But, I suggest, faith groups will bring their special contribution - the moral, ethical and spiritual dimensions, reminding the secular world of the infinite worth of human life in the sight of God, so that all may be accorded dignity in a just society.* The major faiths share this understanding of *the worth and dignity of people*. As US Episcopal theologian Miroslav Wolf stresses, in his book *Flourishing*, there is an 'overlapping' of the major faiths "in common commitment to justice, truth, compassion" to help shape our globalised world for good. Together we must uphold the divinely-given worth of the human person - so often denied in secular society.

At this deeper level, beyond material concerns, our society is 'un-peaceful' because it is cutting away its centuries-old spiritual roots. So it experiences deep alienation - from God, and its true self.

Secularism destroys our cosmic coherence: unless we are anchored in the Divine, we cannot truly know peace: as individuals, as society. So we, in the faith traditions, ultimately help make society 'peaceful' by re-calling it to its spiritual roots. Harmony in society ultimately requires harmony with God. Thank you for listening.