

CONFERENCE REPORT:  
DARE TO OVERCOME CONFERENCE  
RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND BUSINESS FOUNDATION  
MAY 23-25, 2022  
WRITTEN BY: JANE SANDBERG  
<https://religiousfreedomandbusiness.org/dare-to-overcome-2022>

**Introduction:**

The Dare to Overcome Conference was hosted by the Religious Freedom and Business Foundation in Washington, DC at Catholic University's Busch School of Business. The conference brought leaders of Fortune 500 companies to celebrate businesses with religious inclusion and allowed them to connect with other faith-oriented leaders to share best practices.

**Dr. Judith Richter: Founder and CEO of Medinol Ltd., Founder and Chairwoman of The Nir School of the Heart**

Dr. Richter's presentation began with a short introductory video about The NIR School of the Heart. The school was founded to bring students of diverse backgrounds together to learn about cardiology. Students are primarily Israelis, Palestinians, and Jordanians. The NIR School brings them together to learn how to respect each other's cultural differences and build connections that last a lifetime. Dr. Richter then spoke about the idea of crossing boundaries, which has been a lifelong interest of hers. Her experience in the medical field and her work with The NIR School have helped her cross boundaries of hate, ignorance, and misunderstanding. She spoke about stents and how they open up arteries in hearts. Every heart beats the same, which makes it so stents can work in any heart they are placed in. These heartbeats are a universal symbol of humanity, and they bring us together. Dr. Richter also spoke about her father, who was a survivor of the Holocaust. He said that the Nazis took everything from him, but the one thing they could not take was his knowledge. Knowledge empowers, humanizes, and builds respect and peace. Richter's company was recently able to provide stents to Ukrainian people who were in need of them. She found out later that the area where those stents were sent was the very same area where her four grandparents were sent to Auschwitz to die. Their lives were taken there, but her company was able to give lives back in that same place. Dr. Richter concluded her remarks with the challenge for attendees to be leaders in the corporate world that inspire others to open hearts and break down barriers. Appealing to our common humanity will create a better world.

**Sumreen Ahmad: Global Change Management Lead, Accenture**

Sumreen Ahmad began her speech with a piece of advice her father gave her many years ago, which is that if you are not serving humanity, you are not serving your true purpose. She spoke of her background growing up in the Islamic faith and how that influenced her life decisions. She has striven to lead her life through the lens of Ehsan, which is the Islamic Dimension that constitutes the highest form of worship through excellence in work and social

interactions. For her, working in the corporate sector was a good fit because the belief of Ehsan merged her foundational beliefs with her work. Once when she was complimented on her leadership style, which she attributed to being inspired by her faith. At that time, her company was not open to the idea of diversity and inclusion initiatives, but she knew that she wanted to advocate for change in that area. She spoke about how faith and inclusion are an integral part of society because religious beliefs present an inseparable part of people's lives. Commitment to faith inclusion must extend to the business sector because it will increase employees' feelings of belonging. This will also increase their desire to be productive and excel in service to broader communities.

### **Dell Technologies ERGs Combat Human Trafficking:**

**Panel Leader: Alicia Malboeuf: Chief of Staff Enterprise Architecture**

#### **Panelists:**

**Glenda Cameron: Escalation Manager**

Glenda spoke on how Dell's fight against human trafficking has transcended across all faiths and ERGs. It has brought them together in a new way as they focus on spreading awareness. Dell has worked with the employees to educate and equip them to reduce the risk of human trafficking in their communities. Glenda's main advice to the audience was to involve company executives in important initiatives such as this. Getting them involved will help the movement gain traction.

**Shawn Trotter: Vice President, North America Commercial Channel**

Shawn shared how important it is for ERGs to come together and find common ground on topics. Dell's ERGs hold multi-faith events a few times a year where they celebrate differences and talk about common causes. It took a long time for the ERGs to get off the ground, but they have made a huge difference in the company and outside of the company. Bringing in A21 was a huge help to them as they helped educate the Dell employees.

**Josh Gamboa: Channel Sr. Consultant**

Josh spoke about how the human trafficking training made him aware that this is not a faraway issue but rather one that impacts the places we live and interact. Even though the difference we can make might be small, light does not cast a shadow, and one piece of light can make an impact. It is not enough just to be against something like human trafficking, we must actively fight it. Human trafficking has a personal impact on people, and it is nearly impossible not to get involved. Everything we do is planting a seed, so we must make sure that we are doing our part in the process.

**Steve Helms: Alliances Account Executive**

Steve said that although the subject matter of human trafficking is heavy, it is very impactful and necessary. He also said that sometimes we fall into categorizations of ERGs and only see how we are separate from one another, but uniting for this cause brought all the ERGs together. Like Glenda, he mentioned the importance of including the top executives of the company because that was what got people talking about the cause and about ERGs in general.

## **Establishing a Successful Faith-Based ERG Panel**

### **Panel Leader: Marsie Sweetland: Client Executive, Equinix**

Panelists shared how they established their faith-based ERG, how they structured it, the challenges they have faced, the value to the organization, and the wins they have had.

### **Panelists:**

**Naomi Kraus:** Founding member and current global chair of Google's Interbelief Network which has over 10,000 members. Also the global lead of the Jewgler subchapter. 9 years at Google as a senior user content strategist. Works on search and google maps.

**Michael Roberts:** co-founder and global president of Faith Force at Salesforce, 4,500 members in 23 hubs across 6 continents. He is a distinguished solution engineer focusing on Salesforce's marketing products. Christian, active member at Holy Trinity Church in Downtown Chicago.

**Tariq Nagpurwala:** Global co-lead for Meta (Facebook) Interfaith ERG (Interfaith at Meta), lead of the Muslim at Meta subgroup. Passionate about Interfaith at Meta's mission of building community by celebrating faith diversity. Engaged in numerous initiatives to foster allyship. Been at Meta for 10 years, most recently as a product technical program manager in the integrity organization.

**Craig Carter:** Leader in Intel's Christian ERG and Cross-Faith/Belief Alliance ERG. He has been at Intel for 25 years and has seen the role that faith-based ERGs have had in creating foundations of trust and high-performing positive teams. Latest role: product management for Intel's Edge Internet of Things Initiative.

### **Naomi Kraus: UX Senior Content Strategist at Google**

Naomi said that a majority of chapters had existed for a long time before she arrives at Google. Religious ERGs were not officially recognized, so when her chapter tried to get a budget request for cheesecake at one of their events, they were turned down. She realized that other religious ERGs were having similar issues, so they all came together against Google to petition for official recognition. After approval, an Interbelief Network was formed as an umbrella ERG for individual religious ERG chapters. This allows them to hold IBN events where all chapters come together and also have individual chapter events. They share experiences and practices and build empathy among the groups. Naomi has lots of satisfaction from running the Jewish ERG, and she feels that it benefits her community. Religious ERGs add value to the business, and they contribute to Google's success. A recent win is that the IBN put together a religious calendar where events could be scheduled around religious observances.

### **Michael Roberts: Certified Distinguished Solution Engineer at Salesforce**

Michael told a story about how his gay friend pushed him to start a religious ERG at Salesforce. Since equality is one of the key values at Salesforce, he felt that it was important to have people of faith be included in the message of equality. He spoke about how important it was to secure executive sponsorship from local to global levels. He also talked about how the average age of Salesforce employees is around 28, which is very young. They often were raised in certain

faiths that they may not ascribe to anymore, but they have the desire to bring that part of themselves to work and unpack their faith in an Interfaith group. A recent win for the Salesforce ERGs is their Duos program where people are able to partner up with someone from a different faith. They commit to spending time with that person over a 4-week period and learning more about that person and their faith. This program has been a huge success.

**Tariq Nagpurwala: Technology Partner at Meta (Facebook)**

Tariq spoke of Meta's grassroots culture, where faith communities should be no exception. There have been 20-30 affinity groups created, and this was one of the first places he felt comfortable practicing his faith freely in the workplace. One specific thing he mentioned was being able to have a scheduled prayer time on Fridays, which helps promote faith and productivity. The mission of the faith groups is to build community and bring the world closer together, so the company has continued to support religious communities on the Meta campus. The community has grown to about 8,000 people. Interfaith groups are very useful in providing structure for requests where the company needs feedback from religious entities. Although activating groups is difficult, finding people who have passion for it makes it so the regional groups can be set up and then run smoothly. There is also external motivation for regional leaders to work with religious ERGs because the work they do with the groups can be included in their performance reports for work. They get credit for the work they do, and it is not completely volunteer-based. Another important thing Tariq mentioned is that candidates going through the interview process have the opportunity to speak with someone who works in an ERG. One recent win at Meta was a widespread initiative to spread awareness about Ramadan. They passed out Ramadan swag to start conversations that foster engagement in the company.

**Craig Carter: Product Line Manager at Intel Corporation**

27 years ago, Intel kicked off employee resource groups. In this process, the Christian group was advocated for. The most recent religious ERG they worked to set up was a Bahai group. Craig has been involved in the Christian ERG for years, and he felt called upon by God to set up meetings with the other religious ERGs to form a Cross-Faith/Believed Alliance at Intel. Although having an ERG can seem like a US-centric idea, getting in touch with HR can help with structures that suit each area of the company. A recent win for Intel employees was having religious employees stand up for coworkers not in the same faith as them. This was surprising to some but was very positive for the community.

**EEOC Commissioner on Religious Nondiscrimination:**

**Andrea Lucas: EEOC Commissioner, US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission**

Lucas shared how religious discrimination has been a major focus for her, and that she wants to make the protection of religious liberty a signature issue during her term. She said that the need for unity in a polarized country is deeply important, but unity cannot come at the expense of diversity. Celebrating and defending religious liberty is a foundational part of our republic. The EEOC's mission is to protect religious workers from discrimination since religious liberty has become a second-class right in some areas of society and culture. The private sector

has a tremendous influence over religious liberty and has a significant role to play in protecting it. She then shared nine best practices including the following:

1. Understand your basic legal obligations and rights related to religion in the workplace
2. Be aware of substantial compliance resources from the EEOC
3. Be aware that the EEOC takes enforcement efforts involving religious discrimination and accommodation very seriously, and your workplace should too
4. Employers should have clear-written and easily accessible policies for religious accommodations
5. Affirmatively allow for religious expression at work
6. When incorporating AI in any employee applicant process, keep in mind the need to avoid religious discrimination and bias
7. Explicitly include religion in diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives, commitments, trainings, and other diversity efforts
8. Be aware of the many dimensions of how religion can intersect with racial, ethnic, and national origin diversity
9. When developing or implementing corporate initiatives related to promoting mental health and wellness, consider how faith and religion and spirituality may arise in that context

### **Military Chaplaincy Model for America**

#### **Rev. Alan T. “Blues” Baker: CEO of ChaplainCare, Rear Admiral (ret.) U.S. Navy. 16th Chaplain of the U.S. Marine Corps**

Reverend Alan Baker spoke about how a chaplain’s caring presence and nurturing relationships can be pivotal to a company. Chaplaincy does not mean having a place for people to come to the chaplain, but rather coming to people where they are and helping them. After his experience in the military, he learned that chaplains need to grow and adapt according to their “tribe” or “team.” Switching focus to the corporate sector, Baker touched on the importance of employees being able to bring their whole selves to work. It is crucial for company leadership should understand this because increased job satisfaction leads to increased productivity, which will benefit the company greatly. He then stated four ways areas in which corporate chaplains can make a difference. These are absenteeism, presentism, life and death issues, and crisis and trauma issues. Battles in the corporate sector are much different than battles in the military sector, but chaplaincy is important regardless. Chaplains can give hope to those who need it most. Four capabilities that chaplains have are to provide, facilitate, care and advise. As corporations work to provide spiritual care as the military does, they must embrace religious diversity, invite employees to bring their whole selves to work, encourage faith-based ERGs in the workplace, and integrate chaplains into the workplace and give them access to individuals at all levels.

### **Corporate Positions and Employee Beliefs Panel**

**Panel Leader: Dr. Johnny Parker: CEO/Founder of The Parker Group, LLC**

**Panelists:**

**Kent Johnson: Senior Corporate Advisor, Religious Freedom & Business Foundation**

Kent's remarks were centered around the importance of creating an environment where people listen to one another. This is vital for all corporations, especially ones with religious ERGs. The workforce is polarized, and public announcements may not align with employees' personal or religious beliefs. Companies should make an effort to listen to their employees and stakeholders before announcing public positions. Companies that have an established culture of listening will be able to manage potential outbursts and belligerent employees better than those with no established culture of listening.

**Paul Lambert: Senior Business Fellow, Religious Freedom & Business Foundation**

In agreement with Kent, Paul shared how important it is to listen to all perspectives. We must also recognize that our company does not have to be a complete reflection of us as individuals. We should have the space to be who we are, but that does not mean the company should completely align with a single individual belief we have. Employees should feel safe enough to voice their thoughts and know that they are being heard by executives. Having a culture of fear of having difficult conversations will make it difficult to create a positive environment. Starting difficult conversations in an understanding and humble way is extremely important. Another important aspect of this is for companies to create a detailed process that they use whenever they take a stance on certain issues because this will allow for consistency as they move forward.

**Intel's Cross-Faith/Belief Leaders Alliance Session:**

**Craig Carter: Product Line Manager at Intel Corporation**

Craig and some of his fellow coworkers at Intel gave a short presentation about how their religious ERGs work together to make their company a more inclusive place. They shared the three Rs which are the results of having religious ERGs. These include recruiting, retention, and results. Each of these is promoted by the use of religious ERGs and free religious expression in the workplace. Intel has had 27 years of experience with religious ERGs and has had no issues because of the wonderful people involved in them. They make an effort to bring their best selves to work and encourage others to do the same.

**Ark Invest's Cathie Wood on Faith and Business:**

**Catherine Wood: Founder and CEO of ARK Investment Management, LLC**

Cathie shared how she became interested in bringing faith to the workplace. While she was working in a large investment firm, she became disillusioned with the investing industry and wanted to create a new firm that promoted faith-centered values. Her firm, ARK, named after the ark of the covenant is based on Psalm 91, which she recites to herself multiple times every day. She prays to have God's will guide her path and work with ARK to place a high priority on allocating capital to its highest and best use.

## **BYU-Hawaii Student Intern Reflections:**

Schuyler Chamberlain:

My experience at the conference was great. I was incredibly nervous beforehand and was really feeling unable to accomplish anything, but once the conference got started, I realized that I would be able to make this a great experience. I learned a lot about networking and about the business and professional world in general. I was able to meet all sorts of people with diverse backgrounds both culturally and professionally. I was also able to find an internship which I was desperately needing to graduate in December. This conference was well worth going to and has really changed my perspective on myself and those around me. I am incredibly grateful I was able to attend.

Probably the most important contact I made was Dr. David Paschane. We met initially because we are both around the same height and found common ground in that and then began to talk and continued to run into each other throughout the conference. He gave me a ton of advice and guidance and just was immediately supportive of me despite me not having much clear direction or goals. He helped me realize a lot about things I was needing to decide and figure out in my life, and he gave me excellent guidance. Eventually he came to me and discussed an internship opportunity he had with the Indian Health Services. He was looking for an intern who had some legal experience because he is working on researching behavior health and the legal principles and support for it. He felt like I was a good fit and he offered me the position. This meant a lot to me because I felt like I was not the most qualified, however it is an area I am passionate about and goes along with my school experience and gives me some real-life legal experience.

I think it was incredibly important that we as BYU-Hawaii students were able to attend this conference. Being located in a more remote location, separated from much of the business world, we as students do not often get the opportunities to interact with large corporations or even smaller entities and professional individuals. The opportunity to not only learn from those individuals but also share our talents and experience was so meaningful and really helped everyone who was involved.

Rachel Akana:

This conference was transformational and eye-opening to see how interfaith can be used to better a business and build the identity capital of an individual. Seeing faith as a resource instead of a thing only expressed on Sunday was really inspirational and helped me build my religious literacy.

I also found it interesting how while it was a business conference it didn't feel like people were talking to me just to get a business card or anything. Everyone had a form of light and knowledge to bring to the conference and to brainstorm together on how we can increase that in the workplace was empowering. I felt a personal responsibility to now take what I learned and bring it to future occupations. I am passionate about lifting people up and bringing them together and so to be able to leave the conference feeling spiritually charged with others that have the same vision was powerful.

Most college students do not get the opportunity to greet and serve so many amazing people in the corporate world. I am so happy to say I have made lifelong friends from this conference and I hope to see them again next year. Not only did we get to build our knowledge of how faith is important in the workplace but we also got to see how chaplaincy can provide the space, care, facilitation, and advice. These support systems can help any workplace thrive and seeing how authentic culture can build a better business inspired me to make sure that my future occupations have the same vision.

Watching people of the Muslim faith pray in their own times made me check myself and inspired me to pray and make sure my heart is always carrying a heart of gratitude and prayer. The greatest form of worship is living your faith's beliefs and values, to see people do that in such a busy corporate world was beautiful. As I grow older I realize I have more feelings and fewer words to express how I feel. The cool thing is knowing that although we may come from all different parts of the world and backgrounds we all share the same emotional experiences that connect us.

By the end of the conference attendees were saying they felt like they were home because they felt so heard and accepted in who they were. I was also inspired to wear my professional aloha blouses to work after seeing another attendee where his aloha shirt and call it his national guard. With DC culture being so different from the islands I was a little hesitant about bringing my whole self to the conference with my aloha blouses but after talking to that one attendee with his national guard I also felt welcomed and encouraged to bring my whole self to the conference.

Being blessed to meet so many good people is an understatement, there is a collective culture being shifted and I am so lucky to see it shift. I love seeing how the world is moving towards a place of acceptance, love, and forgiveness. Seeing how the religious sector is growing and bringing more light into the secular world can help us with creativity, innovation, understanding, and appreciation for each other's differences.

Misieli Peaua:

From May 20th – May 26th, 2022, my colleagues and I embarked on journey alongside Professor Kajiyama, Professor Smith, and Dean of Students James Faustino to attend the Religious Freedom and Business Foundation Conference “Dare to Overcome” conference at the Catholics University of America in D.C.

Connie M. shared one of the takeaways I got from the first day of the conference. She said that religion has been one of the greatest means of division and has been generally viewed as a problem. That view on religion has to change. Instead of seeing religion as a problem, we should see religion as a resource and a solution. This hits home because religious freedom and inclusivity are something my home community is making progress in changing. In general, if I were affiliated with a particular religion, I would attend a certain school and be more likely to be qualified for a certain job than other jobs. This matter was pointed out in the conference about how the influence of religion affects many dimensions of life. This "Dare to Overcome" conference held by the Religious Freedom and Business Foundation was changing a culture of religious discrimination and division in work environments and building a more tolerant culture of religious freedom. This foundation and conference is and will also continue to influence many dimensions of life, not only in the business world. Having been invited to attend as a student intern, the conference fostered knowledge, skills, and enlightenment that will help me make a huge difference wherever I go.

In our last meeting with Paul Lambert and Brian Crim, they raised the question, "what was the highlight of the conference?". For me, the entire conference itself was the highlight. People of diverse religious backgrounds come together to celebrate and to continue building religious freedom cultures in their businesses and environments because they know its value and worth. Another highlight of the conference happened when the Texas mass shooting came out on the news. Seeing so many influential people of diverse religious backgrounds praying for the victims in Texas brought this sense of care, peace, respect, and tolerance of one another's religion, setting aside differences and working in unity. The multi-prayer session established the same environment where it was safe to be one's true self and bring their whole identity to the conference. Indeed, this conference and its work, at least from my experience, is unprecedented.

At the conference, I was honored to meet and network with many wonderful people who are great examples of leading religious freedom and promoting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in their work community. Some of the most diverse and religious-friendly cooperation groups that I had the honor to meet were Intel, Tyson, American Airlines, AI and Faith, and PayPal. In just three days, I was amazed at how passionate, united, and driven they were in building and encouraging religious freedom in their work environments. It has been a pleasure meeting everyone at the conference and learning about their personal and professional backgrounds. On top of that, some even offered to help wherever they could, and to me, that was a bonus to this conference.

Killian Canto:

Take a second and imagine a large event space full of businesspeople, ready to discuss a concept that will increase productivity, energize their corporate culture, and lead to better business practices; all these benefits will lead to the ultimate goal of a business, to make money. However, in this hypothetical situation eliminate two elements that may define the atmosphere—ego-centric attitudes and a focus completely on profit. While it may seem blunt, those qualities surrounding business-talk are ever present. It must be asked, what is left when they are taken away? Methodology? Market trends? Maybe. What if they are replaced by discussion of how to allow all those within a corporation to bring their whole selves to work, faith included? The result of that is exactly how it felt to attend Dare to Overcome with the Religious Freedom and Business Foundation.

With over 250 attendees present and a multitude of religious beliefs represented, Dare to Overcome presents a unique opportunity for understanding and advocating religious freedom principles in the workplace. Religion is a topic often avoided, especially when it comes to corporations that strive to be diverse and inclusive. However, avoiding religious discussion creates an environment antithetical to one with diversity and inclusion. A person's faith is part of who they are, it defines, in large part, how they see the world. It is a concept that, due to the sensitive nature of religion, is left untouched. Those at the Religious Freedom and Business Foundation found the courage to bring that topic to the table and gathered those who are ready to join them, the ones who Dare to Overcome.

The event, featuring keynote speakers, roundtables, panels, and multiple exhibits highlighted three powerful elements for the promotion of religious freedom in the workplace, employee resource groups (ERGs), chaplaincy, and acceptance. Employee resource groups allow associates to connect with their coworkers who share their experiences, whether it be a belief system, an experience, or a disability. ERGs are essentially support groups within companies to ensure people understand they are not alone. Chaplains serve a similar role, but they have a position dedicated to the spiritual and mental wellbeing of their coworkers. Providing that resource for employees communicates a realization of their being individual people with full, complete, and nuanced lives. During the conference, Chaplain Alain Ndagijimana from Tyson Foods emphasized the role of chaplaincy when he said, "What is not transformed is transmitted," meaning that the struggles employees face in their personal lives, whether they be familial, financial, spiritual, or otherwise, still exist when they come to work. What a chaplain can do is help their coworkers take those challenges and transform them, rather than transmitting it into lower productivity or poor work product.

Acceptance through the lens of religious freedom in the workplace is by far the most powerful tool, enabled through ERGs and chaplains. Acceptance allows employees to openly discuss, display, and embrace their religious beliefs at work. It does not mean proselytizing, but it does mean creating a safe space for all that is held dear to the hearts of those within a company. It means building bridges of understanding that would otherwise not even be approached. It means being accommodating to every belief system that has some hand in the

success of your company. Acceptance widens the perspectives of all those involved, bearing the fruit of an uplifting and ethical workplace.

Remember the hypothetical event we discussed earlier? That event is Dare to Overcome. Three days the conference filled with opportunities to discuss religious freedom, explore and share various faiths, and celebrate the progression of religious freedom in various businesses. It created an atmosphere where it did not seem to encourage intense, cutthroat competition, but one where everyone chose to uplift one another. Attending Dare to Overcome gave a sense of hope that as people are able to follow their moral compasses, especially as they relate to faith, more and more good people will go into business; those people, hopefully, avoiding the malicious, the unethical, and the evil and embracing their role and purpose in creating a better world.

Jonah Gunter:

Attending the 2022 Dare to Overcome Conference was truly one of the greatest privileges of my career. The environment of the conference was unlike any professional environment I have been a part of; it was elevated, inspiring, and faith-promoting—something I have rarely encountered in the business world.

Unlike other business conferences I have attended, this one stood out to me for the incredible caliber of the individuals in attendance, both on professional and personal levels. Not even one of the dozens of people I met was there because it was a free trip, or because they wanted to meet a quota or line their pockets. Every one of them was there because they believed in a higher purpose.

I prayed with a Christian executive who told me of the strength of his mother and the pride with which he bears her legacy in living his faith, no matter where it takes him. I felt deep kinship with a Sikh engineer who humbly described the tragedy that reignited his commitment to practice faith. I couldn't help but smile with a Muslim professional who beamed as he spoke of his company's generous accommodations for salah, daily prayer, in the workplace.

In every interaction, I was inspired by the intimate connection that faith allows—a connection that business so desperately needs. In the age of authenticity, a staggering amount of authenticity is stamped out for those whose identities are informed by their faith. This problem became apparent as I sat down to lunch with a young insurance professional on the first day of the conference. When I asked her about her faith, she admitted that she considered herself a religious person, but downplayed her involvement in any religion, turning the subject of the conversation back to business. When I pressed slightly harder, a look of realization and relief came across her face as she exclaimed, “oh! I forgot I can talk about that at this conference! Yes, I'm deeply religious and very involved in my faith community.”

This pressure to hide such a crucial component of one's identity is shared by religious people across the entirety of the professional world—and this is precisely what Dare to Overcome seeks to transform.

The conference gave me the courage I needed to wear my faith with pride. This week I felt the gentle, confident power that comes when individuals of faith band together for good. The overwhelming love and goodwill were tangible to all in attendance. I am determined learn from this transformative week to share the same power, love, and goodwill with the world.

Dare to Overcome, I'll see you in India next year!

John Zenger:

Three parts of the trip stood out to me. The first was the trickiness of navigating pluralism. The second was all the connections I made and how they are going now. And the third is how I changed because of the religious exposure.

Jonah and Gavin were tasked with setting up the Muslim prayer room, and I helped them. I think everyone in the group heard the story. In the direction of Mecca, there was a sculpture on the wall of Christ being crucified. The prayers could not occur with that on the wall, so we needed to take it down or cover it. But that was not possible either in this catholic school. So, we were at an impasse. This showed me that pluralism is complex, especially regarding beliefs held as deeply as religion. We were able to find a solution eventually. The first try kind of worked but was not ideal. This also showed me that when you are trying to accommodate and even celebrate different religions, you will mess up. But it all worked out well eventually.

I met interesting people. Judith Richter was interesting. I talked to her for quite some time, and I hope she will be speaking to the peacebuilding program in the fall semester. She received the award for her nonprofit surrounding peace and medicine in Israel, Jordan, and Palestine. I also connected with Stephen Scranton, who runs the nonprofit World Vision. It operates in 100 countries and impacts 200 million children. He befriended me and said he would love to help my career in any way he could.

Lastly, the different faiths I saw changed how I view God and the world. The Hindu and Sikh prayers touched my soul. "Peace, peace, peace" is how they end every prayer. Every religion that preaches goodness has so much truth; we can find many similarities between them and us. Hearing all these people pray was a sacred experience that I value highly.

John Lidang:

My overall experience from Dare to Overcome was very enlightening and inspiring. I compare it to a professional EFY because of the meaningful connections I made and the stories that created an impact on my life. I felt empowered from meeting so many professionals and people of faith who stand up for their beliefs and help to foster an environment of inclusivity in their respective workplaces. I felt that one of the main messages that were encouraged strongly during the 3 days was inspiring people to be their authentic selves both at home and also at work, to not leave or check their religion at the door but to be proud of who you are.

Throughout the conference, certain themes rang consistently in my mind. I observed how everyone's excitement to be there was palpable because their faith means so much to them, so much so that they were willing to travel to connect and learn from one another. Before the conference, I didn't understand the impact that religion can have in the workplace both on workers' performances and work ethics, as well as the company's productivity. I learned that for many people, their religion is their identity and companies must do their best to promote religious openness in the workplace so their employees don't feel hindered and have a safe place to practice their religion. One of the things that inspired me the most was seeing that the foundation had set up a special room for prayer for both our Muslims and Jewish brothers and sisters. Each time they would pray, I would also go to a secluded area somewhere and offer my personal prayer to Heavenly Father. At that specific moment, I felt united with those of other faiths who at the same time were just praying. It was a surreal and humbling experience that made me feel even more strongly about being an advocate of religious freedom and expression for those who choose or do not practice their religion or culture. I was inspired to learn how out of the many things that may be the difference between all of us, there are more and stronger bonds that connect us all together. I learned how to recognize the good that each of us can contribute to society. Throughout the entire conference, in a place where everyone represented a different culture or religion, I felt belonged and was supported. I genuinely felt that these people have my back and I have theirs. There was a spirit of camaraderie in the air where everyone just wants to help one another and be there for each other and to be with all the other interns who have become more than just colleagues to me, it was, it is an experience that has shaped my character for the better.

I am thankful for each of the connections I made and the friendships I was able to create. I am inspired to make sure to pay it forward, to keep the momentum going, with my friends and those around me by being someone who creates an environment of understanding and good dialogue. I will continue to learn about the challenges that people face around the world and look for solutions to mitigate those issues. I am excited to continue to network with new friends and nurture the ones I made during this conference. Most importantly, I will pray daily, to be reminded of how generous God has been in my life and show Him my gratitude by giving Him more time in my day to get to know Him more as I've learned from my new friends.

Jane Sandberg:

Having the opportunity to work as an intern for the Religious Freedom and Business Foundation has been an amazing learning experience for me. Starting in January, when I was introduced to Brian Grim and the foundation, I was drawn to the idea of increased pluralism in the corporate sphere. Up to that point, my research on religious freedom had not included any focus on how religious individuals are treated in the workplace. Beginning work on the REDI Index and researching employee resource groups (ERGs) in Fortune 500 companies opened my eyes to how often religion is excluded from various diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives. Religion is a crucial aspect of identity and is closely intertwined with human dignity. Having employee resource groups and other inclusive programs that allow employees to express their beliefs in the workplace is a pivotal step that corporations can take to increase pluralism and eventually overall productivity.

One primary focus of the Religious Freedom and Business Foundation is the importance of employees bringing their whole selves to work. When employees are able to fully embrace this aspect of their identity in an accepting and inclusive environment, their motivation to provide their best work increases. At the Dare to Overcome Conference, I was amazed at how important this idea was as I met with individuals whose lives were directly impacted by employee resource groups and other inclusion initiatives at their respective workplaces. The concepts I had spent the last few months researching suddenly took on a new meaning as I met individuals working tirelessly to advocate for religious freedom in their companies. The uplifting environment at the Dare to Overcome Conference was inspiring to me as a student intern. I was surrounded by professionals who prioritize their faith and create inclusive spaces wherever they work, and was able to connect with them on a more personal level than I would have in almost any other situation. I am forever grateful that I was given the opportunity to attend the Dare to Overcome Conference and will forever treasure the connections I made there.

Gavin Cranney:

The Dare to Overcome Conference was an amazing opportunity to learn a lot about how corporate companies are promoting religious freedom in their diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives, as well as network and make diverse friends. It was so amazing because everyone was so excited and down to Earth. I made genuine friendships and connections with people. I never felt as if people were being nice to each other to try and leverage something for them, but it truly was an amazing community that was created over these three days. Overall, the feedback I received from the guests was largely positive. The guests were ecstatic about the conference and appreciative of the hard work to organize and operate this conference. From my perspective as an intern, there would be no major adjustments to make; however, when speaking with some guests, I noticed some common themes of aspects that could be improved.

I noticed throughout the days we would be behind and then had to shorten certain forums and activities throughout the day. I loved the forums and information presented, but a lot of people felt that there was too much passive absorption of information and not enough time to ask questions, interact with one another, and connect. I would recommend the future spacing out some of the forums with more time to ask questions and interact. The human library and interfaith prayer are a good demonstration of that. Sometimes people can learn more experientially than just from speakers and a forum. At the next conference, I think there should be more activities for people to interact with each other and collaborate, and this will make people more focused and excited when they are in the forums. In addition to that, some people wanted more time to sit and enjoy lunch, but the conference started up very quickly, and some people missed a part of it or rushed through their meals, which is not ideal.

This conference was very considerate of religious accommodations and did a fantastic job, especially with the dietary concerns; however, in some of the other avenues, it could be improved. Considering this conference will be going to India next year, a country with a sizeable Muslim population, I think it is necessary to ensure they have a proper prayer room. We made it work this year by making an impromptu prayer room. However, some complications could have been avoided if planned accordingly. An email promised a prayer room in a certain room, but that room was booked, and we had to make one quickly. However, that issue should not happen in the future. It would be wise to have more members of different faiths as interns or in the conference management just to make sure that everything is as accommodatable as possible. As a conference about building religious freedom, it is embarrassing and ironic that this accommodation was not prioritized. In a similar vein, I think that most people attending the conferences possess additional skills and talents that can be used to unite. I loved Genti and their performance, but I believe it would also be a fantastic addition to have certain faiths have their own forms of music, dance, and singing presented in the future. It was fine, but I thought having the only musical performance sing God Bless the USA was a little narrow in scope, and there should have been diverse musical numbers that expressed other faith perspectives. The interfaith prayers were great, and I think that having this musical, cultural exchange can also teach a lot of people about other cultures and in addition, uplift the spirits of the participants.

Another issue I ran into was just confusion about the logistics, such as the time and location of certain things, but this was solved very quickly with some direction. There was also some confusion over getting people to the videographer to get interviewed because there were no set times or time slots they could sign up for. I would suggest having a more organized structure to accomplish this instead of scrambling to find people and have them interviewed.

As I said, however, most of these things are nitpicking. Overall, people thoroughly enjoyed the conference and were appreciative of the effort put into this important and ambitious project and are looking forward to attending next year. Participants left invigorated and with an emboldened desire to enact a positive change in the world by fostering tolerance and diversity in the workplace, resulting from the diligent work of the conference managers.

Connor Hansen:

I really enjoyed the conference. I had never spent much time considering the proper role of faith in the workplace before and appreciated the opportunity to learn from the many participants at the conference trying to find that right balance. From ERGs to corporate chaplaincy, all of the ideas presented were fascinating to me. I especially enjoyed hearing about how the issue of faith can be framed within a DEI initiative and how proactively moving towards becoming a faith-friendly institution is a profitable and somewhat popular movement. The speakers were phenomenal as well.

Thomas Holdman, Mark Whitacre, Cathie Wood, and Judith Richter all gave presentations that were deeply impactful. One thing I enjoyed about the conference was the level of intellectual diversity present. The speakers I just mentioned all had very different presentations and shared very different ideas – sometimes even sharing ideas contradicting each other. I got a sense of true pluralism at the conference. We were all united in our efforts to promote religious freedom in the workplace, but past that commonality, there was a range of ideas on how to best accomplish that goal and to what extent it should be taken. This was a good lesson to me on what a pluralist society should look like – a people with some base level of shared values rooted in respect for each other given the freedom to disagree with each other and pursue what they view as the best course of action. The networking opportunity the conference presented was a big draw for me as well.

It was highly encouraging to me as a man of faith with corporate aspirations to meet so many successful business people who are working to preserve religious liberty. Regardless of faith, everyone I met was completely dedicated to standing up for my right to exercise my religious identity in the workplace. That meant a lot to me and gave me a lot of hope for my future.

I am deeply grateful to have been able to attend the conference. I am grateful to everyone who worked to put it on and for the donors who made it possible for the BYU-H team to attend.

Andrea George:

Being able to participate in the 'Dare to Overcome' conference was an experience of a lifetime. The event answered many personal questions I never knew I had. Being in that environment and learning and collaborating with others who are just as passionate about human rights and making the world and workplace more accepting of everyone's differences was inspiring to me. I learnt more about myself and about what I feel is my purpose here on Earth.

Firstly, I was especially moved by the purpose of the conference. I felt extremely grateful to be able to participate in the celebration of the work that businesses and ERG's carry out to promote religious freedom and expression within the workplace. It was astounding to see so many companies come together to be able to share and learn and work towards one goal. Being able to see these amazing people share their concerns about human rights has given me a renewed hope for the future of the recognition of human rights not only in the workplace but in the wider community also. The entire conference was a learning experience for me because it caused me to reflect on the state of the recognition of human rights in the Pacific and within the Cook Islands in particular, my home country. I've been able to recognize that there is very little recognition of religious freedom since there is an Act that limits the introduction of new religions. This provision is in violation of the right to freedom of religion in Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. I appreciate being able to learn from the conference and learn about the value of encouraging religious expression. I hope to be able to spread this message when I return to the Cook Islands.

I was also deeply impacted by the display of Tom Heldmans "7 Pillars of Humanity". It must be my favourite display of art in existence. What I love most about these panels of stained-glass art is that they communicate the message of what it means to be human. According to each pillar, humans have something that makes them more similar than different. We are all in pursuit of knowledge, creativity, faith, love, unity, freedom, and courage. One keynote speaker said something that resonates with me still. She said "If you are not serving humanity. You are not serving your true purpose. I feel like after this conference I have a greater understanding of my purpose here on Earth and I am beyond grateful for such an opportunity to learn more about myself. I was so glad to be able to get to experience what it means to be American. Although I am technically a U.S. citizen, I was raised in the Cook Islands, and I have been very disconnected from my American heritage. Through this trip to DC, I was able to correct misunderstandings about what it means to be American. After having met the people, I did, I grew to understand that there are people who truly care about the progress of the country not only economically but spiritually and socially. I feel like many international countries would do well to learn from the example of the U.S., particularly those Americans who are devoted to ensuring that we can exercise our human rights. I have never been prouder to be an American.

I have so much love and respect for the people that made this event possible. Brian Grim, Paul Lambert, Melissa Grim, King Hussein, Jan and Bryson Garbett. It is people like you, cogs in the machine that facilitate miracles. These experiences have changed my life forever.

Amber Helfrich:

I had a great experience as a student intern at the religious freedom and business conference in Washington DC. I got the opportunity to meet and connect with tons of different people who work in business and are trying to find a way to foster religious freedoms. It was a very enlightening experience in many ways.

As an intern, we had a few jobs. One of which was to make the conference run smoothly including setting things up, taking things down, and ensuring that everything is in the right location. The other job that we had to do was to make the participants of a conference feel welcomed. This was my favorite part of our job. This required me to step outside of my comfort zone and talk to so many people who I look up to as business professionals. People who are actively working to promote religious freedom in their business environment. I got the opportunity to speak to people who work in the fields that I am interested in going into as well.

I was impressed with how eager those participants were to speak to me as well. They showed interest in my education and my desired career path. We had very enlightening conversations and I made many lasting connections with those people who I hope to be able to connect with in the future.

Overall, this was a great experience for all of us BYU Hawaii students. Everyone had a great experience and was able to learn so much about religious freedom and the working environment we are about to embark into. I hope that this opportunity will be available for more and more BYU Hawaii students in the future and that those relationships will continue to be fostered throughout the duration of the conference.