



# **Religious Freedom & Human Dignity Initiative**

## **at BYU–Hawaii**

### **Conference Report**

**2025 Religious Freedom Annual Review: Becoming Peacemakers  
Through Supporting Religious Freedom and Pluralism**

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## Overview



Why religious freedom? In a world of diverse beliefs about religion and increasingly large numbers of people choosing not to belong to religious institutions, why does religious freedom matter?

The Annual Review brought a broad array of perspectives to this issue, with religious, media, academic, legal, and thought leaders. What role does religion play in building peace and fostering human flourishing? How does religious freedom's respect for both individual choice as well as the human dignity of all increasingly matter in a fractious world? Experts on religious freedom and peacemaking explored the interconnections.

Empirical evidence provides surprising demonstrations of the enormous power religion brings to human flourishing. Sociologists of religion as well as religious leaders from a variety of faiths looked at what this empirical evidence means in practice.

Breakout sessions examined ways popular culture portrays religion and how religious individuals can respond and explore legal developments.

# Impressions

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The Religious Freedom Annual Review provided a transformative environment to engage deeply with the principles of human dignity and religious liberty. The conference created opportunities to reflect on the critical role of the First Amendment in safeguarding rights and privileges, especially during times when these rights face significant challenges. The opening session set a clear tone of urgency and hope, highlighting the essential need to prioritize religious freedom as a pathway toward peace. Sessions emphasized that even in a diverse society, differences can strengthen communities when rooted in respect, encouraging thoughtful consideration of how the law and faith intersect to foster human flourishing.

A significant aspect of the experience was the opportunity to interact with accomplished professionals, scholars, and faith leaders who model the diverse ways to advance religious freedom in their communities. Conversations with attorneys, nonprofit leaders, chaplains, and scholars illustrated how legal advocacy, pastoral care, academic research, and community engagement each contribute to protecting religious freedom and building inclusive societies. These interactions expanded the understanding that meaningful contributions can be made across various fields, including law, public administration, education, and interfaith dialogue, demonstrating that the protection of religious freedom requires collective action from multiple sectors.

The conference also provided valuable mentorship and networking opportunities that helped clarify pathways toward graduate and professional education. Law students and alumni offered practical guidance on preparing for law school and careers in public service, while connections were made with scholars and practitioners involved in peacemaking initiatives, refugee advocacy, and interfaith collaboration. These interactions offered not only professional insights but also encouragement, affirming that pursuing higher education and professional contributions in the field of religious freedom is both realistic and impactful.

Overall, the conference strengthened the commitment to promoting human dignity and religious liberty through education, service, and community-building efforts. Participation in the event fostered a sense of responsibility to contribute to the ongoing work of protecting religious freedom while inspiring a broader vision of leadership rooted in love, respect, and service. The experience reinforced the university's mission of preparing students to be leaders who engage in the world's pressing challenges with compassion, faith, and professional excellence.

## Schedule

Here is a link to the conference program: [2025 RFAR Conference Schedule](#)

## Summary

The 2025 Religious Freedom Annual Review focused on the theme “Religion, Peace, and Human Flourishing: Understanding the Whys of Religious Freedom,” bringing together scholars, legal experts, religious leaders, and students to examine the role of religious liberty in fostering thriving societies. Opening sessions explored the connections between faith, civic engagement, and community well-being, emphasizing that religious freedom not only protects individual conscience but also strengthens societal resilience. Panelists highlighted research showing how faith communities contribute to social cohesion, mental health, and moral development, while also encouraging advocacy for religious liberty as an act of love and service toward others.

Several legal sessions analyzed current Supreme Court cases and state-level disputes regarding religious liberty, parental rights in education, and nondiscrimination policies. Discussions included the complexities surrounding religious charter schools, parental opt-out rights concerning curriculum with LGBTQ+ content, and the fine balance between maintaining religious freedom while ensuring respect and inclusion within diverse societies. These sessions emphasized that legal protections for religious freedom require careful navigation to uphold both individual rights and the broader public interest, with a recurring call for open dialogue and civility even amid deeply contested issues.

Practical peacemaking sessions demonstrated the role of faith communities in countering polarization, fostering dialogue across differences, and promoting dignity-centered discourse in civic life. Interfaith leaders and nonprofit directors shared models of community revitalization, chaplaincy’s impact, and service initiatives that transcend religious boundaries to address societal challenges. Sessions on media representation underscored the importance of accurate, ethical storytelling in shaping public perceptions of religion, advocating for narratives that highlight the civic contributions of faith while avoiding stereotypes.

Throughout the conference, the call to action encouraged participants to engage actively in protecting religious freedom, to partner across faith traditions, and to promote civil discourse within communities. The review underscored that advancing religious freedom and human dignity requires both structural protections and the personal commitment to build relationships, engage in meaningful service, and advocate for peaceful coexistence in a pluralistic society.

# Opening Session

## Opening Remarks

### **Elizabeth Clark**

*Director for ICRLS*

Dr. Clark welcomed everyone and guests. The event talks about the role of religious freedom in society. Shira Hoffer was called to give the opening prayer. Shira shared that in Judaism they do not typically share the opening prayer is not typically spoken or given. In lieu of praying, they say; Psalm 1:18; blessed is God and his greatness is everlasting. She also shared; "from the depths I call to you God, and you answer to me in great expanse. God is my strength, and he will redeem me." The Panel was introduced shortly after.

### **Brett Scharffs**

*Director of ICRLS, Professor of Law at J. Reuben Clark Law School*

Brett Scharffs shared all that is happening around the globe, the United States' polarization regarding antisemitism, hatred, shootings in Utah, and distresses in political protests and events. According to him, anger and fear drives this hatred. He says that hatred, separation, aggression, vilification, finger pointing, and sarcasm does not work. He encouraged that we turn to our faithful and religious traditions and communities to seek a better path.

Scharffs also shared that as Latter-day Saints, we need to remember that we must: (1) be peacemakers in the implementations of the habits and skills we adapt that are to help us become peacemakers, and (2) human flourishing; in a way that contributes to building covenant communities, institutions, and infrastructures dedicated to serving human dignity and religious freedom. These create both horizontal (our relationships with other people) and vertical relationships; with ourselves and the Lord; fostered in fidelity love, and service. Such communities allow us to live in peaceful, commitment living with others, and God. Love works, but love is really hard work.

He also expressed that expressing and emulating kindness is hard. Patience and avoiding envy is challenging. Being humble and slow to anger, not keeping score in wrongs, supporting hope and persevering is hard. But love works. "Love is real hard work," as Scharff says. Religious freedom matters because love matters. We stand up for the religious freedom of others because we love our God. Hence, we are to learn to become better advocates for human dignity and religious freedom for others.

### **Shane Reese**

*President of BYU*

Dr. Reese started by welcoming guests to the university and talked about how BYU- Provo strives in all that we do to be Christ-centered, and that they take their

religious values seriously. He also shared that disciplinary excellence is vital to the campus. He encouraged all to speak in the language of all things sacred and spiritual; two mutually reinforcing things: (1) to be successful academics because of their spiritual freedoms, and (2) to continue protecting the ability to pursue missions that are dear to us. He also stated that "covenants" are self-interest generated contracts. Contracts are to make exchanges for mutual benefits, with our motivating factor being our self-interests. Covenants, on the other hand, are created by two or more individuals respecting each other's dignity come together in love and trust to share their love and lives in pledging to do together what they cannot do alone, sustained in loyalty and fidelity even if they call for sacrifice. This happens when we put aside our self-interests to obtain the greater good.

Reese also shared that research for BYU centers around the core pillars for strengthening society: (1) family, (2) the Constitution (freedom of religion and speech), and (3) how religion has the power to strengthen societies. Unlike the believed fallacy that faith-based institutions are oppressive, research shows that the distinct lack of trust does not stem from religious-based institutions. This area we see growth in throughout the country are in religious and faith-based institutions, adding to flourishing. We experience not a crisis of faith, but a crisis for meaning, and that is what our institutions provide. Faith based communities add to mental and self-resilience due to the comfort of the sense of community and traditions fostered in religious communities. Lastly, he calls to action that the rising generation needs religious freedom and human dignity advocacy.

## General Session

### **Elder Marcus B. Nash**

#### *General Authority of the Seventy*

International Relations graduate from BYU, worked in major law firms and then served as a general authority in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

"God governs in the affairs of man."

Elder Nash shared that latter-day saint scriptures promised that saints will flourish in the latter days. The prophesied flourishing goes hand in hand with religious freedom, which is a catalyst for flourishing. Talked about how his ancestral grandfather, Christian J. Larson, experienced religious inequity. He shared the interrogation; and stated that the Denmark priests would not stoop low to talk to Christian. Religious belief played a significant role in the US Constitution as the drafters recognized that free religious practice is to be secured and safeguarded their hard-earned liberty. The forefathers who wrote the Constitution were influenced by their religious beliefs.

Although correlation does not cause causation, passionate pleas made a way for the conventions to continue and is not benefited by us this day. The Constitution was heavily influenced by religious. God wants us to reap the blessings of religious liberty. LDS Scripture states it is not right that any man be in bondage of another, applies to freedom and protection from slavery and lack of freedom from government Gods raised the delegated us to protect all flesh according to just and holy principles, that all men may act according to the good and moral agency given by God.

Freedom is valued by God as it gives us the power to decide to act for good. The capacity to choose good amidst opposition is a privilege for u to grow according the fulness of the gospel of Christ. Maximum freedom is how we can act to the highest form of our agency, and religious freedom can inspire us to think in a higher plane and build communities. The preamble states: The Constitution creates an environment for human flourishing, as it is the people not the states who authorizes the democratic republic. We are all subject to. Rule of law, which we are a part of making, crafting, and upholding. The quality of law depends upon the values of the people, thus for the flourishing of the nations, we must uphold just, and humane values promulgated in faith-based institutions to create a more perfect union.

"Unity does not mean thinking alike, but it means acting together: to disagree without being disagreeable. To forge good works and common grounds with those we do not always agree with. Religious and freedom of religion is the first freedom articulated in the freedom of rights."

The Constitution is holy and adequate to the government. It is the first freedom because it is foundational and essential in perpetuating a free society, allowing for more flourishing. Inspires us to do the unenforceable: fidelity, honesty, virtue, patience, service, forbearance, kindness, self-sacrifice, and respect. It is the communal practice of religions which add to the incline of betterment of health and flourishing in human living. Religions support and encourage us to work together and forge common ground; to find solutions in mutual negotiations and accommodations in finding unifying solution, inspiring us to flourish in so doing.

The right to free expression of religion encourages us to exercise our religious actions in the home and out in our communities, affecting national values. Latter-day saints have the duty to live the Constitution and be active agents in defending and promoting such values. We are to apply such civilly in consistency with laws and religious beliefs. We do this in our attempt to unify and flourish ourselves, and others' lives. Contention never leads to peaceful and sustainable solutions. There is room for all except for condemnation and prejudice of any kind. As we weave faith love and kindness in our nation, our nation will thrive, we, the people will flourish.

## **Harold Koenig**

*Director of Center for Spirituality, Theology and Health; Duke University Health System*

Harold Koenig is a professor of medicine and psychiatry, teaches in Jedda, in Yinchuan, China, had given testimonies for the house of representatives, had trained Ukrainian military for spiritual chaplains and defenses for suicide. Dean Koenig also shared that religious faith affects family, education, work and employment, and religious community (four pathways to human flourishing), then affecting happiness, satisfactions, mental and physical health, finding meaning and purpose, character and value improvement, flourishing of close social relationships and betterment of financial and material stability. Religious practice helps people cope. Other benefits of religion, specifically religious practice and attendance include betterment of mental health, fostering of social relationships, better character development, improvement of mental and physical health, and financial well-being.

Koenig also shared research (in the past 15 years) about how religious practice improves mental health and is an efficient solution to helping people recover from depressive episodes. If people attend church service, there is a 94% decrease in possibility of constituent dying from/ committing suicide. Research also shows that there is greater well-being and happiness 256 of 326 studies show a 93%. Betterment of mental health for the general population. Reciprocal altruism (a social altruism) is not a problem for religious people. Religious people have better immune function.

## **Lawrence Edward Carter Sr.**

*Dean of Martin Luther King Jr. at Morehouse College*

In 1938, Martin Luther King Jr. personally recruited Dr. Lawrence Edward Carter Sr. to attend Morehouse College. Dr. Carter would later become the founding dean of the Martin Luther King Jr. International Chapel at Morehouse. He is also a licensed and ordained American Baptist minister and has received over 100 honors for his work in education, ministry, and human rights advocacy.

Dr. Carter's address centered on the idea that spiritual flourishing is the key to a humane and civilized future. He emphasized the role of liberal religion in shaping that future, stating the need for a greater focus on personal interpretation, critical thinking, and pluralism. He spoke passionately about how liberal religion challenges individuals to engage more deeply with their values, especially in today's consumer-driven society. According to Dr. Carter, this introspective and open approach to faith nurtures spiritual liberation, "the art of living and reasoning."

He also shared that the role of religion extends beyond doctrine: it is a powerful force for prophetic imagination, theology, moral philosophy, nonviolent peace-building, and human flourishing. For Dr. Carter, religion is engagement with ultimacy, encompassing both theism and atheism. It represents the primacy of value and the sharp edge of meaning in human life. He also adds that liberal religion does not seek

uniformity but rather values personal reasoning and conscience, thus promoting social justice and ethical individuality. Human flourishing, he noted, is inseparable from an inclusive, just society rooted in these principles. Dr. Carter also reflected on the integrity of peace, describing it as “the right relationship” and a necessary remedy for the harms of white Christian nationalism, which he identified as incompatible with true equality and participatory democracy.

Dr. Carter also cited Joseph Fletcher’s six propositions of situation ethics to connect virtue ethics and moral conduct to religious practice:

1. Only one thing is intrinsically good: love.
2. The ultimate norm of religious decisions is love.
3. Love and justice are the same, for justice is love distributed equally (as emphasized by MLK).
4. Love wills the good of the neighbor, whether we like them or not.
5. Only the ends justify the means. The means must be unity to be nonviolent. The ends must preexist in the means.
6. Decisions are to be made situationally, not according to fixed rules.

He closed with a powerful reflection on peace, dignity, and human responsibility. He explained that when there is cooperation within our bodies, we call it health. When there is cooperation within society: among governments, institutions, and industries. When we have these, we have civilization.

## Breakout Sessions:

### Legal Developments: Current Supreme Court Religious Liberty Cases

#### **James Phillips**

*Constitutional Government Initiative Director, Wheatley Institute, BYU*

Phillips was the moderator for the session. As such, he introduced the three panelists, and the session started shortly after.

#### **Nicole Stelle Garnett**

*Professor, Notre Dame University Law School*

Professor Garnett started her section with introducing the case *Catholic School v. Drummond*, an unresolved legal situation involving the question of whether a state can enter a contract with a religious institution to operate a charter school. The case led to a deadlock, and at the heart of the case is the issue of whether it’s unconstitutional for the state of Oklahoma to establish religious charter schools. The case revolves around “charter schools” are publicly funded but privately operated, and they’re often designed

to stimulate pluralism and increase educational opportunity. They are regulated differently in every state, but one thing many states agree on is that charter schools are expected to be non-sectarian in their operations, even if they are run by private groups. This case raises the question: If the government contracts with a private organization to run a public school, can it still require the school to avoid religious activity? Or does that restriction violate the First Amendment rights of the religious group?

The state of Oklahoma argued that they are not banning religious schools from participating in the charter school system, but they are just saying that schools receiving public funding cannot use that role to teach or promote religion. In other words, the school can be run by a religious group, but it fails to act religiously while operating as a public school. One of the big legal questions in the case was whether the Catholic Virtual Charter School should be considered a public or private actor. When the diocese entered a contract with the state to open the virtual school, it brought up new questions about how its organization and conduct would fall into law. If a religious organization runs a public school, how much freedom does it have to still act in accordance with its beliefs?

This case calls back to First Amendment protections, especially the idea that religious institutions should be able to practice freely without government interference, while challenging how those protections apply when public funds and education are involved. Can the government fund a school and still tell it not to teach or practice religion? Or does that limit the school's freedom? Overall, because there was no majority opinion, this ruling does not set a national precedent, but it keeps the ban on publicly funded religious charter schools in Oklahoma for now. The issue is still very much alive, and according to Professor Garnett, would likely still come back and be revisited in the court in the future.

## **R. Shawn Gunnarson**

*Shareholder, Kirton McConkie*

Dr. Gunnarson focused on what counts as a religious organization under the law and its effects on that organization's First Amendment protections, mentioning a case involving *Catholic Charities vs. Wisconsin*, which raised the question of whether the state was wrong to deny them religious status under its laws. Stated as such, Catholic Charities had to prove that its activities were religious in nature, which would mean that they had to prove that they were organized only for religious purposes. The key issue in the Wisconsin case was that the state failed strict scrutiny, failing to prove that denying religious status to Catholic Charities was necessary or was the least restrictive way to achieve their goal.

The state of Wisconsin argued that Catholic Charities looked no different than other non-religious groups doing community service. The court looked at two major factors to decide if an organization is truly religious: (1) Whether it limits who receives

services based on their faith, and (2) Whether it uses its services as an opportunity to share or promote religion. Because Catholic charities in fact, did not limit their services to just Catholics, and did not overtly use their services to promote the faith, the Wisconsin trial court ruled in favor of the state, with its rationale being that the organization did not meet the criteria for being religious under their standards. This verdict was challenged later, and the Court of Appeals ruled in favor of the church, stating that the state's standards were too narrow, inevitably violating First Amendment protections.

The ruling emphasized that the government cannot "pick and choose" what counts as religious just because the institution does not exclusively limit its services to faith-based or evangelical means. This is where denominational neutrality becomes important. This case implies that the federal government is not allowed to favor certain religious expressions over others, or act based on religious preferences. That's required not just by the First Amendment, but also by the Commerce Clause and the Free Exercise Clause. The court found that the state's standard for religious classification was too exclusive and did not respect the broader role faith can play in service and outreach.

### **Michael A. Helfand**

*Professor of Law, Pepperdine Caruso School of Law*

Professor Helfand's section discussed *Mahmoud v. Taylor*, a case involved Montgomery County, which had adopted a new English Language Arts curriculum that included LGBTQ+ inclusive books, aimed at supporting literacy, prevent bullying, and reduce stigma toward the LGBTQ+ community. The facts detail that the district had a parent opt-out policy in the past, which allowed for families to be informed if a certain book with LGBTQ+ themes was going to be read. This gave the parents the right and authority to allow them to opt their children out of specific classes or activities if found to contradict their religious beliefs. Later, the county removed the opt-out policy entirely, which resulted to several parents filing suit, arguing that they had removing the opt-out privilege infringed on their constitutional right to be informed and remove their children from activities that contradicted their beliefs according to their judgement, as guardians of said children.

The case raised important First Amendment issues, particularly regarding religious discrimination and the idea that laws must be neutral as well as generally applicable. Helfand states that a rule can be considered discriminatory or even unconstitutional if a rule appears neutral on the surface but was inherently created in a way that targets or disrespects religion. Helfand also pointed out that some of the language used by the district such as comparing religious objections to white supremacy, reflected clear hostility toward religion, which could have contributed to the court's ruling. The case *Wisconsin v. Yoder* (1972), a landmark Supreme Court case,

was also made mention in the session. This case involved Amish families being granted the right to withdraw their children from school after eighth grade due to their religious beliefs. Specifically in the Yoder case, the court ruled that religious parents have the right to raise their children in accordance with their religious beliefs, so long as they provide an alternative form of education. Because of that, the case is still considered good law as it supports the idea that government cannot interfere with religious parenting without a compelling reason.

### **Q&A Portion:**

**Q:** Why is the legal debate over religious charter schools considered cyclical and confusing, particularly in the context of religious freedom?

**Helfand:** The paradox becomes even more tangled when we consider how charter schools are defined differently across states, with some allowing more freedom than others. The confusion is amplified by the fact that religious institutions want to maintain their identity while participating in a system meant to be non-sectarian. If the government can contract with private entities to run public schools, then at what point does regulation become unconstitutional interference?

**Garnett:** The case highlights the ongoing constitutional struggle between protecting religious freedom and maintaining the separation of church and state. Charter schools exist especially when religious organizations attempt to run them. The state of Oklahoma argued that while religious groups can operate charter schools, those schools must remain secular. However, this raises the question of whether requiring a religious group to act non-religiously in a public role violates its First Amendment rights.

## **Religion's Impact in Our Communities: Contributions of Chaplains**

### **Robert Freeman**

*Emeritus Professor, Brigham Young University*

Freeman was the moderator for this breakout session. As such, he introduced the panelists. He is a religious education professor at Brigham Young University with 30 years of experience. He also holds a JED.

### **Elder Matthew Carpenter**

*General Authority Seventy, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.*

Elder Carpenter graduated from BYU in 1983. Specialized in ministry and chaplaincy. He emphasized the transformative power of chaplaincy, stating, "No matter what I have been in my past, my future is spotless." He highlighted the importance of religious liberty and ensuring access to spiritual services. Chaplaincy, he argued, strengthens communities by improving coping skills, fostering integration, and building relationships. He concluded with a quote from President Russell M. Nelson: "True disciples of Jesus Christ are peacemakers."

**Father Greg McBrayer**

*Chief Flight Controller and Chaplain, American Airlines*

Father McBrayer shared his journey into chaplaincy, inspired by a vision from God. He described chaplaincy as a calling to serve others, particularly in high-stress environments like the military and aviation. His work focuses on meeting people where they are and finding fruitfulness in service.

**Rev. Laura Reyes**

*Pastor, United Baptist Church*

Rev. Reyes discussed her 20 years of service, including work with 10,000 homeless children and prison ministries. She emphasized sacrifice and divine calling, stating, "Chaplaincy needs sacrifice and service." Her message underscored the importance of answering calls to serve, even in challenging circumstances.

## Practical Peacemaking: The Power of Religious Institutions to Counter the Spiritual Crisis of Toxic Polarization

**Paul W. Lambert**

*Religion Initiative Director, Wheatley Institute, BYU*

Lambert opened with his concerns about divisions within society. He said he believes One America's approach is valuable because not only does it include religion in the conversation of unifying society, but it centers religious organizations as the central piece.

**Chandra DeNap Whetstine**

*CEO, One America Movement*

Whetstine told a story about how her friend, Pastor Brian, reached out to a Jewish rabbi after the initial attack by Hamas in Israel. He later tried to forge connections with the Muslim community to help mourn with them as well when Israel

attacked Gaza. Pastor Brian later invited the rabbi and Muslim leader to his church “to break bread together” because he had remembered the scriptures’ call to “mourn with those who mourn.” She shared, “Toxic polarization is a spiritual crisis. Faith is a powerful response.” She said disagreement is the foundation of democracy, and she admonished the listeners about not taking on negative meta-perceptions of those from other demographics and to remember that faiths include tenets that, when applied, can heal communities.

At individuals’ best, faith communities can provide belonging and cross bridges. She explained their organization allows people to meet with people of their own faith tradition to find out their role in this effort. They have worked with Jewish people, Evangelical Christians, Muslims, etc. by asking them to bring their congregations to work on issues they care about in their communities. “When we work together, we are forming an identity together.”

### **Nanette Antwi-Donkor**

*Vice President of Programs, One America Movement*

Antwi-Donkor presented data that challenged her listeners’ beliefs about those who carry different worldviews from them and then conducted breakout groups for audience members to discuss among one another. She said false polarization is pulling people apart. For example, on the issue of immigration, Democrats and Republicans perceive that the other is completely for or completely against open borders. However, there is a lot of overlap in how they feel about immigration policy. She visualized the overlap using a graph that showed a significant area where red and blue overlapped.

When audience members shared with the larger group what they had discussed with partners, several reflected on the polarization within the media. People will only listen to certain kinds of media that echo a single perspective (and only read certain kinds of history books).

Here, Whetstone briefly commented that even people on One America’s board felt very differently about what was happening in Gaza. However, because they had relationships with one another prior to this particular issue, they had already laid the groundwork to talk openly about it.

## **How Can I Make a Difference?: Regional Activities of the Religious Freedom Alliance Council**

### **Allyson Egbert**

*President of Las Vegas Alliance of Religious Freedom and Human Dignity, United States and Bill Benac, Co-founder, Dallas Fort Worth Alliance for Religious Freedom*

Egbert was the moderator for this session. As such, she introduced the panelists for the session. This breakout session showcased inspiring grassroots efforts across various U.S. regions aimed at strengthening religious freedom through local collaboration, service, and civil discourse. She started with sharing experience in organizing religious freedom events with her husband in Las Vegas, Nevada, despite political and cultural obstacles. She also mentioned that even though she is not lawyer, she loves to conduct and participate in these initiatives. She later emphasized that love and community were the key drivers. In 2019, she helped organize a symposium on “Dignity and Diversity” at UNLV, which eventually gained momentum and support from the university and community. She highlighted how acts of service, like preparing meals for homeless youth, created unity. She also quoted Elder Nash saying, “The point is not to agree, but to unify,” reflecting the purpose behind their efforts. It was what binding us, Nash said. “Not a big community but a big vision”, she quoted.

### **Matthew Latimer**

*General Counsel, ACT Capital Advisors*

He started by speaking about a symposium he organized in Seattle back in 2017. It was during the first year of Trump administration. According to him, Seattle was not as welcoming to religious group and activities. The event still, was a success having over 150 attendees, including law students, attorneys, religious leaders, and community members. Elder Von G. Keetch also attended the event. The symposium’s topic was in regards to pluralism and the idea that religious freedom matters regardless of one’s faith, belief or even political leaning. Additionally, the symposium also had an interfaith breakfast where Elder Keetch shared religious freedom principles with a diverse group, a moment that was unplanned but deeply impactful.

### **Peter H. Harris**

*President, Dallas-Fort Worth Alliance for Religious Freedom, and Human Dignity*

He recounted a Dallas-based event held at a Holocaust memorial venue. It included panelists from diverse religious backgrounds, such as the first Muslim U.S. representative and a senior rabbi, who engaged in thoughtful dialogue despite some difficult moments. High school students and law students also contributed, and the mutual respect among the participants, even across deep differences, was a standout takeaway.

### **Robert Kime**

*Member, The Freedom of Religion Roundtable*

He shared his experience organizing a religious freedom roundtable in Georgia. Beginning at an LDS chapel and later moving to Georgia State University, they brought together elected officials, citizens, and interfaith leaders. Despite some concerns about

hosting, it at LDS chapel, the focus on respectful disagreement and shared values allowed it to grow, with over 170 participants attending. His key insight: “We don’t have to agree to love each other,” emphasizing the importance of seeking divine guidance, showing up, and learning from repetition.

### **William P. Benac**

*Co-Founder, Dallas Fort Worth Alliance for Religious Freedom*

He offered a legal perspective, noting that recent Supreme Court decisions have positively shifted religious freedom laws in the U.S. He mentioned that the Alliance Council operates in 32 states and provides logistical and speaker support for those seeking to host similar events. He reminded attendees that the goal is not only to change law but to change culture, starting with relationships.

### **Q&A Portion:**

During the Q&A, attendees asked about funding and inclusivity. Panelists responded that many of their events were funded through local law firms, university departments, and private donations, not through official church budgets. Others mentioned that they kept costs low by relying on volunteer speakers and in-kind donations.

The conversation also addressed how to navigate inclusivity, especially involving LGBTQ+ communities and politically diverse groups. The advice was to avoid preaching and instead create space for civil discourse. One speaker summarized it best: “We’re not here to convert. We’re here to connect.”

The session closed with an overarching theme: Show up, serve, and build relationships. Whether in blue states, red states, or communities unfamiliar with faith discourse, meaningful change begins with humble, consistent efforts to foster unity across differences.

## **Breakout Sessions:**

### **Legal Developments: Parental Rights in Public Schools**

#### **Erin Cranor**

*Associate University Counsel, Continuing Education, Brigham Young University*

The session was moderated by Erin Cranor. She introduced the session, handled the Q and A portion, and added insights to each who spoke. She also focused on topics such as parental rights, school curriculum, and religious freedom, particularly in cases which involved topics like gender identity and LGBTQ+ towards public education.

## **Gene Schaerr**

*Managing Partner, Shaerr Jaff LLP*

In this session, Schaerr talked about how the law is being upheld with regards to parental rights and religious freedom, especially in education. He started to share stories from two important court cases which are the *Pierce v. Society of Sisters* and the *Wisconsin v. Yoder* where the Supreme Court sided with parents who wanted to send their children to a private or religious school. The last case was also about the students wanting to have the right to stop their children to go to school because of religious reason. He also went on talking about a recent case that involve a group of parents from different faith who objected to certain school materials but weren't allowed to opt their kids out. From these cases, Schaerr pointed out that even though the court did not side with the parents, especially in areas like gender identity and mental health. Still, he encouraged facing these issues with respect and unity. He concluded saying we should maintain peace rather than conflict.

## **Shannon Price**

*Minter, Vice-President of Legal National Center for LGBTQ Rights*

He started speaking about the case of Montgomery County in which a school district introduced a book that was meant to reflect on diverse family structures including LGBT+ members. At first, parents were given a choice if they want to opt out of those books but later, the district court reversed that option. He said that this could have been handled through having open discussion instead of a legal battle. From here, Shannon emphasized the importance of open and safe dialogue including schools avoiding pushing ideological messages. He also encouraged mutual respect as key ingredients for resolving complex cultural issues.

## **Q&A Portion:**

The audience contributed thought-provoking questions and reflections. One of questions was on how people would remain peacemakers, regardless of legal cases outcomes. Both speakers answered with one similar approach, and that is to lead with compassion, respect, and a willingness to talk through disagreements.

Another participant raised a concern about how opting out of certain topics could lessen their exposure to diverse perspectives in which they learn to build empathy and peacemaking skills. Minter responded by acknowledging that it may be hard balancing it but he emphasized that conversations must continue with openness and curiosity.

Nan Hunter, another attendee, shared her experience when she was the founder of a private school in California. She shared that although it is not bad to teach diversity

and inclusivity, she believes that schools should focus on teaching core values instead like kindness, diligence, and cooperation. She said that sensitive topics such as gender and sexuality should be taught at home.

In the later part, an audience named Ms. Keogh asked about children's rights in these kinds of situations. Shaerr explained that, in the most part, parents often have the rights to speak and decide on behalf of their children's constitutional interests, especially with religion and other sensitive topics.

The session ended on a hopeful note. The speakers, Minter and Shaerr successfully emphasized one important lesson which is the importance of open and safe dialogue even on difficult topics is essential for maintaining peace and mutual respect in public education.

## Religion's Impact in Our Communities: Forgiveness in the Public Square

### **Shima Baradaran Baughman**

*Woodruff J. Deem Professor of Law, J. Reuben Clark Law School; Distinguished Fellow, Wheatley Institute, Brigham Young University*

Professor Baughman introduced the panelists and raised the two topic questions for the panel; (1) The role of deterrence and punitive measures, and how the current system lacks forgiveness and healing; can we instead focus on redemption and restoration, especially for serious crimes? and (2) The role of deterrence and punitive measures, and how the current system lacks forgiveness and healing; can we instead focus on redemption and restoration, especially for serious crimes? The session started shortly after.

### **Jenae Nelson**

*Assistant Professor of Psychology, Brigham Young University*

Professor Nelson discussed how behavior change is possible and necessary for people to flourish and thrive not only in the religious realm, but holistically as well. She emphasized that behavior is shaped not only by individuals but also by "multiple ecological levels, including cultural and societal systems." According to her, such systems play a vital role in promoting hope and creating virtuous cycles where people take responsibility for others' actions, reinforcing positive change. The importance of separating the individual from their behavior, which fosters compassion and growth was also highlighted in this session, stressing that a system of forgiveness within society helps sustain this change by providing hope and encouraging collective responsibility.

Nelson also explored the role of applying religious principles, specifically of the Christian faith, in helping people cope with unfairness and understand forgiveness. She reminds us that forgiveness is not about ignoring justice; rather, our resistance to

forgive often stems from our desire for justice. Mercy should never replace justice, but forgiveness allows individuals to release animosity and heal emotionally, being free from the burden of carrying the weight of grief and anger brought by said act of injustice they suffered. In answering “How do you counsel someone who has suffered serious crimes,” Nelson answered to (1) forgive others just as Christ did, (2) Practice and extend generous restitution for others, and (3) to recognize that the process of forgiveness moves in “ebbs and flows.” She described forgiveness as a continuous process, with different types and stages depending on the context. When people receive forgiveness for their wrongdoings, it can unlock hope and potential for meaningful personal transformation.

### **Corinna Barrett Lain**

*S. D. Roberts & Sandra Moore Professor of Law, University of Richmond School of Law*

When asked “What would a more (justiciable) world look like to you?,” Dr. Lain specifically answered that it would be a “world without the death penalty.” She shared insights from her book *Redemption*, focusing on Brian Dorsy, the main protagonist, who was convicted of double murder and spent 17 years in prison. Dorsy lived in the honor dorm and interacted with both guards and inmates serving life or death sentences. Lain reflected on how redemption is difficult, especially when it involves taking a life, describing moments of profound holiness she has witnessed in such challenging circumstances. She explained that the greater the despair someone experiences, the greater the potential for meaningful change.

Lain also raised important questions about the role of forgiveness; how it shapes our relationship with God and influences how we forgive others. She challenged us to consider the kind of people we are creating when society asks individuals to take a life as part of their job. Her talk pushed us to think deeply about justice, redemption, and the transformative power of forgiveness in both personal and societal contexts.

### **Elder Don R. Clarke**

*General Authority Seventy Emeritus, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*

Elder Nash encouraged that as followers of Christ, we are called to embody His compassion by drawing near to those whom society often avoids. Just as Jesus touched and healed lepers, people considered untouchable, we, too, should not be afraid to engage with those who are hurting, marginalized, or burdened by stigma. To be Christlike is to see and treat everyone as fully human, not defined by their circumstances or past, but by their inherent worth as children of God. Our posture should always be one of love, dignity, and presence; treating others not as problems, but as people.

When asked about counseling someone who has suffered serious harm or injustice, Elder Nash also stressed the importance of approaching our brothers and

sisters with patience and grace. Forgiveness may be part of the journey, but it cannot be forced. Forgiveness often comes in waves, and that's okay. Christ's forgiveness of us provides a foundation of grace, but not a shortcut through the pain. Healing also involves truth-telling, justice, and where possible, generous restitution from those who have caused harm. Ultimately, we walk alongside survivors, not to rush them into resolution, but to support them as they move at their own pace toward healing and hope.

### **Q&A Portion:**

**Q:** Didn't Joseph Smith include advocating for generous restitution instead of deterrence in his presidential platform?

**Dr. Baughman:** Yes, Joseph Smith did emphasize the importance of generous restitution, meaning those who cause harm should make amends and take responsibility. This idea fits well with the principle of justice and healing, rather than only focusing on punishment or deterrence.

**Elder Nash:** Joseph Smith emphasized the importance of our relationship with God, and the prioritization of gaining education (seeking learning by study and by faith). For example, the Pathway programme was adapted even for longtime inmates for this purpose.

\*This section ended after one question due to lack of time.

## **Practical Peacemaking: Interfaith Community Revitalization**

### **Almas Muscatwalla**

*Co-founder, Faith Forward Dallas, Thanksgiving Foundation. Indian-American Shia Ismaili Muslim and Non-clergy Leader*

Muscatwalla's core belief is that humanity originates from a single soul, making diversity a strength. She advocates for serving humanity as a form of worship and views faith as a way of life. Her work focuses on responding to societal diversity with unity and compassion.

### **Kyle Ogden**

*President and CEO, The Thanksgiving Foundation*

Ogden discussed practical peacemaking through initiatives like The Beacon Campaign. He framed ethical living as a lifeline, not a luxury, and emphasized thriving

through competence, relationships, and autonomy. Ogden highlighted civic responsibility and the need for an ethical vocabulary to address societal challenges.

## How Can I Make a Difference?: Tools for Awareness and Conversations

### **Amy L. Andrus**

*Associate Director, ICLRS*

Andrus opened by saying the purpose of ICLRS (the International Center for Law and Religion Studies) is to provide people an opportunity to develop their knowledge of religious freedom. Projecting the website onto the front, she explained some basic functions on the website.

### **Douglas E. McAllister**

*Senior Fellow, ICLRS*

McAllister explained the brochures, reflecting on how the ones about the United States were condensed into a single resource. He said they are not LDS brochures but ICLRS brochures because they want them to be taken seriously across religious traditions.

He said it is important to have brochures that simplify these issues because some people have different interpretations of what religious freedom is. Some people think that even talking about religious freedom means that they are preferring a particular religion over secularism, but he said that is not true. Talking about religious freedom is powerful and important. He also noted religious freedom manifests differently in different parts of the world, but it is an important cause even in Provo, Utah.

### **Brett G. Scharffs**

*Director, ICLRS; Rex E. Lee Chair and Professor of Law, BYU Law*

Scharffs shared more personal anecdotes from his work experience. Several years ago, the idea of human rights was politicized. Many outside the United States felt like it was the Western worlds' way of trying to impose Western views of liberal sexual rights on more conservative countries and a way for the U.S. to shame the political leaders of other countries for their human rights violations. He told a story about how when people are hesitant to accept religious freedom, the concept of human dignity is more universal and palatable.

He explained some of the scholarship that ICLRS is working on, including writing books about different cultures' perspectives on human dignity. He said last year, the Vatican issued a new document on human dignity linking human dignity and religious freedom. The Vatican contacted ICLRS to help them do a partnership conference

inspired by this new document. He reiterated “human dignity” can open doors “religious freedom” will not at first.

**Gary B. Doxey**

*Associate Director, ICLRS*

Doxey finally went over a piece of paper that discusses how to be a more effective communicator to build community. He said being educated on issues and building community are vital. He encouraged actively engaging in a profession and community to build credibility and expertise that will make others more open to listening. He explained the networking is important because if people know and respect an individual, they will be more effective. He also encouraged providing selfless service to others. He shared, “Be an example of what is highest and BEST in your belief ... Stand up with civility. Effective advocacy requires civility and respect.”

## General Session

### Religion and Religious Freedom’s Contributions to Social Flourishing

**Shima Baradaran Baughman**

*Woodruff J. Deem Professor of Law, BYU Law; Distinguished Fellow, Wheatley Institute  
BYU*

The foreground was given the theme of the session of how to make real and lasting change through meaning, belonging, and a moral vision. Religion offers this opportunity in society. The most transformative work was not happening in the system alone, but in the places where people build relationships and are offered forgiveness, accountability, and hope in a community. Brief introductions were made after this foreground and the discussion began. The question of the panel was what is made possible because of religion in society?

**Rev. Dr. David G. Latimore**

*Director, Betsey Stockton Center for Black Church Studies, Black Theology and Leadership Institute, Princeton Theological Seminary*

Revered Latimore talked about the beauty that happens when we can encounter opposition and still find the power within religion and strength in our faith communities. He spoke of several stories that showed the symbols of religion expressed in private and public during the Civil War. He spoke about gathering in the name of God and expressing that understanding of God. An emphasis was made on the resources churches give to individuals regarding self-reliance and the ability to survive in

tumultuous circumstances. Human flourishing was connected to civil right and faith as both the social and economic circumstances of life were alluded to. As a whole faith, peace, and becoming more active in our faith communities and belief were the central focus. His call to action was ensuring that we recognize the interconnectedness of both the physical resources and faith work hand and hand to create an environment where humans can flourish together.

### **Matthew T. Lee**

*Professor of Social Sciences and Humanities, Institute for Studies of Religion, Baylor University*

After an interactive activity where the audience imagined a person that has loved and helped them personally persevere, Dr. Lee focused on relational well-being. Flourishing is inherently an energizing state of being and is complexly integrated in social science research. To be whole amid adversity shows that flourishing is not situational but relational. He described the Secure Flourishing Index measurement tool to include the life circumstances that includes the physical life of a person. Resilience was differentiated from flourishing and harmony was introduced. Dr. Lee charged the audience to extend flourishing to all people through promoting both well-being and well-doing.

### **Shaylyn Romney Garrett**

*Co-author, The Upswing: How America Came Together a Century Ago and How We Can Do It Again*

Giving context through a summary of her book *The Upswing*, she set the stage by describing each of the following factors in relation to each other: economic inequality, political polarization, social fragmentation, and cultural narcissism. Each of these factors carried throughout her speech that highlighted a need for a change in our society to shift our prosperity up like it was projected in the past. The last “upturn” was connected to the Gilded Age and was the consequence of a nationwide change in cultural values. Religion has the capacity to help the lagging factors (like economics) be upturned. She invited the audience to step into their role as leaders and be visionaries, truth tellers, organizers, joiners, and civic innovators. She inspired the audience to recognize the need to shift our culture up together. The need to be unified in this journey up was the central idea.

### **Q&A Portion:**

**Q (to all panelists):** If you were to share one thing to do to increase religious and human flourishing what would it be?

**Rev. Dr. David G. Latimore:** Find a place to bring to life your faith for the benefit of someone outside of your immediate community.

**Matthew T. Lee:** Shift of monologue to dialogue and ask how can we love each other more fully?

**Shaylyn Romney Garrett:** Go and meet your own neighbors.

**Q (to Shaylyn):** In relation to the focus shift needed that was spoken of in the context of your book, how do you create these experiences amidst a hostile culture within the media? Have you had any embodied experience of hope?

**Shaylyn Romney Garrett:** Social Capital and social technologies that bring people into relationships are the hope that is being provided today. There is power in being put in spaces that make you encounter opposition. It would be necessary to create a shift in the world of how to care and provide mutual aid.

**Matthew T. Lee:** The GDP is negatively related to secure flourishing, since the middle-income countries have higher opportunity of social flourishing we could ask: What can we learn from the diversity and how do we pursue economic growth in the context of our current society in the United States context?

**Rev. Dr. David G. Latimore:** To what degree have religious communities been affected by the circumstances and environment and been influenced by the downturn? Talk to religious leaders and communities more broadly and see how religious communities could inspire an upturn.

## Breakout Sessions:

### Legal Developments: Civility, Religious Liberty, and Nondiscrimination

**Elizabeth A. Clark**

*Chair, Religious Freedom Annual Review; Associate Director, ICLRS*

Clark did not share much information on the topic. She primarily announced the speakers and asked a few questions at the end.

## **Tim Schultz**

*President, 1st Amendment Partnership*

A lobbyist and legislative strategist, Schultz discussed the history of religious liberty legislation in the United States. He explained the various court cases that have strengthened and/or rescinded religious freedom protections, including *Sherbert v. Verner*, *Bob Jones University v. United States*, and *Employment Division v. Smith*. At certain periods of history, the free exercise of religion was ruled as being worth protecting to the highest constitutional standard whereas other times religious discrimination was viewed as being less discriminatory than racial discrimination. He explained the initial bipartisan support for RFRA legislation that later became politically charged. The Court decided Congress did not have the jurisdiction to enforce RFRA on state governments, so religious freedom activists “watered down” RFRA to become RLUIPA (which only addressed land use and institutionalized persons).

He explained a shift occurred in 2013 where religious freedom laws became unpopular and were framed as an excuse to discriminate. Utah passed the Utah Compromise that sought to pair religious freedom protections with protections for homosexual people. Utah became a model for religious freedom legislation across the United States.

## **Kevin J. Worthen**

*Hugh W. Colton Professor of Law, BYU Law; Constitutional Law; Fellow, Wheatley Institute, BYU*

With a background in indigenous law, Worthen focused primarily on nondiscrimination. He heavily quoted an address by Elder Holland to the University of Virginia in 2021. He spoke about how in negotiation, both parties need to be filled with respect and a desire for fairness for all. He said this means people should set aside habits of contesting every policy that might infringe on their individual rights, no matter how small. Instead, people should consider the wellbeing of all, including those who hold different beliefs than them, and accept personal inconveniences if they help protect and empower others in meaningful ways. One of my favorite things he said was that one set of rights should not automatically always trump others, which is something I think people of all political persuasions should understand better. He said this sense of give and take built on unity and human dignity is not popular, but it is consistent with the Constitution and with Christian theology. He closed by saying that relationships with people in our community’s matter. Even if we do not achieve everything we want, engaging in the process of respectful negotiation with others provides an opportunity to forge enduring relationships.

## **Tyler Deaton**

*Senior Advisor, American Unity Fund*

Deaton said that he initially came to Utah working on Fairness for All. He said his experience has taught him that peacemakers are some of the most hated people, even though it is often hard to be patient and civil with “enemies.” He said it is more comfortable to stick to the type of crowds people are more comfortable with than stay in extreme echo chambers where their beliefs are never challenged. He said having uncomfortable conversations is tough work, but it is what Christians are called to do. One of my favorite points he said is that being a peacemaker does not mean a person must be super moderate in their views to appeal to more people. He spoke peacemakers can still be more extreme in their personal views while being willing to engage in peacemaking dialogue. He said, “don’t be mushy for peace. Be aggressive for peace and take those slings and arrows,” because peacemaking is laborious work.

## **Q&A Portion:**

**Question from Clark:** How do you handle when compromise and respect for plurality is interpreted by people as being complicit in others’ sins and allowing them values to be compromised?

**Schultz:** You shouldn’t violate your conscience, but you should interrogate your conscience. You can’t elevate every single political policy decision to being the end all be all, a matter of damnation or salvation.

**Deaton:** You could make the same argument about protecting the religious freedom of different religions from you as people make for allowing protections for LGBTQ people. Utah is tied for the top three states for nondiscrimination with Vermont and New Hampshire. Utah supports traditional marriage but also believes in fairness for all.

**Schultz:** I want people to convert to Messiah Jesus and believe that atheists are profoundly incorrect, but I refuse to tolerate atheists being discriminated against in the workplace.

**Worthen:** We don’t assume good faith motives of others. Let’s assume they are people trying their best.

## Religion's Impact in Our Communities: Interfaith Service's Impact on Religious Believers

### **Rebecca Glazier**

*Professor, University of Arkansas at Little Rock*

She moderated the discussion and contributed reflections and research insights throughout. She talked about the importance of service and its essence in connecting with God. From her studies, she said that people often felt closer to God when they serve their fellow beings. She also shared that service is like a Pentecost. It is where people disregard their differences and people just connect more deeply and sincerely. This encourages hope, she added. She also mentioned the value of researching and conducting surveys when it comes to congregational action.

### **Pastor Earnest Thomas**

*Pastor of Discipleship, Saint Mark Baptist Church*

He circled his message into sharing lessons that he learned from St. Mark. First, the Hurricane Katrina that happened in 2005. The initiative was helping people from New Orleans have shelter. He also mentioned that FEMA and Red Cross helped. Second, he also talked about the "Restoration Project" especially during COVID-19. Its mission was to assist people with their rent, mortgages, utilities, food and business grants. It provided aid even much than the government could have. Lastly, he talked about the hot meal program which they started back in 2022 and still is up in the present. They served people from Monday to Thursday. They feed from 50 people to 200 daily. Many of the people they serve are employed but is struggling to afford lunch. He also added that not only are the homeless deserve to be helped but everyone. He quoted St. Mark with "Whosoever will, let them come".

Additionally, he emphasized that helping one another through partnerships and being involved in volunteer ship are important in the church's mission. That through these services will lead you to more spiritual and communal blessings. Pastor also addressed being burnout. That enjoying occasionally is good such as celebrating small wins, sharing your testimony, and involving new members actually sustain your energy.

He also went on commending Rebecca's research, saying that her approach helps a lot of churches become healthier thru shared data. He also said that joining people who are with God is much easier and fulfilling.

### **Rev. Patricia Lewis Matthews**

*Episcopal Priest and Executive Director, The Interfaith Center*

She started with explaining the idea of the importance of balancing effort with discernment. She talked about burnout, that this could be a sign from the spirit to shift to a different focus. She also said that some ministries are meant for other people and that

it's okay to shift to make room for new ones. She then went on concluding that while she sees the love and the need for service, it is also equally important to rest.

She shared that most of the valuable initiatives come from church members. She also added that this is often where new energy and ideas come from as well. She also shared the important correlation of being social and spiritual. She then quoted Rev. Farmer, saying "You cannot be spiritual unless you're social".

### **Lindy Vogado**

*Associate Pastor for Belonging and Outreach, Second Presbyterian Church, Little Rock Arkansas*

She spoke about inter-congregational cooperation and serving together. She talked about how important collaboration among churches with differing theologies. That this actually unite them and not divide. She also shared her experience in her congregation when they helped two people from Afghan as refugee and they both coming from different backgrounds. She then encouraged the crowd to make use of surveys to discover what congregation cares about. One example was a survey result of one church having health care as its top one concern. This piece of information has led them to create a public health scholarship for HBCU graduates in response to racism. In closing, she affirmed that sometimes letting go of things like old programs can make new, spirit-led efforts.

## **Practical Peacemaking: Pluralism and Peacemaking on College Campuses**

### **Gary Doxey**

*Associate Director, International Center for Law and Religion Studies, Brigham Young University*

Director Doxey stated that this panel was geared toward validating the legitimacy of different viewpoints laid the foundation for civil rights to grow, specifically in the protection of religious freedom. He stated that practicing the ideals of religious freedom today helps reinforce those rights and prepares the next generation to be strong advocates for religious liberty. Shortly after, he introduced the panel, and the session continued.

### **Shira Hoffer**

*Executive Director, Institute for Multi-partisan Education*

Shira Hoffer shared a personal and eye-opening talk about her time at Harvard, where she experienced discrimination as a student. Now, being the Executive Director of the Institute for Multi-partisan Education also known as "The Viewpoints Project," she

advocates for encouraging open conversations on college campuses, especially around topics people are often too scared to talk about. One of the most interesting statistics she brought up through her scholarly research was that around 90% of students say they believe in free speech, but 2 out of 3 say they'd hold back from asking questions out of fear of social punishment or judgment. That fear often stops students from engaging deeply, even though, ironically, she found that students are more likely to engage with those they disagree with when it comes to religion.

She explained that the Viewpoints Fellowship aims to help students push past that fear and build skills for what she calls "curious disagreement." The goal is to shift the culture on campuses toward one that values curiosity over conflict. The fellowship works closely with student clubs and organizations to create spaces where disagreement is handled thoughtfully and constructively, not something to avoid.

## **YuQing Jiang**

*President Emeritus, Stanford Political Union*

YuQing Jiang, a recent Stanford graduate and the former president of the Stanford Political Union, talked about his experience creating spaces for real, respectful conversation on campus, especially in a time where censorship and political division feel more intense than ever. Being president of the Stanford Political Union, which dates to 1938, he has taken inspiration from other political union models. He highlights that the goal of the Union was not about debating to "win," but about promoting dialogue through simple means of talking, listening, and learning. Jiang shared how conservative students at Stanford often felt silenced, and how the Union became a kind of "farm" or safe container for conversations on tough, even controversial topics. The focus is on weekly gatherings where students can talk about issues they normally wouldn't get to unpack in class or in most campus spaces. These discussions range from small group moderated dialogues to larger events with invited speakers, and students are encouraged to grapple with difficult ideas rather than just reject or avoid them.

He emphasized that the issue isn't just disagreement, but it is that people are hesitant to speak up at all. The Union tries to build civil skills; how to speak, listen, and engage thoughtfully, alongside social awareness which is not about partisanship, and it's not about performing opinions for applause. The space is intentionally nonpartisan, both in terms of topics and the ways students express themselves. Jiang also talked about his role in panel discussions with co-chairs and in various committees working on antisemitism, anti-discrimination, and equity. This work goes beyond dialogue for its own sake, as well as continuing to inspire civic engagement and making campus a place where students feel like their voices matter, no matter their background or beliefs. Lastly, Jiang stressed the empirical role of conversation in building understanding. It's not just a nice idea, but it's a skill, and one that institutions need to help students develop deliberately.

## **Alex Keogh and Mirabella Archibald Keogh**

*Founders, Peacemaker Project, Brigham Young University*

Alex Keogh (a psychology major) and Mirabella Archibald Keogh (Public Health and Middle Eastern Studies) spoke about their experience founding the Peacemaker Project at BYU. This was a student association programme they piloted within the Political Science Department which had a focus on helping students learn how to disagree productively. The main aim of their project is centered on creating safe spaces where disagreement is not only allowed, but welcomed, as long as it's done with respect and purpose. The Keoghs also shared that their preliminary research shows, not everyone feels comfortable sharing opinions, especially when there's a fear of saying the "wrong" thing or facing judgment.

According to the Keoghs, the Peacemaker Project was created to bring students together to talk about hard topics, build empathy, and develop communication skills that are often missing from everyday academic settings. The Keoghs also emphasized how much they cared about not just what students think, but how, specifically in BYU-Provo. The project creates a safe space for participants to talk to each other, even (and especially) when they don't agree. Later, the couple also shared more of their preliminary findings from their study across 15 different campuses, looking into what allows student-led peace-building efforts like theirs to thrive. Their findings show that: (1) Ideological minorities within student populations were often the most motivated to start these conversations, (2) Religious backgrounds played a big role in shaping students' worldviews and their willingness to engage, and (3) The strongest programs had networks of support, especially with faculty who shared both the skills and the commitment to make civil dialogue possible. This way, partisans are not just talking about peacemaking as a concept but are actively building it into their campus culture.

### **Q&A Portion:**

**Q:** YuQing what will you be doing having just graduated?

**Jiang:** I will be working with Stanford to teach students how to speak using dialogic questions in small group settings and encouraged student leaders to build strong relationships with university leadership, carefully evaluate the resources they accept, and work toward integrating civil discourse into the curriculum while staying aligned with campus policies.

**Q:** Specifically for Shira, I am curious to know more about how it's going with the viewpoints project. Do you have plans for implementing the project more in culturally diverse spaces?

**Hoffer:** The Viewpoints Project is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, which piloted its fellowship program at Dartmouth College. The program was student-led, launched through a student club, and included a campus-wide capstone project. It also involved formal partnerships with the institution to ensure deeper integration and sustainability. The fellowship is designed to be flexible and adaptable to different cultural contexts, and I am excited about the possibility of expanding it to more culturally diverse campuses around the world, given the chance.

## How Can I Make a Difference?: Responding to Portrayals of Religion in Media

### **Kelsey Dallas**

**Managing Editor, SCOTUS Blog; Former Assistant Managing Editor, Deseret News**

Kelsey Dallas, recently named managing editor of SCOTUS blog, brought her expertise in religion journalism to the panel. With a master's degree in religion from Yale Divinity School and accolades from the Religion News Association, Dallas emphasized the critical role of journalists in shaping accurate portrayals of faith. She highlighted the challenges and responsibilities of reporting on religion, advocating for nuanced storytelling that avoids stereotypes. Dallas also shared her passion for bridging gaps between media and religious communities, drawing from her experience covering the Supreme Court and religion at the Deseret News.

### **Josh Good**

*Director, Religion and Society Program, The Aspen Institute*

Josh Good, who leads the Aspen Institute's Religion & Society Program, discussed initiatives like the Faith Angle Forum, which fosters deeper engagement between journalists and religion scholars. With a background in Christianity and culture (Harvard University), Good underscored the need for ethical frameworks in media coverage of faith. He shared insights from his work with urban congregations and ex-prisoners, illustrating how interfaith collaboration can reshape narratives. Good's call to action: media must move beyond superficial portrayals to explore the moral and civic dimensions of religion.

## **Angela Redding**

*Executive Director, Radiant Foundation*

Angela Redding, a leader in media innovation and nonprofit management, presented the Radiant Foundation's mission to improve faith representation in news and entertainment. Drawing from her experience at Ford Motor Company and founding a media trade association, Redding stressed the economic and social impact of diverse storytelling. She highlighted projects that amplify underrepresented voices and shared personal anecdotes about interfaith youth work. Redding's key message: accurate media portrayals of religion require investment, creativity, and community partnerships.

## Closing Sessions

### Why Religious Freedom Matters to Me

#### **Amy L. Andrus**

*Associate Director, ICLRS*

Amy introduced the concluding general session and relayed the final agenda for the completion of the conference. In addition, an introduction to the first speaker was given, after which he gave the time to the speaker. Once the speaker concluded his remarks she gave a second introduction to the next session's moderator Paul Kerry.

#### **G.S. "Mack" McCarter III**

*Founder and Coordinator, Community Renewal International (CRI)*

Reverend Mack McCarter offered a speech on the power of collaborating as a community to create systems that will make our societies successful. Starting off the speech with offering the basic definition of what power and truth look like when spoken to congregations and communities alike, he then offered an object lesson in how ants work together to accomplish a common goal. Placing an emphasized focus on how love is a force that can shift humanity a charge was given to care and recognize the rhythms of our societies systems so we can solve sophisticated problems through teamwork.

A quote that was powerful was "Our neighborhood is one we are born into and cannot leave but only live. So, we march with a system to say I will love all people everywhere". He stated this in relation to developing understanding one- on- one within diverse circumstances in our communities and promoting the dignity of each person participating in this system. If we work together as marching ants, we can be innovative in solving complex problems together. His remarks concluded with a powerful visualization of how the power of harnessing the energies of love into our systems will help each to recognize that love is as powerful as the discovery of fire.

## Peacemaking, Dignity, and Civility

### **Paul Kerry**

*Associate Director, ICLRS; Professor of History, BYU*

Introductions of each speaker were given by Paul Kerry and context of what each of the panelists are doing currently. An emphasis on the individual work of each of the speakers was given and the time was turned over to Steven Collis. A brief story was shared of how Steven Collins was in Paris at Oxford last week and how important family is to Mr. Collis.

### **Steven T. Collis**

*Clinical Professor of Law, University of Texas at Austin; Founding Faculty Director of the Bech-Loughlin First Amendment Center*

There were two themes of the speech, the first was our need to become humble masters of a specific discipline but always being a learner because there will always be more to learn. The second was deconstructing our own toxic partisan loyalty and valuing truth over the tempting protection of being loyal to a group we do not believe in. These were two of many topics of his book, *Habits of a Peacemaker*, and were the base of the speech. The call to action was our need to not avoid problem or controversy, but instead being willing to research and move forward, even if that sometimes means standing alone for a moment. It was a sound of warning to the possible dangers of being a peacekeeper instead of a peacemaker.

### **Tami Pyfer**

*Cocreator of the Dignity Index, Project UNITE, Inc.*

After introducing herself and the diversity of political views within her family, cultural and social divisions were described as an embodiment of how winning fights could result in losing our country. Contempt was defined as “an addiction abetted by the outrage industrial complex”. By promoting dignity inspired language some of the opposition in views will not be filled with contempt but instead promote seeing and hearing fair civil discourse. The division between contempt and dignity were compared to show that avoidance and judgement compared to engagement and understanding. This speech was a powerful speech that charged the audience to evaluate their personal and community language through the Dignity Index provided in the speech or via the embedded link.

### **Talmage Boston**

*Partner, Shackelford, McKinley & Norton, LLP; Author, How the Best Did It*

The theme of the speech was extending civility and being forgiving as portrayed in the chapter in his book, *How the Best Did It*, devoted to Abraham Lincoln. Leaning into his background in history and his study of ranking each of the presidents through a

poll, the spoke of the greatness that is a result of magnanimity and equanimity. These traits were simplified to mean to be forgiving and levelheaded or not easily agitated. The conclusion was made that Lincoln was among the great leaders in United States history because he prevented war through extending dignity to the marginalized. The call to action was to develop within ourselves the ability to be leaders like Lincoln.

## Closing Remarks

### **Doctor Elizabeth Clark**

*Chair, Religious Freedom Annual Review; Associate Director, ICLRS*

Brief housekeeping comments were given before her brief comments concluding the session about the pamphlet provided from the ICLRS team. Gratitude was extended to each of the partners to help to make the conference possible. She detailed some of the reasons to continue to protect religious freedom for the religious and non-religious alike. Knowing why religious freedom matters to us as individuals, communities, and organizations. Each of the ways of how peace is protected through valuing religious freedom and being a part of the initiative. The persecution that occurs in her experience in Eastern Europe and the sacrifice of a friend there to become a preacher and consequently was put in jail like his brother and father. She concluded by speaking of the relevance of community, conversation, and rituals that help connect our fragile societies together. The audience was charged to be advocates for human dignity and human flourishing for “everyone everywhere”.

## Biographies

### **Amy Lynn Andrus**

*Associate Director, International Center for Law and Religion Studies, J. Reuben Clark Law School, Brigham Young University*

Amy Lynn Andrus joined the Center as an associate director in 2021. She previously worked as an attorney advisor for the Department of Justice in the Executive Office for Immigration Review, through the Attorney General's Honors Program. Amy graduated from BYU Law School in 2019, where she was a Clark Scholar and served as lead executive editor of the BYU Law Review. She was a W.G. and Helen Johnson Summer Fellow with the ICLRS, externing at the Office of General Counsel for the Pacific Area in Auckland, New Zealand. She also served as a member of the ICLRS Symposium Student Executive Committee and volunteered with the Immigration and Refugee Initiative in Dilley, Texas. Amy earned a master's degree from BYU in international and area studies, with an emphasis in international development. Her thesis focused on The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints' Gospel Literacy EKort in Guatemala in the 1990s. She graduated summa cum laude from BYU with a bachelor's degree in English– Secondary Teaching and a Spanish Teaching minor. Amy previously worked as an editor for BYU's Kennedy Center for International Studies Publications Office, where she wrote and edited books, newsletters, conference proceedings, and the Culturgrams series.

### **Nanette Antwi-Donkor**

*Vice President of Programs, One America*

Nanette Antwi-Donkor serves as the Vice President of Programs at One America Movement, where she spearheads multi-faith initiatives and oversees program support functions. In this leadership role, she guides a dedicated team to ensure that programs effectively support people of faith in speaking out and acting against toxic polarization in accordance with their faith traditions. Additionally, she manages robust monitoring and evaluation systems to drive continuous improvement and demonstrate measurable impact. Before joining One America Movement, Nanette was a senior program manager at the Aspen Institute, where she led the Data for Impact portfolio. In this role, she enhanced the data capacity of Opportunity Youth Forum collaboratives through strategic grant making, technical assistance, assessment and measurement, and policy advocacy. Her work centered on empowering collaboratives to leverage data to promote equity and facilitate continuous improvement.

### **Shima Baradaran Baughman**

*Woodruff J. Deem Professor of Law, J. Reuben Clark Law School; Distinguished Fellow, Wheatley Institute, Brigham Young University*

Shima Baughman is the Woodruff J. Deem Professor of Law and a Distinguished Fellow at the Wheatley Institute at BYU. She has taught law for over fifteen years at the University of Malawi, BYU, and the University of Utah, where she was also an associate dean. She is a former Fulbright scholar, one of the top cited faculty in her field, and a nationally recognized expert on bail, prosecutors, and police. Her current scholarship examines criminal justice policy, forgiveness, prosecutors, and how religious institutions impact criminal justice reform. Baughman's work has been featured in The New York Times, Wall Street Journal, The Economist, The Washington Post, Forbes, on National Public Radio, and other media outlets. She presented her work at Stanford, Cornell, Michigan, Texas, NYU, UCLA and many other law schools, as well as to groups of federal and state judges and attorneys across the country. Her articles have been published in top law journals including University of Pennsylvania Law Review, USC Law Review, Georgetown Law Journal, Texas Law Review, and the Journal of Empirical Legal Studies.

### **William P. Benac**

*Co-founder, Dallas Fort Worth Alliance for Religious Freedom*

Bill Benac is president of Pathway India, an organization devoted to the education, physical, and mental rehabilitation of disadvantaged Indian youth and adults, and president and founder of The DFW Alliance for Religious Freedom. He also serves various nonprofits and boards that focus on the arts, education, and international affairs. Bill previously held executive positions with global corporations, private equity firms, and as an entrepreneur. Bill earned his bachelor's and MBA degrees from BYU, his JD from Pace University, and is a CMA and CPA. He enjoys boating, road biking, scuba diving, and traveling. Bill and Barbara have nine children and twenty-three grandchildren.

### **Talmage Boston**

*Partner, Shackelford, McKinley & Norton, LLP*

Talmage is a partner in the Dallas office of Shackelford, McKinley & Norton, LLP. He has been recognized on three different occasions as one of the top litigators in the state of Texas. He handles commercial litigation in both trials and appeals, and has been board certified in Civil Trial Law since 1988 and Civil Appellate Law since 1990 by the Texas Board of Legal Specialization. During his 40-year career, he has successfully represented clients in state and federal court lawsuits and arbitrations involving oil and gas, real estate, banking, intellectual property, and partnership disputes. He has successfully tried many jury trials throughout Texas and prevailed in appellate courts all

over the state, including the Texas Supreme Court and the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit.

### **Matthew L. Carpenter**

*General Authority Seventy, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*

Elder Matthew L. Carpenter was sustained as a General Authority Seventy of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on March 31, 2018. At the time of his call, he had been serving as a member of the Sixth Quorum of the Seventy in the North America Central Area. He has served as Area President of the Africa Central Area, First Counselor in the Africa Central Area Presidency, Second Counselor in the North America Central Area Presidency, Assistant to the Utah Area Presidency, and on various committees at Church headquarters. He is currently serving at Church headquarters as an Assistant Executive Director of the Priesthood and Family Department.

### **Lawrence Carter Sr.**

*Founding Dean, Morehouse MLK Jr. International Chapel*

In 1958, Martin Luther King Jr. privately recruited Lawrence Edward Carter as a 10th grader to come to Morehouse College. Dr. Lawrence Edward Carter became the first Dean of the Martin Luther King Jr. International Chapel in 1979. He is now in his 45th year as the Founding Dean. Today, he is a tenured Professor of Religion, archivist, and College Curator at Morehouse College. For sixty-five years, Dr. Carter has studied and worked in fourteen American universities, colleges, and professional schools, spoken at over one-hundred different colleges, universities, and seminaries, and received over one thousand speaking engagements from eighteen Christian denominations, including Jewish, Islamic, Hindu, and Buddhist communions, and traveled to thirty-eight foreign countries. He has made over eighty radio and television appearances. He holds a BA degree from Virginia University of Lynchburg in Social Science and Psychology, a MDiv degree in Theology, a STM degree in Pastoral Care, and a PhD degree in Pastoral Psychology and Counseling from Boston University. He holds certifications in multi-disciplinary clinical training, clinical pastoral education, the editing of historical documents, and community nonviolent training. Dr. Carter was a 1994 Fulbright-Hayes Scholar in Brazil, and twice a National Endowment for the Humanities fellow, in 1993 and 1996. His fourth book titled *The Baptist Preacher's Buddhist Teacher: How My Interfaith Journey with Daisaku Ikeda Made me a Better Christian* has been translated into Japanese and Portuguese. His biography on Dr. Benjamin E. Mays, titled *Walking Integrity, Mentor to Martin Luther King Jr.* is the best-selling book, currently being published by Mercer University Press. Dean Carter is married to Dr. Marva Griffin Carter, an associate tenured professor at Georgia State

University. They have been married 55 years. The Carters are the parents of one son, Lawrence Edward Carter, Jr.

### **Elizabeth A. Clark**

*Chair, Religious Freedom Annual Review; Associate Director, ICLRS*

Elizabeth A. Clark is Associate Director of the International Center for Law and Religion Studies at Brigham Young University. Professor Clark is an expert on religious freedom in Eastern Europe and comparative law and religion. She has written over 40 chapters and articles and edited several books on comparative and U.S. law and religion issues and religion in post-Communist Europe, including co-editing *Religion during the Russian Ukrainian Conflict*. Professor Clark has been featured in Radio Free Europe, radio and public television shows in the U.S. and internationally, *The National Review*, and *SCOTUS Blog* and has been consulted by reporters from *USA Today*, *Bloomberg*, *NPR*, and others. In her work with the Center, she has spoken at and organized over 100 academic conferences throughout the world. She has also testified before the U.S. Congress and the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom on religious freedom issues, taken part in drafting legal analyses of pending legislation affecting religious freedom in over a dozen countries, and has written amicus briefs on religious freedom issues for the U.S. Supreme Court. Prior to joining the Law School, Professor Clark was an associate in the Washington, D.C., office of Mayer, Brown & Platt, where she was a member of the Appellate and Supreme Court Litigation Group. Professor Clark also clerked for Judge J. Clifford Wallace in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit. She graduated summa cum laude from BYU's law school, where she served as Editor-in-Chief of the *BYU Law Review*.

### **Don R. Clarke**

*President, Emeritus General Authority, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; President, Great Salt Lake Utah District*

Elder Don R. Clarke is serving as an emeritus General Authority and President of the Great Salt Lake Utah District (Correctional Facility). He was sustained as a member of the Seventy of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on April 1, 2006. He served as president of the Central America Area from 2007 to 2011 and as a counselor during 2006-2007. He additionally served as an assistant Executive Director in the Missionary Department and as Area Assistant for the Utah North, Utah Salt Lake City, and Utah South Areas. Elder Clarke earned an associate's degree from Ricks College and a bachelor's degree in business from Brigham Young University. He completed a master's degree in business administration from Washington State University. His career included senior executive positions in several retailing companies. Elder Clarke has served the Church in various capacities, including full-time missionary in the

Argentina Mission, president of the Bolivia Santa Cruz Mission (2001-2004), stake president, Director of Church Hosting, high councilor, bishop, stake Young Men president, and Elders quorum president. Don Ray Clarke married Mary Anne Jackson, and they are the parents of six children, 23 grandchildren, and three great grandchildren.

### **Steven T. Collis**

*Clinical Professor of Law; Founding Faculty Director of the Bech-Loughlin First Amendment Center and its Law & Religion Clinic, University of Texas at Austin*

Steven T. Collis researches and teaches on religion law, productive discourse, and other First Amendment topics. He is the founding faculty director of the Bech-Loughlin First Amendment Center and its Law & Religion Clinic. Before joining Texas Law, he was a Research Fellow in the Constitutional Law Center at Stanford Law School. His scholarly work has been cited by Supreme Court justices and published in various law reviews, as well as in his book. Professor Collis is also the author of *The Immortals*, *Praying with the Enemy*, and *Habits of a Peacemaker*, which provides habits for developing the skill to engage in productive discourse about hard topics. The American Library Association has praised him as “a much-needed voice of reason and compromise.”

### **Erin Cranor**

*Associate University Counsel, Continuing Education, Brigham Young University*

Erin Cranor and her husband, Bud, were involved in literacy, education, and other political causes while raising their children in Nevada. Erin consulted for youth development not-for-profit organizations and was elected to the board of the Clark County School District, the nation’s fifth largest. She served as President of the Board of Trustees, President of the Nevada Interscholastic Activities Association, President of the Nevada Association of School Boards, and on a committee of the National School Boards Association during intense times of policy development regarding gender identity, parents’ rights, and school funding. Erin enjoyed creative, collaborative work with other community leaders and became interested in studying law. She graduated from J. Reuben Clark Law School in 2020 with a joint master’s degree in educational leadership. She worked at Kirton McConkie law firm before joining the BYU Office of General Counsel in 2022 as in-house counsel for BYU Continuing Education.

### **Kelsey Dallas**

*Managing Editor, SCOTUSblog*

Kelsey Dallas was recently named managing editor of SCOTUSblog. She previously covered religion, sports and the Supreme Court for the Deseret News and served as assistant managing editor. She has been recognized for her work by the

Religion News Association, Society for Features Journalism, and American Academy of Religion. Kelsey holds a master's degree in religion from Yale Divinity School. In her free time, she loves listening to podcasts and talking about reality TV.

### **Tyler Deaton**

*Senior Advisor, American Unity Fund*

Tyler Deaton is the Senior Advisor to American Unity Fund. He works at the state and federal levels to advance nondiscrimination legislation by working with Republicans. Tyler's first experience in the movement for LGBTQ freedom was in New Hampshire, wherein 2011-2012 he helped lead the successful lobbying and electoral efforts to protect the freedom to marry in New Hampshire and preserve New Hampshire's nondiscrimination laws. Tyler and his husband James live in the Washington, D.C. area.

**Chandra DeNap Whetstine**

*CEO, One America Movement*

Chandra DeNap Whetstine is the Acting CEO and Chief Operating Officer at the One America Movement, a national non-profit building a network of people of faith who speak and act against toxic polarization in accordance with their faith traditions. Under her leadership, the organization launched as an independent 501c3 organization, increased staff size by more than 400%, expanded into 37 states and over 2,100 faith communities, and strengthened program interventions with best practices from social science, psychology, and neuroscience. Chandra is also a seminarian and a Member in Discernment in the United Church of Christ. She holds a BA in Theatre and a Master's in Diplomacy and International Relations. Chandra is a proud Returned Peace Corps Volunteer, a trained birth doula, and a recovering theatre professional.

### **Gary B. Doxey**

*Associate Director and Regional Advisor for Latin America, International Center for Law and Religion Studies, J. Reuben Clark Law School, Brigham Young University*

Gary B. Doxey is an associate director of the International Center for Law and Religion Studies at the J. Reuben Clark Law School at Brigham Young University. He joined the Center in 2005 and serves as regional advisor for Latin America. He also heads the Center's development effort. He has authored several commentaries on draft legislation and a number of amicus briefs in Latin America. He also teaches in the History Department at BYU. Professor Doxey's career has been divided between academia and public service. Prior to joining the BYU Law School, he was chief of staff and general counsel to Utah governors Mike Leavitt and Olene Walker and served as deputy commissioner of financial institutions and as associate general counsel to the Utah Legislature. He has a PhD in history from Cambridge University

and a JD from Brigham Young University.

### **Paul S. Edwards**

*Director, Wheatley Institute*

Paul S. Edwards has directed Wheatley Institute since August 2019. In academia, government, and media, Dr. Edwards has helped organizations better achieve their missions by refining strategic objectives, building capacity, and forming productive coalitions. Before joining Wheatley, Dr. Edwards served as deputy chief of staff to Utah Gov. Gary Herbert where he directed the governor's communications and guided state policy innovations concerning elections, federal-state relations, homelessness, health care, medical cannabis, and suicide prevention. In March of 2020, he was called back into public service for nine months by Utah's governor to assist with the initial phases of the state's pandemic response. He previously served as the editor and publisher of the Deseret News in Salt Lake City, where he restructured the newsroom to improve data-driven solutions journalism, national relevance, and digital reach. Dr. Edwards was provost at Southern Virginia University where he designed and implemented its system for assessment of student learning outcomes and institutional effectiveness. He has also served as president of the Mercatus Center at George Mason University, and vice president for academic affairs at the Institute for Humane Studies. He has taught courses in law and politics at Southern Virginia, George Mason, BYU, the American University of Armenia, and U.C. Berkeley. He earned his doctorate in jurisprudence and social policy and his law degree from the University of California, Berkeley, where he was an articles editor for the California Law Review. Dr. Edwards served as a judicial law clerk for Judge Cecil Poole on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit. He did his undergraduate studies in history at BYU. In addition to his work in academia, media, and public service, Dr. Edwards has advised numerous community and civic boards. He and his wife Margo—who sings with the Tabernacle Choir at Temple Square—reside in Provo, Utah. They are the parents of four children and have three grandchildren. Dr. Edwards enjoys skiing, hiking, and does his honest best at yoga.

### **Allyson Egbert**

*President of Las Vegas Alliance of Religious Freedom and Human Dignity, United States*

Allyson Egbert earned her BA in Political Science from Brigham Young University while serving as ASBYU Vice President. She worked for Senator Orrin Hatch in Washington, DC and Senator James Moss on the State Legislative level. She co-founded Allymar, a development and investment company, serving the needs of the most marginalized throughout the world, most notably those born crippled with Clubfoot. Currently Allyson is on the Executive Committee of the International Advisory Council

(IAC) for the International Center for Law and Religion Studies (ICLRS / BYU), board member on the national committee for Religious Freedom Alliances Coalition (RFAC), member of the Marriott School National Advisory Committee (NAC), chairman of the 2025 women's conference for the Presidential Leadership Council (PLC). She represents The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on the Interfaith Council of Southern Nevada (IFCSN).

### **Robert Freeman**

*Emeritus Professor, Brigham Young University*

Robert C. Freeman was a professor of Church History and Doctrine at Brigham Young University (BYU). Freeman is the director of the Saints at War Project which he co-founded with colleague Dr. Dennis A. Wright. Research of the project has resulted in a series of volumes documenting the contributions of Latter-day Saints in the military during wartime. Freeman has contributed to eight volumes on this theme including World War II, Korea, Vietnam, and conflicts of the nineteenth century. Freeman and Wright have produced several documentaries works on war-related subjects. Freeman and his wife JaNeal have also recently completed work on a history of the community of Springville. Freeman has written professional articles and has presented at professional conferences of historians. Freeman served a mission for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in London, England. He earned his undergraduate degree at BYU and his Juris Doctor degree at Western State University. He worked for many years for the Church Educational System and began teaching at BYU in 1996.

### **Nicole Stelle Garnett**

*John P. Murphy Foundation Professor of Law, Notre Dame Law School*

Nicole Stelle Garnett is the John P. Murphy Foundation Professor of Law at Notre Dame Law School, where she also directs the Notre Dame Education Law Project. She writes primarily on topics related to education policy and religious liberty. In addition to dozens of scholarly and popular articles on these subjects, she is the coauthor of *Lost Classroom, Lost Community: Catholic Schools' Importance in Urban America* (University of Chicago Press, 2014) and the co-editor of *The Case For Parental Choice* (Notre Dame Press, 2023). She is an elected member of the American Law Institute and a senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute. Garnett earned a B.A., with distinction, from Stanford University and a J.D. from Yale Law School. She then clerked for Judge Morris S. Arnold of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit and Associate Justice Clarence Thomas of the Supreme Court of the United States. Before joining the law school faculty in 1999, she practiced law for two years at the Institute for Justice, where she helped to defend the constitutionality of the nation's first private-school-choice programs.

**Rebecca A. Glazier**

*Professor, University of Arkansas at Little Rock*

Rebecca A. Glazier is a political science professor in the School of Public Affairs at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. She is the Director of the Little Rock Congregations Study, a long-term, community-based research project on religion and community engagement. She is the author of *Faith and Community: How Engagement Strengthens Members, Places of Worship, and Society* (Temple University Press, 2024).

**Josh Good**

*Director, Religion & Society Program, The Aspen Institute*

Josh Good directs the Aspen Institute's Religion & Society Program which administers three initiatives: Faith Angle Forum, Aspen Religion Fellows, and Aspen Religion & Philanthropy. Since 2018, Josh has led Faith Angle Forum, a program that strengthens reporting and commentary on how religious believers, religious convictions, and moral arguments affect American politics and public life. In addition to a twice-monthly podcast, Faith Angle convenes two-day forums intentionally "away" from the power centers of Washington and New York, inviting journalists to go deep with top religion scholars on contemporary issues. Previously, Josh served as a director for the Kern Family Foundation's Faith, Work, and Economics Program and, before that, as manager of the American Enterprise Institute's outreach program to faculty and student leaders at Christian colleges. He also worked on responsible fatherhood initiatives and on a national public-private venture that helped urban congregations and local businesses work together in employing and supporting ex-prisoners. Josh holds a BA in history from Covenant College and a master's degree in Christianity and Culture from Harvard University. His work has been published by Routledge Press, in *The Hill*, *National Review*, *Deseret News*, and *The American*.

**R. Shawn Gunnarson**

*Attorney, Kirton McConkie*

R. Shawn Gunnarson is a shareholder at Kirton McConkie, where he represents The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in matters concerning religious freedom. He has participated in briefing 65 cases before the U.S. Supreme Court. Several of these cases include amicus curiae briefs representing the Church and other national religious organizations. Three recent cases illustrate that work. In *Groff v. DeJoy*, a postal worker sought an accommodation from the U.S. Postal Service to avoid working on Sundays for religious reasons; in *303 Creative, LLC v. Elenis*, a Christian web designer invoked the Free Speech Clause to avoid creating messages that clashed with her sincere religious beliefs; and in *Carson v. Makin*, Maine excluded families from otherwise available state funding for their children's education because the state did not

deem their chosen schools secular enough. Shawn graduated from J. Reuben Clark Law School, cum laude, in 1994 and from BYU with a BA in political science and philosophy, magna cum laude and University Honors, in 1991.

### **Peter Harris**

*President, Dallas-Fort Worth Alliance for Religious Freedom and Human Dignity*

Peter Harris serves as President of the DFW Alliance for Religious Freedom and Human Dignity, Communication Director of the DFW Metro Communication Council of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and as CEO of a national specialty nursing services company. During his career, he has held executive roles at more than a dozen businesses with customers across the nation and the globe. He also has served on the governing boards of companies in health care, education, aviation, technology, real estate, and other service industries. For more than a decade, he has served as Chair of the Advisory Board for the DFW Chapter of the BYU Management Society. Peter received an honors undergraduate degree in Mathematical Methods in the Social Sciences and Political Science from Northwestern University and a Juris Doctorate from Harvard Law School, where he served as Editor-in-Chief of the Harvard Journal of Law & Public Policy.

### **Michael A. Helfand**

*Professor of Law, Pepperdine Caruso School of Law*

Michael A. Helfand is the Brenden Mann Foundation Chair in Law and Religion and Co-Director of the Nootbaar Institute for Law, Religion and Ethics at Pepperdine Caruso School of Law; the Florence Rogatz Visiting Professor and Research Fellow in the Brodie Center for Jewish and Israeli Law at Yale Law School; Senior Legal Advisor for the Orthodox Union's Teach Coalition; and Senior Fellow at the Shalom Hartman Institute. Professor Helfand's academic articles have appeared in numerous law journals, including the Yale Law Journal, New York University Law Review, Duke Law Journal, and Washington University Law Review. He often provides media commentary on clashes between law and religion, writing for various public audience publications, including the Wall Street Journal, Los Angeles Times, USA Today, and the Forward. Before joining the faculty at Pepperdine, Professor Helfand was an associate at Davis Polk & Wardwell and clerked for the Honorable Julia Smith Gibbons on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit. He received his JD from Yale Law School, PhD in Political Science from Yale University, and BA from Yeshiva College.

### **Shira Hoffer**

*Executive Director, Institute for Multipartisan Education*

Shira Hoffer is the founding Executive Director of the Institute for Multipartisan Education. A member of the Harvard College Class of 2025, she served on Harvard's

Intellectual Vitality Committee for two years, is a former fellow and research assistant at the Edmond and Lily Safra Center for Ethics' Intercollegiate Civil Disagreement Program and is a practicing mediator in Massachusetts courts. Her senior thesis explored the contemporary relationship between religious identity and speech behaviors on US college campuses.

### **YuQing Jiang**

*President Emeritus, Stanford Political Union*

Hailing from Napier, New Zealand, YuQing Jiang is a recent graduate of Stanford University, where he majored in philosophy and religious studies. He helped revive and served as president of the Stanford Political Union, a non-partisan student organization dedicated to fostering constructive dialogue on campus. YuQing has also been involved with other dialogue-centered initiatives through the Muslim Civic Coalition and the Stanford Deliberative Democracy Lab.

### **Alex Keogh**

*Co-founder, The Peacemaker Project, Brigham Young University*

Alex Keogh is a senior studying Psychology, Chinese, and Global Business. He is passionate about bridging ideological and cultural gaps to find creative solutions to complex problems. Inspired to energize a generation of peacemakers, his passion led him to co-found The Peacemaker Project at BYU and the National Student Council for Peacemaking with his wife, Mirabella. A Bentonville, Arkansas native, Alex is the 2023 North American Champion for comprehensive Chinese skills and cherishes friendships with Chinese-speaking friends across the world. Alex is a pre-PhD student in organizational behavior, with research interests focused on cross-cultural negotiation, reducing political animosity, persuasion, and building trust. His ideal Friday night includes walking around BYU campus debating his wife, followed by an episode of The West Wing with some ice cream.

### **Mirabella Archibald Keogh**

*Co-founder, The Peacemaker Project, Brigham Young University*

Mirabella Archibald Keogh is a dual-degree student at Brigham Young University studying Public Health and Middle Eastern Studies and Arabic. Alongside her husband, Alexander, she co-founded The Peacemaker Project—a campus-wide initiative promoting depolarization and civil discourse. Passionate about inclusive dialogue and global understanding, Mirabella has represented BYU as an award-winning delegate at Model United Nations and Model Arab League conferences. Her research spans public health, legal inclusion, and foreign policy, with a focus on evidence-based advocacy and cross-cultural collaboration. After graduation, she plans to attend law school. In her free

time, she enjoys playing the harp and re-reading every L.M. Montgomery book, multiple times a year.

### **Paul Kerry**

*Professor of History and Associate Director, International Center for Law and Religion Studies, Brigham Young University*

Dr. Paul Kerry is an associate director of the law school's International Center for Law and Religion Studies at BYU, where he is also an associate professor of History. He works in the fields of religion, law, and intellectual history; First Amendment; and international humanitarian projects. He is a contributor to the multi-year project, *Documentary History of Jewish-Christian Relations: From Ancient Times to the Present Day*, which was published by Cambridge University Press in 2024. He served as the senior academic advisor to the UK's All-Party Parliamentary Group for International Freedom of Religion or Belief (2022-2023) and co-organized the 2023 International Sermon Studies Association conference at Christ Church, Oxford. Professor Kerry is a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society and an Honorary Fellow of the Woolf Institute, Cambridge, and has held fellowships at Oxford, Cambridge, Edinburgh, Princeton, and the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE).

### **Rob Kime**

*Member, The Freedom of Religion Roundtable*

Rob Kime has been serving as the President of the Cartersville Georgia Stake of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints since 2020. He and his wife, Sharon are the parents of 6 children and proud grandparents of one granddaughter. The Cartersville Stake has led an Atlanta metro area initiative called The Freedom of Religion Roundtable, which is in its 5th year. The Roundtable is a group of citizens, clergy, public servants, elected officials, educators, entrepreneurs, business leaders, and private citizens, working together to protect human dignity and the rights of individuals, to think, speak, gather, and worship. Rob is a founder and partner at Mosaic Solutions Group, a managed services firm providing commercial data management and business intelligence for pharma and biotech companies.

### **Harold G. Koenig**

*Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, Duke University Health System*

Harold G. Koenig, MD, received his undergraduate education at Stanford University, attended medical school at the University of California, San Francisco, and completed his training in geriatric medicine and psychiatry, as well as earning a Master of Health Science degree, at Duke University. Dr. Koenig is board-certified in general psychiatry and was formerly board-certified in family medicine, geriatric medicine, and geriatric psychiatry. He serves as Professor of Psychiatry and Associate Professor of

Medicine at Duke University Health Systems. Dr. Koenig has over 650 scientific peer-reviewed academic publications, more than 100 book chapters, and 68 books. He is the lead author of the Handbook of Religion and Health (2024), with Tyler VanderWeele (Harvard School of Public) and John Peteet (Harvard Medical School). In 2022 and 2024, Dr. Koenig was ranked #1 in the world (lifetime) among highly ranked scholars in the academic discipline of spirituality and 29th in psychiatry. In June 2023, he was ranked 10th in the world and 7th best in the U.S. by Research.com in the overall category of Best Social Sciences and Humanities Scientists.

### **Corinna Barrett Lain**

*S.D. Roberts & Sandra Moore Professor of Law, University of Richmond School of Law*

Corinna Barrett Lain is the S.D. Roberts & Sandra Moore Professor of Law at the University of Richmond School of Law and author of the book *Secrets of the Killing State: The Untold Story of Lethal Injection* (NYU Press 2025). Lain is one of the nation's leading authorities on the death penalty, presenting her work at national and international conferences and publishing in the top law journals in the country. She is also one of the leading voices on criminal justice in Virginia more broadly, serving as the principal co-author of a four-volume treatise on Virginia criminal law and procedure, and regularly lecturing at annual conferences for the Virginia bench and bar. She is a former prosecutor, a former sergeant in the United States Army, and a recipient of the University of Richmond's Distinguished Educator Award.

### **Paul W. Lambert**

*Religion Initiative Director, Wheatley Institute*

Dr. Paul Lambert is the Religion Initiative Director at Wheatley Institute. He is a leading expert on religious pluralism in society, including the role of pluralism in economics and business. He works regularly with global businesses on this topic, including American Airlines, Accenture, Dell Technologies, Equinix, ServiceNow, and PwC. Paul was Assistant Dean at Georgetown University's McDonough School of Business, where he managed consulting and business education programs for global companies and university partners. Before joining Georgetown University, Paul was at the National Defense University (NDU), where he served as Professor and lead Academic Officer of a congressionally funded Department of Defense and Department of State American Studies graduate program for students from over 75 countries. Paul's leadership and teaching gained him recognition as one of NDU's most highly rated professors and the recipient of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Joint Meritorious Civilian Service Award, the highest award available for civilian service from the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Paul has also held numerous teaching and leadership roles in other educational institutions, including as a lecturer at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at

Tufts University, a visiting professor at the National Defense University in Washington DC, and visiting fellow and faculty at BYU's Marriott School of Business. Paul also led the development of the Freedom Forum Institute's first executive education capability focused on religious freedom in business contexts and served on the executive education advisory board for the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. Paul also serves on the board of the Religious Freedom & Business Foundation and as a member of the national advisory council of Cicero Group.

Paul is a graduate of Georgetown University where he earned his Doctorate in Liberal Studies; the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University where he received his master's degree in international relations; Brigham Young University where he studied American Studies; and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology where he graduated from the Seminar XXI Fellowship Program on foreign affairs and national security.

### **Matthew Latimer**

*General Counsel, ACT Capital Advisors*

Matthew Latimer is a seasoned business executive and attorney with over 25 years of experience advising companies on complex corporate transactions. He currently serves as General Counsel for ACT Capital Advisors, a national investment bank headquartered in Seattle, Washington. Prior to joining ACT, Matt served as the Chief Legal Officer and General Counsel at American Seafoods Group, the world's largest harvester and at-sea processor of wild-caught whitefish. He began his career practicing law at the premier national law firms of Davis Wright Tremaine, Cooley Godward, and Dorsey & Whitney, where he regularly advised public and private companies, venture capital and private equity investors, and commercial banks with respect to M&A, investment, and other strategic transactions. Matt currently serves as the Assistant Communication Director for the North America West Area of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, which encompasses California, Oregon, Washington, British Columbia, Alaska, and Hawaii. He also is the Area Religious Freedom Specialist. Matt holds a Juris Doctor degree from the University of Washington School of Law and a bachelor's degree in Chinese from Brigham Young University. He also serves on the Board of the Boy Scouts of America (Mount Baker Council) and the J. Reuben Clark Law Society. Matt is also an affiliate faculty member at the University of Washington School of Law where he teaches on business law-related topics.

### **David Latimore**

*Director, Betsey Stockton Center for Black Church Studies, Princeton Theological Seminary*

Rev. Dr. David G. Latimore is the Director of the Betsey Stockton Center for Black Church Studies at Princeton Theological Seminary in Princeton, New Jersey. He

has a Ph.D. in Theology from the University of Chicago Divinity School, a D.Min. in Homiletics from McCormick Theological Seminary, an M.Div. from Duke Divinity School, and a BA in Economics from Harvard University. Rev. Dr. Latimore enjoyed a successful fifteen-year career in investment management and economic development, recently serving as President and CEO of the Initiative for a Competitive Inner City (ICIC), an economic research firm focused on economic development in America's inner cities. He has over twenty years of pastoral experience, most recently serving as the Pastor of the Fifteenth Avenue Baptist Church in Nashville, Tennessee. Rev. Dr. Latimore's research focuses on the influence of neoliberal ideology on the theological presuppositions of the Black Church.

### **Matthew T. Lee**

*Professor, Institute for Studies of Religion, Baylor University*

Matthew T. Lee, PhD, is Professor of the Social Sciences and Humanities at the Institute for Studies of Religion at Baylor University. He is also Director of the Flourishing Network at the Human Flourishing Program in the Institute for Quantitative Social Science at Harvard University, where he is appointed a research associate. In addition, he is a member of the Global Flourishing Study research team, a Distinguished Visiting Scholar of Health, Flourishing, and Positive Psychology at Stony Brook University's Center for Medical Humanities, Compassionate Care, and Bioethics, and a visiting scholar at the Benson-Henry Institute for Mind Body Medicine at Massachusetts General Hospital. He serves as a senior fellow at the Center for Humanistic Management at the Gabelli School of Business at Fordham University.

### **Patricia Lewis Matthews**

*Episcopal Priest and Executive Director, The Interfaith Center*

The Reverend Patricia Lewis Matthews is an Episcopal priest and the Executive Director of The Interfaith Center in Little Rock, Arkansas. Patricia has a deep love of interfaith dialogue and has integrated it into her 27 years of ministry in the Episcopal Church. She believes that the peacemaking work of The Interfaith Center is an integral part of a functioning and harmonious society. She enjoys reading and writing poetry, and she plays the piano, guitar, and cello (a little). Patricia is a certified yoga instructor, and she has practiced dream work from a Jungian perspective since 1998. Recently, Patricia hiked the Camino de Santiago and spent time at Christ in the Desert Monastery in New Mexico. She is married to James Matthews and is the mother of Dillon, Zoë, and Louisa.

**Douglas E. McAllister**

*Senior Fellow, The International Center for Law and Religion Studies, J. Reuben Clark Law School, Brigham Young University*

Douglas E. McAllister retired from the Office of General Counsel, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints after having served as Area Legal Counsel for the Brazil, Philippines, and Asia North Areas. In Brazil, he was instrumental in the publication and dissemination in Portuguese of The Punta del Este Declaration on Human Dignity for Everyone Everywhere. He helped create *Liberdade Religiosa: Um Guia de Seus Direitos – Brasil*, which presently has 51 co-sponsoring organizations, including federal and state government entities, state Bar associations, academic institutions, religious organizations and human rights groups. He currently serves as a member of the Executive Committee, Geneva Office for Human Rights Education. Previously, Doug served in Washington, D.C., initially as an Associate at Morgan, Lewis & Bockius and later as Vice President and Deputy Chief Counsel of the American Mining Congress; in Phoenix, AZ as Director, Fennemore Craig, PC; in New York City as Vice President of Government and Public Affairs for ASARCO Incorporated, a multi-national non-ferrous metals company; and in Arizona, as Vice President, General Counsel, and Secretary, then Interim Chief Executive Officer, and finally Executive Vice President of the same company and its successor. He received his Juris Doctor degree from the J. Reuben Clark Law School, where he served as Case notes and Comment Editor of the Law Review. He and his wife, Janice, of Alberta, Canada, have seven children and seventeen grandchildren.

**Greg McBrayer**

*Chief Flight Controller/Chaplain, American Airlines*

Father Greg McBrayer has worked and served for 46 years in commercial aviation as a Chief Flight Controller and Chaplain at American Airlines (IOC) in Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas. For over twenty-five years, he has been a pioneering force in advancing Faith-Based Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) within the workplace. His professional journey encompasses four decades as an FAA-Licensed Airman in Part 121 Commercial Flight Operations. As a Bi-Vocational ACNA Priest, he also serves as the Executive Director and Senior Chaplain of DFW Airport Chaplaincy. He is the Assisting Priest at Saint Barnabas Church in Fort Worth, Texas. He serves as Chaplain and EAP Representative for the Professional Airline Flight Controllers Association (PAFCA) and Chaplain to the American Airlines Emergency Planning and Response Team. Father Greg founded and served as the President of the American Airlines IOC Monday Ministry Chapter, which is part of the American Airlines Christian Employees Business Resource Group (CEBRG). He is the Christian Global Lead of the CEBRG, overseeing 20 Christian Ministry Chapters at American Airlines worldwide. He is the Chief Growth Officer for “ChaplainCare,” a professional Chaplaincy organization that

provides leadership, learning, and placement opportunities for professional workplace chaplains. Throughout his career, he has chaired and participated in numerous committees and leadership boards within the Church, parachurch organizations, and the aviation sector among military and first responder communities. In 2018, he received the “American Airlines Chairman’s Award” for decades of care and support for employees in his chaplaincy role. His frontline ministry initiatives have earned global recognition, contributing to American Airlines’ top ranking among Fortune 500 corporations on the Religious Freedom and Business Foundation (RFBF) REDI-Index report. In 2022, he was honored as the ERG Leader of the Year by the RFBF.

### **G. S. “Mack” McCarter**

*Founder and Coordinator, Community Renewal International*

Reverend G. S. “Mack” McCarter is the Founder and Coordinator of Community Renewal International. A native of Shreveport, Louisiana, Mack holds a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Religion from Texas Christian University, and a Master of Divinity Degree from Brite Divinity School. He is an Ordained Minister of the Disciples of Christ denomination. Mack pastored Christian churches for 18 years before returning with his family back to his hometown of Shreveport to launch Community Renewal International (CRI). CRI has developed an effective method and model to fulfill its Mission: To care together for ALL the people where we live, connecting with the WHOLE world as a Caring Family in which EVERY SINGLE PERSON is Safe, Loved, and Joyfully Fulfilled. Mack and his wife, Judy, have two children and four grandchildren. He is the author of *How To Remake The World Neighborhood By Neighborhood*.

### **Shannon Price Minter**

*Vice-President of Legal, National Center for LGBTQ Rights*

Shannon Price Minter is one of the most senior attorneys in the LGBT rights movement and has led the legal team at the National Center for LGBTQ Rights for more than thirty years. He has litigated many precedent-setting cases on behalf of LGBT people and their families in state and federal courts across the country, including, in the Supreme Court, *Christian Legal Society v. Martinez*, *Pavan v. Smith*, and *Obergefell v. Hodges*. Shannon was appointed by President Obama to the President’s Commission on White House Fellowships and has twice served on the American Bar Association’s Commission on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity. Currently, he is an advisor to the DFW Alliance for Religious Freedom. He is a coeditor of *Transgender Rights*, coauthor of *Family Law for LGBTQ People* (Westlaw 2024), and contributor to *Religious Freedom, LGBT Rights, and the Prospects for Common Ground*. Shannon obtained a BA from the University of Texas at Austin and a JD from Cornell Law School. He lives in Texas with his wife Robin and many rescue animals.

## **Almas Muscatwalla**

*FaithForward Dallas, The Thanks-giving Foundation*

For more than a decade, Almas Muscatwalla has been blessed and honored to serve on the board of directors for The Thanks-Giving Foundation as chair of the Interfaith Council, and a founding member of Faith Forward Dallas. The Thanks-Giving Foundation and its purpose of “bringing together diverse people on the common ground of gratitude” resonated with her core being. In addition to her work with the Thanks-Giving Foundation, Almas serves as a leader in outreach, educational, cultural, and arts sectors of the community, including the Islamic Art Revival Series, Texas Muslim Women’s Foundation, United Nations Association Dallas Chapter, DFW Muslim Jewish Advisory Council, and Compassionate DFW. Almas holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in psychology and a Master of Science degree in childhood development from Bombay University. She is a graduate of Plano Leadership, as well as Leadership Arts Institute (LAI). Currently, she is continuing her educational journey through the Graduate Certificate Program at Southern Methodist University. Almas and her husband have lived in Plano for twenty years and are the proud parents of sons Naeem and Nabeel. In her spare time, she likes to travel, read, sing, and discuss important issues with friends and family.

## **Marcus B. Nash**

*Presidency of the Seventy, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*

Elder Marcus B. Nash was sustained as a General Authority Seventy of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on April 1, 2006. At the time of his call, he had been serving as a member of the Fifth Quorum of the Seventy in the North America Northwest Area. He has served as President of the South America West, South America Northwest, and the Africa West Areas, and as an assistant in the North America Northeast and North America Southeast Areas. He has also served as an Assistant Executive Director in the Church History and Correlation Departments, Executive Director of the Correlation Department, and as a member of the Boundary and Leadership Change Committee. He recently served as the Executive Director of the Missionary Department. Elder Nash was named a member of the Presidency of the Seventy on January 16, 2024. He currently assists the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in supervising various areas of the Church. Elder Nash graduated from Brigham Young University with a bachelor’s degree in international relations and earned a law degree from the J. Reuben Clark Law School at Brigham Young University. He was a partner in a major Seattle law firm at the time of his call as a Seventy. He and his wife Shelley Hatch are the parents of five children.

## **Jenae M. Nelson**

*Assistant Professor of Psychology, Brigham Young University*

Jenae M. Nelson, Ph.D., is an Assistant Professor of Psychology at Brigham Young University. Her research integrates developmental psychology, character formation, and relational virtues, emphasizing how character supports individual and collective flourishing. Dr. Nelson completed her doctoral training at BYU, followed by postdoctoral fellowships at Baylor University, where she studied virtue development, and at Harvard Medical School, where she investigated the neuroscience of spirituality. She currently collaborates with MIT Sloan School of Management to evaluate and study programs aimed at cultivating socioemotional skills in future leaders. Her recent scholarship explores relational frameworks informed by Indigenous (Anishinaabe) epistemologies, highlighting interconnected well-being, community cohesion, and moral identity development. Combining psychological science with cultural insights, Dr. Nelson's work contributes nuanced understandings of how relational virtues, such as gratitude and accountability, influence societal cooperation, conflict resolution, and meaningful dialogue.

## **Kyle Ogden**

*President and CEO, The Thanks-Giving Foundation*

After a thirty-plus-year business career, Kyle joined as President and CEO of The Thanks-Giving Foundation in January 2018, to begin a "second mountain" career running the fifty-plus year-old nonprofit. Kyle was attracted to the idea of leveraging the Thanks-Giving Square platform as a vehicle for making a difference for the community. Before joining The Foundation, Kyle was Chairman, President, and CEO of Carroll Company, a national manufacturer of institutional cleaning and maintenance products with plants in Texas, California, and Maryland. Kyle received a Bachelor of Business Administration degree in honors business and a Master of Business Administration degree in accounting and finance from the University of Texas at Austin. He is a CPA and began his career with Deloitte. Kyle joined YPO in 1991 and continues to be active currently. Kyle and his wife Cathy have four adult children.

## **James Phillips**

*Constitutional Government Initiative Director, Wheatley Institute*

James C. Phillips is the Constitutional Government Initiative Director and an associate professor at BYU's Wheatley Institute. He is a nationally recognized constitutional scholar and appellate advocate with sought-after expertise on the freedom of religion and constitutional interpretation. His scholarship has been cited by judges around the country, including at the U.S. Supreme Court. He has been covered in various media outlets, including the New York Times Magazine, USA Today, Reuters, CNN, and Fox News. He is a member of the J. Reuben Clark Law Society Religious

Liberty Committee and the Executive Committee of the Federalist Society's Religious Liberty Practice Group.

Before joining Wheatley, Phillips was associate professor of law at Chapman University's Fowler School of Law, where he taught Constitutional Law, Religion and the Constitution, Civil Procedure, Family Law, and Professional Responsibility and was named 1L Professor of the Year. Dr. Phillips has taught Administrative Law at BYU's J. Reuben Clark Law School, where he also helped conceive and design the Corpus of Founding-Era American English. He was also a non-resident fellow with Stanford Law School's Constitutional Law Center.

Dr. Phillips has published 30 academic articles, primarily in law journals, but also communications, business, and history journals. His longer pieces have been published in, for example, the University of Pennsylvania Law Review, the Southern California Law Review, and the Harvard Journal of Law and Public Policy, and his shorter articles have been published in journals such as the Yale Law Journal Forum and the Duke Law Journal Online. Dr. Phillips has also written op-eds on constitutional issues for Newsweek, The Atlantic, the Los Angeles Times, the Orange County Register, Deseret News, and National Review.

Prior to his university posts, Dr. Phillips practiced law as a Constitutional Law Fellow for the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty and an associate for Kirton | McConkie. He has worked on over 30 cases at the U.S. Supreme Court, and in federal and state courts throughout the country. He is currently an academic affiliate with the D.C. law firm of Schaerr | Jaffe and is a member of the bar in Utah and D.C. He clerked for Judge Thomas B. Griffith on the U.S. Court of Appeal for the D.C. Circuit and for Justice Thomas R. Lee on the Utah Supreme Court. Dr. Phillips earned his JD, Order of the Coif, from UC-Berkeley's School of Law, where he was a member of the California Law Review. He also has a PhD in Jurisprudence & Social Policy from UC-Berkeley, an M.A. in Mass Communication from BYU, and a B.A. in History from Arizona State University. He and his wife live in Utah County and have eight children.

## **Tami Pyfer**

*Dignity Index Co-creator, Project UNITE, Inc.*

Tami Pyfer is the Chief External Affairs Officer for UNITE- a national organization seeking to ease division across political and cultural differences. Tami is also the co-creator of the Dignity Index, an eight-point scale for measuring the dignity or contempt in the language we use with each other when we disagree. Tami leads the Dignity Index government, corporate, and state partnerships. Before her work with UNITE, Tami served for 7 years as the Education Policy Advisor to former Utah Governor Gary Herbert, where she was involved in state level policy development, coalition building, and stakeholder engagement. She held local and state elected offices for 12 years: 8

years on the Logan City Council and 4 years on the Utah State Board of Education. Tami's professional training is in Special Education and before her appointment to serve on the Governor's executive team, she taught at Utah State University, preparing teachers to work with students with disabilities. Tami and her husband Aaron are the parents of 5 children, grandparents of 16. They live in Salt Lake City, UT.

### **Angela Redding**

*Executive Director, Radiant Foundation*

Angela Nielsen Redding currently serves as Executive Director at Radiant Foundation, which invests in more accurate, balanced representation of all faiths in news, entertainment, and social media. Prior to her work at Radiant Foundation, Angela led innovation and partnerships for a technology subsidiary of Ford Motor Company. Previously, she founded a media innovation trade association, leading multi-million and billion-dollar investments. Her professional experience includes decades of nonprofit management and management consulting with some of the largest and most impactful corporations, nonprofits, and startups. In her personal time, she has led church youth groups in Northern California and Northern Utah and engaged in interfaith and media relations in local communities. Most of all, she loves adventuring with her husband and little girls.

### **C. Shane Reese**

*President, Brigham Young University*

C. Shane Reese began his tenure as the 14th president of Brigham Young University on 1 May 2023. Prior to his appointment, he served as BYU academic vice president from 2019 to 2023 and dean of the BYU College of Physical and Mathematical Sciences from 2017 to 2019. He also serves as a member of the Department of Statistics faculty and is an elected fellow of the American Statistical Association. President Reese's research has centered on Bayesian hierarchical models and Bayesian optimal experimental designs. He has created statistical models addressing a range of issues, from predicting the power of solar storms to determining the safest method for destroying chemical weapons to assessing climate impact on glaciers in high mountain Asia and Antarctica. His work has also been used by the US Olympic volleyball team as well as the NFL's Philadelphia Eagles. President Reese earned a doctoral degree in statistics from Texas A&M University and master's and bachelor's degrees in statistics from BYU.

### **Laura Reyes**

*Pastor, United Baptist Church*

Reverend Laura Reyes is a native of Boston, MA. She is the widow of Israel A. Reyes. She has two sons, Anthony Buchanan and Rayshawn Buchanan. In 2001, Rev.

Reyes became the first female to serve in an all-male county jail and served in this capacity for 21 years. Reverend Reyes was ordained in 2006 by the United Baptist Convention, where she now serves in leadership at the United Baptist Convention of Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and New Hampshire. She serves as the first vice president and will become the first female president in the organizations over 100-year history. Reverend Reyes is the Senior Pastor of United Baptist Church in Jamaica Plain, MA. She is currently serving in her 16th year in the Pastoral Commitment. She is skilled in preaching, teaching, and pastoral counseling, including drug addiction and marriage. Reverend Reyes had also served as a mentor for the R.E.A.L BWIM organization. Reverend Reyes was featured in the Boston Globe in 2014 for her ministry, titled “The Minister Goes Where the Need Is.” Reverend Reyes has received the multiple awards, including most recently 2023 – Inspirational Pastor of the Year; 2024-Affirmed Apostle in the Lord’s Church, and she was inducted in 2023 to the Board of Preachers, MLK International Morehouse College.

### **Shaylyn Romney Garrett**

*Author*

Shaylyn Romney Garrett is a celebrated author and social entrepreneur whose work offers a fresh take on political polarization, social isolation, economic inequality, and culture change. Her award-winning book, *The Upswing: How America Came Together a Century Ago and How We Can Do It Again*, coauthored with Robert Putnam, offers an energizing and deeply researched message of hope during a dark time in America’s history. Her commentary has appeared in various outlets including NPR, PBS Newshour, the BBC, *Deseret Magazine*, *TIME Magazine*, and *The New York Times*. Romney Garrett holds a degree in Government from Harvard University and served in the Peace Corps. She spent six years in Jordan working to catalyze youth social innovation. Upon returning to the U.S., she helped found “Weave: The Social Fabric Project” at The Aspen Institute with David Brooks. She is a member of the Braver Angels Scholars Council, Citizen University’s Civic Collaboratory, and the Faith Matters Initiative Advisory Board.

### **Gene Schaerr**

*Managing Partner, Schaerr Jaffe LLP*

Gene Schaerr specializes in handling—and usually winning—civil appeals, writ proceedings, and similar matters, both in appellate courts and in the law-focused proceedings at the trial-court or agency level that often determine success or failure on appeal. He has argued and won dozens of cases in a variety of forums—including the U.S. Supreme Court (where he has argued six cases), every federal circuit, and numerous federal district courts and state appellate courts. His win rate in the dozens of federal appeals he has argued in the past six years is over 75 percent. He was a

coordinator of Sidley Austin's appellate practice from 1993 until 2005, and from 2005 until 2014 was the chair of the nationwide appellate practice at Winston & Strawn—a practice he led to numerous recognitions in publications such as the Appellate Hot List. His personal practice successes have won him repeated recognition in such publications as Best Lawyers in Washington, D.C., Legal 500, D.C. Superlawyers, and Best Lawyers in America. In January 2014, Mr. Schaerr formed his own boutique litigation firm so that he could serve his clients without the conflicts and inefficiencies inherent in big-firm law practice. Substantively, Mr. Schaerr's experience includes not only virtually every area of federal constitutional law, but also administrative law, antitrust, arbitration, class certification, contract law, defamation, higher education law, immigration, insurance coverage, labor and employment, patent and trademark, privacy, product liability and warranty, statutory interpretation and tax. He has represented clients in virtually every sector, including automotive, communications, energy, financial services, health care, higher education, insurance, maritime, pharmaceuticals, technology, and state and local government. He also teaches courses in Supreme Court litigation, religious-freedom litigation, and advanced litigation skills as an adjunct professor of law at Brigham Young University. Mr. Schaerr began law practice in 1987 following clerkships on the U.S. Supreme Court (for Chief Justice Warren Burger and Justice Antonin Scalia) and on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit (for then-Judge Kenneth Starr). He graduated in 1985 from Yale Law School, where he was Editor-in-Chief of the Yale Journal on Regulation and Senior Editor of the Yale Law Journal. From 1991 to 1993, he served in the White House as Associate Counsel to the President, where he had responsibility for a wide range of constitutional and administrative-law issues, including those involving economic regulation, higher education, separation of powers, federalism, and religious freedom.

### **Brett G. Scharffs**

*Director, International Center for Law and Religion Studies; Rex E. Lee Chair and Professor of Law, J. Reuben Clark Law School, Brigham Young University*

Brett G. Scharffs is Rex E. Lee Chair and Professor of Law and Director of the International Center for Law and Religion Studies at Brigham Young University Law School. He received a BSBA in international business and an MA in philosophy at Georgetown University and, as a Rhodes Scholar, earned a BPhil in philosophy at Oxford. He received his JD from Yale Law School, where he was senior editor of the Yale Law Journal. He is a recurring visiting professor at Central European University in Budapest and at the University of Adelaide Law School. He has for several years helped organize certificate training programs in religion and the rule of law in China and in Vietnam and has taught and helped organize programs at several Indonesian universities on sharia and human rights. Author of more than 100 articles and book chapters, he has made more than 300 scholarly presentations in 30 countries. His

casebook, *Law and Religion: National, International and Comparative Perspectives* (with Cole Durham, 2nd English edition forthcoming 2017), has been translated into Chinese and Vietnamese, with Turkish, Burmese, and Arabic in process. He is an author with Elizabeth Clark of *Religion and Law in the USA*, a 2016 contribution to Wolters Kluwer's *International Encyclopedia of Laws*.

### **Tim Schultz**

*President, 1st Amendment Partnership*

As President of the 1st Amendment Partnership (1AP), Tim Schultz works with faith groups to ensure that religious freedom is fully protected in the law. He chairs a broad and diverse religious coalition aimed at influencing federal policy and public opinion about the value of faith to the common good. In 2022, this coalition was critical to the passage of the historic Respect for Marriage Act, which added religious freedom protections to federal law for the first time in more than 20 years. Under his leadership, 1AP has played a central role in the passage of more than 20 state religious freedom laws, and Tim has worked on the ground in more than 30 state capitols. He regularly counsels with lawmakers in both parties, and he is frequently quoted by national media sources. He is a graduate of Kansas State University and Georgetown University School of Law. He has been married for 14 years to Rev. Lisa Wink Schultz, and they live in suburban Washington, D.C., with their two sons. He is a youth baseball coach and an active member of Church of the Advent, a parish in the Anglican Church in North America.

### **Earnest Thomas**

*Pastor of Discipleship, Saint Mark Baptist Church*

Pastor Earnest Thomas is widely recognized as a passionate teacher, shepherd, counselor, and leader. In September 2003, he was called to serve as the Pastor of Discipleship at the Saint Mark Baptist Church in Little Rock, Arkansas, where he is responsible for overseeing all aspects of the Christian Education Ministry. Pastor Thomas' responsibilities include developing and implementing teacher training programs, leadership conferences, church-wide studies, and Bible studies. He gives direct leadership to the Associate Ministers, Sunday School, Growth Tracks, Education Council, and Golden Saints. Pastor Thomas is a native of Baton Rouge, Louisiana where he received his Bachelor of Science Degree in Accounting from Southern University. He completed three years of theological study at Southern Bible Institute in Dallas, Texas, and four years of study in the Master of Divinity program at the Antioch School of Church Planting and Leadership Development in Ames, Iowa.

**Lindy Vogado**

*Associate Pastor for Belonging and Outreach, Second Presbyterian Church, Little Rock, Arkansas*

The Reverend Lindy Vogado has been the Associate Pastor for Belonging and Outreach at Second Presbyterian Church in Little Rock, Arkansas, since 2013. In her work as Associate Pastor, she serves as staff resource for the church's outreach, adult education, social justice advocacy, and environmental stewardship ministries. Before serving in Arkansas, she worked in the Office of Religious Life at Presbyterian College in South Carolina, where she coordinated campus ministry and service programming. She serves on the Board of Directors for The Presbyterian Outlook, a national news magazine serving the Presbyterian Church (USA), and on the Clergy Advisory Board for the Little Rock Congregations Study at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock.

**Chandra DeNap Whetstine**

*Chief Operating Officer, One America Movement*

Chandra DeNap Whetstine is the Acting CEO and Chief Operating Officer at the One America Movement, a national non-profit building a network of people of faith who speak and act against toxic polarization in accordance with their faith traditions. Under her leadership, the organization launched as an independent 501c3 organization, increased staff size by more than 400%, expanded into 37 states and over 2,100 faith communities, and strengthened program interventions with best practices from social science, psychology, and neuroscience. Chandra is also a seminarian and a Member in Discernment in the United Church of Christ. She holds a BA in Theatre and a master's in diplomacy and international Relations. Chandra is a proud Returned Peace Corps Volunteer, a trained birth doula, and a recovering theatre professional.

**Kevin J. Worthen**

*Hugh W. Colton Professor of Law, J. Reuben Clark Law School; Former President, Brigham Young University*

Kevin J Worthen is a noted scholar on federal Indian law and the impact of law on indigenous peoples internationally. He has published in numerous journals including the Harvard, Minnesota, Vanderbilt, and North Carolina Law Reviews. He is also the author of portions of the 2005 revision of Felix Cohen's Handbook of Federal Indian Law. His strong interest in Indian law grew during his clerkship for Justice Byron White of the U.S. Supreme Court through the 1983-84 term. Prior to clerking for Justice White, Professor Worthen clerked for Judge Malcolm R. Wilkey of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit. He joined the Phoenix law firm of Jennings, Strouss & Salmon in 1984 and worked there until coming to teach law at BYU in 1987. In 1994, he was a Fulbright Scholar at the University of Chile. He served as BYU Law School associate dean for academic affairs from 1999 until he was

appointed the fifth dean of the J. Reuben Clark Law School in 2004. Professor Worthen was the Advancement Vice President for BYU from 2008-2014. He served as President of Brigham Young University from 2014-2023.

(source of the bios: <https://religiousfreedom.byu.edu/speakers/> )