

Faith and Peaceful Relations Forum

1. Challenging times
2. The goods and bads of culture
3. Battles of ideas but some optimism!
4. Religion in a changing Europe
5. Building confidence



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All fundamentalists feel that in a secular society, God has been relegated to the margin, to the periphery and they are all in different ways seeking to drag him out of that peripheral position, back to centre stage.

Karen Armstrong



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If we want to create a viable, peaceful world,
we've got to integrate compassion into the
gritty realities of 21st century life.

Karen Armstrong



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The gritty realities of 21st century life

The defining issue of our times

The way culture shapes identity of the societies and communities in which we now live



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Culture is about who we are, how we see the world and how we relate to those round us

Its about our accepted social norms

And the daily perspectives that we use to engage with our neighbours



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Culture is the framework within which we seek to position ourselves and our place in the world

But culture is also misused as a vehicle for fuelling fears and tensions and for excluding



Cultural confusion....
Building trust and
allowing trust to
corrode

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So what can we/should we do?

The world faces a **battle of ideas**.

Powerful, extreme ideologies abusively use **religious justifications** to speak to a range of grievances and inspire horrific acts of violence.

We have to **engage** in this battle if we are to prevent these actions.



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The forces of prejudice vs. the **forces for pluralism**

Respect matters **for difference**, and for diverse religious traditions –religious pluralism

Religious pluralism values **religious particularity**

Young people focus on **social action**

Inclusion matters



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Drivers of change

1. Changing demographics and the velocity of change
2. Place of religion in secular states
3. Rising economic inequality
4. Development of media and connections
5. Challenges to leadership



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New frames of reference and a new paradigm

A readiness to acknowledge diversity within and between people and groups

Looking for new religious literacy based on understanding and not judgement

A Focus on grace and compassion and not fear; to seek justice and understanding while acknowledging painful pasts

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New frames of reference and a new paradigm

Human **encounters** at all levels

Encounter necessary but not sufficient -exchange

Exchange necessary but not sufficient -engage

Engage necessary but not sufficient -enact

encounter – exchange - engage - enact

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