

Senior Faith in Leadership Programme

Tuesday 14th – Thursday 16th June 2022



FAITH IN LEADERSHIP



ST BENET'S HALL
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD



Mustardseed
Trust

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Foundation



ST GEORGE'S HOUSE CONSULTATIONS

PARTICIPANTS BIOGRAPHIES



Dr Usaama al-Azami

I am a Lecturer in Islamic studies at the Markfield Institute of Higher Education. I read my BA in Arabic and Islamic Studies at Oxford University, and my MA and PhD in Near Eastern Studies at Princeton University. My research is primarily focussed on the interaction between Islam and modernity. I am also interested in the role that religion has to play in the public sphere, and in particular, how Islam

can engage in fruitful public dialogue in the West with those of other faiths and none. During my undergraduate career, I also pursued Islamic studies in seminarial contexts alongside my academic studies both in Europe and the Middle East. Accordingly, I have taught in Islamic seminaries alongside my more academic teaching. I cultivate an active interest in public engagement as a British Muslim, and regularly contribute to BBC Radio Leicester and other media alongside my more strictly academic pursuits.



The Reverend Sonia Barron

Sonia is a proud Jamaican by birth whose parents were of the Windrush generation. She originally trained as a teacher and taught RE and led RE departments in schools in London, Surrey and Nottingham.

During her time as the Archbishops' Adviser for minority ethnic Anglican concerns she sought to ensure all were present and participating in the life of the Church of England.

Ordained in 2011 she had experience of parish ministry in Suburban and rural parishes before her current role as DDO.



Imam Irfan Chishti

Traditional yet modern – bridge between various generations as well as cultures. Worked in various fields – admin, prison chaplaincy, religious tours, teaching preaching and currently also managing director of a Counter Extremism organisation called Me and You

Education – bringing people who are very different and opposing viewpoints together as a united voice against extremism.

Passionate about inter and intra faith action that begins with the dialogue. Very keen to ensure that at any opportunity in mainstream media the faith voice reaches out to the maligned extreme voices.

Family is very important to me also – recently had to move from a "grand" mosque role to little "mosque on the prairie" after the loss of my late father who was one of the earliest Imams to serve in the UK since 1974 in Sheffield then Rochdale where I live now with my four daughters.



Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel

Sheikh Imtiyaz is the CEO and founder of the multi-award winning Abu Hanifah Foundation based in Blackburn; a non-profit social enterprise and educational charity which has transformed the lives of hundreds of children. He was also the winner of the 2016 British Imams & Scholars award for outstanding contribution to youth work. He has a BA Hons degree in Arabic and Comparative Religions (Leeds), a BA Hons and MA degree in Islamic Studies (Riyadh), an MA in Islamic Education (Warwick) and currently pursuing a PhD in Islamic Education. He is a council member for the British Board of Scholars & Imams. He is married with four children.



The Reverend Max Drinkwater

I am an Anglican priest in the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich, which serves the county of Suffolk, and was ordained deacon in 2016 and priest in 2017. I was an Assistant Curate in Newmarket for four years, and since September 2020, I have been Priest-in-Charge of Haverhill, a market town close to Cambridge, and the village of Withersfield. I continue to be part of interfaith and ecumenical forums in West Suffolk and also act as an advisor for vocations and discernment in the diocese, especially for young people.



Dr Benjamin Ellis

Benjamin grew up in an orthodox family in Leeds, and studied for two years at Yeshivat Har Etzion before embarking on his career in medicine. He has been involved with KeshetUK since it was founded and believes passionately that every Jewish organisation can find a way to be more inclusive and welcoming to LGBT+ Jews.



Rabbi Daniel Epstein

Daniel is the Senior Rabbi at The Western Marble Arch Synagogue in London's West End. He has been serving the community together with his wife Ilana, since March 2021. Prior to WMA, they served the Cockfosters & N Southgate United Synagogue in North London from 2014. Moving to Israel in 1998, I established a PR firm, servicing government, corporate, technology and non-profit clients, worked for The Arad Foundation and Pelech Jerusalem School and was CEO of Sunrise Israel, a summer camp for Jewish and Arab children with cancer. I am involved in interfaith dialogue, run adult education programmes in Torah, political and cultural debate; and am passionate about mental health, establishing "Mental Health Awareness Shabbat" in 2017, now marked by over 180 communities, university Jewish societies and schools. I am a governor at 2,000-student JFS School and an educator on the Holocaust Educational Trust's "Lessons from Auschwitz" programme, taking students to Poland. I hold a BSc in Chemistry and Management from Imperial College and we have 4 children, aged 15 to 24.



Dionne Gravesande

I describe myself as a woman fuelled by love and motivated by faith!

I am the Ecumenical Lead at Christian Aid, having previously led a Church Advocacy team as part of the Policy and Public Affairs section. Before that I spent 10 years leading the Churches and Young People's work.

My work now focuses on the intersection between faith and development with a lens into inequality, climate, gender and peacebuilding.



Alia Khan

Alia is the Founder and Chairwoman of Islamic Fashion and Design Council (IFDC), an organization established for the development of this sector in the Islamic economy worldwide. In record time, Alia has rapidly brought IFDC to being the world's leading fashion and design (art, architecture, interiors, etc.) organization representing the Islamic economy and its stakeholders. Known as one of the leading authorities in the Islamic economy, Alia's vision is to establish a narrative unlike any other in a creative space that most would have overlooked until long overdue global attention was brought to it, largely due to the efforts of Alia's work through IFDC.

Alia has had the privilege of working with experts from around the world and is a recognized industry expert and speaker. She has been featured in multiple global publications and continues to be the authority that is asked for comment when world incidents occur with women wearing hijab. Alia Khan has many accolades to her name including being listed in 50 Most Influential Women in the Arab World.



Betsy Mathieson

Born in Scotland to a modest Christian family, has lived in Bahrain since 1980, and is a mother of two sons.

Betsy is the Chairman of 'THIS IS BAHRAIN", an NGO established in 2010, to promote 'the humble Bahraini way of life" focusing on religious freedom and peaceful coexistence. 'THIS IS BAHRAIN" have travelled the world to share the Bahraini Model of a harmonious multi-faith society and have launched 'The Kingdom of Bahrain Declaration' authored by HM The King, and The King Hamad Chair in Inter-Faith Dialogue and Peaceful Coexistence at Sapienza University in Rome and many youth empowerment focused programmes including hosting several events each year at The United Nations General Assembly in New York.

In 2018, His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, King of the Kingdom of Bahrain, created the 'King Hamad Global Centre for Peaceful Coexistence', appointing Betsy as Deputy Chairman. A prolific writer and advocate of Religious Freedom as the most fundamental

of human rights, Betsy is the author of "A Brief History of Christianity in Bahrain" and is passionate about Youth Empowerment through education, both academic and vocational and is especially committed to providing maximum opportunities for disadvantaged youth to ensure equality of advancement for all.

A self-confessed 'peace activist' Betsy believes that sharing our Faith Stories is the most fundamental and effective way of breaking down perceived barriers, combatting 'ignorance of the other', and paving the way for peaceful coexistence through the mutual respect and love that flourishes when a safe space is provided to enable us to interact in an honest and dignified manner.



The Reverend Dr Reynaldo Leão-Neto

Presently, he is the Methodist Church Interfaith, the Culturally Diverse Fellowships/Congregations, and the Assistant Ecumenical Officer. Internationally, he is the Chair of the Inter Religious Relationships Committee of the World Methodist Council (WMC). More recently he has represented the WMC at the 'Popoli Fratelli Terra Futura' Conference in Rome promoted by the Vatican for reflection and prayers in the Spirit of Assisi with representatives of different Christian Denominations and of different World Religions, October 2021.

Reynaldo Ferreira Leão Neto (known as Leao or Leo) came to the UK from Brazil 25 years ago, to serve as a Mission Partner with the Methodist Church and work with the Grassroots Ecumenical Programme in Luton in the areas of community and interfaith ministry. Later he was the Chair of the Grassroots Programme for 9 years.

As a Methodist Minister he served for 10 years at Hinde Street Methodist Church in Marylebone, London and at the West London Mission leading the Chaplaincy ministry to 5 different services relating to homelessness, those struggling with addictions, and involved with the justice system.

Leao served as the Superintendent Minister of the Harlesden Methodist Church, in Brent for just over 8 years. In the community, he was for some time, the chair of the Churches Together in Harlesden and Stonebridge, the chair of the Brent Multi Faith Forum, and the chair of the Harlesden Neighbourhood Forum. He initiated and ran the Meals-on-Heels and the Food Bank amongst other initiatives.

Leao is married to Alison and has two adult children: Madalena and Lucas. He loves cycling and walking and enjoys sharing food and wine with good company.



Amos Schonfield

Amos is the Founder & Director of Our Second Home, the UK's youth movement for refugees and people seeking asylum. In 2021 he was appointed CEO of Mavar, a charity supporting people from the UK Charedi (Strictly Orthodox) community who wish to explore new paths in life, and flourish and thrive in a life of their choosing. He studied at Leeds University and latterly at Oxford University, and has worked, volunteered and campaigned across the British Jewish community. He can occasionally be found in print and, with thanks to SFLP, heard on Radio 2's Pause for Thought.



Marc Shoffren

Marc is the founding head of Alma Primary, a Jewish primary school in north-west London. With colleagues he has built the organisation from a single class to full school. He holds an MBA in Educational Leadership, an MA in Religious Education and a BA (Hons) in Drama and Dance. Marc's educational interests include developing imagination, curiosity and the use of technology to enhance learning. He believes in the importance of emotionally literate leadership and is an advocate of Learning in Depth, helping children to develop expertise from an early age. He is the father of two amazing daughters and is married to an inspiring informal educator.



Rick Sopher

Rick has a financial background and is the CEO of Edmond de Rothschild Capital Holdings, which he joined in 1993. He is the Chairman of the world's longest established investment fund of its type. Prior to that he worked at BDO Stoy Hayward, where he was appointed the youngest ever partner. He has received various industry awards including the Outstanding Contribution Award from Hedge Fund Review and the Decade of Excellence Award by Financial News. Rick graduated from Cambridge University and has more recently worked in the area of interfaith relations with the Woolf Institute, Cambridge as a member of their Council.

During the lockdown period, Rick convened an online dialogue between Professors of Religion at the world's leading universities to discuss the relationship between the Qur'an and the Bible and has himself dialogued with Muslim leaders on the subject. Rick was awarded the Chevalier de la Legion d'Honneur in 2007 from President Chirac for his contribution to religious education in France and is Chairman or Director of several educational charities in the UK.



Jude Trenier

Jude is a qualified community and youth work professional with over 20 years' experience working predominately in the not-for-profit sector in various roles, both nationally and internationally. This has included starting and growing grassroots youth work initiatives in Ireland; developing and delivering multimedia issue-based workshops for young people; working therapeutically with young people (and those who work with them) with ESD in schools and PRU's; writing and delivering gender and equality training and charity consultation in Asia; radio presenting and published writing on various issues including mental health, faith, relationships and sexuality, personal development, mentoring and leadership. She is also a speaker at a variety of conferences and events across the UK for young people and adults. Her work in recent years has included, working with various parliamentary bodies, advocating for resettlement of refugees and development of young adults, directorship and senior leadership in several charities including a focus on organisational and leadership development, as well as media and communications. Jude is currently the Diversity, Inclusion and Well-being Lead for the NCS Trust (Royal Charter Body working with young people across the UK), and currently serves on MIND UK's Board of Trustees.



Ameer Versace

Ameer is the Strategic Engagements Director of the Scottish Ahlul Bayt Society. His working life has taken him through many fields, from commerce, to aviation, to finance, and to community. Ameer was CEO of a fashion retail company and also spent three years in personal and corporate finance as a broker. During his academic years, he worked part-time as a market trader. He is married with three grown up sons. Early starts and a hard work-ethic were ingrained in him from his late and inspirational father. His mother's love and faith in God is what drives Ameer to live in harmony with everyone and pursue his ambition to lead others towards faith and service. As a coach and speaker, Ameer uses his skills to collaborate with people of all backgrounds in Scotland, and has a strong track record of faith-based activities spanning Glasgow, and Scottish cities more widely.