

Mohammed Marzuq Abubakari

Islamic Concept of Compassion as a Tool of Global Order

Abstract

Humanity is currently in a state of varied turbulence. Authoritarian regimes are emerging, and nations in military conflagrations. Genocidal mentality and violent extremism are on ascendency. In response to these trends, this Paper examines the Islamic concept of compassion in the context of global peace and governance. The objective is to encourage compassion as an instrument of global order. From an interdisciplinary perspective, the Paper conducts normative analyses of relevant verses of Quran, models of governance, and theories of International Relations. After data analysis, it finds inadequate compassion at all levels of governance: domestic, national, and international. The Paper concludes that the contemporary models of governance in various countries and at the international level are incompatible with Quran Chapter 21 Verse 107 in which Prophet Mohammed is described as mercy to all the creatures in all the worlds. The Paper recommends a review of the current global order to reflect compassion and related values of fairness and justice. It also advises the authoritarian governments of some Muslim majority countries to be guided by compassion. This way, they will epitomise peaceful and responsible governance worthy of emulation.

Bio

Dr. Mohammed Marzuq Abubakari is a lecturer and an interfaith activist. He holds a PhD in English as a Second Language (ESL) and MA in Adult Education. He is the Personal Assistant to the National Chief Imam of Ghana. Besides, he is an alumnus of Oxford University Symposium on Religious Studies.

Gretsjanialdi Apner

Empathetically Engaged in Our Relationship: A Constructive Interreligious Theology Using the Concept of Omnipresence in Christianity and Panentheism in Hinduism to Overcome Ecological Crisis in Multireligious Society

Abstract

This study aims to construct an interreligious theology that encourages individuals to increase ecological awareness and empathetically fulfill their responsibilities in addressing environmental issues, particularly in the context of living alongside others, including those with different religious backgrounds. The ecological crisis is a significant and tangible global problem that demands more serious and immediate action from those inhabiting the planet. Despite the efforts of various governmental

and non-governmental organizations worldwide, not enough has been done. The author identifies promising opportunities to address this issue, especially within multi-religious societies. To this end, the author adopts an interreligious approach to critique and response to the ecological crisis, viewing it as common ground for developing an empathetic interreligious theology in multi-religious contexts. This study specifically draws upon the theology of God's omnipresence in Christianity, as articulated by Stephen Charnock, and the concept of panentheism in Hinduism, as examples of how two distinct religious traditions can collaborate to construct an empathetic theology that effectively addresses the ecological crisis. By integrating these concepts, the author seeks to demonstrate that fostering empathetic interreligious relations can unlock the potential of multi-religious societies to tackle the ecological crisis more constructively.

Bio

Gretsjanaldi Apner is a Master of Divinity student at the Vancouver School of Theology, focusing on intercultural theology and children and youth ministry. He previously earned a Master of Theology (Th.M) degree from Jakarta Theological Seminary, where his studies centered on missiology. His recent theological contributions include addressing the empowerment of marginalized communities and exploring the role of intercultural theology in ministry. He currently serves as a Children and Youth Ministry Coordinator at West Point Grey United Church.

Pato Banton

with Antoinette Rootsdawtah

The Spirit of Ubuntu

Bio

Internationally acclaimed reggae artist Pato Baton and cultural ambassador Antoinette Rootsdawtah work together to share the philosophy of Ubuntu, which emphasizes interconnectedness, compassion, and collective well-being. They are the executive producers and creative contributors to the award-winning "Spirit of Ubuntu" documentary. Their musical collaborations combine reggae rhythms with conscious lyrics to echo their message of unity and love. Together, they have brought concerts, workshops, humanitarian missions, and social media outreach to 21 countries across four continents.

Amanda Burrows

with Lauren Sanders and Casey Stainsby

Meet Our Neighbour: Vancouver's Mentally Ill and Drug Users

Abstract

Do people who experience extreme mental ill health and people who are regular substance users deserve compassion in the form of tangible support and services? Do they deserve access to governmental support and taxpayers' contributions? Do the mentally ill and drug users deserve a place to live... in your neighbourhood?

In light of Mayor Ken Sim's "Save Our Streets" proposal, which includes a pause on construction of any net-new supportive housing that was approved by Vancouver City Council on February 26, 2025, the answer is no. Compassion costs too much. It leads to violence and more people coming to Vancouver to obtain social services.

First United Church Community Ministry Society (commonly known as FIRST UNITED) believes all people, especially those who have extreme mental ill health and those who are regular substance users, deserve housing and access to support and services. We need to go where the people are, where the need is. Equipped with our definition of compassion, FIRST UNITED's Executive Director Amanda Burrows, Indigenous Spiritual Care Chaplain Rev. Lauren Sanders, and Spiritual Care Student Casey Stainsby story-tell and theologize the work of compassion within the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver.

Bio

Amanda Burrows (she/her) is Executive Director of FIRST UNITED. Through published articles and interviews from news sources, Amanda urges systems and institutions to build stronger and more equitable communities. Amanda has a MMSt from University of Toronto, is a Certified Fund Raising Executive (CFRE), and has Public Leadership Credential (PLC) from Harvard Kennedy School.

Bios of co-presenters Lauren Sanders and Casey Stainsby listed separately.

Chris Clark

with Lissette Guajardo and Hannah Moderow

Buddhist and Christian Reflections on Compassion

Abstract

Bio

Chris Clark is a queer, neurodivergent white settler living on the ancestral and unceded lands of the x^wməθk^wəyəm (Musqueam) people.

For the last 20 years, he's worked in non-profit frontline positions with youth, people affected by the housing crisis, poverty, HIV and AIDS, disability justice, and harm

reduction. He holds a Bachelor of Arts (BA) in Sociology from Athabasca University and is on the final leg of completing a Master of Divinity (M.Div.) at Vancouver School of Theology. He brings a queer, feminist, universalist lens to his hermeneutic as well as an irreverent wit and gritty grace to how he moves through life.

Jacqueline Cleland

Drawing Inspiration from Being Good Enough

Abstract

This paper examines the crucial connection between "enoughness" and compassion, arguing that a strong sense of inherent worth is essential for cultivating deeply empathetic relationships. Scarcity mindsets and social comparison detrimentally affect self-perception and interpersonal interactions. This study begins by analyzing Romans 5:6-8 as a theological foundation for recognizing inherent value, irrespective of one's perceived flaws. Drawing upon disability studies, abundance theory, and the concept of common humanity, this research explores how these diverse perspectives contribute to a richer, compassionate spirituality. By integrating the valuable insights of thinkers such as Kate Bowler, Alicia Ostriker, Kaitlin B. Curtice, Julia Watts Belser, and Amy Kenny, this paper convincingly demonstrates that recognizing inherent "enoughness" fosters robust self-compassion and helps mitigate defensive reactions rooted in fear and feelings of inadequacy. This study reveals how acknowledging "enoughness" fosters a deeper empathy and profound self-compassion, effectively mitigating fear-based defensive reactions and promoting a more inclusive understanding of human worth and dignity.

Bio

Jacqueline Cleland, a VST/SAH graduate (M.Div.), is the Pastoral Care and Outreach Coordinator at Oakridge Christian Ministry (VCPC). She is dedicated to fostering community engagement and building spiritual connections. Jacqueline enjoys exploring how individuals can deepen their relationship with God through the diverse activities they are already participating in.

Casey Collins

The Compassionate Core of Negative Emotions: Buddhist and Jewish Teachings

Abstract

Buddhist and Hasidic Jewish conceptions of compassion include openness to a full range of human emotion. This can be seen in the writings of Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi and in the iconography of wrathful Buddhist divinities. Homiletically and ritually some read these literary and visual sources as teaching that negative emotions have a compassionate core. This paper will explore the practical implications of this conception for compassion in our daily lives.

Bio

Casey Collins holds a PhD in Asian Studies from the University of British Columbia. His work at a Buddhist lay organization (Tokyo, 2009-2012) inspired his research on Japanese new religions. Casey is active in the Vancouver Jewish community as a service leader and a Wexner Heritage Program fellow. He is an avid student of the Omotesenke tea tradition and connected with the Shingon Buddhist community of the Pacific Northwest.

Don Cowie

Compassion is Courage: How our Neurobiology Supports Compassion Competency

Abstract

Studies are showing that we, as humans, can grow in our capacity for compassion. It is a neurobiological competency that can be strengthened through specific understandings and practices. We are also discovering the profound impact it has on both its receiver AND giver.

What is compassion and how does it differ from Empathy? I will examine what compassion is, how it is different neurobiologically and physiologically from empathy, investigating the implications of understanding the differences. We will discover that compassion is more like courage than kindness—and that far from being tiring or depleting—it is energizing and replenishing.

We will also reflect on how our negativity bias affects us, resulting in our capacity to have greater compassion for others than for ourselves. We will look at the science and practices which nurture self-compassion—linking the experience of self-compassion to compassion for others.

Woven through the paper will be a recognition that our current scientific—specifically neurobiological—discoveries about compassion are providing “evidence” of previously unmeasured experiences, beliefs, understandings, and awarenesses that are a part of most spiritual traditions and have been for millennia.

Bio

I (Don Cowie) have a MATH from Regent College and participate in the educational life of VST by being the Certified Supervisor Educator of the Fraser Health Clinical Psychospiritual Education (CPE) program. I served in a parish just outside of the DTES for many years before taking my CPE training at Vancouver General Hospital. Before becoming a CPE educator, I worked as a Spiritual Health Practitioner in palliative and hospice care. Recently I graduated from Stanford University's Center for Compassion and Altruism Education (CCARE) as an Ambassador of Compassion.

Laura Duhan-Kaplan

Compassion in Dangerous Times: A Jewish Perspective

Abstract

Perek Shira is a mysterious ancient Hebrew text celebrating the spiritual wisdom of animals, plants, and the land. Each creature expresses its unique wisdom through a spiritual verse. The scorpion, in its verse, calls us to pay attention to divine compassion (Psalm 145:9). Though scorpions are awe-inspiring creatures, classical Jewish literature understands them to be a danger. So the author of *Perek Shira* is clear: in times of danger, mild and severe, we must call on compassion.

Teachers of Musar, Jewish spiritual ethics, tell us how to call on compassion, by moving from an attitude of fear to one of compassion. I will share some of their techniques. Then, I will suggest how the program can help us develop important interpersonal resources as we respond to evolving political, economic, and social dangers in North America.

Bio

Rabbi Dr. Laura-Duhan Kaplan is Director of Inter-Religious Studies and Professor of Jewish Studies at the Vancouver School of Theology. Her recent books include *Mouth of the Donkey: Re-imagining Biblical Animals* and the co-edited anthology *Visions of the End Times: Revelations of Hope and Challenge*.

Tanweer Ebrahim

Compassionate Communities Panel

Bio

Tanweer Ebrahim has dedicated her career to promoting community impact and empowering women. As the Founder of Nisa Foundation, she provides a safe and nurturing environment for women who have experienced trauma, homelessness, or abuse. She is also a Muslim life coach, and CO-Project Manager of Twins of Faith Conference Vancouver.

Esther Ofonmbuk Ekong

Compassionate Engagement with Immigrants: Theological and Practical Perspectives for the Church

Abstract

Immigration is a transformative process that involves profound cultural, social, and economic shifts, making it both a physical journey and a deeply spiritual and emotional experience. Many immigrants turn to faith communities for stability and support as they navigate the complexities of a new society. However, meaningful support requires a compassionate understanding of the intersectional realities of immigration, including gender, family dynamics, and cultural adaptation. Compassion, defined as a deep awareness of suffering coupled with a desire to alleviate it, plays a crucial role in shaping how faith communities respond to immigration. This paper seeks to answer the question, “How can the Church embody a theologically grounded and practically effective model of compassion in response to the challenges faced by immigrant communities?” To do this, the paper employs an intersectional theological methodology, integrating theological reflection and case study analysis of church-based immigrant support initiatives, to explore theological, ethical, and practical dimensions of compassion in the context of immigration. This paper argues that the Church must move beyond a generalized understanding of compassion to a more nuanced and intersectional practice where it can hold the space between competing tensions, thereby fostering holistic support.

Bio

Esther Ekong holds a PhD in Law from the University of Ottawa, where her research focused on inclusive methodologies. Esther is discerning to become a Presbyterian minister and is currently undertaking the Master of Divinity program. As a Nigerian immigrant to Canada, she understands the transformative power of a compassionate faith community.

Anne-Marie Ellithorpe

Friendship and Compassion: A Personal Journey into Engagement with Māori Wisdom and Knowledge

Abstract

“Kāore te kumara e kōrero mō tōna ake reka.” This Māori whakatauki (proverb) emphasizes the value and strengthening impact of humility, with its assertion that the kumara (sweet potato) does not sing of its own sweetness. Practicing this whakatauki can be a delicate dance, or a balancing act, between demonstrating humility and having appropriate spaces to talk about yourself. Outworking this whakatauki can pose challenges as one moves between coexisting communities shaped by different value systems. I take this opportunity to engage in such a

balancing act, by considering my own journey into engagement with Māori wisdom and knowledge. Through reflection on my own life experiences, as well as on the experiences of others, this paper considers factors that promote the intertwined development of friendship, compassion, and engagement with Indigenous wisdom.

Bio

Dr. Anne-Marie Ellithorpe, a practical theologian and religious studies scholar, is research associate at Vancouver School of Theology and faculty at Douglas College. She has engaged in Indigenous language and culture studies at Te Wānanga o Raukawa in Aotearoa New Zealand and is the author of *Towards Friendship-Shaped Communities* (2022) and co-editor of *Multireligious Reflections on Friendship* (2023).

Parvaneh Farhangpour

Compassion in the Mirror

Abstract

This multifaith, multidisciplinary paper takes a holistic approach to compassion. The first part of the paper uses philosophy, ethics, psychology, and spiritual scriptures to establish the relevance and importance of compassion as a human virtue. Sacred verses from different religions and traditions will show that compassion and care for all beings have been emphasized throughout history to exalt the individual and improve human relationships.

The second part of the paper uses examples from the arts, poetry, and stories from the lives of a few moral personas in history, such as Nelson Mandela from South Africa, Abdu'l-Bahá, from the Baha'i Faith and Mother Teresa, to demonstrate compassion in action.

It is argued that compassion is a noble characteristic and a pathway to addressing massive inequalities and injustices, reducing immense suffering and paving the way for peace.

Moreover, compassion, understanding and unity are essential qualities needed for the survival of human beings and the planet whose well-being is interrelated and interdependent.

The undeniable oneness of humanity and the virtue of compassion motivate us to see ourselves in others as we see ourselves in a mirror.

Bio

Dr Parvaneh Farhangpour holds a PhD, MA, BA and B.Ed. She is author of YEP, a character building program, and CEO of a NGO that ran 13 years in South Africa. She has presented twice at Parliament of World Religions, VST Conference and several interfaith events. She has published textbooks, scholarly articles, and poetry.

Lucas Neiro Garcia

A Compassionate God and a Prophet in Agony

Abstract

The book of Jonah presents one of the most well-known biblical narratives. Jonah's adventure with the huge fish has surpassed the walls of temples and reached world literature with adaptations of this conflict. However, the greatest conflict portrayed in this story is not between a man and a fish, but between a prophet and his God. Jonah is a prophet in deep agony, as he has encountered YHWH, a deeply compassionate God. Jonah's agony begins right at the start of the book with an unexpected call to preach in an enemy city. Wrong ship, sea, fish, prayer, forgiveness, preaching, and repentance. This entire plot was not enough to relieve the prophet's agony in the face of a compassionate God. The last verse of the book gives us great clues to understanding the extent of God's compassion. In it, we find the target of this compassion: the entire great city of Nineveh, both people and animals. Furthermore, this verse ends with a question directed to every reader to answer: what is our view of the city? Are we willing to work together with this compassionate God, or, like Jonah, are we in agony over God's compassion for the city?

Bio

Lucas Neiro Garcia is auxiliary pastor at the First Independent Presbyterian Church of Sorocaba, Brazil. He holds a degree in Theology from Fatipi and a Master's in Religious Studies with a focus on literature and religion in the biblical world from the Methodist University of São Paulo. Lucas is passionate about theology and academic research.

Valerie M. Grissom

Early Christian Catacomb Art of Third-Century Rome: Intercultural Art for an Inclusive Community

Abstract

Previously, catacombs in early Christianity were thought to serve as hiding places for people avoiding religious persecution. Deeper study has revealed a richer purpose for catacombs built by early Jews and Christians, enabling people from diverse cultures and religions to come together to bury and honor their dead, offering larger rooms (*cubicula*), as well as chapels embellished with frescoes (*cryptae*) for communal lament and worship. Even more spectacular than the gesture of building these communal spaces are the remarkably preserved examples of art found in third-century Roman catacombs. These earliest exhibits of Christian art serve as an exemplar for intercultural worship, intentionally welcoming and including all people regardless of socio-economic standing, status, ethnicity, gender, age, and religious experience to mutually share, using the common language of art, to participate in the story of God together. In a culture of rampant death that tended to devalue life, catacomb art

counterculturally initiated a community of inclusion and welcome, honoring and valuing every life. This paper will study in detail five images found in early Christian catacomb art: the ram-bearer, Orpheus, the orant, Endymion, and early images of Christ.

Bio

Dr. Valerie M. Grissom (valeriemgrissom.com) is a pastor near Seattle, Washington, as well as a researcher, writer, speaker, and coach regarding intercultural and intergenerational worship. She is the Chair of the [InterGenerateTeam](#) and editor of the book *All Ages Becoming: Intergenerational Practice in the Formation of God's People*.

Lydia Kau

From Table to Heart: Exploring Interfaith Connections Through Vancouver's Multicultural Cuisine

Abstract

The paper examines how food functions to connect different religious groups in Vancouver. The research intends to examine how multifaith culinary traditions facilitate interfaith communication and build mutual understanding and compassion. This research uses literature reviews, surveys, and interviews to show that shared food experiences build unity and empathy between different people. It aims to reveal the cultural importance of food across different traditions while creating methods to build stronger interfaith connections through shared food practices.

Bio

Lydia Kau is a MATS student at the Vancouver School of Theology, specializing in Interfaith Spiritual Health Care. Lydia, who is Malaysian born Chinese, is passionate about interfaith spiritual care and practical theology studies, including family and children's ministry.

Lily Kim

Powerful Waters We Tread: A Recovery of Mercy after the Age of Discovery

Abstract

The hidden lives of Canadian caregivers emerged with post-Holocaust excavation. After the Age of Discovery, diverse voices of reconciliation in a Judeo-Christian retrospective engaged in liberative relations. From the Algonquians of Queen Esther's Town, Pennsylvania, to *The Paths We Tread: Blacks in Nursing Worldwide* (1854–1994), inclusive journeying from trauma and segregated care to recovery was renewed through practices of mercy. Crossing waters and borders, different icons constituted a collective model of compassion. As unearthed by a practical theological

approach to intercultural reconciliation, through the lens of cultural trauma, the indigenous matriarch (Esther Montour) and “contraband” nurses in the Eastern Woodlands lent impetus to medical missions in colonial Korea and nursing survivors of the Holocaust in Europe. Through acts of healing, sacred waters and memory connected multiple agents in solidarity movements. With an eye on the biblical text, a deeper analysis of agents of mercy could uncover meaningful practices and adoption—thereby helping to sustain colonized communities through life-giving healers.

Bio

Lily A. Kim’s roles as director or Advisory/steering committee member benefited programming of the American Academy of Religion and of museums. From Salish homelands, her doctoral work in Practical Theology followed her move to Munsee-Delaware borders and to Huron-Wendat territory. While centring on trauma-informed care, she helped raise the voices of Holocaust survivors, resulting in greater cultural competency and awareness.

James Magee

Screening the Modern ‘Good Samaritan’: The Compassionate Catholic Cleric from ‘Golden Age’ Hollywood to Netflix

Abstract

With their distinctive habits, Catholic priests and nuns provide filmmakers with visual shorthand for ostensibly pious figures, resulting in their ubiquitous presence on movie screens. Cases of child abuse by the clergy and conspiracy theories involving the Vatican dominate in the media and current screenplays, eclipsing a wide range of altruistic acts and positive portrayals of these religious characters from Hollywood’s ‘Golden Age’ through contemporary world cinema. Utilizing a cultural studies lens and Pope Francis’ excursus on the ‘Good Samaritan’ in his 2020 encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* as backdrop, I will explore these encouraging alternative scripts, cinematic portrayals of the compassionate Catholic cleric who tends, sometimes at great personal risk, to the physical and psychological wounds of society’s marginalized and outcasts. I will argue that these films evidence a long-standing tradition of indiscriminate charitable work by members of the Catholic clergy with off-screen analogs such that Francis’ inclusive vision of fraternal love among all peoples is less a radical reform and more a timely renewal of an ideal Christian *praxis* of compassion for the ‘other’ in response to a growing climate of intolerance and the threat of global conflict.

Bio

James Magee Jr. holds MA degrees in theological and biblical studies and is a research affiliate with VST. He has published essays focused on the intersections of religion, film and childhood and his current projects include co-authoring a book on depictions of children in films set in the ancient Roman world and co-editing a volume on the subject of religion and violence.

Harry O. Maier

Creating Urban Spaces of Compassion in Early Christianity

Abstract

This paper explores ways in which densely populated neighborhoods, poverty, and absence of urban zoning contributed to a Christian imaginary of compassion amongst first and second century Christ followers. Drawing on some Gospel passages, Paul's letters, and extra canonical texts, the paper illustrates how Christians were shaped by urban environments to imagine time and space in ways conducive to practices of compassion and thereby the invention of new forms of urban practice. The paper invites consideration of ways in which contemporary religion and urban environments may similarly be an inducement to imagining the creation of compassionate spaces and practices.

Bio

Harry O. Maier is Professor of New Testament and Early Christian Studies at Vancouver School of Theology where he has taught since 1991. He has published numerous books and articles, mostly in the social world of early Christianity, and is working on a book related to spatiality and the mutual formation of cities and religion in second century Christianity. He is co-editor with Laura Duhan-Kaplan of the Religion and Public Life series published by Wipf and Stock.

Yehuda Mansell

Reading Ruth as a Revolutionary Text

Abstract

This paper will explore how, emerging amid post-exilic debates and panic about purity and insider/outsider status, the Book of Ruth was a revolutionary text intended as a *chesed*-soaked corrective to xenophobic dialogue. I will show that Ruth's arguments tactfully embedded in narrative are critically needed in our cultural moment when some within religious circles are propagating compassion as weakness, empathy as sin, and outsiders as people to be feared. I will situate the book in its cultural and theological milieu, a time in which national and religious identities were mistakenly thought to be under threat. I will then conclude with a practical call to faith leaders and practitioners to embrace compassion as a revolutionary act and will suggest utilizing the storytelling method of persuasion so artfully modelled in Ruth.

Bio

Yehuda Mansell is a Ph.D. Candidate in the joint Durham University/VST program. He holds an MA in Theology from Regent College and a BA in Bible, Archaeology, and ANE Studies from Ben Gurion University in Israel. Yehuda lives in Surrey in a refugee resettlement home. His research interests include literary theory, the book of

Job, and Ancient Near Eastern Literature. Yehuda has more than 20 years of experience working with youth, homelessness, addiction, and refugees.

Steven Muir

Ted Lasso and the Apostle Paul: Motivating Through Belief and Visioning

Abstract

There seems little similarity between folksy, self-effacing TV series coach Ted Lasso and prickly, authoritarian apostle Paul. Yet, each wants to build a supportive group which can stand together in challenging circumstances. Ted's motto is "Believe" – an invitation for team members to develop their individual and group potential. In Paul's brilliant "Hymn to Love" (1 Corinthians 13), the apostle writes an insightful and enduring analysis of compassionate love (*agapē*). Paul concludes with an introspective portrait of his growth in understanding, and he presents his vision of future development. He situates himself in the group as their role model (as does Ted).

I use Richard Boyatzis to bring Ted and Paul together. Richard Boyatzis, PhD is an award-winning organizational theorist and professor of social psychology. He developed Intentional Change Theory (ICT). In his book *Helping People Change: Coaching with Compassion for Lifelong Learning and Growth*, he notes: "The best way to help other people to learn, grow and change is by helping them move closer to their ideal self, their dreams and vision of their ideal future." Boyatzis found that a detailed vision of a person's ideal self creates a Positive Emotional Attractor (PEA) which is a powerful motivating tool for long-term change.

Bio

Steven Muir, PhD is Professor Emeritus of Religious Studies at Concordia University of Edmonton. Trained as a historian and biblical analyst, he has developed interests in group dynamics, women's studies, health and development, mysticism and meditation, and magic and the occult.

Rangi Nicholson

"The greatest thing is compassion": Anglican Māori Language and Cultural Revitalization in Aotearoa New Zealand

Abstract

For almost two hundred years the Anglican Church in Aotearoa New Zealand has conducted Indigenous mission and ministry through the medium of Māori language and culture. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, Māori language and culture

are endangered and need to be revitalized. The written Anglican revitalization policy consists of five Standing Resolutions of the General Synod which is the main policy making body of the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia.

Senior stakeholders were interviewed from the Church's three cultural strands: Tikanga Māori (Anglican Māori), Tikanga Pākehā (Anglican Settlers) and Tikanga Pasifika (Anglican Pacific Islanders). A wide range of perspectives emerged from within these cultural groupings as they reviewed past, present and future practices of each Standing Resolution.

As a result of viewing the Anglican Church's policy and practice through Treaty of Waitangi and contemporary Māori theological lenses, a number of disturbing trends became apparent. This research concludes by strongly advocating that Anglican Māori alter their revitalization policy and practice in order to reverse these trends through bold, compassionate transformation. Christ-like compassion is seen to be critical if the Anglican Church and Māori language and culture are to flourish.

Bio

Reverend Dr Rangi Nicholson is an elder, clergyperson and contextual theologian in the Māori Anglican Church, Aotearoa New Zealand. He is also a sociolinguist who has spent over fifty years working in the area of Māori language revitalization. He has taught at St John's Theological College, Auckland, and at four universities.

Sepideh Omidvari

with Nasir Zaidi

Love and Compassion in the Teachings of Maulana Rumi

Abstract

This article will explore the deeper level of the roots of compassion in the teachings of Maulana Rumi. Maulana not only tells us different aspects of compassion but also teaches us how to cultivate compassion and empathy within the soul through heart-to-heart connection. Maulana goes beyond the teaching and articulates this term in a very artistic way as Maulana indicates compassion is like drinking the cup of pain, which symbolizes completely immersing oneself in the suffering of others. Maulana signifies the moral deficiency in the general understanding of compassion and teaches us that true compassion is not helping others from the place of superiority but about realizing oneness with all existence. Maulana teaches us how compassion removes the cultural, social, and racial veils and takes us to the divine dignity of human being. Maulana emphasizes the language of the heart and believes that the real way of connecting with someone goes beyond just sharing a common language. Maulana believes that only love and compassion bind two people in a way

that each becomes a part of the other. Rumi emphasizes that compassion and empathy among people is a reflection of God's infinite love and mercy.

Bio

Dr. Sepideh Omidvari is an Associate Professor of Research, psychiatrist, and faculty member at Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Iran. With experience in health research centers, she currently works at the Cancer Research Center. Her research focuses on both mental and spiritual health, aiming to contribute meaningful insights to these fields.

Antoinette Rootsdawtah

with Pato Banton

The Spirit of Ubuntu

Bio

Internationally acclaimed reggae artist Pato Baton and cultural ambassador Antoinette Rootsdawtah work together to share the philosophy of Ubuntu, which emphasizes interconnectedness, compassion, and collective well-being. They are the executive producers and creative contributors to the award-winning "Spirit of Ubuntu" documentary. Their musical collaborations combine reggae rhythms with conscious lyrics to echo their message of unity and love. Together, they have brought concerts, workshops, humanitarian missions, and social media outreach to 21 countries across four continents.

Or Rose

Compassionate Leadership According to Rabbi Levi Yitzhak of Berditchev

Abstract

Rabbi Levi Yitzhak of Berditchev (1740-1809) was one of the leading figures in the early Hasidic movement. A person of great intelligence and erudition, he is remembered widely for his compassionate leadership. Stories of his kindness abound in Hasidic literature. In this presentation I will examine how the master himself articulated his leadership vision in his homilies. I will do so through a careful reading of texts dealing with the leadership challenges of the great biblical figure of Moses, as interpreted by this creative 18th century mystical master.

Bio

Rabbi Or Rose is the founding Director of the [Miller Center for Interreligious Learning and Leadership](#) of Hebrew College and a senior consultant to [Interfaith America](#). He is publisher of [The Journal of Interreligious Studies](#) and is co-editor of the award-winning anthologies, *My Neighbor's Faith: Stories of Interreligious Encounter, Growth, and Transformation* and *With the Best of Intentions: Interreligious Missteps & Mistakes*.

Lauren Sanders

with Amanda Burrows and Casey Stainsby

Meet Our Neighbour: Vancouver's Mentally Ill and Drug Users

Abstract

Do people who experience extreme mental ill health and people who are regular substance users deserve compassion in the form of tangible support and services? Do they deserve access to governmental support and taxpayers' contributions? Do the mentally ill and drug users deserve a place to live... in your neighbourhood?

In light of Mayor Ken Sim's "Save Our Streets" proposal, which includes a pause on construction of any net-new supportive housing that was approved by Vancouver City Council on February 26, 2025, the answer is no. Compassion costs too much. It leads to violence and more people coming to Vancouver to obtain social services.

First United Church Community Ministry Society (commonly known as FIRST UNITED) believes all people, especially those who have extreme mental ill health and those who are regular substance users, deserve housing and access to support and services. We need to go where the people are, where the need is. Equipped with our definition of compassion, FIRST UNITED's Executive Director Amanda Burrows, Indigenous Spiritual Care Chaplain Rev. Lauren Sanders, and Spiritual Care Student Casey Stainsby story-tell and theologize the work of compassion within the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver.

Bio

Hew, Lauren nshenkango. Within Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, Rev. Lauren Mosadum Sanders listens to people's stories and provides multifaith, trauma-informed spiritual care in FIRST UNITED's programs or around the neighbourhood, using her Indigenous communities' values and mental health chaplaincy training. Lauren has a MDiv from Louisville Seminary and ThM from VST.

Bios of co-presenters Amanda Burrows and Casey Stainsby listed separately.

Casey Stainsby

with Amanda Burrows and Lauren Sanders

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Bio

Casey Stainsby (she/her) is a fourth year MDiv student at VST, working towards Unitarian Universalist ministry. This year she has been completing her Theological Field Education at FIRST UNITED, working with Rev. Lauren Sanders in the Spiritual Care Department, providing spiritual care for community members of the Downtown Eastside.

Bios of co-presenters Amanda Burrows and Lauren Sanders listed separately.

Andrea Tsugawa

Stories of Compassion That Can Change the World

Abstract

Many of us—especially the dreamers—aspire to create change so profound in our social environments that it might transform the world. We strive to overcome challenges—indifference, conformism, structural violence, and the long list of "it's

always the same” realities that often derail our efforts. But what if compassion is the key to change?

In a small town in Canada, compassion is quietly reshaping reality. Through this narrative, I will share insights of how I, a foreigner, witnessed the most honest and unstoppable conversations, that are leading people of the Rocky Mountain Clearwater House County into a journey of unpacking and understanding one another, using storytelling as the vehicle for spreading solid and positive change. Why was I there? The Creator works in mysterious ways...

Bio

Andrea Tsugawa was born and raised in Peru into an interfaith Japanese Shinto-Buddhist and Indigenous Peruvian ancestry. She is currently pursuing a Master of Arts in Indigenous and Interreligious Studies and a Master of Arts in Public Pastoral Leadership for Clinical Psychospiritual Education. She loves art, horses, and little sunrays illuminating her eyes.

Marilyn Turkovich

Compassionate Communities Panel

Bio

Marilyn Turkovich is Executive Director of the Charter for Compassion. She came to the Charter in 2013 with a background in higher education, leading programs in teacher training, multicultural education, and global education. She worked with Independent Broadcasting Associates on a series for National Public Radio, BBC and Australian Broadcasting. Earlier, she specialized in instructional design, organizational development, strategic planning and leadership development.

Joel Cherian Varghese

Anointed to Heal: The Compassionate Pastor Model as Seen in the Ordination Liturgy of the Mar Thoma Church

Abstract

This paper explores the liturgy of ordination in the **Mar Thoma Syrian Church** to propose a theological and pastoral model of **compassionate leadership**. Rooted in the West Syriac liturgical tradition, the ordination rite articulates a vision of the far from presenting the pastor as a bureaucratic administrator or institutional gatekeeper, the rite frames ordained ministry as a calling to **heal, serve, and stand with the suffering**. The liturgy constructs a pastoral identity rooted in **mercy, humility, and faithful presence through its prayers, scriptural readings, hymns and ritual gestures**.

Drawing from **liturgical theology, ecclesial history, and pastoral studies**, this paper unpacks how the ordination rite of the Mar Thoma Church envisions a minister who embodies the compassion of Christ—one who is called to bind wounds, reconcile the broken, and walk alongside the marginalised. In an era marked by institutional decline, social fragmentation, and spiritual exhaustion, this ancient yet living liturgical tradition offers a powerful model for **leadership grounded in love and service**, relevant across diverse communities and contexts.

Bio

Joel is a researcher and writer specialising in theology, history, and socio-political studies. He has presented numerous papers on religion, politics, and cultural narratives. He has completed his bachelor's in History, Economics, and Political Science. He serves on the editorial board of *Kerala History* magazine and works on multiple scholarly books, including *From Pulpit to Parliament*. He has also published many articles. His research explores themes of liberation theology, Christian contributions to Indian politics, and folklore's intersection with faith. Joel is also involved in ecumenical projects.

Nasir Zaidi

with Sepideh Omidvari

Love and Compassion in the Teachings of Maulana Rumi

Abstract

This article will explore the deeper level of the roots of compassion in the teachings of Maulana Rumi. Maulana not only tells us different aspects of compassion but also teaches us how to cultivate compassion and empathy within the soul through heart-to-heart connection. Maulana goes beyond the teaching and articulates this term in a very artistic way as Maulana indicates compassion is like drinking the cup of pain, which symbolizes completely immersing oneself in the suffering of others. Maulana signifies the moral deficiency in the general understanding of compassion and teaches us that true compassion is not helping others from the place of superiority but about realizing oneness with all existence. Maulana teaches us how compassion removes the cultural, social, and racial veils and takes us to the divine dignity of human being. Maulana emphasizes the language of the heart and believes that the real way of connecting with someone goes beyond just sharing a common language. Maulana believes that only love and compassion bind two people in a way that each becomes a part of the other. Rumi emphasizes that compassion and empathy among people is a reflection of God's infinite love and mercy.

Bio

Syed Nasir Zaidi. Currently, I am working as a Spiritual Care Practitioner at Fraser Health and as a spiritual and religious consultant at Az-Zahraa Islamic Centre,

Richmond BC. I have a Masters and Ph.D. in Islamic Philosophy and Theology from the University of Tehran. I was a visiting professor in Bonn University Germany, Assistant Professor in International Islamic University Islamabad, and Director General at Islamic Ideology Council Islamabad. I am also a Muslim Chaplain at the University of British Columbia.

Bio of co-presenter Sepideh Omidvari listed separately.

Michael Zoosman

Compassionate Communities

Bio:

Cantor Michael Zoosman (he/him/his) is a Certified Spiritual Care Practitioner with the Canadian Association for Spiritual Care/Association canadienne de soins spirituels (CASC/ACSS) and received his cantorial ordination from the Jewish Theological Seminary of America in 2008. He sits as an Advisory Committee Member at Death Penalty Action and is the co-founder of “L’chaim! Jews Against the Death Penalty.” Michael is a former Jewish prison chaplain and psychiatric hospital chaplain. Currently, he serves as a Spiritual Health Practitioner (Chaplain) for various mental health outreach teams, working with individuals in the community living with severe mental health disorders and addiction. He lives with his family in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. His opinions are his own.