



RELIGION  
SPIRITUALITY  
INTERFAITH

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INTERNATIONAL  
MOVEMENT

## Charter for Compassion

bring compassion to life



*Compassion is no longer an option—it is the key to our survival. If our religious and ethical traditions fail to address these challenges, they will fail the test of our time.*

~Karen Armstrong, “Compassion: An Urgent Global Imperative”

### The Test of Our Time

Religions and spiritual traditions have provided humankind with a variety of paths to personal enlightenment, various teachings for developing a relationship with an entity or entities outside ourselves in a universe full of mystery, and to a number of scriptures that not only tell the story of these paths and teachings but also guide us in how to live in community with other human beings and the world we inhabit. The seed for the

Charter for Compassion is this latter point—the idea that all world religions share a common thread about how to relate to other human beings—our mothers and fathers, our families, our communities, as well as the strangers beyond our boundaries.

Charter founder Karen Armstrong, who has studied and written widely about world religions and religious traditions, urges a more global perspective by all those involved in particular religions, faith traditions, and interfaith efforts. That global perspective is the realization that all human beings—not just those with whom we share a community—urgently need our compassion, and the conviction that we must act to provide such compassion wherever there is suffering.

### The Charter’s Call to Compassion Action

Recognizing that “the principle of compassion lies at the heart of all religions, ethical and spiritual traditions, calling us always to treat all others as we wish to be treated ourselves,” the many world luminaries from a variety of faith traditions who contributed to writing the Charter made a specific call to all men and women:

- To restore compassion to the center of morality and religion
- To return to the ancient principle that any interpretation of scripture that breeds violence, hatred or disdain is illegitimate

- To ensure that youth are given accurate and respectful information about other traditions, religions and cultures
- To encourage a positive appreciation of cultural and religious diversity
- To cultivate an informed empathy with the suffering of all human beings—even those regarded as enemies

### **The Charter – A Document and a Global Movement**

Since Karen Armstrong received the TED prize in 2008 and worked with other influential scholars and leaders to develop the Charter, the document has become central to a global movement and an organization, The Charter for Compassion International. As of June, 2014, the Charter connects a worldwide community of people in over 235 cities (towns, hamlets, townships, countries) that have declared their intent to operate in all their affairs with compassion. The Charter has also developed a “network of networks” connecting people in a variety of sectors (Education, Environment, Healthcare, Business, Peace, Religion/Spirituality and Interfaith, Science Research, Social Justice, and the Arts) through regular phone conferences, newsletters, and a rich website of compassionate stories, bibliographies, and resources for establishing compassion as a motivating force in whatever we are doing in the world.

### **Become a Partner of The Charter**

Although the Charter for Compassion is in part supported by those who have committed themselves as Members, there is no fee for an organization to become a partner, and we encourage you to join us by signing the Charter and then by declaring yourself a Partner organization.

The Charter provides regular, open conference calls for each of its sectors usually beginning with a provocative speaker. A summary report is published following each of these calls, and all Partners also receive general newsletters and announcements of upcoming events, conferences, and other information that may be of interest. Each Partner organization has a dedicated page within our website so that others can read about what an organization is doing and perhaps form alliances among organizations. An ongoing blog, relevant annotated bibliographies, and an ever-increasing library of resources is also available on our website. The Charter staff take seriously the need and the commitment to facilitate the connection of people who share the hope of making a difference.

### **Spotlight on a Few of Our Partners**

Here are just a few examples of Partners who have signed on to the Charter for Compassion. We encourage you to read more about them and then to join us by becoming a Partner.

**Berkley Center for Religion, Peace & World Affairs- Georgetown University** (USA), is dedicated to the interdisciplinary study of religion and the advancement of interdisciplinary understanding. Its scholars, programs, events, and publications examine the intersection of religion with global policy challenges of diplomacy, democracy, development and dialogue.

**The Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions** (USA) works to cultivate harmony among the world's religious and spiritual communities to achieve a just, peaceful and sustainable world. The Council organizes the world's

I love you when you bow in your mosque, kneel in your temple, pray in your church. For you and I are sons of one religion, and it is the spirit.

~Khalil Gibran

largest interfaith event, the Parliament of Religions every 5 years in a different city around the world.

**The Maimonides Interfaith Foundation** (United Kingdom) is an interfaith charity that fosters understanding and co-operation among Jews, Christians, and Muslims through cultural and academic programs. The Foundation is committed to creating opportunities where the three communities can meet and share their commonalities and discuss their differences.

**The United Religions Initiative** (USA) is a grassroots, bridge-building organization that believes when people's passions and initiative are organized, connected and shared, they can create a sustaining global force for good. While respecting differences among beliefs and spiritualities, URI pursues a common purpose: to promote enduring daily interfaith cooperation, to end religiously motivated violence in order to create cultures of peace, justice, and healing.

Become a Charter Partner. Visit our Charter for Compassion Website: [www.charterforcompassion.org](http://www.charterforcompassion.org).



Art on the front page by American artist George Tooker.