

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Leaders of World Faiths Open First U.S. G20 Interfaith Forum at Salt Lake City's Historic Tabernacle

Salt Lake City, October 13, 2026 — Senior leaders of seven faith traditions will share one stage at the Historic Tabernacle at Temple Square this Thursday, October 15, as the G20 Interfaith Forum (IF20) opens its annual Forum in the United States for the first time. More than a dozen speakers, among them Muslim, Catholic, Orthodox, Hindu, Jewish, Anglican, and Latter-day Saint leaders, will offer addresses and prayers between performances by the Tabernacle Choir at Temple Square, in an evening ceremony that is open to the public.

Sheikh Dr. Mohammed bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa, Secretary General of the Muslim World League, will deliver the opening keynote as guest of honor. President Dallin H. Oaks of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints will host the evening, and Archbishop Gabriele Caccia, Apostolic Nuncio to the United States, will deliver a message on behalf of the Holy See, the Catholic Church's central government at the Vatican. They will be joined by Elder Metropolitan Emmanuel of Chalcedon of the Ecumenical Patriarchate; Sheikh-ul-Islam Allahshukur Pashazadeh, Chairman of the Caucasus Muslims Board; Pujya Sadhvi Bhagawati Saraswati, Secretary-General of the Global Interfaith WASH Alliance; Rabbi Mark Dratch, Chair of the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations; and Dr. Francis Kuria Kagema, Secretary General of Religions for Peace.

Earlier that afternoon, Utah Gov. Spencer Cox, former South Carolina Gov. David Beasley, and Martin Luther King III will take part in Peacemaking through Disagreeing Better, a public dialogue on how faith communities and public leaders can work together across deep political divides. The afternoon program will also include the presentation of the Jewish-Muslim Declaration of Fraternity in Faith, in which Jewish and Muslim religious leaders describe a relationship that moves beyond tolerance toward mutual support.

Founded in 2014, IF20 meets each year in the country that holds the G20 presidency, bringing together religious leaders, scholars, humanitarian practitioners, and public officials. Its premise is that faith communities, which run schools, hospitals, and relief networks around the world, have experience worth sharing on the issues the world's largest economies discuss, from poverty and health to technology and the environment.

IF20 Vice President Katherine Marshall, who will also speak Thursday evening, described what participants hope to contribute in remarks at IF20's Washington Policy Forum at Georgetown University in May.

"We aim to bring the best of religious traditions, ideas, and experience to the G20 table," Marshall said, "and we present care for the vulnerable, those left aside and behind, as a, if not the, central shared 'gift' of the complex worlds of religion."

This year's Forum, themed "Resilient Hope, Shared Future," continues on October 16–17 at the University of Utah. Plenary sessions will take up the priorities the United States has set for its G20 presidency, including economic growth, energy security, and artificial intelligence, along with the future of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Smaller sessions will address human trafficking, mental health, education, disaster response, and freedom of religion or belief, and participants will take part in a service project. The Forum closes Saturday at the Cathedral of the Madeleine with a handover to the organizers of next year's Forum in the United Kingdom. The G20 Leaders' Summit follows in Miami, December 14–15.

IF20 Director of Communications Marianna Richardson described Thursday's events as an invitation to the wider community.

"It is rare to see leaders of so many faiths share one stage," Richardson said, "and we're grateful the whole community can be there to see it."

Both public events take place Thursday, October 15, 2026, at the Historic Tabernacle at Temple Square in Salt Lake City. Peacemaking through Disagreeing Better, moderated by Deseret News Editor Sarah Jane Weaver, runs from 3:30 to 5:00 p.m. MDT (doors open at 2:30 p.m.). The Opening Ceremony and Welcome Concert runs from 7:30 to 9:00 p.m. MDT (doors open at 7:00 p.m.). Registration is required at <https://www.g20interfaith.org/2026-annual-forum-opening-ceremony/>. Forum sessions on October 16–17 are closed to the public.

Speakers will include:

- **Sarah Jane Weaver (Moderator)**, Editor, Deseret News
- **Gov. Spencer Cox**, Governor of Utah
- **Gov. David Beasley**, Former Governor of South Carolina; Former Executive Director, UN World Food Programme
- **Martin Luther King III**, Humanitarian and Civic Leader; Ambassador for Global Human Rights
- **Sheikh Dr. Mohammed bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa (Opening Keynote)**, Secretary General, Muslim World League
- **President Dallin H. Oaks (Host)**, President, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
- **Archbishop Gabriele Caccia**, Apostolic Nuncio (Vatican Ambassador) to the United States
- **Elder Metropolitan Emmanuel of Chalcedon**, Ecumenical Patriarchate
- **His Virtue Sheikh-ul-Islam Allahshukur Pashazadeh**, Chairman, Caucasus Muslims Board
- **Pujya Sadhvi Bhagawati Saraswati**, Secretary-General, Global Interfaith WASH Alliance
- **Rabbi Mark Dratch**, Chair, International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations
- **Dr. Francis Kuria Kagema**, Secretary General, Religions for Peace
- **Prof. W. Cole Durham**, President, G20 Interfaith Forum Association
- **Prof. Katherine Marshall**, Vice President, G20 Interfaith Forum Association

The complete 2026 Forum program and speaker list are available at <https://www.g20interfaith.org/2026-forum-program/>.

About the G20 Process

The Group of Twenty, or G20, is the premier forum for international economic cooperation, bringing together the leaders of Earth's most prosperous economies. Collectively, G20 members represent around 80 percent of the world's economic output, two-thirds of the global population and three-quarters of international trade. Throughout the year, representatives from G20 countries gather to discuss financial and socioeconomic issues as well as broader humanitarian issues targeted by the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

About the G20 Interfaith Forum

The G20 Interfaith Forum seeks global solutions by collaborating with religious thought leaders and political representatives to help shape the overall G20 agenda. It draws on the vital roles that religious institutions and beliefs play in world affairs, reflecting a rich diversity of institutions, ideas, and values. Through its extensive network of networks, it helps prioritize key global policy goals and point toward practical means of implementation at every level of society.

For more information, please visit www.g20interfaith.org.

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