

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Gov. Spencer Cox, Gov. David Beasley and Martin Luther King III Kick Off G20 Interfaith Forum with Call to Disagree Better

Salt Lake City, October 15, 2026 — The G20 Interfaith Forum (IF20), the world's leading organization focused on the intersection of faith and policy, began its first annual Forum held in the United States today with a [Disagree Better](#)-sponsored dialogue at the Historic Tabernacle at Temple Square. Utah Gov. Spencer Cox, former South Carolina Gov. David Beasley and Martin Luther King III urged faith communities to lead the way out of an era of contempt, and the afternoon closed with Jewish and Muslim leaders signing the Jewish–Muslim Declaration of Fraternity in Faith.

Cox, who launched Disagree Better as chair of the National Governors Association in 2023, said his deepest worry is what is happening in homes and neighborhoods. Five years ago, he noted, only 5 percent of Americans had lost a family member or close friend to politics; today that figure is five times higher. Disagreeing better, Cox stressed, is not about giving up your principles, but about being who you are while staying curious and acting with charity and love.

“Politicians are not worth it. We are not worth it,” Cox said. “We are not worth losing a single friend or family member — we will let you down every time. So value your friends more than you value the politics.”

Real change, he said, starts with serving our neighbors — “that’s actually how we fix the world. One conversation, one disagreement, one act of service at a time.”

Beasley, who led the UN World Food Programme when it received the 2020 Nobel Peace Prize, said his years fighting hunger in the world’s most war-torn places taught him that everyone is our brother and sister. He recalled working to open ports while children in Yemen were dying of starvation.

“Each child is not a statistic or a number. They’re my little brother, my little sister,” Beasley said. “That’s what keeps me positive. Together we can overcome anything and everything we need.”

He also pointed to the families of the victims of the 2015 Charleston church shooting, who publicly forgave the gunman within days, as proof that “love is the most powerful weapon on the planet,” and challenged everyone in the room to break bread this week with someone different from them.

King built his remarks around the choice at the heart of his father’s final book, *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?* What the country is doing now is not sustainable, he said, and it must choose community over chaos.

“Communities are sustained by the values they believe in, but they’re also sustained by leadership, particularly faith leadership,” King said. “When faith does what it’s supposed to do instead of pulling people apart, community is advanced.”

That choice is personal for King, whose father was assassinated when he was 10 and whose grandmother was later killed inside her church.

“I could have easily chosen to hate,” he said. “But I’m so grateful for what my family taught me: to hate the act, but not the person.”

All three panelists returned to the same point: none of this happens on its own. King said better communities, like strong marriages, have to be worked at; Cox said listening to understand rather than to argue is a choice, and it takes work; and Beasley urged the audience not to get discouraged. As King put it: “We can, we must, and we will do better.”

The session then moved from disagreeing better to building something together. Imam Dr. Talib Shareef and Rabbi Dr. Yakov Nagen, leaders of the [Jewish–Muslim Fraternity Project](#) launched at the 2025 IF20 Summit in Cape Town, returned with the Jewish–Muslim Declaration of Fraternity in Faith. Rooted in the sacred sources of both traditions, the Declaration moves beyond tolerance and coexistence toward a relationship in which each community honors and elevates the other.

Shareef said their collaboration had reinforced one core conviction.

“We aren’t here to coexist,” Shareef said. “We’re here to co-elevate.”

He warned that the greatest danger facing the world is not disagreement itself but the hardening of hearts, and called on both communities to refuse to inherit the hatreds of history.

“Our scars should not divide us,” he said. “They should make us healers.”

Nagen said that real differences between the two faiths should deepen their fraternity rather than diminish it, and gave the audience homework: find a friend from another tradition.

“Let us not just ask, ‘Can I tolerate you?’ but, ‘What can I learn from you?’” Nagen said.

After reading and signing the Declaration, Shareef and Nagen invited attendees to add their own signatures in the days ahead.

The session, moderated by Deseret News Editor Sarah Jane Weaver, took place October 15, 2026, from 3:30 to 5:00 p.m. MDT. The Forum continues October 16–17 at the University of Utah under the theme “Resilient Hope, Shared Future,” including a follow-up session on the Declaration, “The Abrahamic Family: Shared Values, Deep Roots, Joint Action.” The full program is available at g20interfaith.org/2026-forum-program.

Speakers included:

- **Sarah Jane Weaver (Moderator)** — Editor of the Deseret News and the first woman to hold the role since the paper’s founding in 1850. She previously spent nearly three decades at the Church News, leading it as editor from 2017 and expanding its reach through translation, video and podcasting.

- **Gov. Spencer J. Cox** — Governor of Utah. As chair of the National Governors Association, he launched [Disagree Better](#) in 2023, an effort to model healthy conflict in public life that has since become an independent nonprofit. He has served as governor since 2021.
- **Gov. David Beasley** — Leader of Breaking Bread Together, a national effort built on the idea that connection begins with a shared meal, and Governor of South Carolina from 1995 to 1999. As Executive Director of the UN World Food Programme from 2017 to 2023, he led the agency through the period in which it received the 2020 Nobel Peace Prize.
- **Martin Luther King III** — Humanitarian, civic leader and Ambassador for Global Human Rights. The eldest son of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Coretta Scott King, he has spent decades advancing his parents' legacy of nonviolent social change, including as president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and president and CEO of The King Center.
- **Imam Dr. Talib M. Shareef** — President of the International Coalition for Peace and Reconciliation and President and Imam of Masjid Muhammad, [The Nation's Mosque](#), in Washington, D.C. A U.S. Air Force veteran of more than 30 years, he was the first imam with military service to open a session of the U.S. Congress in prayer. He is a leader of the Jewish-Muslim Fraternity Project.
- **Rabbi Dr. Yakov Nagen** — President of the Jerusalem Interfaith Center. He directs Ohr Torah Stone's Bickel Institute for Interfaith Dialogue, teaches at Yeshivat Otniel and has written ten books on Jewish spirituality, Talmud and interfaith relations. He is a leader of the Jewish-Muslim Fraternity Project.

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.

About Disagree Better

Disagree Better is a nonpartisan initiative that equips citizens, leaders and influencers to navigate hard conversations without abandoning their principles or the dignity of their neighbors. Launched in 2023 by Utah Gov. Spencer Cox as his National Governors Association Chair's Initiative, it is now an independent nonprofit. Learn more at disagreebetter.us.

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