

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Metropolitan Emmanuel of Chalcedon Urges Honest Dialogue and Care for Creation as G20 Interfaith Forum Opens

Salt Lake City, October 15, 2026 — His Eminence Elder Metropolitan Emmanuel of Chalcedon of the Ecumenical Patriarchate called for a shared future built on honest dialogue and care for creation at the Opening Ceremony of the G20 Interfaith Forum (IF20) on Thursday evening. He spoke at the Historic Tabernacle at Temple Square to what the Church History Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has confirmed is the largest gathering of interfaith leaders ever assembled in Utah, as the IF20 opened its first annual Forum held in the United States.

The Metropolitan brought greetings from Constantinople, where, he noted, his Church has lived for 17 centuries. In the Forum's theme, "Resilient Hope, Shared Future," he said, the word "shared" carries special meaning for Greeks, because it has the same root as the word for community.

He recalled the Apostle Paul speaking to the Athenians, a people of many faiths. Rather than begin with what separated them, Paul told them that God made all people, quoting one of their own poets: "for we are all his offspring." Difference, the Metropolitan said, is part of creation's design.

"Variety belongs to creation itself. Two leaves of the same tree are never entirely alike," he said. "In the Tabernacle Choir, the bass doesn't ask the soprano to come down to his own range. It's beautiful because the voices remain different."

He described patience in its original Greek sense of remaining underneath: bearing the weight and not walking away, enduring even when circumstances are hard.

The shared future, he said, belongs to the earth as well. Abraham was promised that he would be the father of "many nations," and whenever humanity has kept that commitment only to the first generation, he said, the results are plain to see in our rivers and forests. He called on faith leaders to protect creation and the earth, tying the health of the natural world to the health of the spiritual one.

"A crisis with man's relationship with God becomes a crisis with his relationship with creation," the Metropolitan said.

Making a difference starts with honest dialogue, he said, a dialogue "measured in years, in people who return again and again to the same temple." He also called on every tradition to ask, when needed, "those of our own who use the name of God against their neighbor, to change."

Earlier on Thursday, the Metropolitan took part in closed meetings with senior religious leaders on a new multifaith advisory council for the IF20. Drawing on decades of interfaith engagement in G7 and G20 settings, he urged the council to bring something genuinely new to the table rather than hold conferences for their own sake, and expressed hope that it will succeed where earlier efforts have not.

President Dallin H. Oaks of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints hosted the ceremony, calling the assembly “the most prominent constellation of faith leaders that has ever gathered in Salt Lake City.” Michael O. Leavitt, President of The Tabernacle Choir at Temple Square, conducted, and Sheikh Dr. Mohammed bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa, Secretary General of the Muslim World League, delivered the opening keynote as guest of honor.

Archbishop Gabriele Caccia, Apostolic Nuncio to the United States, delivered a message on behalf of the Holy See, asking whether the progress G20 leaders seek will serve the human person.

“Technology offers extraordinary possibilities, but it does not tell us what is good,” Caccia said. “We still need to ask the questions of whom progress is serving and whether it is serving them well. This is where faith leaders have something to offer.”

Rabbi Mark Dratch, Chair of the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations, spoke of a people who have refused to let go of hope throughout their history.

“We hold fast to God, to one another, and to a future we cannot yet see but we are willing to work for starting today,” Dratch said. “We are, each and every one of us, prisoners of hope.”

Other speakers included IF20 President W. Cole Durham and Vice President Katherine Marshall, Sheikh-ul-Islam Allahshukur Pashazadeh, Pujya Sadhvi Bhagawati Saraswati and Dr. Francis Kuria Kagema, Secretary General of Religions for Peace. Bishop Alastair Redfern and Lord Russell Rook offered the opening and closing prayers, and The Tabernacle Choir at Temple Square performed throughout.

The Opening Ceremony took place October 15, 2026, from 7:30 to 9:00 p.m. MDT. The Forum continues October 16–17 at the University of Utah under the theme “Resilient Hope, Shared Future,” ahead of the G20 Leaders’ Summit in Miami on December 14–15. The full program is available at g20interfaith.org/2026-forum-program.

Speakers included:

- **His Eminence Elder Metropolitan Emmanuel of Chalcedon** — Ecumenical Patriarchate
- **Michael O. Leavitt (Conducting)** — President, The Tabernacle Choir at Temple Square; former Governor of Utah and U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services
- **President Dallin H. Oaks** — President, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
- **Sheikh Dr. Mohammed bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa (Guest of Honor and Opening Keynote)** — Secretary General, Muslim World League
- **Archbishop Gabriele Caccia (Message on Behalf of the Holy See)** — Apostolic Nuncio to the United States
- **Prof. W. Cole Durham** — President, G20 Interfaith Forum Association
- **Prof. Katherine Marshall** — Vice President, G20 Interfaith Forum Association
- **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

Full speaker bios are available in the [2026 Forum Directory](#).

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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