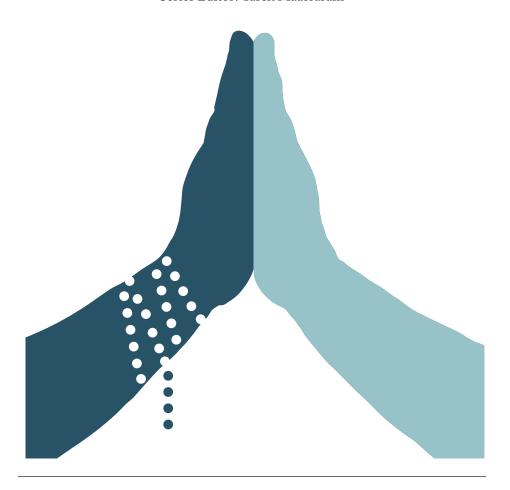# Religion *and* Reconciliation

ACTION GUIDE

Religion *and* Reconciliation

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UNITED STATES
INSTITUTE OF PEACE
Making Peace Possible

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Getting Started

THIS ACTION GUIDE will help those who are moved to organize, facilitate, or support reconciliation efforts where faith matters to those involved. It is intended to be of use to both religious and secular practitioners who already have a basic understanding of reconciliation.[1] The Guide will also interest religious and civil society leaders, diplomats, funders, and staff of various local and international organizations.

For the purposes of this Guide, *reconciliation* is the process by which adversaries move toward right relations, whether this is between family members or coworkers, victims and offenders of a crime, governments and rebel groups, or even large intergenerational identity groups such as Indigenous or enslaved peoples and descendants of settlers or slaveholders. We understand *adversaries* to be the individuals and groups involved in conflict or harm and *right relations* as healthy and sustainable relationships. *Moving toward* suggests that reconciliation is ongoing and dynamic, sometimes lasting beyond the timeline of a specific initiative.

Communal Restoration in Andean Tradition

"In our language, there is no word for 'forgiveness' but a strong practice of restorative justice. We focus on sustainable change on the part of the individual—but this is done by collectivizing justice. The individual is often not present in discussions, where responsibility for restitution and guarantees of non-repetition extend to the family. This is more sustainable; the individual feels greater shame [for failure] if the responsibility is more public, and success is shared more widely and completely."

—*Wayúu Andean spiritual leader*

Source: Coauthor James Patton's notes taken during an interfaith dialogue on reconciliation held in Bogotá in 2017.

Peacebuilding balances three important goals: rebuilding relationships, settling disputes, and recreating social structures. Reconciliation in this Guide deals primarily with the first of these goals, the pursuit of which includes healing, humanizing the other, reducing bias, and creating new patterns of interaction so that adversaries can better accomplish the latter two goals.

Reconciliation raises questions of justice: what is fair when harm has been done. Many nation-states use a penal approach to justice, whereas various cultures, at the community level, take a more restorative approach, as instanced in the textbox above. See table 1 for a comparison of the key features of the two approaches. Both can be used and even mixed in reconciliation efforts, but the latter has a greater focus on relationships.

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1   While *secular* is understood here as not explicitly affiliated with any specific religion but also not hostile to religion, some scholars argue that even secular approaches are implicitly religious because of the degree to which they have been informed by Protestant norms and values.

TABLE 1. **A comparison of penal justice and restorative justice**

FEATURE	PENAL JUSTICE	RESTORATIVE JUSTICE
What is being determined?	How a law, policy, code, or rule was violated	How harm was caused and relationships broken
Who plays a role?	An authority and the people involved in the violation or their legal representatives	The people involved and affected by the harm, their supporters, and facilitators
What is accountability?	When violators are punished	When those who harmed acknowledge the harm and seek to make amends
What are the goals?	To offset the wrong, rehabilitate the violator, and deter future violation	To restore balance and address the underlying needs that gave rise to the harm and resulted from the harm

This guide is part of a series of four Action Guides for religious peacebuilders. *Religion in Conflict and Peacebuilding: Analysis Guide (*hereafter referred to simply as the *Analysis Guide)* was published in 2018*; Religion and Mediation* (the *Mediation Guide*) appeared in 2021; and *Religion and Gender* (the *Gender Guide*) and *Religion and Reconciliation Guide* (the *Reconciliation Guide*) were published in 2023.[2] Each guide draws on examples from different regions and religions, including Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Judaism, and Islam. Not all religions are represented. Within the page limits of these guides, we have selected religions we consider relevant and widespread, though we aim for the concepts to apply to other faiths.

2   Owen Frazer and Mark Owen, *Religion in Conflict and Peacebuilding Analysis Guide* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace [USIP] Press, 2018), www.usip.org/sites/default/files/USIP_Religion-in-Conflict-Peacebuilding_Analysis-Guide.pdf; S. Ayse Kadayifci-Orellana and Tarek Maassarani, *Religion and Mediation Action Guide* (Washington, DC: USIP Press, 2021), www.usip.org/sites/default/files/Religion-and -Mediation-Action-Guide.pdf; and Sheherazade Jafari, *Religion and Gender Action Guide* (Washington, DC: USIP Press, 2023).

Understanding Religion

Religious traditions are complex and distinct. They are defined and expressed in different ways by different people from one context to another. This Guide defines religion as "a human response to a perceived nonphysical reality concerning the origin, meaning, and purpose of life."[3] Consider the five dimensions of religion, as described by Owen Frazer and Mark Owen in the *Analysis Guide* and shown in figure 1.[4] Considerations of religion's role in conflict are often incomplete because they do not include all of these dimensions.

- **Religion as a set of ideas:** A shared set of teachings, doctrines, norms, values, language, stories, and narratives that provides a framework for understanding and acting in the world

- **Religion as community:** A defined group of followers and believers that provides individuals with a sense of belonging to something bigger than themselves

- **Religion as institution:** The formal structures, leaders, and organizations associated with religious communities

- **Religion as symbols and practices:** The many visible manifestations of a religion, from buildings to dress to ceremonies and rituals

- **Religion as spirituality:** A personal experience that provides a sense of purpose and connectedness to something greater than oneself, as well as a powerful source of motivation

FIGURE 1. **Different dimensions of religion relevant to reconciliation**

How Religion Relates to Reconciliation

Faith traditions have a long history of practicing and encouraging reconciliation through prayer, meditation, and grieving. The five dimensions of religion help us understand the many ways religion can support a reconciliation process. These dimensions can also be dividers in a conflict and create obstacles to a reconciliation process.[5]

Spirituality in Reconciliation	An African Union reconciliation effort between Muslims and Christians in the Sudan was in danger of failing because Christian churches were in conflict and refused to engage with one another. In December 2012, a pastor brought a stadium full of them together for singing, preaching, guided meditation, prayer, and public confession, followed by restitution. At the end, a flame was passed from one person's candle to the next, symbolizing light replacing darkness amid singing and calling for the coming of Emmanuel. The next day, many Christians showed up to begin a three-day interfaith conference with Muslims. *Source:* From a personal experience of coauthor David Steele. See David Steele, "Creative Approaches to Conflict Transformation in Societies Affected by Extremist Religion," unpublished manuscript developed for the University of California, San Diego, 2013, 48, available at www.umb.edu/editor_uploads/images/centers_institutes/center_peace _democracy/CT_in_Societies_Affected_by_Extremist_Religion_by_D._Steele_for_UCSD.pdf.

Religious teachings, values, and stories shape how people think and act, motivating movement toward right relationship and defining what that means. The ancient languages used in the Abrahamic traditions (Hebrew, Greek, Arabic, and Latin) define reconciliation as the process of restoring right relationships.[6] Central concepts in Dharmic and indigenous belief systems include harmonious order, compassion, and the ultimate unity of all things.

Religion is a form of shared identity that brings participants together into community. For the dedicated believer, it can be the most important source of belonging. Shared identity can overcome other divisions and allows for those who are not directly involved in a reconciliation process to be represented by members of their group and makes it easier for them to accept the process and its outcomes.

Religion as an institution offers credible and influential people, extensive networks and channels of communication, and logistical and financial resources to support the outreach and recruitment, organizing and implementation, and follow-up of a reconciliation process.

Religion as symbol and ritual—including traditional dress, buildings, ceremonies, blessings, chants and songs, altars and candles, prayers, rites of passage, and lament practices—can enhance a reconciliation process. Lament practices are spiritual approaches to handling grief individually or collectively that have existed in various traditions around the world. Because of their association with the sacred, symbols and rituals bring meaning, purpose, and openness to the process.

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5 For examples of religion as a connector and divider, see pages 9–10 of the *Mediation Guide.*

6 Daniel Philpott, "Beyond Politics as Usual: Is Reconciliation Compatible with Liberalism?" in *The Politics of Past Evil: Religion, Reconciliation, and the Dilemmas of Transitional Justice*, ed. Daniel Philpott (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), 14–15.

Spiritual experiences can be a powerful motivation for reconciliation. They go beyond rational thought to shape one's emotional state, offering a way for participants to reflect upon, live out, and express visionary dreams, grief, love, forgiveness, and the sacred. The textbox on page 8 offers an example. It also illustrates the importance of intragroup reconciliation before intergroup engagement.

How to Use This Guide

This Guide will explore the strong connection between religion and reconciliation, taking a flexible approach that recognizes that any reconciliation initiative must fit a specific context and complement other peacebuilding efforts. We turn next to three guiding principles that are a foundation of all peacebuilding work. The second section of this Guide, "A Guiding Framework for Reconciliation," offers a tool for planning and implementing a reconciliation process with prompts for integrating the dimensions of religion. The third section discusses religious dimensions of several faith traditions as they relate to reconciliation. The fourth section offers practical guidance for practitioners. The fifth section presents a case study to illustrate the various concepts presented.

Throughout the Guide, you will find questions, figures, activities, and real-world examples of faith-based reconciliation processes. We encourage you to explore the other guides in the series, as well as the variety of texts and websites available on reconciliation (though they may define and treat reconciliation differently). Some of these are listed under "Additional Resources on Religion and Reconciliation" (pages 62–63).

Throughout this Guide, we use the term *actor* to identify any person or group involved in the conflict or in some way concerned by it. An actor can be an individual, organization, network, or institution. The term may refer to men and women of all ages. *Religious actors* refers both to formally recognized religious leaders and authorities such as the pope, the Grand Sheikh of Al-Azhar, and the Sangha Supreme Council of Thailand and to actors who are religiously inspired or connected (also referred to as *faith-based*) such as the internationally active humanitarian organization World Vision and a local village elder who is recognized for her religious wisdom. Religious actors may carry multiple religious, traditional, and secular identities.

We use *participants* to refer to individuals who are directly involved in the reconciliation process; facilitators are those individuals or organizations guiding it; and organizers are those supporting it. We use the singular (*facilitator* or *organizer*) and the plural (*facilitators* or *organizers*) interchangeably.

Three Guiding Principles

Do No Harm

The most important principle in peacebuilding is to avoid making a situation worse. Practitioners and organizers are not objective, passive actors within a conflict context. Their presence, who they do and do not engage with, what they say and do, and the issues they raise can all have an impact on the context.[7] Ensure that your interactions and intervention do not re-traumatize or put others at risk. And if they do, take responsibility and work to repair the harm. This is simply doing yourself what you expect of others. Do not skip over preparation, including the conflict analysis. Be trauma aware. Always aim for informed consent from your participants. If you are part of the conflict, recognize how you or your group contribute to it. If you are from outside the context, work with local partners who have deep local knowledge and are aware of issues that might be problematic. If you are not experienced in religious reconciliation, seek help from someone who is.

Be Self-Aware

We all have our own values, biases, assumptions, and expectations that we bring to any situation. Being aware of these is extremely important. We may not always be able to change them, but we can be aware of how they affect our role as a facilitator or organizer. How does your own religious or secular identity and experience influence your perception of the reconciliation process, its participants, and a just outcome? When working with actors of different religions, you will likely be confronted with values or beliefs that are not negotiable and are different from your own. How will you navigate these differences? How do you model what it means to accept and appreciate others' perspectives? Key to remaining open and flexible is committing to self-reflection and adopting techniques for regulating your emotions.

Embrace Complexity

Conflict rarely has simple causes or answers. Conflicts are complex, messy, and dynamic—and so are reconciliation processes. Adding religious elements and addressing religion's role in conflict introduces even more complexity. Do your best to understand the conflict and its context, select the right facilitators and participants, and design a meaningful process. And respond to challenges as they arise. Beyond this, you cannot control where the process will go. While you may hope for a particular outcome, do not get attached to it and then disengage from your role supporting the process when things do not go as expected. The success of a dynamic process is not always obvious at any one moment in time. Faith deals with transcendent realities, and thus success amounts to more than what can be measured.

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7 For further reading, see Mary Anderson, *Do No Harm: How Aid Can Support Peace—or War* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1999).

A Guiding Framework for Reconciliation

CONSIDER THE STATE that individuals or groups are in at the start of a reconciliation process. We may have acted violently, betrayed our own values, witnessed suffering and death, felt physical and emotional pain, and experienced loss. We may have done harm to others, received harm, or both. Even if the harm has stopped, we may continue to feel numbness, anger, shame, anxiety, shock, confusion, and guilt, and we may suffer from a variety of physical and psychological conditions associated with trauma or stress. Those of us who forget or overlook the past may be deeply unsettled when it is brought back to our attention.

And because all of this has happened in relation to another person or group, we may try to make sense of it by creating simple, yet powerful narratives about what happened, about ourselves as victims or as righteous actors, and about the "other" as aggressors, liars, or less than human. These beliefs protect us from facing the reality of our own actions. These polarizing narratives and identities provide meaning and a sense of security in a seemingly uncertain and unsafe world. They are focused on the past, deepen distrust, give rise to perceived threats and grievances, and justify renewed violence in the name of justice or revenge (as shown at the bottom of figure 2). These beliefs are difficult to change, and to suggest that they are wrong or need to be changed can be deeply upsetting.

A reconciliation process attempts to move actors out of this state of fixed tension, or spiraling violence, to a new state of openness, improved relationships, and hope for the future, as depicted by the upward spiral in figure 2. To make this move requires, first of all, that any violent interactions between participants stop, and second, that changes occur within the person or group (the "intra" level) and in the exchanges between them (the "inter" level). When, as is often the case, large-scale factors such as law, policy, and social norms have contributed to the harm, reconciliation also requires change at the institutional level. To guide you in designing, carrying out, and supporting this complex process of change, table 2 shows these three levels and the components of reconciliation at each.

Figure 2 shows how trauma, stress, perceived threats and grievances, polarizing narratives and identities, and institutional harms can feed cycles of violence and how the components of reconciliation can move actors toward peace and justice. Intrapersonal/intragroup components are found within the spirals, interpersonal/intergroup ones between them, and institutional components in the structure around them.

FIGURE 2. **The upward spiral of reconciliation**

TABLE 2. **Components of reconciliation at the intra, inter, and institutional levels**

INTRAPERSONAL/ INTRAGROUP LEVEL	INTERPERSONAL/ INTERGROUP LEVEL	INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL
• Processing the past	• Sharing stories	• Public truth telling
• Understanding those who have been harmed	• Acknowledging those who have been harmed	• Memorializing the past and the process
• Understanding those who have done harm	• Accepting those who have done harm	
• Releasing and mobilizing	• Taking reparative and integrative action	• Providing social support and redistribution
• Reconstructing narratives and identities	• Reconstructing relationships	• Reconstructing laws, policies, and norms

A process will generally move from top to bottom, and components on the intra level often go before those on the inter level; however, the process is not linear. Components may overlap or the process may shift back and forth unexpectedly, so be sensitive to even the smallest changes that open up new directions.[8] Each step demands vulnerability, energy, and resources, so move carefully and slowly. The whole process may continue for as long as the parties to that conflict, or their descendants, remain in contact, so build the capacity for them to continue the process beyond your own involvement.

Note that in some contexts, there is a clear distinction between those who have done harm and those who have been harmed. This may be less clear in other contexts, particularly where there is conflict between actors with similar degrees of power or where there are cycles of interpersonal, intergroup, and intergenerational violence. The way that violence can be transmitted from one actor to another is captured by the saying, "hurt people hurt people."[9] Keep this in mind as you determine what components to take on at which levels in what order.

What exactly is needed for each component will depend on the people involved and their circumstances, as well as the religious and social context. The textbox on page 14 demonstrates how some approaches may not be accepted, especially when introduced from the outside as explicit goals of a process. In preparing to design a process, ask yourself and other stakeholders:

1. How do you understand each component? What language is typically used for each?
2. Which components are important to you?
3. What is missing? What should be left out?

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8   As John Paul Lederach says, "Reconciliation looks through—at times goes through—what is visible and penetrates the deeper processes of perceptions, understandings, and interpretations of the purpose and meaning of a relationship, how it was constructed, and how it will be reconstructed." John Paul Lederach, "Five Qualities of Practice," in *Forgiveness and Reconciliation*, ed. Raymond G. Helmick and Rodney L. Petersen (Philadelphia: Templeton Foundation Press, 2001), 185.

9   In a related manner, Franciscan Friar Richard Rohr has suggested that "transformed people transform people." "Wounded Healers," Daily Meditations, Center for Action and Contemplation, October 26, 2018, https://cac.org/daily-meditations/wounded-healers-2018-10-26/.

4. What components have already been pursued and with what result?

5. How can you build on past reconciliation efforts and pursue new ones?

6. How do the dimensions of religion support the components you wish to pursue?

Don't Rock the Boat	After a retreat with monks in preparation for a dialogue on the role of the Buddhist Dharma and Sangha in reconciliation, local community members unexpectedly expressed frustration with the perceived pressure to engage in formal processes of revisiting historical memory and engaging in dialogue. "This is a Western imposition; our way is to move quietly on, to 'not rock the boat,'" said a community elder. He elaborated that a member of the Khmer Rouge living in his village had been directly involved in killing members of his family. "I don't seek to speak with him, but I also don't avoid him. We must live together, so we live together."
	Source: Personal experience of coauthor James Patton outside of Phnom Penh in 2003.

The rest of this section of the Guide provides summaries of each of the components, clustered around each row and generally moving from left to right in table 2.[10]

Processing, Sharing, and Truth Telling

This set of components typically happens first in a reconciliation process. By bringing attention and voice to what has happened and its impacts, these components are an important foundation for those that follow.

Processing the Past

Processing the past involves facing the memories and emotions of the past, taking in the full and painful weight of what has happened and why it matters. This can be achieved through personal reflection, through creative activities, or in conversation with those who will understand and affirm. Such understanding and affirming may come naturally for those who have gone through and processed, or are ready to process, similar experiences.

A reconciliation process encourages and supports participants to process on their own or with the facilitators and supporters.

Processing the past leads an individual or group to understand themselves as those who have been harmed, done harm, or both. And it is important for developing a story of what happened to be shared with the adversary.

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10 For further information about faith-based perspectives on most of these components, see David Steele, "An Introductory Overview to Faith-Based Peacebuilding," in *Pursuing Just Peace*, ed. Mark M. Rogers et al. (Baltimore: Catholic Relief Services, 2008), 22, www.crs.org/sites/default/files/tools-research/pursuing-just-peace.pdf.

TABLE 3. **Questions to reflect on the role of religion in processing the past**

COMPONENT	DIMENSIONS	KEY QUESTIONS
Processing the past	Set of ideas	What religious values, ideas, and stories encourage self-reflection and facing a painful past?
	Community	How can a religious community support its own members in facing the past, finding words, and expressing emotions?
	Symbols and practices	How can sacred objects, spaces, and rituals provide the space for processing?
	Spirituality	What religious experiences can inspire self-reflection?

Sharing Stories

By "sharing stories" we mean participating adversaries telling and listening to what happened and why it matters. Doing so can be challenging because of shame or fear of rejection, judgment, or blame. It is sometimes called "truth telling" and "truth listening"—"truth" here meaning not universally accepted or objective facts, but lived experiences and how we make sense of them, particularly when those experiences are not widely known. One's truth is communicated through words and the nonverbal expression of emotions. See the textbox below for what it means to listen for another's truth.

Facilitators can play a key role in preparing participants to talk and listen deeply and in determining when and how each will share their story in a way that is humanizing, authentic, and understandable.

Sharing stories between those involved in the harm helps participants to better understand one another. It is also important for creating formal spaces for public truth telling.

Truth Listening

"When I really want to hear another person's story, I try to leave my preconceptions at the door and draw close to their telling. . . . The most critical part of listening is asking what is at stake for the other person. I try to understand what matters to them, not what I think matters. . . . When the story is done, we must return to our skin, our own worldview, and notice how we have been changed by our visit."

—*Sikh activist Valerie Kaur*

Source: "Courageous Listening," Daily Meditations, Center for Action and Contemplation, July 26, 2022, https://cac.org/daily-meditations/courageous-listening-2022-07-26/.

TABLE 4. **Questions to reflect on the role of religion in sharing stories**

COMPONENT	DIMENSIONS	KEY QUESTIONS
Sharing stories	Set of ideas	What religious values, ideas, and stories encourage the telling of one's truth and listening to others?
	Community	How can a religious community support its own members in facing truth telling and truth listening?
	Symbols and practices	How can sacred objects, spaces, and rituals encourage sharing that is humanizing, authentic, and understandable?
	Spirituality	What religious experiences can inspire the vulnerable giving and receiving of stories and their significance?

Public Truth Telling

Public truth telling involves opening formal spaces for stories to become public in social conflicts that have impacted nearly everyone in a given community or country. It can include establishing truth commissions and organizing other public events that provide a platform for those who have been harmed and done harm to tell their stories and be heard and recorded.

A reconciliation process can help institutionalize storytelling in this way to engage large numbers of people, including future generations, and lift up the stories that are not well known.

Public truth telling creates the material with which to memorialize the past. It also leads to a greater and widespread understanding of those who have been harmed and done the harm.

TABLE 5. **Questions to reflect on the role of religion in public truth telling**

COMPONENT	DIMENSIONS	KEY QUESTIONS
Public truth telling	Set of ideas	What religious values, ideas, and stories encourage participation in public truth telling?
	Community	How can a religious community or identity encourage participation in public truth telling?
	Institution	How can religious networks and leaders support a platform for public truth telling so that participants' stories reach their audience and are regarded as credible?
	Symbols and practices	What role do sacred spaces and holidays have in public truth telling?
	Spirituality	How can the powerful spiritual experience of public truth telling be brought out?

Understanding, Acknowledgment, Acceptance, and Memorialization

With attention and voice on what has happened, individuals and groups in a reconciliation process begin to relate to their own experiences and one another differently. These are powerful shifts that correspond with the building of empathy and trust.

Understanding Those Who Have Been Harmed

This component involves the individuals and groups who have caused harm developing a nuanced and compassionate understanding of the harm they have caused to the other, as well as the harmed actors better understanding their own experiences. It starts the internal process of letting go of the simple, yet powerful internal narratives about what happened, about themselves as victims or as righteous actors, and about the other as aggressors, liars, or less than human. It often emerges from the state of empathy that is created through the sharing of stories and expression of emotions.

Facilitators can play an important role in encouraging participants to listen, reflect upon, and consider others' experiences during separate preparatory meetings and joint sessions.

Not until the harm and those who experienced it are understood can they be meaningfully acknowledged.

TABLE 6. **Questions to reflect on the role of religion in understanding those who have been harmed**

COMPONENT	DIMENSIONS	KEY QUESTIONS
Understanding those who have been harmed	Set of ideas	What religious values, ideas, and stories encourage participants to understand the suffering of others?
	Community	How can a religious community support its own members in listening, reflecting upon, and considering the story of the other?
	Symbols and practices	How can sacred objects, spaces, and rituals support compassion and nuance?

Acknowledging Those Who Have Been Harmed

Acknowledgment, here, happens between participants and has three active parts: (1) affirming the other's story as their truth (though not necessarily agreeing with all of it); (2) taking responsibility for how one's actions contributed to the harm or failed to prevent it; and (3) authentically expressing emotions such as regret, shame, or sadness that the first two parts bring up. In acknowledgment, the attention stays on the speaker.

Facilitators can prepare a participant in advance, sense when they are ready, and then ask them to verbally acknowledge the other. However, acknowledgment may not always be expressed in words.

It can look like defensiveness turning into silence, the softening of body language, apologizing, or expressing remorse. Facilitators can pick up on subtle signs of acknowledgment and make sure they are received.

When the person being acknowledged receives it as genuine, acknowledgment serves as confirmation that one is considered worthy. Even small expressions of acknowledgment can inspire an emotional shift toward release, an exchange of acknowledgments in all directions, and an openness to understanding those that harmed them.

TABLE 7. **Questions to reflect on the role of religion in acknowledging those who have been harmed**

COMPONENT	DIMENSIONS	KEY QUESTIONS
Acknowledging the harm	Set of ideas	What religious values, ideas, and stories encourage a person to affirm, take responsibility, and express emotion?
	Community	How can a religious community support its own members in acknowledgment?
	Institution	What religious networks, platforms, and leaders make acknowledgment meaningful and visible?
	Symbols and practices	How do sacred objects, spaces, and traditions around confession, repentance, and atonement help participants express recognition of the other?
	Spirituality	What religious experiences shift participants into expressing regret, shame, or sadness?

Understanding Those Who Have Done Harm

This component involves starting to replace participants' simple and dehumanizing internal narratives of what happened with a more nuanced and compassionate understanding of those who have harmed and what led them to do so. This process of replacement can flow naturally from the state of empathy that is created when there has been real acknowledgment.

In addition to the preparation and facilitation techniques they provide, facilitators can offer guidance regarding the timing and order of the process, thereby playing an important role in the sensitive task of building understanding for those who have done harm.

This kind of understanding for those who have done harm is critical for those who have been harmed to accept them and the harm.

TABLE 8. **Questions to reflect on the role of religion in understanding those who have done harm**

COMPONENT	DIMENSIONS	KEY QUESTIONS
Understanding those who have done harm	Set of ideas	What religious values, ideas, and stories encourage participants to understand those who have harmed?
	Community	How can a religious community help its own members to understand and recognize the story of the other?
	Symbols and practices	How can sacred objects, spaces, and rituals support compassion and nuance?

Accepting Those Who Have Done Harm

Acceptance, here, has to do with the acts and expressions of rehumanization that happen between the participants. It may involve explicit words of forgiveness or take more subtle forms such as a softening of body language or expressions of concern, care, and curiosity.

If the facilitator or others place expectations on participants or otherwise pressure them to forgive and forget when they are not yet ready to do so, acceptance may be delayed. At worst, it may not happen at all or the process may add to the existing harm and lead to renewed cycles of violence. Once signs of acceptance appear, facilitators can make sure they are received.

Acts of acknowledgment and acceptance are connected to the internal experience of release and also provide the materials with which institutions can memorialize the past.

TABLE 9. **Questions to reflect on the role of religion in accepting those who have done harm**

COMPONENT	DIMENSIONS	KEY QUESTIONS
Accepting those who have done harm	Set of ideas	What religious values, ideas, and stories encourage a person to express acceptance or forgiveness?
	Community	How can a religious community support its own members in accepting or forgiving?
	Institution	What religious networks, platforms, and leaders make acceptance meaningful and visible?
	Symbols and practices	How do sacred objects, spaces, and traditions around forgiveness, repentance, and atonement help participants express recognition of the other?
	Spirituality	What religious experiences shift participants into expressing concern, care, and curiosity?

Memorializing the Past and the Process

Memorializing the past is about finding lasting ways to publicly honor the stories, acknowledgments, and acceptances emerging from a reconciliation process in social conflicts that have impacted nearly everyone in a given community or country. It can include memorials and days of remembrance, as instanced in the textbox below.

Sorry Day in Australia	Despite initial resistance from the national government, most of the state parliaments and churches in Australia organized thousands of grassroots events in 1997 to share the stories of Aboriginal people who had been abducted as children. Apology, acknowledgment of responsibility, and requests for forgiveness were made publicly. Since then, Sorry Day has become an annual day of remembrance, for which the Australian government built a memorial in 2004. *Source:* John Bond, "From Saying 'Sorry' to a Journey of Healing: National Sorry Day in Australia," in *People Building Peace II: Successful Stories of Civil Society*, ed. by Paul van Tongeren et al. (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2005), 647–652.

In pushing for institutions to honor the past and the process, a reconciliation process expands its reach across society and generations.

This public memorialization of stories, acknowledgments, and acceptances provides the basis for social support and redistribution to take place, as well as for the reconstruction of narratives, identities, relationships, and institutions on a wide scale.

TABLE 10. **Questions to reflect on the role of religion in memorializing the past and the process**

COMPONENT	DIMENSIONS	KEY QUESTIONS
Memorializing the past and the process	**Set of ideas**	What religious values, ideas, and stories justify memorializing the past?
	Institution	How can religious networks and leaders support memorialization activities so that they have reach and credibility?
	Symbols and practices	What role do sacred spaces and holidays have in memorialization?
	Spirituality	How can the powerful spiritual experience of honoring the past be brought out?

Release, Action, and Support

This set of components builds on those before it to inspire an orientation and movement toward the future.

Releasing and Mobilizing

Release refers to the internal process of separating the past from the future, the painful actions from those who carried them out. Release embraces the truth expressed by Bryan Stevenson, a US advocate for the rights of prisoners: "Each of us is more than the worst thing we have done."[11] As the past cannot be undone, a person who is equated with the harm they have done becomes forever incapable of change and the person they have harmed forever a powerless victim. Without release, the future is trapped in the past for both. With release comes renewed hope, a focus on the future, and motivation to take action.

Release is closely tied to each individual's or group's own journey of grieving, redemption, healing, and sometimes learning to live with the pain. It is best supported by providing the psychosocial support of professionals or healers, as well as innovative techniques that engage the body and allow for creative expression or group processing of emotions such as lament practices.[12] Release may occur suddenly or slowly, and it may happen before, during, or well after a reconciliation process.

TABLE 11. **Questions to reflect on the role of religion in releasing and mobilizing**

COMPONENT	DIMENSIONS	KEY QUESTIONS
Releasing and mobilizing	Set of ideas	What religious values, ideas, and stories can support those who have suffered or done harm in shifting from past to future and separating the harm from the person?
	Community	How can a religious community provide spaces for grieving, redemption, and healing?
	Institution	What facilities and resources help participants access psychosocial and spiritual support?
	Symbols and practices	What sacred objects, spaces, and lament practices encourage release?
	Spirituality	What religious experiences, including lament, build resilience, and transform helplessness into hopefulness?

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11 Bryan Stevenson, *Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption* (New York: Spiegel and Grau, 2014), 17.

12 In the Abrahamic traditions, lament practices typically include bringing one's suffering before God in detailed, graphic, and even overstated ways; calling on God to save one from evil with specific, and sometimes extreme, cries for help; and leaving justice to God once one's needs and demands have been fully voiced, confident and grateful that God has heard and will respond even if that response is not immediately visible.

> ## "I have given up all hope of a better past."
>
> *—A Jew upon giving up the search for the Nazi collaborator who betrayed him.*
> *As told to coauthor David Steele by Landrum Bolling,*
> *a Quaker peacebuilder working for Mercy Corps and co-leading various workshops*
> *with Steele in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s.*

Taking Reparative and Integrative Action

Sometimes called "doing accountability," reparative action includes restitution, actions to prevent harm from occurring again, and symbolic acts that demonstrate sincere acknowledgment or acceptance. It may even mean accepting jail time or other penalties (see the textbox "Sulha in Practice" on page 41). Integrative action is the practical way that participants come to live and interact with each other and may include supporting the reintegration of harming individuals back into the community after time in prison or battle zones.

Facilitators can make any action more relevant, meaningful, and sustainable by ensuring that participants decide upon it together. Collaborative action also builds trust—a fact that a reconciliation process can benefit from even in its early stages by encouraging small acts of collaboration, as illustrated in the textbox below.

Cooking across Dividing Lines	On the first evening of an interfaith gathering of youth leaders from Sri Lanka's diverse and conflicted ethnoreligious communities following the end of the country's twenty-six-year civil war, coauthor and facilitator Tarek Maassarani provided participants with a variety of ingredients and asked them to make dinner together. To increase the challenge, Tarek, tied the arms or legs of some participants to the arms or legs of others and blindfolded some. The youth collaborated to finish the meal, then ate together with great pride and enjoyment. *Source:* Personal experience of coauthor Tarek Maassarani at an interfaith gathering Organized by the Centre for Peacebuilding and Reconciliation in Colombo, August 2013.

Collaborative interpersonal and intergroup action leads to long-term reconstruction of narratives and identities. It may also be needed for institutional forms of action to take place in large social conflicts.

TABLE 12. **Questions to reflect on the role of religion in taking reparative and integrative action**

COMPONENT	DIMENSIONS	KEY QUESTIONS
Taking reparative and integrative action	Set of ideas	What religious values, ideas, and stories can guide action toward repair and integration?
	Community	What action will be meaningful for others in the religious community who have done or experienced harm?
	Institution	What religious networks, platforms, leaders, and resources can support action?
	Symbols and practices	How can sacred objects, spaces, and rituals contribute to collaborative action?
	Spirituality	How can religion shape action that is experienced as transformative and healing?

Providing Social Support and Redistribution

Whereas reparative and integrative action addresses the emotional and material needs of participants that remain unmet by the reconciliation process, institutional action can meet the needs of those affected by social conflict and widespread harm who have not been directly involved in the process. Forms of social support and redistribution include reparations; psychosocial services; demobilization, disarmament, and reintegration (DDR) programs (see the textbox below); and joint economic or community improvement projects.

DDR and Reconciliation

DDR programs are important for preventing renewed violence in postconflict situations where former combatants face rejection, stigma, or retaliation and may have limited employability, underdeveloped social skills, and significant trauma. According to a former guerilla fighter who participated in Colombia's DDR program:

> When I demobilized I didn't trust the government, but I had no other option than to enter the DDR program. I reacted to everything with defensive justifications based on my own pain. One day, I realized that although that pain was real, it didn't excuse my own actions and the damage that they had caused. My pain did not justify hurting others; I began to separate the two, allowing me to deal with both.

Source: As told to coauthor James Patton.

Collaboration with or input from those receiving institutional support is empowering and important to effective, sustained broader reconciliation within society.

Meeting the needs of the larger community creates the stable social space for the long-term reconstruction of narratives, identities, relationships, laws, policies, and norms.

TABLE 13. **Questions to reflect on the role of religion in providing social support and redistribution**

COMPONENT	DIMENSIONS	KEY QUESTIONS
Providing social support and redistribution	Set of ideas	What religious values, ideas, and stories can justify institutional efforts toward social support and redistribution?
	Community	How can religious community advocate for and support institutional efforts?
	Institution	How can religious networks, leaders, and resources support programs, services, reparations, projects, and reintegration?
	Symbols and practices	How can sacred objects, spaces, and rituals enhance public efforts?

Reconstruction

These components represent the long-term work of reconciliation. They reshape the actors, their relationships, and their institutions, allowing for the new social structures to develop that are needed for peacebuilding to be sustainable.

Reconstructing Narratives and Identities

A reconciliation process reshapes our beliefs about what happened and who we are, giving rise to new narratives and identities that can in turn serve as a new source of meaning, security, and certainty. Perceptions, beliefs, and even memory change as space for reflection is created; needs met; humanizing stories shared and understood (and combined); trust built; and power, healing, and safety experienced.

Facilitators can continue to provide the space for participants to reflect and express their narratives and identities throughout the reconciliation process.

The reconstruction of narrative and identities opens the door to the deeper reconstruction of relationships.

TABLE 14. **Questions to reflect on the role of religion in reconstructing narratives and identities**

COMPONENT	DIMENSIONS	KEY QUESTIONS
Reconstructing narratives and identities	Set of ideas	What religious values, ideas, and stories offer material for new beliefs about the past and oneself?
	Community	How can new narratives and identities create more inclusive community?
	Symbols and practices	How can sacred objects, spaces, and rituals represent or enhance new narratives and identities?
	Spirituality	What spiritual experiences motivate the reconstruction of narratives and identities?

Reconstructing Relationships

Reconstructing relationships here means the long-term building of new relations between former adversaries, particularly when separating the adversaries geographically and socially or ending their relationship is not an option. In some interpersonal and most intergroup situations, participants from one side of a conflict must continue to live and work alongside participants from the other side.

As shown in the textbox below, a reconciliation process can prepare participants to collaborate, share space and resources, negotiate, and communicate constructively with one another through training, practice, agreements, and modeling.

Jumping out of an Airplane Together

In the 2000s, the Colombian military had rounded up young men from the poorest neighborhoods around Bogotá, where sewage runs through the streets and houses are built of scrap metal. They drove them into the hills, executed them, dressed them in guerilla uniforms, photographed them, and buried them in mass graves. They submitted the pictures in field reports to get additional vacation and bonuses. The mothers of these "false positives," as the scandal came to be known, formed an advocacy group demanding justice and supporting one another as they coped with their loss. Through a slow process of reconciliation, facilitated by faith and community leaders and supported by government action, the commanders and mothers came together to share their stories. The commanders, who faced official punishment, still sought the forgiveness of these victims, acknowledging the horror of their actions and accepting the judgment of these women. Some women were ready to accept these men, separate them from their actions, and construct a new relationship based on compassion and mutual healing. One of their leaders came to trust the repentance of the colonel who commanded the responsible battalion, so much so that she jumped out of an airplane with him in a tandem skydive.

Source: From coauthor James Patton's conversation with one of the mothers, July 2022.

Reconstructing relationships allows for the reconstruction of laws, policies, and norms.

TABLE 15. **Questions to reflect on the role of religion in reconstructing relationships**

COMPONENT	DIMENSIONS	KEY QUESTIONS
Reconstructing relationships	Set of ideas	What religious values, ideas, and stories can define new relations between adversaries?
	Community	How to model relationship building for, and expand it to, the wider religious community?
	Institution	How can religious networks, leaders, and resources help build capacity and expand opportunity for living and working side by side?
	Symbols and practices	How can sacred objects, spaces, and rituals define new ways of living and interacting with each other?
	Spirituality	How can religion provide ongoing transformative relationship building experiences?

Reconstructing Laws, Policies, and Norms

This component focuses on the enduring institutional changes a reconciliation process can help generate that are designed to address the structural causes and impacts of social conflicts and harms such as discrimination, prejudice, oppression, colonization, and authoritarianism.

A reconciliation process must influence policymaking or generate widespread public support if it is to change laws, policies, and norms.[13]

TABLE 16. **Questions to reflect on the role of religion in reconstructing laws, policies, and norms**

COMPONENT	DIMENSIONS	KEY QUESTIONS
Reconstructing laws, policies, and norms	Set of ideas	What religious values, ideas, and stories justify structural change or suggest new laws, policies, and norms?
	Community	How can religious community and identity be mobilized around institutional change?
	Institution	How can religious networks and leaders build public support or influence policymaking?

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13 For guidance on mobilizing social change, see Nadine Bloch and Lisa Schirch, *Synergizing Nonviolent Action and Peacebuilding—SNAP: An Action Guide* (Washington, DC: USIP Press, 2018), www.usip.org/publications/2019/04/snap-synergizing-nonviolent-action-and-peacebuilding.

Reconciliation in Diverse Faith Traditions

THIS SECTION SURVEYS some of the major dimensions of six religious traditions as they relate to the components of reconciliation. We also raise some of the challenges each faith brings to reconciliation, noting that limited inclusion of women and youth is a theme that cuts across all of them.[14] Indeed, to be a resource for reconciliation, it is important that religious communities pursue the components described in the previous section to stop, address, and heal from any harms they are directly responsible for.

We first look at two religions within the Dharmic tradition, Hinduism and Buddhism; then we turn our attention to the three religions within the Abrahamic tradition, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam; and we conclude by exploring Wayúu indigenous traditions.[15]

Reconciliation in Hinduism

Hinduism—a term European merchants and colonists used to refer to the many philosophies, gods, sects, and practices of India—is the oldest of the belief systems featured in this Guide. The Upanishads, the mystical parts of a broader collection of 3,000–4,000-year-old sacred texts called the Vedas, emphasizes the ultimate unity of all things and dharma, or the law that maintains the order of the universe. Hinduism guides followers in personal transformation, overcoming the illusion of division on a path toward purity and compassion, often over successive lifetimes. According to another revered Hindu text of a different lineage, the Bhagavat Purana, compassion is one of four values of righteous living. Among the essential rules for observing dharma, the ancient sage Manu further emphasized patience, forgiveness, and the absence of anger.

Two relevant traditional Hindu *upayas* (practices) are saam and daam. Saam uses meditation and mantras to promote calmness in situations that normally cause agitation. Daam is offering gifts or compensation as a part of ahimsa, the expression of love to ourselves and all other members of the human family. Rooted in the practices of saam and daam, satyagraha ("truth force" or "soul force") inspires followers

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14 For more discussion of religious peacebuilding and the ways it can contribute to injustice, see Atalia Omer, "Religious Peacebuilding: The Exotic, the Good, and the Theatrical," in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion, Conflict, and Peacebuilding*, ed. Atalia Omer, R. Scott Appleby, and David Little, Oxford Handbooks, online ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 2015).

15 We are indebted to two sources for many of the descriptions of both the Dharmic and all three Abrahamic religious traditions: Harvey Cox, "World Religions and Conflict Resolution" and William Vendley and David Little, "Implications for Religious Communities: Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, and Christianity," both of which are in *Religion: The Missing Dimension of Statecraft*, ed. Douglas Johnston and Cynthia Sampson (London: Oxford University Press, 1994).

to do what is right regardless of how others respond. These principles guided the Swadhyaya Movement (as described in the textbox below), as well as Mahatma Gandhi in leading a nonviolent struggle to end British colonial rule and foster harmony between Hindus and Muslims in postindependence India.

Practicing Saam, Daam, and Satyagraha

The Indian Swadhyaya Movement shows the power of Hindu principles. Based on the belief that everyone has divine skill and purpose, the movement encouraged residents of fishing villages who were caught in self-destructive and criminal activities to seek spiritual transformation. Fishermen set aside a portion of each day's catch at the feet of a god. Fruit orchards were planted on barren land. Water conservation projects turned arid land into farmland at one-tenth the normal cost. Farmers gave one-third of their crops to the poor with no obligation to repay. The movement is convinced that this inner transformation resulted in more communal reconciliation and socioeconomic development than most development programs.

Source: R. K. Srivastava, "Swadhyaya: A Movement Experience in India," in *Visions of Development,* ed. Wendy Tyndale (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 1988), 1–8.

Gandhi, in turn, inspired many others, from US civil rights activist Martin Luther King, Jr., to East European prodemocracy protesters, who adapted the satyagraha to the values and principles of their own faith traditions. Prayer, fasting, preaching, and religious vigils or pilgrimages have been among the religious practices used in nonviolent action. In Hinduism, fasting, in particular, is a form of worship; denying physical needs is to practice self-discipline and elevate the spirit. When the workers at textile mills were upset about their low wages in 1918, Gandhi fasted to capture the attention of those responsible and move the process toward resolution. This was the first of four fasts that Gandhi was ready to carry out until death.

TABLE 17. **Overview: connecting select dimensions of Hinduism to components of reconciliation**

INTRAPERSONAL/ INTRAGROUP LEVEL	INTERPERSONAL/ INTERGROUP LEVEL	INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL
Vedic values and ideas of unity, harmonious order, compassion, and personal transformation, as well as the practice of saam, support processing, understanding, release, and reconstructing narratives and ideas.	These values and ideas also support sharing stories, acknowledgment, acceptance, and reconstructing relationships. Saam supports sharing and daam taking action.	Satyagraha and fasting support reconstructing law, policies, and norms.

Among the challenges reconciliation work faces in contemporary Hindu contexts is rising intolerance toward Muslims and other faith communities. For example, India's largest political party, the Bharatiya Janata Party, and the Hindutva nationalist movement have favored self-preservation over the values of unity and compassion discussed above. Hindutva is a nationalist movement that regards Hinduism as a central component of Indian identity.

Furthermore, the continued existence of the caste system, rooted in the Hindu concept of dharma, which assigns different groups different social roles, maintains prejudice against people of lower

Hindu castes, particularly Dalits (or so-called untouchables). External intolerance and internal caste are key challenges facing reconciliation in Hinduism.

Reconciliation in Buddhism

Buddhism arose out of the Hindu context and as a rejection of casteism. It shares many of Hinduism's teachings, beliefs, and practices. There are two primary schools of Buddhism. The oldest, Theravada, claims to be closest to the original teaching of the Buddha and is predominant in Southeast Asia. The newer Mahayana school is predominant in Northeast Asia and includes Zen and Engaged Buddhism, which have become popular in the West. Differences between the two do exist, but the Sanskrit Sutras used by the Mahayana and the Pali Suttas used by the Theravada are both believed to be literally or metaphorically Buddha's words. Both value harmonious order, ultimate unity, and nonattachment to the self (*anatma*), as well as principled nonviolence and compassion, even for those who harm you.

Buddhist Meditation Practices	
	• **Mindfulness:** Bring awareness to the sensations and thoughts in the present moment without reacting to them. • **Breathing:** Take deep, intentional breaths, especially when you are anxious or tense. • **Contemplation:** Consider the infinite and eternal reality surrounding you and your situation. How does this perspective make a difference? • **Acceptance:** Instead of focusing on how things should be or could be, find acceptance with the current reality, remembering that this too shall change. • **Compassion:** Turn your attention to yourself, loved ones, friends, and then adversaries, saying, "May you be well, calm, peaceful, protected, free from hatred and filled with love." Imagine loving-kindness spreading from you to the entire world. • **Empathetic joy** (*mudita* in Sanskrit): find joy in the happiness and good fortune of others, starting with that of a friend, and working toward an equal joy for those who are difficult. *Sources:* Adapted from Nyanaponika Thera, *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation: A Handbook of Mental Training* (Sri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society, 1983), www.bps.lk/olib/bp/bp509s_Nyanaponika_Heart-of-Buddhist-Meditation.pdf; a mindfulness class, "Welcome to Yoga and Mindfulness!" taught by John McConnell at University of Vermont in fall 2012; and Ven. Buddhaghosa, "The Meditative Development of Unselfish Joy," excerpted from "The Path of Purification (Visuddhimagga)," in *Mudita: The Buddha's Teaching on Unselfish Joy* (Sri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society, 1983), www.bps.lk/olib/wh/wh170_Nyanaponika-Etal_Mudita--Four-Essays.html.

The Buddha taught the Four Noble Truths, which identify the cause of all suffering and one's liberation from it. The fourth truth (magga) points to the Eightfold Noble Path for living free of suffering. The Eightfold Noble Path encourages examining the self, letting go of false assumptions, accepting others' perceptions, and directing one's energies toward a better shared future. The textbox "Fools and Wise People" on the next page presents an example of how the Buddha's teachings encourage acknowledgment and acceptance. Buddhist meditations practices focus the

mind (mindfulness), reduce challenging emotions such as anger, and open the heart. As shown in the textbox above, these practices include mantras and prayers, visualizations, and reflections.

"Fools and Wise People"

From the Bala-pandita Sutta (AN 2:21)

"Monks, these two are fools. Which two? The one who doesn't see his transgression as a transgression, and the one who doesn't rightfully pardon another who has confessed his transgression. These two are fools."

"These two are wise people. Which two? The one who sees his transgression as a transgression, and the one who rightfully pardons another who has confessed his transgression. These two are wise people."

The Dhammayietra Peace Marches in Cambodia

The Dhammayietra ("Pilgrimage of Truth") began in 1992, when Venerable Maha Ghosananda led a thousand refugees and Buddhist monks on a four-week march from the Thai border. The pilgrimage has become an annual event that addresses issues such as communal violence, land mines, and deforestation. Participants are given training in Buddhist concepts and meditation. Some participants have been killed and others injured as they have walked through conflict zones.

Source: Yos Hut Khemacaro, "Steering the Middle Path: Buddhism, Non-violence and Political Change in Cambodia," in *Safeguarding Peace: Cambodia's Constitutional Challenge*, ed. Dylan Hendrickson, *Accord*, no. 5, November 1998, Conciliation Resources, https://rc-services-assets.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/Safeguarding_Peace _Cambodia%27s_Constitutional_Challenge_Accord_Issue_5.pdf

The textbox below shares reconciliation steps developed by Vietnamese monk and creator of the Order of Interbeing, Thích Nhất Hạnh, as part of the Engaged Buddhism movement during the Vietnam-US war. In their work, Hạnh, the Dhammayietra peace marchers described in the textbox above, the Dalai Lama, and many other activists and peacebuilders have built on Buddhist ideas and practices for reconciliation.

Reconciliation in Engaged Buddhism

- Participants sit face to face, communicating directly and surrounded by the whole community
- They remember the whole history of the conflict
- The senior monks advocate for an openness to other's perspectives (non-stubbornness)
- "Cover mud with straw": the monks express loving kindness to demonstrate care, de-escalate anger, and facilitate understanding
- The monks encourage voluntary confession
- All come to decisions by consensus
- Participants accept what the community committee proposes they do

Source: Thích Nhất Hanh, *Being Peace* (Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press, 1987), 77–81.

TABLE 18. **Overview: connecting select dimensions of Buddhism to components of reconciliation**

INTRAPERSONAL/INTRAGROUP LEVEL	INTERPERSONAL/INTERGROUP LEVEL
Buddhist values and ideas of harmonious order, unity, nonattachment, and compassion, as well as the practice of self-examination and meditation, support processing, understanding, release, and reconstructing narratives and ideas	These values, ideas, and practices also support sharing stories, acknowledgment, acceptance, and reconstructing relationships.

Despite these values and practices, there are also dynamics of intolerance in Buddhism. In the third century BCE, King Ashoka of India was seen as the embodiment of Buddhist values, but he led nonviolent campaigns to convert all his citizens and peoples of other lands as far away as Egypt. This promoted a belief in Buddhism's superiority in Southeast Asia. From Zen Buddhists' influence on Japan's radical militarism prior to World War II to Theravada monks calling for violence against other communities in Myanmar and Sri Lanka in the past decade, some Buddhist actors, stories, forms of identity, and ideas have been a source of conflict.

Buddhism's inward focus can be another challenge to reconciliation when it leads to disengagement from what is happening in the world. This tendency can be observed among the members of some monastic orders that insist on austere lifestyles. These monks, who are highly respected within their communities, passively disengage from addressing suffering in the world. In this way, the search for individual enlightenment may not contribute to active work for the good of society.

Reconciliation in Judaism

Judaism is the oldest Abrahamic faith and the origin of many concepts and practices adopted by Christianity and Islam. Judaism continues to develop and adapt, guided by its primary sacred texts, which include the Torah (the first five books of the Hebrew scriptures) and the Talmud (a compilation of the teachings of thousands of rabbis). The following values and practices are especially relevant to reconciliation: peace (*shalom* in Hebrew); justice (including *mispat*, the act of doing justice; *sedaqa*, the practice of "offering" for the sake of others; and *hesed*, just and righteous actions); truth (*emet* in Hebrew), which is dynamic and to be found in every encounter that furthers personal character and restoration of the world; confession and repentance; compassion (*gemilut hasadim*, literally meaning "the giving of loving-kindness"); and forgiveness.[16]

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16 David Blumenthal, "Repentance and Forgiveness," *Journal of Religion and Abuse* 7, no. 2 (2005): 70–72; and Marc Gopin, *Between Eden and Armageddon: The Future of World Religions, Violence, and Peacemaking* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 187–189.

Inviting God In: A Personal Teshuva Exercise

1. Where do you go inwardly to be yourself, to be safe, at peace?

2. What is unconditional love? Do you know someone who loves you unconditionally? What is that like?

3. What needs to be seen and let go?

4. However, lost, broken, and disconnected, return to the Source and let the waters of life bring you alive.

5. Find your soul's purpose. What does your heart know? Where do you come from? Where are you going? May you be blessed with fellow travelers on your journey. And let the future pull you.

6. Find a name or image of God you can work with, live with, and be grounded in.

Source: Adapted from Reclaiming Judaism, "Teshuva: Can We Invite God in Again? Hashpa'ah after the Shoah (Holocaust)," www.reclaimingjudaism.org/teachings/teshuvah-can-we-invite-god-again-hashpa%E2%80%99ah-after-shoah-holocaust.

The medieval Jewish philosopher and Talmud scholar Maimonides defined a Jew as one who is willing to forgive the other even after experiencing mass murder. Yet, in Judaism, forgiveness does not mean forgetting and requires acknowledgment of wrongdoing, repentance, and restitution. There are three levels to forgiveness: *mehilah* is offering pardon, which is expected when true repentance has been shown; *selicha* is recognizing and accepting the one who has offended as human; and *kaparah* (letting go of the past) and *taharah* (purification) constitute the highest form of forgiveness, though it can be granted only by God in its fullest sense.[17]

Tikkun olam means to "repair the world." It refers to the pursuit of social justice and forms the basis of teshuva, Judaism's fundamental reconciliation process. Teshuva is one of three major practices established by Rabbinic Judaism to replace the sacrificial rituals that had been conducted by priests in the temple. Ten days in the Jewish calendar between the first day of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are set aside for teshuva, though one can practice it at any time and it is considered an ongoing process. See the textbox above, "Inviting God In," for a personal teshuva reflection and the textbox on the next page, for the eight steps of teshuva as laid out by Maimonides. The first four steps take place amid crying and requests for forgiveness and, in the most serious cases, can involve changing one's name.

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17 David Blumenthal, "Repentance and Forgiveness," *Journal of Religion & Abuse* 7, no. 2 (2005): 72–74; and Henry Abrahamson, *Maimonides on Teshuvah: The Ways of Repentance*, accessed August 7, 2021, https://touroscholar.touro.edu/lcas_books/1, 37–38.

The Eight Steps of Teshuva, as Laid Out by Maimonides

1. Acknowledgment of wrongdoing

2. Confession to God and community

3. Deep public remorse

4. Public announcement not to sin again

5. Restitution: repayment of what was lost

6. Request for forgiveness three or more times, if necessary

7. Avoid the conditions that caused the offense (even moving to a new location)

8. Repentance: a commitment to not repeat the offense and even change one's identity ("I am no longer the person who did those things")

Source: Mark S. Rye et al., "Religious Perspectives on Forgiveness," in *Forgiveness: Theory, Research, and Practice*, ed. Michael McCullough, Kenneth Pargament, and Carl Thoresen (New York: Guilford Press, 2000), 32–33. Additional description of some steps from Marc Gopin, *Between Eden and Armageddon: The Future of World Religions, Violence, and Peacemaking* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 187–189.

Some interpretations of Judaism do not encourage forgiveness before there has been confession and repentance, which is seen as a Christian notion. At the same time, the influential political theorist and Holocaust survivor Hannah Arendt views unconditional forgiveness as a way to break from the past, and Rabbi Daniel Roth, who has directed both the Pardes Center for Judaism and Conflict Resolution and the Religious Peace Initiative, Mosaica, argues that it can prepare one to engage in a teshuva process with the other for full healing.[18] When Jews recite the special prayer, Tefilah Zakkah, during Yom Kippur, they are forgiving everyone who has slandered or injured them, whether or not there has been any acknowledgment of wrongdoing. The textbox on the next page presents a proposal for a broad application of teshuva to the Holocaust based on the discovery of stolen gold in Swiss banks.

Burying Swiss Gold

A member of a commission, which was appointed by the Swiss government in 1996 to investigate Jewish gold, wrote a letter calling on the Swiss government to bury all the gold in Swiss banks that the Nazis had stolen during the Holocaust. Scholar, practitioner, and director of the Center for World Religions, Diplomacy, and Conflict Resolution Rabbi Marc Gopin agreed, arguing that the burial of loved ones is a central part of Jewish mourning and the same is true of the gold from the teeth of incinerated Jews. Such symbolic acts could be seen as an authentic practice of teshuva that includes detailed confession, expression of deep remorse, and a commitment to change.

Source: Marc Gopin, *Between Eden and Armageddon* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 188–191.

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18 Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition,* 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); and Daniel Roth, "Tefilah Zakkah: Bilateral and Unilateral Forgiveness on the Eve of Yom Kippur," in "The Pardes Companion to Yom Kippur," Pardes Center for Judaism and Conflict Resolution, n.d., accessed August 1, 2021, https://sinaireno.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/24/2016/10/2016-09-19_Yom-kippur_booklet.pdf.

Jewish lament practices are also important to reconciliation, preparing participants for teshuva by promoting grieving without reactive violence. Notably, Tisha b'Av marks the end of three weeks of personal reflection and eight days of mourning in remembrance of the destruction of both temples in Jerusalem and the exile to Babylon. During this ninth day of the month of Av, the entire Book of Lamentations from the Hebrew scriptures is chanted. There is a sense that all Jews have been betrayed by humanity and by God, coupled with anger and despair against age-old adversaries as well as God. Yet, when the recitation nears the end, the entire congregation prays for God to save them: "Take us back, O Lord, to Yourself, and let us come back, renew our days as of old." It is an affirmation of God's covenant with the Jewish people and a choice to move forward in hope.[19]

TABLE 19. **Overview: connecting select dimensions of Judaism to components of reconciliation**

INTRAPERSONAL/ INTRAGROUP LEVEL	INTERPERSONAL/ INTERGROUP LEVEL	INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL
Jewish values and ideas of peace, justice, truth, confession and repentance, and forgiveness support understanding and reconstructing narratives and identities. The rituals of teshuva, lament practices, and the notion of *kaparah* support processing and release.	These values, ideas, and practices, particularly the steps of teshuva and practices such as *mispat, sedaqa,* and *hesed* support sharing stories, acknowledgment, acceptance, action, and reconstructing relationships.	*Tikkun olam* supports redistribution and reconstructing laws, policies, and reforms. Teshuva supports public truth telling.

Whereas many other faiths may view themselves as being universalist, Judaism's history and theology are rooted in an ancient conception of particularity. For many Jews, Judaism grows out of the Israelite covenant with God. The practices, traditions, and self-conception of Judaism can in some cases become a source of conflict in a pluralistic society. One example is the recent controversy over the education system run by the Hasidic community in New York. However, Judaism itself is far from monolithic, and it is important to recognize that many writers and thinkers across the wide array of Jewish traditions have enunciated and continue to express diverse understandings of identity, tradition, faith, and practice.

A history of genocide, forced assimilation, and removal among the Jewish diaspora has brought about fear, a strong motivation for self-protection, and distrust of other groups, which can all be a challenge for reconciliation efforts. Some forms of Zionism emphasize cultural and physical survival by all means necessary, regardless of the cost to other groups.

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19 Moshe Halbertal, "Eikhah and the Stance of Lamentation," in *Lament in Jewish Thought*, ed. Ilit Ferber and Paula Schwebel (De Gruyter, 2014), www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvbkjx96.6?seq=9#metadata_info_tab_contents.

Reconciliation in Christianity

Christianity began in the first century CE as a movement that split from Judaism to reconnect people, who had fallen into sin, with God. It made atonement available through the death of Jesus Christ. Over time, the Christian church spread and fragmented. In 1054, the Eastern Orthodox Church split from the Roman Catholic Church, and in 1517, the Protestant Reformation led to the creation of many decentralized Protestant denominations. The Bible (including the New Testament as well as the Hebrew scriptures of the Old Testament) is Christianity's primary sacred text, followed by writings of the Early Church Fathers.[20] Some movements such as Christian liberalism and evangelicalism, as well as specific practices and beliefs, cross denominational lines.

Go Down Moses

When Israel was in Egypt land, let my people go!
Oppressed so hard they could not stand, let my people go!
So God said: Go down Moses, way down in Egypt land
Tell all pharaohs to let my people go!

As in Judaism, peace and justice, confession and repentance, truth, forgiveness, and compassion are key concepts relevant to reconciliation. Confession may take place privately in different Christian churches, but it is closely linked to a call for repentance in all denominations. Informed by the New Testament, Christianity calls upon believers to forgive unconditionally and love one's enemy as God's creation, just as Jesus forgave his tormentors while being crucified.

Christian reconciliation involves the adjustment of difference, the restoration of harmony, and the renewing of friendship. In Latin, the historic language of Western Christianity, *concilium* means to work out differences "in council," *re* indicates "again," and *con* signifies "with." Put together, *re-conciliation* in Christianity expresses an aim to "be with again," or to restore relationships with one's neighbor and ultimately God for sins committed either by one's self or by one's community.

Despite examples in the New Testament, including Jesus' own expressions of grief as he prepared for death (Matthew 26:37-55) and then while on the cross (Matthew 27:39-54), lament is not widely practiced in contemporary Western Christianity. Yet, Christian lament practices can be found where suffering and traditional mourning customs exist. The textbox above, "Go Down Moses," quotes a verse from an Afro-American spiritual sung by enslaved Africans to express despair and hope and share secret messages about the underground railroad. The textbox on the next page, "A Lament Practice in the Great Lakes," offers a more recent example.

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20 These manuscripts, which include interpretations of the tradition, were written by church leaders and theologians during the early centuries of the church, before it was determined which documents would be included in the New Testament of the Bible.

A Lament Practice in the Great Lakes

The Great Lakes Initiative is a faith-based peacebuilding organization made up of churches of seven central African countries. In January 2017, it sponsored a retreat in Uganda for key South Sudanese leaders, church members, and youth. The first day, participants told stories of horrors they had experienced, with facilitators encouraging such deep sharing until "your story [and] my story becomes our story." The day ended with a pastor leading the following lament:

> Our houses have been destroyed or looted. I cannot go to my own house although it is just some distance away.
>
> Our wives are being raped in front of us or before their own children.
>
> We are forced to live our lives in UN Protection of Civilian Sites or to flee to foreign land where people speak strange languages.
>
> We always sleep hungry while our harvest is getting rotten in our farms.
>
> Our children are malnourished due to lack of milk because our cows were driven away in broad daylight while we look helplessly from our hiding place in the bush.
>
> Where are you Lord?
>
> I don't trust the UN Peace Keeping Mission
>
> I don't trust Government leaders who promise peace yet people continue to die.
>
> Come down O Lord! And put an end to the suffering of your people.

Source: From a report by Bill Lowery, "South Sudan Retreat, Great Lakes Initiative: South Sudan Working Group," January 2017, 2–4; a copy is in coauthor David Steele's files.

The Roman Catholic Church has a Rite (or Sacrament) of Penitence similar to what the Eastern Orthodox Church calls the Sacred Mystery of Confession. The Second Vatican Council of the Catholic Church renamed it the Rite of Reconciliation and revised it to serve multiple individuals or the whole church community.[21] The four steps to this rite are detailed in the textbox on the next page. *Working for Reconciliation: A Caritas Handbook* (1999), together with *Peacebuilding: A Caritas Training Manual* (2002), spell out a vision and practice for the church to promote reconciliation in response to such tragedies as the genocides in Rwanda and Bosnia in the 1990s.[22]

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21 Danielle Celermajer, *The Sins of the Nation and the Ritual of Apologies* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 108–141.

22 Brian Starken, ed., *Working for Reconciliation: A Caritas Handbook* (Vatican City: Caritas Internationalis, 1999), 4; and Reina Neufeldt et al., *Peacebuilding: A Caritas Training Manual* (Vatican City: Caritas Internationalis, 2002), www.mreza-mira.net/wp-content/uploads/Peacebuilding-A-Caritas-Training-Manual.pdf. See also R. Scott Appleby, "Catholic Peacebuilding" *America* 189, no. 6 (September 8, 2003): 12 ff., www.americamagazine.org/issue/449/article/catholic-peacebuilding.

The Rite of Reconciliation in Roman Catholicism

1. **Contrition:** To have an attitude of sorrow and remorse, as well as a firm resolve not to repeat the sin.

2. **Confession:** To take responsibility for one's sins by speaking them aloud.

3. **Penance:** To make amends for the sin, both within oneself—returning to God and changing one's life—and with others—acts of service. When imposed by a priest, penance must match the nature and gravity of the sin.

4. **Absolution:** To have the priest determine that the sin has been taken away by virtue of God's merciful love.

Source: Catholic Diocese of Broken Bay, *Reconciliation: A Short Guide*, accessed August 12, 2021, www.bbcatholic.org.au/parish-community/parish-renewal-discipleship/the-light-is-on /reconciliation-a-short-guide.

The Orthodox Church's ritual is performed only for an individual, not for a group or the whole church community, though confession and absolution are performed among witnesses. Although Protestant churches do not have a formal process of confession, most of them have kept communal acts of personal confession and forgiveness found in Catholicism, with the pastor acting as proclaimer, not mediator, of God's forgiveness.

Regardless, there are numerous examples of reconciliation in larger social conflicts across denominations, ranging from St. Francis of Assisi visiting the Sultan al-Kamil in 1219 to end the Crusades; the long history of efforts by the Quaker, Mennonite, and Brethren peace churches and their associated organizations (the American Friends Service Committee, the Mennonite Central Committee, and Christian Peacemaker Teams) to prevent or intervene in conflict and to help communities heal from violence; and the work of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (discussed later in this Guide).

TABLE 20. **Overview: connecting select dimensions of Christianity to components of reconciliation**

INTRAPERSONAL/ INTRAGROUP LEVEL	INTERPERSONAL/ INTERGROUP LEVEL	INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL
Christian values and ideas of peace and justice, truth, forgiveness, and compassion support understanding and reconstructing narratives and identities. Confession, lament, and absolution practices support processing or release.	These values, ideas, and practices, particularly contrition, confession, and penance found in the Rite of Reconciliation, support sharing stories, acknowledgment, acceptance, action, and reconstructing relationships.	The Rite of Reconciliation supports social support and redistribution and reconstructing laws, policies, and norms.

Although some Christians (such as Unitarian-Universalists, nonstructured Quakers, the Second Vatican Council, and mystics) have acknowledged the divine in other faith traditions, many Christians believe that Christianity embodies absolute truth and should be embraced by all people. The active spreading of this belief (known as evangelism and encouraged in the New Testament) challenges efforts at reconciliation across faiths.

Orthodox Christianity's history of identifying with a particular ethnic or national group has been a source of ethnoreligious-nationalist conflict. Catholic and Protestant evangelism supported the violent conquest and colonization of many parts of the world where Christianity continues to be distrusted. Yet, the fact that Christianity has so many followers and contributes to liberation and social justice movements in the postcolonial world demonstrates the complexity of Christianity's role.

Reconciliation in Islam

Islam emerged in the context of seventh-century CE socioeconomic inequality and tribal feuding in the Arabian Peninsula. The Prophet Mohammed opposed *assibya* (loyalty to tribe) and created a community based on submission to Allah ("Islam" literally means "surrender"). The community split between those (the Shi'a) who believed the Prophet's rule should be succeeded by a family member and those (the Sunni) who believed the successor should be his closest companion. When the Prophet's grandson Hussein was killed at the Battle of Karbala in 680 CE, the Sunnis gained spiritual and political control of most of the Islamic world. The minority Shi'a instituted their own leadership in the office of an infallible imam, a role that has remained unfilled since the tenth imam in the ninth century. The divergent histories of Shi'a and Sunni Islam have led to some differences in belief and practice. Yet, both have mystical Sufi orders and value Islam's sacred texts. Foremost among those texts are the Quran, the divine revelations given to Prophet Mohammed, and the Hadith, which are the sayings, teachings, and actions of the Prophet Mohammed as remembered, passed down, and written down in the eighth and ninth centuries.

The various sources of Islam emphasize peace and justice, compassion, confession and repentance, and forgiveness, values shared with the other Abrahamic faiths and important to reconciliation. Believers are expected to be merciful and compassionate like Allah and to take responsibility for the wrongs they have done—as illustrated by the story of the Prophet and the excerpt from a Sufi prayer in the textboxes on the next page.

Sufi Dua Prayer: Plea to Allah

In the name of Allah, Merciful and compassionate . . .

My Lord, teach me that tolerance is the supreme level of power, while desire for revenge is the first sign of weakness . . .

My Lord,

When I do harm to people give me the strength for apology, and when the people do harm to me give me the power to forgive.

Source: From the participant manual for a workshop on interfaith dialogue in Iraq cofacilitated by coauthor David Steele and convened by the United States Institute of Peace and the Council of Representatives Committee on Religious Affairs of the Iraqi Parliament.

The Prophet and a Woman

An old woman had a habit of throwing garbage on the Prophet Mohammed whenever he passed her on the way to the mosque. He would pass silently without showing anger or annoyance. One day, the old woman was not there. She was sick in bed. The Prophet went to visit her. As he entered, the woman thought that he had come to take his revenge, but he assured her that he had come to see her and to look after her needs. It was Allah's command that a Muslim should visit the sick and help them in need.

Source: Qamar Ul-Huda, "Peacebuilding: A Collection of Stories and Anecdotes from the Prophet Muhammad's Life," unpublished manuscript, September 2012.

Islamic justice favors an interactive process of acknowledgment, restitution or reparation, forgiveness, and rehabilitation. Islam introduced specific codes of punishment for different crimes in three broad categories:

- *Hudud*: crimes whose punishment is mandated by the Quran if proven true, notably theft, adultery, slander, drinking alcohol, highway robbery, rebellion, and apostasy (renouncing Islam).

- *Quisas*: crimes such as voluntary and involuntary murder, bodily harm, assault, and battery for which the Quran gives options for punishment to be determined by those involved, their families, and the larger community, while also encouraging reconciliation.

- *Tazir*: crimes not mentioned in the Quran, the punishment for which is to be determined by jurists and legislation.

Lament in Islam is similar to the practice in other Abrahamic traditions, except criticism of Allah is not allowed. Tears are a sign of awareness, repentance, purification, and wisdom. Both Shi'a and Sunni hadiths retell how Prophet Mohammed and other Muslim saints cried, hit their faces, beat their chests, and tore their clothes. The Shi'a ritual of Ashura is an annual pilgrimage of thousands of people, sometimes wailing, hitting, whipping, and burning themselves in reenactment and mourning of the death of Hussein, the grandson of the Prophet Mohammed, and of other tragedies since. The ritual's purpose is to provide a model for bearing suffering with honor and

dignity and experiencing release from harm, as illustrated in the Ashura scripts in the textbox below.

The Ashura Scripts: A Shiite Lament

The following extracts are from the Ashura scripts—a liturgical ritual presentation of the Shiite commemoration of Ashura—and lament the death of Hussein, the Prophet's grandson, in 680.

After the Battle of Karbala, Zainab, the sister of the martyred Hussein, exclaims:

> O Mohammed! Upon whom the angels send blessings, this is your al-Hussein who is immersed in blood. His body parts have been torn to pieces and his daughters have been taken into captivity. I complain to Allah, to Mohammed (the chosen one of Allah) . . . O Mohammed! This is al-Hussein left forlorn in the desert and wilderness while the wind blows over him. He has been killed by children born out of adultery. I seek safety from your sorrow and suffering, O Aba 'Abd Allah!

Later, the Prophet Mohammed appears to the suffering Hussein, saying:

> Trials bring you near to Allah and establish a close union between Him and you. Think not about your former trials. Let the tree of intercession and forgiveness bear fruit.

After bearing his terrible suffering and hearing the words of the Prophet, the dying Hussein then speaks to the believers:

> O my friends, be relieved from your grief and come along with me to the mansions of the blest. Sorrow has passed away; it is now time for joy and rest.

Source: This is a compilation of two scripts, which are referenced in Ali Asghar Ridwani, "Reciting Elegies when Mourning for Imam al-Hysayn: #9 Zaynab (as) Recited Elegies in the Form of Prose," in *The Uprising of Ashura and Responses to Doubts*, accessed September 7, 2022, from www.al-islam.org/uprising-ashura-and-responses-doubts-ali-asghar-ridwani/reciting-elegies-form-prose; and G. E. Von Grunebaum, *Muhammadan Festivals* (London: Curzon Press, 1976), 92–94.

Rooted in pre-Islamic customs, the sulha reconciliation process was adapted to unite Arab tribes in the seventh century. Based on the practice of public consultation (shura), the process can last months or years and involves elders or other highly regarded community figures first visiting separately and then bringing together the individuals and families embroiled in a dispute, including group representatives in the case of intertribal or intrasectarian conflicts (see the textbox on the next page for an example). The elders facilitate shared storytelling; the acknowledgment of responsibility; forgiveness; plans for rehabilitation, restitution, and reparations; and closure through, for example, ritual handshakes (*musafaha*) and the sharing of meals (*mumalaha*). Today, when circumstances demand a flexible approach, sulha-shura practices may go quicker, use nontraditional facilitators, draw from other approaches that complement Islam's core values, and be adapted to interfaith settings.

| Sulha in Practice | When a member of one Shi'a tribe killed a member of another in Iraq, both tribes faced a dilemma. If the person responsible went free, a political party affiliated with the other tribe would intervene and escalate the situation into a political conflict. If the killer was sent to prison, his tribe would be banned from certain areas and the conflict would expand to include a larger tribal confederation. A local facilitator convinced one tribe to acknowledge the unlawful killing and pay compensation to the other. Both tribes agreed on a limited prison sentence and an end to fighting. There would be no revenge, no banning of a whole tribe, and no political party or tribal confederation would intervene.

Source: David Steele, "Creative Approaches to Conflict Transformation in Societies Affected by Extremist Religion," unpublished manuscript developed for the University of California, San Diego, 2013, 44, available at www.umb.edu/editor_uploads/images/centers_institutes /center_peace_democracy/CT_in_Societies_Affected_by_Extremist_Religion_by_D._ Steele_for_UCSD.pdf. |

TABLE 21. **Overview: connecting select dimensions of Islam to components of reconciliation**

INTRAPERSONAL/INTRAGROUP LEVEL	INTERPERSONAL/INTERGROUP LEVEL
Islamic values and ideas of peace and justice, compassion, confession and repentance, and forgiveness support understanding and reconstructing narratives and identities. Lament practices support processing or release.	These values, ideas, and practices, as well as the sulha tradition, support sharing stories, acknowledgment, acceptance, action, and reconstructing relationships.

Many Muslims believe that Islam is the only divinely sanctioned way to organize society socially and politically—as expressed by calls for a universal caliphate or the primacy of sharia law even in mixed religious societies. This can challenge reconciliation efforts. Although the Quran celebrates religious diversity and gives special recognition to "people of the book" (those of other Abrahamic faiths), there are also Islamic teachings critical of other religions that pose problems for interfaith engagement. Within Islam, the Sunni-Shi'a divide is a source of conflict and violence around the world.

A history of empire and territorial expansion by Muslims, followed by more recent Western domination of the Muslim world, adds to tension and mistrust between Muslims and non-Muslims. Influenced by literalist and traditionalist movements such as Wahhabism and Salafism, these tensions have led to the emergence of al-Qaeda, Islamic State, and other contemporary extremist groups.

Reconciliation in Wayúu Indigenous Spiritual Traditions

Indigenous spiritual traditions, sometimes referred to as "animism" (the belief that all living and nonliving things have a spiritual essence), continue to exist throughout the world. In many places, precolonial and postcolonial faith traditions have blended to create distinctive new combinations. Colonial powers typically sought to control and change Indigenous peoples and their beliefs and practices, which has resulted in a loss of indigenous culture and at times a sense of internalized inferiority.

This discussion of reconciliation and indigenous spiritual traditions takes the example of the South American Wayúu, a clan-based people of the Guajira Peninsula in the northern region of what is now Colombia and Venezuela. They are the largest Indigenous group in both countries. Although specific beliefs and practices vary among Indigenous groups across the globe, the Wayúu exemplify a worldview this is common to most groups—namely, a concern for communal well-being and a desire to preserve or restore a harmonious balance among all of creation, including ancestors and the natural world. The Wayúu's first encounter with one of the other faith traditions discussed in this section occurred in the early sixteenth century, when Catholic-based colonialism, evangelism, and nationalism made inroads into South America. Even so, the Wayúu still maintain much of their cultural heritage.

The Wayúu believe in multiple deities, the most important of which is Maleiwa, the creator and god of rain in a region marked by drought. The deities, Pulowi and Juya, are a married couple. Pulowi, a female figure, represents the wind and dry seasons, while the male Juya represents hunting. The Wayúu also believe in the spiritual power of nature and ancestral spirits. *Piachi* are shamans valued for their ability to communicate with ancestral spirits and to connect the rational world with the world of dreams and feelings and thereby understand and heal illnesses. Most are women, as they are considered more sacred. Demonstrating the intermingling of indigenous and Catholic traditions, most Wayúu babies are baptized *and* have a traditional naming ceremony (where children take on their mother's last name). Burials are significant events, representing a transition in the ongoing cycle of life and death.

Relevant to reconciliation is the idea that all living things are interconnected and exist in an endless cycle of renewal. An imbalance in this order can cause individual and social illness, and so creating harmony is a form of healing. The Wayúu accept conflict as a natural part of life but value the resolution of conflict because it allows for peace and freedom of movement and opportunity. Further, an individual is not seen as separate from the collective. An individual's family or clan, or even the larger community, may initiate, participate in, and share responsibility for a reconciliation process (see the textbox on page 5). Although they do not take part in meetings, women have a particularly important role in deciding whether and when to proceed with a process .

In the event of a dispute breaking out between families or a crime being committed, the Wayúu typically prefer to use their customary reconciliation process rather than the national criminal legal system. Families choose a *pütchipü'üi* (orator, or *palabrero* in Spanish), an intermediary role played by people in the community who are trustworthy and valued for their skill with words (see the textbox below for the myth about how this role originated). The *pütchipü'üi* engages

the families in dialogue, consulting with *piachis* whose dreams provide guidance, and drawing on the floor with a cane to bring out the wisdom of the Earth. Agreement is sought on what the person who has harmed and their family will pay the harmed person's family in order to repair the families' relationship and restore the harmed family's honor. Payment is based on what the person and their family can afford to pay; it is not calculated in terms of actual damages. The payment may be in the form of animals or necklaces—these necklaces are sometimes kept to be used as payment in future disputes. A reconciliation process ends with a toast being made in front of the elders and the families involved.[23]

The Myth of the *Palabrero*

"Wayúus tell [us] that in the beginning was born the 'seductive palabrero,' the first one organizing law and men, who gave the principles for social life. [T]he big Maleiwa became a palabrero but one day he got tired; after this he called the woodpecker and he was in charge of [resolving] the families' wars. He said that it was necessary to always give and receive compensation or they would have to face death, violence, and the loss of all their wealth."

Source: Weildler Guerr, *La disputa y la Palabra: La ley en la sociedad Wayuu* (Bogotá: Ministerio de Cultura, 2001).

TABLE 22. **Overview: connecting select dimensions of Wayúu spirituality to components of reconciliation**

INTRAPERSONAL/INTRAGROUP LEVEL	INTERPERSONAL/INTERGROUP LEVEL
Wayúu values and ideas of communal well-being, harmonious balance, and interconnectedness, as well as their traditional reconciliation practice, support processing, understanding, release, and reconstructing narratives and identities.	These values, ideas, and practices support sharing stories, acknowledgment, acceptance, action, and reconstructing relationships.

Indigenous reconciliation processes such as that of the Wayúu function in communities with an enduring collectivist and restorative culture. They may not be accepted where traditional values give way to secular laws and norms related to confidentiality, due process, gender equality, and collective punishment. In intergroup reconciliation, distrust arising from painful colonial histories or ongoing marginalization, as well as others' stereotypes of "devil worship," may be a challenge to engaging with nonindigenous participants.

Furthermore, concepts that are seen as external to an indigenous group may be seen as colonial efforts to destroy local culture and will be strongly resisted. This mistrust of ideas introduced from outside is rooted in historical experience, but it can complicate efforts to include indigenous groups in reconciliation processes.

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23 For more details, see Adriana Eugenia Vásquez Del Río, "Wayuu Palabreros in Colombia: Indigenous and Process-Oriented Conflict Facilitation Worldviews Explored" (a project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a master's degree, Process Work Institute, October 2014), www.processwork.org/files/Finalprojects/Wayuu_Adriana%20Vasquez_r.pdf; and UNESCO, Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, "Wayuu Normative System, Applied by the Pütchipü'üi (Palabrero)," accessed September 1, 2021, https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL /wayuu-normative-system-applied-by-the-ptchipi-palabrero-00435.

EACH OF THESE FAITH TRADITIONS has values, ideas, and practices that can support a reconciliation process. To varying degrees, they provide for the components of processing; sharing stories; understanding; acknowledging; accepting; release; reparative or integrative action; and reconstructing narratives, identities, and relationships. Not all faith traditions' values, ideas, and practices, however, have a direct link to public truth telling; memorialization; social support and redistribution; and reconstructing laws, policies, and norms at the institutional level, though all faiths have inspired actors to pursue institutional change. The Dharmic faiths share an emphasis on overcoming the ego to connect to a larger unity, particularly through various contemplative practices. The Abrahamic faiths focus on being accountable to and submitting one's suffering to God, particularly through lament, confession, and repentance practices. Certain indigenous traditions, such as that of the Wayúu, seek collective harmony and have well-established restorative justice processes.

A major challenge in applying the dimensions of certain Dharmic and Abrahamic religions to reconciliation between members of different faiths is the way that those traditions have been associated with, and sometimes even used to support or justify, colonialism, ethnonationalism, and other forms of historic or contemporary harm. Further, the religiously sanctioned exclusion of women and youth present in all religions, in addition to other internal harms, is a challenge to reconciliation for members of the same faith. It is important that these harms are addressed for interfaith and intrafaith reconciliation to be most effective. In the next section, we offer guidance that will help address these and other difficulties.

Practical Guidance for Practitioners

Building on the prior sections, consider the following tips for those who wish to initiate, organize, facilitate, or otherwise support a reconciliation process in which religion serves as a connector.

Preparations

Getting ready for a reconciliation process is essential. The following guidance helps make sure you understand what you are getting into, have designed the process with intention, and are prepared for the unexpected.

Analyze before Action

How will your identity affect the reconciliation process in which you will be involved? How have religious actors been responsible for harm in the conflict you will be tackling? Has harm occurred across religious identities? Have religious ideas been used to justify acts of harm?

Practitioners need to consider how the dimensions of religion play a role. Review the *Analysis Guide* to examine and reflect upon the conflict (or postconflict) situation you face, its context, your own role and identity, any other peacebuilding efforts, and how to plan for action with particular focus on all of the religious factors at play. We also recommend you apply the mapping tool from the *Mediation Guide* (pages 15–17) to assess how secular or religious the context is.

Use the exercise in the textbox on page 46 with your team or other stakeholders to better understand what reconciliation means to each person with regard to two sets of concepts—peace and justice—that are often in tension and have religious associations.

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PEACE AND JUSTICE:
A GROUP EXERCISE FOR EXPLORING THE TENSIONS IN RECONCILIATION

Those who emphasize peace and mercy are often criticized for compromising truth and justice, while those who emphasize truth and justice are seen as blocking peace and mercy.

First, consider these definitions:

- **Truth:** exposing what has happened in the name of acknowledgment and accountability

- **Mercy:** extending acceptance, compassion, and forgiveness based on the intrinsic worth of all humans

- **Justice:** making things right by determining responsibility for past harm and obligations to repair

- **Peace:** ending hostilities and promoting future harmony

Second, take these steps

1. Invite participants to select which of the four values (truth, mercy, justice, and peace) they identify with most and then form a group with likeminded members.

2. Ask each group to discuss concerns, fears, and hopes around that value, then share with the rest of the participants.

3. Invite group members to respond to the concerns of the other groups.

4. Invite members to share what they value in others' values and how these values relate.

5. Have all discuss what they learned about the tensions and intersections of these values.

Source: Adapted from an exercise by Jean Paul Lederach, a Mennonite Protestant professor, entitled "Weaving Together Disparate, Core Concepts," that he based on Psalm 85:10.

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Organize the Process

Consult the *Mediation Guide* due to the many similarities between a mediation process and a reconciliation process. It offers practical ideas, activities, examples, and worksheets relevant to the following tasks:

- Determining whether to seek facilitators and organizers who are from within or outside the context, then selecting them based on your context mapping; their level of religious authority; and an assessment of their legitimacy, leverage, and capacity.

- Preparing and building your facilitation-organizing team, including assessing how to support your team's own resilience and interfaith collaboration.

- Selecting and preparing participants, including deciding how to take gender and external resisters into consideration.

- Determining where and when to hold meetings.

- Selecting general and religion-specific facilitation tools and techniques to enhance the process.

- Addressing common challenges such as power imbalances and conflicting religious ideas.

Even if these selection, preparation, and planning tasks have already been completed or are beyond your control, make your own assessment of how they have been carried out so you can anticipate and address potential problems.

The documentary films *The Imam and the Pastor* and *An African Answer*, and their accompanying discussion guides, are another valuable resource, particularly for African, Christian, and Muslim reconciliation contexts. They offer practical tips and an example of an interethnic reconciliation process. The films can even be shown to participants in reconciliation processes in similar contexts. (See pages 62–63 for links to the films and discussion guides.)

Throughout the Process

Here are four key points for ensuring your process is sensitive to the relationship dynamics that are an essential, but often unseen, part of reconciliation.

Take a Gender-Inclusive Approach

To include the perspectives, needs, and aspirations of women and gender and sexual minorities (GSM) is to make reconciliation efforts more responsive, effective, and sustainable. However, just as religious actors have more power than laypeople in religious contexts, men typically have more legal, economic, and social power than women, and even more so than GSM, which can make inclusion in the process and equity in the outcomes challenging to achieve. Further, each of the intersecting identities—male religious leaders, female religious leaders, laymen, laywomen, GSM laypeople, and so on—has its own unique forms of power and of power differences in relation to the others. In most faith traditions, religious men can hold positions of institutional power that are not open to others. Recognize these differences and work toward equitable participation in the process.

Just like religious identity, gender deeply influences one's lived experiences, as well as perspectives and behavior. It creates and reinforces power difference. In conflicts, violence often occurs along gender lines. Any reconciliation process also needs to repair and improve relations between gender groups. In fact, a reconciliation process offers the possibility of constructing more equitable gender narratives, identities, relationships, and institutions. As gender is also fluid, consider how male gender norms can change and men can become allies to women and GSM, including within religious communities, during the process. Consider how certain religious ideas, identities, leaders, symbols, practices, and experiences can also adapt and support the process. Consult the *Gender Guide* for an in-depth discussion of these issues.

Build Relationships with a Broad Spectrum of Stakeholders at the Speed of Trust

The sustainability of peacebuilding efforts depends on reaching and building relationships with as many relevant stakeholders as possible, often across social divides. As shown in the text box "Breaking Down Walls in East Germany," religious actors and institutions play an important role in this relationship-building process, as they often have extensive networks and moral legitimacy among both marginalized and dominant groups, both mainstream and extremist elements, and both factions committed to and factions resistant to reconciliation. Note that they may consider relationship building to be part of their religious duty and role, rather than part of any reconciliation effort, and, therefore, they may work at a different pace and in a different style than what has been planned or funded for the reconciliation initiative.

Breaking Down Walls in East Germany	By the autumn of 1989, tens of thousands were attending prayer meetings and protests in Leipzig, East Germany. A few of the participating pastors had developed relationships with the secret police, called Stasi, although others rejected them for supporting the repressive regime. Enough trust and collaboration emerged, however, to allow some pastors to lead the protest movement, while others discussed a vision of a more just, free, and unified society with Stasi officers. As these pastors listened to the concerns of the police, they emphasized the nonviolent nature of the protest and promised to protect the police from any violence. On the night the Berlin Wall came down, church members formed a ring around the Stasi building to protect it. As a result, the Stasi refused government orders to attack protestors, saying they trusted that the religious leaders were nonviolent and only wanted a better life for all East Germans.
	Source: David Steele "At the Front Lines of the Revolution: East Germany's Churches Give Sanctuary and Succor to the Purveyors of Change," in *Religion: The Missing Dimension of Statecraft*, ed. Douglas Johnston and Cynthia Sampson (London: Oxford University Press, 1994), 119–152.

To get religious and other actors involved, spend time building those relationships without being focused solely on the outcome of that relationship, as shown in the text box "Moving at the Speed of Trust in Yugoslavia." Be patient with and sensitive to the risks and challenges actors face, and take steps to reduce them, or, if they are unavoidable, share in them. Be transparent and take responsibility for your own shortcomings throughout the process.

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Moving at the Speed of Trust in Yugoslavia

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In the mid-1990s, coauthor David Steele spent two years building relationships in what was then Yugoslavia before beginning a reconciliation process. He met periodically with a Serbian Orthodox bishop, who made it clear that interfaith reconciliation and cooperation were not to be discussed. Instead, he and the bishop had conversations exploring the meaning and importance of the host's religious tradition. One day, David was invited to attend Orthodox Easter, the Orthodox Church's most sacred holiday. After spending all night standing in worship with congregants, he was invited by the bishop to break the fast as the sun rose. From this point on, the bishop slowly began to send representatives to interfaith reconciliation events. Finally, without hesitation, this faith leader gave support to the entire program, providing David with access to high-level church and political leadership to support and even cosponsor the process.

Source: For more details, see David Steele, "Creative Approaches to Conflict Transformation in Societies Affected by Extremist Religion," unpublished manuscript developed for the University of California, San Diego, 2013, 36–37, available at www.umb.edu/editor_uploads /images/centers_institutes/center_peace_democracy/CT_in_Societies_Affected_by_ Extremist_Religion_by_D._Steele_for_UCSD.pdf.

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Bridge the "Us" and the "Them"

Social science research suggests that in healthy group bonding, people form a group and then develop trust and loyalty toward its members.[24] Regardless of whether the group has a religious or other identity, this in-group dynamic leads to attitudes of superiority and acts of aggression toward nonmembers when that single group identity becomes all-important and nonmembers are stereotyped as belonging to out-groups that are seen as a threat to the in-group.[25] If the primary divisive identity is religious, an effective reconciliation process can reverse this dynamic and bridge between in- and out-groups by helping participants connect to

- **a secondary identity**, such as a profession or trade;
- **an identity not previously considered,** such as grandmothers from adversarial groups who share family stories or youth from rival denominations who join the same sports team; or
- **a larger inclusive identity with common values,** such as being part of the Abrahamic tradition or the Asian region.

A reconciliation process can also push groups to reexamine and change what their primary religious identity means, sometimes even incorporating aspects of the other's identity. For example: What does it mean to be Israeli? Must the borders of Israel align with biblical references, or can the state's territory be negotiated? Must an Israeli be a religious Jew, or can an Israeli be a secular Jew, a non-Jew, or a member of another religious tradition?

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24 Material within this subsection, "Bridge the 'Us' and the 'Them,'" and the following subsection, "Address Conflicts of Values," draws on David Steele, "Creative Approaches to Conflict Transformation in Societies Affected by Extremist Religion," unpublished manuscript developed for the University of California, San Diego, 8–12, available at www.umb.edu/editor_uploads/images/centers_institutes/center_peace_democracy /CT_in_Societies_Affected_by_Extremist_Religion_by_D._Steele_for_UCSD.pdf.

25 One framing of this identity formation can be found in Marilynn Brewer, "Intergroup Identification and Intergroup Conflict: When Does In-Group Love Become Out-Group Hate?" in *Social Identity, Intergroup Conflict, and Conflict Resolution*, ed. Lee Jussim, Richard Ashmore, and David Wilder (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 19.

When the primary divisive identity is not religious, religion can be a unifying secondary identity. Religious ideas and values, community and leaders, symbols and rituals, and spiritual experiences can assist in reforming one's group identity.

The *Mediation Guide* provides additional guidance on how to respond when religious identities or ideas are drivers of conflict, as well as when participants relate to their religion differently; when religious ideas, symbols, and practices conflict; when there are power imbalances specific to religion; and when religious actors do not have the authority to act on behalf of their institutions. The textbox below shows how reconciliation work connects to religious extremism.

Reconciliation and Religious Extremism

Reconciliation has the potential to prevent or counter religious extremism if it is able to bring those who intentionally harm others in the name of their religion into a process that constructively challenges their beliefs while acknowledging their experiences and grievances and their needs for belonging, for spiritual connection, and for purpose. This can happen through interactions with credible moderates from their own faith or with those of whatever faith they have harmed. Furthermore, although extremists are often small in number, they often find acceptance or support within the wider faith tradition of which they are a part. Reconciliation efforts can engage this base in recognizing and addressing their indirect links to extremism.

Address Conflicts of Values

Values are principles, standards, or qualities that people deem to be of high worth and on the basis of which they make decisions about their lives, their relationships, and their behavior. Values provide a framework that gives meaning to life and a moral sense of right and wrong. This framework informs how one treats others and expects to be treated. In the preceding section, "Reconciliation in Diverse Faith Traditions," we identified values specific to several faith traditions that support reconciliation.

Living in Integrity with One's Values

In a workshop involving Muslims as well as Serbian Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant Christians, a team of faith-based facilitators introduced confession of sin as a practice central to each of these faith traditions. Immediately, the host—a Serbian orthodox deputy bishop—stood and told a story about a young Serbian militia commander who had recently come to him explaining that he had ordered his men to attack and kill everyone—women, children, and elderly—in a Bosnian Muslim village. The man begged to know whether he could possibly be forgiven for what he had done. The bishop stopped the story and pointed to every Serbian Orthodox priest in attendance. "We have a lot to be accountable for in this war—not just our militias or our Serbian government, but our church, which has legitimized this terrible violence." A respected authority, he had highlighted the gap between his church's espoused values and its behavior. The Muslims were shocked. Having come with doubt that anything could be accomplished, they decided they could work with this man.

Source: From personal experience of coauthor David Steele, who was one of the facilitators of this workshop, held under the auspices of the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Banja Koviljaca, Serbia, in May 1997. See David Steele, "Creative Approaches to Conflict Transformation in Societies Affected by Extremist Religion," unpublished manuscript developed for the University of California, San Diego, 2013, 33, available at www.umb.edu/editor_uploads/images/centers_institutes/center_peace_democracy/CT_in_Societies_Affected_by_Extremist_Religion_by_D._Steele_for_UCSD.pdf

However, when core values are threatened, they are likely to escalate conflict even if the differences between the actors' values are relatively small compared to the similarities (such as between the Sunni and Shi'a or the Protestant and Catholic traditions). Religion, and culture more broadly, shapes values, leading to differences in how one values, for example, tradition vs. change, individualism vs. collectivism, hierarchical rank vs. equal status, "who you are" vs. "what you do," accountability and punishment vs. forgiveness and restoration, being task-centered vs. relationship-centered, or spirituality vs. materialism. People will not typically recognize when conflicts are grounded in differences in values; rather, they will usually express judgment and direct blame toward the other's action, goals, or beliefs.

A first step in addressing a conflict of values is thus to help participants reflect upon and identify the values that are important to them in both intragroup premeetings and joint meetings. Refocusing from sharing judgment and blame to affirming everyone's values often deescalates the conflict and uncovers shared values. Faith-based ideas and stories behind an adversary's values can help one understand why they matter to the adversary. Religious wisdom can also inspire participants to consider competing values and how their values align with their own attitudes and actions, as shown in the textbox above. The kinds of questions worth exploring might include:

- What values have most motivated your actions in this conflict?
- What values are most important now?
- How can you better live out these values?
- How does your faith help you to understand peace, justice, mercy, truth, compassion, harmony, unity, accountability, acceptance, and forgiveness?
- What do your faith's core values demand of you in these circumstances?

- What prophetic leaders and stories provide examples of the right way forward?
- What values do you respect or admire in the other?

Evaluation and Follow-Up

Evaluation and follow-up are two aspects of a process that are often not fully considered or planned for. They ensure your learning and improvement, as well as the sustainability of the outcomes of the process.

Ensure Ongoing Support for Follow Through

A reconciliation process does not, of course, end when participants leave a facilitated meeting, even if they are satisfied with the process and the strength of their relationships. If they are part of an intergroup conflict, they will need to communicate and engage with the groups they represent. The process may need to be expanded to include others or call for policymakers to implement explicit or implicit agreements. See the "Postmediation" section of the *Mediation Guide* (pages 50–52) for additional guidance on follow-up activities. Reconciliation can take generations to fully address deep and long-standing social conflicts and harms, so participants, their communities, and their institutions need to develop the capacity to continue reconciliation beyond the lifetime of your organized process.

Evaluate during and after Action

Reconciliation is about changing relationships and this is difficult to measure. Changes in belief and attitude often come before, or even drive, changes in behavior and relationship. Faith-based actors can often detect changes in belief or attitude around religious ideas and identity. The facilitator, or an external evaluator, can collect, analyze, and utilize this kind of data to inform a learning process that can improve a faith-based initiative, as illustrated in the textbox on page 53. For a deeper exploration, including questions to ask in religion and reconciliation, see "Supernatural Belief and the Evaluation of Faith-Based Peacebuilding," which is listed in "Additional Resources on Religion and Reconciliation" (page 63).

Interreligious and Interethnic Collaboration in Macedonia

An interreligious and interethnic reconciliation initiative was held in 2003–5 following the 2001 Macedonian civil war. The project staff, consisting of a project director, workshop facilitators, and local consultants, brought together Albanian Muslims and Macedonian Orthodox Christians from communities most affected by violence. After a series of workshops addressing all the components of reconciliation, the project staff encouraged Albanians and Macedonians to collaborate on reintegrative projects of their own choosing. At the same time, an external project evaluator conducted an evaluation of participants' own perceived changes in attitudes and behavior during this first year of the project. Utilizing this data, the project staff recommended that those reporting the greatest degree of change form one working group. After successfully addressing their selected environmental issues of hygiene in both Macedonian and Albanian municipalities, these middle-aged male Muslim Albanian political leaders and female Macedonian Orthodox civil society leaders led a mediation process that prevented renewed fighting. Such an outcome was only possible after training in the components of reconciliation, sensitivity to real-time participant feedback, consistent implementation support, and participant openness to a challenging collaboration that neither they nor the staff could have previously imagined.

Source: From the personal experience of one of the authors, David Steele, who was the project director and head of the workshop facilitation team during this project, which was held under the auspices of the Conflict Management Group in 2003–4 and Mercy Corps in 2004–5. See David Steele, "Creative Approaches to Conflict Transformation in Societies Affected by Extremist Religion," unpublished manuscript developed for University of California, San Diego, 2013, 33, available at www.umb.edu/editor_uploads/images/centers_institutes/center_peace_democracy/CT_in_Societies_Affected_by_Extremist_Religion_by_D._Steele_for_UCSD.pdf.

A Case Study of South Africa

In Chapter 11 of the Book of Genesis, the Bible states that all people shared the same language and began to build a city with a tower tall enough to reach the heavens. The Lord responded to the people's arrogance and self-reliance by giving them many languages and scattering them throughout the world. From early on, the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) used this scripture to justify political apartheid in South Africa. Over time, it came to reinterpret the Bible, emphasizing other ideas and stories to ultimately name apartheid a sin.

An important moment in this change occurred in November 1990, when a remarkable conversation unfolded during a conference in the small town of Rustenburg. President F. W. de Klerk had called on churches to make a plan for the future, presenting the church with a historic challenge "to unite Christian witness in changing South Africa." No fewer than 230 delegates gathered in Rustenburg, including Roman Catholics, Charismatics, members of African indigenous churches, members of the Dutch Reformed Churches (segregated into Black, "Coloured," and White), Anglicans, Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, and others.[26]

In his keynote speech, W. D. Jonker, a DRC member, declared:

> [I] confess before you and before the Lord, not only my own sin and guilt and my personal responsibility for the political, social, economic and structural wrongs that have been done to many of you, and the results of which you and our whole country are still suffering from, but vicariously I dare also do that in the name of [the] DRC of which I am a member, and for the Afrikaner people as a whole. I have the liberty to do just that, because the DRC at its latest synod has declared Apartheid a sin and confessed its own guilt of negligence in not warning against it and distancing itself from it long ago.

After Jonker's address, Archbishop Desmond Tutu of the Anglican Church reacted:

> Prof. Jonker made a statement that certainly touched me, and I think touched others of us when he made a public confession and asked to be forgiven. I believe that I certainly stand under pressure of God's Holy Spirit to say that, as I said in my sermon that when confession is made, then those of us who have been wronged must say "We forgive you", so that together we may move to the reconstruction of our land. That confession is not cheaply made, and the response is not cheaply given.

Jonker described that moment:

> At that moment everybody stood up. There was tears. There was a feeling of affection. Something like which I have never experienced in my life. It felt as if I were embraced and accepted by co-believers who took the guilt from our shoulders.

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26 Johan van der Merwe, "The Rustenburg Church Conference of 1990: A Call to the Churches in South Africa after 30 Years," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 42, no. 1 (January 1, 2021): 1–4, www.scielo.org.za/pdf/vee/v42n1/21.pdf. This article is also the source of the following extracts.

Upon hearing of this incident, former South African president P. W. Botha phoned the DRC moderator, Pieter Potgieter, to protest the confession. Potgieter responded:

> The delegates of the DRC want to state unambiguously that we fully identify ourselves' with the statements made by Prof. Jonker on the position of the church. He has in fact precisely reiterated the decision made by our General Synod in Bloemfontein recently. We want to see this decision of the synod as the bases of reconciliation with all people of all churches.

While this was a spontaneous exchange, the Rustenburg conference had been carefully planned over many months. Demonstrating the importance of relationship building and participant selection, the organizers ensured the representation of a wide variety of church and related organizations under a common theme of unity and hope. They emphasized a common Christian identity in the face of the country's other divisive identities and histories, reinforced by Christian symbols and rituals such as worship and prayer. They negotiated with the government to ensure the conference remained independent.[27]

The above exchange clearly shows acknowledgment and release by Jonkers and acceptance by Tutu. Presumably, significant processing, understanding, and release happened among the other attendees as well. Christian language, values, and ideas of confession, sin, guilt, and forgiveness ultimately combined to create a spiritual experience. The preceding convening and declaration of the synod was a form of public truth telling and memorialization that allowed the Rustenburg conference to build on an institutional form of acknowledgment.

The Rustenburg Declaration drafted at the end of the conference incorporated strong religious language, values, and ideas to memorialize the past and the process, acknowledge those harmed, and call for social support and redistribution, alongside the reconstruction of law, policies, and norms. It stated:

> We engaged midst joy and pain, love and suspicion, in a process of soul searching and wrestling with the theological and socio-political complexities of our country. In the process, we had a strong sense that God was at work among us. We became aware that He was surprising us by his grace, which cut through our fears and apprehension. We give praise to this liberating God who is forever faithful in visiting His people in their hour of need.
>
> As representatives of the Christian church in South Africa, we confess our sin and acknowledge our part in the heretical policy of apartheid, which has led to such extreme suffering for so many in our land. We denounce apartheid, in its intention, its implementation and its consequences, as an evil policy, an act of disobedience to God, a denial of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and a sin against our unity in the Holy Spirit.
>
> Those of us who have perpetuated and benefited from apartheid are guilty of a colonial arrogance towards black culture. We have allowed State institutions to do our sinning for us. In our desire to preserve the Church we have sometimes ceased to be the Church. We have often been more influenced by our ideologies than by Christ's Gospel.
>
> With a broken and contrite spirit we ask the forgiveness of God and of our fellow South Africans. We call upon the Government of South Africa to join us in a public confession of guilt and a statement of repentance for wrongs perpetrated over the years.

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27 Douglas Johnston, "The Churches and Apartheid in South Africa," in *Religion: The Missing Dimension of Statecraft*, ed. Douglas Johnston and Cynthia Sampson (London: Oxford University Press, 1994), 198–199.

> The Bible reveals God as a God of compassionate love who has a special care for the sinner, the downtrodden, the poor and all who suffer injustice. Obedience to Christ therefore requires that we develop an economic system based on justice, compassion and co-responsibility, so that those in need benefit more than those who have more than they need. More equitable wealth distribution must go hand in hand with economic growth.

> After decades of oppression, the removal of discriminatory laws will have to be accompanied by affirmative acts of restitution in the fields of health care, psychological healing, education, housing, employment, economic infrastructure, and especially land ownership. For many years, greed has led to the taking of land from the poor and weak. But church and state must address the issue of restoring land to dispossessed people.

Another notable event at the conference was the participation of women of faith. The lesser-known statement they produced illustrates a common dynamic in religious peacebuilding of women's voices receiving less attention, despite telling important truths:

> The victims of this legacy are mainly people from the oppressed community, especially black women and yet the representation at this conference reflects the old order of selective Justice!! This is a deep concern for those of us who had the special privilege to be invited to participate in this conference. Whilst the conference has been grappling with the issues of Justice, the humanity of women is gravely neglected.

This statement influenced the other participants and received acknowledgment in the final Rustenburg declaration:

> Those of us who are male confess that we have often disregarded the human dignity of women and ignored the sexism of many of our church structures. By limiting the role and ministry of women—as was reflected in this conference—we have impoverished the church. We have been insensitive to the double oppression suffered by black women under sexism and apartheid.

The credibility and access that churches enjoy as institutions in South Africa allowed the Rustenburg Declaration to impact policymakers and the public—not dissimilar to the impact of the postwar efforts by faith communities in Bosna-Herzegovina described in the textbox on page 57. With extensive follow through by the organizers and participants in the aftermath of the conference, it laid the foundation for the widely known Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) established six years later under the leadership of Tutu.

Bishop Tutu built upon a uniquely African Christian religious framework already known and used by church leaders.[28] He drew on *ubuntu,* an indigenous concept that emphasized the unity of the human family—"one is a person through other people"—and on the biblical understanding of covenant, as shared vows for a mutual future, in his vision of reconciliation. The TRC established three committees to organize hearings and follow-up meetings, workshops, and other activities around three topics: truth telling and confession, forgiveness and amnesty, and restitution and reparation.

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28 Tanzanian Catholic theologian Laurenti Magesa argues that relationships are the basis of African legal practice. In many African countries, judges attempt to prevent the breaking of relationships between the individuals involved and within the larger community. Laurenti Magesa, *African Religion: The Moral Traditions of Abundant Life* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1997), 272–276.

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Faith-Based Reconciliation in Bosnia-Herzegovina

The World Conference of Religions for Peace led a postwar reconciliation process among the Serbian Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Jewish, and Bosnian Muslim communities in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Their leaders' "Shared Statement of Moral Commitment," issued in July 1997, raised forgiveness on the political agenda. A follow-up statement issued by Catholic and Orthodox leaders contained mutual apologies for the harm done to each other, calling for the prosecution of war criminals, stressing the rights guaranteed in the Dayton Peace Accords, and asking for sincere repentance, forgiveness, and reconciliation between their respective communities. The efforts also led to the creation of the first Inter-Religious Council of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Source: Zoran Brajovic, "The Potential of Inter-Religious Dialogue," in *Peacebuilding and Civil Society in Bosnia-Herzegovina: Ten Years after Dayton*, ed. Martina Fischer, 2nd ed. (London, Transaction Publishers, 2007), 198–204; and Branka Peuraca, "Can Faith-Based NGOs Advance Interfaith Reconciliation?" Special Report no. 103, March 2003, United States Institute of Peace, www.usip.org/publications/2003/03/can-faith-based-ngos-advance -interfaith-reconciliation-case-bosnia-and.

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Making twenty thousand victims' statements and seven thousand confessions public, the first committee supported processing the past, sharing of stories, understanding those harmed, and release. Many citizens told highly emotional stories of their suffering. At one point, Tutu joined them in tears and led those at the hearing in ritual prayer and song. Some of the accused took selective steps to acknowledge those harmed. Most of those did express remorse, but did not make a full confession or apology. Here are sample confessions from among forty-one faith communities (Christian and non-Christian, Black and White) present at an open-invitation hearing for faith communities.[29]

- Military chaplaincies acknowledged their participation served to "reinforce the acceptance of the apartheid cause in the minds of church members, and often justified the 'demonization' of their opponents."

- Apostolic Faith Mission pastors acknowledged teaching that opposition to apartheid was "Communist-inspired and aimed at the downfall of Christianity," while the Evangelical Churches simply encouraged their members to stop meddling in politics.

- A number of churches, as well as Hindu, Muslim, and Jewish leaders, said they failed to oppose apartheid soon enough. Even the Uniting Reformed Church, a strong opponent of apartheid over many years, confessed to "taking too long to make a stand, particularly against the migrant labor system. Such a failure indicated 'silent approval' of state actions."

- The difficulty of translating resolutions into practice was poignantly expressed by Beyers Naude, a White Christian leader who strongly opposed apartheid: "I have not done enough! How is it possible that our preaching was so ineffective, that our actions were so timid, that we did so little to ease the pain of the victims, to confront the rulers of the country, the exponents of the ideology of apartheid?"

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29 The following quotations are taken from J. Meiring, "Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa: The Role of the Faith Communities," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 26, no. 1 (October 2, 2005), 146–173, www.researchgate.net/publication/267225024_Truth_and_Reconciliation_in_South_Africa _the_role_of_the_faith_communities.

- The Dutch Reformed Church confessed that it treated the "prophets within its midst" shoddily. Christian institutions engaged in antiapartheid activities were also left unsupported. "When the Christian Institute of South Africa was banned two years later, along with its executive leadership, little action was taken and little support given to many of those who were affected."

- Following charges expressed about the "Christianization" of the TRC process, Tutu declared: "I am certain that all my fellow Christians in South Africa will agree with me if I express our deep apologies to you, the members of the other faith communities in the country, for the arrogant way in which we as Christians acted—as though ours was the only religion in South Africa, while we have been a multi-religious community from day one."

The Christian idea of forgiveness was at the heart of Bishop Tutu's model of reconciliation, and the second committee encouraged those who had been harmed to forgive, unilaterally, if they wished for release from hatred and victimhood. The harming individual could apply for amnesty from the state if they confessed the harm they had caused, though the committee did not require remorse or regret, as that would be too subjective to assess. This amnesty component was a political compromise that the TRC made in the spirit of integration to save the country from anticipated mass violence and lengthy legal trials.

The TRC's mandate allowed it to recommend reparations for victims. The third committee sought to address the specific needs of those who testified while responding to the social and systemic abuse of all Black people through a combination of individual reparations, symbolic commemorations, and community rehabilitation programs. The committee allowed those harmed to waive legal recourse and apply for reparations from the government. To encourage a wider form of social support and redistribution, the committee recommended that the state invest more in education, housing, healthcare, and emergency food and create civic institutions to address a variety of needs.

Unfortunately, in what Tutu lamented as "unfinished business," the South African government did not fully provide for reparations, support the prosecution of those who declined amnesty, or adopt the committee's more systemic recommendations. Even the churches that played such an important role in this process did not redistribute much of the land they had received by virtue of the colonial past. Successive protest movements continue to call for change and additional truth commissions. Writing in 2021, the year in which he died, Tutu admitted: "Healing is a process. How we deal with the truth after its telling defines the success of the process. And this is where we have fallen tragically short."[30]

This story ends much the same way as a well-known South African parable in which a neighborhood boy who stole a younger boy's bike returns to apologize and ask for forgiveness. In response, the younger boy simply asks, "What about the bike?"[31]

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30 David Smith et al., "Special Report: Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation," *Guardian,* June 24, 2014, www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jun/24/truth-justice-reconciliation-civil-war-conflict.
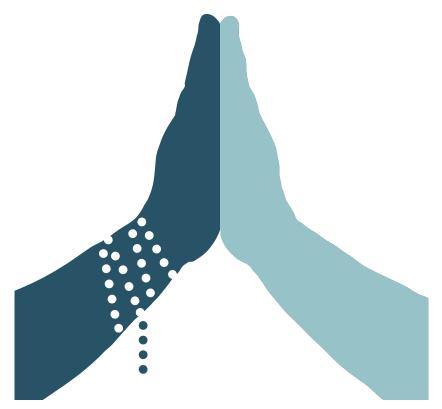
31 David Augsburger, "A South African Parable: What About the Bike?," adapted from a story reported by a TRC observer, Samuel Pau, accessed October 3, 2022, www.nacr.org/resource-center-on-emotional-and-relational-health/a-south-african-parable-what-about-the-bike.

Final Remarks

Reconciliation is no cheap matter. It does not come about by simply papering over deep-seated differences. Reconciliation presupposes confrontation. Without that we do not get reconciliation, but merely a temporary glossing over of differences. The running sores of society cannot be healed with the use of sticking plaster. Reconciliation presupposes an operation, a cutting to the very bone, without anaesthetic. The infection is not just on the surface. The abscess of hate and mistrust and fear, between black and white, between nation and nation, between rich and poor, has to be slashed open.

—David Bosch, at the Pan African Christian Leadership Assembly, 1976

Reconciliation deals with our deepest fears, hopes, pain, and sense of self. It involves powerful and unpredictable human dynamics. And so does religion. For this reason, it is hard to imagine a reconciliation process that does not draw on religious ideas, identity, institutions, symbols and rituals, or spirituality to nurture reflection and to enable people to tell their story, understand with empathy, take responsibility, offer pardon, undergo healing renewal, and take action to make amends. We hope this Guide clarifies these connections and encourages you to make them intentional, adaptively and self-reflectively. Remember that no amount of written guidance can substitute for the passion and compassion you bring to this work and to the task of building and rebuilding relationships. Also remember that reconciliation as we have defined it here is not complete without bringing an immediate end to harm and violence or recreating social structures for long-term change. These three aspects need to be integrated if peacebuilding is to be sustainable.

Organizations Working on Faith-Based Reconciliation

The following international and local organizations work on faith-based reconciliation. The list does not capture all the relevant organizations or countless actors throughout the world. Additional listings are available at www.usip.org/programs/religious-peacebuilding-action-guides.

American Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
www.afsc.org

Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs, Georgetown University
http://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu

Center for Faith, Justice, and Reconciliation, Richmond, Virginia
https://faithandjusticerva.com/

Center for Justice and Peacebuilding, Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Virginia
https://emu.edu/cjp/

Centre for Peacebuilding and Reconciliation, Sri Lanka
https://cpbr.lk/

Centre for Religion, Reconciliation and Peace, University of Winchester
www.winchester.ac.uk/wcrrp

Community of Sant'Egidio, Rome
www.santegidio.org

Cordoba Peace Institute—Geneva
www.cordoue.ch

Fellowship of Reconciliation USA, Nyack, New York
https://forusa.org/

Global Initiative for Justice, Truth & Reconciliation
https://gijtr.org/our-work/faith-based-actors-in-transitional-justice/

Indigenous Justice, Recognition and Reconciliation program, Institute for Faith-Based Diplomacy
www.ifbdglobal.org/about

Institute for Global Engagement, Arlington, Virginia
https://globalengage.org

Interfaith Mediation Centre, Kaduna, Nigeria
https://interfaithmediation.org/

International Center for Religion and Diplomacy (ICRD), Washington DC
http://icrd.org

King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue (KAICIID), Vienna
www.kaiciid.org/en/the-centre/the-centre.html

Lombard Mennonite Peace Center, Lombard, Illinois
https://lmpeacecenter.org/

Mary Hoch Center for Reconciliation, George Mason University, Arlington, Virginia
www.mhcr.gmu.edu/

Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers, Helsinki
www.peacemakersnetwork.org

Pax Christi International, Brussels
https://paxchristi.net

Quaker United Nations Office, New York
https://quno.org/

Religions for Peace
www.rfp.org

Religion, Politics, Conflict, Human Security Division, Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs
www.eda.admin.ch/eda/en/fdfa/foreign-policy/human-rights/peace/religion-and-conflicts.html

Sulha Peace Project, Israel/Palestine
www.uri.org/who-we-are/cooperation-circle/sulha-peace-project-cooperation-circle

Tanenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding, New York
www.tanenbaum.org

United Religions Initiative, San Francisco
http://uri.org/

World Council of Churches, Le Grand-Saconnex, Switzerland
www.oikoumene.org

Additional Resources on Religion and Reconciliation

The following nonexhaustive list of publicly available resources complements this Action Guide, providing basic information on reconciliation, information specific to certain religions or secular contexts, and references to related topics such as trauma. Additional resources are available at www.usip.org/programs/religious-peacebuilding-action-guides.

Being Peace, by Thích Nhất Hanh (Berkeley: Parallax Press, 1987)

Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies, by John Paul Lederach (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 1997)

"Catholic Approaches to Transitional Justice and Reconciliation Processes: Guidelines for Reflection and Planning," by Tom Bamat, Caesar A. Montevecchio, and Gerard F. Powers, CPN, Kroc Institute, CRS, 2018
https://kroc.nd.edu/assets/303696/cpn_tjr_digital_version.pdf

Changing Lenses, by Howard Zehr (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1995)

"Creative Approaches to Conflict Transformation in Societies Affected by Extremist Religion," by David Steele, unpublished manuscript developed for the University of California, San Diego, 2013
www.umb.edu/editor_uploads/images/centers_institutes/center_peace_democracy/CT_in_Societies_Affected_by_Extremist_Religion_by_D._Steele_for_UCSD.pdf

Faith-Based Reconciliation: A Religious Framework for Peacemaking and Conflict Resolution, by Brian Cox (Xlibris, 2012)

"From Memory to Action: A Toolkit for Memorialization in Post-Conflict Societies," by Ereshnee Naidu, International Coalition of Sites of Conscience
www.sitesofconscience.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Memorialization-Toolkit-English.pdf

"Healing the Wounds of Slave Trade and Slavery: Approaches and Practices," by Katherine Marshall, Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs, 2021
https://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/publications/healing-the-wounds-of-slave-trade-and-slavery-approaches-and-practices

The Imam and the Pastor, *An African Answer*, and *The Serene Life & the Serene Smile*, FLTfilms, produced by Alan Channer
www.fltfilms.org.uk

Peer Learning and Support Community of Practice, US Truth and Reconciliation Hub, and International Reconciliation, Peacebuilding, and Truth Telling Hub, ThinkPeace
www.thinkpeacehub.org/

"Reconciliation in Practice: Selected Observations about the Assumptions Informing Practices of Reconciliation," by Fanie du Toit and Angelina Mendes, *Reconciler*, no. 1, (April 2022)
www.thinkpeacehub.org/reconciler

REconciliation: Working with Difference, Northern Ireland National School Curriculum, Belfast, Council for the Curriculum Examinations and Assessment, 2008
https://uk.ccea.org.uk/learning-resources/reconciliation-working-difference

Religion, Reconciliation, and Transitional Justice: The State of the Field, by Daniel Philpott (New York, Social Science Research Council, 2007)
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Acknowledgments

About the Action Guides

Why were the Religious Peacebuilding Action Guides written? Although it is difficult to deny that religion plays a role in many conflicts across the world, only relatively recently has there been an increased interest in what this means for peacebuilding. Religious peacebuilding has developed as a recognized field in its own right since the turn of the century. However, religion continues to be relatively neglected in the wider field of peacebuilding both because of a secular bias that tends to downplay the importance or relevance of religion and because of a shortage of practical tools to help peacebuilders navigate the complexities of the religious dimensions of conflict.

The Action Guides aim to address this shortage of practical tools and, in the process, to challenge the persisting secular bias in peacebuilding. We hope they will bridge the divide between secular and religious peacebuilding by ensuring that peacebuilding actors are capable of understanding and acting within the religious landscape of conflict environments.

These four Action Guides are the product of a collaborative process involving eight authors coordinated by three editors with support from the religion and inclusive societies team at the United States Institute of Peace. Two consultations, one in New York and one in Thailand, with stakeholders from the United States, Europe, Africa, and Asia; a global survey of some eighty respondents; and two symposia of religious and thematic specialists fed into the process. Editors were then responsible for reviewing and finalizing the publications, ensuring consistency across all four Guides.

About the Authors and Series Editor

David Steele is former adjunct lecturer in conflict resolution and coexistence at Brandeis University and has thirty-five years' experience facilitating interfaith peacebuilding on most continents. He has conducted conflict assessments, training workshops, and strategies for countering violent extremism with a wide variety of faith communities, utilizing indigenous and Western approaches. He has participated in track II diplomacy efforts and provided religious training for diplomats, governmental mediators, and aid agencies. He has authored numerous publications and holds a PhD in Christian ethics and practical theology from Edinburgh University.

James Patton is the president and CEO of the International Center for Religion and Diplomacy (ICRD). He has conducted international development, conflict transformation, and social reconciliation for twenty-five years in dozens of countries. His nongovernmental experience includes advancing citizen security with Indigenous and Afro-descendent communities in the Andes, facilitating Cambodian Buddhists' role in postconflict stability, and developing frameworks for training religious actors in preventing extremism in north Africa. His governmental experience includes leading stability operations assessments for the US Department of State in South Sudan.

Tarek Maassarani is program director of the Salam Institute for Peace and Justice and a frequent trainer for the United States Institute of Peace. Tarek's experience includes developing and implementing cross-border encounter programs, gang intervention efforts, community mediation and intergroup dialogue, nonviolent action, peace education programs, and restorative justice initiatives, as well as a variety of training and facilitation activities in the United States, the Middle East, and Africa. Tarek has taught university courses in conflict resolution and, as an attorney, practiced, published, and lectured in the area of human rights.

About the Supporting Organizations

The Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers builds bridges between grassroots peacemakers and global players in order to strengthen the work done for sustainable peace. The Network strengthens peacemaking through collaboratively supporting the positive role of religious and traditional actors in peace and peacebuilding processes.

See www.peacemakersnetwork.org/about-us for more information.

The Salam Institute for Peace and Justice is a US-based nonprofit organization for research, education, and practice on issues related to conflict resolution, nonviolence, human rights, and development, with a focus on bridging differences between Muslim and non-Muslim communities. The Salam Institute has extensive experience directing projects focused on peacebuilding and interfaith dialogue and exchange in Muslim countries.

See http://salaminstitute.org for more information.

The United States Institute of Peace is a national, nonpartisan, independent institute, founded by Congress and dedicated to the proposition that a world without violent conflict is possible, practical, and essential for US and global security. In conflict zones abroad, the Institute works with local partners to prevent, mitigate, and resolve violent conflict. To reduce future crises and the need for costly interventions, USIP works with governments and civil societies to build local capacities to manage conflict peacefully. The Institute pursues its mission by linking research, policy, training, analysis, and direct action to support those who are working to build a more peaceful, inclusive world.

See www.usip.org for more information.

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THIS ACTION GUIDE is written for people who are organizing and facilitating reconciliation processes where religious issues or identities are important and religious texts, principles, values, symbols, or rituals may be used. It is one of four Action Guides in a series; the others being *Religion in Conflict and Peacebuilding*, *Religion and Mediation*, and *Religion and Gender*.