



## SALT LAKE INTERFAITH ROUNDTABLE

P.O. Box 112016 Salt Lake City, UT 84147-2016

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### MEDIA ADVISORY

#### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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#### **SALT LAKE INTERFAITH ROUNDTABLE MEMBER BRIAN D. BIRCH ELECTED AS BOARD TRUSTEE OF THE PARLIAMENT OF THE WORLD'S RELIGIONS**

Dr. Birch's election coincides with the Parliament's preparations for its 2015 conference in Salt Lake City, October 15-19, 2015, at the Salt Palace Convention Center.

In a letter to the Parliament Board, he stated that "It is an honor to be considered for nomination to serve on the Board of Trustees for the Parliament. The work of this organization is critically important in developing just and peaceable relations across cultures and traditions."

Dr. Birch is the Director of Religious Studies at Utah Valley University and a valued member of the Salt Lake Interfaith Roundtable.

He has worked for the past twenty years in higher education to strengthen awareness of diversity and to explore ways in which students can contribute to an atmosphere of respect and cooperation across religious traditions and ideologies.

The Parliament is eager to develop more youth- and student-related programming in these areas. "I am honored to help contribute to this objective, in addition to helping specifically with the Salt Lake event.

"Beyond next year's Parliament, I am interested in contributing to broader efforts to build leadership capacities among students and to strengthening relationships between the Parliament and institutions of higher education.

"The experience will be a superb supplement to their formal education in religious studies and other related fields. Our local colleges and universities are anxious to provide opportunities for student involvement and are planning customized curriculum in preparation for the Parliament."

He is currently working with representatives from Utah colleges and universities on certain collective activities; their main focus is on pledging volunteers for the event. His efforts have resulted in a commitment of 200 interested students. Those selected by the Parliament will participate in specific pre-event training.

“The Parliament’s presence in Salt Lake City is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for our students. No other event in the world provides more opportunities for engagement with religious diversity.”

During his current tenure as Director of Religious Studies at Utah Valley University, the program has organized nearly 100 academic events related to interreligious understanding and service. It has hosted a number of influential scholars and religious leaders, including His Holiness the Dalai Lama, who will speak at the 2015 Parliament, and national interfaith leader, Eboo Patel, a well-known writer who has made several visits to the campus as the founder of Interfaith Youth Core. The Parliament says news detailing Patel’s participation in the 2015 event will soon be announced.

“Religious diversity is an important part of our Religious Studies curriculum and we have developed a university-wide Interreligious Engagement Initiative to serve all students as part of our mission of inclusion.”

Dr. Birch holds a bachelor's and a master's degree in philosophy from the University of Utah. His interests in religious diversity and comparative studies led to completion of a Ph.D. in the Philosophy of Religion and Theology program at Claremont Graduate University in California.

He has worked for several years with the Foundation for Religious Diplomacy and recently signed on to serve as Senior Research Fellow. He has written and collaborated on a number of papers and articles in the area of religious studies.

## **YOU, TOO, CAN PARTICIPATE IN THE 2015 PARLIAMENT OF THE WORLD’S RELIGIONS IN SALT LAKE CITY**

First, **REGISTER** to be part of this international and interfaith conference at [2015.parliamentofreligions.org](http://2015.parliamentofreligions.org).

Then, take advantage of the numerous opportunities to present workshops, purchase booth spaces, or become a sponsor.

The program proposal submission deadline is January 15, 2015. Individuals and groups dedicated to promoting compassion, peace, justice, or sustainability throughout the world are encouraged to present a variety of types of programming at the 2015 Parliament.

### **You must be registered to participate in the above activities.**

Find the links for submitting proposals, reserving exhibit space, or volunteering, on the 2015 Parliament home page, [2015.parliamentofreligions.org](http://2015.parliamentofreligions.org).

### **SUPER SAVER REGISTRATION ENDS DECEMBER 10, 2014**

Registration for individuals goes up \$100, and student rates will increase by \$20, after December 10. Take advantage of the super saver rate now at the Parliament's Registration page. Fifty percent savings for members of groups will remain throughout the next registration period.

### **THE SALT LAKE INTERFAITH ROUNDTABLE:**

A 501(c)(3) non-profit organization of over 220 members working to promote love, harmony, and

increased understanding among persons of all faith traditions, cultures, and belief systems everywhere.

The Roundtable regularly supports free community programs and events throughout the year with the express purpose of facilitating interfaith dialogue. To donate, or for information about the Roundtable, annual Interfaith Season, and the Musical Tribute, please visit [interfaithroundtable.org](http://interfaithroundtable.org).