

The Episcopal Anglican Province of Alexandria



Centre of Christian-Muslim Understanding & Partnership

المركز المسيحي الإسلامي للتفاهم والشراكة

Newsletter, May 2023



Dear friends,

We are happy to share with you our news and activities that happened since our last February 2023 newsletter.

We would like you to know that we appreciate your friendship and support to the Center.

May God bless you,

+ Mouneer

Archbishop Emeritus Dr. Mouneer Anis,

Director-General

Centre for Christian-Muslim Understanding and Partnership (CCMUP)

Email:

mouneer.anis@ccmup.org

info@ccmup.org

Mobile phone no.: +20 122 325 1379

Website: <https://www.ccmup.org/en/home-page/>

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I. **Conference on the Role of Religious Leaders in Protecting the Environment & Addressing Climate Change, 29 & 30 May**
Urgent Need for its Fundraising

In partnership with the House of the Egyptian Family (بيت العائلة المصرية), Al-Azhar Al-Shareef, the Ministry of the Environment & Egypt's Churches, the Centre is organizing a 2-day conference to address the role of religious leaders in protecting the environment & addressing Climate Change, to be held on the 29th & 30th of May, 2023, at the All Saints Cathedral Hall.

We are expecting about a 100 participants representing Egypt's religious leaders, as well as academic and practitioner leaders in Egypt's private and public environmental sector. In recognition of the major influence religious leaders have within their communities, the conference aims to raise their environmental awareness and encourage them to take practical action within their communities, to transform environmental rhetoric into practice.

As such, we would appreciate your financial contributions to help successfully realize this much needed conference. You can donate for this conference on the Centre's bank account:

Account name: Diocese of Egypt (الكنيسة الأسقفية مشروع الحوار)

Account number: 1250 1335 9008

IBAN: EG71 0005 1025 0000 0125 0133 590 08

Alex Bank, 26 July st. el Zamalek, Cairo.

II. Meeting with the Grand Imam of Al Azhar Al Sharif



On Tuesday, May 9th, Archbishop Dr. Samy Fawzy, Archbishop-Emeritus Dr. Mouner Anis, and Rev. Dr. Matthew Anderson met with the Grand Imām of al-Azhar, Dr. Aḥmed al-Ṭayyeb. Among other subjects, they discussed the activities of the Centre for Christian-Muslim Understanding and Partnership (CCMUP), with a particular focus on the upcoming conference on religious leadership and the environment that will be held at the All Saints Cathedral complex on May 29th and 30th. This interfaith conference builds on the legacy of the 2022 U.N. Climate Conference (COP27) which was held last November in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, and will

feature scientific, theological, and practical perspectives on the environmental crisis. Along with the Faraday Institute for Science and Religion (Cambridge, U.K.) and Dialogue Across Borders (Cairo, Egypt), we are looking for additional sponsors for this important event.



The Grand Imām was very supportive of the conference and the work of CCMUP. Since assuming leadership at Al-Azhar in 2010, he has prioritized interfaith efforts around the world. Perhaps most notably, the Grand Imām signed the landmark Document on Human Fraternity with Pope Francis in 2019. Born in Luxor in 1946, the Grand Imām completed his doctorate at al-Azhar University in 1977. He served as the Grand Muftī of Egypt from 2002-2003 and the President of Al-Azhar University from 2003-2010. He is also the chairman of the Muslim Council of Elders, an international organization founded in 2014 to promote peace in Muslim communities.

III. Taking part in the MCC's Safeguarding Workshop & Peace-Making Club Trainings

On the 2nd of May, Mr. Kareem Gerges, the Centre's Director of International Partnerships & Public Policy, represented the Centre at the workshop organized by our partner the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), which included important discussions and trainings on the subject of safeguarding mechanisms, including questions related to carrying out safe programs through risk assessment and mitigation.

The Centre also participated in the MCC's training for Peace Clubs, throughout the months of February & March, 2023.

IV. Project: 'It's Our Planet, Let's Save it'; Meetings for School Principals & Teachers



On Sunday 26 March and Wednesday 19 April, 2023, the Centre organized two meetings for the school teachers and principles participating in the environmental project. The first meeting was to officially inaugurate the project, in the presence of Archbishop Dr. Samy Fawzy, Anba Armia, Secretary General of the House of the Egyptian Family, Sheikh Dr. Abu Zeid el Amir, Coordinator General of the House of the Egyptian Family, and Archbishop-Emeritus Dr. Mouneer Anis, the Centre's Director General.

During the second meeting, on 19 April, the Centre invited Dr. Samar, an environmental scholar, to give a lecture raising awareness on the challenges facing us through environmental degradation and climate change, presented to the teachers and school principals participating in the project.





V. St. Patrick's Day & Intercultural Festival



The Centre partnered with the Irish Embassy in Cairo, the Gusoor Cultural Center, and Refugee Egypt, in organizing an intercultural event celebrating St. Patrick's day, as well as other cultures, on Friday 17th March. The participants included musicians, singers and dancers coming from different backgrounds, such as Sudan, South Sudan, Syria, Eritrea, Ireland and Egypt. The event highlighted the rich diversity of backgrounds and cultures co-existing in Cairo, including within the Anglican Church. In addition, Mr. Kareem Gerges represented the Centre at the reception organized on 16th March by the Embassy of Ireland in Cairo, in celebration of St. Patrick's day.







(Right) Ambassador Nuala O'Brien, Ambassador of Ireland in Egypt; Mr. Kareem Gerges, the Centre's Director for International Partnerships & Public Policy, at the St. Patrick's day reception, the Embassy of Ireland in Egypt, 16 March 2023.

VI. Lecture on Early Arab Christianity

On April 5th, the Centre for Christian-Muslim Understanding and Partnership hosted Dr. Wageeh Mikhail for a lecture on early Arab Christian theology. Dr. Mikhail served as director of the Centre for Middle Eastern Christianity at the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo from 2004 - 2019 and is now the Middle East director for ScholarLeaders International. He completed his doctoral studies under Prof. David Thomas at the University of Birmingham, one of the world's leading scholars of early Arab Christianity.



Throughout his lecture, Dr. Mikhail challenged the way many interpretations of Christian history neglect the emergence and significance of Arab Christianity, transitioning almost directly from early figures like St. Augustine (d.430 CE) to medieval and Reformation developments in Europe. After an introductory overview, the lecture focused on three key figures who made a decisive impact on the theological and interfaith legacy of Arab Christianity: John of Damascus (d.749), Bishop Timothy I (d.823), and ‘Ammār al-Baṣṛī (c.9th century).

In terms of Egypt, Dr. Mikhail clarified that the first work of Christian theology in Arabic was written in 970 by the Coptic Orthodox scholar, Sāwīris ibn al-Muqaffa‘ (d.987). After the Mongol invasion destroyed Baghdad in 1258, Egypt became the new center of Arab Christian theology. With both Christians and Muslims in attendance, the lecture provided a valuable introduction to a vital part of Christian history and interfaith relations that has often been neglected.



VII. Signing MoU with the Rose Castle Foundation (RCF)

The Centre is pleased to announce that it has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the renowned peace-making Rose Castle Foundation (RCF). This is in recognition of both organizations' commitment towards advancing interfaith peace and cooperation, in Egypt and beyond. We are excited for this partnership, for the beneficial projects it should bring to our communities.

VIII. The Diocese Ramadan Iftar



The Centre took part in the Diocese Ramadan iftar, which invited several sheikhs from Al-Azhar Al Sharif & imams from our community's mosques to share the break of the Ramadan fast with their Christian brothers and priests, in a convivial atmosphere. The iftar has been a precious annual tradition by the Diocese, deepening interfaith friendships and cooperation.



IX. Network of Centers for Christian-Muslim Relations



The Centre's Director, Archbishop-Emeritus Dr. Mouneer, participated in the conference on the network of centers which work on interfaith relations, which was held in Istanbul, Turkey from the 11-15 of May. 15 centers working on Interfaith dialogue from Asia, Africa and the Middle East with North Africa participated in this conference. It is Rev. Dr. Wageeh Michael's vision to form a network of these global south centers. Scholars Leadership International supports this excellent vision.

"It was a very rich time of sharing and exchange of ideas. I think that this conference is both historic and strategic. I believe that there will be many future fruits for this meeting" Archbishop-Emeritus Dr. Mouneer.

X. Europe Day Reception



(Left) Ambassador Christian Berger, Head of the EU Delegation to Egypt, with Mr. Kareem Gerges, the Centre's Director of International Partnerships & Public Policy.

The Centre was pleased to participate in the Europe Day reception, organized by the European Union Delegation to Egypt, which was held on Wednesday 10th of May, at the Ambassador's residence. It was a good opportunity to engage with friends and partners from different cultural and religious backgrounds, reflecting the Centre's aim to advance interfaith peace and cooperation in Egypt and beyond.



(left) Mme. Antonia Zafeiri, the Head of Political, Press and Information Section



(Right) Mr. Hassan Mosa, Political Affairs Officer

Finally, we would like to express our sincere appreciation and gratitude for your continuous support and interest in our projects. We would be more than glad to hear from you, including your thoughts and reflections on how -together- we can advance and progress the mission of the Centre of Christian Muslim Understanding and Partnership (CCMUP).

The Centre's Executive Team



Centre of Christian-Muslim Understanding & Partnership

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