## Faith leaders say populist extremism is 'incompatible with religion'

POPULIST extremism rejects fundamental moral and ethical principles of Christianity and other religions, and accordingly must be actively resisted by faith communities.

Such was the core conclusion. of an inter-falth peace event in Edinburgh on "Faith, Peace and Global Politics in the Age of President Trump", heid by Edinburgh Inter-Palth and Unit-

ing for Peace.

Professor Jolyon Mitchell, Director, Centre for Theology and Public Issues, Edinburgh University, said the separation barriers now within and between many countries - from Cyprus and Northern Ireland to Israel-Palestine and USA-Mexico - symbolised the deep divisions in today's world.

"The past 12 years have seen 6,000 miles of new separation walls and barriers erected in 65 countries." Overcoming these divisions and building peace required both top-level action by leaders and local-level action by activists and communities, and also "the often neglected middle-level action where religious leaders are very important:

Imam Amin Buxton of Annandale Street Mosque said the current time of great uncertainty also 'a deeply religious age called for "a pact of the virtuous, unity of faiths against oppression, and solidarity of the wise against the corrupt

Purification of the soul was a vital element in creating nonviolence and reconciliation.

"Rectifying the heart of the individual is essential to help

rectify the world. Imam Hassan Rabbani said close engagement by Muslims with non-Muslim society was the best way to tackle Islamo phobia caused by ignorance and lack of contact: "we need to

build bridges."

The Rev Brian Cooper, Uniting for Peace Inter-Faith Secretary, said populist extremism in Europe and in the USA had significant negative features; racial and religious intolerance, appeals to lear and hate, xenophobia, scapegoating of 'the other' and minorities, emotionallam at the expense of resson, creation of divisions, rejection of global compassion and

responsibility. "By appealing instincts, and lacking concern for human rights, safeguarding minorities, solidarity and internationalism, populist parties present a fundamental moral challenge to long-held social ethics shared by Jews, Chris tians, Muslims, those of other faiths - and Enlightenment

humanists.

"The very notion of compassion, rooted in Europe's Judaeo-Christian heritage and shared by Islam, is absent from populism."

## New body aims to mediate while seeking peace outcomes

PEACEMAKER Mediators (www.pencemakers.ngo) was launched on Saturday 6 May at Christ Church, Virginia

The new body alms to be a catalyst for peace-making, especially where minorities are persecuted, where justice is denied, human rights are suppressed or reconciliation is needed'

The director, the recently retired vicar of Christ Church, the Rev Stephen Sizer, said he wants to work with other peacemaking charities, with a specific role of dealing with causes not consequences

Patrons of the charity are Archbishop Mouneer Anis Gerusalem and the Middle East) and the former Archbishop of Uganda, Henry Orombi. The Panel of Reference

includes Bishop Michael Langrish, former Bishop of Exeter.

Speaking from this Sunday's lectionary he noted that Eph-esians 2:14 reads "Christ is our peace who has broken down the dividing wall to make peace". The cross, which was a priestly and prophetic act is not a victory over hatred, Bishop Langrish said. Jesus was not winning a conflict but putting an end to

Pouring millions into peacekeeping only keeps warring parties apart. The Christian community struggles to keep reconciliation alive. "This charity is committed to keep that witness alive," he said, "a vocation to which Christ calls us and for which he gives us the grace."

Stephen Hofmeyr QC spoke of his experience of being brought up in Cape Town where he lived "under the horrors of a

majority who were persecuted.\* His experience taught him that reconciliation and true peace only come from God. involves "truth, dealing with the realities and all the issues, not sweeping them under the car-

founder of Amos Trust, and a trustee of the charity, gave a concert with guitar and harmonica. His songs had lines such as

"In the tents of God's mercy all are accepted... God is still waiting with wide open arms".

"I believe in the way of peace, I believe in the way of freedom,

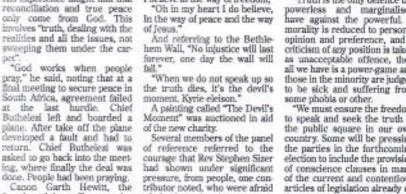
pressure, from people, one cun-tributor noted, who were afraid of what he was saying.

Canon Chris Sugden welcomed the launch of Peacemaker Mediators as timely for the UK because from a Christian perspective, making peace and reconciliation achieving

depends on truth. Truth is the only defence the powerless and marginalise have against the powerful. I murality is reduced to persons opinion and preference, and criticism of any position is take as unacceptable offence, the all we have is a power-game an those in the minority are judge to be sick and suffering from

"We must ensure the freedon to speak and seek the truth in the public square in our own country. Some will be pressin the parties in the furthcoming election to include the provision of conscience clauses in man of the current and contentiou articles of legislation already of the statute book and envi

Pictured: (from left) Canor Garth Hewitt, Bishop Michael Langrish, the Rev Stephen Size and the painting The Devil Moment by Daniel Burnel



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