

# BASS CONFERENCE 2012

## KEYNOTE SPEAKERS: BIOGRAPHIES

Rose Hudson-Wilkin, Chris Cook, Sister Jayanti, Paul Gilbert, Grace Davie

### **Rose Hudson-Wilkin Bphil Ed.**

Born and grew up in Montego Bay. Attended Montego Bay High School for Girls. Trained as a Church Army Evangelist in Great Britain and returned to work in the diocese of Jamaica in the field of Christian Education. She later, returned with her husband to England in 1985. She was ordained deacon in 1991 and ordained to the priesthood in 1994. She presently serves as a priest in the diocese of London.

In 2007 she was appointed as a Chaplain to Her Majesty the Queen and in 2010, she became the first female to be appointed as the 79th Chaplain to the Speaker of the House of Commons. In her new role she leads the prayers in the House of Commons daily when the House is sitting and carries the responsibility for the pastoral care of both members and staff of the Palace of Westminster.

She has previously served as a member of the General Synod of the Church of England and was one of the Panel of Chairs of the Synod. She has also previously served on the Broadcasting Standards Commission and on the Board of SPCK – Chairing their Worldwide Committee. She has twice represented the Church of England at the World Council of Churches meeting and is also one of its representatives on the Anglican Consultative Council. As a Selection Secretary for the Church of England, she helps to select men and women seeking to test their vocation to the ministry. She is often called on to preach in the colleges of Oxford and Cambridge and does some religious broadcasting.

She is married to a priest who serves as a prison chaplain and they have three adult children.

### **Chris Cook**

Chris Cook is a Professorial Research Fellow in the Department of Theology & Religion at Durham University and a Consultant in Substance Misuse with Tees, Esk & Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust. He trained at St George's Hospital Medical School, London, and has worked in the psychiatry of substance misuse for 25 years. He was ordained as an Anglican priest in 2001. He is Director of the Project for Spirituality, Theology & Health at Durham University and an editor (with Andrew Powell and Andrew Sims) of *Spirituality and Psychiatry* (Royal College of Psychiatrists Press, 2009).

### **Sister Jayanti, European Director of Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University (BKWSU) and their NGO Representative to the United Nations, Geneva**

For over 40 years, Sister Jayanti has been an emissary for peace. She has a vision and experience that is truly global and deeply spiritual. Perhaps this is because among other factors, she is a child of two cultures. Sister Jayanti was born in Poona, India in 1949 of Sindhi parents who migrated to England in the 1950s. From the age of eight she was therefore exposed to

Western education and cultural influence. Her return to India for several months' stay at the age of 19 (leaving behind her study of pharmacy at the University of London) led her to begin her life's path of spiritual study and service with the Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University.

Her role within the University is broad. As well as assisting with the overall coordination of the activities of the Brahma Kumaris in over 100 countries outside India, her day to day work involves spiritual counselling, teaching and translating. She is a Director of the International Co-ordinating Office of the Brahma Kumaris (BK) in London, Global Cooperation House, of the Global Retreat Centre in Oxfordshire and of BK Centres in over 20 European countries. She is a former trustee of the Janki Foundation that considers the needs of patients and practitioners at the levels of body, mind and spirit.

Her travels as a keenly sought after speaker and broadcaster have taken her into well over 100 countries. Many trips during the early eighties were pioneering in nature. She helped establish the work of the University in London, Hong Kong, the Caribbean, Japan, South Africa and several European countries and continues to provide spiritual support to Centres all over the world.

Sister Jayanti has a unique ability to impart the deepest spiritual truths with the utmost clarity. Her prominent lecture themes have included health, education, racial harmony, women's needs, religions of the world, sustainability, peace and international relations, all of which have generated a lot of media interest. Sister Jayanti was a delegate to the International Women's Year Conference, Berlin in 1975, which heralded the start of the United Nations Decade for Women. Indeed, women's issues have remained especially close to her heart. As a young woman growing up in London, from a traditional Asian family she had to face not only the cultural divide but also that of gender. The understanding of spirituality enabled her to understand the role of feminine qualities in personal and world transformation and empowered her to use these in a practical way.

Sister Jayanti sees the erosion of spiritual values at the heart of the underlying cause of the crises that the world is facing today. She has worked tirelessly to promote positive, human, spiritual values to all sectors of society. In 1980 she was appointed the University's main representative to the UN in Geneva. This has led her to participate in many UN Conferences and projects in connection with Women, Development, the Environment, Youth and a major international project for the United Nations International Year of Peace. She has therefore undertaken extensive research into the role of spiritual values in world change.

At the 20th World Conference of the Society for International Development in the Netherlands in 1991 she drew attention to the need to reaffirm faith in the dignity and worth of the human person (as proclaimed in the preamble to the Charter of the United Nations). "... dignity and worth are sadly only too often sacrificed in the name of solutions to these (world) problems. To reassert this dignity and worth as much careful attention must be given to human development and enrichment as is being given to economic development or environmental protection. No political, economic, social or environmental system can fulfil its purpose unless peoples' lifestyles, and valuesystems correspond to the sustained continuity of that system or state of affairs. The quality

of any society or community is no better or worse than the personal qualities of its members, and to achieve economic growth and social development it is crucial to achieve personal growth. Without this the very building blocks of any 'new world order' will themselves be the downfall of that order." In 2009, Sister Jayanti was a major participant at COP 15, the UN Climate Change Conference, and in May 2010, she spoke at the UN Conference: Cultural rights and Climate Change, Spiritual & Ethical Perspectives, Palais des Nations.

Amongst Sister Jayanti's achievements to date was her role in the international coordination of two major international projects of the Brahma Kumaris. The first, 'The Million Minutes of Peace Appeal', was created especially for the UN International Year of Peace in 1986. People in approximately 80 countries contributed their prayers, meditations and positive thoughts towards peace in the world, making a final total of 1.34 billion minutes! 'The Appeal was something that everyone, regardless of their age, cultural background or education could take part in and, indeed, most minutes were collected from developing countries. Peace songs rang out at Manila Railway Stations, hot air balloons went up in London's Hyde Park and Trafalgar Square and even Hong Kong traffic wardens decided to refrain from bookings when the Appeal was launched in September 1986!

The Million Minutes of Peace began a wave of change and in 1988 the project 'Global Cooperation for a Better World' was launched from the Houses of Parliament in London. This was the first Peace Messenger Initiative dedicated to the United Nations. Support for the project came from 129 countries creating thousands of community projects across the globe, nearly all of them involving people at the grass roots. From Presidents and Prime Ministers to street children, people began donating their positive visions of a better world and with that, their plan of action, however small, to make that vision a reality. Sister Jayanti was closely involved in synthesising the hundreds of thousand of visions collected by the 'Global Cooperation Bank' into a 12 point Global Vision Statement that represents the hopes and desires of people worldwide. At the Foundation for International Studies when the second phase of the project was launched by the President of Malta, Sister Jayanti spoke of the underlying unity of humankind; "Their enthusiastic response has created a vision of amazing hope and courage. The resilience of the human spirit has been demonstrated. At a time of disintegration and chaos, a general state of hopelessness and despair, the people of the world have presented us with a powerful vision. Considering the vast spectrum of humanity that actively participated, the vision has an incredible cohesiveness. People have shown that their hopes and dreams are the same. The colours, that is the details, of the picture convey a wonderful sense of variety, but the form and content of the picture is a unified one."

Another area of great importance to Sister Jayanti in her life and work is her contribution for over 30 years within the interfaith movement. Her approach to interreligious cooperation is perhaps best summed up in this excerpt from her statement to the UN Seminar on the Encouragement of Understanding: Tolerance and Respect in Matters Relating to Freedom of Religion or Belief, in Geneva in 1984: "A simple analogy that helps me appreciate the role of each religion and even the paths of nonreligions is that of a tree representing the whole of humanity. Every branch of the tree is supporting the leaves of the tree and so is important; i.e. every religion is a support for the people. There has to be a certain detachment even from my own religion to appreciate the

validity of other paths. This does not mean being unfaithful to my religion but entering a state of consciousness that transcends barriers and limitations.”

Sister Jayanti was an Advisor to the Council for a Parliament of the World’s Religions, Chicago and gave a major presentation at the Parliament itself. She is also a member of Executive Committee of the World Congress of Faiths and is a member of the Advisory Body of the International Interfaith Centre. She also served on the World Congress of Faiths International Committee from 1988 to 1993, which planned the contribution of the World Congress of Faiths to 1993 A Year of Interreligious Understanding and Cooperation.

In the role of a spiritual leader and teacher, it is practice not theory that is paramount. This is of course the secret of Sister Jayanti’s success. If there is one particular quality that could be singled out, it would be humility. This allows her to be a very clear instrument for others because of her constant attention on her own personal change. She firmly believes that we cannot expect to change others or the world around us unless we are prepared to change ourselves. This was clearly expressed by her in a recent seminar in Toronto on the theme of ‘The Challenge of Change’, “I am very well aware that any change in the world starts from something which is very small, very tiny. It perhaps begins in the mind of one individual and is communicated one to ten and then to 100 and then to 1,000 others. Within a short space of time you do not even know where that idea began. It seems as though it is coming to you from all directions. Not only do we influence the microcosm around us, but also together and individually we are responsible for the macrocosm as well. We are responsible for the state of affairs in which we find ourselves.”

With the recent explosion of interest in the sustainability of planet earth, Sister Jayanti has been involved in the topic for 15 years. The dimension of spirituality and the environment has been of personal interest and exploration for Sister Jayanti. In particular, the aspect of respect for all forms of life.

As the BK NGO representative to the United Nations in Geneva, Sister Jayanti participated in the Geneva preparatory meetings at the UN leading up to the Rio Earth Summit in 1992 where she assisted in the creation of the Earth Charter. Even now, there is ongoing interest in the application of the principles outlined in this Charter. Sister Jayanti was a member of the Brahma Kumaris delegation to the UN World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, South Africa in 2002.

In Madrid in 2005 Sister Jayanti was a keynote speaker during “Businesses with Soul and Responsibility in a Changing Environment”, a special day for business people organised by “La Fundación Sagardoy” and the “Club de Excelencia en Sostenibilidad” at the Hotel Palace. In 2008 Sr Jayanti spoke at the Jaipur Global Peace Initiative and in 2009 had major tours of South Africa and the Gulf States.

In December 2009 Sister Jayanti led the Brahma Kumaris delegation to the UN Climate Change Conference COP15 in Copenhagen.

Cultural Rights and Climate Change, Spiritual & Ethical Perspectives, was a UN Conference held at the Palais des Nations May 2010, where Sister Jayanti was a speaker.

Coming into the Light Sister Jayanti was a major speaker at a residential retreat for 120 from all over the Middle East that took place in Bahrain, February 2010.

Books by BK Jayanti: God's Healing Power, Michael Joseph/Penguin (London: 2002) Practical Meditation, HCI (Florida: 2000) The Art of Thinking, BKIS (London: 2000) Dreams and Reality, BKIS (London: 2000) With Mike George, Meditation for Extremely Busy People, BKIS (London: 2000) Relaxing the Mind (audio tape and CD), BKIS (London: 2000) Moments of Peace (video), Présence Image et Son (France) Relationships between Genders: An Alternative Perspective (publication pending, the Netherlands: 2004) Awaken Your Inner Wisdom (O Books: 2010) God's Healing Power, new edition (Sterling Publishing, New York: 2010) Awaken Your Inner Wisdom (O Books: 2010)

### **Paul Gilbert BA., MSc., PhD., Dip Clin Psych., FBPsSOBE**

Paul Gilbert is Professor of Clinical Psychology at the University of Derby and Consultant Psychologist at Derbyshire Mental Health Services NHS Trust. He has a visiting Professorship at the University of Fribourg (Switzerland) and Coimbra (Portugal). He has been a Fellow of the British Psychological Society since 1993. He is a past committee member and then president of the International Society for Evolutionary Approaches to Psychopathology (1992). He was a on the board of the British Association for Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapy (2001-2004) and president in 2003.. He was also on the British Government's Advisory committee NICE (National Institute for Clinical Excellence) for the Depression Guideline (2002-2004).

He has authored over 100 academic papers and book chapters' and authored/edited 18 books. He has researched and written extensively in the areas of mood disorder, social anxiety, shame and psychosis. Throughout his 33 year career he has focused on evolutionary mechanisms underpinning vulnerabilities to psychological problems with a specific focus on attachment and social ranking systems. Individuals who have been unable to develop secure attachment may often use social ranking systems to organise self-other information and roles which is a source of shame. He has a specific interest in cross diagnostic processes relating to shame, stigma and self-criticism.

His major therapy work has been to develop better conceptual understanding and interventions from people who have high levels of shame and self-criticism. 20 years ago he began to explore the value of developing compassion, especially self-compassion, for people from troubled backgrounds, who have high shame and self-criticism. With his patients, and from a variety of influences from standard psychotherapies, Buddhism, the neuroscience of emotion regulation, he has developed an integrative multi-modal approach to therapy called Compassion Focused Therapy. Different groups around the world are now developing and investigating the efficacy of compassion focused therapy.

While we are developing our understanding of the processes of empathy, kindness and compassion at the intra and interpersonal level we are yet to explore how to build compassion

societies in the modern world, against the background of complex economics and business competitiveness. To help advance compassionate approaches to psychological and other human problems he established a charity called the Compassionate Mind Foundation.

[www.compassionatemind.co.uk](http://www.compassionatemind.co.uk). The mission statement is: Promoting Wellbeing Through the Scientific Understanding & Application of Compassion

In March 2011 he was awarded an OBE by the Queen for his work in mental health.

His recent books include Gilbert, P. (2010). *Compassion Focused Therapy: Distinctive Features*. London: Routledge Gilbert, P. (2009). *The Compassionate Mind*. London: Constable Robinson: (2010 New Harbinger) Gilbert, P. (2009). *Overcoming Depression: A Self-Help Guide using Cognitive Behavioral Techniques*. New York: Basic Books. Gilbert, P. (2005). *Compassion: Conceptualisations, Research and Use in Psychotherapy*. London. Routledge Gilbert, P. (2007). *Psychotherapy and Counseling for Depression*: London Sage Gilbert P & Leahy, R (2007). *Therapeutic Relationship in the Cognitive Behaviour Psychotherapies*. London: Routledge. He is now a series editor for Constable Robinson, for self-help books taking the Compassionate Mind Approach.

### **Grace Davie**

Grace Davie is professor emeritus in the Sociology of Religion in the University of Exeter. She is a past-president of the American Association for the Sociology of Religion (2003) and of the Research Committee 22 (Sociology of Religion) of the International Sociological Association (2002-06). In 2000-01 she was the Kerstin-Hesselgren Professor in the University of Uppsala, where she returned for the 2006-07 academic session and again in 2010. In January 2008, she received an honorary degree from Uppsala.

In addition to numerous chapters and articles, she is the author of *Religion in Britain since 1945* (Blackwell 1994), *Religion in Modern Europe* (OUP 2000), *Europe: the Exceptional Case* (DLT 2002) and *The Sociology of Religion* (Sage 2007); she co-author of *Religious America, Secular Europe* (Ashgate 2008), and co-editor of *Predicting Religion* (Ashgate 2003) and *Welfare and Religion in 21st Century Europe* (2 vols) (Ashgate 2010 and 2011).