



## *Memphis Peace and Harmony Days – September 21-23, 2011*

**For Immediate Release**

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## **Interfaith Panel on Peace Kicks Off Memphis Peace and Harmony Days**

Members of an interfaith panel will usher in the Second Annual Memphis Peace and Harmony Days on September 21, 2011. Panelists will discuss how their faith cultivates peace. Speakers will include:

- **Khenpo Gawang Rinpoche**, representative of the Buddhist tradition, has been a Tibetan Buddhist monk since he was 10. Wishing to study Buddhism deeply, at age 19 he moved to Southern India and entered the college at Nam dro ling Monastery. He studied there for 9 more years completing the equivalent of a PhD.
- **Dr. Nabil A. Bayakly**, representative of the Muslim faith, is currently Assistant Professor of Biology at LeMoyne-Owen College in Memphis as well as Adjunct Professor at both U of Memphis where he established the Arabic Program and at Memphis Theological Seminary where he teaches Islamic Theology.
- **Dr. Prasad Duggirala**, representative of the Hindu faith, was trained as a general surgeon at Columbia University, in New York. After Moving to Memphis in 1980, he practiced General Surgery in Memphis and Ripley, Tennessee for 26 years before retiring in 2006. Dr. Duggirala is a founding trustee of India Cultural Center and Temple and currently holds the chairmanship of board of trustees.
- **Cantor John M. Kaplan**, representative of the Jewish faith, is a member of the clergy of Temple Israel. He officiates at life cycle events, performs ministerial duties within the congregation, is involved in the adult education, the Bar/Bat Mitzvah program, and is advisor to the Committee on Congregational Caring. He is responsible for the musical life of the congregation.
- **Dr. Carol Richardson**, representative of the Christian faith, serves as associate pastor of the First Baptist Church in Memphis. She is involved in the holistic healing and health ministry of her church and is presently involved in inter-faith dialogue in her

community in an effort to promote greater understanding among the faith traditions. Carol has recently served on the boards of the national Woman's Missionary Union Foundation as well as the Samaritan Counseling Center, serving the poor in the Memphis area. Carol was the first female to be ordained into the gospel ministry by her church and among the first women in her church to be ordained as a deacon.

- **Jimmie Thigpen**, representative of the Native American spiritual tradition, is of Cherokee descent. He is a former Indian Commissioner for the West Grand Division of Tennessee's Indian Affairs. He currently serves as the Chairman of the American Indian Association of Millington, Tennessee and is one of the founding members of the Faraway Cherokees in Memphis, Tennessee. He is a Tribal member of the Tanasi Council of Cherokee and a member of the Memphis Tia Piah Warrior Society, Big River Gourd Clan. He is an accomplished Native American dancer.
- **Janice Vanderhaar**, representative of the Catholic faith, has dedicated her life to working for peace and justice, and is a member of Pax Christi, the International Catholic Peace Movement. She was a founding member of the Mid-South Peace and Justice Center and the M.K. Gandhi Institute for Nonviolence. She serves on the board of the World Cataract Foundation, and is chair of the Vanderhaar Symposium at Christian Brothers University which she established in memory of her late husband, Gerard Vanderhaar. Dr. Vanderhaar was a vocal and well known advocate for non-violence.

Following the speakers, a candle lighting ceremony will take place to symbolize spreading peace from oneself into the world. A silent period for meditation/prayer and contemplation will conclude the evening. The event will be held at the PhoDa Temple located at 3943 Frayser-Raleigh Road, Memphis, TN 38128 from 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM. People anywhere in the world can attend online by going to [www.memphispeaceandharmony.org](http://www.memphispeaceandharmony.org), clicking the "Connect Online" link and following the instructions.

For more information about the interfaith panel speakers, visit our website at the following address: <http://www.memphispeaceandharmony.org/speakers.htm>

On September 22, 2011, prayers for peace from the Tibetan Buddhist tradition will be led by Khenpo Gawang Rinpoche. Following the prayers, Khenpo Gawang will speak about developing individual peacefulness. The featured prayer is written by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Prayers will be chanted in English -- all are welcome. This event will be held at the Pema Karpo Meditation Center, 3912 Frayser-Raleigh Road, Memphis, TN 38128 from 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM. People anywhere in the world can attend online by going to [www.memphispeaceandharmony.org](http://www.memphispeaceandharmony.org), clicking the "Connect Online" link and following the instructions.

On September 23, 2011, a mindful peace walk will be held at Sleepy Hollow Park in Bartlett, Tennessee starting at 7:00 PM. The walk will be led by Khenpo Gawang Rinpoche. A map to the park can be found at <http://communitylink.com/us/tn/bartlett/map/city>.

At any time during September 21- 23, 2011, anyone can create activities that promote calm and peace within themselves and share them on our Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/MemphisPeaceAndHarmonyDays](http://www.facebook.com/MemphisPeaceAndHarmonyDays). Some examples of activities anyone can do include baking bread mindfully, sitting calmly in nature, praying for peace, sitting in a public area and wishing good for all who pass, or helping someone who needs it.

**History of Memphis Peace and Harmony Days:** In 2002, the United Nations General Assembly permanently adopted September 21st as the International Day of Peace. On September 22 and 23, 2009, His Holiness the Dalai Lama visited Memphis, Tennessee and on September 23, 2009,

received the International Freedom Award from the National Civil Rights Museum in Memphis. During his two day visit he gave a public talk on "Developing Peace and Harmony." Memphis political leaders declared September 22 and 23 Memphis Peace and Harmony Days.

At that time the Founder of Pema Karpo Meditation Center, Khenpo Gawang Rinpoche, made a commitment to honor the visit of His Holiness by creating an annual festival of peace and harmony. Memphis Peace and Harmony Days' purpose is to cultivate peacefulness within individuals so families, societies, nations and ultimately the world can live harmoniously. The first annual Memphis Peace and Harmony Days was celebrated in 2010 from September 21-23.

### [What People are Saying About Memphis Peace and Harmony Days:](#)

**Khenpo Gawang Rinpoche**, Buddhist monk and scholar says, *"Peace is a major subject in the religions of this world yet peace does not belong to religions. We all agree that more peace, loving kindness, and compassion are needed human values in this world. This Peace and Harmony conference is one way we can talk about different traditions of bringing peace."*

Memphis Peace and Harmony Days will capture the compassionate words and intention of **His Holiness the Dalai Lama**: *"A good motivation is what is needed: compassion without dogmatism, without complicated philosophy; just understanding that others are human brothers and sisters and respecting their human rights and dignities. That we humans can help each other is one of our unique human capacities."*

His Holiness imparts this advice: *"Through training our minds we can become more peaceful. This will give us greater opportunities for creating the peaceful families and human communities that are the foundation of world peace."*

**Candia Ludy**, Executive Director of Pema Karpo Meditation Center notes, *"I was watching a National Geographic special on tracing the DNA of humans. We all started from the same spot in Africa and from the point of view of our DNA are 99.9% the same. 99.9% is a lot of similarity. We are not making peace with each other; we are making peace with ourselves."*

Speaker **John M. Kaplan**, Cantor at Temple Israel reflects, *"For me, the word for 'peace' in Hebrew, as many people know, is Shalom. But the word means more than the cessation of physical violence. It means "wholeness," "contentment," and "fulfillment." That is, as I see it, my most paramount responsibility in this world. To participate in the creation of a society where family wholeness, individual and emotional contentment, and socio-economic fulfillment are realities for everyone – and not just a dream."*

**Janice Vanderhaar**, member of Pax Christi and the International Catholic Peace Movement says this about Memphis Peace and Harmony Days, *"As we come together in a prayerful, sharing way, we continue to build relationships and understanding which helps move not only Memphis but bend the entire world toward peace, unity, harmony, and respect."*

**Dr. Prasad Duggirala**, founding trustee of India Cultural Center and Temple and current Chairman of the Board of Trustees quotes his spiritual teacher who said, *"Peaceful and merciful heart is the abode of God."*

**Sara Free**, Memphis Peace and Harmony Days volunteer, reflects, *"Even though Memphis Peace and Harmony Days is sponsored by Pema Karpo Meditation Center, it isn't an event just for Buddhists. It is for everyone regardless of religion, age, ethnicity, etc. It is for anyone that is creating, or wants to create, peace and harmony in themselves, their community, their country, or in the world. I believe that*

*peace begins with individuals. If people can learn to be at peace with themselves, then peace and harmony with others will naturally spring from that."*

On the 20th anniversary of The International Day of Peace in 2002, The U.N. Resolution UN/A/RES/55/282 (<http://www.un-documents.net/a55r282.htm>) officially established September 21 as the permanent date for the International Day of Peace. By setting a fixed date for The International Day of Peace, the General Assembly concluded that, "*The International Day of Peace*) offers a cessation of violence and conflict throughout the world, and the related importance of achieving the broadest possible awareness and observance of the International Day of Peace among the global community."

To find out more about Memphis Peace and Harmony Days, visit [www.memphispeaceandharmony.org](http://www.memphispeaceandharmony.org).

**About the Sponsoring Organization:**

**Pema Karpo Meditation Center** is a meditation center inspired and guided by teacher Khenpo Gawang Rinpoche who is a Tibetan Buddhist scholar, monastic, and meditation teacher. The center's primary purpose is to use ancient Tibetan Buddhist wisdom to eliminate the troubles of the world through meditation, teachings, retreats, community service and outreach projects, and translation and publication of ancient Tibetan Buddhist texts.

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**Note to Press:**

For supporting materials to use with this news release, contact Debbie Burch at [debbie@memphispeaceandharmony.org](mailto:debbie@memphispeaceandharmony.org).