

HJ International Graduate School for Peace and Public Leadership Newsletter

Thomas G. Walsh
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2025 ECOSOC Partnership Forum Side Event

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VOICES OF PEACE
VOCI DI PACE

Perspectives on the Concept of “Only Begotten”

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An Introduction to Voci di Pace

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Being a Peacemaker, Leadership Series Event

The Office of Student Life and Graduate Student Council teamed up to host the first event of a Leadership Series, entitled “Being and Peacemaker” featuring Simon Amare Tekeba, Secretary General of Universal Peace Federation (UPF) and Ethiopia National Leader of FFWPU.

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Student Spotlight! Wendweson Fikire

HJI focuses on academic knowledge, peace, and reconciliation regardless of culture, religion, or ethnicity.

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2025 ECOSOC Partnership Forum Side Event



"From Margins to Changemakers: Girls Empowered through Leadership Training and Travel"
5 February 2025 | 13:15 – 14:30 | 2nd Fl, 4 W 43rd St, New York, NY 10036 | (Hybrid, Off-Site)

Organized by: the International Association of Youth and Students for Peace & Girls Empowered by Travel – Nepal; co-sponsored by the Permanent Mission of Mexico to the UN, Major Group for Children and Youth, and HJ International Graduate School for Peace and Public Leadership.

General Information on the Event

The side event, co-organized by the International Association of Youth and Students for Peace (IAYSP) and Girls Empowered by Travel (GET) Nepal, took place to showcase the impact of travel-based leadership programs as tools for education, empowerment, and sustainable community development. The event aimed to highlight how these programs equip young students with essential skills, boost their confidence, and prepare them to become change-makers in their communities. By emphasizing the successful partnership between IAYSP and GET-Nepal, the event illustrated how grassroots initiatives can drive long-term social change and contribute to the achievement of SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).



The event also served as a platform to foster multi-stakeholder partnerships, encouraging broader investment in strategies that empower girls globally. The discussion underscored the transformative power of locally driven initiatives, with speakers highlighting best practices in travel-based exchange programs designed to enhance cross-cultural learning and leadership development—while gender equality was later addressed as one of several key topics.

Key Discussions and Outcomes

Grassroots Leadership and Empowerment Programs



Kayoung Choi (Communications Coordinator for IAYSP) opened the session by introducing the collaboration between IAYSP and GET-Nepal, emphasizing its role in fostering transformative leadership and empowerment for young women in an inclusive platform. The panel featured Nagma Shrestha (IAYSP Representative to the United Nations, NY) and Elena Zubareva (Co-Founder of GET Nepal). They shared real-life examples of how grassroots initiatives create lasting change, particularly through leadership programs tailored to local needs. The discussion also highlighted the importance of SDG education among youth and the role of travel in fostering independence and self-confidence in young women.

Empowering Women Through Rural and Urban Exchange

A key initiative discussed was the Rural Urban Intercultural Exchange Program (Hitaishi), meaning “friend” or “well-wisher,” which brings together girls from different regions for leadership training before guiding them to implement community projects in their respective areas. The panelists showcased the impact of GET’s program, engaging approximately 4,000 community members and 1,750 direct beneficiaries. The program’s success was attributed to its emphasis on confidence-building, leadership skills, and real-world application. Other innovative initiatives were also discussed, including professional development programs for female guides and cultural homestay experiences designed to empower women while preserving local traditions. During the discussion, Teresa (A Representative of the UN Major Group for Children and Youth), shared strategies for securing government and institutional support for grassroots leadership initiatives, particularly for young women. She emphasized the importance of centering youth voices in decision-making and highlighted key recommendations from young feminists, including the need for universal, inclusive education, gender-responsive climate action, and stronger support for girl-child empowerment.



Advancing Gender Equality Through Literacy and Leadership Programs

The discussion further explored the role of literacy in women’s empowerment. GET presented its adult literacy program, which has enabled increased autonomy for participants and sparked initiatives such as campaigns against child marriage, leadership training for girls, and sustainable tourism projects. Brinda Basnet (Board Member of GET Nepal) spoke about the critical role of partnerships in the success of these programs. Civil society activist Patricia Gonzalez from Mexico shared perspectives on how community-driven initiatives contribute to advancing gender equality and development, reinforcing the need for localized solutions that address specific community needs.

Strengthening Global Collaboration for Gender Equality

The event highlighted the IAYSP Peace Designer program, an initiative aligning local projects with global goals. Panelists discussed how such programs can be adapted to different cultural contexts to

promote gender equality more effectively. Insights were shared on best practices, including engaging local stakeholders, leveraging media to showcase impact, and ensuring accountability and transparency in program implementation.

Overcoming Challenges in Community Engagement

Speakers addressed common challenges faced in implementing community projects, including initial skepticism from local communities. Examples were shared of how trust-building efforts, community consultations, and clear communication of program benefits helped overcome resistance. Testimonials from GET participants illustrated the effectiveness of these approaches in fostering long-term community buy-in and program sustainability.

Fostering Emotional Connections and Sustainable Impact

Building emotional connections was highlighted as a crucial aspect of leadership development. Brinda Basnet discussed the importance of establishing trust with program participants and their families, including home visits before program selection to ensure strong engagement. Additional insights were shared on personal motivations for involvement in women's empowerment, with speakers reflecting on their experiences in supporting marginalized communities.

The Role of Partnerships in Scaling Impact

The session concluded with a call to action to strengthen multi-stakeholder partnerships, expanding successful models like those of IAYSP and GET-Nepal. Emphasizing the importance of consistency and personal connections in achieving these goals, it highlighted the value of building long-lasting relationships to drive meaningful change. The session also introduced the new YSP [anthem](#), "In Unity, We Rise," which was created in collaboration with a chapter in Zambia. This song underscores the power of collective action in promoting youth empowerment and inclusion.

Key Takeaways and Next Steps

- Grassroots leadership programs advance gender equality, economic empowerment, education, health, and more by addressing challenges identified by participants.
- Travel-based empowerment programs are effective tools for fostering confidence, independence, and values of transformative leadership among young women.
- Multi-stakeholder collaboration is essential for scaling impactful initiatives and ensuring sustainability.
- Clear strategies for overcoming community skepticism are crucial to gaining support and ensuring program success.
- Accountability, transparency, and strong local engagement are necessary for long-term impact.

The event successfully demonstrated how localized, community-driven leadership initiatives can contribute to global development efforts. Moving forward, IAYSP and GET-Nepal will continue advocating for greater investment in leadership programs and fostering partnerships to support the empowerment of all youth.



Pictures taken by Hitaishi girls with disposable cameras at the UNESCO World Heritage Site Kathmandu Durbar Square in Nepal.

Further Resources

Please find the full recording of the event and other information [here](#).



HJ International

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Christology: Perspectives on the Concept of "Only Begotten"



FACULTY ROUNDTABLE SERIES

Christology: Perspectives on the Concept of "Only Begotten"



Thursday, February 27 at 7pm ET



Presenter:
Dr. Franco Famularo
HJI Adjunct Faculty;
Chairman, Board of Trustees



Host:
Dr. Thomas Walsh
President

On February 27, a Faculty Roundtable on Christology: Perspectives on the Concept of 'Only Begotten' was presented by Dr. Franco Famularo, HJI Adjunct Faculty and Chairman of the Board of Trustees. The event was hosted by Dr. Thomas Walsh, President. Steven Boyd, Dean of Enrollment Management and Student Life, gave welcoming and closing remarks.

The concept of "only begotten" found in biblical sources, and the place it holds in the complex development of early Christian doctrine, was discussed by Dr. Famularo. In addition, Dr. Famularo offered reflections on some of the similarities, distinctions and contrasts that may apply when comparing traditional Christian understandings of this concept with the development of True Parents' Thought.

Dr. Famularo expressed his hope that we can communicate sensitively and effectively with real understanding across various denominations. Biblical and Theological Terms have long histories and can have different meanings to Jews, Christians, Muslims and people of other faiths. He mentioned the term and concept of "Only Begotten" has circulated in Family Federation since 2014. His presentation included: Application to Christians through discussion the Council of Nicaea, Filioque – Trinity – Holy Mother, Begotten, Monegenes, Biblical Translation, Begotten in Divine Principle and Founder's Speeches, and the application to True Parents' thought.

[You can watch the recording here.](#)

Please be on the lookout for future Faculty Roundtable events.



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An Introduction to Voci di Pace

VOICES OF PEACE VOCI DI PACE

Written by Giorgio Gasperoni, HJI Graduate Student

Voci di Pace began publishing in March 2007 as a project of UPF Italy and San Marino. Registered in the Republic of San Marino, I have directed it from the start. Over time, our editorial team has grown; today, we are five.

Initially, our goal was to engage our closest contacts, particularly Ambassadors for Peace. With patience, we earned their trust and built a strong network of collaborators.

A key challenge has been maintaining the magazine's relevance. The risk was relying on archived articles without a strong link to current events. However, we have balanced in-depth thematic explorations with timely content.

A turning point came in 2015 when UPF International launched major global conferences and summits, expanding our ability to explore peace culture. These events, along with publications like *Dialogue & Alliance*, enriched our work.

In 2023, I enrolled at HJI to deepen my understanding of conflict transformation, negative and positive peace, interreligious dialogue, Christianity's role, and ecumenism. These studies have provided new insights that inform the magazine's direction.

In our latest issue, I dedicated the editorial to the 2025 Jubilee, reflecting on the responsibility of Catholic and Protestant churches in addressing today's challenges. The risk is that the Jubilee remains a mere celebration rather than fostering real spiritual and social impact.

The 2025 Jubilee is an opportunity for spiritual renewal and deeper reflection on faith and modernity. In biblical tradition, it symbolized reconciliation and justice—values that remain crucial in today's divided world.

The editorial also explores how Catholic and Protestant traditions have engaged with modernity. The Catholic Church transitioned from resisting 19th-century liberalism to embracing social issues, from *Rerum Novarum* to the Second Vatican Council. Protestantism, meanwhile, has responded in varied ways—from liberal theology, which reinterpreted faith in light of scientific discoveries, to fundamentalism, which upheld a literal biblical reading. The Social Gospel movement emerged as a middle ground, emphasizing justice and solidarity.

Despite differences, Catholics and Protestants have found common ground in the ecumenical movement and a shared commitment to social justice and environmental protection. The Jubilee presents a unique moment to strengthen dialogue and transform tensions between tradition and modernity into renewal.

Conclusion

Over the years, *Voci di Pace* has evolved from providing quality information to fostering reflection and dialogue on peace, justice, and spirituality. My studies at HJI have further deepened our exploration of religion's role in modern society, bridging tradition and innovation.

The 2025 Jubilee offers a concrete opportunity to renew this commitment, emphasizing reconciliation and justice in a world of deep divisions. Faith communities must move beyond celebration to make this event a catalyst for spiritual and cultural renewal.

On this journey, *Voci di Pace* seeks to be an authoritative voice, sharing stories of hope, offering diverse perspectives, and advancing peace as an active process of transformation.

Voci Di Pace Blog: <https://www.vocidipace.it/>

[Recent Publication](#)



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Being a Peacemaker, Leadership Series Event



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LEADERSHIP SPEAKER SERIES

HOSTED BY GRADUATE STUDENT COUNCIL



Presenter:
Simon Amare Tekeba
Secretary General,
Universal Peace
Federation Ethiopia



Respondent:
Wendweson Fikire
Doctor of Ministry, HJI

The Office of Student Life and Graduate Student Council teamed up to host the first event of a Leadership Series, entitled "Being and Peacemaker" featuring Simon Amare Tekeba, Secretary General of Universal Peace Federation (UPF) and Ethiopia National Leader of FFWPU. The event was held on Monday, March 10th, and drew over a dozen participants, mainly from the Asian and African continents. Simon gave a presentation about his role working with UPF, the history of Ethiopia, including the religious, social, and political challenges and opportunities there, as well as his work with the religious leaders and the African Union, headquartered there. Wendweson Fikire, DMin student and GSC Treasurer, served as a respondent following Simon's presentation. As someone who splits his time between the United States and Ethiopia, Wendweson was very knowledgeable of the spiritual and political climate in Ethiopia, and he shared about the importance of helping religious leaders to elevate spiritual values over political agendas, rather than allow political powers to influence the important work of these leaders.

The connection and teamwork Simon and Wendweson demonstrated in their collective work with Ethiopia was palpable, and they worked together to answer participant questions. Questions included learning more about the opportunities for peace work in Ethiopia, the state of the youth, and strategies for reconciliation work between the different faith leaders there. The core message that surfaced by the end of the program was on the importance of helping people to focus their energy on their commonalities, their reverence to a divine source of true love that could unify everyone, and the need for people to open and change their hearts, rather than operating from a place of fear. This was a first time event organized by the current Student Council and it was great to see and hear Council representatives throughout the program. Graduate Student Council President, Felecia Dorbor, shared some words of greeting at the start, helping to create a warm and welcoming atmosphere.

We look forward to creating similar events going forward so that students can have a platform to interface, garner ideas, and support one another in their own professional pursuits beyond their degree programs.

You can watch the recording [HERE!](#)





Student Spotlight – Wendeson Fikire



STUDENT *Spotlight*



Wendweson Fikire
Doctor of Ministry

Wendweson Fikire currently serves as Treasurer on the Graduate Student Council, and previously served on the GSC for the 2023-2024 academic year. He is originally from Ethiopia.

What inspired you to apply to HJI and your program? What do you most appreciate about being a student at HJI?

HJI focuses on academic knowledge, peace, and reconciliation regardless of culture, religion, or ethnicity. HJI strives and is committed to raising leaders who can be instrumental in reconciliation efforts among nations in conflict, where many religious-affiliated institutions have not yet tried to do so or do not yet have a road map for. HJI has opened my mind to think beyond my affiliated religion.

What has been a highlight of your study at HJI?

Online learning at HJI has been a great experience. One of the highlights at HJI are the Faculty Roundtable events hosted by HJI's prominent professors.

What do you enjoy in your free time?

Teaching at college, physical exercise, reading, listening to classical music, drinking coffee, watching movies and wondering about nature.



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