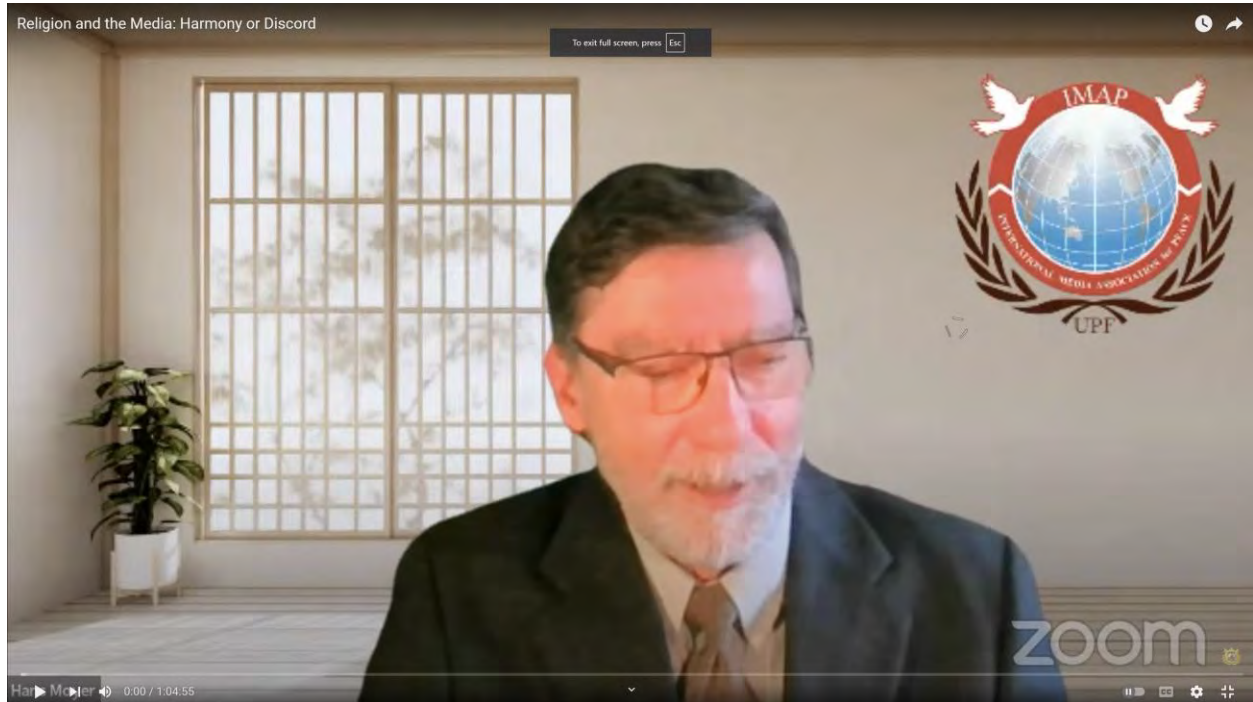


IMAP - International Media Association for World Peace webinar report

Hans Moyer
June 7, 2024



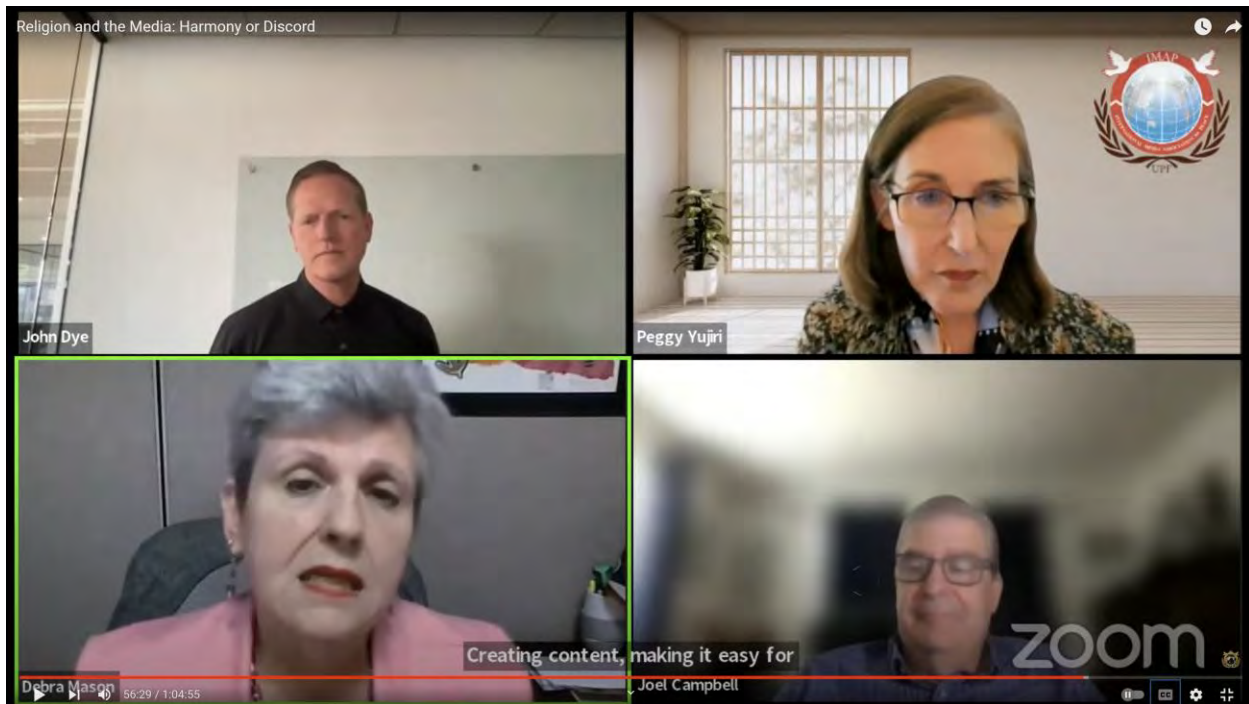
Dear friends of IMAP,

This month's IMAP webinar, "Religion and the Media: Harmony or Discord?", held on May 28, 2024, provided an opportunity to explore some of the ways that Faith and Media intersect and the tensions that exist between them. Our panelists: Dr. Debra Mason, Professor and Director Emerita, Missouri School of Journalism, Founding Director, Religion News Foundation, former publisher Religion News Service, Professor Joel Campbell, Associate Teaching Professor, BYU School of Communications, and John Dye, Executive Director of skylight.org, an initiative of the Radiant Foundation, provided their unique perspectives as to how faith communities can best interact with the media and also provided recommendations on improving "faith fluency" among journalists.

Dr. Mason, who has an extensive background in covering and promoting religious news, does not see an overt bias against religion in the news media. She asserts that the lack of news on religion is due to a combination of factors, including the decline in religious news specialists due to budget cuts, the complexity of covering faith issues, and the reluctance of advertisers to support it.

Professor Campbell covered some strategies for improving coverage of faith in the media. He emphasized that people of faith must recognize that journalists will always take a different perspective than believers and will pursue critics and critical points of view. People of faith can expect no more than to be treated fairly. However, efforts to educate journalists in religious literacy is an effort worth investing in. He highlighted some ongoing efforts being made in this area including those of the Religion News Association, the International Association of Religion Journalists, and the Religion and Media Interest Group.

John Dye walked us through a recent global survey conducted by the Radiant Foundation's Faith and Media Initiative. The majority of those surveyed do not think that religion is portrayed fairly in the media. However, the survey indicates a substantial demand for high quality coverage of issues of faith. John attributes the lack of reporting on religion to several factors, including the lack of "faith fluency" among journalists, a lack of easily accessible spokespeople among faith traditions, and the fact that news tends to focus on sensationalism or "click bait" rather than human interest stories involving good deeds motivated by faith.



Asked for a suggestion on how faith communities can improve their representation in the media, Dr. Mason suggested that faith communities become more proactive by writing op-ed articles and promoting their own content through various news channels. Professor Campbell emphasized the importance of providing classes on world religions in schools of journalism to improve religious literacy among reporters. John Dye pointed out that people of faith need to "step up and stand out" by providing positive, inspirational messages that are relevant and sorely needed in the current media climate of rancor and despair.

We sincerely thank all three of our panelists for sharing their insights and highlighting some areas where faith a media can build bridges of mutual respect and better communication.

Watch the entire webinar free on YouTube at this link: www.youtube.com/watch?v=XhHKTBYrAc&t=230s

Contributed by Peggy Yujiri

Hans Moyer
US Coordinator International Media Association for World Peace
hmoyer@us.upf.org
washingtonbrief.org/