



ANNUAL GINGKO INTERFAITH FELLOWSHIP COLLABORATION PRIZE 2022

The Ginkgo Interfaith Fellowship Collaboration Prize is an annual micro-grant competition for the most promising and creative collaborative projects between groups of 2-3 Fellows. A grant of up to £3,000 is awarded to each of the selected projects which demonstrates inspiring scholarship in the field of interfaith understanding.

The panel judges, included Barbara Schwepcke, Anthony Ball and Mona Siddiqui, were very impressed with the 2022 submissions. Ginkgo is delighted to award the prizes to two projects under the titles: **Comparative Religion Studies in the East and the West: Themes and Methods by Reverend Calum Burke and Ahmed Ragab** and **Exploring an interfaith approach for clergy engagement to respond to domestic violence: A comparative analysis from Ethiopia, Egypt and the UK by Romina Istratii and Mahmood Ashal Afifi**, respectively. The judges believed that both projects encourage interfaith collaborations which have the potential to develop the skills of those involved and strengthen networks and friendships. The wider impact of both projects is mobilising deep faith and scholarship from multiple traditions to offer new resources and perspectives on a defining issue of the 21st Century.

Barbara Schwepcke of Ginkgo said:

'We awarded two prizes, as we did in the inaugural year of the Ginkgo Interfaith Fellowship Collaboration Prize:

- One research, one analytical study*
- One collaboration of Founding Fellows, one collaboration of New Fellows*

Both projects would not have happened if you had not met at the Ginkgo Fellowship Retreats; the Fellowship was the bridge – you chose to walk across it

That makes them unique and therefore deserving to win the prize.'

ABOUT THE AWARDED PROJECTS

Comparative Religion Studies in the East and the West: Themes and Methods by Reverend Calum Burke and Ahmed Ragab

Inspired by the last Ginkgo retreat in Cairo (May 2022), this project aims to organize a two-day symposium entitled: **Comparative Religion Studies in the East and the West: Themes and Methods**. This symposium will be organized by Ahmed and Calum at The American University in Cairo (AUC). Two senior scholars will be invited to each deliver a lecture on the symposium's theme. Dr. Elisabeth Kennedy, an assistant professor at AUC, has confirmed her approval to be part of this event. One further senior academic from an Islamic background will be invited. This event will be open to 20 undergraduate and graduate students mainly from Al-Azhar University and the AUC. There will be ten bursaries for students from outside Cairo to help with their accommodation and travel costs.

The purpose of this symposium is to bridge the gap between the Eastern and Western methods of studying religions in different contexts. The organizers and the visiting academics will demonstrate the importance and significance of studying comparative religion. The content will be suitable for those now engaged in academic studies, whether they be undergraduate or postgraduate students, or those working outside, especially within the non-profit or religious sector.

Exploring an interfaith approach for clergy engagement to respond to domestic violence: A comparative analysis from Ethiopia, Egypt and the UK by Romina Istratii and Mahmood Ashal Afifi

The question of whether an interfaith approach should be favoured over a faith-specific approach has not been given sufficient attention in the relevant literature despite the extensive evidence available on clergy-centred domestic violence programmes. In fact, there is hardly any literature that conceptually or theoretically differentiates these approaches and defines a faith-specific or an interfaith model of clergy engagement. What are the distinctive characteristics and benefits of each of these approaches? Does an interfaith approach to train clergy on domestic violence present benefits that a faith-specific approach does not? If there are advantages in employing an interfaith model of engagement, what would be an appropriate, practical, and feasible process for designing and delivering such a programme to diverse clergies operating in multifaith contexts? Who would be the potential stakeholders (e.g., imams, priests, scholars, and feminist theorists and activists) to design this approach and to deliver subsequent interventions? How would the proposition of engaging clergy and religious leaders from different faiths in one setting be received by these groups, especially more conservative sides, in contexts as diverse as Egypt and Ethiopia?

In the current collaborative project, we aim to bring together and to build on the authors' experience working with clergy of Christian and Muslim affiliations to respond to domestic violence in Ethiopia, Egypt and the UK in order to explore some of the questions above.

The aims of the project will be two-fold:

1. To identify the distinct characteristics and types of faith-specific and interfaith approaches for training clergy and religious leaders on domestic violence;
2. To identify the unique benefits and limitations of an interfaith approach and to delineate how such a programme could be developed to engage clergy and religious leaders in multi-religious contexts.

ABOUT THE FELLOWS

Reverend Calum Burke is an ordained priest in the Church of England. He trained for the Priesthood at Ridley Hall in Cambridge and currently serves in the parish of Dudley in the West Midlands. Calum is involved in various interfaith activities in Dudley and beyond, including the Church of England's Presence and Engagement Task Force. He travels widely in the Middle East, supporting Christians and churches in the region.

Ahmed Ragab is an Assistant Lecturer at Al-Azhar University and a doctoral candidate in interfaith studies at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David. He got his BA and MA from Al-Azhar University with distinction. His doctoral project is about the comparative religious ethics of the teachings of Jesus and Muhammad and its implications on inter-religious dialogue and Christian-Muslim relations. He is a volunteer chaplain at the University of Wales TSD and the local imam of the Muslim community in Lampeter, west Wales.

Romina Istratii is UKRI Future Leaders Fellow at the School of History, Religions and Philosophies at SOAS University of London. She is also an Honorary Research Associate to the Department of Development Studies and the Centre of World Christianity at SOAS. Her work focuses on developing cosmology-sensitive and people-centred methodologies and approaches for analysing and addressing issues with gender dimensions in

religious societies of Africa, Asia and other regions of the world. Dr Istratii specialises in Eastern Orthodox and pre-Chalcedonian (also known as 'Oriental Orthodox') Christian Churches and traditions and is particularly versed in Orthodox theology of gender, marriage, and the conjugal relationship. She is the author of the monograph *Adapting Gender and Development to Local Religious Contexts: A Decolonial Approach to Domestic Violence in Ethiopia* (Routledge, 2020).

Mahmoud Afifi is a Researcher at Al-Azhar Research Academy, Egypt. In 2012, he has completed his Master's in the USA in Islamic studies with a focus on gender in Islam. He is a member of the Advisory Board of the UKRI-funded project "Bridging religious studies, gender & development and public health to address domestic violence," known as [project dldl/ጉልጉል](#). His work also focuses on the different interpretive approaches towards the religious Muslim text, regarding issues of gender and marriage. He contributed to the encyclopaedia of Occidentalism published by Qatar University in 2022. He also contributed with a translation of an Islamic fatwa regarding women in Islam, in a yet to be published work entitled *Islamic Law in Context: A Primary Source Reader*, Cambridge University Press. He also contributed with a book review of [Mahmood, S. \(2005\). Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject](#), *al-Raida Journal* (alraidajournal.com)

Gingko aims to inform and educate the interested public and work with scholars of diverse backgrounds and research interests to increase crucial understanding of the Middle East, West Asia and North Africa through conferences, publications, public events and cultural programmes.

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