

Political Reconciliation and Interreligious Encounter: Joint Conference Held at Cambridge University

14–18 September 2026 | St Edmund's College, University of Cambridge

The European Wasatia Graduate School for Peace and Conflict Resolution and the Von Hügel Institute for Critical Catholic Inquiry (VHI) at St Edmund's College, University of Cambridge, convened a joint conference on "Political Reconciliation and Interreligious Encounter" from 14 to 18 September 2026.

The five-day programme brought together academics and doctoral researchers for interdisciplinary exchange on reconciliation, interreligious dialogue, human dignity, religious traditions, and the challenges of building relationships across political, religious, and historical divisions. It also provided an opportunity to strengthen institutional collaboration between the



University of Cambridge and Europa-Universität Flensburg (EUF), including meetings involving Professor Florian Bruckmann, Dean of Faculty III at EUF; Dr Vittorio Montemaggi, Director of the VHI; and Dr Cynthia Lumley, Principal of Westfield House, Cambridge.

The conference opened with a welcome from Dr Lidia Ripamonti of the VHI, followed by an introduction to the programme by Professor Ralf Wüstenberg and Dr Zaineh Barakat of EUF.

A central element of the conference was Scriptural Reasoning, which brought Jewish, Muslim, and Christian perspectives into conversation. Sessions were led by scholars including Professor Lejla Demiri of the University of Tübingen and Dr Daniel Weiss, Senior Lecturer in Jewish Studies at the Faculty of Divinity, University of Cambridge. Wasatia doctoral researchers participated actively throughout the sessions, engaging with scholars



from Cambridge and Flensburg in an interdisciplinary and interreligious setting. The following day, three doctoral researchers also led a Scriptural Reasoning reading group.

The programme extended beyond the seminar room through a series of academic and cultural visits. Participants visited Cambridge Central Mosque, where they were welcomed by Dr Timothy Winter, Shaykh Zayed Lecturer in Islamic Studies at the University of Cambridge. They also visited Trinity Hall, where they met and held discussions with the Reverend Dr Stephen Plant, Dean, Runcie Fellow, and Associate Professor at Trinity Hall.

The conference featured a keynote lecture by Dr Vittorio Montemaggi, Director of the VHI, entitled “On Love, Ideology, and Inter-religious Relations in Dante.” Drawing on Dante’s work, the lecture explored questions of love, ideology, and relationships between religious traditions.

Professor John Loughlin also delivered a lecture entitled “Human Dignity and the Limits of Proceduralism: Towards a Constructive Theological Anthropology for Reconciliation in Ireland,” followed by a discussion with conference participants.

The programme concluded with a visit to Westfield House, Cambridge, where participants met faculty members and students and continued their academic exchange in an informal setting.



Throughout the week, scholars and doctoral researchers from diverse academic backgrounds exchanged perspectives and explored the relationship between religious encounter and political reconciliation.

The organisers expressed their gratitude to all speakers, participants, and partner institutions for their valuable contributions. Particular thanks are extended to Professor Ralf Wüstenberg and Dr Zaineh Barakat of Europa-Universität Flensburg, and to Dr Vittorio Montemaggi and the Von Hügel Institute at St Edmund’s College, for bringing together an international group of scholars and doctoral researchers.

The conference forms part of the ongoing academic collaboration between Europa-Universität Flensburg and the Von Hügel Institute, fostering continued dialogue on reconciliation, interreligious encounter, human dignity, and peace.