

Sacred Sites Promoting Pluralism



Building bridges from the past to the present

KNOX THAMES

DIRECTOR, GLOBAL FAITH AND
INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES PROGRAM

PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY

DC CAMPUS - 2011 PENNSYLVANIA AVE. NW
WASHINGTON, DC 20006

Global Challenge

Diversity is a 21st century reality, as people and faiths are intermixing as never before. However, fear of the religious "other" leads to divisions, hostility, and even violence. In response, statements like Fratelli Tutti, the Marrakesh Declaration, and the Document on Human Fraternity promote peaceful coexistence through religious traditions. In addition, human rights norms protect individuals from harm. However, these often fall short, ignored or viewed as outside impositions.

Theory of Change

Yet our collective histories can improve our future. Around the world, sacred heritage sites tell of a diverse but forgotten past. They demonstrate a history of living together despite profound differences. While these stories were never perfect, sacred sites provide an indigenous inflection point to discuss the importance of respecting diversity and others' beliefs. Often overlooked, they can build bridges from the past to a brighter future tomorrow.



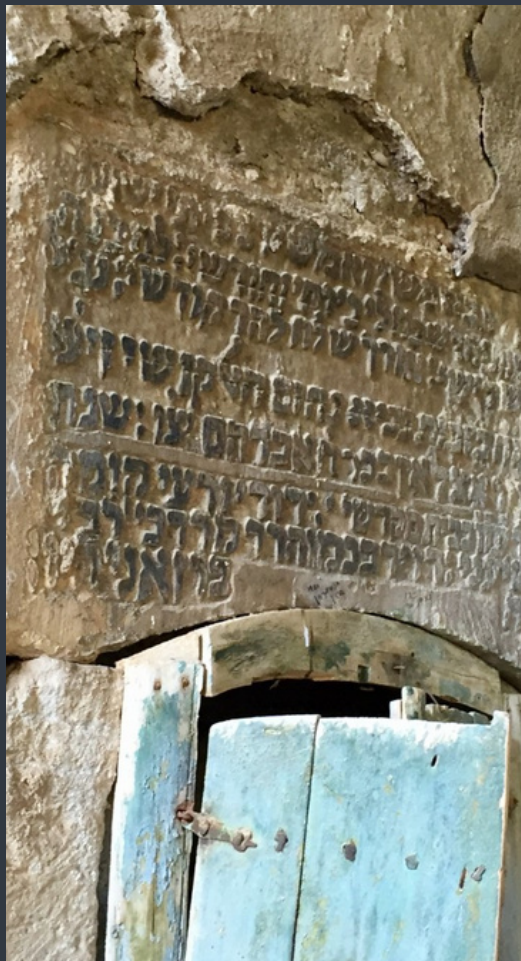
Project Details

Purpose: At a time of increasing diversity and intolerance, emphasize how sacred sites can foster interreligious peace by overcoming interfaith amnesia through an appreciation of historic religious pluralism.

Goal: Through capacity building, advancing knowledge, and grassroots engagement, the project aims to elevate awareness about the potential of sacred sites to promote pluralism, diversity, and respect for different beliefs.

Projected Outcomes:

- Create and continuously expand a network of partners interested in this emerging area of impact
- Convene experts in cultural heritage preservation, human rights, and interfaith engagement to share best practices and potential synergies to advance shared goals
- Develop classroom materials and teacher training guides involving sacred sites to promote pluralism
- Lead trainings on CHP/FoRB/HR engagement to equip diverse teams to identify opportunities for work at this nexus and what institutional mechanisms exist to do so
- Encourage governments and organizations to invest in and promote pluralism through sacred sites
- Develop a Plan of Action for expanding respect for pluralism through sacred sites





Project Lead

Knox Thames served for 20 years in various U.S. government positions, last serving at the State Department in a special envoy role focusing on religious minorities in the Middle East and South/Central Asia. In recognition of his nonpartisan work, both the Obama and Trump administrations appointed him to the envoy role as a civil service expert.

Launched in April 2023, Thames directs the Program on Global Faith and Inclusive Societies at Pepperdine University, thanks to a grant from the Templeton Religion Trust.

Knox.Thames@pepperdine.edu
www.pepperdine.edu/center-for-faith-common-good/research/global-faith-inclusive-societies.htm
@KnoxThames



SACRED HERITAGE PROMOTING PLURALISM



Supporting Organizations



A global charitable trust established by Sir John Templeton, TRT has supported initiatives that enrich the conversation about religion since 2012. Projects have focused on the benefits of religion, from health to human peace, harmony, happiness, and productivity, as well as projects that expand understanding of “the work and purpose of the Creator.”



Based in California, Pepperdine University is committed to the highest standards of academic excellence and Christian values. Pepperdine maintains satellite campuses around the world, including Washington, DC. Pepperdine consistently ranks in the top 50 colleges in the United States. The main campus is also considered one of the most beautiful places to study in America with its Pacific Ocean views.