

## ABOUT THE PROJECT

The Charter for Compassion is the result of Karen Armstrong's 2008 TED Prize wish and made possible by the generous support of the Fetzer Institute. It was unveiled to the world on **November 12, 2009**.

### Why a Charter for Compassion?

The Charter of Compassion is a cooperative effort to restore not only compassionate thinking but, more importantly, compassionate action to the center of religious, moral and political life. Compassion is the principled determination to put ourselves in the shoes of the other, and lies at the heart of all religious and ethical systems. One of the most urgent tasks of our generation is to build a global community where men and women of all races, nations and ideologies can live together in peace. In our globalized world, everybody has become our neighbor, and the Golden Rule has become an urgent necessity.

The Charter, crafted by people all over the world and drafted by a multi-faith, multi-national council of thinkers and leaders, seeks to change the conversation so that compassion becomes a key word in public and private discourse, making it clear that any ideology that breeds hatred or contempt ~ be it religious or secular ~ has failed the test of our time. It is not simply a statement of principle; it is above all a summons to creative, practical and sustained action to meet the political, moral, religious, social and cultural problems of our time.

We invite each of you to adopt the charter as your own, to make a lifelong commitment to live with compassion.

### About Karen Armstrong

Karen Armstrong is one of the most provocative, original thinkers on the role of religion in the modern world. Armstrong is a former Roman Catholic nun who left a British convent to pursue a degree in modern literature at Oxford. She has written more than 20 books around the ideas of what Islam, Judaism and Christianity have in common, and around their effect on world events, including the magisterial *A History of God and Holy War: The Crusades and Their Impact on Today's World*. Her latest books are *The Case for God* and *Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life*. In *The Case for God*, her meditations on personal faith and religion (she calls herself a freelance monotheist) spark discussion — especially her take on fundamentalism, which she sees in a historical context, as an outgrowth of modern culture. In *Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life*, Armstrong brings us an impassioned and practical guide to putting the ideals of compassion into practice. She gives each of us the tools to improve the way we treat each other, the way we treat ourselves, and offers concrete examples and exercises for being more compassionate in our daily activities. This vital work draws on the teachings of all religious traditions and is imbued with the rich

scholarship and clear reasoning that we have come to expect from the best-selling author.

In February 2008, Karen Armstrong won the TED Prize and wished for help in creating, launching and propagating the Charter for Compassion.

## **A project of the TED Prize**

TED stands for Technology, Entertainment, Design. It is an annual conference which brings together the world's most fascinating thinkers and doers, who are challenged to give the talk of their lives (in 18 minutes). [TED.com](https://www.ted.com) makes the best talks and performances, the ideas worth spreading, from TED available to the public, for free.

The [TED Prize](#) is designed to leverage the TED Community's exceptional array of talent and resources. It is awarded annually to one exceptional individual who receives \$100,000 and, much more important, the granting of "One Wish to Change the World."

## **Made possible by the Fetzer Institute**

A private operating foundation based in Kalamazoo, Michigan, the [Fetzer Institute](#) engages with people and projects around the world to help bring the power of love, forgiveness and compassion to the center individual and community life. The Institute's work rests on a deep conviction that each of us has power to transform the world by strengthening the connection between the inner life of mind and spirit with the outer life of service and action. While the Fetzer Institute is not a religious organization, it honors and learns from a variety of spiritual traditions.