



SPIRIT OF  
HUMANITY  
FORUM

# NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER 2020

## An eagle took flight



Thor Barddal our dear friend, spiritual lighthouse and a cornerstone of the Forum, has eventually taken off after a long-term illness, on Wednesday 14 October. Thor played a crucial role in the SoH Forum. Together with his wife Sigrun Olsen, both representing the Brahma Kumaris in Iceland, he paved the path for the Forum in a very practical way. It was their great generosity, hand-on work and important connections which opened the gates for the SoH Forum to hold its international Forums in Iceland and to establish its base there. They took care of the Forum organisers with royal hospitality and brought in a whole team of hands from the BKs who served the Forum from early morning until late night during the events. Soon after Sigrun left us in the spring of 2018, also after a long-term illness, Thor himself was diagnosed. That seemed to fire up his enthusiasm for the Forum and his general desire to spiritually serve humanity. The following two years became his most active time with the Forum. He set an outstanding example for us all by having an unwavering outlook of hope and positivity, stable like a rock, always encouraging others, thinking big and wanting to benefit many, never afraid to put in extra work to complete a task with quality. He kept on travelling the world, taking part in many events with great interest. Thor never worried, not even at the end, but like a carefree king he had a constant smile on his face.

For him, it was very clear that the end means a new beginning and so with his usual pragmatism, he prepared for his coming journey and was able to close all his worldly affairs very neatly with great dignity before taking flight like the powerful eagle he is. We are left with a big empty chair, which means that it is now time for us to imbibe the qualities Thor shared into our own lives and not only admire them. Thor was a great sculptor, you can see his work: [HERE](#)

In the summer Thor gave an outstanding master-class on the topic of “Embracing death”, recorded by Brahma Kumaris, UK. It is a very uplifting, a hands-on gift which we warmly would like to recommend: [WATCH HERE](#)



## TOWARDS A LOVING WORLD

### Leadership & Governance for Wellbeing

3-5 June, 2021

**The theme for the 5th SoH Forum and the guiding star for our work during the coming two years!**

‘Towards a Loving World - Leadership & Governance for Wellbeing’ will guide all our work during the two coming years. During this time we wish to especially explore the meaning of love. As Prof Ursula King raised at a regional SoH Forum in Bristol, we feel that our ideas of love have become weak. We need to understand love in a new way, or maybe an original way that has been lost. Ursula said that we have made love small, into something we only keep

for friends and relatives, intimate connections. But the power of love is so much greater. We must nurture a different kind of love which can reach out in the world. We would like to invite explorations and reflections, stories and experiences of the meaning and power love from different perspectives to exemplify what love looks like when it builds bridges, connect differences, creates trust, overcomes great problems, makes us see with the eyes of another and creates harmony among people. We are dedicating this Newsletter to LOVE to set this ball rolling.

### Concept Paper

It is our shared longing for connectedness, solidarity, and harmonious living that gives us the courage and determination to express deeper humanity and move into a new way of being and acting in the world. A loving world is one in which each human being is valued for who they are rather than for what they can produce, and the greater good of every creature on the planet motivates decisions at the highest level of leadership.

Such love is the greatest energising force that connects all. Only through love can we heal ourselves and our planet, only through leading and governing with love can we transcend the self-interests of the individual, group, and even nation, and only by acting in love can we work together in building a better a post-Covid world. We must encourage love that encompasses all. This is a true collective spiritual awakening – to experience the transcendent nature of being while being conscious of the sanctity of all life. In this sense, our collective well-being is also our spiritual well-being, at the core of which lies the profound bond of love between all that is. [READ MORE](#)

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### The Three Pillars

**Silence, listening and dialogue are three practices which uphold all our events**

The Forum is using silent reflection, deep listening and dialogue to provide an opportunity for leaders and change-makers who are driven by core human values to learn from each other in a safe space and find new ways forward together.

### **Silence**

In a world crowded with messages, our minds often go in circles thinking the same kind of thoughts over and over again. To see a different perspective and think new thoughts we need to give the mind a complete rest in between. In silent reflection, we digest impressions, let insights sink in and we prepare ourselves to learn something new.

### **Listening**

We often listen while simultaneously interpreting, drawing conclusions and having our own interests running in the background. But to listen deeply with only a sincere intention to grasp what the other is trying to express is a very different experience. It is a level of listening that can open up for the dialogue and build bridges of new understanding.

### **Dialogue**

Dialogue is about building our understanding of something, together with others, without the pressure to make decisions or be "right." We inquire a subject, rather than advocate for certain ideas. A dialogue begins when we listen from a space of silence that can welcome what the other has to offer.

[READ MORE](#)

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## A NARRATIVE OF LOVE

*A narrative of love*

### **Interview series**

**A Narrative of Love** is a series of conversations with thought leaders and spiritual teachers about their understanding of the significance of love in our personal and public lives. This is being made in preparation for the 5th Spirit of Humanity

Forum. In this Conversation with Sister Jayanti Kirpalani, the European Director of Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University, Dr Scherto Gill asks questions about how love might be integrated into our everyday lives, politics, and education. [VIEW HERE](#) or [LISTEN HERE](#)





Quote from the interview:

*“Dignity and worth don’t come through money, politics, or any of the external factors, they are part of the experience of the love that human beings can feel. If I am feeling love, if I am feeling full of love for others, I hold my head up high with dignity. I am able to see others with that self-worth that allows me to have respect for myself and respect others and value them.”*

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## Love emerges in silence

When we calm down, when we feel safe, when we feel connected beyond words, the experience of love comes easily to us...



**Fridays for Silence** - has become our weekly spiritual practice of just connecting in real-time online without agendas, plans and work to do. We just sit in silence in the presence of each other for 15 minutes with a few words of reflection in the beginning. It has been very successful and supports the foundation of the SoH Forum from inside-out. It started last year and the group is growing. [READ MORE](#)

**A Moment of Silence** - Meditation & Inspiration for the weekend - a ‘Fridays for Silence’ in Icelandic, 15 minutes every Saturday in collaboration with Brahma Kumaris Iceland. If you know Icelandic and have Facebook: [JOIN THE EVENT](#)

*‘Silence crosses all boundaries of distance and language.*

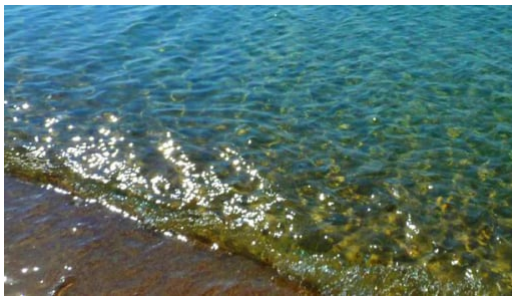
*For silence is not an absence of something, but the presence of something that cannot be put into words.*

*It can only be experienced, but it can be experienced across great distances.*

*For when we are gathered together in silence, we know we are deeply connected in the stillness and quietness.*

*This is where healing begins, for this is the place of Love.'*

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**"We don't need to go left and right – we need to go deeper"**

**Helping build the spiritual foundation for a loving world** is the mission of the Fetzer Institute, one

of our Founding Partners. Words on love by Bob Boisture, CEO & President of the Fetzer Institute from the SoH Forum in Reykjavik last year are worth drawing attention to again:

*"I've come to the conclusion that whatever our ideology, all of us have to be working against polarization, and it seems to me that the only force that is powerful enough to pull us together is the commitment to love. As a friend of mine says, "We do not need to go right or left – we need to go deeper," and get underneath our political ideologies and find that shared moral vision of a world, in which the reality is harmony and flourishing for all people, and for the natural world."* [READ MORE](#)

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## **A NARRATIVE OF LOVE**

**How can we develop a truly captivating and galvanizing conception of Love that can invite a fundamental shift in human consciousness?**

Well this is a task with great purpose and this is exactly what the research

project – A Narrative of Love - led by David Cadman and Scherto Gill is aiming at where they are exploring diverse perspectives on the notion of Love.



SoH Forum is collaborating on this project as it goes hand in hand with the theme for the 5th SoH Forum and the guiding star for our work during the coming two years, which is to explore the meaning of love and wellbeing in leadership and governance.

This research is jointly funded by the [American Dartington Solar Quest Trust](#) and the GHFP. Other research partners include the [Fetzer Institute](#), [Pureland Foundation](#), the [Harmony Institute at the University of Wales Trinity St David](#), and others. In addition to exploring love in Eastern and Western philosophies, and in the teachings of Abrahamic religions, the research also touches upon love in mysticism. The research reports will be published this year. Please watch this space for updates [LINK](#)

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## Why it's impossible to love your Self

There is a statement that is often heard during personal development workshops. It's been written in countless books. It is one of the mantras of what became known as 'new age' thinking. It's the moment when someone says, "I need to learn to love my self". But why is it not possible or even necessary to learn to love oneself? With humour and depth Mike George opens up a completely different door to the treasure of love. [READ MORE](#)



## How is spirituality an important part of well-being?

Guerrand-Hermès Foundation for Peace (GHFP), one of our founding partners, has developed an innovative understanding of what well-being constitutes and how a normative and values-based approach to well-being can serve as a holistic proactive and inspirational vision for humanity. "Such a conception of well-being can form a basis for **evaluating well-being in societies, framing economic and governance policy priorities, and designing social institutions** that are caring and committed to supporting people's well-being in **harmony with nature.**" [READ MORE](#)

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## What does spirituality mean to us?

**Strengthening a living bridge between our inner and outer lives is the key to both personal and societal flourishing**



A very interesting study of spirituality in the United States has just been published by The Fetzer Institute. Fetzer's mission—to help build the spiritual foundation for a loving world—is rooted in the conviction that we are intrinsically spiritual beings. In much of Fetzer's work, spirituality is a central, vital, and unifying force for promoting the positive flourishing of both individuals and society. Because of this core conviction, they have a long-standing commitment to supporting research that deepens our understanding of spirituality and how it can animate concrete and positive change. Their mission compels us to learn about the myriad manifestations of spirituality and then—based on those learnings—to discern how they can be better cultivated and engaged for personal and societal well-being. [READ MORE](#)

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### Co-Creative Reflection & Dialogue Space



Our friends at the Institute of Advanced Sustainability Studies (IASS) published their first paper on **Co-Creative Reflection & Dialogue Space: *Enabling new mindsets and transformative skills for negotiating and activating***

***climate action***, which is based on lessons from UNFCCC conferences of the parties. [READ MORE](#)

We find this research very important and interesting because in creating a better future it is so important that we can come together, collaborate and have meaningful dialogues where we really listen to each other. This is what the Forum is aspiring for, to create spaces where this can happen.

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### A Quest for Love

"To find Love, find Silence and Stillness. For Silence and Stillness are the ground of Love.

Unlike so much of what we are asked to do, Love cannot be done in a hurry, and its not a competition. You can't *have* Love, for Love is found when it is shared or given away. The more you give, the more there is to give."



*By David Cadman for the 'Friday's for Silence' gathering*

[READ MORE](#)



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## Thank you for helping bring more inclusiveness and caring in public education



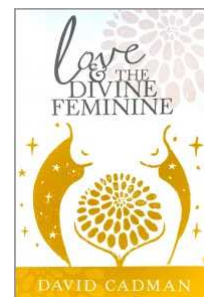
In July we sent out an invitation to participate in a survey from the Education Task Force of the G20 Interfaith Forum directed to all who are working in the field of inclusive and caring education. This was part of a research, led by dr. Scherto Gill, where she consulted with spiritually inspired project worldwide to form the basis for recommendations for educational innovation to be presented by the G20 Interfaith Forum to G20 Leaders. We are grateful for all those that participated and now the 2020 G20 Interfaith Forum Education Policy Brief has been published advocating 'An Interfaith Approach to Inclusive Education' It is available to view and can be download here on the G20 Interfaith Forum website: [READ MORE](#) This policy brief will be put forward to the G20 Leaders Summit in November. A big thank you to all who participated.

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## Books on love from different perspectives

### Love and the Divine feminine

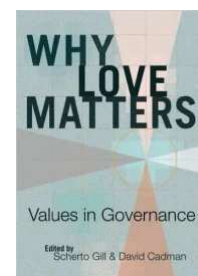
David Cadman has been looking at the relationship between the loss of Love and a disconnection with the Divine Feminine; what has happened to the mystical teachings of Jesus and the story of Mary Magdalene; and how the Church's doctrine of redemption for our sins through crucifixion and resurrection has overwhelmed and dismissed the inner experience, expression and practice of Divine Love in our lives. The result is this book: [READ MORE](#)



### Why Love Matters: Values in Governance

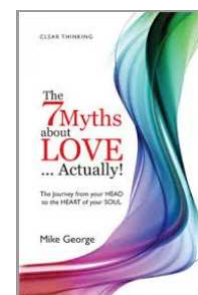
- now available in softcover

Following the 2014 SoH gathering in Reykjavik, with its focus on love and compassion in governance and all the inspiring stories that were told there, our colleagues Scherto Gill and David Cadman brought together a number of texts from Forum participants in a book entitled Why Love Matters: Values in Governance. [READ MORE](#)



### The 7 Myths about LOVE ...Actually!

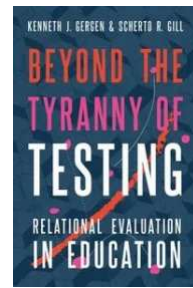
Do you know love? Have you discovered love? If you think you have this book will make you think again. So what is LOVE exactly and why are we so confused? Mike George takes you on a journey to the very heart of your life where love lives and has always lived. Along the way he dispels the myths about love, clearly defines and locates love, and reveals exactly why we are all so emotionally confused about love. [READ MORE](#)



## Beyond the Tyranny of Testing

### - Relational Evaluation in Education

A new book about alternatives to standardised testing, by Kenneth J. Gergen and Scherto Gill. They have been overwhelmed by the interest in the book and the practices it highlights. Let's hope education can truly move beyond testing, and to embrace humanness, spirituality and love. [READ MORE](#)



## Spirit of Humanity Forum

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