

# Gift of Peace

## Icelandic Initiative for Inner Peace

### Leadership Circles – Nurturing Inner Values for Outer Impact



#### 1. Background and Rationale

In a world of growing complexity and relentless demands, leaders are increasingly confronted with stress, pressure, and a disconnect from their core values. Although Iceland consistently ranks as the most peaceful country in the world, this external recognition does not shield its society from inner tensions, stress, and social conflict. True and lasting peace requires more than favorable global rankings - it must be rooted in the inner well-being of individuals. To genuinely sustain and deepen the peace Iceland is known for, it is essential to cultivate inner peace and resilience, particularly among those leading key sectors of society.

The Gift of Peace Leadership Circles project seeks to create intentional spaces where Icelandic leaders from diverse sectors can reflect, rejuvenate, and reconnect with their core values. The initiative builds on Iceland's global standing in peace and aims to foster a new dimension of leadership rooted in self-awareness, reflective practices, and meaningful connection.

The project was piloted in autumn 2024 and spring 2025, involving a total of 54 participants across five leadership groups. Scientific research on the project yielded very positive results, and participants reported feeling better equipped to manage the complex challenges associated with their leadership roles.

## 2. Project Objectives

- To offer leaders a facilitated space to nurture inner well-being through meditation, reflection, and dialogue.
- To build conscious leadership communities across diverse sectors of Icelandic society.
- To explore the relationship between inner peace and societal impact.
- To explore how cultivating values such as compassion and tolerance can lead to greater inner strength and increased resilience in handling challenging and complex situations.
- To position Iceland as a model for integrating inner development into leadership practices.
- To contribute to research on the effectiveness of inner development programs for leaders.

## 3. Target Audience

The project targets established and emerging leaders from various professional fields in Iceland:

- Politics
- Education
- Healthcare
- Business
- Environmental Issues
- Arts and Culture
- Corporate Management
- Media
- Sports

Participation is by invitation only, with each group consisting of 12–14 participants. In selecting leaders, we aim to ensure diversity by including individuals from a range of sectors, age groups, genders, backgrounds, and perspectives.



## 4. Project Design and Activities

Each group participates in a program consisting of four sessions and a concluding weekend retreat. When inviting participants, we emphasize the importance of attending all sessions, as full commitment from everyone is essential for fostering depth, continuity, and trust within the group.

The program includes the following elements:

### Monthly Leadership Circle Sessions

**Structure:** Each group meets once a month over a four-month period.

The topics for each session are as follows:

- Maintaining Inner Peace and Balance in Times of Transformation
- The Strength of Tolerance
- Staying True to One's Own Values
- The Transformative Power of Benevolent feelings and Attitudes

**Session Format:** While each session may vary, they typically include some or all of the following elements:

- Opening meditation and check-in round
- Short facilitator-led input on the theme
- Reflective questions (individual writing)
- Large and small group dialogue
- Experiential exercises
- Group check-out
- Closing meditation/reflection

### Optional Weekly Meditation Sessions Online

- 15-minute guided meditations (on Zoom)
- Twice a week for all participants
- Aim: To sustain personal practice and group coherence

### Weekend Retreat

- Location: Global Retreat Centre, Oxfordshire, UK or Solheimar Retreat in Iceland
- Purpose: The weekend retreat plays a vital role in the overall process, providing an opportunity to deepen trust within the group, enhance personal reflection, encourage cross-group exchange, and support individual rejuvenation. It also fosters a strong sense of community that can continue to grow beyond the retreat itself.

## 5. Research and Evaluation

To assess the impact and develop the project, social scientists Dr. Inga Dóra Sigfúsdóttir, Dr. Þorlákur Karlsson, and Jóhanna Björk Briem, M.A., lead a basic evaluation:

- Method: Anonymous pre- and post-project surveys
- Small focus groups of participants who evaluate the project afterwards.
- Focus Areas: Well-being, leadership style, inner peace, and perceived societal impact
- Use: To inform future scaling and academic publication

## 6. Organizers

### Spirit of Humanity Forum

International movement based in Iceland

Focus: Inner values in leadership

More info: [www.sohforum.org](http://www.sohforum.org).

### Lótushús – Brahma Kumaris Iceland

Established meditation school in Iceland since 2000

Offers free courses and meditation programs

More info: [www.lotushus.is](http://www.lotushus.is)

### Facilitation

Stefanía Ólafsdóttir – Leader of the initiative

20+ years of experience in meditation and facilitation

National coordinator of Brahma Kumaris in Iceland and Norway

Executive member of SoH Forum

## 7. Expected Outcomes

- Strengthened inner well-being and resilience among participating leaders
- Formation of peer support networks across key sectors
- Increased awareness and practice of conscious leadership in Iceland
- A tested model for future local or international replication
- Research data on the effectiveness of meditation and inner work in leadership development

## 8. Conclusion

The Gift of Peace Leadership Circles project offers a unique opportunity to blend inner development with societal leadership. By nurturing Iceland's leaders from the inside out, this initiative aligns personal growth with national identity and global contribution. Through careful facilitation, community-building, and research, the project aspires to plant seeds of transformation that extend far beyond the circle.

