



# Child-Friendly Faith Project Conference 2014

How can we better address child maltreatment that occurs in faith communities?  
What should we do when religious or cultural practices are unhealthy for children?

**DATE:**  
**December 4 and 5, 2014**

**LOCATION:**  
**Wyndham Garden Hotel – Austin, Texas**

This conference features prestigious experts in fields related to child advocacy; they will provide enlightening and practical information for clergy, faith organization administrators, as well as attorneys, social workers, counselors and others. Continuing education hours (including ethics) will be offered.

## Keynote Speakers



**Marci A. Hamilton, JD**

Paul R. Verkuil Chair in Public Law, Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law, Yeshiva University



**Lisa Aronson Fontes, PhD**

Cultural Expert, Author, and University of Massachusetts Amherst Lecturer

Special Video Welcome by



**Basyle 'Boz' Tchividjian, JD**

Executive Director of Godly Response to Abuse in the Christian Environment (GRACE)

## Also Featuring



**Zainab Al-Suwaij**



**Rev. Carla Cheatham, PhD**



**Steven Hassan**



**Rev. Charles Foster Johnson**



**Paul A. Offit, MD**



**Rev. Jaime Romo**



## Hotel Reservations

Act now to lock in low nightly rates! Call 800.996.3426 and ask for the "Child-Friendly Faith room block".

**Continuing education hours offered for attorneys, social workers, and licensed professional counselors.**

**Register Today!**

**[ChildFriendlyFaith.org/Register](http://ChildFriendlyFaith.org/Register)**

**DAY 1 – Thursday, Dec. 4**

- 8:00 – 9:00am Registration/Breakfast
- 9:00 – 9:05am Welcome by CFFP Board member Rev. Charles Foster Johnson
- 9:05 – 10:15am Lisa Aronson Fontes, PhD — “Corporal Punishment Across Cultures: Keeping All Children Safe”
- 10:15 – 10:30am Break
- 10:30am – Noon Breakout Session 1

| Track A  | Track B  |
|--|--|
| Paul Offit, MD<br>“When Medicine Conflicts with Faith” | Zainab Al-Suwaij<br>“Domestic Violence Against Women in Muslim Communities and Its Impact on Children” |

- Noon – 1:00pm Lunch
- 1:00 – 2:30pm Breakout Session 2

| Track A   | Track B  |
|---|--|
| Lisa Aronson Fontes, PhD<br>“Child Sexual Abuse in Culturally Diverse Families: Focus on Latinos” | Rev. Carla Cheatham, PhD<br>Rev. Jaime Romo<br>“Handling the Sticky Widgets—Engaging Faith Communities in the Conversation about Child Maltreatment” |

- 2:30 – 3:00pm Break
- 3:00 – 5:00pm Parents Panel Discussion — “From Tragedy to Healing to Hope”
- 5:00 – 6:00pm Reception
- 8:00pm Film screening of *All God’s Children*. Discussion to follow with film’s directors.

**DAY 2 – Friday, Dec. 5**

- 8:00 – 9:00am Breakfast
- 9:00 – 9:10am Introductory Comments by Rev. Charles Foster Johnson
- 9:10 – 9:15am Special Video Welcome by Basyle “Boz” Tchividjian, JD, Executive Director of Godly Response to Abuse in the Christian Environment (GRACE)
- 9:15 – 10:15am Breakout Session 3

| Track A  | Track B  |
|--|--|
| Rev. Patricia Ross, CPM<br>“Unkind Cuts: The Tradition and Practice of Female Genital Cutting” | David Pittman<br>“Working with Faith Communities and Governmental Agencies to Support Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse” |

- 10:15 – 10:30am Break
- 10:30 – 11:30am Breakout Session 4

| Track A  | Track B  |
|--|--|
| Steven Hassan<br>“Freedom of Mind: Helping Loved Ones Leave Controlling People, Cults and Beliefs” | Peter Singer<br>“Bridging the Gap between Faith Communities and Child Protective Services” |

- 11:30am – 12:30pm Marci A. Hamilton, JD — “Extreme Religious Liberty Statutes that Endanger Children and Women”

## **DAY 1 – Thursday, Dec. 4**

**Lisa Aronson Fontes, PhD**

### **“Corporal Punishment Across Cultures: Keeping All Children Safe”**

This presentation models ways for social service professionals and attorneys to work positively with culturally diverse parents on issues of corporal punishment and physical abuse while improving children’s safety. Dr. Fontes discusses non-blaming and non-shaming approaches to child discipline and describes ways to build a culture of competence so that professionals genuinely welcome parents of diverse religious, cultural and racial backgrounds.

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| <b>Breakout Session 1/Track A</b><br><b>Paul Offit, MD</b><br><b>“When Medicine Conflicts with Faith”</b>  | This presentation centers around the 1991 measles epidemic in Philadelphia in which the faith healing-related beliefs of two fundamentalist churches led to the largest single outbreak of measles in the post-vaccine era in U.S. history. Dr. Offit addresses the debate over compulsory vaccination of children in light of the city's struggle of wanting to both respect the faith of those who had chosen to forgo vaccination and medical care and protect children and the surrounding community from disease.  |
| <b>Breakout Session 1/Track B</b><br><b>Zainab Al-Suwaij</b><br><b>“Domestic Violence Against Women in Muslim Communities and Its Impact on Children”</b>  | Incidents of domestic violence against women in the Muslim community provide a unique and difficult situation for the women and children involved. Women within these communities often feel that they are caught between perceptions of Islamic cultural norms and the civil rights they are afforded in this country. This talk discusses how incidents of domestic violence against women affect the wellbeing of children.  |
| <b>Breakout Session 2/Track A</b><br><b>Lisa Aronson Fontes, PhD</b><br><b>“Child Sexual Abuse in Culturally Diverse Families: Focus on Latinos”</b>   | Latino families often struggle mightily when they become involved in the legal and child welfare systems for child sexual abuse. Cultural issues related to family dynamics, shame, attitudes toward authorities, and taboos, often impede investigations and interventions. This talk provides practical advice to help attorneys and social workers improve their investigations and interventions with Latino families who are caught in the crisis of child sexual abuse.   |
| <b>Session 2/Track B</b><br><b>Rev. Carla Cheatham, PhD, and Rev. Jaime Romo</b><br><b>“Handling the Sticky Widgets—Engaging Faith Communities in the Conversation about Child Maltreatment”</b> | Communicating about child maltreatment in general can be challenging. The topic can be even trickier in faith communities, especially when the maltreatment being discussed has a religious component. This presentation covers the barriers faith communities experience when discussing child maltreatment, the risks to survivors and religious institutions of not having those conversations, and the benefits to having those conversations. Most importantly, it provides tools and talking points to members of faith communities to help them with such discussions, as well as a case study of a faith community that held such a conversation with a survivor present. |

### **Parents Panel Discussion — “From Tragedy to Healing to Hope”**

This presentation will feature a panel of parents whose lives have been touched by unhealthy, authoritarian influences. These mothers and fathers will share their stories talk about what they believe constitutes “child-friendly faith.”

**Reception & Film Presentation** — Following the panel discussion, we will have a reception. At 8pm, we will show the acclaimed film, *All God’s Children*, which tells the gripping story of the first boarding school for children of missionary parents that was investigated for widespread abuse.

## DAY 2 – Friday, Dec. 5

### Introductory Comments by Rev. Charles Foster Johnson

### Special Video Welcome by Basyle “Boz” Tchividjian, JD, Executive Director of Godly Response to Abuse in the Christian Environment (GRACE)

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| <b>Session 3/Track A</b><br><b>Rev. Patricia Ross, CPM</b><br><b>“Unkind Cuts: The Tradition and Practice of FGC”</b>                                    | Female genital cutting (FGC) is illegal in the United States, yet many girls have had the procedure done or are at risk for undergoing it. Furthermore, the ritual is still performed on over ninety percent of girls in much of Africa. FGC, especially in its more severe forms, can cause excruciating pain and long-term physical damage. Most approaches to stopping this practice have had little effect, however, one organization has had success. Midwives on Missions of Service (MOMS) works with midwives who perform the practice in Sierra Leone, West Africa. Rev. Ross, who co-founded MOMS, explains how the organization's educational efforts have empowered the midwives to choose to stop performing FGC. This presentation describes the practice of FGC, the practitioners, and a healthy approach to making change.  |
| <b>Session 3/Track B</b><br><b>David Pittman — “Working with Faith Communities and Governmental Agencies to Support Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse”</b> | Therapy is an essential part of the healing process for those who have suffered the trauma of childhood sexual abuse. Yet many survivors don't know where to turn to find those services. David Pittman—a survivor himself—founded Together We Heal for that very purpose. Its mission is to pair survivors with mental health services through partnerships with therapists in private practice, religious organizations, and governmental agencies. Mr. Pittman explains how such a model of collaboration has helped survivors overcome trauma and achieve recovery, healing, and hope.   |
| <b>Session 4/Track A</b><br><b>Steven Hassan</b><br><b>“Freedom of Mind: Helping Loved Ones Leave Controlling People, Cults and Beliefs”</b>             | Most cases of abuse involve one or more persons exerting power over others. Therefore, it's essential that therapists, attorneys (including human rights, estate, family, and child welfare attorneys), as well as those investigating abuse cases, understand how a power dynamic manifests itself in cults and high-control, authoritarian relationships and groups. In this presentation, Mr. Hassan describes how people are recruited into a wide range of cult groups, including those that engage in human trafficking, and how they are indoctrinated with different techniques of undue influence, such as covert hypnosis and phobia programming. He discusses how to evaluate victims using his BITE model of control (Behavior, Information, Thought and Emotion.) His method to help people to begin reclaim their personal power and decision-making, the Strategic Interactive Approach, is also described. |
| <b>Session 4/Track B</b><br><b>Peter Singer</b><br><b>“Bridging the Gap between Faith Communities and Child Protective Services”</b>                     | The faith community and child protection services often find it difficult to partner in meaningful ways to help children and families impacted by child maltreatment. Mr. Singer has worked with these two groups in Minnesota since 2005 to develop techniques to bridge this gap. In this presentation, he discusses strategies that he employs to help the faith and child protection communities work together to help children and families struggling with issues of abuse and neglect.  |

### Marci A. Hamilton, JD

#### **“Extreme Religious Liberty Statutes that Endanger Children and Women”**

How do legislative demands for religious liberty in the United States affect the vulnerable, particularly children? Law professor Marci Hamilton, a leading expert on such legal issues, will explain how statutes such as the Religious Freedom Restoration Act and its state counterparts have lowered legal barriers on religious believers' illegal conduct. Prof. Hamilton represented the City of Boerne, Texas, before the Supreme Court, persuading the Court to hold RFRA unconstitutional. She will also discuss how state legislatures refuse to repeal medical neglect exemptions, despite the fact that children have died from medically treatable ailments due to extreme “faith healing”-related beliefs held by their caretakers and how elected state governors and attorneys general fail to enforce laws that could prevent adults from engaging in religious practices that put children and women in harms way.



**Zainab Al-Suwaij** is co-founder and executive director of the American Islamic Congress whose mission is to build interfaith and interethnic understanding and represent the diversity of American Muslim life. As an advocate for women's equality, civil rights, and interfaith understanding, she left her teaching position at Yale University after the 9/11 terror attacks to launch AIC. Zainab was named an "Ambassador of Peace" by the Interreligious and International Peace Council, recognized as the "International Person of the Year" by the National Liberty Museum, and received Dialogue on Diversity's Liberty Award. She has briefed Congress and the White House on Muslim issues, has published editorials in the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, and *USA Today*, and has appeared on NPR, the BBC, Al-Jazeera, and other radio and television networks.

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**Bethany Brittain** grew up in a fundamentalist Christian home and is a survivor of religious child maltreatment. As prescribed by church leaders, her parents used corporal punishment on Bethany and her three siblings starting in infancy, and frequent and severe beatings continued into their teen years. After having been home schooled in isolation and groomed to be a submissive wife, she left home in her late teens, obtained a college degree in instructional design, and transcended her abusive childhood. Today, Bethany creates training programs for corporations and specializes in adult learning.

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**Rev. Carla Cheatham, PhD**, is an ordained minister with the United Church of Christ and a hospice chaplain, and she has devoted much of her career to counseling at-risk youth. She also owns and operates Carla Cheatham Consulting Group, which provides training in culturally competent and sensitive interfaith spiritual care to healthcare workers nationwide. Carla understands the needs of abuse survivors, as she suffered religious spurning as a child. She found refuge among members of her Southern Baptist Church, but when she came out as a lesbian at the age of twenty-one, she was rejected by church members. Carla received an M.A. in Psychology at Stephen F. Austin State University, a doctorate in Health and Kinesiology from Texas A&M University, and a Master's of Divinity at the Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University.

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**Lisa Aronson Fontes, PhD**, has dedicated two decades to making the mental health, social service, and criminal justice systems more responsive to culturally diverse people. She has written numerous journal articles and chapters on cultural issues in child maltreatment and violence against women, cross-cultural research, and ethics. Lisa is the author of *Interviewing Clients Across Cultures: A Practitioner's Guide* and *Child Abuse and Culture: Working with Diverse Families* and teaches at the University Without Walls at the University of Massachusetts. Fluent in Spanish and Portuguese, she has conducted research in Santiago, Chile, and with Puerto Ricans, African Americans, and European Americans in the United States.

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**Roger and Joellen Griffin** (Parents Panel) raised their six children in the religious group, the Twelve Tribes, known for its strict rules about childrearing. In the group, parents are expected to raise children who are absolutely obedient. Boys and girls are not permitted to engage in fantasy or imaginative play and are frequently subjected to corporal punishment. Roger and Joellen will talk about what it was like to be parents in such a controlling group and how their family was able to escape intact. They will also offer advice for other mothers and fathers who have had similar experiences or are struggling with what to do about loved ones who are still members of an authoritarian religious community.



**Marci A. Hamilton, JD**, is one of the United States' leading church/state scholars and holds the Paul R. Verkuil Chair in Public Law at the Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law, Yeshiva University. She specializes in religious organizations and individuals that violate the law; the First Amendment's Religion Clauses; and the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) and its state counterparts. Prof. Hamilton is the author of *God vs. the Gavel: The Perils of Extreme Religious Liberty* and *Justice Denied: What American Must Do to Protect Its Children*. She is the recipient of the National Crime Victim Bar Association's Frank Carrington Champion of Civil Justice Award; the E. Nathaniel Gates Award for outstanding public advocacy and scholarship; and the Lifetime Achievement Award for Pro Bono Legal Service to veterans groups.

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**Steven Hassan** has been educating the public about mind control, controlling groups, and destructive cults since 1976. At the age of nineteen, he was deceptively recruited into the Unification Church. After serving as a high-ranking official in the organization, Steven escaped through deprogramming. Later, he founded the Freedom of Mind Resource Center and authored several books on how cults harm adults and children, including *Freedom of Mind: Helping Loved Ones Leave Controlling People, Cults and Beliefs*. Steven addresses hundreds of campus, religious, and professional organizations throughout the world and is often asked by the media to answer questions about mind control. He is a Licensed Mental Health Counselor in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and a Nationally Certified Counselor.

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**Janet Heimlich** founded the Child-Friendly Faith Project in 2012. She is an award-winning journalist and the author of *Breaking Their Will: Shedding Light on Religious Child Maltreatment*, which examines child abuse and neglect in America that is enabled by certain kinds of religious belief. Janet has been a freelance reporter for National Public Radio and has written nonfiction articles for such publications as *Texas Monthly*, the *Austin American-Statesman*, and the *Texas Observer*. She has won nine journalism awards, including the regional Katie, the State Bar of Texas' Gavel Award, and a "Radio Journalist of the Year" Lone Star Award. Janet graduated from Stanford University with a B.A. in communications.

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**Rev. Charles Foster Johnson** is a Baptist minister and the founder and pastor of Bread, a non-traditional faith community in Fort Worth, Texas. He also serves as spiritual director of New Horizons Treatment Center for Children. Throughout his thirty-five year pastoral ministry, Charles has served churches in Mississippi, Kentucky and Texas, including the Second Baptist Church of Lubbock and the Trinity Baptist Church of San Antonio. In 2004, the Baptist Center for Ethics named him "Baptist of the Year." In 2008, Charles was inducted into the Martin Luther King, Jr. Board of Preachers of Morehouse College. In 2013, he began Pastors for Texas Children, a nonprofit organization to mobilize the faith community for public education advocacy and support. Charles preaches and speaks at universities, churches, and business organizations about numerous children's issues, including education and safety.

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**Paul A. Offit, MD**, is the Chief of the Division of Infectious Diseases and the Director of the Vaccine Education Center at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. He is also Professor of Pediatrics at the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine and the co-inventor of the rotavirus vaccine RotaTeq, recommended for universal use in infants by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Paul is the recipient of many awards, such as the J. Edmund Bradley Prize for Excellence in Pediatrics from the University of Maryland Medical School and a Research Career Development Award from the National Institutes of Health, as well as the President's Certificate for Outstanding Service from the American Academy of Pediatrics. Paul has published more than 140 papers in medical and scientific journals and numerous books in the areas of vaccine safety.



**David Pittman** is the executive director of Together We Heal, a nonprofit organization whose purpose is to provide cost-free counseling and guidance for those who suffer from the trauma of childhood sexual abuse. TWH pairs survivors with mental health services by working with therapists in private practice, religious organizations, and governmental agencies. Through its efforts, survivors overcome trauma so that they can heal and thrive. David raises awareness of this issue through public speaking and collaborating with other advocacy groups, exposing sexual predators and their methods. He is also the South Florida Area Support Group Leader for Survivors Network of Those Abused by Priests and a member of the American Academy of Experts in Traumatic Stress.

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**Rev. Jaime Romo** is a commissioned minister in the United Church of Christ for Healing and Healthy Environments in San Diego, a certified primordial sound meditation instructor with the Chopra Center for Wellbeing, and an active member of the National Center for Trauma-Informed Care. He earned his doctorate in educational leadership from the University of San Diego. Following a career of teaching children from kindergarten through high school, Jaime—who is a survivor of child sexual abuse—develops and implements safe policies and healing community practices for churches and trains parents, volunteers, and employees on abuse prevention. He is the author of *Healing the Sexually Abused Heart: A Workbook for Survivors, Thrivers, and Supporters*.

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**Rev. Patricia Ross, CPM**, is an Episcopal clergyperson who retired from a career in training and organizational development so she could fulfill her dream to become a midwife. Today, she is a Certified Professional Midwife and the education director of Midwives on Missions of Service (MOMS), which has made significant improvements in maternal and neonatal mortality in Sierra Leone, Africa. MOMS' model draws from Patricia's studies in ethics and practical experience in business and nonprofit organizations providing her a unique perspective on how to conduct humanitarian efforts in a way that honors the culture undergoing change.

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**Peter Singer, MSW, LICSW**, is the Director of Care in Action Minnesota, a nonprofit organization that helps faith communities reach out to children and families impacted by child maltreatment. As a boy, Peter was greatly affected by a terrible tragedy suffered by a childhood friend and his family. The realization that it might have been prevented had his church community and child protection services worked together led him to seek solutions in the field of child protection. Peter also serves as a Clinical Supervisor with the counseling network Family Innovations, where his counseling practice focuses on children who have been impacted by traumatic events.

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**Trish Taylor** (Parents Panel) joined the Jehovah's Witnesses when she was a young mother at the age of twenty-three. At the time, her daughter was four years old and, later, she had two boys whom she raised in the faith while they were young. When Trish was in her late thirties, she began questioning Jehovah's Witness doctrines and got out. Looking back, she feels that the way the religion controls parents' lives had a tremendous impact on her ability to nurture her children and meet their needs.



**Basyle 'Boz' Tchividjian, JD**, is the Executive Director of Godly Response to Abuse in the Christian Environment (GRACE), an organization that educates and trains Christian communities in child abuse and conducts investigations of abuse cases. The grandson of the Rev. Dr. Billy Graham, Boz is also a professor at Liberty University School of Law. From 1994 to 2001, he served as Florida's Assistant State Attorney General, which included serving as Chief Prosecutor in the Sexual Crimes Division. As a member of GRACE's board of directors, Boz has helped create relationships with other Christian organizations that are committed to empowering the Christian community to recognize and respond to cases of child abuse through education and training.

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**Scott Solary** and **Luci Westphal** are the directors of *All God's Children*, the acclaimed documentary that will be shown at the conference Thursday evening at 8pm. The film tells the gripping story of the first Christian missionary boarding school to be investigated for widespread abuse. Survivors and parents share their journey of seeking justice, redemption, and healing. Together, Scott and Luci run the production company Good Hard Working People.

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**Cathy** and **John** [real names withheld] (Parents Panel) grew up in very different faith communities. Cathy grew up in the fairly progressive Episcopal Church. John, on the other hand, was raised in a fundamentalist, non-denominational Christian community that believed that demons and other evil spirits lived among the membership and other scary ideologies. The teachings were psychologically harmful for John, who eventually developed anxiety disorders and PTSD—conditions Cathy did not have to wrestle with. Now that the couple has a young son, they talk a great deal about his spiritual education. At the panel discussion, Cathy and John will share how their religious backgrounds have influenced their parenting decisions.