

36th Niwano Peace Prize: Dr. John Paul Lederach
Professor Emeritus of International Peacebuilding, University of Notre Dame in USA

The 36th Niwano Peace Prize will be awarded to Dr. John Paul Lederach, Professor Emeritus of International Peacebuilding at the Kroc Institute for Peace Studies at the University of Notre Dame and a Distinguished Scholar at Eastern Mennonite University in the United States where he served as the founding director of their Center for Justice and Peacebuilding. Currently he serves as Senior Fellow at Humanity United, a philanthropic foundation. Dr. Lederach has worked in mediating conflicts, building peace, and fostering international reconciliation for more than thirty years. He has developed training in conflict transformation and provided direct conciliation support services in some of the most violently conflicted regions across five continents.

While Dr. Lederach has consulted with the highest-level government officials and national opposition movements in war-torn settings like Nicaragua, Somalia, Northern Ireland, Colombia, Nepal, and the Philippines, in many of those same locations he has provided accompaniment for local communities most affected by the decades of violence. As a practitioner-scholar, Dr. Lederach's academic work draws on this rich experience in the field as a mediator, negotiator, peacebuilding practitioner, trainer, and consultant.

Dr. Lederach was born in Indiana and grew up in Oregon. His parents worked as teachers, his father initially a pastor and his mother a nurse, both with strong emphasis on holistic caregiving that influenced his life. He graduated from Bethel College in 1980 with a degree in History and Peace Studies after giving numerous years to voluntary service in Europe, in both Belgium and Spain. He then pursued a PhD in Sociology with a concentration in the Social Conflict Program from the University of Colorado, receiving his degree in 1988. From the mid 1970s he began to actively engage in international peacebuilding becoming director of the International Conciliation Service of The Mennonite Central Committee in the late 1980s.

Dr. Lederach is the author, co-author and editor of 24 books and manuals, numerous academic articles and monographs on peace education, conflict transformation, and mediation training. His books have been translated into more than fifteen languages, and he is in international demand as a lecturer, consultant, and peacebuilding trainer. He is a recipient of many awards and cited recognitions from the academic communities and civic organizations and associations as well.

Dr. Lederach comes from Mennonite faith tradition born in the protestant reformation. One of the historic peace churches, this tradition places particular emphasis on the biblical command for Christians to be peacemakers. Mennonites have long developed a commitment to service to alleviate human suffering and encourage development and can be often be found with humanitarian engagement and peace promotion in areas of war and conflict in the world. As Dr. Lederach was entering adulthood, new countries were being born out of colonialism, at times through revolution. His peacebuilding has taken him to many of those places in search of what one of his book titles calls the journey toward reconciliation. In this particular book he outlines some of the theological underpinnings that guide his work including the view that conflict is natural to human relationships but the real challenge of peace is always found in how one

chooses to respond with love, dignity, and accountability to those conflicts. In a later book he referred to this as the moral imagination that is capable of envisioning the web of relationships that includes our enemies and the curiosity and creativity that builds toward understanding, restoration and healing. From this view, Dr. Lederach suggests that reconciliation is only possible through people who risk to journey across our deep social divides where forming new relationships between enemies becomes possible. Reconciliation requires commitment to craft the social space that brings truth, mercy, justice, and peace together within conflicted groups. This is the beauty of Dr. Lederach's lifelong conviction and his commitment to live in a way that makes known the reconciling love of God within human brokenness through peacebuilding, conflict transformation, and reconciliation.

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