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“Charter of Compassion” founder Karen Armstrong will explore the transformative power of compassion at the 2014 Collins Lecture

As part of the ongoing celebration of Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon’s 40th Anniversary, the Collins Lecture will be delivered by internationally known author, comparative religion scholar, former Roman Catholic religious sister, and “Charter of Compassion” founder Karen Armstrong. The lecture, titled “The Transformative Power of Compassion,” will be held at 7 p.m. on March 6, 2014, at Trinity Episcopal Cathedral in Portland.

Armstrong has been called “a prominent and prolific religious historian” and described as “arguably the most lucid, wide-ranging and consistently interesting religion writer today.”

In 1984, Armstrong was commissioned to write and present a British TV documentary on the life of St. Paul, The First Christian—a project that involved traveling to the Holy Land to retrace the steps of the saint. Armstrong described this visit as a “breakthrough experience” that defied her prior assumptions and was the inspiration for virtually all her subsequent work, which focuses on commonalities of the major religions, such as the importance of compassion and the Golden Rule.

Armstrong first rose to prominence in 1993 with her book *A History of God: The 4,000-Year Quest of Judaism, Christianity and Islam*. She traces the evolution of the three major monotheistic traditions from their beginnings in the Middle East up to the present day. Armstrong’s *The Great Transformation: The Beginning of Our Religious Traditions* (2006) continues this theme and examines the emergence and codification of the world’s great religions during the so-called Axial age, identified by Karl Jaspers to describe the period from 800 to 200 BC, during which similar revolutionary thinking appeared in Persia, India, China and the Occident.

In February 2008, Armstrong received the \$100,000 TED Prize. She used that occasion to call for the creation of a “Charter for Compassion” (charterforcompassion.org), highlighting the

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fundamental principle that compassion lies at the heart of all religious, ethical and spiritual traditions, calling us always to treat all others as we wish to be treated ourselves.

“We urgently need to make compassion a clear, luminous and dynamic force in our polarized world,” concludes Armstrong. “Rooted in a principled determination to transcend selfishness, compassion can break down political, dogmatic, ideological and religious boundaries. Born of our deep interdependence, compassion is essential to human relationships and to a fulfilled humanity. It is the path to enlightenment, and indispensable to the creation of a just economy and a peaceful global community.”

The cost to attend the Collins Lecture is \$40 for preferred seating (front of the sanctuary), \$25 general, and \$15 student. Register securely online at www.emoregon.org.

For those wanting to delve deeper into the topic of compassion, “Continuing the Conversation: Interfaith Perspectives on Compassion and the Common Good,” will be held on Friday, March 7, from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. in Kempton hall at Trinity Episcopal Cathedral. The seminar will include an interfaith panel and breakout workshops. The cost is \$10 and registration is available at www.emoregon.org. (Note: Karen Armstrong will not be speaking at this event.)

The Collins Lecture is an annual event designed to provide an opportunity for clergy and laity to explore issues related to religion and social ethics. The lecture is supported by the Collins Foundation. For more information, call the EMO office at (503) 221-1054.

Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon is a statewide association of Christian, congregations, ecumenical organizations and interfaith partners working together to improve the lives of Oregonians through community ministry programs, ecumenical and interreligious dialogue, environmental ministry and public policy advocacy.