

MARGARET KARRAM PRESIDENT OF THE FOCOLARE MOVEMENT Biography

Margaret Karram was elected President of the Focolare Movement by the 2021 General Assembly and re-elected for a second term (2026–2031) on the 12th of March 2026. She is the third President after the foundress Chiara Lubich (1920-2008) and Maria Voce Emmaus (1937-2025).

Childhood and education - A Christian Arab, she was born in Haifa, Israel, in 1962. The Christian values and principles she learnt from childhood instilled in her a strong sense of openness towards others, regardless of their religion or culture. She attended a Catholic school run by the Carmelite Sisters in Haifa, where, in addition to studying Arabic and Hebrew, she began learning English and Italian.

A wealth of knowledge, experience, and personal suffering that, from her teenage years onwards, inspired her desire to make a difference, to change society and the world around her.

The Focolare Movement - When she was fourteen, she got to know the spirituality of the Focolare Movement, which she saw as an answer from God: she grasped the full power of living out the words of the Gospel, moment by moment and in every circumstance, aware of the power of a revolution brought about by true, selfless and boundless love. Thus began her commitment to dialogue between Christians, Jews and Muslims, which took her for a time to the United States, where she graduated in Judaism from the American Jewish University in Los Angeles. Returning to her homeland, she became co-responsible for the Focolare community in the Holy Land. She worked for 14 years at the Italian Consulate General in Jerusalem. She also collaborated in various commissions and organisations promoting dialogue between the three monotheistic religions, such as the Episcopal Commission for Interreligious Dialogue, the Assembly of Catholic Ordinaries of the Holy Land, and the ICCI (Interreligious Coordinating Council in Israel). In 2013, she was awarded the Mount Zion Award, an award for reconciliation, which she shared with the scholar and researcher Yisca Harani, in recognition of her commitment to fostering dialogue between different cultures and religions. In 2014, on Pentecost Sunday, she was invited to represent the Focolare Movement at the Prayer for Peace in the Vatican Gardens, alongside Pope Francis, the then President of Israel Shimon Peres and the then President of the Palestinian Authority Mahmoud Abbas.

Elected General Councillor - In the same year, she was elected General Councillor by the General Assembly of the Focolare Movement. During the following six-year term (2014–2020), she served as Councillor for Italy and Albania and was co-responsible, on behalf of the Focolare Movement, for dialogue between ecclesial movements and new Catholic communities. In 2016, she was awarded the International St Rita Award for promoting dialogue between Christians, Jews and Muslims, starting from the everyday experiences of life.

President of the Focolare Movement - On the 31st of January 2021, she was elected President of the Focolare Movement and, the following day, the Spanish focolarino Jesús Morán was elected Co-President for a second term.

On the 8th of June 2022, Margaret Karram, accompanied by Co-President Morán and a delegation from the Focolare Movement, was received in audience by the Ecumenical Patriarch, His Holiness Bartholomew I in Istanbul (Turkey) at the headquarters of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople. This visit further strengthened the long-standing and fruitful friendship between the Focolare Movement and the Patriarchate.

In February 2023, she took part in the European continental stage of the Synod of the Catholic Church in Prague (Czech Republic), and in October of that same year, Pope Francis invited her to attend the 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops of the Catholic Church on synodality at the Vatican, in the capacity of a "special guest".

In March, in Munich (Germany), she addressed the Steering Committee of Together for Europe (T4E) – a network of around 300 Christian movements that has been working for many years to spread a culture of fraternity across Europe among individuals, organisations, Christian churches and people of different faiths.

During the same period, the Archdiocese of Milan (Italy), in collaboration with the social promotion association "Elikya", awarded her the 2023 "Fuoco dentro" [Fire within] award, an initiative aimed at highlighting and publicly promoting awareness of exemplary individuals who serve as role models for all men and women of good will.

In May, during a visit to Focolare communities in various countries across South-East Asia, Margaret Karram spoke in Tokyo (Japan) in the Great Sacred Hall of the Rissho Kosei Kai Buddhist Movement, with which the Focolare Movement has maintained a friendship dating back to the time of their respective founders, Chiara Lubich and Nikkio Niwano.

In Indonesia, at the Sunan Kalijaga Islamic University in Yogyakarta, she took part in the interfaith panel discussion, "In dialogue to promote fraternity". She also travelled to the Fiji Islands, where two Focolare communities have recently been established and are working alongside the local Church throughout the Pacific region.

In August, at the World Youth Day in Lisbon (Portugal), she gave two catechesis sessions on the relevance of the figure and message of Mary and on building bridges in contexts of conflict.

On the 25th of November 2023, she was appointed Member of the Dicastery for the Laity, the Family and Life.

On the 7th of December 2023, to mark the 80th anniversary of the birth of the Focolare Movement, together with Jesús Morán and those responsible for the Movement's geographical areas around the world, she was received in a private audience by Pope Francis. In February 2024, to mark the 25th anniversary of the signing of the historic Joint Declaration on Justification between the Catholic Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Churches, she spoke in Augsburg (Germany) at the conference "Dare to be One" organised by the Bishops, Friends of the Focolare Movement, representing 30 Christian denominations.

In May 2024, she participated in the interreligious conference "One Human Family", organised by the Focolare Movement, which was attended by around 600 people of different faiths with the aim of strengthening dialogue and working together for peace and fraternity among nations.

In the summer of 2024, she spent a month in Brazil with the Co-President of the Movement,

meeting with numerous local communities, particularly those in the Amazon region. They then took part in the Genfest, the Focolare Movement's youth event, in Aparecida (São Paulo), which brought together around 4,000 participants from more than 50 countries.

In May 2025, she travelled to the United States with Co-President Jesús Morán, where she spoke at various events, including the forum: 'Sustainable Peace Networks: Dialogue between Different Perspectives and Faiths – A Multi-view and Multifaith Forum', which brought together 120 peace workers from 90 organisations. She also took part in one of the regular meetings of "NextNow", which promotes Islamic-Christian dialogue starting from the communities, with a focus on the legacy of spiritual friendship between Imam W.D. Mohammed and Chiara Lubich. On the 26th of August 2025, she attended the Meeting for Friendship Among Peoples organised in Rimini, Italy, by the Communion and Liberation Movement. On the 26th of September 2025, Margaret Karram and Jesús Morán were received in a private audience by Pope Leo XIV.

From the 1st to the 3rd of October 2025, in Castel Gandolfo (Italy), along with the Co-President, she participated in the international conference "Raising Hope for Climate Justice", a historic event to mark the tenth anniversary of the Encyclical *Laudato Si'*. The proceedings were opened in the presence of Pope Leo XIV.

On the 31st of January 2026, she took part in the political hackathon in Rome (Italy), which marked the conclusion of the first year of the two-year political training programme "One Humanity, One Planet: Synodal Leadership", organised by the Movement for Unity in Politics of the Focolare Movement. The event was attended by 100 young political leaders from 36 countries.

Books - In 2023, together with the journalist Monica Mondo, she published the book 'Per non sfiorarci invano' [So that we may not pass each other by in vain] (Francescane), an interview-based book in which Margaret Karram recounts her experiences in the Holy Land and reflects on peace through dialogue, seen as a path to fraternity among different peoples. In 2026, she published the book "Prossimità via alla pace. Pagine di vita" [Closeness: The Path to Peace. Pages of Life] (Ed. Città Nuova), in which, drawing on her own personal experience and that of many men and women who live the spirituality of unity proposed by Chiara Lubich, she guides the reader in discovering the roots and possibilities of a society founded on closeness, dialogue and fraternity.

The book has been presented in Bergamo (Italy) during the eighth edition of the *Festival delle Relazioni* [Festival of Relationships] and in Rome (Italy) on the 30th of January 2026 at Lumsa University. A panel discussion also included Imam Nader Akkad, advisor on religious affairs at the Great Mosque of Rome; Irene Kajon, member of the Jewish Community and Emeritus Professor of Moral Philosophy at La Sapienza University of Rome; and Alberto Lo Presti, Associate Professor of the History of Political Doctrines at Lumsa University in Rome. It was moderated by Alessandro Gisotti, Deputy Editorial Director of the Dicastery for Communication of the Holy See.