

## Rev. Dr. Shanta Premawardhana

Rev. Dr. Shanta Premawardhana is the president of the OMNIA Institute for Contextual Leadership, a global training organization that builds Interfaith Peacemaker Teams to counter religious extremism and region-based oppression, domination and violence. It trains people of faith to deconstruct theologies of exclusivism and superiority and reconstruct theologies of pluralism. It also trains them to build power by engaging diverse communities for effective collaborative action.



Immediately prior to his current position, Premawardhana was the director for Interreligious Dialogue and Cooperation at the World Council of Churches (WCC), a worldwide association of 349 Protestant and Orthodox denominations based in Geneva, Switzerland. There, he spearheaded a joint initiative between the Vatican, World Evangelical Alliance and the WCC (representing about 90% of the Christian world), seeking agreement on a code of conduct for Christian witness. In addition, he worked on the project Accompanying Churches in Situations of Conflict, which encourages churches to advocate for religious freedom on behalf of communities facing religious oppression. His primary task was to bring senior religious leaders in such contexts to dialogue tables to seek ways of resolving conflicts and finding means of reconciliation.

Prior to moving to Geneva, Premawardhana served as the Associate General Secretary for Interfaith Relations at the National Council of Churches of Christ, a national association of 39 Christian denominations based in Washington DC. There, he initiated and co-led a dialogue table of senior Jewish and Christian leaders in the United States addressing critical questions of theology and justice. He also initiated a similar dialogue table with senior Muslim and Christian leaders.

Premawardhana earned his Ph.D. in Religion at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. He is an emeritus trustee of the Parliament of the World's Religions, and currently serves on the board of governors of the National Council of Churches, USA and the board of directors of Common Cause Illinois.

He has published numerous articles on economic justice, Christian theology and interreligious dialogue and is a frequent speaker on these subjects. His most recent publication is an edited volume of essays by scholars of five religious traditions: *Religious Conversion: Religion Scholars Thinking Together* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2015.)



155, North Michigan Avenue, #519 | Chicago, IL 60601  
+1-312-726-1200 | [www.omnialeadership.org](http://www.omnialeadership.org)