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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Rt Hon Tony Blair Shares about Faith and Reconciliation at the Saddleback Civil Forum: Pastor Rick Warren presents former British Prime Minister with third International Medal of PEACE

LAKE FOREST, Calif., March 6, 2010 – More than 2,600 attended the Saddleback Civil Forum on Peace in a Globalized Society at Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, Calif., Sunday evening, March 6, to hear a candid discussion between Pastor Rick Warren and Rt Hon Tony Blair, former Prime Minister of Britain.

“As the world comes together and people of different nations, different ethnicities and different faiths are forced to live together, the primary question is, ‘How do we find common understanding?’” said Blair. “Faith teaches you to understand there is something more important than yourself, which is an important principle in working toward a better world. If individuals can see people of faith in action, helping in support of others, it makes this process of globalization easier.”

Warren and Blair agreed that faith plays a major role in how we interact with each other in this changing world. Warren stated that we can't just tolerate people; we have to treat them with dignity. “Interfaith dialogue doesn't mean compromising your faith or finding the lowest common denominator, but explaining each other's faith for better understanding,” Warren said.

Providing a glimpse into his Faith Foundation, Blair discussed reconciliation as a building block toward peace. He expressed his efforts to alleviate the five global giants Warren has identified in his PEACE Plan, including pandemic diseases, extreme poverty, illiteracy, self-centered leaders and spiritual emptiness. Blair even listed, from memory to an applauding crowd, what the five letters of the PEACE Plan represent: **P**romote reconciliation, **E**quip servant leaders, **A**ssist the poor, **C**are for the sick and **E**ducate the next generation.

During the hour and one-half long Q&A dialogue with Warren, Blair touched on his experience in Northern Ireland, Kosovo, Iraq and Afghanistan, highlighting the growing importance of faith in this globalizing world. As faith motivates billions of people around the world, Blair said



Pastor Rick Warren and Rt Hon Tony Blair, former Prime Minister of Britain, engage in a candid discussion during the Saddleback Civil Forum on Peace in a Globalized Society at Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, Calif., Sunday evening, March 6.

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understanding its trends and its impact can be as important as understanding a nation's GDP, its business and resources.

"If faith doesn't have a major role, then the risk is a process of globalization without values, without convictions," Blair said. "Faith can inspire and motivate people to do good and faith-based organizations are a big part of bringing peace."

Warren thanked Blair for his support of the United States following the 9/11 crisis, prompting a roar from the audience followed by a standing ovation. "In the face of evil, bystanders are no better than perpetrators. I can say on behalf of America, thank you for your leadership," said Warren.

"Your armed forces are our armed forces," replied Blair to sustained applause.

Warren and Blair went on to discuss the current issues playing out in the Middle East to which Blair stated that when faced with a choice, people want democracy.

"The challenge with democracy is developing the institution behind it," said Blair. "With the disintegration of the old must come the construction of the new. We must watch for the extreme Islamist because where others are disorganized, they are very organized. That's why we must get behind the people and support ... we must help them construct the institution and systematic change. Democracy is a lot more than the right to cast a vote every four years ... the right to vote should lead to other freedoms."

Warren and Blair conversed about the importance of education during which Blair spoke as a pupil and a parent, not a politician. Blair said he likes to learn something new every day and that educating the next generation is not about educating them for the moment but developing an attitude and mind to help them keep learning.

The evening's Q&A ended with Blair sharing his vision for 10 years from now. "I would like to see a situation in which, just as today, people of different races or nationalities can get along together, that people of differing faiths – remaining absolutely true to their own faith – can reach out, understand, know about and learn about someone who is of another faith," he said. "And where in an era in which the world is changing so fast and technology does transform our lives and there are so many gadgets and things ... that in that world, faith is accepted as part of the future and progress, and not some distant relic of the past."

Following the discussion, Warren and his wife Kay presented Blair with the International Medal of PEACE, which has been presented over the past few years to those helping to further the segments of PEACE. The first medal was presented to President George W. Bush in 2008 for his work in caring for the sick and those affected and infected with AIDS. In 2009, the medal was awarded to Rwandan President Paul Kagame for his efforts toward reconciliation.

"Tony Blair's commitment to reconciliation and peace in the Middle East is something we want to honor, and the Network of Purpose Driven Churches in 168 countries have chosen him as the recipient of the Third annual International Medal of PEACE," said Warren as he presented the award.

In addition to the medal, the Warrens also gave Blair a copy of "To Every Nation," the pictorial book showcasing Saddleback's journey of sending over 13,000 Saddleback Member to all 195 countries in an effort to fulfill the PEACE Plan.

The Tony Blair Faith Foundation was launched in May 2008. In an increasingly globalized world, religion is at the very core of life for billions of people and it cannot be ignored. The Tony Blair Faith Foundation aims to promote respect and understanding between the major religions. It empowers, supports and trains young people to take multi-faith action against extreme poverty in over 100 countries, providing them with a positive alternative to those who try to use faith as a means to divide. It provides emerging and current leaders with the education and analysis to

understand the role of religion in the modern world, and it breaks down barriers between young people of all faiths and none by using new technology to connect them. To find out more go to <http://www.tonyblairfaithfoundation.org>.

Founded in 1980 by Rick Warren and his wife Kay, Saddleback Church is located in Lake Forest, Calif. With an average weekly attendance of 22,000, it is one of the largest churches in America. For additional information about Saddleback Church, visit <http://www.saddleback.com>.