

REV. DR. JUSTIN OSTERMAN

B.A. in English (St. Andrews Presbyterian College, Laurinburg, NC), Doctor of Ministry (Meadville Lombard Theological School, Chicago)

REV. DR. JUSTIN OSTERMAN began his study of Islam in college. He learnt Arabic at the Defense Language Institute in Monterey, California, then served as a US Army interpreter on peacekeeping duty with the Multinational Force and Observers in Egypt.

After earning his Doctor of Ministry degree from Meadville Lombard Theological School, Justin was ordained, and served Unitarian Universalist congregations for 20 years before leaving the ministry. Following the September 11, 2001 attacks, in which the congregation he served in northern New Jersey lost a member, he began a public ministry to promote interfaith dialogue, foster greater understanding of Islam, and cultivate relationships between the congregations he served and their Muslim neighbors.

An acclaimed speaker and award-winning preacher throughout his professional life, Justin has excelled in the role of translator, both in the literal sense - as an Arabic interpreter in the US Army, and, later, the first civilian minister to meet and speak with prisoners held in Guantanamo Bay - and in the figurative sense, ministering to congregations, breaking down complicated ideas to clear the way for inclusive, cross-cultural conversations, and metabolizing hard truths about himself to find the lessons that can help others.

He founded **Breaking the Surface™** in 2021 as an on-line platform to share life lessons drawn from his decades as a recreational SCUBA diver and minister. This intersection of SCUBA and spirituality is the inspiration behind Breaking the Surface, created to unite, inspire, and equip people who are searching for deeper, richer, more meaningful lives and relationships outside the framework of institutional religion.

He was *The Salaam Network's* Distinguished Guest Speaker for its Interfaith Study Group on 9 February, 2022 and presented on “*Reclaiming the Core of Islam: How Myth, Misunderstanding, and Disinformation Prevent Bridge Building to Peace in the 21st Century.*”

Read more about Justin's personal journey, and draw from his experience as a diver, interpreted through his training as a minister, at www.breakingthesurface.com.