The Big News for this month: After waiting for three long months, this week the official letter finally arrived from the IRS granting our regional organization 501(c)3 status. URI in North America is now legitimately a tax-exempt charitable organization retroactive to our date of incorporation, May 19, 2010. If this is all that has been keeping you from supporting our region with your tax-deductible gift, you still have time to include it in this year’s charitable donations by following the link to PayPal from our website or sending a check to URI in North America, 1735b W State of Franklin Road, Suite 5-296, Johnson City, TN 37604. Either way, you will receive both our thanks and a letter of appreciation suitable for use in filing your 2010 taxes whether as an individual or on behalf of your organization, business or corporation.

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II Money Matters: Cost savings: Discount program through Office Max begins
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I. Money Matters: A Fundraising Tool for All

Within the coming week, each of our North American Cooperation Circles and Affiliates will be receiving a two-fold gift in the mail. Five glossy 4”x6” greeting cards bearing the URI logo are being sent to each Primary Contact person with our thanks for serving as our information bridge to their organization. But beyond just serving as a lovely gift, we've produced
these beautiful all-purpose cards at an exceptionally low cost so they can be purchased in bulk and resold at any price. Each CC can keep the difference to help fund their programming in the New Year. Similar cards from UNICEF and other nonprofit groups can cost as much as $2.00 per card, so there is an income potential built into the low price of only $8.00 for a set of 10 cards and envelopes when buying 5 or more sets. We’re keeping them affordable for individual purchases as well at just $12.00 per set for a limited introductory period. Ask your group’s Primary Contact person to show you the cards when they arrive, or check them out on our website at the [new online shop](#).

II. Money Matters: Keeping Printing Costs Down

If you live anywhere near an Office Max store, you can participate in a group buying program we’ve just established for all of URI throughout North America. At present it’s just for use in their printing and copying department, but it may expand to include office supplies and technology purchases -- we’ll see. For now, to get the URI discount, just give this Retail Connect number to the clerk when you get ready to pay for your copying or printing: 8888-0001-05883-90503. And here’s a neat feature: You can order a printing or copying job at one Office Max store and have it printed out and available for pickup at another store, anywhere else in the US!

III. CC Programming – North America Picks a Regional Theme for 2011

At its recent Fall Retreat, the North America Region’s Leadership Council agreed to establish a theme to guide our region-wide services and programming in the coming year: "Tending the Human Garden". How might that theme be interpreted in your community? It can encompass a broad variety of focal areas in keeping with our URI Purpose and Principles. One concern we see throughout the US and Canada is "Islamaphobia" -- the fear a growing number of people have about what they perceive as the threat to our way of life represented by the Islamic culture, and by extension, by those of the Muslim faith and tradition. This fear takes many forms, from discrimination and shunning of Muslims at one end of the spectrum to vandalism and outright violence on the other. As an organization dedicated to ending religiously motivated violence, we feel that those of us who stand up for the United Religions Initiative need to find ways to address this fear with programs, education, and initiatives appropriate to needs of each local area. Many groups are already reaching out to build bridges to the Muslims in their communities. Please share with us what you are doing in your area, or ideas your CC might have that would need broader support. As we move into the New Year, let’s find ways to work together to make a positive difference on this and other aspects of "Tending the Human Garden".

IV. CC Programming -- Have a FUNATICAL Good Time

Reprinted with permission from the North America Interfaith Network Fall newsletter PlanetPix Media & Entertainment Group, is producing an exciting tour entitled "FUNATICAL: Taking Comedy to the Extreme! 'We Come in Peace' Tour" to break stereotypes between mainstream Americans and diverse Americans, including South Asian, Arab, Muslim, Jewish, and Persian communities across America in a three city tour. This tour is designed to build bridges of peace between communities in addition to educating Americans about different cultures and religions through comedy. Visit the website at [www.funaticalcomedy.com](http://www.funaticalcomedy.com) for
more information about our LA, NYC, and DC based shows from December 2010-March 2011. Note from Sandy: (Psst - Beware - some consider this concert to be R-rated for profanity.)

V. Action Item: Send Holiday Card to Pres. Obama for Peace in the Middle East

A recently published public opinion poll shows that most Americans, Israelis and Palestinians support American efforts to mediate Palestinian-Israeli peace. Two thirds of Israelis would support some form of withdrawal from the territories occupied in 1967, and most want Israel to do more to promote comprehensive peace with the Arabs. If the two state solution collapses, about 42 percent believe there would be conflict for years to come. Very few believe the Palestinians would give up or that there would be a one-state solution. For details click here.

We encourage you to send a Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) Christmas card to the President to show your support for continued US leadership for peace in the holy land, and urging him to work for peace with justice and security for both Palestinians and Israelis. If you have not done so yet, CLICK HERE.

VI. CC Programming - United Nations General Assembly Accepts by Consensus Establishment of "World Interfaith Harmony Week"

Reprinted with permission from the North America Interfaith Network Fall newsletter, October 31, 2010 by Judy Lee Trautman

I recently received an email from HRH Prince Ghazi of Jordan, the personal envoy of HM King Abdullah II, that imparted wonderful news of a resolution of the United Nations to to designate the first week of February every year as the World Interfaith Harmony Week. Hopefully NAIN member organizations will want to support this wonderful week. Indeed, we ought to celebrate the spirit of this week every day. Here is the text of the email:

In the Name of God
Dear Friend,

Salaam. Forgive the intrusion. I am writing to seek your help and involvement. On October the 20th, 2010 — a few days ago — the United Nations General Assembly unanimously established the World Interfaith Harmony Week. The resolution was first proposed by H.M. King Abdullah II of Jordan on September 23rd 2010, and I myself had the honour of introducing and explaining it at the UN. (Please see enclosed speech with resolution at end.) The operative text of the Resolution says, remarkably:

World Interfaith Harmony Week

The General Assembly,
1. Reaffirms that mutual understanding and interreligious dialogue constitute important dimensions of a culture of peace;
2. Proclaims the first week of February of every year the World Interfaith Harmony Week between all religions, faiths and beliefs;
3. Encourages all States to support, on a voluntary basis, the spread of the message of interfaith harmony and goodwill in the world’s Churches, Mosques, Synagogues, Temples and other places of Worship during that week based on Love of God and Love of the
Neighbor, or based on Love of the Good and Love of the Neighbor, each according to their own religious traditions or convictions;
4. Requests the Secretary-General to keep the General Assembly informed of the implementation of the present resolution.

We believe this idea has the potential to do a lot of good in the world by:
(1) 'Co-ordinating and uniting the efforts of all the interfaith groups doing positive work with one focused theme at one specific time annually, thereby increasing their collective momentum and eliminating redundancy.
(2) Harnessing and utilizing the collective might of the world’s second-largest infrastructure (that of places of worship -- the largest being that of education) specifically for peace and harmony in the world: inserting, as it were, the right 'software' into the world’s religious 'hardware'.
(3) Permanently and regularly encouraging the silent majority of preachers to declare themselves for peace and harmony and providing a ready-made vehicle for them to do so. Moreover, if preachers and teachers commit themselves on the record once a year to peace and harmony, this means that when the next inter-religious crisis or provocation occurs, they cannot then relapse into parochial fear and mistrust, and will be more likely to resist the winds of popular demagoguery.'

However, your help I very much needed. Specifically, we need and gratefully ask you to:
(1) Write a personal email or letter of support for this initiative and post it at www.worldinterfaithharmonyweek.com at the appropriate place:
(2) Forwarding this email to all those on your email list who you think might be interested in it and them to their friends and so on as much as possible (please do not worry about this email address as it is set up for this purpose and I will not be using it for anything else).
(3) Posting any resources you think would be important to theme of the World Interfaith Harmony Week at www.worldinterfaithharmonyweek.com at the appropriate place.
(4) Organizing yourself an event or simple a sermon or a lecture or an event on the first week of next February on the theme of Interfaith Harmony.
(5) Recording your event at www.worldinterfaithharmonyweek.com at the appropriate place according to your own country.

Harmony and Peace need work, and the real beneficiary of love and charity towards our neighbour is always ourselves, but we fully appreciate if you cannot do any or all of this and thank-you anyway,

Salaam and best wishes,
Ghazi

The full text of Prince Ghazi’s speech is to be found at http://www.acommonword.com/en/component/content/article/421.html

A note from Sandy Westin: World Week of Interfaith Harmony. What a perfect opportunity for URI Cooperation Circles to put together local observances of this new global recognition sponsored by the Jordanian Embassy!. Here are just a few of the possibilities your CC might consider doing to participate locally in this global event:

- Work with local middle school geography teachers and homeschooling parents to build awareness of some of the world’s religions – their beliefs, practices and holidays.
Facilitate a penpal program for kids of different faiths to get to know one another via email, snailmail or social networking media – either in their own hometown or from another URI region across the world.

Host an interfaith celebration of music and dance offerings from several of your community’s different faith traditions, with costumes, banners, and food representing the many cultures present in your area.

Do let us know what your CC develops to celebrate this historic recognition of the importance of interfaith peacebuilding so we can include it on our region’s website calendar.

VII. Programming in CCs: Seattle’s Circle of Love CC Hosts a New Year’s Eve Interfaith Celebration

The annual New Year's candlelight and prayer service at Green Lake on Friday, December 31st at 3:30pm with a pre-event dialogue at 1:30pm. This wonderfully diverse and spiritually uplifting gathering will feature presentations and prayers from the Yogic, Byakko - Divinity, Buddhist, Bah'ai, Wiccan, Jewish, Islamic, Traditional Christian and Mystic Christian traditions. Contact the Interfaith Community Church at 206.783.1618 interfaithcommunitychurch@yahoo.com for more information.

VIII. Programming in CCs: Seattle is "Warm for Winter"

WarmforWinter, which is both an ending homelessness awareness and direct gifting project, is sponsored by the URI CC, Interfaith Network of Washington State. Since Thanksgiving 2006, the WarmforWinter project has given 25,000 handmade hats and scarves to individuals awaiting affordable homes in Washington State. Twenty-four interfaith and ecumenical "Blessings of the Hats and Scarves" services have graced our communities in recent years. For more information, see the project's website and our CC's website.

IX. Nurturing our Network - Progress Report from the Trail of Dreams Multi-Region CC

Greetings All,

We have now been on the 13 Moon Walk 4 Peace for two months. Needless to say we are having an inspiring walk through communities with our Peace Flame, the flame from the Sacred Fire of Thunder from Six Nations, Canada (Diane Longboat) that connects us to the legacy of the Great Peace Maker. We have walked from Macon, GA, where we walked with a mother whose son was murdered on 10-10-2000, allegedly by law enforcement officers (see my website: www.audriscottwilliams.com for the video); to Valdosta, GA where we had
the opportunity to engage in interfaith activities with the community through our hosts, Linda Bennett Elder. We then journeyed to West Palm Beach to walk through the community there and see the 150 families who have come together to support urban gardening. We ended our walk at Coleman Park to see the gardens the youth at the center have planted with our host Greg Richardson and beloved Umoja.

Along the way we visited with a sculptress, Joan Baliker, in Ormond Beach who just finished a sculpture of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.; the Kashi Yoga Center hosted by our United Religions Initiative sister Swami Anjani and participated in teachings with Ma; we then headed to Tampa/St. Petersburg, FL and visited Sacred Lands, did water ceremonies, walked and showed the film, Four the Next 7 Generations (a film about the 3 Indigenous Grandmothers); then on to Tallahassee, FL for more of the same. The highlight of the walk continues to be the people we meet. Imagine in one day we are walking along the road and pass a man on a bike riding across America AND a lady with one leg completing her journey around America. How is it we all end up on the same stretch of highway in Florida on the same day?

Of course gratitude for the families who invited us into their homes and cared for us -- strangers/family -- like Susan and her family in Valdosta, and Jennifer and Bill in Tampa, Florida; and who took care of us when the RV broke down and it took nearly three days to get it fixed -- like Janet Windwalker Jones/BGD Elder. We are also grateful to the churches who have supported us along the way: Victory for the World, Stone Mountain, GA; Christ the King, Valdosta; Unity of Tampa, Tampa, Florida; and Unity of Tallahassee.

And now as we head to New Orleans, the hospitality of the Ashe Cultural Arts Center really motivates us to keep going and to celebrate peace with every step. So, if you are near New Orleans this weekend check the schedule here and join us if you can: http://acabnola.blogspot.com/

The team is holding up well. Art coordinates our day to day walk and spends many hours buried in maps to make sure we are taking the best route and coordinating drop points so we make our miles. He is still the master walker, capable of doing up to 24 miles a day if necessary. Mary coordinates our activities in each city and our sponsorship solicitation. Dave is the overall picture and video taker, video editor, and assists Elizabeth with the websites. Elizabeth is our web master and keeps the site up to date. Karen is the bookkeeper, tracking all of our receipts and coordinating the food purchases (she makes a mean pot of greens as well). Baba Ojiji keeps the car and the RV in check. I am the visionkeeper for the walk. This is the current team on the road but we also have Swami Jinendra, Melodie, Rod, Kai and two little ones Tixo and Jude. That makes 13 members of the team on the 13 Moon Walk 4 Peace!

We have formed alliances with Om Sounds; WorldBed, Inc.; For the Next 7 Generations; Center for Spiritual Democracy; Encouragement Ministries, Inc; and World Bridge Media. See our websites for more information.

Now, for all of you who have asked how you can help, here is the link to our websites: www.13moonwalk4peace.com and www.communitiesofpeace.ning.com. You can donate directly through our Paypal account at either site or you can mail a check to The Spirit of Truth Foundation c/o Michael Ware at 3604 Skip Jack Court, Abingdon, MD 21009. In addition, if you are in an area where we will be, come and donate some walking miles. We are a relatively small team and we cover about 40 miles a day. We have actually walked nearly a 1,000 since we left Atlanta. We can use some help making more miles. So put on your walking shoes and come walk 5, 10, 15 miles a day for whatever period of time that you can. If you would like to be a host in one of the cities we will be walking through or...
would like to help us coordinate activities there, click this link to see what cities are on the schedule: http://www.13moonwalk4peace.com/tour/
Call Dave or Mary for more information: 570-220-9249. Please visit and engage with us on the Communities of Peace site, our virtual walk site.

Much Gratitude and Love,

Audri Scott Williams
www.audriscottwilliams.com
www.13moonwalk4peace.com
www.communitiesofpeace.ning.com
404-374-1162

X. Nurturing our network: URI Star certificates

During the regional council's Fall Leadership Retreat last October, the subject came up of "How can we show recognition and appreciation for the tremendous work being done in interfaith peacebuilding by our CCs, as well as other organizations and individuals?" After some discussion of creative possibilities, one of our newest LC members, Katie Ward of San Diego, volunteered to create a URI certificate of recognition which could be awarded to anyone by anyone in honor of their work on behalf of interfaith peace. The certificate "URI Star" template, which can be downloaded from our website (at XXXX), can be printed out using any color computer printer on two sides of a sheet of white paper or cardstock. Two certificates appear on each sheet. We would love to know who receives these colorful certificates so we can extend the region's appreciation to them as well. So please send in word of the individuals and organizations to whom you award a "Star" to Sandy. Let those stars shine!

XI. News of our Affiliates: Paul Chaffee on Scarboro Missions and Toronto’s Interfaith Community

Reprinted with permission from the North America Interfaith Network Fall newsletter, November 9, 2010 by Paul Chaffee

Years of reading the Bay Area Interfaith Connect newsletter does nothing to quell my amazement at the multitude of interfaith activities reported here every month. So tempting, sometimes, to think of the San Francisco Bay Area as an interfaith one-of-a-kind! A week in Toronto last month completely banished my provincial temptations. -- Paul Chaffee, October 30, 2010

Jan and I were invited to Canada’s biggest city by interfaith activists. Their work had been featured here at NAINConnect 2008. Now they wanted us to witness the interfaith ferment on the northern shores of Lake Ontario.
Our host was Scarboro Missions, a small Catholic order with decades of global social justice engagement. A strong and abiding commitment to interfaith activities led the Order to create a new department -- Scarboro Missions Interfaith (SMI).

Paul McKenna, who leads SMI, is creator of the Golden Rule poster, the simplest and most powerful interfaith tool in the world today. Having hundreds of thousands of posters distributed in 20 languages (so far) is remarkable by itself. But the poster tells only a small part of Scarboro’s interfaith activity, in Toronto, in North America and the world.
Our first morning at Scarboro we watched 50 bussed-in 11th graders being introduced to world religions in a five-hour workshop by Kathy Murtha. It was a pure joy, actually astonishing to see how much fun they had, how much information and wisdom they absorbed, and how serious, still, and creative a rambunctious bunch of teenagers can become with a master teacher. (This happens four times a week; new students every time. They started the program for Catholic schools. Now public schools are sending busloads as well. The students’ favorite part of the workshop? Two sessions during the day given to meditation.)

Paul McKenna and his team organized a dozen meetings for us with religious leaders from all over Canada’s largest metroplex. They wanted Jan and me to see and hear what they are doing and in return to share a bit about the San Francisco Bay Area interfaith culture. We spent most of one day with two dozen young adults and their mentors from around the region. We met and broke bread with leaders from the Interfaith Council and visited the sites of a variety of multi-religious educational ventures and service providers. The historic and ongoing Jewish-Christian engagement and cooperation, with Muslims as full participants these days, is impressive and fully glocal (global & local) in focus.

We spent most of the last day at the University of Toronto, a subway ride downtown. Modeled on Oxford and Cambridge, UT has numerous theological faculties and religious studies programs along with 30 chaplains (two for most traditions, including Pagan and Humanist, and including LGBT representation). On top of this is a new Multi-Religious Building where prayer and meditation goes on most hours of each day in a variety of traditions. Everyone’s invited to the free talk-about-any & everything-tea-and-muffins party each Wednesday, and you can attend assorted interfaith programs each week. The day before we visited, they hosted the Dalai Lama. Strong on hospitality. Altogether, very high on the Wow!-meter. It sounded and felt like the 21st century happening in beautiful new ways.

At the end of the day, even those most involved in Toronto’s interfaith culture can’t keep up with all the multi-faith bubblings in their midst. Feels just like the Bay Area. That equivalency suggests the power and goodness of the multifaith relationships growing spontaneously, willy-nilly across North America. We may not know it, given the thousands of miles that separate these two remarkable global communities; but Greater Toronto and the Bay Area, each with about 5 million souls from all over the globe, share a new kind of interfaith culture, a vital source of hope and satisfaction for the glocal religious community-at-large in coming years.

We have all sorts of things to learn on both sides of a Bay Area-Toronto interfaith relationship. One thing, though, is absolutely identical in our communities -- the best part of the work is the relationships which develop. The people we met in a week came from every tradition imaginable -- gracious, friendly, wise, engaged individuals happy to interact as soon as you meet. They were just like the people here at the Presidio Chapel in San Francisco and the thousands who are involved in interfaith relationships around our beautiful Bay. Getting to know one another is not only the work at hand, but the reward. Makes for a joyful journey and a joyful homecoming.

XII. A Global Trustee Footnote with Anne Roth

The View from Here
Except for the green wall in front of me, you can’t see much from this desk - until you look closer. There’s a post-card up there about the Multifaith Calendar, there’s a copy of the Golden Rule poster, there’s a photo of Sandy and Rebecca and myself standing at the 10th Anniversary banner in Amman, Jordan last June, there’s a calendar for this fast-disappearing year from my friend at the Colorado Mediation Center, there’s a photo of Yolanda Trevino swearing me in as a Trustee (taken by Barb Hartford) and the certificate itself. There is a list from my studies of the Enneagram that I call "The whole Star of the evolved soul." It says: "Perfection without anger, Caring without neediness, Image without vanity, Creativity without darkness, Knowledge without superiority, Organizing without paranoia, Planning without escapism, Leadership without controlling, Peacebuilding without amnesia."

And there is a bumper sticker that says: "The future belongs to those who give the next generation reason for hope." It’s a quote from Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, a paleontologist and priest whose amazingly insightful work was silenced by the Holy Office of the church until after he died.

The other thing I can see from here is the whole world. My little computer in front of me makes it possible for me to be in touch with all of you. We zing e-mails back and forth from Ethiopia and Jerusalem, from Hebron on the West Bank and San Francisco on the other west bank. We share ideas from Seattle to Tennessee to New York. We introduce people to one another whose skills can enhance each other’s work. And we tweak documents and suggest plans as the work goes forward.

What else I can see is the phenomenal progress that the team has made within URI North America over the past couple of years. If you’ve ever watched Ty Pennington on "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition", you’ll recognize the pattern. It takes a while to get the plans out, the plumbing connected, the foundations laid. When the walls start to go up, the speed increases until it feels like a blur. With the foundations in place, our walls are going up fast: new embers on the Leadership Council, new ideas for fund raising, new plans for 2011, new plans for the website, and a process that is falling into place so that people can find clear pathways to offer their ideas, their hopes, and their input.

Part of that new process will be getting the members of the Leadership Council and the members of the Cooperation Circles into direct contact. We need to know who we’re serving, and we need to know how best to serve you. We want your input, your ideas, your needs. And as we move forward, we need to know what direction you want this fast-growing region to go. Our Affiliates are lining up and joining us as well, and they have gifts to share and ideas to bring to us. For me, the most exciting part is seeing it coming together and seeing what our CCs and Affiliates are doing to make this world a better place.

Peace to you and yours, Anne

XIII. Indigenous Wisdom Ceremony: Carry Souls to Higher Ground -- photos and reporting by Rebecca Tobias, URI in North America Global Trustee - complete report

Beginning at sunset on the evening of August 21st, and culminating under the pale light of a waxing moon, members of the Southern California interfaith community joined together taking part in an outdoor Mayan Sacred Circle Fire Ceremony lead by Indigenous Spiritual
Guide and Elder Tata Apolinario Chile Pixtún who had come from Guatemala to share his time honored vision and wisdom with us. Global Council Chair, Yoland Trevino accompanied him throughout the spiritual journey which was expressed in the ancient language of 'prayermakers' of Mesoamerica. The evening's ritual was held in honor of Mother Earth, and to celebrate our reverence for the bounty that earth provides, circle members brought personal offerings of incense, fruit, food, and flowers to leave in the sacred circle as we each reflected deeply upon our place in the cosmos.

The evening's garden setting in the foothills of Seirra Madre lent a contemplative splendor to the ceremony as we shared our hearts in word, music, dance, and song. As the sun went down and the air cooled, candles and talismans of the Earth were carefully set in their place as we prepared to give thanks and grateful blessing for She who sustains us body and soul.

Completing the event was a feast under the stars.

Check out the homepage of our regional website at www.uri.org/na for op-ed pieces that are put out occasionally. Consider them nutritional supplements and food for thought. Responses welcome!

See you next month.

Sandy Westin, Regional Coordinator
Roger Eaton, Communications Coordinator
The Communications Committee of the North American Leadership Council