Meet Your 2011 Leadership Council

L-R: John Denker, Ardey Turner, Anne Roth, Adelia Sandoval, Kali Mallik, Margie Coles, Michael Pappas, Roger Eaton, Sandy Westin, Rebecca Tobias.
Not in photo: Sande Hart, Katie Ward.

Every Cooperation Circle in North America now has an assigned liaison on the Leadership Council to provide a conduit for two-way communications between our local and regional URI organizations. Do you know which of these lovely people is your liaison? Ask the person who serves as your CC’s Primary Contact, or check with Sandy.

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Program Planning

Most organizations kick off the New Year with a planning session. Read about some URI tools that might be of help in having that planning go smoothly. "Throw it against the wall and see what sticks," is one description of the brainstorming process. At its best, that co-creative process can look pretty messy at the beginning, but out of it can come some tremendous ideas and planning. We have three tools ready for you to use to help stir that creative process if you like.

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I. A New North American Website for 2011

Up to 2008, our region's website was minimal at best. Since then it’s grown like Topsy as we've added more news and features every month. It was time to bring the site both a fresh look and make it much more useful. It can still be found at www.URI.org/na, but it's definitely a whole new website. We hope you find the results as exciting as we do. Just some of the new features:

- **Resources** - Find (and post) books, videos, websites and other goodies recommended by your peers to support the work we all do.
- **Peacebuilders' Blog** - send postings to Roger Eaton, our Communications Coordinator, to have them posted.
- **Galleries** - Both videos and photos of our CCs' and region's activities have a place to live now.
- **URI Gift Shop** - In the Resources tab you'll find this source of URI-branded items you can use, gift, or even use as your own fundraiser. New items will be added every quarter.
- **Interfaith Calendar** - Who's doing what, and where and when. Our North American events scheduler.
- **About...** - The Who's Who and What's What of URI in North America including an interactive map with the locations of all our region’s CCs.

II. Our Theme for 2011

What might "Tending the Human Garden" mean in your community and for your CC? A garden needs seeds planted, fertilizer, prayers for rain, (plus some occasional weeding). A garden is elegant in its strength borne of diversity. Having a region-wide theme such as this is intended to stimulate ideas from each CC on what that phrase might mean to them in their local community. Individual members of all our CCs and Affiliates are also encouraged to let their voices be heard. Let us know your thoughts, on what programs your CC chooses to develop around this theme. Together we'll grow our garden!

III. Program Planning - World Interfaith Harmony Week

King Abdullah of Jordan has succeeded in persuading the U.N. to dedicate the first week in February towards fostering interfaith harmony. The URI global office offers a "URI Tool Card" to help CCs in planning events and programs for the new **World Interfaith Harmony Week**. The Tool Card is full of good ideas, some taking little preparation. Go for it!
IV. Program Planning - URI Bioregional Gatherings in 2011 - Attend one near you or better yet, host one!

This year our region hopes to see CC and other interfaith leaders come together in at least two "Bioregional Gatherings" (BRG) for purposes of mutual networking and empowerment. Each BRG is designed to bring people together from a distance of no more than 100 miles, more or less, so the time and expense involved in long distance traveling is not such a barrier to participation as they can be for region-wide meetings. This year we'd especially like to see one happen on the Pacific Coast and one in the Southeast, such as in Florida, to make these events accessible to both coasts.

Last year we had one official BRG held in Southern California the end of August which proved to be incredibly successful. While that event included a guest speaker, music, addresses by all present organizations and other exciting elements, there is no one "right way" to put on a BRG. The BRG held in Charlotte, NC, for the International Day of Peace in late September included a guest speaker and reception with display tables of many different faith and cultural traditions of the area, complete with ethnic foods for refreshments.

Can you imagine your CC putting on a Bioregional Gathering for your part of North America? Perhaps you could partner with other CCs or interfaith organizations in your area to do it. If some funding could make that possible, the region might be able to help with that. Those who host BRGs find they yield a variety of benefits in the process:

- You get to know and work with other CCs and interfaith organizations in the area and build relationships that can continue on into future projects together.
- Organizations that were not previously aware of URI may become interested in joining your CC, forming a new CC, or establishing an Affiliate relationship with URI in North America -- all possibilities that can strengthen interfaith work in our communities and our region.
- Members of your own CC can become more inspired by experiencing the broader picture of interfaith peacemaking through producing a BRG.

What's the downside? Ummmm. Can't think of one offhand. If you'd like to explore the possibility of hosting a Bioregional Gathering in 2011 or even in 2012, contact our Regional Coordinator to see how easy and fun it might be. Watch for news of BRGs coming up across North America on our website and in these monthly bulletins.

Approximate Bioregional Definitions.

V. Program Planning - Moozlum

An important new movie starring Danny Glover is about to come out - one you may want to see with your CC friends and family. Check out the trailer...

VI. Regional Coordinator Sandy Westin on the Road

Regional Coordinator Sandy Westin Schedules a Busy Week in the Bay Area January 15-22.

Saturday, Jan. 15 - Meet with the Womens Interfaith Circle of Service CC in Pleasanton, CA

Monday, Jan. 17 - Participate in the Martin Luther King Day parade and events with the Interfaith Center at the Presidio CC.

Wednesday, Jan. 19 - Work with URI global staff, regional leaders and Muslim and academic scholars to develop ideas for a region-wide response to Islamophobia.
Thursday, Jan. 20 - Meet with Cooperation Circle and other Bay Area interfaith leaders at a reception hosted by the Interfaith Center at the Presidio CC.

Saturday, Jan. 22 - Give presentation on URI at the Annual Community of Faith Breakfast in San Leandro.

Watch our website for reports of Sandy's travels.

VII. Money Matters

Matching Donations: What a concept! Not one, but two donations of $250 came to the region when an individual's gift was matched by her employer. As an official 501(c)3 organization, contributions to the region both bless the giver and make it possible for URI in North America to grow services that strengthen our CCs and Affiliates. Such gifts make many ripples!

VIII. URI Gift Cards

As a mutual fundraising tool, you can't beat the win-win of buying URI branded gift cards. They are not only a beautiful way to share the peace-building message of URI with your friends, but can easily be used in raising funds for your local CC. See the new URI in North America online Gift Shop.

IX. Los Angeles - Unity-and-Diversity World Council

Peace Sunday 2011 is coming up Sunday, January 30. from 2-6 pm at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Santa Monica. Many thanks to the efforts of Leland Stewart and the Unity-and-Diversity World Council, a Cooperation Circle of URI in North America, in producing this fine event. URI in NA will have a display table there, as will several local area CCs. Stop by! See the UDC Peace Sunday web page for more details.

X. Sarasota - Center for Religious Tolerance

Dr. Deri Joy Ronis is leading the Center for Religious Tolerance CC bringing a group of high school students together for a study circle. We are recruiting two students of each faith - Muslim, Judaism, and Catholicism - with hopefully one of each gender attending. We will keep you posted on the details as we get closer to implementing this project. A report on another project at Sarasota High School can be found at www.c-r-t.org.

XI. San Francisco - The San Francisco Peninsula CC

The San Francisco Peninsula CC has established a list of Foundational Principles which might be useful to others.

Our San Francisco Peninsula URI Circle of Cooperation meets under two following guiding principles. The first is the Foundational Purpose of URI, and the second is made up of the six Foundational Rules of our Circle. Every member of our circle is committed to abiding by these two sets of guiding principles. Any visitors are expected to abide by the same principles while participating in our activities.

URI Purpose

The purpose of the United Religions Initiative is to promote enduring, daily, interfaith cooperation, to end religiously motivated violence and to create cultures of peace, justice and healing for the Earth and all living beings.

Foundational Rules of the URI San Francisco Peninsula Circle of Cooperation

1. Recognizing that the essence of each of us is Love, we agree to honor and respect one another, and that each of us and our belief systems are of equal value.
2. We are here together to learn about different belief systems, not to give advice or change anyone's
beliefs or behavior.
3. We agree to listen with an open heart, to give mutual support, and to practice nonjudgmental listening and sharing.
4. We agree that we have a common goal of inner peace, and that it is from this place of peace that we come together to find the best answers for the work we are carrying out.
5. We are willing to risk exposing our feelings openly and honestly while always respecting others in order to create a space where clear communication is supported and mutual understanding can be experienced.
6. We agree to keep confidential information within our group, but feel free to share our good news with the world.

**XII. Salt Lake City - Utah URI CC**

[Engineers Without Borders](http://www.engineerswithoutborders.org) and [Interethnic Health Alliance](http://www.ieha.org) this summer took this brick making machine to Uganda. We United Religions Initiative members have been helping to support this effort. - Marsha Pilgeram, [Utah URI CC](http://www.utahuri.org)

![the brick making machine and how it makes a difference](https://via.placeholder.com/150)

**XIII. Orange County - S.A.R.A.H. CC**

The [SARAH CC](http://www.sarahcc.org) has put out an inspiring video of the work it accomplished in 2010. [See it here...](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=your_video_id)

**XIV. Laguna Beach, CA - R Star Ministries**

[R Star Ministries](http://www.rstarministries.org) has joined URI as our newest Affiliate of the North American region. Rosalind Russell heads up this ambitious organization which raises funds to purchase pairs of goats which provide impoverished women in Nepal with a source of food and income for their families.

**XV. Toronto - Scarboro Missions**

[Scarboro Missions](http://www.scarboromissions.com) has put together a very useful list of Principles and Guidelines for use in interfaith dialogue.

"Etiquette is part of many disciplines, including interfaith dialogue. In this new article on our website, Canadian multifaith educator J.W. Windland argues that a sensitive use of interfaith language expresses our common humanity, builds relationships of respect and trust, and pursues peace.

"Visit [The Principles and Guidelines for Interfaith Dialogue](http://www.scarboromissions.com/principles-guidelines) section of our site. Once there, click entry #12 which is [The Language of Interfaith Conversation.](http://www.scarboromissions.com/principles-guidelines/language)"  - Paul McKenna, Scarboro Missions

**XVI. URI's Environmental Satellite offers encouraging quotes and an inspiring video**

The URI Environmental Satellite assembled the following inspirational quotes to lift up a moral voice in addressing the ecological challenges facing humanity today, including curbing climate change. They
present ways of understanding nature and humanity's place in creation from major religious, spiritual, indigenous, and ethical traditions. These were originally prepared for the climate negotiations that have just concluded in Cancun, Mexico. We invite Cooperation Circles (and Affiliates) to use these in any way they deem appropriate. And of course, feel free to add to this list!

Baha'i: Know thou that every created thing is a sign of the revelation of God. ~ Bahá'u'lláh

Buddhism: Even as a mother protects with her life her only child, so with a boundless heart should one cherish all living beings, radiating kindness over the entire world, spreading upwards to the skies, and downwards to the depths, outwards and unbounded. ~ Buddha

Christianity: The kingdom of God is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in the garden; it grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air made nests in its branches. ~ Jesus

Confucianism: Does Heaven say anything? The four seasons pursue their courses, and all things are continually being produced. Does Heaven say anything? ~ Confucius

We are indebted to GreenFaith Australia, the Green Rule Study Guide of Faith and the Common Good, and Religions for Peace for compilations of quotes from which these have been drawn. Their original sources, however, are prophetic voices and scriptural texts from across the ages and around the world. - Cynthia Sampson

URI Environmental Satellite presents a video from Interfaith Power and Light. This message draws a compelling link between our faith and our concern for the environment.

XVII. Following a Star by Anne Roth

The "twelfth day of Christmas" in the Christian tradition is really a feast called Epiphany, which is symbolized by the story of the three wise men coming to find the baby Jesus. Tradition says they found the location by following a star. One idea of what that "star" might have been is that there was an astronomical nova at that time, the very bright explosion or implosion of an existing star. Another is that it was the bright astrological conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn in Pisces -- which would have made perfect sense to the Magi themselves.

We all look for "stars" to follow, hoping they will show us the way, show us our path, shed light on the mystery of our reason for being on this earth. There’s a reason the movie industry calls their celebrities "stars", and that people try to copy them or follow their stories. Maybe, we hope, they will give a clue to "Self" as to how we’re supposed to look or be. Maybe their success will rub off.

It is a curious phenomenon that in 1996 when the first 60 people met to decide if there should be an organization called a United Religions Initiative that a 10-year-old boy, whose mother was involved, sat with his origami paper and created a star. Young Walter Gray was invited to share his project with the group, and his star -- which can be opened into a circle -- became the original logo for URI. We still use the multicolored origami star as our logo. Even a professional "branding" company could not improve on it.

So if you know someone who is seeking a Star to follow, a way to find themselves, a path to a better world, we have one to offer. His star will lead you to new friends, to new ideas, to a greater compassion, a deeper understanding of the world. This star will shine on the needs of the world, the people in trouble, the ones who are doing wonderful things to help. This star will show you a global community working together in every corner of the world made up of more than 500 circles of friends in 78 countries. And hopefully, as more and more people follow this star, there will be more and more Light to shed in this world.

In North America, there is now a way to recognize the interfaith "stars" in our communities and Cooperation Circles -- those who by their leadership and example are providing shining paths for all of us to follow in discovering who we are and what we have to offer towards building a more peace-filled world. Under the "Resources" tab of our brand-new website at www.URI.org/na you’ll find a page titled "CC.
Tools" which contains a pair of downloadable PDF files (one for the front and another for the back) which can be used to create "URI Star" certificates. What better way to start our new year than by using this elegant means of expressing gratitude and appreciation for our many "stars" of URI and the larger world of interfaith peacebuilding. - Anne Roth

XVIII. Join in the fun! URI's regional development committees have openings.

Many hands make a job easier, we know, but they also make it a lot more fun! As Sande Hart of SARAH CC in Orange County said of her participation at the regional level of URI, "Someone from every CC should be on this Leadership Council (or one of its work teams) for at least a short time if only to see what energy goes into it!"

At the beginning of each year, the Leadership Council is establishing a convention of defining what committees it will have in place for the year, what their scope of work will be, and who will be serving on each one. Every Leadership Council member serves on at least one Committee and serves to report on its work back to the LC, but membership on the committees themselves and their specific-task work teams is open to anyone in our North American URI community -- CC members and Affiliates alike.

Each committee members is asked to serve for a calendar year. (This is a renewable commitment, of course, but more is not expected.) Work team members typically serve until their task has been accomplished or until other priorities pull them away, whichever comes first. This chart describes the nature and purpose of each committee, the work teams currently and Anchor Person (read: Chair) associated with each. The work of each committee is typically done via email and an occasional conference call, so there’s not a lot of travel or other demands involved. Here’s the sign-up form if you’re ready to get started today. If you’d like to just explore the possibility of playing on a regional team, please send a note to that Anchor Person. As Sande Hart discovered, we’re a hard-working group, but we sure have fun, too.

Volunteer Registration Form -- List of Committees and Work Teams

Notes from the Editor:

1. Have videos, photos or reports about your CC or Affiliate's events and programs to share? Send them in! The deadline for submissions for each bulletin is the 5th of the month. Material for our website is accepted at any time.

2. Please forward this Bulletin to others in your organization so they can be aware of what’s happening in URI beyond your community. This will also allow them to manage their own subscription to these bulletins if they wish. Subscribe here.

Check out the homepage of our new regional website at www.uri.org/na!

See you next month.

Sandy Westin, Regional Coordinator
Roger Eaton, Communications Coordinator

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