As Charles Gibbs announced to everyone through the URI-Contacts listserve on June 19, it was with a mixture of sadness and profound gratitude that my resignation was tendered to URI effective June 30. Working for United Religions Initiative as the North America Regional Coordinator for the past 2 ½ years has been an incredible gift.

Back in 2004 I was looking for an organization to work for that was committed to fostering peace and justice, especially as they relate to religiously motivated violence. I asked my friend Gurudev Khalsa for recommendations. He named a few organizations, but said one stood out because of the integrity of its leaders: URI. A decade ago, Gurudev had facilitated meetings that led to the formation of URI’s Purpose, Preamble, and Principles, and he remains a friend of URI today. Through a series of serendipitous events, about 1 ½ years later I was hired as the URI North America Coordinator.

Today, I must say that I couldn’t agree more with Gurudev’s assessment of this organization. The integrity demonstrated by URI’s Global Trustees, Global Staff, and Cooperation Circles is unparalleled. I am honored to have worked with each of you in North America, as well as with URI friends and colleagues around the world. Your work is impressive and has a real impact on world peace locally, regionally and worldwide.

In North America, our work during the past two years has set the stage for momentous growth. The Interim Leadership Council is currently addressing the many difficult tasks with which they were charged at the Regional Assembly last May. The issues are not easy, but the wisdom of the Council is broad and conviction to their shared purpose deep. I leave secure in knowing that the Region will advance in meaningful ways, and grateful to have played a small role in making this possible.

I wish North America and all of URI every blessing as you move forward.

Editor’s note: A search for the North America regional coordinator position begins in July 2009. A job description will be sent to the North America regional list serve. (northamerica-air @uriglobal.org) Candidates are asked to apply by sending a letter of intent and a resume to Sally Mahe at the San Francisco global support office (sally@uri.org). A global support and regional team will review the applications. The new Coordinator is expected to be announced by Oct. 1, 2009. *
Transformation in Our Seattle CC
by Margie Coles

On June 14, 2009, the Interfaith Council of Washington formally changed its name to The Interfaith Network of Washington (INW). The Leadership Team made this decision to more accurately express its shifting emphasis towards networking as the vehicle to support its vision and mission statements. The new Web site URL is www.theinterfaithnetwork.org.
The Interfaith Network was founded in 1986 to promote better understanding between faith leaders of diverse traditions, and soon thereafter became a 501(c) 3 non-profit organization. Today, after 23 years, INW remains an all-volunteer organization, an organization that is pleased to provide indirect support for the interfaith connections, programs, and events that continue to spontaneously “bubble up” throughout our Northwest region.

The Interfaith Network of Washington is also a member of NAIN, the North American Interfaith Network (www.nain.org). *

“Can We Talk?”
It’s New, It’s Free, and It’s Interactive!

Thanks to the power of Google Groups, CCs can now share ideas, resources, and needs with one another and with members of the Interim Leadership Council in our very own online workspace at http://groups.google.com/group/na-ccs-connect

For a quick and painless introduction to Google Groups, point your computer’s Internet browser to Google.com, click on the More link at the top of the screen, and select Groups. There you'll find a section of the page that asks “What can you do with groups?” and a link called “Take the tour.” There are three major sections to Google Groups:

1. **Discussions** – A discussion “thread” can be started by any member on any specific topic. Comments and responses go out to all members of the Group (unless you specify otherwise in your account). You can also view the complete history of any discussion topic by logging onto our Google Group and opening that Discussion. Implied agreement: If you want to say something on a topic other than the subject of a specific thread, please go to that topic's thread or start new one.

2. **Pages** – These are interactive “virtual whiteboards” that can be created or changed by anyone in the Group. This is a great area for developing ideas together. A Page can include graphics, photos, and text – like a co-created web page – but requires little technical “knowhow.”

3. **Files** – These are files that have been created offline and then uploaded to be shared with everyone else. Files can be in PDF format (to be sure they can be opened by everyone), or a spreadsheet, word document, etc.

Invitations will be going out to all primary and secondary contacts of our region’s CCs by July 17. If you don’t receive one and would like to be part of this “groupware,” just drop Sandy a line and she’ll be glad to send you a personal invitation. It’s free, and fun! *

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**Interim Leadership Council (ILC) Gets Underway, Considering Adopting Decision Guidelines From Baha’I Faith**
By Sandy Westin

The Interim Leadership Council commissioned at the conclusion of the 2009 Regional Assembly has so far shared three conference calls. It has established a system of rotating leadership in the form of a Facilitator (currently Ardey Turner), and is developing a workplan to outline what it intends to accomplish by May 2010 the completion of its one year term. A complete report on the proceedings of the ILC, including notes of all conference calls, is available on our website at www.uri.org/na.

As one of its first developmental steps, the Council is moving towards agreement to adopt the Baha’i Consultative Model as the principal guideline to be applied in its decision-making process. "Consultation" is considered the bedrock or foundation of all dialogue, discourse, planning, and problem solving in the Baha’i faith. This remarkable model has evolved over a hundred years. The administrative order of the Baha’is provides for a decentralized system at the local, national, and international levels. The following description of the Consultation Process is provided by Kitty Herriott of the URI of Henderson County CC.
Since human evolution is now taking place primarily at a conscious intellectual and spiritual level, it is the intellectual and spiritual interchange between individuals through consultation that makes the social system function. Consultation is thus the mechanism through which we apply our values. In Baha’i consultation, the fullest possible expression of ideas is sought in an atmosphere of love and mutual respect in a search for truth that is more encompassing than any one particular viewpoint. Such a process ensures the application of spiritual values to all aspects of society. All decisions are made collectively after prayerful consultation and a free exchange of views that is motivated by the search for truth and the application of spiritual principles. There is no place in this system for individuals who seek power, rank, or authority. Authority lies with the institution, not with the individuals who comprise it. Elections in service to the community are based on principles of service and humility, requiring qualities that are not inherent in superiority or self-advancement.

Such a system is able to draw on the full diversity of talents within the community, from the grass roots to the highest levels of international organization. It balances global coordination with the greatest possible decentralization and local autonomy, allowing each component its own characteristics.

Here is a summary of the steps of Consultation:

1. **What are the facts** of what is about to be discussed? (These must be laid out for a full and frank discussion to ensue, knowing that the clash of differing opinions ignites the spark of truth.)

2. **What are the principles involved** in what we are trying to achieve?

3. **Dialogue follows**, where everyone is encouraged to offer his or her views. When a person offers individual thoughts and ideas, those become a gift received by the whole and no longer belong to the entity who offered them. In this way, without personal attachment to one’s own point of view, the **ultimate outcome and responsibility for a decision belong to everyone**. Time is always taken during discussions to look at principles involved, perhaps by reading those that are appropriate from our Writings. And time is given to reflect through quiet or prayer.

The **goal is for consensus, if possible**. If a vote needs to be taken because the group wants to proceed, the **minority immediately and radiantly acquiesces**, and the decision to move forward is embraced by everyone willingly and joyfully, knowing that love and unity in the path of service is our goal and ideal, rather than being “right.” The community can always revisit their decision if, in putting it into practice, better ways become evident. **No one person or group is ever held responsible for failure** because, whether by consensus or by vote, it was the unified institution that made the decision.

**Global Council and Staff Retreat Held June 4-11 in the Bay Area**

*Charles Gibbs, Executive Director of our global URI, provided a running eyewitness account when staff and Global Trustees from around the world gathered for a week of strategic planning and community building in early June through the URI-Contact list serve. Below are a few brief excerpts from those memos. They are re-posted on our NA website in their entirety so we can all share in this glimpse into the work of URI in the larger world beyond our communities and our region. From the Home page, click on the “URI Global” tab on the left edge of the page.*

“I see the coming decades as one in which we will focus much more on URI’s work in the world than on how URI works as an organization. … I believe we will see more and more examples of CCs whose work is so transformative and powerful on the local level that it comes to have a regional and even a global impact. It is the privilege and responsibility of this Global Council and staff to help lead this new phase of URI’s development. During two sessions of 30 minutes each, we held conversations using several questions:

1. Recollecting your own experiences, what events, stories and actions stand out as the best of URI?
2. Wanting URI to make good use of its accumulated knowledge, what kinds of know-how and in-depth experiences are important to pass on?
3. Wanting URI to touch others with its value and qualities, how have you witnessed yourself or others change and grow from their heart in URI?
4. Honoring URI’s challenges, barriers, hurts and struggles, what have we learned?
5. To proclaim URI’s unique promise in the world, what would you say?

I invite all members of URI’s CC community to reflect on these questions and share their reflections.”

*This e-newsletter is released quarterly in January, April, July and October. Please direct any suggestions, article submissions, or requests for a printed copy to the editor, Sandy Westin (swestin@uri.org). Copyright United Religions Initiative 2009. All rights reserved.*