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A note from the Editor: Please forward the newsletter to friends and organizational email lists. If you received this newsletter as a forward, you can sign up to receive it directly on our home page.

Regional Updates

Who Are We? by Sandy Westin, URI North America Regional Coordinator

As we enter this next decade, I anticipate all major players in the interfaith movement will be increasingly challenged to address their own organizational identity. As futurist Barbara Marx Hubbard so aptly observed, it is in the nature of social evolution for a new idea to first experience a phase of “emergence”, followed by a secondary phase of multiplicity through “diversification”, then comes a phase of “convergence”. It might be said that URI was born on the ending cusp of a diversification phase in the growth of the interfaith movement with the signing of its Charter back in 2000, and that it is now beginning to experience nudges toward the convergence phase as a few major organizations become prominent and influential.
on the world stage. In our relationship with both NAIN and the PWR, as with others, we as URI must become increasingly clear about who we are - and are not - in relationship to and contrast with other interfaith organizations. Read the full article.

North America Recognizes its Ten-Year Pioneers

“How should our region celebrate the Tenth Anniversary of this incredible global organization?” When the Interim Leadership Council first grappled with that question earlier this year, someone said, "We've had so many outstanding pioneers lead the way and bring us to where we are today." That seed of an idea grew into the "URI Pioneers" program, culminating in June with the distribution of a certificate of recognition and letter of appreciation to each of 70 individuals in North America who were instrumental in establishing URI over the past decade. No doubt there are many, many more who could be recognized. These 70 were each affirmed by at least three URI leaders, and are on record as having played an active part in the establishment of URI from the very beginning, and remaining active for many, if not all, of the years since its inception. You can view the list of our Pioneers and the certificate that was sent to them.

Nominations OPEN for North America Leadership Council 2011

Nominations for six At-Large positions on the North America region’s Leadership Council (LC) will be open from July 1 through August 31st. All Primary Contacts for our region’s CC’s and Affiliates were mailed a packet of information about the nomination process, including a nomination form. Each CC and Affiliate of URI in North America as well as multi-region CCs with North America members can nominate up to six candidates for these open positions. Two each of our new At-Large members will serve for 1 year, two will serve for 2 years, and the remaining two will serve for 3 years in order to establish a rotating schedule for election to the LC. More details on the web.

As of September 1, we will know whether or not a run-off election will be needed. If it is, the election will proceed from September 1 through October 15. If only six nominees come forward, they will be appointed by acclamation and no election will need to be held. If fewer than six nominees are put forward, the Interim Leadership Council is authorized to appoint volunteers willing to fill the remaining seats.

In addition to the six At-Large members, the LC includes our three Global Trustees and two part-time staff members. The LC serves as the Board of Directors for our non-profit corporation, URI in North America, Inc. Contact Sandy Westin if you have any questions about the nomination process at swestin@uri.org or 423.262.8099.

Laying the Foundation
by Anne Roth, URI North America Global Trustee

In just one year, beginning with the Regional Assembly in May through the Spring Leadership Retreat held in May 2010, the framework and gritty legal questions needed to define the
organization that is URI in North America have been put into place. And yet the back story of how we came to this year of productivity is as old as URI itself. Read the full article.

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**Affiliate Program Update**

As URI enters its second decade, we recognize that the Cooperation Circle model is not right for everyone. We are therefore expanding opportunities for forging relationships with individuals and organizations who join URI in being committed to peace building.

The Affiliate program is designed both for individuals and for existing, self-sufficient interfaith, faith, or peace building organizations who, while sharing common values and goals with URI, prefer an alternative way to connect with URI other than by forming or joining a Cooperation Circle.

The list of registered Affiliates stands at eight organizational and one individual as of July 15, and is growing rapidly.

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**Regional Assembly to Shift a Year**

After much dithering on where to hold our next Regional Assembly, a whole new element was introduced when our hub office recently announced that plans for the next Global Assembly, originally scheduled for 2012, were being postponed at least a year. Since we had established the timing of our next RA as 2011 to have it completed before the next GA, this announcement had immediate repercussions for our region.

At present, we are once again intending to hold the next RA in Vancouver, BC, but we can now change the date to May or June 2012. This change has been met with a great sigh of relief, as it frees up more time for us to do the major fundraising campaign we’ll need to underwrite the event. It also gives us another much-needed year to plan even more thoroughly for its success.

Also as a result of this change, in 2011 we may be able to hold several bioregional gatherings of CCs in clustered areas around the country. Holding such localized gatherings would make it possible for most of our region’s CCs to meet with our Global Trustees, Regional Coordinator, and other members of the Leadership Council while only traveling a distance of perhaps 100 miles from home. Let us know if you like the idea of holding bioregional gatherings, and if your CC would like to host one in your area. swestin@uri.org

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**Middle East**

**Two Weeks in the Holy Land**

The last two weeks of June found our region’s Global Trustees (Adelia Sandoval, Anne Roth and Rebecca Gonzales-Tobias) and Regional Coordinator (Sandy Westin) in Amman, Jordan to join with their counterparts from around the world for the annual meetings of the Global Staff and Global Council. Our Executive Director, Charles Gibbs, posted daily reports of those gatherings on the URI Contacts listserve while they were happening.
In the first three days, Sandy worked with key staff members from the San Francisco office, plus Regional Coordinators from Africa, the Middle East, Asia, Southeast Asia and the Pacific, Europe and Latin America on such topics as regional fundraising, the approval process for new CCs, and finding ways to provide meaningful support to established CCs. Sandy gave a 20 minute presentation on the life stages of CCs, and another on the achievements of our region’s development over the past year. Both reports were very well received.

On the weekend of June 19-20, the Global Council arrived, joining with the staff for 6 days of meetings. Sometimes, with everyone present in the same circle, the total count was 43 people – the same as the number of CC’s we have in our entire region! One of the most important outcomes of that week together was establishing agreement that URI wishes to have a “voice” – a means of stepping onto the world stage to state our views on events of the day that directly involve religiously motivated violence, or that are blatantly in moral violation of our PPP’s. As you can imagine, the discussions on this topic were anything but boring! In the end, it was agreed that a new committee of the Global Council would be formed to examine such issues and propose statements for release to the media and the world. This may sound like a small, even bureaucratic step, but actually in the 10 years of this organization’s development, it was a tremendous leap forward. Now we have the means in place to carefully and consciously craft what we want to say to the world, and no longer remain silenced on the sidelines, unable to share our values with others in the public arena.

On our last day together, Saturday, the 26th, we were privileged to meet with the members of the Middle-East and North Africa (MENA) Region of URI – an incredible gathering which represented 28 nations and perhaps a dozen different faith traditions. What an experience of oneness when we all stood in one circle!

On Wednesday of that week we were able to take time to see some of the sights of Amman. As we stood together on the floor of a 2000 year old Roman amphitheatre and raised our hands in celebration of our accomplishments to date, this 6,000 year old city, filled with so many people of every imaginable walk of life from camels to satellite dishes, humbled our celebration of our meager “10th Anniversary”. And yet it represents a landmark we have achieved – and a beginning of a new decade. What will we achieve in realizing and sharing the potential embodied in our Preamble, Purpose and Principles over the next ten years? Time will tell. You were there with us in that circle, celebrating and affirming our shared commitment to building something the world has never seen before – a world of consciously created peace among the faiths and religions we represent.

URI’s Tenth Anniversary in Amman, Jordan: Deepening Relationships, Values and Purpose

As the Muslim call to prayer filled the air, we knew we were in a different world. A world of color and contrast, sights and sounds which delighted us, touching us with light and hope. The language of peace is spoken here--and every conversation opens with, ‘welcome, welcome....’

URI Global Council members and staff met in Amman, Jordan June 16th-26th, and from the moment we entered the Rosary Sisters Convent on
the outskirts of the city we were inspired to bring our best ideas forward in effort to broaden our local and global impact. So after a good night’s rest and a breakfast of warm bread, laban (a local home-made farmer cheese), cucumbers, tomatoes and Arabic coffee we became reacquainted with one another as we set about laying the groundwork for our second decade. Read more – get the details and see the list of proposed interfaith projects.

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**Budrus, a new film from URI-NA CC Just Vision**

**The good news:** Wednesday night was one of the most exhilarating moments in Just Vision's history. Budrus premiered at the Ramallah Cultural Palace before 800 people, including Palestinian officials and community leaders from every political faction, Israeli activists, internationals, local villagers as well as Her Majesty Queen Noor of Jordan -- who helicoptered in on her first trip to the West Bank solely to support the film and its message. Iltezam brought down the house with her celebration of the power of women in nonviolent struggle. Her dad, Ayed, received a five-minute standing ovation. Al Quds featured the event on its front page, as did Ma'an News. You can read a moving testimony from a Jewish blogger/activist in attendance here. More about Budrus. More about Just Vision. And this just in, July 11, NY Times op-ed columnist Kristoff bills Budrus as "this year's must see documentary".

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**With Earth and Each Other: A Virtual Rally for a Better Middle East** Sunday, November 14

Presented by [Friends of the Arava Institute](#), a URI-NA Affiliate, in partnership with Atlanta Interfaith Broadcasters and broadcast on the livestream internet platform in partnership with beNOW.tv This special hour-long non-political program focusing on cooperation in the Middle East will feature performances by the [legendary Pete Seeger](#), Emmy and Tony Award Winner [Mandy Patinkin](#), renowned Israeli songwriter [Mosh Ben-Ari](#), Muslim hip-hop group [Native Deen](#), and more. [Event website](#).

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**Features**

**Aug 29, SoCal Bioregional Gathering**

Colleagues and friends, you are invited to join United Religions Initiative Executive Director Rev. Charles Gibbs and fellow URI Global Trustees and CC members as we share best practices and hear about current peacebuilding projects in and around our Southern California community.

**Save the date:** Sunday August 29th, 4pm-6pm at the Malibu home of Shepha Vainstein of Salaam Shalom Educational Foundation CC. Join the conversation--add your
We would like to extend a special invitation to members of like-minded interfaith and intercultural organizations focused on actively improving the lives of others to join us August 29th. Learn more about URI and our Affiliate programs.

RSVP Rebecca Tobias rtobias@uri.org 310.916.8888

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.

Mt Kilimanjaro Reforestation Project

Halfway across the world, in a region that’s known just as much for its natural beauty as it is the heartbreaking challenges faced by many of its people and families, a bold group of people decided that not acting in the face of overwhelming odds simply wasn’t an option. The congregants of the Northern Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania are doing their part to fight deforestation by planting 3 million trees in 3 years on Mt. Kilimanjaro. Read more about it here. -- Message from The Rev. Canon Sally G. Bingham of Interfaith Power and Light, a URI Cooperation Circle and URI Partner

Preparing for International Day of Peace (IDP) - September 21

Not everyone is aware that URI has an active presence in the United Nations thanks to the work of Monica Willard and Deborah Moldow, our officially designated representatives on several commissions and committees of the UN. The URI is a UN NGO affiliated with ECOSOC and DPI. As an NGO, we participate in many things, including the International Day of Peace. We also have a URI UN CC with membership and a council composed of other NGO representatives interested in our PPPs. Our activities are designed to complement the UN agenda.

Monica is very interested in finding out what plans our CCs have for celebrating the International Day of Peace this year. The theme this year is “Youth, Peace and Development.” She will be reporting on URI’s participation in the IDP to several UN committees in which she participates. This is your chance to raise your hand and be counted among those actively working for peace! Please let Monica know of any programs or events your CC is planning to celebrate or recognize the IDP this year. If you don’t have any plans in place yet, it’s not too late to get started. Check out what other CCs have done in years past._
New Resources

Introduction to URI in North America Power Point™ Now Available

Thanks to the hard work of Affiliate Margie Coles and the Outreach Committee of the Interim Leadership Council, a Power Point program is now ready for use by any CC wishing to view and/or use it in their meetings and programs. The file is also available as a two-fold brochure in PDF format, downloadable here and from the Resources page. Many CCs will find it helpful to review this program with their members to refresh awareness of just what URI is all about, and to get ideas for coming programs and events. Great job, Margie! Download 17MB Intro to URI-NA PowerPoint.

CC & Bioregional Campfires

Three new types of Campfire Calls are about to begin, and the previous monthly scheduled calls are ending. See how you can convene a Campfire Call to address your own group’s needs. Sandy Westin, URI-NA Coordinator will help. Read more about it here.

Appreciative Inquiry

URI’s mentor and friend, Diana Whitney, has written a new book on the appreciative methodology that is one of the founding building blocks of URI. Diana has been a generous consultant to URI since 1997, guiding many of our global, regional and Trustee meetings over the years. The book is: Appreciative Inquiry: Focus on What Works to Drive Winning Performance and Build a Thriving Organization.

“The practice of leadership is on the brink of a paradigm shift. It is moving from authoritarian to collaborative practices, from fear- based to strengths- based relationships, and from talking at people to dialoguing with them. A transformation is taking place in the field of organizational management and Appreciative Leadership is the vanguard book, providing clear concepts and practical tools.”

More New Resources

The URI North America Resources Page has annotated links to quite a lot of material. New resources will also be reported in our quarterly Newsletter. Here is the rest of the first installment.

The Moral Imagination: the Art and Soul of Building Peace by John Paul Lederach. “One of the principles of this group that has endured for over two decades is that "we will seek to understand those who do not understand us." On the basis of formulating and living such an idea, they have created a heretofore unimaginably peaceful space for their children and grandchildren." Quote taken from a page on the Art of Peace web site.

Friendship and Faith: The Wisdom of Women Creating Alliances for Peace: Thirty women from seven different faith groups -- Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Baha’i, Sikh, Buddhist and Hindu -- spent a year writing a book about how they crossed religious, cultural, and racial divides, willing to risk extending a hand in friendship to build meaningful connections.
World Scriptures vols I and II by Leland Stewart of the Unity-and-Diversity World Council CC. "Rev. Stewart has searched the writings of the holy books of the world to record in shortened form (using the original texts) the foundational principles and beliefs of the world's religions and spiritual movements. These books are ideal for personal study and meditation, as well as for use in classes which seek to build bridges between different faiths."

Bridging Cultural Gaps: Healing Racism through Violence Prevention Application of the Study Circle Model in Sarasota High School from the URI CC, Center for Religious Tolerance in Sarasota, Florida

20,000 Dialogues - email Daniel Tutt, Daniel@upf.tv, or call (202) 298-8088 - a URI-NA Affiliate, 20,000 Dialogues has provided us with copies of 5 videos for distribution:
...Talking Through Walls: "How the struggle to build a mosque united a community" (57 min)
...Allah Made Me Funny - The Movie: "Muslim comics; seriously funny." (82 min)
...Prince Among Slaves: "The amazing true story of Abdul Rahman Ibrahima Sori, an African prince enslaved in the American South." (60 min)
...Inside Islam: What a Billion Muslims Really Think (58 min)
...Cities of Light: The Rise and Fall of Islamic Spain, Dialogue Version.(47 min)

Fantastic University of California Television 10th Anniversary Religion retrospective a) Religion Today b) Understanding Religion c) Religion and Science d) Religion and Politics e) Religion and Conflict f) Buddhism g) Christianity h) Islam i) Judaism - also on youtube and mp3 audio is available as well.

The Web Guy's Corner

The URI-NA website now has a North American Interfaith Events Calendar and a News and Views page. Send your events, news and commentary to Roger Eaton. We are canvassing all CCs asking to be placed on your email list. We hope you'll say OK when we get to you so we can stay up to date with your programs and coming events.