Dear URI CC Members and Affiliates in North America,

The past six months have been incredibly challenging for everyone dedicated to peace, justice, and healing for the Earth and all living beings, and for the URI itself as we find and express our voice in the world, while listening and speaking with respect, both individually and collectively. Through all of this, the URI is thriving globally and in our region.

In North America, many CCs continue the tradition of a holding New Year's interfaith observance, which first began during the 72 Hours of Peace prior to the birth of URI. URI-NA CCs and affiliates offered and supported individual and collective actions for peace before, during, and after the Iraq war. CCs here and in other parts of the world are working in close partnership with the Parliament of the World's Religions in co-creating pre-Parliament events and retreats. And many CCs have created delightful offerings to celebrate the URI's third birthday during our 72 Hours of Gift Giving. These are but a few of the rich fruits in the cornucopia of good works of CCs and affiliates throughout our region and beyond.
And we're growing! Since the beginning of this year we have welcomed five new CCs and one new affiliate in North America, and numerous CCs are in the process of formation. On Thursday, June 19, our new NA regional support team met by conference call, and members of that team are introduced below. Each team member is assigned to assist in communications with and support for 10-15 North American CCs and multi-regional CCs based in North America.

This is the year for URI sub-regional gatherings, and I am pleased to report that thus far:

- The URI of the Carolinas and Tennessee got together in May, as reported in the most recent URI eUpdate.
- Barbara Trites is helping to plan a Pacific Northwest interfaith gathering including URI CCs on July 17 and a separate gathering for URI CCs the following day.
- Members of the Alliance for Spiritual Community and City of Angels URI-LA are participating in planning a Southern California Interfaith Retreat in August as a pre-Parliament event that will include the five CCs in that region in addition to dozens of other interfaith organizations.

Thank you for letting me be of service!

Peace Within and Without,
Steve Fitzgerald, Ph.D.
URI-NA Regional Support

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North American Region

URI-NA Regional Support Team

There's a new team on the URI-NA block! We are honored to continue and expand upon the good work of all of those who have been working to support URI-NA over many years now. We are really each a part of the URI-NA support team! In this latest development, Barbara Trites (Seattle), Eric Wenzel (New York), Susanna McIlwaine (Virginia), and Carolyn Knaus (Montana) have agreed to serve on a sub-regional support, telephone communications team. Each has agreed to be in touch with the coordinators for 10-15 CCs and multi-regional CCs based North America several times per year by telephone, on an invitational basis, to offer the gifts of listening, appreciation, information exchange, and support. Read on below for the barest of biographies on these folks whom you'll be invited to speak with in the next half of this year. You may notice a strong common—though coincidental—theme running through each...

Stephen Fitzgerald, Ph.D.: Raised Roman Catholic, a comparative religions course led Steve down other paths. After religiously practicing Transcendental Meditation for 10

...
years, he began to explore New Thought churches: Unity and Religious Science. He began studies to become a Religious Science prayer practitioner, but after 3 years felt compelled to switch his focus to graduate school. In 2003, Steve was awarded a Ph.D. in organizational psychology with a dissertation on the formation and development of a group of 8 URI cooperation circles on four continents. He currently lives in Los Angeles, CA.

Carolyn Knaus: Carolyn was raised "intensely Catholic" in New Orleans, LA, going to mass every day all through her youth. She then began visiting Protestant churches, reading Protestant theology, and eventually broadened her study to include Eastern practices including 3 years spent living in a Sikh Ashram. She now sees herself as a universal interfaith person. Living today in rural Montana, the URI has inspired her work in teaching organizational design, leadership development, and peer counseling.

Susanna McIlwaine: Growing up in a mixed Catholic/Hungarian-reformed household, by the age of 12 Susana had begun blending Eastern concepts with her own meditative Christian-spirituality. Soon after moving to Virginia 3 years ago she learned of the United Religions and soon, in her words, became completely entranced. Since that time she has gone from being involved with the local CC and doing strategic planning to CC building, outreach, and bringing people, including efforts to open up mainstream churches to the URI and creation of a new Northern Virginia CC of women dedicated to peaceful, quiet mutual learning and worship.

Barbara Trites: Barbara grew up attending services in a beautiful little Episcopal cathedral in central Nebraska. As a child she fell in love with sacred art (stained glass windows) and music (chant). In mid-life after raising a family she moved to Seattle where she began her indigenous shamanic journey through many different cultures including an in-depth study program with Incan healing medicine. Several years ago she began exploring the ancient wisdom of Sufism as a path to connecting mysticism from other faiths. She currently participates in a three year Leader program for Dances of Universal Peace. Recently retired as president of the Interfaith Council of WA, she is now giving her service to weaving faith communities with the different interfaith projects blossoming in the Seattle area. Her goal is to ultimately coordinate a regional interfaith gathering Spring, 2004.

Eric Wenzel: Born in Brooklyn, Eric's Lutheran upbringing gave way to his interest in Eastern religions in high school. He studied apocryphal Christian scripture, Islam, Buddhism and other eastern traditions before becoming a devotee of the Rev. Moon at 18 years old. In 1990 while studying for a Master of Divinity degree at Unification Theological Seminary he joined a summer interfaith volunteer project in Poland. That project was a turning point which led Eric to embrace universalism as a core part of his philosophy. After focusing time on his family and career during much of the 90's, Eric began doctoral studies in organizational development and became a founding member of the Association for Spirit at Work. Beyond his local community work, Eric is passionate about creating peace among religions. Currently, he is working to create a model of peace
among religions in Delhi, India through an interfaith humanitarian service project in December 2003.

Budget Overview

URI Principle 18 states: We maintain the highest standards of integrity and ethical conduct, prudent use of resources, and fair and accurate disclosure of information. To embody that principle, we'd like to share the following 2003 budget overview for the North American region, prepared by Steve Fitzgerald and approved by the URI-NA trustees to the global council and global hub office staff.

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URI-NA Global Council Conference Calls

Our North American regional representatives to the URI Global Council are Don Frew, Kay Lindahl, and Rev. Heng Sure. Each are members and/or coordinators of three or more CCs. The Global Council now has a variety of committees, and Don is on the Organization Development committee, Kay is on the CC Approval and Membership Support committees, and Heng Sure is co-chair of the Communications Committee.
We come together in a one hour teleconference each month, and you are welcome to join the call and listen in if you'd like to get the latest updates from the URI Global Council and Regional Support team.

Next call scheduled for: Tuesday, July 1, 5-6 pm PDT. Call in to: 978-431-1111, extension 797, and please let everyone know when you arrive on the call. Each participant pays their own normal long distance charges.

Open Conference Calls; Next Topic: Social Justice

Over the rest of this year we are continuing our series of conference calls on topics of interest to many URI members. You are invited to join any call that interests you, and any member of your CC or any affiliate is welcome to join us as well. The calls are designed to provide opportunities to share your experience, ideas, and questions with other affiliates and CC members on the topic of the call.

- We'll be using the free Easy Conference service (see resources section below for information on how you can also use this free service for your CC).
- Each participant will pay for his or her own long distance charges.
- Each call is scheduled for one hour, but the participants are free to extend the call if they wish.
- Each call can include up to 30 people. If you would like to be on the call, email the contact person for that call to let them know, then just follow the instructions below to dial into the call.
- You are free to join any call that you feel drawn to, even if only to listen.
- Each call is co-led by 2-4 people from different CCs, global council reps, and/or support staff who have personal experience and insight to share regarding the topic of the call.

Join us to share your insights, experience, ideas, hopes, questions, and success stories! Here is the schedule of our next conference calls (dialing instructions follow at the end):

Please Join Us For A Discussion on Religion and Human Rights!

Dominique de Menil expressed that, "[there are] universal truths recognized everywhere, though not always practiced. We all have a sense of justice, of decency. We all have an innate repulsion of hypocrisy, of dishonesty. But our affairs - always pressing - cloud our perception. We tend to forget the colossal injustice existing in certain sectors of the world, where people have no way of rising above intolerable poverty and where any attempt at a change means risking death."

The Rothko Chapel in Houston, Texas is a place of contemplation and action, keywords of the Chapel's life. As we contemplate the powerful reminders of fundamental values, it will propel us to action. The action has been focused on human rights. The Chapel is open to all, and each group follows and deepens its own tradition, while enriching and
being enriched by other traditions. But, the deeper lessons learned are that when we've come to a place of respect, we can work on solving the injustices of the world.

The discussion will focus on the lessons learned in The Rothko Chapel's 30-plus years as an interfaith organization, the people who have help us learn and the learning that still needs to happen. Executive Director Suna Umari and longtime URI supporter P.K. McCary (perri@rothkochapel.org) will share their insights and reflections and invite your own wisdom, learnings, ideas, and questions.

July 15th, 7:30 p.m. Central Standard Time

Contact: P.K. McCary, perri@rothkochapel.org

Instructions for Joining Any of the Above Conference Calls:

Dial: 1-413-461-0333, extension 802.

The first person to arrive and enter the three-digit code assigned will hear a prompt to "press one to create the conference room." All other conferees will simply enter the room. This is a very quiet bridge so please introduce yourself when you enter the room when there is a break in the conversation so that we know that you have joined the call.

Note: You can press 5 on your phone to "mute" your own phone (e.g. to screen out background noise) and "4" to unmute your phone.

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URI-NA: Whither Mexico? Include 35 Million Latinos in the U.S.!

Jonathan Rose, Coordinator of the Consejo Interreligioso de Mexico URI CC in Mexico City, responds to the questions of if, when, and how the Mexico City CC might like to affiliate with the North American region:

Our response was immediate and obvious: Mexico is part of Latin America, our natural Spanish speaking home, where we share a common history, religion and language with our neighbors to the south and in much of the Caribbean.

While URI-NA should be set up to eventually include Mexico, I advise that the first meetings be entirely in English with a heavily USA-oriented agenda. First, URI-NA has to bond, become a family and set basic priorities before it can invite its southern neighbor to the table to participate in whatever it is URI-NA decides to do. The "gringos" need to get their USA goals agreed upon.
When URI-NA includes the topic of Latinos in the USA (35 million plus at last count) and when URI-NA has Latino participants (noticeably absent, I believe) then the need for inclusion of Mexico and Mexican nationals will become obvious and occur naturally. When URI-NA discusses the Native American question, then the native peoples of Mexico will be a natural topic in that context and URI-NA will want its neighbor country to participate in future actions.

The URI-NA region should know from the outset that it is a region which includes 30,000,000 Canadians (50% Catholic) who speak mostly English but also French; 270,000,000 US Americans (22% Catholic) who speak mostly English but where 15% speak Spanish; and 100,000,000 Mexicans (85% Catholic) who speak Spanish. This means URI-NA is a region of 400,000,000 people of whom 40% are Catholic and over 30% speak Spanish. With that as background, URI-NA should make its plans, priorities and choices.

While URI-Latin America and the CIM welcome a wide variety of religious traditions, without the inclusion of Catholics we would be unrepresentative of the Latin American region. URI in North America also needs to address the matter of being representative of the North American region as a whole both ethnically and by religious tradition. If there is a lack of participation by Latinos and Catholics in URI-NA, it is an opportunity for growth and enrichment for us all.

I will continue to advise my URI friends in North America about Latino contacts I have there who should be interested in URI. For example two of the founders of the CIM, one a Presbyterian minister and the other an Episcopalian Bishop, now live in the US in Michigan and California, respectively, and would be natural contacts for URI with the Latino communities where they work.

I will attach a copy of the CIM brochure in Spanish to this letter, and repeat a suggestion I have made over the years to interfaith groups in the USA: take this brochure to a neighborhood church where you know the priest is a Latino, introduce yourself and ask if someone will translate the brochure into English for you. When you are participating in that learning experience, you are having an interfaith, inter-cultural dialogue and the Latino is being introduced to URI. The rest is up to you.

Shalom.
Jonathan Rose
Consejo Interreligioso de Mexico (CIM)
jonrosemx@yahoo.com.mx

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**Interfaith Walk for Peace**
**Washington, DC**
This is a collaborative project with current sponsorship by A Different Future (ADF), the United Religions Initiative (URI), and the U.S. Interreligious Committee for Peace in the Middle East (USICPME). Dates will be announced soon, with "launch activities" schedule for September and the full Walk for later in the fall.

**A Different Future** is an interfaith organization of scholars, religious leaders and communications experts whose purpose is to promote peace between Palestinians and Israelis by using the full range of communications methods to amplify the voices of Arabs and Israelis, and American Jews, Christians and Muslims, who are working together in mutual respect. The goal is to reclaim the public idea space from extremist elements that currently fill that space with images of hatred and violence that contribute to a sense of irreconcilable differences and hopelessness. In the words of the Palestinian-American poet Naomi Shihab Nye, "Moderate voices have to speak more loudly. We have to shout as moderates, even though it is not our style." ADF believes that the way moderates should shout is through a professionally developed communication plan that integrates voices of individual organizations into a powerful chorus. More on ADF is available at its website ([adifferentfuture.org](http://adifferentfuture.org)).

**United Religions Initiative** is a global interfaith organization whose purpose 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. URI's membership includes 200 local, grassroots Cooperation Circles (CCs) with 25,000 members in 47 countries, including 46 CCs in North America and 7 in the Middle East. URI's website currently receives one million visits per month. More background on URI's work is available at its website ([http://www.uri.org/](http://www.uri.org/)), and in a chapter on URI's work in Interfaith Dialogue and Peacebuilding, published by the United States Institute of Peace.

**U.S. Interreligious Committee for Peace in the Middle East**, founded in 1987, represents 2,500 American Jews, Christians and Muslims, including prominent national leaders of all three communities, working together based on the deepest values in the three religious traditions. The Committee arranges national and local programs of dialogue, education and advocacy in support of U.S. policies to achieve comprehensive and lasting peace between Arab states, Israel and the Palestinians. The Committee's Director, Ron Young, is a frequent speaker at religious congregations, schools, college campuses and community forums.

**Rationale and Project:**

For there to be peace between Israelis and Palestinians, it is essential that the voices of moderate religious leaders be heard in the Middle East and here in the United States. We propose to create the opportunity for a highly publicized expression of moral vision and principle by American Christian, Jewish and Muslim leaders who believe working together for peace is fundamental to our faiths.

The recent official endorsements of the Roadmap to Peace by Israel and the Palestinian Authority, and President Bush's declared determination to pursue the Road Map provide a
timely, positive focus for active interreligious cooperation. We plan to carry out this project in a spirit of hope-filled support and public pressure for success of U.S.-led peace initiatives and the Roadmap to Peace.

In particular, we plan to create a gathering and walk of 1,000 Jewish, Christian and Muslim religious leaders (200-250 locally constituted teams of 3-5 persons from across the country) who will travel to Washington, D.C. for two days to meet together, walk together and visit Congress together in solidarity and support for active U.S. pursuit of a just peace between the Israeli and Palestinian peoples; and who will then return to their local communities committed to ongoing work to build bridges of mutual respect and broader, active cooperation for peace. Although the emphasis is on participation by clergy, lay leaders of the faith communities are welcome to participate as members of the 3-5 person walking groups.

We believe this event will have a positive impact on U.S. government action, on broad-based public opinion, and on public opinion in the local communities from which these leaders come. A major Washington public relations firm has prepared a communications plan to maximize the impact of "The Walk".

Detailed plans are still being developed, but consist at present of:

**Day One - A Day of Inspiration, Dialogue and Education**

- Talks by prominent Israelis and Palestinians who are working together for peace
- Modeling and workshops on dialogue and cooperation
- Expert briefings in preparation for visits to members of congress.

**Day Two - A Day of Action and Reflection**

- The Walk of 250 interfaith walking teams to the White House and Capitol Hill to support U.S.-led peace initiatives and the "Road Map"
- Delivery of a letter to President Bush
- Visits to members of Congress
- Gathering to reflect on Congressional visits and to generate ideas for local follow-up activities.

**Principles for Participation**

(People planning to participate in the Washington Walk should subscribe to the following set of principles)

- We are American Jews, Christians and Muslims who believe working together for Arab-Israeli-Palestinian peace reflects fundamental teachings in our religious traditions.
• We support and take inspiration from the many courageous Israelis and Palestinians who are working together for peace both individually and in organizations too numerous to list but too little known to the world.
• We cherish the bonds many of us have with people on each side of the conflict; and we believe working for peace requires us to listen sensitively to voices from both sides.
• We believe peace cannot be achieved by violence but only by negotiations and active efforts at mutual understanding. We oppose terrorism and all other forms of violence.
• We unequivocally support the goal of a viable, independent Palestinian state alongside the state of Israel, with peace and security for both; and we call for an immediate end to all violence.
• We support the Road Map to Peace developed by the United States in coordination with the EEU, Russia and the U.N. Secretary General; and we believe ongoing determined leadership and monitoring are needed to assure implementing actions by both sides.
• We believe Israeli-Palestinian negotiations at Taba, Egypt in 2000-01 came close to success, and offer important benchmarks for mutually acceptable peace agreements.
• We come to Washington, DC on September 15th and 16th to learn from each other and to walk together in support of active, determined U.S. efforts to help Arab states, Israel and the Palestinians to achieve peace. We will return home to our local communities committed to ongoing work to build bridges and generate broad interreligious cooperation and action for peace.

Please reply A.S.A.P if you will commit to participate in The Walk and if you are willing to invite leaders from the other Abrahamic communities in your area to join with you.

PLEASE REPLY TO:

RON YOUNG, U.S. INTERRELIGIOUS COMMITTEE FOR PEACE
TELEPHONE: (360) 652-4285 or E-MAIL: usicpme@aol.com.

OR

REV. CHARLES GIBBS, UNITED RELIGIONS INITIATIVE
TELEPHONE: (415) 561-2300 or E-MAIL: office@uri.org

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NAIN Connect 2003

Principle 11 of the URI charter states: *We seek and offer cooperation with other interfaith efforts*. One such effort is the North American Interfaith Network's annual Connect conference. Representatives of NAIN member organizations will join with "Friends of NAIN" and others, including those from the central Ohio area in exploring "Journeys of
Faith, Freedom, and Justice;" during the 2003 NAIN Connect, on August 9 "‘12, to be held at The Ohio State University in Columbus, hosted by the Interfaith Association of Central Ohio.

Paul Chaffee, Executive Director of the Interfaith Center at the Presidio (a URI CC), will be attending the conference as a liaison for the URI North American Region, and will report back to us. The Board of Directors of the Interfaith Center at the Presidio CC offered to contribute Paul's expenses to attend NAIN as a gift to URI-NA. Thank you! And URI-NA global council trustee and Alliance for Spiritual Community CC coordinator Kay Lindahl serves on the board for NAIN.

For more information, please visit http://www.nain.org/news/n02Winter.htm.

The Interfaith Alliance

Barbara Trites of Seattle recently brought to our attention the presence of another substantial interfaith network in the U.S. - the Interfaith Alliance (insert web address - and delete web address from the end). The Alliance has been in existence since 1994, and now has clergy-led local interfaith alliances in 38 states! This organization is a great resource and partner for interfaith political activism in the U.S. Barbara is working to link URI CCs in the Pacific Northwest with regional members of this entity and many other interfaith and peace organizations. Visit their website for further information, resources, and a list of their local alliances.

Cooperation Circle Activities

Globalhealing.net Fundraising Effort from the Utah URI CC

The Utah URI CC is sharing a new Globalhealing.net program that will raise funds for your CC, URI Global, URI Africa, and the Call to Global Healing implementation that was endorsed at the URI Global Assembly. Globalhealing.net is a new global Internet Service provider (ISP) to network around the URI Global Assembly's "Call to Global Healing."

The mainsite will allow people to view a flash presentation of Global Healing and to download three options of software to link with the system. The home page will feature each day:

- a link to the URI Global Web site with its most recent story
- the latest United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) press release
- the most recent Global Healing story (envisioned to come from CC's and from networks such as the International Pastoral Care Network for Social Responsibility, Friends of the United Nations, National Council of Churches etc, and a special link for local networks.

The ISP will allow people to join as regular ISP customers with more phone lines than AOL, MSN, or Earthlink and automatic translations to Spanish. Because it is a private ISP spam will be almost nonexistent and commercial advertising will not be on the system.

The email system allows multiple email accounts to come to one place and are color coded by account. The Email has the option for a tag on the email form to be added to announce special events like the URI Global Assembly or to share stories in the network like the example you see of Utah URI CC working with Feeding Children International to send 280,000 meals to URI Malawi.

Individual users will have the option to make online purchases that will further send commissions. (Note each individual can shut off this feature if they choose.)

A passport account will be provided for people who want to be in the network but not change their ISP. This will also allow our CC's in Africa and other parts of the world to be part of the network even though the ISP service is not offered in their country at the present time. A free browser bar will be available for people who do not want to be part of the network but want to financially support Global Healing.

40% of the commissions will stay with the local CC, local network, or your program, 40% of the commissions will support the work of the Call to Global Healing, 10% of all commissions will go to URI Global, and 10% of all commissions will go to a URI Africa fund.

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URI 72 Hours of Peace - The Impact Continues

At the turn of the last millennium, six months before the formal birth of the URI, our first 72 Hours of Peace linked together our fledgling CCs around the world in inspired collective interfaith action for peace. These observances made news in many places, and have become annual events for at least several CCs in the North American region, including URI of Henderson County, North Carolina, Rocky Mountain URI, and Utah URI.

For example, on December 31, 2002, 300 people gathered in Salt Lake City to commit themselves as ambassadors of peace in their neighborhoods. This project was initiated by Utah URI member, Ms. Buba Roth (director of the Utah Peace Institute), promoted by the
Utah URI and Utah Peace Institute, and supported by the Governor of Utah, Michael O. Levitt, the Utah Attorney General, Mark Shurtleff, and local congressman, Jim Matheson.

And in Hendersonville, NC, 200 people representing 8 different faith traditions gathered for the URI New Year's Eve Interfaith Service for Peace. Hosted by the URI of Henderson County, it has become an annual event and the highlight of participants' life together.

Pre-Parliament Event in Berkeley Scheduled

Sunday, July 20, 2003, 2-8 pm

[Note: CC's in Seattle and Southern California are also in the planning stages for Pre-Parliament events. Stay tuned for further details!]

Once or twice a decade, the Parliament of the World's Religions sponsors a gathering of thousands representing hundreds of religious, spiritual, indigenous traditions. They gather to learn about and build friendships among peoples who once were strangers. Those who have attended, including hundreds from California, say the Parliaments are life-transforming. The Fourth Parliament of the World's Religions will be held in Barcelona, Spain, July 7-13, 2004 (http://www.cpwr.org/).

To ensure that the San Francisco Bay Area region is informed about the Parliament and able to benefit from it, the Bridge Cooperation Circle of the United Religions Initiative in San Francisco welcomes you to a "taste of the Parliament." The details:

Church of Divine Man, Berkeley
2018 Allston Way (Between Shattuck and Milvia)
Sunday, July 20, 2003, 2 to 8 PM

The day together offers a "taste" of what to expect next year in Barcelona: meditation and prayer, intra-faith discussions with others of our own tradition, dialogue with people of different faiths, interfaith engagement--how faiths work together, dinner, and celebratory dance and music.

- To Register for "A Taste of the Parliament:" Email Parliament RSVP@aol.com
- Donation of $15 (for meal and expenses) is requested.
- Information and updates on pre-Parliament events: http://www.uribridgecc.org/.

Please come and bring members of your faith community on July 20 in Berkeley! Please forward this invitation to your friends in the San Francisco Bay area.

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Learning How to Help Kids in Iraq

Instructions for assembling boxes of health-kits and educational packages for children in Iraq will be featured at a public meeting at the Main Post Chapel at the Presidio (see map & directions at www.interfaith-presidio.org), Monday, June 30, at 1:00 pm.

Boxes gathered by August 31 will be distributed in Iraq through Church World Service, one of the largest aid groups in the world. CWS is known for its insistence that giving and receiving aid at the community level during crisis needs to be a fully interfaith exercise.

The June 30 event will feature a discussion among those gathered about how people on different continents can be connected in meaningful ways. This will include news of a campaign to raise funds for securing mobile medical clinics to be used in the Iraqi countryside.

Imam Amer Araim, an Iraqi who leads a mosque in Concord, is helping bring together the many individuals and groups who have heard about this grassroots effort and want to participate. Imam Amer, who spent over 20 years as a United Nations diplomat after escaping the regime of Saddam Hussein, will speak briefly at the meeting. The public is cordially invited.

Write to Paul Chaffee, pjchaffee@aol.com, for information on how your CC can contribute too.

Walk for Global Understanding

PeacePrayer is a new URI CC in Hemet nestled in the foothills of the mountains in Riverside County in Southern California. We are very happy to become a URI cooperation circle, and we look forward to networking and meeting other members!

PeacePrayer has existed since at least 1995, gathering the first Wednesday of every month at noon so that people could come together for a short time praying for peace for our community; we also would pray for peace for the entire world. Co-coordinator Michael Madrigal writes: I'm naturally an interfaith person because my upbringing is Native American, Christian, and Catholic, and I've had the opportunity to experience both traditions. In my public work where I've done ministry, I've been able to participate in both communities and have learned to appreciate the value of interfaith experience and dialogue and the wonderful enrichment it can bring to peoples lives. So it was very natural for me to be part of the PeacePrayer group that was open to people of different faiths. It gave me a chance to learn about the beliefs of other faith communities. We've shared prayers and readings from many traditions as part of our gathering.
Fay Loomis, the convenor of PeacePrayer, says: In 2000, I signed the URI charter on the web and visited the website. And, in 2000, we participated in the 72 hours of peace. Our PeacePrayer group had two gatherings that weekend, at the beginning and end of the 72 hour period. We had a traditional Native American ceremony. That was one of our early links with URI. We were trying to participate.

In addition to weekly noon gatherings to pray and meditate for peace, we collaborate with many groups in the community. One of our recent cooperative ventures was participation in a Walk for Global Understanding on March 1, 2003, in the city of Hemet, California. The walk was coordinated by the Hemet-San Jacinto Interfaith Council and included representatives of local Muslim, Sikh, Hindu, Jewish, Christian and other faith communities.

This multi-faith, multi-cultural walk provided an opportunity to express our solidarity with one another and with people around the world. We carried a lead banner reading Walk for Global Understanding, as well as national flags of many countries.

PeacePrayer and the Human Relations Council also carried banners representing their respective organizations. The banners and flags made a colorful walk, prompting passersby to respond with honks and waves.

About sixty in all made the walk along Highway 74 to Weston Park where we made introductions, engaged in informal dialogue, and enjoyed refreshments provided by a local bank.

At a time when many in our community were divided about the impending war in Iraq, members of our cooperation circle wanted to take action that would be unifying for our local community.

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Chevron/NCCJ Grant

Last fall, several CCs in North America collaborated on proposals for the Chevron/NCCJ Grant. The grant's purpose was "to identify and support innovative and replicable approaches to address the bias, bigotry, and racism being faced by those individuals and groups who have experience heightened discrimination in the wake of the September 11th attacks."

Amongst the CC's to apply where The Rothko Chapel, City of Angels URI-LA, Rocky Mountain URI, and URI of Washington DC. While no CCs were included on the final list of grantees, engagement in the process itself was generative for participants, at least some of whom have continued to follow through on the programs they proposed, as evidenced by the following quotes from Jennifer Kirk, Amanda Trosten-Bloom, Susanna McIlwaine, P.K. McCarry, and Steve Fitzgerald:
Jennifer Kirk (URI Staff):

I think that the work all of you (and Sarah) did on this project is a marvelous model for how Cooperation Circles can work together on common issues in local communities. I wish that the NCCJ folks understood more the importance of bringing an interfaith component to the important work of preventing bias from occurring.

I'm delighted to learn that Susanna and the URI of Washington DC CC are moving forward with their project and hope that your other efforts will be successful.

Many, many thanks for the wonderful work all of you are doing on behalf of a better world.

Susanna McIlwaine URI of Washington DC):

It was wonderful to experience the collaboration - I hope we find many ways to continue this, through Steve's conference call system, through more collaborative projects.

The grant possibility got me going on something I had been thinking about, brought in the collaboration of the Arlington Resilience project, gave us a vehicle for talking up interfaith, URI and inclusivity to the mainstream churches, opened doors to other groups, brought together an interfaith and intercultural group to seed ground-level community interfaith and assistance projects. This happened at a time when a lovely institution-based interfaith group is forming in Arlington to organize services and hotline support for communities, so we find ourselves in a swirling dance of connections.

Thanks to each of you for your wisdom and great ideas, and to Sarah in her absence for her elegant, efficient management of the process.

Steve Fitzgerald (City of Angels URI-LA):

Thanks Jennifer. It was a real peak experience for me and for members of our CC who participated on this project with you all at the end of last year, and as you say Jennifer, a wonderful model of what's possible when Ccs work together on a project. City of Angels is also moving forward with its vision of an interfaith youth retreat, that will be integrated into a pre-Parliament of the World's Religions retreat to be held at Hsi Lai University in Rosemead, CA August 22-24.

Amanda Trosten-Bloom (Rocky Mountain URI):

We are also moving forward on our project, here in the the Denver metro area. Lisa Main has taken the helm in organizing a women's retreat, which is still in the planning phase at this point. We will keep you all informed.

P.K. McCary (Rothko Chapel):
Thank you all. We made a great team and will continue to work together. This was a first for me. I learned from each of you. We here at the Chapel are dedicated to future collaborations and our welcome mat is open to all of you. Perhaps we can put our heads together for future colloquia on religion and tolerance. URI is in the forefront (and frontline) for bringing peace to this world.

The 99 Days of Intentional Peace ends for the Chapel on the weekend of April 26th. We've made and planted peace poles, had dialogue groups of both young and old(er), worshipped together and will continue the work through future collaborations. A professor from St. Thomas University created an entire syllabus around the 99 Days called "The Good Life." The students are remarkable and they are putting together a book over the summer entitled "99 Days." It is all about what've they seen and learned about peace and how we can make a difference.

Last night was a "Gathering of Women." Women of different faiths met at Baptist Church (one of firsts here in the Bible Belt). Round table discussion took place at 19 tables. It was awesome. Jains, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, and Christians sat and talked, showed pictures of family and showed the best of what our religions have to offer: People!!!! who love God.

The 26th will also be a "Gathering of Women" calling forth their families to peace. It will be led by Native Americans, but will include all of the religions. Also, on the 24th, we are putting together an anti-Semitism program at St. Thomas (another collaboration). Again, students and adults.

Welcome New Cooperation Circles in North America!

From North America, we welcome the Rothko Chapel CC in Houston Texas, USA. The contact persons are longtime URI supporter P.K. McCary and Suna Umari, the Chapel's Executive Director. The Chapel has existed for over 30 years. It is a place alive with religious ceremonies of all faiths, and where the experience and understanding of all traditions is encouraged. The Chapel also serves as a rallying place for all people concerned with human rights throughout the world. They hope to introduce a new generation to the work of URI and the Rothko Chapel. Their board members' diversity includes Christian, Muslim, and Jewish, but their organization represents people from a wide diversity of faiths. To learn more about the Chapel, contact P.K. at perri@rothkochapel.org and visit them at http://www.rothkochapel.org/

From our North America region, we welcome the Toronto CC. Ms. Jane Damude-Empey is the contact person and her email address is jdamude-empey@sympatico.ca. Their purpose is to establish CCs in Toronto, beginning with their group. They meet monthly and have been using the URI *Visions for Peace Among Religions questions as a way of learning appreciative listening. Their religious diversity is Christian, Islam, Tibetan Buddhist, Jewish, and Anglican Christian.
We have a second CC from North America, the Peace Prayer CC in Hemet, CA, USA. Mrs. Faye Loomis and Mr. Michael Madrigal are the contact persons. Their email is floomis@lasercom.net. The CC's purpose is to gather people from multi-faiths to pray and work for peace. On March 1st, they co-sponsored a Walk for Global Understanding with the Interfaith Council of their area. Their religious diversity is Christian, Indigenous Native American, and Mayo; Mexican Catholic-Christian Indian.

We welcome a third CC from North America, the Interfaith Explorers in Northern Virginia, USA. Susanna McIlwaine and Patricia Morningstar are the contact persons. Their emails are smcilwaine@starpower.net and pjmrngstr@aol.com. Their purpose is to experience, understand and honor different faiths and to nurture an expanding interfaith community. They want to help themselves, each other and their neighbors to see this diverse community with increased understanding and openness; and to help knit together the faith and cultural communities around them. Their religious diversity is Jewish, Christian, Buddhist, Muslim, and Unitarian Universalist.

We also welcome the Spiritual and Religious Alliance for Hope (S.A.R.A.H) in Santa Margarita California, USA. Ms. Sande Hart is the Contact person. Her email address is sandehart@cox.net. Their purpose is to empower the community, learn from each other and enlighten one another; all towards the creation of a culture of peace. They learn from each other through dialogue, community service, guest speakers, and book discussions. One of the most profound things that SARAH does is to bring different people together to make peace tapestries. To see examples of their peace tapestries or read more about SARAH, please visit their website at http://www.sarah4hope.org/. Their religious diversity is Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Bahá'í, Hindu, and Native American.

Welcome New North American Affiliates!

From North America, we welcome the Pacific Center for Spiritual Formation in Richmond California, USA. Ms. Ruth Schweitzer-Mordecai is the Contact person. Her email address is ruthsm@attbi.com. Their purpose is to enable individuals, groups, and congregations to experience a deeper awareness of God. They are rooted in the Christian contemplative tradition and explore spiritual practices from their own and other faith traditions.

Resources for CCs and Affiliates

Contact Information for URI Global & Regional Support
Many people have asked who they should contact in San Francisco for various needs and info. Here is the contact information for the global support staff in that office, and for regional coordinators around the world:

**Global Staff**

**Executive Director:** Charles Gibbs · charles@uri.org

**Communications & Technology:** Cory Robertson · crobertson@uri.org, Kristin Swenson · kristin@uri.org

**Financial Management:** Ray Signer · rsigner@uri.org

**Peace-Building & Human Resources:** Barbara Hartford · barbara@uri.org

**Philanthropy/Global Fundraising:** Alice Kawahatsu · akawahatsu@uri.org, Jennifer Kirk · jkirk@uri.org, Sarah Talcott · mailto:sarah@uri.org Rick Murray · rick@uri.org

**Membership & Organizational Development:** Sally Mahé · sally@uri.org

**Membership and Technology:** LaTonya Trotter · ltrotter@uri.org

**Office Management:** Victoria Smiser · office@uri.org

**Vision for Peace Among Religions:** Nancy Nielsen · nnielsen@uri.org

**Regional Support**

**Africa:** Mr. Godwin Hlatshwayo · gmhlatshwayo@earthlink.net

**Asia:** Fr. James Channan · jchan_54600@yahoo.com, Ven. Dr. Jinwol Lee · urikorea@chollian.net, Dr. Mohinder Singh · nips@delnet.ren.nic.in

**Europe:** Mrs. Annie Imbens-Fransen · imbansen@wxs.nl, Mr. Deepak Naik · deepak@naik.freeserve.co.uk, Ms. Karimah Stauch · Germany dmlbonn@aol.com

**Latin America and the Caribbean:** Sra. Maria Eugenia Crespo de Mafia · mec@movi.com.ar, Mr. André Porto · andreporto@vivario.org.br

**Middle East:** Mr. Yehuda Stolov · msyuda@mscc.huji.ac.il, Dr. Mohamed Mosaad · mosaad@aucegypt.edu

**North America:** Mr. Steve Fitzgerald · stevefitzg@attbi.com

**The Pacific:** Ms. Marites Africa · shekinah8@i-manila.com.ph
Free Teleconferencing Resource

In North America we are blessed to have access to Easy Conference, a free conference call service. Each participant pays his or her own long distance charges. It's easy, it's clear, it works, and best of all the conference service is FREE. The conference "bridge" is not guaranteed, and they advise that you don't schedule a call during business mornings. I've used this service many times and it works great!!

This can be a tremendous help to CCs that are geographically dispersed, or that need to make collective decisions between meetings, convene an interfaith advisory board or steering committee for a conversation, etc.

For further information, go to: http://www.easyconference.com/, and click on "Sign Up." You have to provide your name and email address, but that's it. Enjoy!

Free URI Program Materials

Hey Kids! Did you know that the URI now has a kids website with interfaith curricula for children? It includes teacher unit plans, resources and glossary, lots of wonderful activities, songs, stories, and beautiful, simple pages on many of the world's religions, spiritual expressions, and indigenous traditions. Go to http://www.uri.org/kids. The website is and all materials are free and available to the public.

Hey Peace Builders! In case you've not yet heard, the URI has launched a three-year global inquiry called "Visions for Peace Among Religions" (VPAR). The URI website has wonderful stories from the VPAR pilot project, overview information, and more (www.uri.org/peacebuilding/vpar). VPAR questions have been created for adults, teens, and children. To join in this global effort, please contact Nancy Nielsen, nnielsen@uri.org.

URI Information Materials Available from the Global Office

Here is the latest on the URI materials available to CCs and affiliates:

URI Preamble, Purpose & Principles Brochures, no cost
URI Brochures, no cost
Current URI Update Newsletters, no cost
Archived URI Update Newsletters, no cost
Annual Report, 2001, no cost
CC and Affiliate Applications, no cost
URI Global Assembly Video, 2002 (12 minutes), $15.00
Introduction to URI Video, 1998 (12 minutes), $15.00
URI Pins, $5.00 each; $3.50 each for 20+

Order Contact: Victoria (URI office manager) office@uri.org, 1-415-561-2300.

LaTonya Trotter notes: We typically do not ask CCs to pay for written materials—if CCs are doing outreach or fundraising for URI, that is payment enough. If they are requesting an unusually large amount, we may suggest a donation to cover shipping. (Of course, members can always send a donation to help support the network). The blue URI Charters are not available at this time. They are an expensive item to print, so at this point, we have not reprinted them. In their place, we have Brochures with the PPP.

Steve Fitzgerald's Note: The Video makes a great intro to the URI. The URI pins make great gifts, and can be used as a fundraiser. City of Angels URI-LA sells them for $10 each when we have a display table at an event. We also honor faith and interfaith leaders in the community with the gift of a URI pin.

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For more information on the URI in North America, contact Dr. Stephen Fitzgerald at stevefitz@attbi.com.