North American Region

Let the Planning Begin! NA Regional Summit II, Jan. '05

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A Note on Newsletter Distribution

This newsletter is intended for everyone and anyone interested in URI Cooperation Circle activities in North America. Though it is initially sent only to CC contact persons, it is hoped that they will pass it along to other members in their organizations. Please also feel free to submit (short) articles on your organization's activities and events. Send these to editor@interfaithnews.net.

North American Region

Let the Planning Begin! NA Regional Summit II, Jan. '05
While we all have grown to depend on and love the Internet as a communication and organizational tool (well, okay, maybe only a few of us!), few organizations or projects can succeed without real-world contact—face-time, as some call it. Thus with the May 2001 North American Regional Summit began a cycle of regional, sub-regional, and global assemblies, bringing URI members and friends together for mutual growth and exploration of what interfaith collaboration and dialogue mean in the local, regional, and international arenas.

Following on last year's wonderful Global Summit in Rio de Janeiro, 2004 brings us back around to the regional summits. And thus we now begin the planning for the second North American Regional Summit, which will be held at Hsi Li University, just outside of Los Angeles, over the weekend of January 20-23, 2005 (tentative - awaiting final approval on those dates). Exact schedule and agenda pending. If you would like to offer your organizational acumen to the planning efforts, please contact Dr. Steve Fitzgerald at 323.252.1066 or stevefitzg@charter.net.

The North American Regional Support Team

Speaking of Hsi Li University…

Whereas in the rest of the world one or two regional coordinators work to support the efforts of CCs across each continents, in North America we've decided to try something a little bit different: instead of a regional coordinator, we have a regional support team. That team gathered for its first face-time in late January at the aforementioned Hsi Li University: to strengthen their ability to work together as a team, begin regional strategic planning, begin the planning for the upcoming summit, and to join the festivities for the Southern California Interfaith Network's second official gathering (we reported on SCIN's first gathering in issue 3).

The regional support team is made up of: Steve Fitzgerald (still technically the coordinator), Jenet Dhutti, Stephen Fuqua (your humble editor), Carolyn Knaus, Susanna McIlwaine, Betsy Stang (who was sadly unable to join us), Barbara Trites, and the Global Council Trustees for North America-Rev. Hung Sure, Elder Don Frew, and Kay Lindahl. Also joining the fray were Multi-Regional Trustee & Coordinator Yolanda Trevino (thanks for the wonderful food Yolanda!), URI hub staff member Sally Mahé, and URI newcomer/enthusiast Milt Markewitz, coordinator of the Spiritual City Club in Portland, Oregon. We were also joined for a time by various members of SCIN, who will be serving in a strong support role for the regional assembly.

(By the way—last year in issue one we reported on the regional support budget. You can download a report on the 2003 budget and activities from the new URI CC web site. See below for details on accessing that site).

Read on for a more detailed report from Hsi Li
United Religions Initiative Mobilizes Faith Communities to Reduce Youth Violence

United Religions Initiative (URI), working as the Religious Sector Sponsor for the National Youth Violence Prevention Campaign, invites faith communities and interfaith groups across the U.S. to participate in National Youth Violence Prevention Week March 29 through April 2. This educational and awareness-raising event focuses on effective ways to prevent and reduce youth violence. People from all sectors of society are encouraged to join in activities that demonstrate the positive role young people can play in making their schools and communities safer.

Each day of the week focuses on a specific violence prevention strategy. These strategies include promoting respect and tolerance, anger management, resolving conflicts peacefully, supporting safety, and uniting in action.

United Religions Initiative is mobilizing its members, as well as reaching out to faith communities and interfaith groups across the country, to join in activities of solidarity and education. To find out more about how your faith or interfaith community can get involved, visit URI's website at: www.uri.org/youth/vpc. URI offers specific activities...
and resources for addressing and resolving issues of religiously motivated violence, intolerance or bullying.

Read the complete announcement

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NAIN and NAEIS Heading to New York, Film Festival in Tow

Each summer, the North American Interfaith Network (NAIN) holds an interfaith conference, the NAIN Connect, for its member organizations. Any URI cooperation circle is eligible to become a member of NAIN. This year for the first time, NAIN and the National Association of Ecumenical and Interreligious Staff (NAEIS) are working together to hold a conference with the them of "Connecting Partners; Enlarging the Circle" that will be held in New York City on July 24-27, 2004.

Augmenting the typical (but invigorating!) array of offerings will be the first international interfaith film festival. Submissions of any length works that include faith, ethics, belief, or values-based themes are welcomed.

Want more on the conference? or More on the film festival?

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Cooperation Circle Activities

The following articles illustrate but a few of the many activities going on with CCs in North America. Please share your stories and ideas by sending them to editor@interfaithnews.net. Contact information for all CCs is available to any URI CC via the new CC website or by contacting the editor or hub staff in San Francisco.

Alliance for Spiritual Community's Fifth Annual New Year's Day of Peace Celebration

This is the first day of the new year when we come together to set a tone and direction for ourselves for the year. We come together as a member of the social community to build a community of peace, well being and goodwill to put out to the local community and expand it out to the greater community of Man. To share this experience with each other in an open accepting attitude celebrating us all is a divine event. We celebrate our cultural and religious history and traditions and connect it to today's world so that we are all energized for our interaction in the new year. It seems to me that every one of us takes
that special connection back out into the broader world to share with those we meet and do business with. We have set a level to aspire to and to inspire. -Beverly Waterman

Read quotes from the Orange County Register

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Henderson County's New Year's Eve Interfaith Service for Peace

The URI of Henderson County (NC) held its Fifth Annual New Year's Eve Interfaith Service for Peace on December 31st. Over 200 people gathered in Hendersonville to celebrate community, to pray, to sing and to dance. Once again, the soul of the service revolved around prayers for peace from eight different faith traditions.

The URI of Henderson County sees itself as committed to peace education and has scheduled a program for the community on the first Sunday evening of each month. The first program was January 4 and the subject was "Violence and Peace: What does Christianity have to offer us to reverse the trend towards violence in the world? February 1st found members of this CC visiting St. Paul's Tabernacle and hearing a presentation on the African American Religious Experience. Both of these offerings were well received and very exciting for participants.

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Interfaith Circle of Love's New Year's Eve Walking Meditation for Peace

The annual URI New Year's Eve Walking Meditation for Peace was organized by the Interfaith Circle of Love CC, which is part of the Interfaith Community Church in Seattle. Each year spiritual leaders from many faiths come together to share chants and prayers as participant's candles light their 2.8 mile path around the moon shimmering Green Lake.

Sky Jubilee ruminates on the fulfillment of the URI's promise through the Walking Meditation
The candle light glow of the meditative walk was led by a mystical group of people carrying lanterns and dressed as "illuminated trees".

The Interfaith Council of Washington's World Religions Series

The 5th Annual World Religions Series - *While Standing on One Foot* continues to be a vibrant fundraiser for the Interfaith Council of Washington CC. Each year they present a different offering of six faith leaders who provide a full day talk and group discussion on essential teachings and practices of their tradition. This year speakers will represent: Hindu -Vedanta Society, Islam, Buddhism, Christian Eco-Spirituality, Ananda-Church of Self Realization, and Shamanism-Inca traditions.

The series is co-sponsored by The School of Theology and Ministry at Seattle University where the second Saturday of the month events take place. Tuition for the complete series is $120 or $25 for individual sessions.

*For more details on how you might create such an educational fundraising event for your CC, contact Greg and Nancy Eisen at (206) 547.4077 or go to [http://www.interfaithcouncil.com/](http://www.interfaithcouncil.com/).*

The Toronto-Malawi Connection
Eve Maliwichi had long been an active supporter of the URI through the Lilongwe CC in Malawi (Africa). In September she transferred to Guelph in the province of Ontario, whence she began attending CC activities in Toronto. The cross-cultural exchange has added strength and new vitality to those involved, leading to new insights and ideas for both CCs.

Read on for thought-provoking observations from Eve and Toronto CC Coordinator Jane Damude-Empey

URI DC to Participate in National Day of Youth Interfaith Service

The URI DC cooperation circle is collaborating with the DC Habitat for Humanity and the Interfaith Conference of Metropolitan Washington for a Youth Build at the Interfaith House. The Youth Build day involves additional partners such as the Points of Light Foundation and has been endorsed by the Corporation for National and Community Service (which includes AmeriCorps and AmeriCorps*VISTA).

On April 24, 50-60 young people of high school through college-age will work together on the Interfaith House. They will represent Bahá’í, Buddhist, Hindu, Jain, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh, and a variety of Christian faith communities. The day will begin and end with youth-led prayers from the various traditions, and will feature a picnic lunch with interfaith activities.

Utah URI and the UN URI Lead Olympic Peace Pole Dedication

The Utah and UN URI CC's completed the Olympic Peace Pole project begun almost two years ago as part of the Salt Lake 2002 Winter Olympics. The Peace Poles were dedicated at the International Peace Gardens along the Jordan River in Salt Lake City. The Salt Lake City Mayor Rocky Anderson chose Human Rights Day as the day for the dedication.

The speakers included Salt Lake Mayor Rocky Anderson, Dr. David Randle from Utah URI, Rev. Annie Heart, the Utah Peace With Justice Coordinator for the United Methodist Church (a member of Utah URI), Ms. Deborah Moldow, Director of the World Peace Prayer Society and the UN URI, and Mr. Goran Rogonjic, representing the Young Refugees of Utah for World Peace (a member of Utah URI).

Click through for more details on the Salt Lake City Peace Pole project
Washington Interfaith Diversity Fair: Faith as a Blessing for Building Loving, Caring Communities

This all day event was held October 25th in Bellevue, WA as a collaboration of eight major faiths. Discussions, panels and workshops filled the day along with continuous stage entertainment, information booths about different organizations and faiths, activities for children and a special youth conference.

The fair steering committee is grateful to the Alliance for Spiritual Community CC and Kay Lindahl for their Southern California Religious Diversity Faire model that became the inspiration for creating our own annual event. Bellevue Community College Multicultural Services department co-sponsored the day by providing the venue at a nominal cost. Because many contributions were made by individual faith communities, this event had a nominal budget.

For full details go to http://www.interfaithfair.com/
Diversity fair steering committee members Jasbir Kaur, Food Chair, Barbara Trites, URI-NA Regional Support team, and Victoria Scarlett, Center for Sacred Art presenter.

URI / International Interfaith

Parliament of the World's Religion Coming to Barcelona, Spain, July 2004

The Parliament of the World's Religions is an international interreligious gathering to be held in Barcelona from 7-13 July, 2004. All people of faith, spirit and goodwill are welcome to encounter the vast diversity of the world's religious, spiritual and cultural traditions, to listen to each other with open hearts and minds, to dialogue for mutual understanding, to reflect on critical issues facing the world, to celebrate the richness of our spiritualities, and to commit to discovering and creating new pathways to peace.

Barbara Hartford, from the URI hub office, writes: "We'd like to know who might be going, and what workshops or other responsibilities you may have. I'll collect this information and share it so that we can be in touch with each other before and/or during the Parliament." If you will be attending and would like to get together with other URI folks (which could be difficult in the expected crowd of 10,000!), then contact Barbara at barbara@uri.org.

For more information, visit http://www.cpwr.org/what/events/barcelona/barcelona.htm.

2005 URI Global Assembly goes to Seoul, Korea
This past fall Executive Director Charles Gibbs traveled to Seoul to begin plans for our next global gathering. He feels this location in Korea will provide an extraordinary place at an extraordinary time in human history. The Assembly will be held June 26 – July 1, 2005. The opening day marks the fifth anniversary of the signing of URI's Charter and the sixtieth anniversary of the signing of the United Nations Charter. June 25th, the day before, will mark the fifty-fifth anniversary of the beginning of the Korean War.

Please mark your calendars to join URI's global community going to the right place at the right time!

Read on for more from Charles Gibbs

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Rio's Interfaith Agenda 2004 - A Model Plan for Interfaith Collaboration

Within the URI family, some CCs focus their attention inward—developing mutual understanding and respectful relationships among their members—while others are more outwardly focused on having an impact in their communities. Both models are valid and necessary. For the outward-oriented, we in North America can learn much by looking south to the Rio Inter-Religious Movement (MIR).

Earlier this year MIR completed its strategic planning process for 2004, laying out an elaborate plan of action around topics such as the Interfaith Hunger Zero Plan, religious education in public schools, the Sacred Village, spiritual ceremonies and round tables, and development of internal infrastructure and communications.

MIR agenda and Interfaith Hunger Zero Plan

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Resources for CCs and Affiliates

Login to the New and Improved CC Website!

At long last our agony is requited—the global CC website has been unleashed! A hyperbolic description perhaps, but a milestone nevertheless. The CC website at http://www.uriglobal.org/ is a revamped tool for facilitating information-sharing and online networking within and amongst CCs the world-over.

The site is password protected for security and privacy, so each CC contact person has been provided a login account and an invitation to explore the site. Other CC members
are encouraged to join by visiting uriglobal.org and clicking on the "Create Your Account Sign up now!" link.

Visit the CC Website!

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The Many Languages of the URI Charter

Those CCs based in communities with large immigrant populations may find it useful to have available copies of the URI Charter in languages other than English. Thanks to the CC website, those translations are now just a few clicks away—well, almost. Actually they're not quite there yet, but will be soon.

The Charter is available in: Arabic, Dutch, Farsi (Persian), French, German, Hindi, Korean, Mandarin, Portuguese, Spanish (Catalan and Latin American), Urdu, Vietnamese. To access these documents, login to the site, click on URI Library, and then Charter in the Library's file menu. City of Angels URI CC in Los Angeles has found it useful to display several hard copies of the charter in each languages when sponsoring a table at an event. Someone invariably picks up a copy in another language, and it demonstrates the international scope of URI - right here in our own backyards!

URI Global Website

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And a Hearty Welcome to Deepak Jagannath

Since our last issue Deepak Jagannath has joined the URI hub staff in San Francisco as the Membership & Technology Associate. It is thanks to his efforts that the CC site is now available, so warm fuzzies from all to Deepak! He can be contacted at deepak@uri.org or 1-415-561-2311.

The full staff listing and contact information is maintained on the URI website

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URI News & Discussion on the Internet

Confused by the profusion of e-mail lists and sources of news and information about the URI? Don't worry, you're not alone—even the tech-geeks amongst us get confused sometimes. Communication is essential to creating meaningful networks, be they local, regional, or global. Effort is constantly put forth to create the most effective and efficient communication channels, so let us all strive to use them well and use them wisely.