Regional News

Hospitality, Gratitude & Sharing:
Interfaith Action in Our World

Friday, August 12, 2005 - Tuesday, August 16, 2005
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

This promises to be a watershed event in interfaith visioning and work. This will be the first joint gathering of the United Religions Initiative and the North American Interfaith Network. This groundbreaking meeting will bring both groups together for resource sharing, networking and bridge building.

Each day a different value will be celebrated and embraced. The conference will open on Friday, August 12th with a Native American Presence and Celebration, honoring the sacred ground upon which the conference will occur, Las Vegas — “The Meadows.” Saturday, the Islamic Community of Southern Nevada will provide Hospitality, providing an evening meal with Islamic Cuisine from all parts of the world and Islamic entertainment. Sunday, the Community of Southern Nevada will come together to celebrate the value of Gratitude, with a renowned speaker. And, Monday evening, the focus will be on taking our Sharing into Interfaith Action in our World.

Each day the program will open our eyes to the wonder of real interfaith engagement. As never before our world needs the peace that comes of genuine interfaith dialogue, come join us as we enter more fully into that dialogue!
Registration is now open at http://www.uri-na.org/register.html. The registration fee is $50 for each day plus room and board ($50/day double-occupancy or $70 for single). Early registration closes on June 30, after which time there will be an additional $50 fee.

Global Council Elections

As I’m sure you all recall, the URI held its second Global Council Trustee elections this spring. I am pleased to report that, of 42 active CCs in North America, 35 were eligible to vote, and 25 returned a vote. This put the region over the threshold of 50% participation needed to fully legitimate the vote.

The new Trustees will take office during the URI Global Council meeting in Seoul, Korea, which takes place the last week of June (only a few weeks away!), and will serve for the next three years. The 2005-2008 Trustees from North America are:

- Reverend Heng Sure of Berkeley, CA
  Continuing Trustee and member of Bay Area Friends of the Parliament and URI-The Bridge
- Ms. Kathy Sandoval of San Juan Capistrano, CA
  Member of Alliance for Spiritual Community
- Ms. Perri Kathryn “P.K.” McCary of Houston, TX
  Member of Women’s Spirituality CC, Arts & Creativity CC

Welcome to all three of you!

An Introduction

This newsletter is long delayed, has missed many no-longer-upcoming opportunities, and does not have as much news from local organizations as would be preferred. Nevertheless we forge on...

For those who do not know me yet, a brief introduction: Hi, I’m Stephen A. Fuqua, formerly of Austin, Texas, now living Saint Paul, Minnesota. On April 1st, Dr. Steven Fitzgerald stepped down as Regional Coordinator for the URI in North America, and I replaced him. He remains an integral member of the North American Regional Support Team, which also includes Barbara Trites, Carolyn Knauss, Don Frew, Heng Sure, Kay Lindahl, Patricia Morningstar, and Susanna McIlwaine (you guys are wonderful, and I’m so glad you’re all a part of this team).

Our purpose is clear: to provide support for existing URI CCs and promote the interfaith movement in North America (in my own words). We're not here to create a hierarchy, tell groups what to do, etc. We practice servant leadership, in an advisory and promotional role. One avenue for this action is communication: through this newsletter, through our new website at uri-na.org, through periodic phone calls or postal mailings, and in person at gatherings such as the URI-NAIN Connect 2005.

To all the CCs and URI Affiliates in North America — thank you for being a part of this growing network and movement "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." And to anyone else reading this newsletter — won't you consider joining with us, adding your own wisdom, networks, and abilities to a larger cause while retaining your own distinctiveness? This is unity in diversity.

Peace be with you,
Stephen A. Fuqua

Cooperation Circle Activities

While big events always get our attention and the public's notice, we value everything your organizations do. Whether you've had a huge public event or a small gathering that deepened your personal insights and interpersonal connections, we welcome your news updates. Please submit your CC's activities and reports to sfuqua@uri.org.

Websites Wanted

Would you like to have your CCs website listed on the new URI North America site? Even if you don't have a site, we'll be more than happy to list your contact information for the general public.

Bridge CC

The Bridge CC, a group formed in the Bay Area for promoting both the URI and the Parliament of the World's Religions, recently helped out at Carry the Vision: Building a Culture of Peace in our Families, Our Community, and Our World, which was held as a part of the Season for Nonviolence.

California Interfaith Power and Light

If your CC is interested in working with environmental issues, one source to learn from is the CIPL "e-newsletter that contains updates and information about programs, events, legislation and global warming."

Greenville Faith Communities United

The Greenville Faith Communities United CC in May put on the "2005 Festival of Faiths, an opportunity to learn from each other and celebrate the diversity of our faith communities. The theme of this year's festival is Building Bridges — The Faces of Faith. It is our hope that bridges of understanding will be built because of the Festival and that we will have the opportunity to see the faces and the faith of our neighbors and celebrate with them."

Interfaith Center at the Presidio

San Francisco's Interfaith Center at the Presidio has started a new program, the Interfaith Family Circle, "a new kind of model for generating and supporting interfaith relations in any local community." The Circle is "a self-organizing group of people representing the religious, cultural diversity of our world who regularly gather to develop friendships, pray and reflect, celebrate their differences, and explore the concerns they share."

Interfaith Council of Washington
The Council, along with the School of Theology and Ministry at Seattle University, has been holding a series of seminars on the different world religions. This spring, they have held day-long classes on Hinduism, Mennonite Religion, Sikhism, Wicca, Islam, and soon on the Baha’i Faith.

"The World Religion series provides presentations and discussions on the essential teachings and practices of a variety of religious traditions. These programs are intended to promote understanding, respect and good will among the faith traditions in our community. The series offers the opportunity to learn from a variety of spiritual traditions, each presented by a representative from that faith community. The series is designed to be interactive, with the intention of broadening your understanding of others — while providing you the opportunity to deepen your own faith."

URI of Utah

The URI of Utah, sponsors of the Global Healing project, have been rather busy this spring. In mid-May, they co-hosted a delegation of Muslims leaders from Tajikistan. The group has also reached outside its borders by sponsoring the Southern Sudan Education Project. In the Bor County of Sudan, the group is working to bring educational supplies to the children. On a recent visit, a village elder was quoted as saying, "If you educate these children, we will have peace in Sudan. If you do not educate these children, we will remain in war." In addition, the CC will be bringing in food supplies and is trying to setup similar projects in several other nations. Assuredly they welcome all financial contributions to advance the cause of peace in Sudan (see links above).

URI at the UN

The URI-UN, in partnership with The Values Caucus, The Spiritual Caucus and The NGO Committee on Spirituality, Values and Global Concerns, presented a Round Table Discussion to Honor the 10th Anniversary of the Values Caucus on "The Ethical and Spiritual Dimensions of the Millennium Development Goals" on Thursday, 12 February 2004 at the United Nations headquarters in New York.

More than 60 members of the UN non-governmental community attended, overflowing the small conference room. URI-UN facilitator Deborah Moldow served as moderator, opening the meeting with the Moment of Silence traditional to the Values Caucus. There were congratulations on the 10th anniversary of the Values Caucus, including a message from Ambassador Juan Somavia, director-general of the ILO in Geneva. Monica Willard presented a celebratory cake, to be shared after the meeting. Continue reading...

Interfaith Resources

Selected resources from URI Global Support Staff and from URI CCs

Partners in Leadership Manual

During the last five years the URI community has enjoyed an array of effective practices, lessons and experiences that have advanced our work and enlivened us as a community. Building from the experiences at URI global summits and regional assemblies on five different
continents, we have had an opportunity to collect some of the best practices that exemplify the values and purpose of the URI and to consider how to include this expertise as we go forward. Visit the link above or contact office@uri.org for more information.

**Interfaith Peacebuilding Guide**  (link requires login to uriglobal.org; also available for purchase or free overview)

This guide was conceived as a resource for interfaith groups — those “everyday gandhis” who are making a difference one meeting at a time in their local communities. It is for people of diverse faiths who have been strangers (or worse, enemies) who become friends and allies dedicated to peace, justice, and healing. The guide has been designed for groups that are just starting out in their life together, as well as those that are more established and yet seek to strengthen their planning and sharpen their skills for building interfaith understanding and taking action.

**Shared Wisdom: Growing Grassroots Interfaith Relationships**

Shared Wisdom explores the unique religious diversity we live in today. It surveys several post-World War II documents that have helped shape our thinking about dialogue and relationship. You’ll find suggestions about studying the material and getting acquainted with neighbors from different traditions and, in chapter 5, a provocative chart for developing dialogue skills by Professor Patrice Brodeur. The book ends with an annotated list of resources and links. (By Paul Chaffee, Interfaith Center at the Presidio)