



United Religions Initiative | *eUpdate*

URI eUpdate for April 2005

Our Monthly Electronic Newsletter

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1. URI Members Elect New Global Council Trustees

On behalf of the Global Council (GC), we are delighted to announce the results of the global voting to select 24 trustees to serve on URI's 2005 – 2008 Global Council. The new GC will commence its term in Seoul, Korea during a joint meeting of the outgoing and incoming Global Councils, from June 26 - July 1, 2005.

Here are some reflections of the new GC's diversity:

- 8 trustees from the current GC and 16 new trustees;
- 11 women and 13 men;
- 17 countries;
- 9 Christians, 4 Muslims, 3 Jews, 3 Indigenous, 2 Buddhist, 2 Baha'i, 1 Hindu, 1 Sikh, 1 Interfaith (with diversity within traditions).

The votes from 174 CCs around the world were counted at

the URI Global Support Office in San Francisco, Wednesday, 6 April 2005. The vote-counting process began with an opening prayer to invite the presence of the URI community around the world. The ballots were read by Global Council Chair, Rita Semel, and Executive Director, Charles Gibbs, tabulated by staff and observed by Iftekhar Hai, Paul Chaffee and Alice Kawahatsu.

Each region easily met the requirement that 50% of the eligible voting members participate. Latin America had the highest percentage of participation – 100% of eligible CCs (17 of 17) participated. Asia had the greatest number of participating CCs – 64 CCs voted in Asia.



Once the results from a region were confirmed, all those present offered the following prayer, which all of you are encouraged to offer on behalf of all the newly elected trustees and the rest of the URI community:

May these trustees receive blessing and support to fulfill the vision and values of the Preamble, Purpose and Principles of URI. We hold in gratitude all candidates who stood for leadership, and all CCs who voted, and all who collectively serve the URI. May they serve URI with strength, love and joy.

A list of the new trustees, including each trustee's region, name, tradition, one CC/MCC affiliation, and city and country or state may be found in the Features section of www.uri.org.

2. Executive Director's Letter, April 2005

Dear Friends of the United Religions Initiative,

I refuse to live in an "Age of Terror", though many

politically powerful people and extremists, bent on destruction and death, see our time through that lens.

I choose, along with URI members and countless other sisters and brothers around the world, to live in an "Age of Transformation".

This age of transformation is no more risk free than an age of terror, but it is an age of active hope rather than disabling fear. An age of cooperation rather than domination. An age for healing ancient and modern wounds rather than perpetuating an endless, escalating cycle of wounding. An age not for promoting violence, but for creating peace.

Those who believe that this is an age of transformation, and URI members are among their ranks, choose to risk reaching out to those we do not know to create cultures of peace, justice and healing. We choose to value, indeed celebrate our diverse national, religious and cultural identities, while claiming a unifying identity as citizens of this Earth and children of one sacred source of all life.

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3. United Religions Initiative Global Council Endorses Darfur Unity Statement

The United Religions Initiative Global Council in March voted to endorse the Darfur Unity Statement in recognition of the continuing necessity for international intervention in the Darfur region of Sudan. Originally signed by over 100 non-governmental agencies in July of 2004, the Save Darfur Coalition's Unity Statement remains relevant today with over two million refugees in need of aid and death toll estimates in the region now exceeding 300,000 (the statement can be found at www.savedarfur.org).

Alarmed at the lack of resolution to the crisis in Darfur, a small group of URI Cooperation Circle leaders informally convened in March as the URI Darfur Action Group. Representing URI members from across the United States and from Brazil, Israel, Ethiopia, Nepal, Pakistan and Chile, the group requested that the URI Global Council show its solidarity and desire for peace by endorsing the Unity Statement. "Even in this late day we are not powerless to act, to help a desperate people avoid further atrocities and the suffering of refugee life," said one of the group's conveners, Stephen Fuqua. "Though the URI Global Council

cannot make policy pronouncements on behalf of URI members, it can speak for itself."

Reporting on the Council's agreement to support the Unity Statement, URI Executive Director Charles Gibbs said "the Standing Committee enthusiastically supports having URI be added as a signatory to the Unity Statement. A key factor leading to the committee's support was that the request came from our grassroots representatives and members who had been seriously considering this issue."

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4. South East Asia & Pacific Regional Assembly

"Creating a Common Ground for Friendship and Peace." was the theme for the first meeting of Cooperation Circle (CC) representatives and members of the URI Board of Trustees in the region of Southeast Asia, Indonesia, and the Pacific. In late February, URI leaders came together in The Philippines, hosted by the Peacemakers Circle CC.



They came to Manila from Malaysia, New Zealand, Australia, Indonesia, and Cambodia, and were joined by a visiting Global Council member from Pakistan. Much ground was covered as they shared visions for developing a strong URI presence in the region, visited sites of local URI action in Muslim-Christian dialogue and cooperation, and created strong bonds of commitment to their work.

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5 . Youth Interfaith Encounter Focuses on Water

On World Water Day, March 22nd, the environmental students' group for interfaith encounter addressed the theme of water at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. After a round of introductions to include new members, each participant shared a personal association with the word water. Water was examined both as a cause for war, and also a symbol for peace and compromise. It was noted that in conflict zones around the world, including the Middle East, agreements around water are usually kept, even when other agreements are broken.

Both the Torah and the Koran refer to areas where water is a scarce resource and therefore need to be treated carefully. Examples ranged from a source from the Talmud saying that a well appearing in a dream is a symbol for peace, wisdom or life to the biblical story of the parting of the Red Sea waters in which water plays a threatening role - that of drowning people.

The student participants all provided enriching input from different fields of study, and the next meeting will continue the theme of water from the Muslim perspective. These students ask us all to "... use this report to remind people to save water, treat it with sensitivity and keep it pure."

Read This and other stories of URI Cooperation Circles around the world

6 . Upcoming North America Regional Assembly

Hospitality, Gratitude and Sharing: Interfaith Action in our World—is the title of the first joint gathering of the North America Interfaith Network (NAIN) (www.nain.org) and the United Religions Initiative (www.uri.org), promising to be a watershed event in interfaith visioning and action. It will take place August 12-16 2005, in Las Vegas, Nevada. Five hundred participants are expected from the USA and Canada.

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, 12 August 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. Monday evening's 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 from genuine interfaith dialogue, come join in as we enter more fully into that dialogue!

NAIN Connect Information and Registration

7. Your Gift Makes a Difference!

Please contribute to URI's vital peacebuilding work. URI needs your financial support! Your gifts ensure we can continue our work for peace, justice, and healing throughout the world. URI accepts gifts of cash, stock, property and service. You can make a donation online or mail your gift to United Religions Initiative, P.O. Box 29242, San Francisco, CA 94129.



Contact URI

United Religions Initiative
P.O. Box 29242
San Francisco, CA 94129
USA

Web: www.uri.org

Phone: +1.415.561.2300

Fax: +1.415.561.2313

Email: office@uri.org

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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.

`{account.address}`, `{email}`