



URI InterfaithNews.Net - June 2006

Welcome to the e-zine InterfaithNews.Net sponsored by **United Religions Initiative** (URI) and **s.a.f net**.

Reacting to religious fanaticism and the challenges of advancing and sustaining a more equitable civilization, a global interfaith movement has sprung from the grassroots of religion and spirituality. InterfaithNews.Net (INN) seeks to chronicle this movement by focusing primarily on positive interfaith and religious news, events, and resources.

Dear Readers,

I apologize for the fact that, although the website was updated in April, the most recent e-mail announcing articles came way back in February. Thus in this issue I am including brief descriptions of each article from the past two issues.

As always, each description is followed by a link to the full article on the InterfaithNews.Net website. Please do stop by to read stories both heartwarming and deeply saddening, stories both reflective and action-oriented. Each story has a form at the bottom through which you may leave your comments and thoughts for other readers. On the right side of the main home page screen, you will also find links to several intriguing articles that cannot be legally copied to InterfaithNews.Net.

In my April **editorial**, I wrote, "If we are to prevent a firestorm of religious violence, we must take the lessons of interfaith dialogue into our workplaces, into social justice, into the halls of governance, into our places of worship. And we must share the stories of our success, the means to our actions, and the inspiration for our visions — that we might advance together towards a future that is sustainable, just, and spiritually fulfilling for people the world over."

If you have a story you would like to publish about interfaith cooperation, religious news, or multifaith resources, you may send it to **editor@interfaithnews.net** for consideration.

Peace be with you,
Stephen A. Fuqua
Editor, *InterfaithNews.Net*

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For older articles, please visit <http://www.interfaithnews.net>. Submit articles and send comments to editor@interfaithnews.net.

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Leaven Collection for the Poor - Jerusalem Youth Interfaith Encounter

With the latest tragedies in Israel and Palestine threatening to shatter the uneasy truce of the past year, it feels heartening to read stories of Muslims, Jews, and Christians engaging in constructive face-to-face dialogue and action. The Interfaith Encounter Association is a network of a dozen or so "encounter" groups in Israel, including the Jerusalem Youth Interfaith Encounter. This spring, these youth struck upon a unique service project: gathering leaven from Jewish households that would otherwise go unused during Pesach and distributing it to Arab families.

Read the article

Changing Paradigms in Interreligious Understanding

Shanta Premawardhana, Associate General Secretary for Interfaith Relations, National Council of Churches USA, has graciously allowed us to republish a presentation he recently made at the Connecticut Council for Interreligious Understanding. He begins with a beautiful vision of children from all over the world playing together. With that peaceful meditation in mind, he addresses the nature of interfaith dialogue, delving into and explicating four different types of dialogue that he identifies as Dialogue of Life, Dialogue of Action, Dialogue of Contemplation, Dialogue of Theological Reflection.

Read the article

Where the youth are

The question "where are the youth?" is one I have often heard at interfaith gatherings. As one who is still considered amongst the youth (though well into my career), I often feel this myself. At recent gatherings I have taken to looking around the room, wondering who amongst the participants will still be around in 10, 20 years. The interfaith movement only has as much potential as it has human resources. On the other hand, how many of my distinguished older colleagues were involved in interfaith work in their youth? They are there now, and I have faith that left to their own devices, an equal number of today's young people will turn to interfaith work once they get past the prime of their career-building, courtship, and parenting years. Still, interfaith groups need to be developing their young leadership today. In a recent edition of his Sightings project, Martin E. Marty from the University of Chicago Divinity School continues on this theme.

Read the article

Commit to sustainable development, fight global warming, Vatican tells U.N.

"The international community must commit to sustainable resource management policies that place the needs of the human family and protection of the environment above commercial and industrial concerns, the Vatican's representative to the United Nations told a May 11 session of the U.N. Economic and Social Council's Commission on Sustainable Development."

Read the article

USAID Announces Funding for the Inter Religious Campaign Against Malaria in Mozambique

"Malaria does not discriminate between Muslims and Christians." The Inter Religious Campaign Against Malaria in Mozambique, working with the Washington National Cathedral in Washington, D.C., USA, was recently awarded a major grant to fight malaria from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

Read the article

Update on Arrests of Baha'is in Iran

In mid may, 54 members of the Baha'i community of Shiraz, Iran were arrested while teaching children in a religiously-neutral setting. No indication has been given as to the cause of their arrest. While most have been released, a few remain in jail. Many in the international community see this as continuing evidence of the renewed persecution — alluded to in our April editorial — of the Bahá'ís in their homeland of Iran, where they are the largest religious minority yet do not enjoy equal rights with the majority religion or other minority religions.

Read the article

Combating HIV/AIDS demands creative partnerships, religious leaders say

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the recognition of HIV/AIDS as a new disease. In early June the United Nations held a "High-Level Meeting on HIV/AIDS" to review world progress toward lessening the impact of this pandemic. On the eve of the meeting, dozens of groups representing every world religion gathered for a prayer service and a press conference addressing the need for urgent action beyond mere words and declarations.

Read the article

NCC General Secretary Reacts to Release of Christian Peacemakers

"Edgar expresses thanks for release of Christian Peacemakers, and thanks Council on American Islamic Relations for support"

I did not at first follow at all the kidnapping of a Christian Peacemakers Team (CPT) in Iraq, nor the execution of journalist Tom Fox. My immediate, unfounded

assumption was that this was a missionary group who shouldn't have gotten in the middle of an Islamic civil war. I couldn't have been more wrong. Quoting from the Mission of the CPT, "Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) offers an organized, nonviolent alternative to war and other forms of lethal inter-group conflict. CPT provides organizational support to persons committed to faith-based nonviolent alternatives in situations where lethal conflict is an immediate reality or is supported by public policy." I am humbled by the devotion to religious principle that lead these four into Iraq. Truly Mr. Fox's passing is a martyr's death.

Read the article

Prospects for Inter-Religious Understanding

The Pew Research Center recently conducted an opinion poll in the United States looking at public tolerance for religious groups and inter-religious cooperation. While they found that both evangelical Christianity and Islam are not well accepted in the U.S. compared to other groups, their analysis (presented below) shows that Catholics and Jews are seen much more favorably than they once were, suggesting capacity for a continued dynamism in the American public's perception of religions.

Read the article

Our common life together

Eboo Patel, Executive Director of the Interfaith Youth Core, weighs in on the apparent conflict of loyalties between western free speech and Islamic religious practices, refusing "to fall prey to" the black and white mindset that insists on choosing one side over the other.

Read the article

Philippines kicks off forum to spur interfaith dialogue and coexistence

Following on last year's ground-breaking conference on Interfaith Cooperation for Peace at the UN, which brought together members of governments, the UN, and NGOs, the Philippine Mission announced last week the creation of the Tripartite Forum on Interfaith Cooperation for Peace. The launch event was attended by representatives from more than 60 nations, UN departments, and civil society groups, including the five officers of the Committee of Religious NGOs (Soka Gakkai International, Temple of Understanding, Religions for Peace, Baha'is of the USA, United Religions Initiative).

Read the article**Bridges of dialogue, discovery and respect: the Second World Congress of Imams and Rabbis for Peace**

Meeting from March 20 through 22nd, a group of 150 Jewish Rabbis and Islamic Imams gathered in Seville, Spain for dialogue and collaborative action planning, with the theme of "Islam and Judaism as instruments of peace - recognition and respect of others." Two of the participants, Co-Executive Directors of Children of Abraham, share their personal experiences of the conference, its conflicts, means, and results.

Read the article**An Open Letter to Interfaith Activists**

A student at the American University in Washington, DC, Fait Mahdini, calls on interfaith activists to do more to attract youth in their quest to counter messages of religious intolerance and violence. In so doing, he outlines a vision of using the arts to inspire and uplift the pluralistic message of interfaith activism, going beyond academic conferences and statements of unity.

Read the article**Unity in Faith: The Prince of Wales' speech delivered at Al-Azhar**

On the first day of spring, March 21, Charles, Prince of Wales, spoke to a gathering at the University of Al-Azhar in Egypt. His speech focused on the commonalities of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam — all based in the Abrahamic traditions — and the need for all parties to look deeply at their understanding of the other, (re) learning to appreciate the strength of each and the examples history has for us of fruitful collaboration between the three.

Read the article

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