Dear Friends—

Welcome to the United Religions Initiative (URI) Year in Review 2006.

For more than ten years, URI has been at work around the world, confronting what may be the defining issue of our age, religious conflict.

From the days of human history right through the publication of this morning’s New York Times, religion has helped find ways, programs and guidelines. Today, faith leaders from different traditions are working together to find solutions to our world’s greatest challenges.

This is just the beginning. In a world of nearly six billion people, we have just 340 Cooperation Circles ongoing, one million people a year. We look forward to the day when URI’s Growth and Community Centers are everywhere, and all people, of every faith, will come together in peace and harmony.

Dr. Sudarshan Kapoor and Dr. and Mrs. Albert R. Lowrey stepped in to help resolve once and for all the ancient rivalry.

In Ethiopia, against a backdrop of growing violence and political instability, young Ethiopian adults have formed a URI CC in Addis Ababa. Through the URI Peacebuilding Code of Conduct, they are working toward shared goals.

And in the 21-year war between the Ugandan government and the Lord’s Resistance Army, Anglican and Catholic CC leaders from these four conflict zones gather periodically under the leadership of the Rev. and Mrs. Francis Hagey with you.

That day will come. We look forward to sharing it with you.

With care and gratitude,

The Rt. Rev. William E. Swing
Global Council Chair

United Religions Initiative 2006 Year in Review

Interfaith Cooperation for Peace, Justice and Healing

Supporting Interfaith Action

URI is a vital community of people around the world who give their time, their hard work and their resources to create a more peaceful, just and sustainable world.touches billions of lives and have made great progress toward resolving many long-standing conflicts.

Offices
Mr. William Neuman, Chair
Mr. Mariano Vale, Vice Chair, Europe
Mr. Irwin Katriel, Vice Chair, USA
Rev. Heng Sure, Assistant Secretary, USA

Officers
Dr. Ratnam Alagiah, Assistant Treasurer, Australia
Rev. Heng Sure, Assistant Secretary, USA

Cooperation for Peace, Justice and Healing

Mr. Adam S. Boehler
Vedanta Society of No. Vallarta Institute
Mr. and Mrs. William K. Bowes, Jr.
William K. Bowes, Jr. Foundation
The James R. and Donna H. Turner Foundation, Inc.
The Celebrate Foundation
The Taube Foundation for Jewish Life and Culture
The San Francisco Foundation
Mrs. Barbara P. Deasy
The Very Rev. Rick Lawson
Ms. L. J. Schwebach
Rev. and Mrs. Francis Hagey
Mr. and Mrs. Robert Morey
Mr. and Mrs. Robert A. Lurie
Rev. Dr. Carol C. Saysette
Mrs. Betty Sellars
Mr. Robert Nissen and Ms. Iris Spellings
Mr. and Mrs. Charles Elliott
Mrs. Margaret M. Paul
Mr. Robert J. and Mrs. Mary Page Sims
Mr. Robert J. and Mrs. Mary Page Sims
Rev. Sue Singer
Mr. and Mrs. Charles Elliott

Supporting Interfaith Action

In Ethiopia, against a backdrop of growing violence and political instability, young Ethiopian adults have formed a URI CC in Addis Ababa. Through the URI Peacebuilding Code of Conduct, they are working toward shared goals.

And in the 21-year war between the Ugandan government and the Lord’s Resistance Army, Anglican and Catholic CC leaders from these four conflict zones gather periodically under the leadership of the Rev. and Mrs. Francis Hagey with you.

That day will come. We look forward to sharing it with you.

With care and gratitude,

The Rt. Rev. William E. Swing
Global Council Chair

Through URI’s Most Urgent Need Peacebuilding Program, it is the urgent need that prompts our work. URI’s goal is to mobilize globally committed and committed for the hard work of making peace between people of different faiths. Through this grant program we are creating a (peace-building) capacity for the entire URI network.

"INTER-RELIGIOUS POTENTIAL FOR VIOLENCE WILL NOT BE SOLVED BY MILITARY WEAPONS OR POLICE ACTION...THE COMMUNITY ABSOLUTELY MUST ARRIVE AT A PLACE OF HEALTHY DIALOGUE AND COMMON CONSTRUCTIVE ACTION, EVERYWHERE.”

—BISHOP WILLIAM J. SWING, URI’s President, Speaks before the United Nations High Level Conference on an International Day, Sept. 21, 2006
**Year in Review 2006**

"I will never forget the songs chanted by the delegates," said Dr. Taleb, a Palestinian URI volunteer leader. "Ali Bushnaq, a Palestinian living in the United Arab Emirates, is a world-class opera singer, a diplomat with the African Union, and the UN Special Envoy to nós-occupied areas. When he came to visit us some months ago, he sang a song for the delegates. It made everyone cry, it brought them to tears." 

**Peacebuilding:**

"We are not so different after all." A documentary is in process to share the stories of the delegates who attended URI’s summer training institute in South Africa. With more than 700 participants from 58 countries, the institute allowed them to engage in practical ways to create cultures of peace, justice and healing in their communities. In North Carolina, the Henderson County URI Council sponsored a summer camp for youth and police. Participants reflected on their experiences and developed strategies for integrating the arts into their work to foster healing and understanding.

**Regional assemblies help URI leaders deepen relationships, share lessons learned, and mobilize resources on a global or multi-national scale. Like URI’s global communication network, the sense of community and shared purpose unites grass-roots groups into a coordinated global movement.**

2006 brought URI many unprecedented opportunities to make peace for people at the grassroots level and to support them in their efforts.

In June URI launched an Online Interfaith Program, bringing together CC leaders to form regional tasks forces that are working on helping the Philippines and Uganda achieve peace. URI leaders have been active in the peace process in Darfur, Sudan.

Also last year, URI’s Global Council awarded and matched many CCs’ UN programs sponsored by Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Wangari Maathai to plant over 300 million trees worldwide. With support from the Tanenbaum Foundation, URI undertook an intensive study of how CCs can work together around the world to help end global warming.

With URI’s increased attention to global networking, URI expanded strongly in 2006, bringing 30 new CCs into its family, including:

- Singapore South CC, India
- Center for Multifaith Interfaith and Other Networks CC, Australia
- Ecumenical Network Malta-Eu CC, Montenegro
- South of Peace CC, Pakistan
- United CC, China
- Women Leaders Network (WLN-UR) CC, Middleeast
- Youth Action to Develop CC, Malaysia

As URI grows, so does its capital needs. That is where we need your support, so that we can fulfill URI’s mission, which is to bring people together toward a shared vision of peace, justice, and healing around the world.

**Working for Peace, Justice and Healing around the World**

North America: Dynamic Educational Courses to Promote Change

In 2006, URI was becoming a valuable resource for peace-building education, especially for the people seeking practical ways to create cultures of peace, justice and healing in their communities. In North Carolina, the Henderson County URI Council sponsored a summer camp for youth and police. Participants reflected on their experiences and developed strategies for integrating the arts into their work to foster healing and understanding.

**South East Asia and the Pacific: Muslims and Christian Relations Improve**

Seven years ago sporadic violence erupted in Melanesia and Malaysia following the violence in Mindanao-state with the 9/11. Catholic officials in Sarawak and Melanesia, to acknowledge the PENIDA’s call for peace and shared understanding, held a conference in the Philippines. The conference was attended by URI leaders and brought about an understanding of the need to relate to each other peaceably. URI leaders from the region participated in a series of workshops and seminars to develop strategies for building a new relationship between the communities.

**Middle East and North Africa**: CCs Become a Resource for Teaching Peace

Mohamed and Christian youth leaders of Najad Interfaith Action (NIA) CC express a spirit for peace during the peace festival for Palestinian refugees. The dynamic interfaith dialogues were held while students were engaged in studying and craft activities. Although they are different in their religious backgrounds, they have come together to share their perspectives on peace and justice and to learn from each other.

**Africa**: Interfaith Peaceful Boys' Project May Inspire New Approach to Conflict’s Problems

A unique 2006 launched effort that is helping to make peace in Malawi began in February 2005, reporting promising results. In this unique initiative, young men from different ideological backgrounds are engaged in non-violent training to help build a peaceful society. In the Malawi project, young men are selected from various faith and non-faith backgrounds and are trained in non-violent techniques to prevent them from engaging in violent conflict.

**South America**: Transforming Communities for Peace

"It has been the most interesting project I have ever been involved in," says Dr. Taleb, a Palestinian URI volunteer leader. "We have been able to bring together people from different backgrounds and help them understand each other. The project has been very successful in creating a sense of community and a shared purpose."