



URI Europe Dialogue-Letter No. 3

January/February 2005

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1. From the URI EEC (European Executive Committee)

Dear friends,

the third edition of our URI Europe Dialogue-Letter is before you.
We hope that you like the material presented!
As always feel free to contact us with any suggestions and constructive criticism.

We also invite you to share your views on the following question:

“What is most inspiring for you in your tradition at this period of time?”

We will be happy to share your views in the next edition of this Dialogue-Letter.

peace and blessings to you!

Mr. Dr. Raschid Bockemuehl, Dortmund/Germany, Treasurer URI Europe
Mr. Shaikh Bashir Ahmad Dultz, Bonn/Germany, Member URI Europe
Mr. Patrick Hanjoul, Antwerp/Belgium, Member URI Europe

Ms. Annie Imbens-Fransen, Eindhoven/The Netherlands, Member URI Europe
Mr. Jean-Mathieu Lochten, Brussels/Belgium, President URI Europe
Mr. Deepak Naik, Coventry/United Kingdom, Vice-President URI Europe/Global Council member
Ms. Heidi Rautionmaa, Espo/Finland, URI Global Council at-large-trustee
Ms. Karimah Stauch, Bonn/Germany, Co-ordinator URI Europe

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2. European URI CC-activities – invitations, introductions, reports

2. a) European URI CC-activities - New issue of the Initiative Interfaith Magazine

Initiative interfaith magazine

We are pleased to announce publication of issue 13 of 'Initiative' interfaith magazine.

This interesting and colourful 48 page issue explores the theme of 'Sacred Fire' which includes contributions by South American Indian, Zoroastrian, Christian, Hindu and Pagan writers.

Informed professionals explore the theme of the 'ethics of biotechnology' relating to issues of cloning and stem cell research etc.

Famous author and broadcaster Mark Tully features as our keynote writer and Umm Hanie' Rebler and Shiban Akbar contribute thoughts on Sufi mysticism. Tibetan Buddhist art, paintings of world sacred sites and photographs of faith celebrations add to the colourful dimension of 'Initiative'.

Please see our website www.initiativemagazine.co.uk
or to request a copy (Euro 10 including postage and packing) contact the
Editor Heather Wells: info@initiativemagazine.co.uk.

Write to:
PO Box 110,
Lancaster LA2 6GN
England.

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2. b) European URI CC-activities - Invitation to the 32nd International Student Conference of Jews, Christians and Muslims in Europe - co-organized by the German Muslim-League Bonn CC

**“Religious Perspectives on Contemporary Society
Living in a Culture of Fear”**

The conference is organised by the **Standing Conference of Jews, Christians and Muslims in Europe (JCM)** and has taken place uninterruptedly for over 30 years in the Hedwig-Dransfeld-House in Bendorf, Germany.

The JCM Planning Team in cooperation with a number of experienced partner institutions in Germany and Britain is continuing this tradition and is **inviting you** to come to Wuppertal and dialogue.

Our aim is to create a space in which people can meet. We hope we can bring together knowledge of other religions, but also our own personal experience, which will have an impact on our studies and professional work.

We are especially inviting

- students, teachers & lecturers of different theological disciplines
- students and practitioners in social & community work; in the teaching, therapeutic and counselling professions
- workers in religious institutions
- those with a special interest in this theme

The conference is open to **people of all ages**.

Families are welcome to attend. **Child care** will be provided if requested.

Conference Languages are German and English.

The three keynote lectures will be given in one of the conference languages. A written translation of the text into the other conference language will be available.

During workshops and group sessions translation will be provided by participants.

In the **Jewish-Christian-Muslim Discussion Groups**, participants exchange personal and professional experiences and can learn from one another. It is here that the JCM dialogue on an individual level takes place.

Creative workshops may also be offered, such as meditative dance, text study, arts, music and meditation. Please bring along any musical instruments and music.

Additional workshops (**Speaker's Corner**) may be offered by participants to discuss current events or inform about initiatives and developments of special interest.

All participants are invited to each others' **religious services**.

Conference Centre:

Ökumenische Werkstatt Wuppertal

Missionsstr.9

42285 Wuppertal

Tel.: 0202-89004-810

Fax: 0202-89004-805

oeuwe-wup@vemission.org

www.vemission.org/werkstatt/wuppertal

The **Oekumenische Werkstatt** (Ecumenical Centre) is situated among gardens and woodlands above the river Wupper only 15 Minutes by bus from Wuppertal city centre and the main train station. For more information please visit our homepage or e-mail us.

The closest **train station** is the Wuppertal main station; the closest **airport** is Duesseldorf.

Conference Fees:

The conference fee is:

Double room en suite 325,00

Double room, shared bath 290,00

Single room en suite 450,00

Single room, shared bath 390,00

Special reduced fee 165,00

(for students and people with low or no income, accommodation in rooms of 5)

The conference fee includes room and board, programme costs and a fee of 30,00 organisational costs of the sponsoring organisations.

We are grateful again this year, for **donations** that would allow people who have financial difficulties - particularly students - to participate.
In case of **financial hardship**, some bursaries may be available. **Please** contact the organisers.

All meals are vegetarian, although fish may be served.

Application:

Please complete the enclosed **application form** and return it to Leo Baeck College.
Closing date for applications: 5th February 2005

Beginning of Conference:

7th March 2005 with supper at 6.00 p.m., followed by the opening session at 8.00 p.m.

End of Conference:

14th March 2005 at 11.30 a.m., lunch available on request

JCM Planning Team:

Jewish: Rabbi Professor Jonathan Magonet, LBC-CJE, London
Rabbi Rebecca Quassim-Birk, London

Christian: Stefan Hartmann, Odernheim
Rota Vavilova, Oxford
Constanze Vieregg, Berlin

Muslim: Chadigah M. Kissel, DMLB, Bonn
Dr. Jabal Buaben, CSIC, University of Birmingham
Halima Krausen, Hamburg
Karimah Stauch, DMLB, Bonn

Ecumenical Center Wuppertal:

Jutta Beldermann, Ecumenical Centre Wuppertal

For administrative enquiries, please contact:

Irit Burkeman, Leo Baeck College,
80 East End Road, London, N3 2SY
Tel: (+44) 208-349 5600
Fax: (+44) 208-349 5619
e-mail: irit.burkemann@lbc-cje.ac.uk

or

Stefan Hartmann
Bannmühle, 55571 Odernheim, Germany
Tel: (0049) 06755-1735
Fax: (0049) 06755-1807
e-mail: JCM04@web.de

Partners in Dialogue/Sponsoring Organisations:

JCM – THE STANDING CONFERENCE OF JEWS, CHRISTIANS AND MUSLIMS IN EUROPE
OEKUMENISCHE WERKSTATT WUPPERTAL
LEO BAECK COLLEGE – CENTRE FOR JEWISH EDUCATION (LBC - CJE), LONDON
DEUTSCHE MUSLIM – LIGA BONN e.V. (DMLB)
CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF ISLAM AND CHRISTIAN – MUSLIM RELATIONS, UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM
THE BENDORF FORUM

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2. c) European URI-efforts - URI CC “Movement without a Name”, a Belgian Social Culture NGO, introduces itself

Empowering others

Movement without a Name (MwN), in Dutch ‘Bond zonder Naam’, is a Belgian Social Culture NGO with approximately 20 initiatives in different fields. We work with more than 1500 volunteers.

Our aim is to empower individuals and groups. We work on an increasing awareness among people for the different problems in their private lives, their families and the different forgotten groups in our society (poor people, former prisoners, abused children, women in distress, illiterate people, etc).

We also try to create initiatives where people can find rest, can reflect about themselves and their lives. We encourage our 165.000 members by sending monthly positive proverbs and invite them to reflect on it and to do something on a voluntary basis for others with fewer chances. The Movement also exists in 12 different countries all over the world.

Bond zonder Naam
Patrick Hanjoul
Director

Our address:
Bond zonder Naam vzw
Sint-Jacobsmarkt 39
B-2000 Antwerpen
Belgium

Tel: 32 - (0)3 201 22 10
Fax 32 – (0)3 201 22 15
patrick.hanjoul@bzn.be
www.bzn.be

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2. d) European URI CC-activities - Diary of Events of the URI UK CC

February 2005

Spiritual Elders meet Emerging Visionaries - Nottingham,
Date and venue to be advised

April 2005

April 26, 2005

Spiritual Elders meet Emerging Visionaries - Bradford City Hall, 7.00 pm

For further details of all these events please look onto the website www.uri.org.uk or e-mail: info@uri.org.uk or phone: 0044 (0)17687 77671 the URI UK office

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2. e) European URI CC-efforts - Report about the URI Berlin CC meeting of December 12, 2004, Berlin, Germany

Meeting of URI Berlin CC on of December 12th, 2004

The URI group Berlin met the second time in the club Ha-Atelier, Oranienburger Str., in Berlin-Kreuzberg. The discussion concentrated mainly on the understanding of ones own religion.

Egon Savelsberg from the Jewish perspective started his reading by saying that human language would not work if it hand not a relation to the truth. Here he understood truth as a synonym to God. He related to Augustin and his teaching on what God is not. A story from the Mishna gave us a final impression on the Jewish perspective of truth and interpretation and history.

From an Islamic point of you view our friends Idris Koenecke and Taufiq Mempel stated that they did not find to religion by dogma but rather by personal impression and experience. The religious law helps to stay on the path on which we became lovers, Idris said.

Reinhard Schaenke, our Christian friend, spoke on his experience with the New Testament and how the human being should work with the light in daily action. He said that in the Forum of Human rights, which takes place in Erfurt (Germany), in summer 2005, there will be a big focus on the formula "the relationship between human and human and the relationship between human and earth" but no word is in the papers on the relationship between human and heaven. Perhaps this will one of the focus points URI Berlin CC will concentrate on in the next month.

Next meeting of URI Berlin CC will be at the end of January. We will visit the Jewish prayer ceremony on Shabbat. Our internal Topic will be "trusting in God"

Taufiq Mempel, URI Berlin CC
TNMempel@aol.com

Note: The URI Berlin CC has also started an activity for children and parents from different religions, and these have met for the first time.

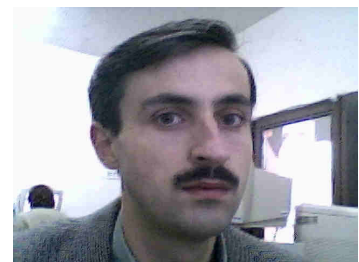
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2. f) Tatomir Ion-Marius, new URI-affiliate from Romania, introduces himself

Date: Nov 16, 2004

My name is Tatomir Ion-Marius, I am 25 years old, I m from Romania, born in Resita, and living in Sighetu-Marmatiei, the northest of my country.

I am a member of the International Society for Philosophers(Sheffield,UK), member of the Universal Oneness United, a spiritual organization with the motto: "Love is All there is & We are All One", (from Sinton,Texas,USA), and Representative for Romania of the World Peace Prayer Society, spreading with all my efforts the message and universal prayer:
May Peace Prevail on Earth!



I speak some foreign languages at fluent level, so it will be an opportunity to take the contact with many of you.

I wish you a Happy New Year, and may you have all the Blessings!
I m happy I m a part of this wonderful Work and Team! Legjobbakat! Bessern wunschen! Mes voeux
chez vous! Tanti auguri! Buena suerte a todos!
Thank you!

Truly,
Tatomir
tatomir@usa.com

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2. g) Greetings from Ayse Sidika Oktay, Isparta, Turkey

From: "Ayse Sidika Oktay" <asoktay@hotmail.com>
To: urieurope-friends@uriglobal.org
Subject: happy new year
Date: December 28, 2004

Hello Friends,

I wish happy a new year to you, to your family. I hope new year bring peace, physical and spiritual
harmony to our lives all. I hope, less people die because of intolerance, wars, drugs, next year.
I hope, people try to forgive and understand each other more next year.

And merry Christmas to all Christian friends.

AYSE SIDIKA OKTAY
Asistant Professor
Suleyman Demirel University
Faculty of Theology
Department of Philosophy and Religious Sciences
Isparta/Turkey
asoktay@hotmail.com

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3. URI global

3. a) URI global – URI Religions and Traditions website relaunched

Theme: [uri-contacts] URI Religions & Traditions
Date: 10.11.2004
From: Kristin Lee-Swenson, URI global staff, San Francisco

Dear Friends,

We have just relaunched the Religions & Traditions section of our website. This section of our website
provides a guide to world religions and spiritual traditions. This website is currently being advertised
throughout North America with a mailing that included our new bookmarks promoting this and the URI
Kids website (also about world religions and spiritual traditions - geared for ages 9 to 14).

To see the new Religions & Traditions website go to:
<http://www.uri.org/religions>

To view the URI Kids website, go to <http://www.uri.org/kids>

In time, we hope to add to Joel's original content and include more religions and spiritual traditions and deeper levels of information for each one.

Thank you and kudos to Cory and Deepak (SF Staff) for their hard work to import content and give a fresh new design and navigation for the site!

Thank you also to Stephen Fuqua for his original work to adapt Joel Beversluis' Sourcebook for Earth's Community of Religions content for our website!

And of course, thanks go to the Kalliopeia Foundation for funding the project!

In peace,
Kristin

PS. If you find errors in the functionality or in the content, please send them to Deepak at deepak@uri.org and he will make adjustments or route the concern appropriately.

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3. b) URI global – URI-Website www.uri.org relaunched

It's time to return to our website www.uri.org !! Not only have we changed the face of the site, but more importantly-we have radically changed the insides to a user-friendly medium that will more authentically display the vibrant and growing activity of URI. We will be able to bring you up-to-the-minute news and stories of the creative ways inspired local groups are bridging religious divides. In the coming months, we will be adding URI sites from Latin America, Korea, and Europe, and providing our basic information in many languages. Our website is our portal to the world, and we will constantly try to make it work as well as possible for our worldwide audience.

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3. c) URI global – 9 new CCs (Cooperation-Circles) approved in December 2004

On December 22, URI welcomed nine new Cooperation Circles to our global community, which now includes 279 circles around the world. They are from South India (2), Pakistan (3), Mozambique (2), Cambodia and The Philippines. Ranging in size from 10 to 100 members, these CCs focus on a diverse array of interests: Muslim-Christian dialogue, youth building peace, holistic medicine, teaching interfaith respect in schools, women speaking out for peace, providing tuition for poor Muslim and Christian children, and coordinating interfaith student groups.

Following the list of newly approved CCs with some further information on each.

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1. Interfaith Students Movement of India CC **Region: Asia, South India**

Contact person: Rev. M.O. Oommen
Vicar, Jerusalem Mar Thoma Church, R.S.P.O.
Tirvalla-689111, **India**
Phone : -91-469-2603027; Mobile: 09447305874

Email: karickam@sancharnet.in

Current Membership: 15

Traditions: Christians of various denominations, Muslims and Hindus

Governance: by an executive council elected by the Annual General Body

CC Purpose: To promote harmonious co-existence among students, religions and all sections of the Society.

CC Dream: To see the world as one family.

CC Highlights: This is a pioneering movement in India. We have initiated the process of starting units in various educational institutions. We hope to take the message of peace to the young minds, so as to foster deep relationships.

Interview: by Abraham Karickam, URI India south zone leader

This pioneering Students Movement in India, started with the whole hearted support of URI South India Region. This organization will work as an umbrella for various Inter-faith Student Units in different educational institutions. Programs include inter-faith dialogues, study of various religions and ideologies, youth exchange, programs to overcome violence, peace building institutes. This is an association with great potential as the younger generation is the main target. It will go a long way in containing religious fanaticism and dangerous fundamentalism.

Office bearers are: Patrons Most Rev. Dr. Philipose Mar Chrysostom Mar Thoma Metropolitan; Swami Samgrananda; Imam AbduSchukoor Maulavi

Advisors: Swami Agnivesh; Dr. A. K. Merchant; Dr. Meher Master Moos; Fr. Albert Nambiaparampil; President: Rev. M. O. Oommen, Vicar, Jerusalem Mar Thoma Church.

Vice Presidents: Prof. M. S. Indiradevi, Devi Prasadam, Muthoor 2. M. Habibullah, Zulfi Manzil, General Secretary: Rajaneesh V. Pillai, Teacher, Govt. Higher Secondary, Puthuppally, Kottayam Student Secretaries: . Sajan Kumar; Sabeena T.H

2. Interfaith Association, Kanjirapally CC

Region: Asia, South India

Contact person: Dr. Prameela Devi J.

Aparna Anakal, Kamjirapally,

Kerala 686508 **INDIA**

Phone : 04828 206866

Email: drprameeladevi@rediffmail.com

Current Membership: 11

Traditions: Hindus, Christians, Muslims

Governance: by the executive committee elected by the general body

CC Purpose: To create a world of religious harmony and peace.

CC Dream: By respecting the different religions and opening dialogues among people of diverse faiths, we hope to cultivate religious harmony.

CC Highlights: We are new organization.

Interview: by Abraham Karickam, URI India south zone leader

This is a new Association of Hindus, Muslims and Christians, the first CC to be registered in the Kottayam District of Kerala. Majority of the members are youths. The leader is Prof. Dr. J. Prameeladevi, a well known poetess of Kerala, who has won several awards. She is an authority in Hindu scriptures, too. She attended the Post Parliament Delhi Peace Summit and will be participating in the Asia Assembly of the URI in Lahore. They came to know about the URI Movement through the Leadership Training conducted at the Cosmic Community Centre CC in Karickam. The group meets regularly in different homes and conducts studies on various religions and ideologies. They participate in community development programs such as literacy mission, Aids awareness, forestation, etc.

3. Flowers of Peace Women's CC

Region: Asia, Pakistan

Contact person: Ms. Shabana Kabil

Catholic Church, Shadman Colony,

Pir Mahal 36300 **Pakistan**

Phone: 92 4656 61299

Email: jchan54600@yahoo.com

Current Membership: 12

Traditions: Shia Muslim, Sunni Muslim, Catholic Christian, Protestant Christian

Governance: democratic

CC Purpose: To promote interfaith harmony and peace among women of different religions, especially among Christians and Muslims. To help Muslim and Christian school children to receive a better education by providing free tuition and books and to help financially poor and deserving Muslim and Christian women at the time of their wedding. To celebrate together religious feast, national and international days such as Women's Day, Mother's Day, International Children's Day, World Peace Day, etc.

CC Dream: To build bridges among Christians and Muslims and people of all other faiths. To provide better education for children to make this world a more peaceful world.

CC Highlights: We have offered free tuitions to Muslim and Christian students. We have helped poor young women financially at the time of their weddings. We have also celebrate World Peace Day and Women's Day as well as Muslim and Christian feasts together,

Interview: by James Channan

I met 12 members of the Women of Peace Women's CC Pakistan in Pir Mahal during the first week of November 2004. They are a group of teachers, social workers, human rights activists and housewives. I have found this group of women dedicated and enthusiastic. They feel proud that through the URI they will be able to put their full contribution for the betterment of humanity, especially for the women and school children. They have come to know about the URI through my visits and through Fr. Javed Younas. I am sure Flowers of Peace CC will distribute flowers of peace and good will not only in Pakistan but through out the world and their fragrance will freshen the whole atmosphere all around the world.

4. All Faiths Harmony CC Pir Mahal Pakistan

Region: Asia, Pakistan

Contact person: Father Javed Younas

Catholic Church, Shadman Colony

Pir Mahal, 36300 **Pakistan**

Phone: 92 4656 61535

Email:

Current Membership: 20

Traditions: Christian Catholics and Christian Protestants, Sunni Muslims, Shia Muslims

Governance: democratic

CC Purpose: to promote harmony, peace and interfaith dialogue though sports, meetings, and by celebration of religious and national holidays.

CC Dream: To live in harmony and peaceful co-existence

CC Highlights: We have organized programs at Christmas, Easter and Breaking of the Fast for Muslims, International Women's Day, Pakistan Independence Day on August 14, We hosted student study camps, youth awareness programs and social awareness programs.

Through these activities Muslims and Christians have joined and worked together for peace and harmony.

Interview: by James Channan

All Faiths Harmony CC have been working in the field of peace and harmony and have organized several programs. I was very happy to see that more than 200 Christians and Muslim participated in their programs from all walks of life. There were teachers, youth, journalists, lawyers, human rights activists, political personalities and also those of the civil administration. At one event, about a dozen persons spoke about interfaith peace and harmony. I also had two hours interview with Fr. Javed. It was very interesting and positive and I see a lot of potential in this CC to work for the Charter of the URI. I am very pleased to see their knowledge about the URI and find this group very sincere in promoting interfaith dialogue and thus bringing healing to the society we are living in. Therefore, I am very impressed by this group and they can bring a very significant change in our society and further strengthen the activities of the URI in Pakistan.

5. Ibteda Cooperation Circle (First Steps)

Region: Asia, Pakistan

Contact persons: Mr. Syed M. Hasnain Gilliani

Ibteda Foundation

Vision Public School System

PD – 1067, Stadium Road

Rawalpindi, 46300, **Pakistan**

Phone: 92 51 4450999

Email:

Current Membership: 100

Traditions: Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, Christianity

Governance: democratic

CC Purpose: To promote interfaith harmony, peace, justice, and understanding in the world. To respect equality among all religions.

CC Dream: To make our world peaceful.

CC Highlights: We have organized programs at Christmas, Easter and Breaking of the Fast of Muslims, International Women's Day, Pakistan Independence Day on 14 August, and we have organized Students Study Camps, Youth Awareness Programs and Social Awareness Programs. Muslims and Christians have joined in these activities and worked for peace and harmony.

Interview: James Channan

I had three meetings and appreciative interviews with Syed M. Hasnain Gilliani and four other members of the Ibteda Foundation CC. I also participated in two other programs which were organized by this organization. I have found them interested in promoting interfaith dialogue and harmony. In the programs which I attended there were believers of Islam, Christianity, Hinduism and Sikhism. These programs were impressive and in the right direction of the PPP of the United Religions Initiative. I am confident that Ibteda Foundation will be able to contribute a lot towards the vision of the URI to promote cultures of peace and healing and bring interfaith harmony. They have a very strong network of about 700 schools all over Pakistan. Because I see their interest, programs and dream to make this world a better place to live in, I am strongly recommending this application for approval and favorable consideration.

6. Women for Peace CC

Region, Africa, Mozambique

Contact person: Marie Castelo-Branco

Rua Aortis Maria Matos

No. 47 1-d Maputo, **Mozambique**

Email: marie_gc@yahoo.com; c/o gudsiah9@hotmail.com

Current Membership: 29

Traditions: Hindu, Christian, Muslim, African traditional, Bahai, Catholic, Espirita

Governance: majority vote by show of hands

CC Purpose: to organize, promote and work for peace.

CC Dream: to organize and hold activities to promote and serve for establishing a culture of peace.

CC Highlights: get-togethers for prayers, meditation, service to the poor and needy children.

Interview: by Sabapathy Alagiah

Most often when religious communities meet the women folk are always at the background with out active participation as the men almost always dominate the show. This situation led to the women forming their own groups and because they wanted to have the opportunity to voice their own views and programs for peace, etc. Several meetings have been held and finally the core group has decided to form the Women for Peace CC. Women leaders from all religious communities in Mozambique will be involved in these activities for peace and to serve the people in need.

7. Medecina Alternativa CC

Region: Africa, Mozambique

Contact person: Mr. Telmo Mascarenhas

1781 Av. Ahmed Sekou Toure

Maputo, **Mozambique**

Phone: 258 1 431 846

Email: gudsiah9@hotmail.com

Current Membership: 32

Traditions: Jewish, Espirita, Catholic, Bahai, Hindu, Budista

Governance: majority show of hands or secret ballot.

CC Purpose: to promote and serve as alternative medicine to cure the sick

CC Dream: to promote alternative medicine to cure the sick and ailing.

CC Highlights: prayer and meditation, meetings to know and understand, get to know each others practices.

Interview: by Sabapathy Alagiah

The Association for Alternative Medicine in Mozambique, "Medecina Alternativa em Mozambique CC", has been meeting since 2002. It is a small group and is gaining more strength convincing others to join and finally forming the Association in 2004. The back bone of this organization is a core group led by Dr. Qudsiah Yaganagi. Their approach to legalizing their Association was very encouraging and finally met the approval of the Minister of Health. Their recent activities have been meeting to get to know each other's practices and having expositions and sharing of literature and knowledge. They organized and observed the International Day of Alternative Medicine with about 6 km walk carrying banners and posters, etc. Their main purpose is to serve the sick who cannot afford to go to the hospitals as it is very expensive and to serve people in the rural areas where hospitals do not exist.

8. Interfaith Youth Circle of Cambodia

Region: Pacific and Southeast Asia

Contact person: Mr. Ros Sam An

Address: Wat prey chiak, Svay Rieng Province, Phnom Penh, **Cambodia**

Phone: 855 16 78 29 51

Email: rossaman@santisena.org

Mr. Nou Chantea: chantea_nou@yahoo.com

Current Membership: 7

Traditions: Buddhist (different lineages), Muslim, Christian

Governance: dialogue with all members and share the best way to decide together

CC Purpose: to build up peace among youth through dialogue and friendship in Cambodia.

CC Dream: To create peace building among youth from different religions in Cambodia and to share information related to peace in Southeast Asia via friendship promotion and discussion.

CC Highlights: We had a women's network monthly meeting to share risks and local efforts at peacebuilding. We encouraged youths from different religions to join in peace activities planning.

Interview: by Marites Africa

The Interfaith Youth Circle of Cambodia was organized by Sam An, a visionary 25-year old Buddhist peace activist who is currently the Administrative Assistant of the Santisena Buddhist Center in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Sam An is also the Project Officer of the Pagoda. He is responsible for coordinating the collaborative activities and projects of the Buddhist monks and the members of the surrounding communities. They engage in peacebuilding initiatives, attend to environmental protection concerns, promote domestic non-violent actions, and the observance of the "land law."

In one phone conversation, he talked about his vision of having a strong Cambodian youth participation in the global endeavor. I suggested that he organize an Interfaith Youth Circle of Cambodia and apply to be a CC of URI. I also got in touch with Nou Chantea, a young man whom I met in Siem Reap the previous year who also expressed his interest in membership to the URI. They got in touch with each other and immediately agreed to organize themselves into a CC.

The Interfaith Youth Circle of Cambodia finally came to be in October 2004. This group is composed of Muslim, Buddhist, and Christian friends of Sam An. who have known each other for some time, and have worked together in the Cambodia Interfaith Council (CIC) and the Alliance for Conflict Transformation in their area. They plan to organize regular monthly workshops and roundtable discussions among youth representatives of different religions and faith traditions on peacebuilding, democracy education, and good leadership.

9. Muslim-Christian Peacemakers' Association of Caloocan

Region: Pacific and Southeast Asia

Contact person: Mr. Lee Collano, Coordinator

c/o The Peacemakers' Circle
Unit 307 Continental Plaza
45 Annapolis Street, Greenhills
San Juan, Metro Manila

Philippines

Office phone: (63-2) 721-1379

Home phone: (63-2) 436-6798
Mobile phone: 0919-629-3776
E-mail: leecollano@yahoo.com

Current Membership: 48

Traditions: Muslims, Roman Catholics, Seventh Day Adventists, Apostolic Catholics, members of the Church of Christ

Governance: Through the Council of Elders, composed of Muslim-Christian officers of the Association. They meet among themselves to conduct a *masarrah* (consultation) on various issues concerning their association, and present their proposals to the circle of members for comments, suggestions, questions, and decision-making.

CC Purpose: To promote peace, unity, and harmony between Muslims and Christians in our grassroots community in Caloocan City, Metro Manila, Philippines.

CC Dream: To show that Muslims and Christians can live peacefully and harmoniously together in a grassroots community; and, in the spirit of friendship, mutual respect, understanding and good will, help each other in building a healthy community and a stable livelihood cooperative together.

CC Highlights: So far, the highlights of our history are: our first Muslim-Christian get-together in October 2003; our planting of mahogany seedlings together in January of 2004; dental mission in April 2004; the creation of our regular ongoing Friday Inner Work Circle; the creation of the *bantay-kapatiran* (watching over a sibling) project; *damayan* (being in solidarity with our neighbors) project; and the monthly training workshops on peacebuilding, Muslim-Christian friendship building, fear management, good leadership, conflict transformation, etc. for members; and the translation of the URI Charter into *Tagalog*.

Interview: by Marites Africa

The MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN PEACEMAKERS' ASSOCIATION OF CALOOCAN is a grassroots community in Metro Manila. It was formalized in October 2004, one year after its members first met and came together in the spirit of mutual respect, understanding, and dialogue. Their meeting and eventual growing together in friendship was made possible through the assistance and support of the Peacemakers Circle CC.

The Muslim and Christian members meet every Friday for the Inner Work Circle where they share stories of their life's journey with each other, and discuss reflections on peace, love, hope, friendship, etc, that they have learned along the way. They also share their thoughts and insights on the URI Preamble, Purpose, and Principles that one of them translated into *Tagalog*.

After the Inner Work session, they proceed to meet on matters concerning the Association (i.e. how to promote peace and order in the community, how to inspire commitment to the endeavor of realizing the shared vision, finding ways to acquire sufficient water supply, electricity, etc.).

Intra-faith dialogue activities have also been part of their endeavors to promote peace among Muslims and Christians in the community.

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4. European Interfaith News

4. a) Annie Imbens-Fransen: Report on Conference in Söderköping, Sweden: Tools for Peace? – The role of religion in conflicts

Conference Tools for Peace? – The role of religion in conflicts
November 21 – 24, 2004 in Söderköping , Sweden
Annie Imbens-Fransen

The conference was organised by the *Christian Council of Sweden* and the *Swedish Muslim Council*. *The Life & Peace Institute* and the *Swedish Fellowship of Reconciliation* were co-organisers. The conference was supported and mainly funded by the *Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs*. In this report, I give an impression of the content and style of the conference and the workshops I participated in, plus some results.

As many participants are actively involved in peacekeeping activities in conflict areas, I do not mention names of participants or presenters of workshops and discussion panels.

The purpose of this conference was to explore the role of religions in peace and in violent conflicts.

- How do religions, together and alone, exacerbate conflicts?
- How can they lead to conflict-resolution, reconciliation and peace?
- How can we share good practices and explore the tools for the peaceful influenced from religions in conflict situations?

The objectives

- To explore and develop methods of conflict prevention/tools for peace.
- To explore a common value system for peacemaking and countering to violence.
- To deal with the question of how the people of faith should relate to the fact that violence is perpetuated in the name of their religion, as well as, to develop their ability to prevent and to solve violent conflicts.

The participants

Participants were religious representatives, activists, researchers, politicians and diplomats with experience and knowledge of the role of religion in peace making and armed conflicts from Bosnia-Herzegovina, China, Congo Brazzaville, Denmark, Egypt, Finland, France, Hong Kong, India, Iran, Israel, Ireland, Italy, Kenya, Liberia, Northern Ireland, Italy, Jordan, Kenya, Liberia, Nigeria, Norway, The Philippines, Siam (Thailand), Sri Lanka, Sudan, Switzerland, The Netherlands, United Kingdom, USA and from different religious and cultural backgrounds.

Referring to the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 - which calls for increased representation of women in institutions and mechanisms for the prevention, management, and resolution of conflicts - the gender balance was kept in mind. About 30 % of the participants were women. Many young representatives participated.

A working conference

Tools for Peace? was planned as a working conference that focused on participant's own experiences and self-reflective dialogue and the meeting between people. Three keynote speeches served as inspiration for discussion, but the heart of the conference consisted of smaller working groups, to enable a deeper dialogue. The environment was designed to encourage creative encounters and informal conversations.

A few days before the start of the conference short descriptions of the different programme sessions were available.

Participating in the conference Tools for Peace

When arriving at the gate for my plane to Stockholm at Schiphol airport I met three participants from the Middle East. At Stockholm airport, we were welcomed by a member of the organizing committee, who took care we were transported by a bus to Söderköping. It proved to be a long drive through a part of Sweden covered with snow, which made us arrive too late for the opening ceremony and the opening address by Dr. Mustafa Ceric, from Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Every day after breakfast, one hour was available for prayer, meditation and personal reflection, followed by a Keynote speech of 30 minutes, and a selection of parallel workshops. After lunch, we met in Reflection Groups. This was followed by a Panel Discussion and time for reflection, activities and initiatives. After dinner, there was some entertainment and time for further dialogue and networking in comfortable chair near an open fire.

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The theme for Monday November 22, ROOTS.

Keynote: Dr. Debbie Weisman, Israel *Religions and Tools for Peace or Conflict: the Roots*

7 parallel workshops

Religions Clashing or Harmonious Co-existence? Nigeria

Fighting, Faith and Followers: the Role of Violent Religious Extremism, Sri Lanka

Nation, Religion, and Religious Nationalism, USA

Nation, Religion and Political Power: A Case Study of Hindu Nationalism from Gujarat, India

Religiously Motivated Non-violence, Thailand

Religious Structures & Women's Participation in Peacemaking, Sudan

Waging War or Making Peace – The Role of Religious Leaders in Conflict and Peacemaking, Israel

After short introductions by two women from Sudan In the workshop **Religious Structures & Women's Participation in Peacemaking, Sudan** we had an intense exchange on religion as a tool for peace and for conflict, and as a force for women to continue life. Much attention was paid to the cultural inheritance of male dominance in religion. Some remarks: women live in a man's society; women's voice does not count; women are less prone to use violence, more cooperative and less competitive.

Some questions: How much violence is rooted in religion? How much violence is rooted in politics? Religion was described as a powerful source for personal and group identity, and as a frame for violence against women. There was agreement that the recognition of the role of women in conflict prevention and peacekeeping needs to be affirmed.

Different participants agreed that women need the power to interpret religious texts – texts that condone oppression against women, texts that are resources for compassion, texts that promote human rights. After some women expressed their need for education and skills to interpret religious texts from the perspective of women's human rights, a lot of information was exchanged on this issue. Some of my articles will be mailed to all participants via the organisation of the Conference. It was a pleasure to be able to give copies CD-rom Activity Explorer URI Europe, with information on Women's and Children's Human Rights to women from Africa, Asia, and the Middle East.

Reflection Group

Every day, after lunch we met in the same Reflection Group with seven participants to exchange our views on the theme of the day. The meetings in this group were also a preparation for the contribution of members in the panel discussion. The first day we were asked to indicate which values can be or are used by religions to motivate violence against others. Though the start of this group was quite chaotic, we agreed that values can be used and are used by religions to motivate conflicts and violence. The same values can also be used to motivate understanding, peace and reconciliation. We concluded that values are ambiguous.

Panel discussion: *Challenging Religious Militancy, Thailand*, by participants from Israel/Palestine, Sri Lanka. After the short introductions, questions could be raised to the panellists. Many participants used this opportunity.

After dinner Jewish and Muslim participants from Israel, showed a video with their peace activities with Muslims and Jews in Israel. It was inspiring and moving to see how enthusiastically women,

children and men from different religious and cultural backgrounds enjoyed these activities in this conflict area.

* * * * *

The theme for Tuesday November 23, VALUES

Keynote: Dr. Andrea Bartoli, Italy/USA, *Values, Religion and Peacebuilding – a Possible Combination?*

7 parallel workshops

The Global and Local in Religion, Conflict and Peacemaking

Northern Ireland as a Paradigm for Religio-political Conflicts

Are there Common Values?

Inter-religious Dialogue – Celebrating our Differences

Take Back our Faith: Broadening the Understanding of Religious Values

Transforming Religious Values into Political Action

Thinking Outside the Box: Gender, Ethnicity and their Influence on Religion and Peace-building

The workshop **Take Back our Faith: Broadening the Understanding of Religious Values** started with a request to participants to give an example of how they took back their faith, when their faith was used to motivate violence and injustice. Then the moderator gave examples about how Christians and Jews in the USA responded in pamphlets and publications against interpretations of their faith traditions to motivate the war against Iraq, and against the religious slogans of leaders of *Religious Right* who claimed that Christians should only vote for George W. Bush.

An example: “We believe that poverty – caring for the poor and vulnerable – is a religious issue. Do the candidates’ budget and tax policies reward the rich or show compassion for poor families? Do their foreign policies include fair trade and debt cancellation for the poorest countries? (Matthew 25:35-40, Isaiah 10:1-2).”

Reflection Groups

During the second session, we were asked to tell a short story in which we experienced the importance of a certain value. After sharing our stories, we discovered that both hospitality and generosity cannot be used to motivate conflict and violence. We agreed that these values are important tools to prevent and stop violence and to create respect for others.

Panel Discussion: *Ambiguous Values in Religions, Martyrdom, Long Memories and Absolute Values in a Contingent World* by participants from UK, India and the USA.

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The theme for Wednesday November 24 was TOOLS

Panel discussion: How Can Religious Leaders Promote Peace in Armed Conflict?

8 Parallel workshops

Faith Based Mediation

Towards a Shared Society – Tools for Co-existence

Challenging Ethno-religious Extremism

The Challenging Perspective of Self-criticism

God has 99 Names – the Award winning Swedish Multi-faith project

Bridging the Gap of Adversity – From Enemies to Partners in Peace

The Image of the Other – Education as a Tool for Peace

Lessons learnt – the Role of the Churches in the Rwandan Genocide

In the workshop, **God has 99 Names – the Award winning Swedish Multi-faith project** we got an overview of two different interactive exhibitions, a big exhibition for museums in big cities and an exhibition that fits in a suitcase.

The exhibitions are set-up to discover and enjoy different lifestyles in our communities. The big exhibition gives information about: time, food, religious cloths, and death and has a dialogue tent. Visitors can prepare food from these different traditions and have a meal together. They can dress in the religious cloths. The pictures in the PowerPoint Presentation clearly expressed how enthusiastically the visitors of the exhibition used these possibilities.

The second exhibition is a suitcase full of religious objects, like clothes, books, candles, statues and invites people to find out the meaning of this object. A team of multi-faith guides travels with this interactive exhibition.

Reflection Groups

During the last day, we were asked what we had learned and what we kind of actions we thought important to be undertaken. Three activities were discussed: support to the very active Youth Working Group at his conference; activities to address and stop religiously motivated violence against women and children; activities that protect the most vulnerable and most affected in war zones: women, children, elderly.

Networking and planning of actions

At a plenary session, the different proposals for actions resulted in 11 Activity Plans. Groups were formed to further develop these plans.

Education and research initiatives

- Dialogue processes
- Training in reconciliation and peace building
- Working with media
- Learning exchanges and links between people in different conflict zones
- The role of women according to Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security
- Network for Middle East and North Africa
- Methods to respond to religious fundamentalism
- Exploring the relation between identity, communality and common values
- Rapid reaction network
- How to support the youth collective

Unfortunately, I had to leave together with some other participants to get in time at the airport to catch our plane. As one of the initiators of the Action Plan on *The role of women according to Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security*, I was glad to see that six participants would work on this Activity Plan.

The Christian Council of Sweden and the Swedish Muslim Council concluded the conference.

* * * * *

Evaluation and Follow up Activities

As different participants also expressed, this was the best conference I ever attended. There was a good balance in the programme between planned activities and time for personal reflection and networking. The hotel and environment was a comfortable place to meet people and to exchange ideas and information. The selection of participants: religious people, activists, researchers. The sharing of stories and expertises and plans for activities.

There was a very active Youth Working Group at this conference. They got much support and they started a Plan of Action group on Supporting Youth Networks.

As a result of this conference, in cooperation with an organisation in Nigeria and in the UK, I am preparing a programme to stop and prevent domestic and sexual violence in Nigeria.

I missed the closing of the conference, but while travelling from Söderköping to Stockholm airport with four other participants, whom I had not met during the conference, we took the opportunity to

talk at length with each other and to exchange a lot of information and ideas, which continued after being back home. After having sent some articles and the CD-rom Activity Explorer, I received the following response: “I’ve had a brief look through the CD and immediately it has given me an impression of the work of URI – a network that I knew almost nothing about before meeting you in Sweden!”

Annie Imbens-Fransen is a member of the European Executive Committee (EEC) of the URI, she has served on the URI Global Council for many years and is Convenor of the URI Council for Women

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4. b) The Dalai Lama Visits Scotland – News from the World Peace Prayer Society (WPPS)

On the 3rd of June 2004, His Holiness the Dalai Lama visited the cities of Dunfermline and Edinburgh in a historic occasion. One and a half years of preparations involved the cooperation of many organizations including the two City Councils, the Carnegie Trust of Historic Scotland, and the Edinburgh Interfaith Association. Allanton Sanctuary also worked with the Department of Education to put together a resource pack including Peace Pals materials for all the area schools.

Dunfermline – Pittencrieff Park

The Dalai Lama arrived at Pittencrieff Park, where the pavilion held 6,000, including 400 children, whose questions were televised to several thousand children in schools. He then blessed a stone Peace Pole while 26 Peace Poles were simultaneously blessed in 26 schools, before moving onto the main stage where a World Peace Flag Ceremony was already in progress.

The children came on stage in pairs, a big child holding the flag and a little child holding the name of the country, while a chorus of *May Peace Prevail on Earth* was sung by a 40-strong choir. The children then entered a labyrinth, which they walked in time to the music until the last flags, of Scotland and Tibet. Then they faced the centre of the labyrinth, where there was a Peace Pole and the Earth Flag, and raised their flags together in an extremely powerful short silence - there was not a sound from the thousands of people. It ended with *May Peace Prevail on Earth*.

His Holiness talked to the children, emphasizing the importance of peace, starting from our selves. He said how beautiful it was to watch the children waving the flags together, and to see young people holding other countries’ flags. He said it is natural to love one’s own country but if you look at the Earth, you will see that we are connected on this planet Earth together. He finished by thanking all the children for waiting in the rain, and said that he didn’t want them to wait in the cold any longer as he was sure they were full of urine (actual words). The children thought this was hilarious and it was a great way to end the event.

Edinburgh – Usher Hall

Lovely Usher Hall in Edinburgh was fully booked at 2,500 people from the interfaith community, politicians, the education departments and many, many VIPs. Our team had their last rehearsal that morning at precisely the time of the Dunfermline ceremony.

Rev. Prof. Frank Whaling introduced the World Peace Prayer Society. This ceremony was beautiful to watch as 60 high school flag bearers flowed gracefully on and off stage in sevens from four different doors. The grand finale ended with the Earth Flag on stage while we prayed for our cultures and nations, our cities, Edinburgh, our communities, our schools and classrooms, our families and our hearts. The Flag Ceremony was followed by a choir of 100 young children, a Tibetan vocalist, and a traditional Scottish harpist. The Dalai Lama came on stage to give a teaching and a Q&A session with the young people of Edinburgh, organized by the Education Department. Many people were overwhelmed by the whole experience and very emotional. It was a wonderful day.

*Caroline Uchima
WPPS Scotland*

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4. c) Interfaith-texts and 2004 summary from the ISKCON in Hungary

The following texts have been submitted by Govardhana das (Govardhana.SRS@pamho.net) from the ISKCON in Budapest.

Together with our friend Rev. Szabolcs Sajgo and István Tasi from the ISKCON Govardhana das is currently working to organize a "week of religions" in September or October 2005.

Rev. Szabolcs Sajgo is the director of the most beautiful Manreza Conference Centre in Dobogókő near Budapest, where URI Europe was privileged to hold its year 2000 European URI Assembly. The Manreza Centre is located in the hills over Budapest in the nature, with only the sound of the wind in the trees in your ears. But it is close enough to Budapest to go there for excursion. (In case you are interested in staying there: you can contact Rev. Szabolcs Sajgo via: sajgo@manreza.hu.)

During the European URI Assembly in April 2000, Szabolcs and our URI-friends from Hungary had also organized an outing to the ISKCON-centre in Budapest, where we were warmly welcomed and had a interesting and beautiful evening.

Following now are the texts from the ISKCON Hungary.

The first text is from the "ISKCON & Interfaith" textbook, first part.

The second text is the 2004-summary of the movement in Hungary.

FIRST TEXT from the "ISKCON & Interfaith" textbook:

ISKCON (International Society for Krishna Consciousness) belongs to the GauDīya VaiSNava sampradāya (denomination or tradition), a monotheistic tradition within Vedic or Hindu culture. Hindu culture is vast, and the term 'Hinduism' encompasses numerous theologies, philosophies, religious traditions, and spiritual cultures. Thus, dialogue with Hindu traditions is often difficult. There are no official representatives of Hinduism, as the term Hinduism does not imply a single spiritual tradition. This statement therefore is representative of Hindu culture and religion as it is manifest in ISKCON, a Vedāntic, monotheistic, VaiSNava tradition.

Part One

ISKCON's Interfaith Statement

ISKCON in Relation to People of Faith in God

-In ISKCON we consider love of a Supreme personal God to be the highest form of religious expression, and we recognise and respect this expression in other theistic traditions. We respect the spiritual worth of paths of genuine self-realisation and search for the Absolute Truth in which the concept of a personal Deity is not explicit. Other communities and organisations advocating humanitarian, ethical, and moral standards are also valued as being beneficial to society.

-ISKCON views dialogue between its members and people of other faiths as an opportunity to listen to others, to develop mutual understanding and mutual trust, and to share our commitment and faith with others, while respecting their commitment to their own faith.

-ISKCON recognises that no one religion holds a monopoly on the truth, the revelation of God or our relationship with God.

-ISKCON's members are encouraged to be respectful to people of faith from other traditions and to see the need for people of different faiths to work together for the benefit of society as a whole and for the glorification of

God.

-ISKCON affirms the responsibility of each individual to develop his or her relationship with the Supreme Lord.

SECOND TEXT – The 2004 summary of the Movement in Hungary:

Community of Hungarian Krishna Conscious Believers 2004

1. Campaign for Tax allocations

Every year the taxpayers can decide which registered church should receive 1 per cent of their personal income tax. Our call for help was also heard on the radio and could be read in newspapers. Our television ad was frequently broadcast, thus, several million people could see it. It was also a significant help that a very sympathetic film by Anita Tornóczy, named T Files, was also shown in this period, in the most watched evening time.

The so-called One Percent campaign was very successful, compared to one year before, the number of those offering this part of their taxes increased from the former 5338 taxpayers to 7508. In other words, both the number of supporters and the amount increased by 40% from one year to another. Thus, out of a total number of churches, the Community of Hungarian Krishna Conscious Believers became number 5.

New Temple

Maybe the main event of the year was that, after several years' search, the leaders of the Budapest temple managed to find a 2000 sq metre building which is suitable to become the new Budapest temple from all aspects. Acquired in May, the new building is in the Csillaghegy area, has excellent communications by car and by public transport as well, and, at the same time, its immediate surroundings are calm and there is only slight local traffic. The building is in good condition; it has two wings, one of which will serve as temple and cultural centre, and the other will serve accommodation purposes. The temple room and library will take up 140 square metres. The ashramas and guest rooms will take 600, the temple and Food for Life kitchen 300, and the deity worship and preaching area will take up 600 square metres. The food bar and shop and the offices will have an area of 120 square metres each. Presently the complex is being converted to its new function and to represent the Indian tradition also esthetically. The opening is expected to take place in mid- 2005.

2. Accreditation of the Bhaktivedanta Vaisnava College

The accreditation process of the Bhaktivedanta Theological College lasted five years. Such accreditation has many physical, personal and scholarly conditions. The good news this year is that, the process consisting of several stages came to fruition and the Hungarian Parliament acknowledged the College as the high level educational institution of the Krishna conscious believers. Tuition of the 99 students takes place through day and correspondence courses.

3. Ürömi street

Hungarian laws also stipulate that any high level educational institution must have an appropriate facility at its disposal. We did not have an appropriate building. As a brave thought, we applied to the Hungarian government for a building. It was a lucky coincidence that, after a period 29 years, a Hungarian Prime Minister, then Péter Medgyessy, was paying a visit to India. There he was met by Sivarama Swami Mahārāja and Krishna-lila mataji, and several Indian businessmen also suggested to the then Prime

Minister to set up an Indian educational and cultural centre in Budapest..
As a possible location, a 1000 sq metre building was suggested, the address of which is Ürömi út 60-62. After some preliminary discussions the Hungarian Parliament approved the proposition of the government on 25 October, 2004 and approved in an Act of Parliament to transfer ownership of the said building. At present the building is waiting to be renovated.

4. Events

a. Pada-yatra

This year was not only a great step forward for the Bhaktivedanta College but also the Eger devotees under the direction of Caitanya prabhu were busy taking many steps. Similarly to previous years, 25 devotees undertook a grand pilgrimage. In the course of two months, they walked 700 kilometres on foot in the north of Hungary, chanting the Hare Krishna Maha Mantra. The mayors of the 100 settlements on the way all received a commemorative parchment from the devotees passing their town. This pilgrimage named "Make a step" is organised every year in various parts of the country, its motto being: "No alcohol, no drugs, no violence".

Here are some quotes from the logbook of the pilgrims: "I wish success in your mission. Saving "lost" lives is, I think, the main common task of all benevolent people." Péter Bárándy, Minister of Justice

The pilgrimage "Make a step without drugs, alcohol, violence" is directing the attention to basic humane values and significant problems of our age. I wish that all participants undertaking the sacrifice of the pilgrimage that they meet with encouragement and understanding." Tibor Gonda, Deputy Mayor of Pécs.

I wish that the moral values you profess manifest in as wide a circle as possible.
Zsuzsanna Gál, Deputy Mayor of Szekszárd.

b. Summer University

No violence was also the main message of this year's Summer University, which was the seventh in a row, held at Krishna-valley. Here representatives of other churches, academic life and public personalities were invited to participate in discussion forums and to hold lectures. Of course, we also expressed our views on the subject. The University weekend was attended by 300 participants.

c. Ratha-yatra

It is an even longer tradition that we organise the Ratha Yatra festival of chariots, which was held for the tenth time this year. In this festival, a huge chariot is drawn all through the city by chanting and dancing devotees. The route was new as the procession started from the City Park and went through the Chain Bridge to reach its destination in the Tabán where a colourful program and market was entertaining the participants.

d. Folk festival in Krishna-valley

An incredible number of 6227 visitors came to the three day festival in Krishna-valley at Somogyvámos. The cooking competition was fought by 12 teams, and five Somogy county villages took part in the puppet and ikebana contest, the gulab eating, water carrying and samosa preparing. The popular Hare Krishna reality show made it possible for everyone to try for half an hour how it feels to be a Krishna conscious devotee: wear Indian clothes, paint the tilaka, practice the mantra meditation. This latter was also possible by walking the meditation path as well. Two wedding ceremonies were also performed with fire sacrifice. Last but not least, they could witness how devotees were providing musical accompaniment for a Christian chant and how the Somogyvámos Evangelical Choir sang the Hare Krishna maha

mantra.

5. Festivals

We can also cater for the needs of young folks and can present Krishna Consciousness to them in an attractive way. We participated at the more significant youth and music festivals, the Wanted festival in Mezőtúr, the Hegyalja festival in Tokaj, the Rock Marathon in Pécs Debrecen and at the Vekeri lake; in Budapest we participated at the Island festival. In our tents people could hear lectures and Indian music. In the evenings the modern style Mantra and Vishnu bands gave highly acclaimed concerts.

6. Food distribution

We distributed prasadam (vegetarian food) also at the festivals, but food distribution was an all-year activity by the Food for Life program. From January to December, 72 500 meals were contributing to the people. Food distribution took various forms: street distribution, winter crisis management, food distribution at summer festivals, delivery of food to day care centres, cold food parcels for old age pensioners, and, finally, a three-day food distribution during Christmas.

7. Restaurant

The Govinda restaurant in Budapest is not looking after the needy but a daily number of 150-200 more or less well-to do guests. Most of the patrons are business people, office workers, foreign visitors but there is also a large number of students and families as well. There is a wide selection of fine food at the restaurant: 3 different main courses, two kinds of rice and soup each, one thick soup, four kinds of salty delicacies, three flavors of chutney, 6 kinds of salads, 3 to 4 kinds of sweets, pizza and 2-3 kinds of other food is available. Most of the plates are prepared according to Indian tradition, but Hungarian, Italian and French specialities are also available.

8. Campaign "Thou shalt not kill"

We also had a full year campaign which emphasized the importance of moral values and pure life. The message of the program were sent to the public by posters at the underground railway stations, a special issue of our magazine, a webpage and, mainly by the mercy of the Pada-yatra devotees, by leaflets. The motto of the non-violent revolution was: "Alcohol, drugs, meat-eating and abortion is an attempt against the spirit soul!"

9. In the media

As usual, hundreds of articles wrote about the events related to the Krishna-conscious movement during the year, with an average of 30 publications per month. 95% of the writings were positive or at least factual. This is a great improvement compared to the first years of Krishna-consciousness in Hungary.

Apart from the TV program "T-files" and the 1 per cent advertisements, we appeared 10 times on the TV screens; also, Mahajana prabhu started a TV series of cooking lessons on the "TV paprika" channel. Members of the communication team participated at an average of thirty meetings per month.

10. Festive dinner

The most important social event of the year was the festive dinner we gave to our supporters at the Versailles hall. Here approximately 200 intellectuals were our guests. As guests of honour, the ambassador of India,

Mr. Manbir Singh, the Minister for Environment, Mr Miklós Persányi, and the State Secretary for Church relations, Kálmán Gulyás were present. All three greeted the guests on the occasion of the celebration of the Divali Festival. Here was guests from other faiths as buddhist, evangelic church etc...

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THE END