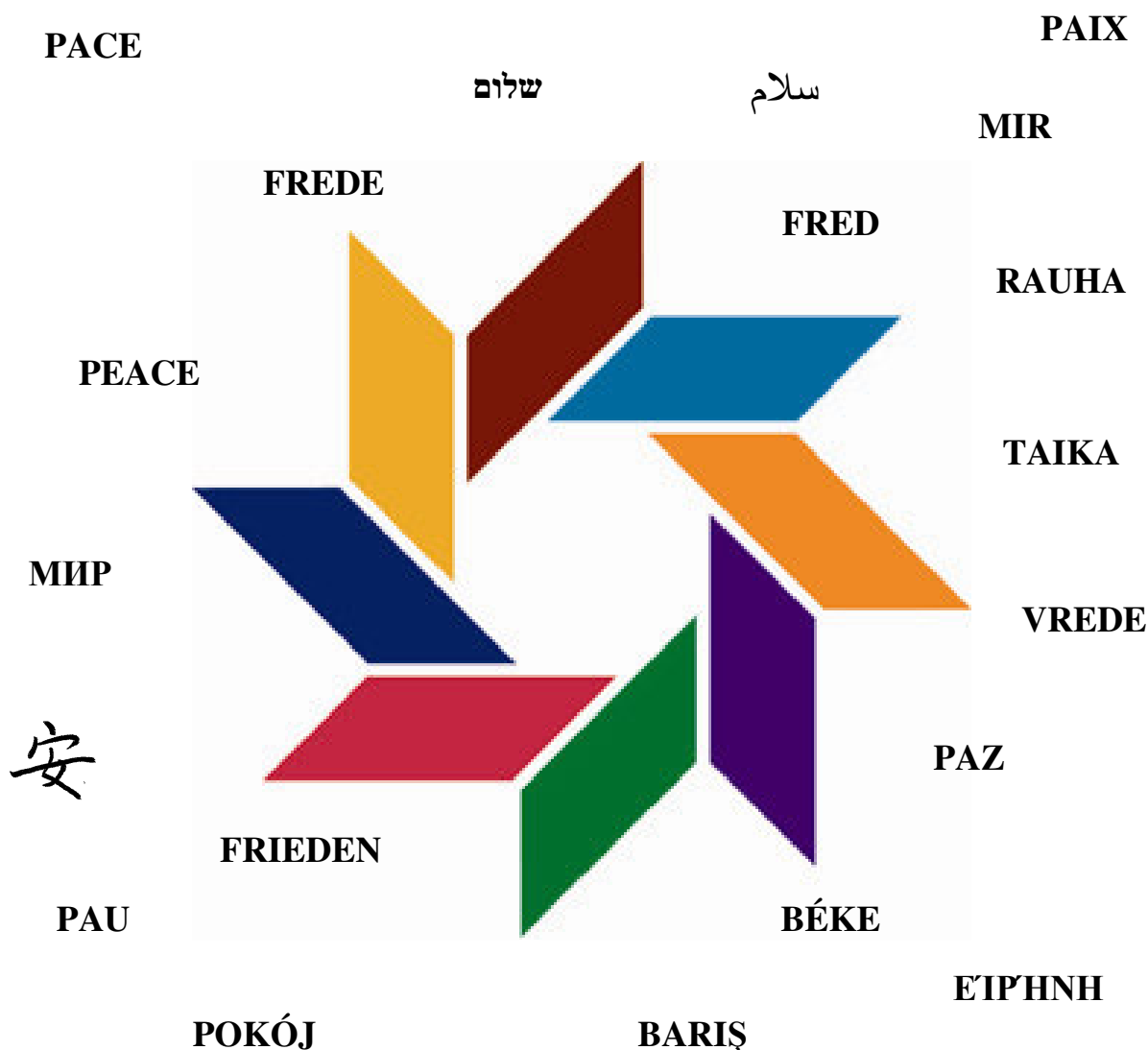

Promoting enduring daily interfaith co-operation, ending religiously motivated violence, creating cultures of peace, justice and healing for the Earth and all living beings.



URI Europe Dialogue Letter

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1. Welcome and news from the URI EEC (European Executive Committee)

Dear friends,

best wishes and greetings to you for the New Year 2007, may peace be with you, your families, all your dear ones, your communities and organizations, your countries and the entire world.

We are very happy to present to you the **URI Europe Dialogue-Letter No. 8**. It contains news and articles, interfaith news e. g. from Germany, Russia, England, Finland and Hungary. We hope you will enjoy it. You are welcome to send us your feedback, comments and insights.

Our URI Europe team would like to share the following news:

- 1.) We cordially welcome a **new European Co-operation Circle (CC)**, the **Unitheum CC** from Germany. We wish the Unitheum CC all the very best, may it fulfill its aspirations. – You can find some more information about the Unitheum CC in this Dialogue Letter.
- 2.) **All Co-operation Circles from the European region are invited to send two delegates to the European URI Assembly**, taking place in Antwerp, Belgium, from **June 15 – June 18, 2007**. The URI Assembly will have the title "Interfaith Dialogue: A Tool for Peace in Europe" and will take place at the "Theological Pastoral Centre (TPC)" (<http://www.bezinningshuizen.be/html/TPC.html>).

There are 23 Co-operation Circles (CCs) in the European region, and we ask each CC to send two delegates to the Assembly. The aim is coming together for exchange and conversation, inspiration and mutual learning. We need this personal exchange and encounter. - **Please join us!**

The **cost** will be approximately: EUR 190, - (Friday lunch till Monday lunch, including accommodation in single rooms and all meals). **Note:** URI Europe would like to welcome all delegates and will do its best to secure scholarships if needed in order to enable all CCs to send two delegates.

Invitations will be sent out to all CCs via email in February. - For an invitation and queries please contact: URI Europe Co-ordinator Karimah Stauch, dmlbonn@aol.com, phone +49-228-230476.

3.) **Connection to the Global Council meeting and interfaith events in Antwerp**

- For the first time a European URI meeting will be held in connection with a meeting of URI's Global Council (GC – world governing board) (June 10-15, 2007)
- **There will be the chance of meeting URI activists from all over the world! Why?**
- There will be an overlap of the European Assembly and the Global Council meeting on Friday, June 15, 2007.
- Following the programme on Friday, June 15, 07
 - walking tour in Antwerp (afternoon),
 - reception at the city hall (afternoon),
 - **interfaith celebration at Antwerp cathedral** (evening).
- There will be a reception at the Antwerp Cruise Terminal with cold and hot snacks served on Friday night. -
- For those who can arrive early, there will be an **academic interfaith forum** on Thursday, June 14, at Antwerp University.

Bond zonder Naam CC (Antwerp, Belgium) under the leadership of Patrick Hanjoul will co-host and support these events, together with URI Europe. The team is grateful to Bond zonder Naam (BZN) CC for its ongoing support.

4.) **Our URI Europe team is planning, hoping, dreaming to visit individual CCs in the European region from the second half of 2007 on.** Our hope is – by doing this – to enhance the contact and communication with all CCs with the aim to more inspire and support each other, as well as exchange and learn from each other.

As a global interfaith organization the URI is still quite new and young in its development, and we would like to learn what is needed and doable to support an international interfaith network, fulfill more aspirations for peace, justice and healing.

Currently **Ms. Sally Mahè, Director for Organizational Development, is on a tour through Europe**, connected to the preparation of the Global Council and European conference in Antwerp which is discussed at a meeting with URI Europe in Antwerp. She is also meeting with a number of European CCs for mutual exchange and inspiration. We are very glad about her visit!

5.) Last but not least:: **please send us news about your Co-operation Circle's (CC's) activities for inclusion in the URI Europe Dialogue Letter** or other contributions. Please address your input to Amina Bach (BachBirgit@web.de) as well as Karimah Stauch (dmlbonn@uri.org).

Thanks for journeying with us.

Peace and blessings to you!

Mr. Dr. Raschid Bockemuehl, Dortmund/Germany, Treasurer URI Europe / Global Council Member
Mr. Shaikh Bashir Ahmad Dultz, Bonn/Germany, Member URI Europe / Global Council Member
Mr. Patrick Hanjoul, Antwerp/Belgium, President URI Europe
Ms. Annie Imbens-Fransen, Eindhoven/The Netherlands, Member URI Europe
Ms. Elisabeth A. Lheure, Barcelona, Catalonia/Spain, Member European Executive Committee
Mr. Jean-Mathieu Lochten, Brussels/Belgium, Vice-President URI Europe
Mr. Deepak Naik, Coventry/United Kingdom, Vice-President URI Europe
Ms. Heidi Rautionmaa, Espoo/Finland, Member URI Europe / Global Council Member
Ms. Karimah Stauch, Bonn/Germany, Co-ordinator URI Europe

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

2.a) We cordially welcome one new CC in Europe - the Unitheum CC from Germany – Information from Karimah Stauch - Co-ordinator URI Europe

We have now officially one more CC in Europe – beautiful that our URI-family is growing!

Presentation of our new “Unitheum CC” from Germany

The Unitheum CC has 36 members.

They have members with the following religions:

Christians (Protestants & Roman Catholics), Buddhists, Jews, initiates in a Sufi order and the White Brotherhood, and people without any religious affiliation

Their dream is

- to make Peace between the various religious faiths – as one step in direction of peace in the whole world;
- not only tolerating and paying respect to the sacred feelings and faiths of other people, but mutual praying and worshipping;
- to be able to experience, esteem and live unity in variety.

Here some of their highlights during the last years:

- Establishment of an association / 2002
- Recommendation / blessings from important personalities of different religions and wisdom-teachings, culture, politics, science ...
- Participation in the Parliament of World's Religions / 2004 / Barcelona
- Universal Worship, for example the annual worship, which opens up the One-Spirit- Festival in the Congress-house of Baden-Baden/Germany / since 2005
- Blessings by more than 300 people to the cornerstone for the sacred building /2006/ Switzerland

For further information please have a look at: www.unitheum.de, or contact Zamyat Gramann (managing director), service@unitheum.de, or Dagmar Aramdaya Schwab (president) laila.schwab@unitheum.de

We are looking forward to hearing a lot more about the “Unitheum CC” in the future.

2.b) Invitation to the “Jewish Christian Muslim Student Conference” in Wuppertal, Germany, March 19-26, 2007 — this conference is co-organized by the German Muslim-League Bonn CC

34. International Student Conference for Jews, Christians and Muslims in Europe (JCM)

Models of social coexistence of the religions – Jewish Christian Muslim Dialog in a changing world
Place: Ökumenische Werkstatt Wuppertal, Missionsstrasse 9, 42285 Wuppertal

Sponsoring organizations:

Leo Baeck College (LBC), London;

Deutsche Muslim-Liga Bonn e.V. (DMLB);

Centre for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations, University of Birmingham;

Bendorfer Forum e.V.;

Kirchliche Hochschule Wuppertal;

Ökumenische Werkstatt Wuppertal.

(Until 2003 the conference took place in Hedwig-Dransfeld-Haus, Bendorf/Rhein.)
For further information please contact: Werkstatt Wuppertal, Matthias Börner: Ökumenische Werkstatt,
Missionsstraße 9, 42285 Wuppertal , Tel.: 0202 / 890 04 – 810, Fax.: 0202 / 890 04 – 805,
E-Mail: oeuwe-wup@vemission.org
Internet: <http://www.vemission.org/werkstatt/wuppertal/>
or DEUTSCHE MUSLIM-LIGA BONN e. V.
KARIMAH STAUCH: dmlbonn@aol.com
SCHECH BASHIR Tel: 0049 (0)228 33 09 15

JCM-Approach

JCM explores problems that all three religions are confronted with. As we reflect on those issues, we are able to determine our similarities and accept each others differences.

Since JCM is based on trust and respect towards the other, we abstain from making common statements or resolutions. All participants are invited to bring their personal experiences back to their communities.

The vitality of the conference is especially achieved by the lectures, the debate in various discussion groups and forums, as well as through creative work in small groups which include art, drama and text studies.

At the end of the week the services of each religion are celebrated and every participant is invited to participate in those ceremonies as far as he wishes or feels able to. Apart from the services there are also times of meditation and the possibility of the study of each religion's most important texts.

The JCM-Conferences are organised by a team which consists of representatives of all three religions in order to meet the specific needs and sensibilities of each religious community, especially in respect of food and times of prayer. Still, mistakes are inevitable, therefore every participant is invited to tell his/her concerns to one of the team members.

JCM is organised by volunteers and is supported by the following organisations: Leo Baeck College - Centre of Jewish Education in London, Deutsche Muslim-Liga in Bonn, Bendorfer Forum e.V., Ökumenische Werkstatt Wuppertal und the Centre for the Study of Islam & Christian-Muslim Relations of the University of Birmingham.

JCM-conferences are open to participants of all three religions as far as they are willing to engage in a dialogue which is based on respect, openness and responsibility towards the Other.

2.c) Request for inter faith speakers for the “Festival of Faith” at the University of Surrey, UK E-Mail from Sarah Talcott – December 6, 2006

Dear friends,

Greetings to you all. After spending many years working for the URI in different capacities (and still doing work in the area of youth programs in URI), I am currently working at the University of Surrey, UK as Inter Faith Education Officer. I am planning a "Festival of Faiths" as part of our inter faith education programme, to take place (tentative dates) Feb. 19-26th, 2007. Throughout this week, we will be having inter faith panel discussions and presentations. So I am currently looking for speakers from different faith backgrounds in the UK (near Surrey if possible) who would be available and who have some knowledge or useful experience and perspective to present about the following topics:

- AIDS ministry and prevention work and what role religion can play
- women's roles and leadership in religion (preferably women for this topic!)
- science and religion (e.g. scientific miracles documented in scriptures, how science relates to / conflicts with religion, etc.)

If you or someone you know might be interested, please get in touch with me... s.talcott@surrey.ac.uk. If these topics do not pertain to you, but if you would be interested to speak on a different topic, please also get in touch to let me know!

Thanks very much, and anticipating your responses..

In peace,
Sarah

Sarah Talcott
Inter Faith Education Officer
University of Surrey
<mailto:s.talcott@surrey.ac.uk>
<http://portal.surrey.ac.uk/chaplaincy/interfaith>

2.d) Some reflections on the URI Europe conference „Overcoming irritations and prejudices ...“, Brussels, Sept. 22-24, 2005 written by Zdenka und Mojmir Križan – URI Germany

Many thanks to Mojmir and his wife Zdenka for writing these reflections. Please excuse the late publishing.

The purpose of the United Religious Initiative (URI) is to avoid conflicts and violence between different groups of people. Since such groups are often based on religious beliefs, or they abuse those beliefs for promotion of their interests, URI is focusing on the avoidance of conflicts caused by religious differences.

The objective of the Brussels conference was to disseminate information about the URI, to offer some training in avoidance and resolution of religiously motivated frictions and conflicts, and to advance the global organisational development of URI.

As participants in the conference, we feel that the following reflections are relevant and may be useful for the future development of the URI.

1) The ad hoc action of Karimah K. Stauch with the posters dedicated to various religions, on which the participants could write their questions concerning the respective religion and also answer those questions, made obvious the strong need for knowledge in this area. The best way to efficiently satisfy this need is to stimulate asking questions and to answer them in front of large audiences. Thus, the questions and answers on Karimah's posters could be used as a starting point for informational events in future gatherings. We believe that such events should be a regular part of URI meetings.

To conclude from the questions posed on Karimah's posters, information about very

different spheres of religious teachings and practices is needed, extending from everyday life (food and clothing regulations, rituals, customs etc.) over important ethical questions up to the central, immovable religious postulates. The descriptions and explanations of these teachings and practices could mitigate many interreligious misunderstandings and conflicts.

2) Nevertheless, a number of such misunderstandings and conflicts probably cannot be eliminated by information alone but require thorough discussion. Unfortunately, such discussions may in some cases exacerbate the irritations and conflicts instead of mitigating them, whereby discussing the central religious teachings may turn out to be more risky than talking about everyday religious life. Despite that, we believe that they should be a permanent and essential part of URI activities, because the alternatives - only two of them - are worse. One alternative is sweeping the impending irritations and conflicts under the carpet instead of confronting them, resulting in the permanent danger of their sudden and unexpected eruption. The other alternative is religious and ethical relativism, which is incompatible with all serious ethical and religious teachings.

3) However, it is also highly improbable that all interreligious irritations and conflicts can be eliminated by profound and extended discussions. This proves the necessity of a

third sphere of URI activities: discussing political and social problems of common life of adherents to incompatible religious teachings in the same society and in the same state. In this sphere, objects of attention and discussion are the political community and mutual toleration, not the religious community and interreligious harmony. From the European perspective an interesting topic in this connection is the future development of the European Union. To conduct a poll on this topic at the end of the Brussels conference was an excellent idea.

4) Also very important is avoiding irritations and conflicts between various groups and individuals within the URI itself, independently of their religious affiliations. In our eyes, the best way to reduce such dangers to a minimum is democracy. Democracy implies strict compliance with democratic procedures and full transparency of the decision processes. Democratic procedures include the

candidacy of more than one person for a vacant position, extensive information of the electorate about the qualifications and intentions of the candidates, and procedurally incontestable elections of all representatives and decision-makers (counting the pro and contra votes, secret voting if so desired etc.). Transparency requires maximizing and regularizing the horizontal and the vertical flow of information within the URI, in particular of the information about the activities of the decision-making bodies. It would be very useful to make the meetings of these bodies public, i. e. open to the general public or at least to all members of the URI. In Brussels, we found the presentations of the activities of the Cooperation Circles from several European countries very interesting and stimulating.

We look forward to feedbacks to the email address mojomir@krizan.net.

2.e) „7th Jewish Christian Muslim Summer School“ in Ammerdown, South of England - Jerusalem in the three faiths – founded by Rabbi Michael Hilton (UK), Father Gordian Marshall OP (UK) and Shaikh BASHIR Ahmad Dultz (Germany), President of the German Muslim-League Bonn CC , EEC and Global Council member

The Conference takes place every 2 years and was first organized in 1992. In 2006 it took place August 7-13, 2006, again at Ammerdown Center, UK, on the estate of Lord Hylton.



Sheikh Bashir, one of the organizers of this conference from the beginning and with him 7 other members of the German Muslim-League Bonn participated and accepted a responsibility.

Claudia Balzereit was leading a Calligraphy workshop, Chadigah M. Kissel a dancing workshop; Wilhelm Sabri Hoffmann was one of the lecturers. His presentation „**Jerusalem in the Three Faiths**“ „**Muslim Perspectives**“ was valued as the „best presentation about this subject“ by most of the participants. It can

be downloaded from his homepage: <http://www.wshoffmann.de/>.

Karimah Stauch was organizing the „warm up“ program in the beginning and recited a prayer. She had put a lot of effort in trying to find English Muslims who would participate in the conference. Three Muslim visitors from Oxford were very warmly welcomed on Thursday. Ismail Warscheid was the Imam for the Friday Muslim prayer. (His report below). Amina Bach und Sarah Großniklaus also contributed to the conference in several ways.

Sheikh Bashir was a team member – along with Rabbi Dr. Michael Hilton and Father Michael Healy, also Bernadette Scholefield and Jane Ozanne from the Ammerdown Centre – following some information about the planning and leadership team-members :
 JEWISH: Rabbi Dr. Michael Hilton, Reform Rabbi and writer, author of 'The Christian Effect on Jewish Life'. Kol Chai Hatch End

Jewish Community
 CHRISTIAN: Father Michael Healy, a specialist in Christian, Jewish and Muslim relations who has just spent a year in Jerusalem.
 MUSLIM: Sheikh Bashir Ahmad Dultz Spiritual Leader of the German Muslim League, Bonn. The topical item this year was „Jerusalem in the three faiths“.



See two reports from Sarah Großniklaus und Ismail Warscheid below.

THREE FAITHS SUMMER SCHOOL 2006

JERUSALEM IN THE THREE FAITHS

STATEMENT by Sarah Großniklaus

It was my first participation in this conference. I heard about it through the German Muslim League who's one of the organizing members. With the German Muslim League I've participated in several interfaith conferences between Muslims and Christians in Germany. This conference in Ammerdown was therefore my first interfaith contact with Jews and my first conference with different European countries.

The subject of the conference, Jerusalem in the three faiths, was very interesting and relevant to all the three faiths. It's a subject that's very topical and needs to be discussed. I didn't know a lot about the importance of Jerusalem in the three faiths. During this week I learned about the historical and religious understanding of Jerusalem in Islam, Judaism and Christianity. The discussions were above all based on an historical approach to the theme and the political situation of Jerusalem today wasn't discussed as a main subject. I think it was important to share the understanding of Jerusalem between people with different religious backgrounds. Knowing the historical and religious importance of Jerusalem for another religion there will maybe grow a better comprehension of the current conflict in Jerusalem.

I don't think that this conference on its own will have an influence on the conflict in Palestine and Israel, but I believe that conferences like this can change step by step the attitude of people towards this conflict and towards other

religions. It's important to keep hope that people who participated in this conference will speak about it with their friends and that in this way the knowledge and the experiences obtained during this week will disseminate like a spiral.

In discussions with participants I was surprised that most of them didn't ever have contact with people of other religions. They seemed to be positively surprised that dialogue with another religion can be peaceful and that similarities can be found. I think that shows the importance of interfaith conferences. Besides the official parts of the conference, I found it very interesting to discuss with participants. These moments were a chance to discover the opinions of others and to share knowledge and understanding about different subjects. The fact that there were participants from the U.K. and from Germany enriched the discussions. It was very interesting to learn about how interfaith themes are organized in different ways. Maybe it would have been interesting to have Muslims, Jews and Christians from all the participant countries. What I appreciated in the conference was that young people had a chance to participate and to share their opinions.

The Three Faiths Summer School was a very good experience for me. I learned a lot, not at least to improve my English.

Sarah Grossniklaus, 21, Christian member of
the German Muslim-League Bonn,

1205 Genève, Switzerland,
sargros@hotmail.com.

Ismail Warscheid,
75011 Paris
France

Statement Three faith summer school Ammerdown, UK

From Monday 7th august until Sunday 13th august I participated at the three faith summer school at the Ammerdown Centre, UK. The week I spent there has been very inspiring and interesting for me. I learned much about the others two faiths (Judaism, Christianity) about the way they pray and how they conceive the world of today. I especially liked the Jewish contribution as it showed me once more the closeness between my Islamic faith and Judaism. The conference made it also very clear to me that most of the conflicts which separate us today, are exclusively political ones and cannot be in any way justified by theological or religious reasons. I'm engaged in the interfaith dialogue since seven years and it is always a great pleasure for me to meet with people of other religions or beliefs. The conference gave me the possibility to enlarge my experiences in this field and to get in contact with new ideas and personalities. The fact that it was my first stay

in an English speaking country made it even more interesting for me to attain the Ammerdown conference. I have been educated mainly in German, Arabic and French intellectual and cultural traditions. Having the chance to get in touch with the English culture has therefore been also a great opportunity. It really opened new perspectives for my personal and my professional life. In the future I hope to come back to Ammerdown because I really liked the centre, its surrounding and the loving hospitality of its community. I also hope that this kind of conferences will continue to be organized. They are crucial for a better understanding of each other and for a peaceful living together based on mutual respect.

Ismail Warscheid
Member of the German Muslim-League Bonn

2.f) Religions for Humanity CC – Presentation of our European CC in Moscow by Prof. Dr. Liudmila Viktorovna Khokhlova, Professor at the Moscow University and Contact Person for the “Religions for Humanity CC”

Our organisation is still small, we have 9 members and meet from time to time when there is something to discuss.

Our members belong to three religions: Christianity, Hinduism, and Islam. In fact, it is not very important for us how many members we have as we do not take fees or anything like that.

We usually organise discussions, dialogues etc. with the students who are not our members but participate in our work. Sometimes we publish the results of our discussions. May be you saw my

small article on Chechen problem in one of the issues of "Initiative" magazine published in England? In September we are planning to discuss a problem if religion should be taught at school. Perhaps you know that recently this problem has been widely discussed in Russia as some members of the Russian Orthodox Church insist on teaching Christian religion, while secular people say that the children should be given basic knowledge of every religion/ Some conservative Muslims object to teaching any religion but Islam.

In June our Department of Indian Philology, where three out of 9 members of our CC work, organised an international conference where - among the others - we discussed the problems of religion in modern literature. We had participants from England, Russia and India. One from Austria.

Yours Liudmila

For further information please contact:

Prof. Dr. Liudmila Viktorovna Khokhlova – contact Person for “Religions for Humanity CC”

E-mail: lvik@orc.ru

2.g) “Religious education at school”

Description of a seminar in Moskow, Russia, conducted by Prof. Dr. Liudmila Viktorovna Khokhlova, Professor at the Moscow University and Contact Person for the “Religions for Humanity CC”

Professor Liudmila invites URI members to discuss the problems of religious education - the topic is widely discussed at present in Russia

The Constitution of the Russian Federation establishes the secular nature of the state and guarantees equal rights to people of all faiths. A 1997 law on freedom of conscience says that in accordance with "the constitutional principle of the separation of religious associations and the state, the government assures the **secular nature of education in state and municipal educational institutions.**" The introduction of **classes on Orthodox Christian culture into public schools** of several regions of Russia raises questions about the relationship between church and state, individual and state, about the rights of religious minorities. Making the Orthodox culture class a compulsory part of the curriculum could spark ethnic and inter-religious tensions in Russia. The Executive Committee of the World Congress of Tatars, headquartered in Kazan, Tatarstan, has already expressed protest against the proposed introduction of a course in the fundamentals of Orthodox culture to be taught in state schools, saying that such actions should be considered disregard for the constitutional principles of a secular state. The problems of religious education in Russia were discussed at our seminar. The main opinions of our seminar participants are summarized below:
Russia has a great cultural tradition tied with Orthodox religion. Anyone unfamiliar with the

Orthodox culture cannot understand Russian literature, painting and Russian spirituality. Russians constitute the majority of population, so the representatives of religious minorities living in Russia or coming to Russia to work must know Russian history, modern culture and Russian mentality. **Classes on Orthodox Christian culture** should be a compulsory part of the school curriculum, though of course they should not include any part of the church ritual. Praying etc. at school may not only insult the religious feelings of the representatives of other confessions, but may be unpleasant for those children who belong to the Russian orthodox church by birth, but do not believe in god or do not accept the ritualistic part of their religion. Other religious studies (Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism etc.) may be optionally included into school curriculum. If we do not want to create a situation similar to what happens in France and other European countries, we must work hard in order not to bring up hostile religious and cultural minorities that take no interest in Russian culture. However tolerant the majority might be, earlier or later there will be religious, cultural and ethnic conflicts as it happens in some very tolerant and politically correct European countries.
As soon as we start giving educational privileges to one religion, especially religion of the majority, we may forget about mutual

understanding between representatives of different confessions. In fact, there is freedom of religions in Russia, but equality is not always respected. A 1997 law on freedom of conscience for example, enshrined Eastern Orthodoxy, Islam, Judaism and Buddhism as "traditional" religions and made it difficult -- if not impossible -- for many other religions like Hinduism, Sikhism etc. to function in Russia. Only the teaching of history of all important religions will help bring up children in a spirit of tolerance and mutual understanding. There should be no religious classes at school. The main facts about the history and philosophy of the important religions of the world should be included into the corresponding courses on history, literature, philosophy etc. That will help to avoid all protests of religious minorities. It is wrong to connect high morals with belief in God as both religious leaders and common people sometimes do, explaining the necessity of religious studies at school. Religious education should be optional, introduced only according to the desire of the

children and their parents. If introduced, it should be serious, going into the depth of philosophy, moral principles, types of behavior etc. It is important not only to find superficial similarities, but analyze differences, because good understanding is the basis of tolerance. Later the Committee of the Public Chamber of Russia recommended optional religious education at school, very similar to our opinion (4). However, many questions remain: who will prepare the curriculum, who is going to check the manuals etc. If every religious community studies only its own religious tradition, the society may be divided into big and small religious groups, at best indifferent, in the worst case – hostile towards each other. For further information please contact: Prof. Dr. Liudmila Viktorovna Khokhlova - Contact Person for "Religions for Humanity CC" E-mail: lvik@orc.ru

2.h) Seminar "An attitude of Hindi writers towards different religions" this seminar was conducted by Dr. G.V.Strelkova, member of the "Religions for Humanity CC", Moscow, Russia

During a regular Seminar we had a discussion on an attitude of Hindi writers towards different religions. After a short introduction made by Dr.Strelkova regarding an important role different religions play in the life of Indian society and how it is described in Hindi literature, one of the students said that she is attracted by a description of everyday life in the stories and novels by Premchand and Phanishwarnath Renu, and that they show how Hinduism becomes not only a religion but a way, a style of life framing and dictating a behavior of every hero and his relations with other personages.

E.Rybyakova who is doing a special research of creations by medieval saint poet Kabir, stressed that Kabir in his poetry applied to the both Hindu and Muslim people teaching them that God is One, only the names of God are different and there is no need for any special ritual for reaching and understanding God. Another student discussed relations of Hinduism and Christianity in India and how it is reflected in the novel "Rani of Jhansi Lakshmi Bai" by Vrindavan Lal Varma. Hindu together with Muslims oppose Christians mainly because they are supposed to be colonizers who force Indian people to be baptized. It is

described clearly in a scene of Diwali festival when the people understood that "the Englishmen were foreigners and they could never be their "own".

One of the students appreciated an attitude of the heroines of Kurrat-ul Ain Haidar's novel "Who went with us till the down" – four young girls –a Hindu, Muslim and Christian – who were very close to each other in spite of different religions.

Another student prepared a short paper dedicated to Rahul Sankrityayan (1893-1963), who was a remarkable Hindi writer and religious person. His real name is Kedarnath Pandey. He was a Vaishnava believer, took an active part in Arya Samaj but later adopted Buddhism, that is why he had changed his name. After his second visit to the USSR in 1938 he became an active communist. He was a propagandist of his communist views and used for this a series of novels he started writing since 1940. The first novel "For the sake of life" described a life of a social reformer since his childhood. The action moves from a small village to Calcutta, from the fields of the First World War to England and back to India. Finally the matured and educated hero helps to Indian peasants to

struggle with a bad landlord. Later, after using the facts of his own biography and facts of contemporary life Rahul Sankrityayan became more interested in the historical, mainly Buddhist past of India and he reinterpreted it in the terms of dialectic materialism. First novels of this type were published even before India has got Independence – in 1946: “Commander Sinha” and “Jay Yaudheya”. The first one describes a life of a General of the Army of democratic Lichhavis. He defeats feudalistic Magadha and becomes a disciple of Buddha, “who is depicted as a forerunner of Marx.” The second novel describes the life of the Buddhist Sangha in the 4-th c. BC Warlike Yaudheyas who led a life of Buddhist monks were defeated by Chandragupta Vikramaditya and his “capitalistic” Brahmins. (Such anachronisms were typical for communist oriented writers of that time.) The author supposes that later, thanks to Buddhism, Yaudheyas were involved in more peaceful occupations and gave an origin to Agraval, Rastogi and some other Indian merchant castes. Novels of R.Sankrityayan demonstrate the difference between his and another very

famous Hindi writer J.Prasad’s attitude towards Buddhism: the first uses Buddhist motives mainly as a device of propagation of his own communist ideas, another tries to present a historical background and give an ideal of a ruler. At the same time, being a Buddhist himself, R.Sankrityayan paid a great respect and interest to this religion. He wrote “A history of Buddhism in Tibet” and a very interesting biography of a Buddhist monk Jayavardhana – “Pilgrim Jayavardhana” who was born in Sri Lanka in 1889. The life of this religious traveler gives an opportunity to the author not only to describe a life of a Buddhist monk in detail, but shows all the holy places. He starts with Sri Lanka and via Sarnath, Lumbini and other Buddhist tirthas follow to Tibet and Nepal, depicting all the difficulties of the way and happiness that has a follower of Buddhism. The biography goes on up to the 1960 and finishes in Rajagiri and Darjiling. Concluding the discussion, Dr.Strelkova attracted attention of the students to the tolerance which is the main feature of most Hindi writers.

2.i) News from Finland – “Religions in Turku CC”

We are very happy to let you know about the activities organized by the “Religions in Turku CC”.

The Forum of Religions in Turku holds seminars and panel discussions with members of different faiths in order to increase mutual understanding, to exchange knowledge about different religions, and to provide a meeting place for inter-religious encounter.

Last fall we participated in the Fair of Religions and Ideologies, where we had a booth with a peace pole and the altar of peace. This was the first event of its kind in Finland; people from seven different faith traditions gathered around the peace pole to pray.

Next fall we will organize a study session for adults and also visit some schools to teach children.

For further information please contact:

Mr. Kari Haikkola
kari.haikkola@pp.inet.fi

Mr. Jouni Elomaa
jelomaa@fkf.fi

2.j) News from Hungary

Govardhana das - URI Europe Supporter – organizes an Interfaith dialogue series

Govardhana das organizes an interfaith dialogue series now, the first part was on October 27, 2006, the Catholic-Hindu part, "What happens after death?"



**Sivarama Svami,
Dr. S. Szabó Péter and
Dr. Kránitz Mihály
during the dialogue**

What happens after death? (October 27, 2006.)

An interfaith conference was held in Budapest. We were very happy to be able to welcome more than 200 guests.

This dialogue is part of a series of programs titled „Let us have a meek discussion – Interfaith Conferences.” The series gives an opportunity for two different religions to explore a subject more deeply. This series of programs intends to demonstrate that people of different religions can live in peace with one another while they know and can sincerely debate the differences between their religions. The dialogues are organised with Catholic, Jewish, Protestant and Buddhist theologians on the one hand, and Krishna conscious (Hindu) on the other.

The subject of the discussion between the representatives of the Catholic and Krishna-conscious denominations was „What happens after death?”

The subject was debated between Dr. Mihály Kránitz, vice-president of Péter Pázmány Catholic University and Sivarama Swami, spiritual leader of the Hungarian Society for Krishna-consciousness. The conference was moderated by Dr. Péter S. Szabó, fellow of Pécs University. He gave an introductory lecture on the importance of interfaith discussion. Following the introduction, two main subjects were debated by the presenters: one: the identity of man and death and the events surrounding death. The lecturers, beside expounding the position of their respective religions, put theological questions to each other. During the last half hour the audience was invited to put questions to Sivarama Swami and Dr. Mihály Kránitz. As a conclusion, both presenters summarised the lessons from the evening.

After the conference, cheesefingers and refreshments were offered to the audience in the lobby. The Hungarian Television made separate interviews with the presenters for the regular program „Multifarious religion”.

For further information please contact:

Govardhana.SRS@pamho.net

www.vallaskozi.hu

2.k) “Cup of good hope”, Hamburg , Germany, July 2–7, 2006 - report written by Waleed Alzyoud, president of the Jordan Interfaith Action CC in Jordan



Jordanian team
Jordan interfaith action CC:-

From 2 – 10 July, 2006 during the last week of the parallel happening Football World Cup 2006 the “Cup of Good Hope” happened for the first time

This event was organized for youngsters with different disadvantaged backgrounds from the countries Egypt, Poland, Cyprus, Hungary, Belgium, Austria, Sweden, Spain, Greece, Turkey, Wales, Northern Ireland, Germany and Jordan, from Hamburg’s sister city Dresden and from Hamburg. Apart from this football tournament for the young guests and their tutors diverse intercultural meetings were organized with local youngsters and an exciting and many–sided cultural programme.



Intercultural night



Jordanian, Greece and Germany
near Hamburg stadium



Hamburg team and Jordanian
team

Teams with 4 youngsters who were supported or in care of acknowledged youth organizations and accompanied by an adult group leader from Jordan interfaith action participated in the “Cup of Good Hope” in Hamburg by application. For each respective guest team there were arranged partnerships in Hamburg e.g. by schools, youth clubs or parishes to assure a special support and to stimulate the sense of intercultural meeting and learning.

Football as a world language suits best to build up international friendships and to develop team spirit, fair play and mutual appreciation. The “Cup of Good Hope” event contributes to intercultural exchange and dialogue and eliminates prejudices. From each of the 12 countries four young boys and girls, aged 14 to 17, and one tutor participated in a small field football tournament and took part in diverse intercultural meetings and an exciting cultural programme. The participants got the chance to present their home country to the other participants and on the other hand they produced a documentary about their stay in Hamburg. With this they presented their experiences and impressions back home. All costs within Hamburg were covered by the City of Hamburg, the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ), the Friedrich Ebert Foundation (FES) and the Goethe Institute (GI). The Goethe Institute Amman was providing additional support to the Jordanian team by contributing to the flight cost, and the German Embassy Amman had provided each team member with a FIFA World Championship 2006 fan package.

For further information please contact: Waleed Alzyoud,
E-Mail: waleed.z@jordaninterfaith.org

2.1) Dialogue across the sea / Training Course on intercultural and inter-religious dialogue- November 21-30, 2006, Coma-Ruga (Catalonia-Spain) - E-Mail from Mamoun Khreisat

Dear friends and URI family,

In Coma Ruga (Catalonia), a small calm city north east Spain overlooks the Mediterranean Sea, we had a 10 days training on Intercultural and Inter-religious dialogue. The training aimed at providing the participants with the knowledge and competencies needed to build solid bridges of dialogue between



people of different cultures and faiths. In addition, it provided some techniques to enhance the process of non-

violent transformation. The training tackled the following areas:

- **Identity and sense of belonging.**
- **Cultural and religious identity.**
- **Prejudice, xenophobia, Islam phobia, anti-Semitism and racism -Perceptions and challenges to cultural and religious diversity in Euro-Mediterranean area.**
- **Experiential learning (10 hours night hike in forest).**
- **Needs and conditions for Inter-religious Dialogue.**
- **Religion and Human Rights.**
- **European campaign “All different all equal”.**

The participants were youth worker and community leaders from the following Euro-Mediterranean countries: Portugal, Algeria, France, Morocco, Italy, Turkey, Israel, Jordan, Belgium and Catalonia (Spain).

The training included unforgettable Hike experience, we started hiking at 9:00 p.m. and finished at 6:45 a. m. Almost 10 hours of hiking through the forest, clamping the mountains hand by hand facing all difficulties and coldness. We were one body and one soul forgetting all the differences among us as we shared one goal. This proves that all mankind could be one if they share a same goal. Hopefully, one day our world will be united in its quest for peace. Also, it included a visit to the Monastery of Santa Maria De Poblet, a world heritage site by UNESCO due to its exceptional historical, architectural and artistic value. The Monk of Poblet accompanied us while touring the Monastery explaining the rich history of the monastery which goes to 1151. In addition, we attended a fruitful lecture on the impact of Propaganda in our daily Media delivered by the president of European Institute of the Mediterranean.

In the organization exhibition, I represented Quested Peace and URI. Unfortunately, non of the participants has heard about URI. I seized this opportunity to present URI as a global effort to promote peace and healing. Two European organizations and one Moroccan organization showed their interested in joining URI community. I will follow up with them.

Finally, I am planning to share the experience I acquired in this training with as many people as I can with in form of workshop and lectures.

I attached some photos, more are available upon request.

In love and peace

Mamoun

For further information please contact: Mamoun Khreisat,
E-Mail: khreisat_73@yahoo.com

3. URI global

3.a) Welcome 14 new CCs – Information from Maria Crespo, Staff Lisison - CC Approval Committee – August 9th 2006 and November 15th 2006

According to the E-Mails from Maria Crespo, Staff Lisison, CC Approval Committee, there are 14 new CC to welcome.

It is with joy that we share with you that our community continues to grow.

During the CC Approval Committee Meetings 14 new groups were approved to become members of the Global Family.

FROM MALAWI IN AFRICA

COMMUNITY YOUTH IN DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES (COYIDA)
YOUTH ACTIONS IN DEVELOPMENT (YADA) CC
CHAPOMOKA CC
CHIGUMULA CC
CHIRIMBA CC
SHARP VALLEY CC

FROM INDIA IN ASIA

TRIVANDRUM INTERRELIGIOUS FELLOWSHIP

FROM AUSTRALIA IN SOUTH EAST ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

CENTRE OF MELBOURNE INTERFAITH & OTHERS NETWORK CC

AFRICA

Escola Ntwananu Matola- Rio, Mozambique

ASIA

Bangalore South CC, South India
Seeds of Peace, Pakistan

EUROPE

Unitheum e.V , Germany

MENA

Jordan Seeds of Peace, Jordan

MULTIREGION

Trail of Dreams World Peace Walk

The next CC Approval Meeting will take place on December 13th.

May the members of these CCs fulfill their aspirations and live in Peace.
May peace prevail on Earth!

For further information please contact María Eugenia Crespo CC Global Support Coordinator
mariaecrespo@fibertel.com.ar

3.b) URI News from Sally Mahè - Letter of Introduction for Margi Ness, Co-Coordinator for North America

Dear friends,

Greetings of love and peace.

With appreciation to the N.America team for participation in the selection process, URI is pleased to announce the appointment of Margi Ness as co-coordinator with Stephen Fuqua in the North America region. Please read the Letter of Introduction (below) to learn more about Margi.

Best wishes,
Sally Mahe

THE UNITED RELIGIONS INITIATIVE (URI)
Letter of Introduction for Margi Ness
Co-Coordinator for North America

The United Religions Initiative is pleased to announce the appointment of Margi Ness as the co-regional coordinator with Stephen Fuqua for North America. URI is grateful to the GC trustees from North America and Stephen for participating in the selection process.

Margi lives in Boulder, Colorado. She first heard about URI from her friend, Gurudev Khalsa, a long time friend and consultant for URI. After hearing Charles speak in Boulder last fall, Margi was very impressed with URI and visited the San Francisco office. Currently Margi is active with the Community for Sudanese and American Women helping to resettle "lost girls" from the Darfur region and she is a certified leader with Circles of 10: Women for World Peace. Margi has worked in service projects in Tibet, Kenya Ecuador, Peru and Mexico. During the Vietnam war Margi worked for the American Red Cross in Vietnam. Margi brings a lifelong commitment to Director, Organizational Development United Religions Initiative, Global Office, San Francisco

peace justice and healing in the world. Margi also brings excellent experience in senior level management positions with non profit organizations. Margi graduated from Georgia State University and holds a Masters degree in Sociology.

As co-coordinator Margi will be responsible to uphold the Preamble, Purpose and Principles and the spirit of the URI. She and Stephen will work together to share responsibilities for coordination in the region. Margi's primary responsibility will be to insure effective communication with CCs. Margi, Stephen and the trustees plan to meet in San Francisco in early February to further develop plans for the region for 2007-2008.

Acting on behalf of the URI global community, URI warmly welcomes Margi Ness in this key staff position and is honored to announce this appointment to the URI CCs in North America and to the international URI global community.

Sally Mahé

3.c) Holy day greetings – E-Mail from Rev. Charles Gibbs, Executive Director URI December 24th 2006

Dear Friends,

Greetings of love and peace; and wishes for a blessed season of light for all.

As a Christian, I always find this time of year filled with extraordinary hope as we celebrate the birth of new light and love in Jesus of Nazareth.

This time of year also fills me with sadness at the enormous gap between the promise of new light and love and the extraordinary challenges so many of our sisters and brothers face and that our whole Earth community faces.

So, in this season of celebration and sadness, I recommit myself to have light and love be born anew within me. To have a passionate compassion that calls me to work for peace, justice and healing be born anew within me.

I recommit myself to do all I am able to help light and love, however it is experienced and understood, be born anew in each of us and in our Earth community. To have a passionate compassion that calls us to work together for peace, justice and healing be born anew within all members of our Earth community.

And so I find myself filled with gratitude for the URI community.

We are, each in our own ways, rooted in the challenges that face our Earth community.

And, together, we are committed to envision and bring into being a new reality that does not yet fully exist.

Each day, we rededicate ourselves to promote enduring, daily interfaith cooperation, to end religiously motivated violence and to create cultures of peace, justice and healing for the Earth and all living beings.

And we commit to work together, with the support of the Source of all life, to be agents of transformation, weaving the worst into the best for all life.

Being called to share in this commitment is the greatest gift I can imagine receiving for Christmas.

So this Christmas, as I sit with my family, in sadness and joy, at Midnight Mass in Grace Cathedral, I will offer thanks for URI and each of you and the work we share in the world.

And I will pray that this work and each of us flourish in the year ahead.

Love,

Charles

The Rev. Canon Charles P. Gibbs
Executive Director
United Religions Initiative
P.O. Box 29242
San Francisco, CA 94129
1-415-561-2300

3.d) Farewell - Kofi & Nane Annan NGOs Bid Farewell after 10 Years! - E-Mail from Monica Willard

Secretary-General Kofi Annan and Mrs. Nane Annan were honored at a reception held on November 29, 2006 to thank them for their 10 years of service to the UN and to the world. The Hague Appeal for Peace invited a representative group of NGOs to give the Annan's a civil society Thank You Party and gift.

A beautiful collage was made for them as a parting gift by artists Laurel Marx and Heide Nitze. It shows the NGO names raining down on the UN from the heavens. One of those rain drops says 'United Religions Initiative'.

The collage also says 'thank you' in the six official UN languages and in Swedish for Mrs. Annan and Kofi for the SG. The collage is highlighted by a peace dove lighting the sky and completed with quotes from the UN Charter.

I used the beautiful pictures from the Global Campaign for Peace Education Newsletter to share this event and the gift with you.

I'd also like to let you know that Secretary-General Kofi Annan sent a personal letter to thank me and the United Religions Initiative for our involvement in the International Day of Peace at the UN and "in enveloping the wider involvement of students in peace activities". I share the final sentence in the hope that you can feel the appreciation for yourself too. "Mrs. Annan joins me in sending you our warm appreciation and best wishes for continued success in your endeavors in the cause of peace and understanding".

It is an honor to represent the URI at the United Nations!

May Peace Prevail on Earth,
Monica Willard
MBWillard@aol.com

3.e) My dearest URI family: Greetings of peace and joy - E-Mail from Yoland Trevino, URI Global Council Chair – Celebrating the International Day of Peace

In California it is 7:30pm and as we enter into the International Day of Peace. I am expressing my profound appreciation for all your contributions, big and small, in making this day come alive and moving closer to our goal of global peace. I know the celebrations are as diverse as each person is unique, cooperation circles and other gathering are contributing in the best way that works for each. In the universe, each drop counts and is precious in the eyes of God. May your efforts be fruitful and like beautiful prayer flags, scatter the seeds of peace everywhere on the planet. I also take this opportunity to send special wishes for sacred blessings for all of you who are and will be celebrating High Holy and Sacred Days. For your reflection I offer the following:

Thoughts to Ponder

THERE IS NO GLIMPSE OF THE LIGHT without walking the path. You can't get it from anyone else, nor can you give it to anyone else, just take whatever steps seem easiest for you, and as you take a it will be easier for you to take a few more.

When you know your part in the scheme of things, in the Divine Plan, there is never a

feeling of inadequacy. You are always given the resources for any situation, any obstacle. There is no strain; there is always security. When you have constant communion with God, a constant receiving from within, there is never any doubt; you know your become an instrument through which a job is done, therefore you have no feeling of self-achievement.

The spiritual life is the real life; all else is illusion and deception. Only those who are attached to God alone are truly free. Only those who live up to the highest light live in harmony. All those who act upon their highest motivations become a power for good. It is important that others be noticeably affected: results should never be sought or desired. Know that every right thing you do—every good word you say—every positive thought you think has good effect.

From the Life and
Work of Peace Pilgrim

Unceasing blessings and may we continue to proclaim, May Peace Prevail in our Hearts, May Peace Prevail on Earth. You are all my relations and I am so blessed. Yoland Trevino, URI Global Council Chair

3.f) Celebration of international day of peace in India - E-Mail from Abraham Karickam (URI Co-ordinator, South India)

Dear friends,

It was for the first time we celebrated the UN International Day of Peace and the whole experience was just wonderful.

We had a peace procession starting from Karickam International Public School. All the school children were holding white flags and posters.

Members from various CCs of URI and UNI-Y (YMCA) students also participated. Children carried posters like Children love peace, We hate war, May Peace prevail on earth, Say no to war, Nuclear..NO, Protect the

Earth, An eye for an eye will make the whole world blind, No more war and so on.

Two priests also participated. Rev. M. G. Thomas inaugurated the peace march. There were three men with the traditional chenda (drums) walking in front to announce the march and that attracted large crowd on both sides of the road.

Several people spoke during the public meeting in the school after the procession. It was an exciting event which marked a new beginning for the life of the people here.

Abraham Karickam

For further information please contact Abraham Karickam (URI coordinator, South India), E-Mail: karickam@sancharnet.in, <http://www.wfism.org/>

3.g) Happy Diwali - Greetings from Pakistan, Civil Society CC Multan, Pakistan - E-Mail from the Co-ordinator of the CC – Naseem George

Dear Indian friends all over the world,
Happy Diwali! May the power of this feast be active in your life and may you be the inspiration and witness to this special power. Have a wonderful celebration with your families.
In unity always, Sr. Naseem George.

Dear Muslim Friends of the URI family,
Happy Eid! Many happy returns! May this Eid be a real family celebration for each one of you filled with blessings, acceptance and forgiveness. May the joy of this day stay on throughout in your life.
Naseem George
Coordinator Civil Society CC Multan-Pakistan

Dear URI friends,
Greetings from Pakistan!
Just to share that URI is introduced in Sargodha, Pakistan. We are Hindu, Christian, Muslim, Sikh and Bahai all united under the aims, objectives and principals of URI. We have been coming together and studying Aim and Principals of URI. Common prayer sessions have been conducted by different persons of each religion. Our discussion goes from local to world issues. The group feels to build up our unity and wants to think globally and act locally. From the perspective of sectarianism, Sargodha is one of the 7 sensitive cities of Pakistan. We have celebrated Bahai feast on the eve of October 19th and also Diwali with Hindu and Sikh friends on the 20th evening. We have been already suspected of introducing a new religion.
Please keep us in your prayers so that we may be the peace we say we seek. May efforts and prayers of URI contribute to peace and unity in our city.
May peace prevail on earth. Naseem George.

For further information please contact:
Naseem George: ngeorge307@yahoo.com

4. European and Global interfaith news

4.a) Book recommendations

**"Jayashankar Prasad and Buddhism" by Dr. G.V.Strelkova,
member of the "Religions for Humanity CC", Moscow, Russia**

The article discusses an attitude of Jayashankar Prasad (1889- 1936), a classic of Hindi literature, towards Buddhism, the way the writer interpreted and used ideas of this world religion in different genres: poetry, drama, short stories and novel. Being a devoted Saivite, at the same time he was attracted by Buddhism, its history, philosophy and humanistic ideals.

On the basis of short stories "Column of Emperor" (Cakravarti ka stambh), "Hurricane" (Andhi), novel "Iravati", some poems and dramas the article shows a change of Prasad's attitude towards Buddhism: from interested and positive attention (to Buddha himself and Ashoka in particular), deep research of the epoch of origin and development of Buddhism in his historical dramas to presentation of a "neutral" – distant author-narrator (in "Andhi), opposition of Shivadvaita and Buddhist philosophical concepts in his one-act play "One Gulp" (Ek ghunt) and poem "Kamayani" to stressing the difference between followers of Hinduism and Buddhism and aversion of manners and behavior of Buddhism followers in some of his historical dramas and "Iravati".

Interpreting Buddhism heritage, Jayashankar Prasad created different heroes – from power-seeking rulers to devoted followers of Buddha's teaching, discussed vital and urgent social-political problems (for example, struggle for national independence and creation of an image of a true ruler) and eternal moral and ethical problems.

In this way, the writer reached different tasks: his creations of high literary quality had ideology of the Enlightenment and helped to improve society. They were based on ancient, very valuable for the nation heritage and gave an example to contemporary generation, reconstructing the ideal, which could exist or just was imagined as existing in the past. At the same time, the development of Independence movement could also influence the attitude of Prasad to Buddhism. Prasad, being a key figure of Hindi literary movement of the first three decades of the 20-th century, was one of the first Hindi writers who "rediscovered" Buddhism and, being inspired by love to India's glorious past, appreciated its humanistic ideas but remained a devoted Hindu.

4.b) Book recommendations – "Treading lightly" - The hidden wisdom of the world's oldest people, written by the Australian authors Karl-Erik Sveiby and Tex Skuthorpe from Heidi Rautionmaa – member of the EEC and Contact Person for the Religious Forum in Helsinki and the URI's Christian-Muslim Circle of Helsinki CC

I am happy to introduce one book that I think most of us would be fond of. The Australian author is right now visiting Finland – can't wait to meet him: The authors are Karl-Erik Sveiby and Tex Skuthorpe.

With peace and all good - pax et bonum
Heidi

Please visit the webpage <http://www.treadinglightly.sveiby.com/> if you become interested in knowing more about what is mentioned here:

The book is called *Treading Lightly: The Hidden Wisdom of the World's Oldest People*

It takes us on a unique journey into traditional Aboriginal life and culture, and offers a powerful and original model for building sustainable organisations, communities and ecologies. The authors reveal the hidden art of four-level storytelling, and discuss how the stories, and the way they were used, formed the basis for a sustainable society. They also explain ecological farming methods, and how the Aboriginal style of leadership created resilient societies.

It is a compelling message for today's world.

THIS BOOK STARTED BACK IN 1999 when Karl-Erik asked Tex - What is the word for knowledge in your Aboriginal language?? We don't have a word for it, Tex replied. He must have felt Karl-Erik's disbelieving look. Struggling to find the words he continued: Our land is our knowledge, we walk on the knowledge, we dwell in the knowledge, we live in our thesaurus, we walk in our Bible every day of our lives. Everything is knowledge. We don't need a word for knowledge, I guess. Maybe that's why?

There was in particular one issue that gradually took hold of Karl- Erik and which in the end became the topic of this book: Australian Aboriginal society's model for sustainability has the longest proven track record on earth. While societies outside Australia emerged, prospered and went under, Aboriginal society withstood and proved its sustainability over tens of thousands of years of dramatic events, until the Europeans arrival in 1788. It is an extraordinary achievement, especially considering that this is something

For further information please contact: h.rautionmaa@suomi24.fi

humanity is now struggling with: the way to build a truly sustainable society on this earth. How did the Aborigines do it? How did they organise for sustainability? What type of leadership did it require? They must have had a recipe for success? What was it? Could we reconstruct it?

But how does one reconstruct something that was lost 200 years ago and where practically all sources and written reports are from a younger date? It would be an impossible task were it not for a unique source: the Nhunggarra stories.

Tex's role is to learn, record and teach the traditional stories that contain the Nhunggarra Law. Our book is, as far as we know, the first serious attempt to use Aboriginal traditional stories for their original purpose: to convey knowledge from one generation to another, about the world, the law, society and the life and death of people

This is what Karl-Erik Sveiby tells about himself on his webpage:

After nine years in Australia I am now based in Helsinki, Finland and Professor in Knowledge Management at Hanken Business School. I keep in touch with Australia as Honorary Professor at Griffith Graduate School of Management, Brisbane, and at Macquarie Graduate School of Management, Sydney. I'm also adjunct Professor at Hongkong Polytechnic.

I have researched management of knowledge and knowledge organisations since the early 1980s, which makes me a bit of a veteran in the rapidly emerging research field, nowadays called Knowledge Management. I have published twelve books on the subject, the first in 1986. You'll find a list further down. Having been a manager in this kind of business myself, my approach is practical and hands-on, rather than theoretical. And I do not believe much in lectures as a means of transferring knowledge

4.c) Iftar and Gedalyah celebration – A story of a special encounter of young adults in Jerusalem on September 25th 2006 - E-Mail from Dotan Arad & Salah Aladdien

A story of a special encounter of young adults in Jerusalem On Monday, September 25th, we met in order to have a joint breaking of the fast dinner. This is the third year in a row that the members of our group meet for this unique Iftar dinner at the end of the Gedalyah Fast. This year too, the Jewish Fast of Gedalyah occurred during the month of Ramadan when the Muslims are fasting. In the beginning of the encounter we mentioned the Jewish Halachic notion of "Khazaka" (presumption). One of the meanings of this notion is that something that was performed three times in a row is considered as permanent and binding. We expressed the hope that this third time of having the joint dinner indicates that it became an enduring custom in the life of our group.

The encounter took place at the home of Nadav and Naama. We gave up the need for balance (last year too the encounter was in a Jewish place), in favor of the comfort of having a Kosher kitchen for the Jews. Participants were veterans alongside with newcomers. We studied the foundations and meanings of the two fasts and about their rules and customs. The Muslim friends shared about the customs of pilgrimage to Mecca and maintaining a Muslim way of life in the modern world. We spoke also about the differences between the Muslim calendar (based on lunar dynamics alone) and the Hebrew calendar (Lunar and Solar in concert). We learned about the mechanism that allows the Jewish calendar to synchronize the lunar and the solar calendars (having a leap year, with a thirteenth month, every several years). One of the important implications of this is that while the times of the Muslim Holidays "wander" along the civil year, the Jewish Holidays are attached to the seasons of the year – Pesach always in the spring, Sukkoth always in autumn, Hanukkah always in the winter etc. In light of that it is clear that the calendar will not allow for eternity to perform this joint dinner for breaking the fasts of Gedalyah and Ramadan. We concluded by expressing our hope that our joint desire will beat the calendar and we will find the appropriate times for joint celebrations also in the future.

Dotan Arad & Salah Aladdien

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4.d) Cruïlla de creences - Centre Interreligiós de Barcelona

CRISTIANISME ORTODOX [gener]
Dilluns 8 de gener del 2007, a les 19 h
"El cristianisme ortodox"
Conferència a càrrec de Luciano Crasovan,
vicepresident de
l'Església Ortodoxa Romanesa de Barcelona.
Al Centre Interreligiós de Barcelona (CIB).

Dilluns 15 de gener del 2007, a les 19 h
Visita a l'Església Ortodoxa Romanesa de
Barcelona, a la Gran
Via de les Corts Catalanes, 406.

BUDISME [febrer]
Dilluns 5 de febrer del 2007, a les 19 h
"El budisme"
Conferència a càrrec de Ramon Martí,
coordinador d'activitats
del Centre Budista Tibetà Tara.
Al Centre Interreligiós de Barcelona (CIB).

Dilluns 19 de febrer del 2007, a les 19 h
Visita al Centre Budista Tibetà Tara, a la plaça
Gal·la Placídia, 8-
10, principal.

FE BAHÁ'Í [març]
Dilluns 5 de març del 2007, a les 19 h
"La fe bahá'í"
Conferència a càrrec d'Amín Egea, membre de
l'Assemblea
Espiritual Nacional dels Bahá'ís d'Espanya.
Al Centre Interreligiós de Barcelona (CIB).

Dilluns 19 de març del 2007, a les 19 h
Visita al Centre Bahá'í de Barcelona, al carrer
Galileu, 336,
entresòl, 2a.

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