

Summer 2016

INTERACTION

PEACEBUILDING AND YOUTH



Young leaders Jaya Reinhauter (Kashi Foundation CC), Shayda Sales (SiVIC CC), and Aspyn Adams and Johnny Martin (Sun Devils Are Better Together CC) represented URI North America by travelling to the United Nations in New York City to participate in celebrations for this year's World Interfaith Harmony Week.



Dear Friends,

Sustainable change is at the heart of URI's work, led by our interfaith Cooperation Circles around the world. As the world's largest grassroots peacebuilding organization, we're ideally placed to engage with larger frameworks for change like the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals, which are the focus for this year's International Day of Peace on September 21.

Youth priorities and their role in building resilient peace and countering violence are central to the UN Goals and for URI's work. Issues of education, access to decent work, inequalities and discrimination, climate change, and infrastructure for health and against poverty impact youth the most. These concerns are taking center stage within the URI network and worldwide with the UN Global Goals. Young people are nearing almost 2 billion globally and are becoming a majority demographic across communities and our CCs. The immense potential for change that youth movements carry comes at a time when global urgency for more inclusive, collaborative change is also growing. In order to integrate and elevate youth-led initiatives in such work, young leaders need new opportunities and mechanisms for their participation in decision and policy making on those issues, from local to international levels. This is what the UN is doing and so are we. This transition from engaging with young people as a program focus to also designing ways to involve them more as equal partners on a wide-reaching set of approaches is something to be excited about.

Our training programs and staff are committed to empowering young leaders in URI to implement their ideas, and we're seeing more youth participation at decision-making tables as staff, on our Global Council, and in CCs. Over the next few years, we aim to increase youth leadership within our network and in larger community efforts as a vital step to making our organization and work sustainable. In this issue, we invite you to explore the role of youth in URI and be a part of that conversation.

Matthew Youde

Associate Director of Global Programs
for Youth Leadership Development

Krithika Harish, former Associate Director of Global Programs and Network Development, is now pursuing postgraduate study, but her work building youth leadership and the capacity of CCs and regions in our network was essential to the activities in this newsletter.

Welcome to our new Cooperation Circles!

JULY 2016

Porsesh Research and Studies Organization
(Kabul, Afghanistan, URI Asia)

Women and Peace Studies Organization
(Kabul, Afghanistan, URI Asia)

Bridge Builders
(Buenos Aires, Argentina, URI Latin America & the Caribbean)

Gallatin Valley Interfaith Association
(Montana, US, URI North America)

JUNE 2016

Council of Religions - Mauritius
(Port Louis, Mauritius, Africa)

Interfaith Cooperation Circle of Kauai
(Lihue, Hawaii, USA, URI North America)

Solar C³ities
(Glenmoore, Pennsylvania, USA, URI North America)

MAY 2016

Seeds for Change (Plovdiv, Bulgaria, URI Europe)

Trans Defi (Plovdiv, Bulgaria, URI Europe)

Palestinian Association for NonViolent Communication
(Idhna, Palestine, URI Middle East & North Africa)

SYNC for Harmony
(Muenchen, Germany, URI Multiregion)

APRIL 2016

The Community RISE Circle of Yoff, Dakar
(Yoff, Dakar, Senegal, URI Africa)

Karonga Nthora (Karonga, Malawi, URI Africa)

Christian Muslim Unity Foundation
(Abuja, FCT, Nigeria, URI Africa)

Inter Religion Harmony Society – IRHS
(Dhaka, Bangladesh, URI Asia)

Kathak Dharohar (Delhi, India – North Zone, URI Asia)

InterReligious Initiative for Civic Engagement
(Navatkuli, Jaffna North, Sri Lanka, URI Asia)

Arizona Faith Network – AFN
(Gilbert, Arizona, USA, URI North America)

1GOD.com
(Clayton, VIC, Australia, URI South East Asia & the Pacific)



Young and old alike gather at a youth-led URI workshop to exchange ideas and wisdom at the 2015 Parliament of the World's Religions.

YOUTH AS CHAMPIONS OF PEACEBUILDING

Interfaith and intercultural understanding are the foundation of building united communities and fruitful collaboration for peace—a theme present from the simplest introductory exchange to joint social action for specific community goals. Youth are active and valuable URI members as part of youth-run and led CCs and in URI leadership, spanning the spectrum of peace in innovative ways.

“We do not come with solutions to communities; our job is to help the youth leaders to explore possibilities and add value to their efforts, because ultimately empowerment is theirs to define and achieve.”

- Nyambura Wa Mundia, URI's Kenya Country Contact and former Youth Ambassador

Engaging various faiths to find commonalities for collaboration rather than difference sounds easy, but is a first step that can be surprisingly difficult to take. Coexistor, URI's largest youth CC, does just that on a global scale through its annual Interfaith Tour, during which four young activists are hosted by CC members and communities around the world. The stories and lessons from diverse communities within the URI network are then taken on tour in France to promote peaceful coexistence and awareness of the challenges and similarities shared by people globally. CCs in Korea, Bulgaria, Argentina, the U.S., Pakistan, and elsewhere also prioritize youth camps and activities that give them the opportunity to learn about different religions. Encouraging interfaith, intercultural, intergenerational youth connections are necessary to enriching both personal and community ties for more effective collaboration, a novel idea in many parts of the world.

Youth leadership also mobilizes communities for united action on local issues. Several youth CCs come from Kibera, an informal low-income settlement in Nairobi, Kenya. Over the last year, six youth-led CCs there have been working together to pool their resources, strengthen their CCs' work, and craft joint action strategies to work on community-identified issues. Under the guidance of regional URI staff, this motivation has enabled more effective support mechanisms and integration into wider efforts. They are currently preparing to submit a joint tender to the government for a project that will draw on their experience and vision for supporting the role of young people in civil society in Kenya. “We do not come with solutions to communities; our job is to help the youth leaders to explore possibilities and add value to their efforts, because ultimately empowerment is theirs to define and achieve,” explained Nyambura Wa Mundia, URI's Kenya Country Contact.

We are committed to ensuring that URI's leadership is reflective of experiences and needs throughout the movement. As of July, we have three young leaders who are new Trustees on URI's Global Council: Naoufal El Hammoumi from Morocco, one of the first ever URI youth ambassadors, who has worked with youth NGOs in Morocco since the age of seven; Suchith Abeyewickreme, a former URI Youth Ambassador with experience supporting reconciliation efforts in Sri Lanka; and Jaya Priya Reinhalter, who was born and raised at Kashi Foundation CC, an intentional interfaith community in Florida, USA.

URI's young people bring unique perspectives and approaches to bridging changing communities and collaboratively addressing peace and development challenges. This increased engagement is already benefitting the network in countless ways, and it will be exciting to see where it will lead next!

THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS
**BUILDING BLOCKS
FOR PEACE**



INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PEACE
21 SEPTEMBER 2016



PARTNERSHIPS FOR INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PEACE

Our headlines are full of violence, inciting divisions based on differences of culture and religion. At URI, we are always reminded of the potential for good in people everywhere as we work for a more sustainable, inclusive peace for all. Our 790 Cooperation Circles (CCs) work tirelessly to build hope and understanding in a changing world, redefining peace and bringing their communities together to achieve it every day.

Since URI began, we were partners with the United Nations Department of Public Information to plan the annual Student Observance for the International Day of Peace (IDP). This annual program provides a special connection between the work of URI CCs in every region to that of the United Nations. CCs celebrate the day with activities like peace reflection workshops, prayer events, and interfaith walks or marches.

This year's IDP on September 21 will highlight implementation of the UN's 17 Global Goals for Sustainable Development, emphasizing collaboration within communities and countries, and the role of civil society. Topics such as gender equality and climate change aren't just for the halls of the UN. CCs address these same issues that impact their communities in 96 countries as they build the unity necessary

to achieve them sustainably.

URI is partnering with **Global Giving**, a crowdfunding platform, to build visibility for URI's support of CCs' work to bring people of different faiths, beliefs, and cultures together to address critical issues in their communities in sustainable ways. URI's campaign will build CCs' capacity to enhance their peacebuilding work and connect more effectively within regional and international frameworks including the Global Goals. Visit GlobalGiving.org to read more about our vision and donate to building grassroots peace. URI is also joining hands with **Compassion Games International, 1 Billion Acts of Peace, and UNIFY**, a URI Cooperation Circle, to broaden the reach of the stories our Cooperation Circles submit of their events and activities in celebration of IDP. Finally, members of the URI community will be featured in the Shift Network's **11 Days of Global Unity**, the last of the *Summer of Peace* online summits leading up to IDP that focus on aspects of peacebuilding, with interactive discussions with leading experts and changemakers to build a blueprint for future change.

We are grateful for these partnerships, and look forward to a successful celebration of International Day of Peace!

"The 17 Sustainable Development Goals are our shared vision of humanity and a social contract between the world's leaders and the people. They are a to-do list for people and planet, and a blueprint for success."

- UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon

IMPORTANT LINKS!

URI at GLOBAL GIVING

tiny.cc/URlglobalgiving

SUBMIT YOUR IDP REPORTS

tiny.cc/IDP2016form
or via email at IDP@uri.org

ENSURING URI'S LEGACY: THREE QUESTIONS WITH GARD JAMESON

URI's **Legacy Circle** is a group of donors who have made provision for a gift to URI in their estate plans. Realized gifts from members of the Legacy Circle go to support URI's endowment. Interest from the endowment helps provide for URI's long-term sustainability.



*Gard Jameson (seen here with his wife Dr. Florence Jameson) is a long-time supporter and friend of URI. If you want to recommend a person in the URI community for a **THREE QUESTIONS** profile, send us an email at newsletter@uri.org*

Why do you support United Religions Initiative?

I have been involved with interfaith work since the early 1970s; helped to start the North American Interfaith Network in Wichita in 1988; was part of the Stanford gathering for URI in the 1990s; co-founded the Interfaith Council of Southern Nevada in 2004, and have attended every Parliament of World Religions, except 1893! The importance of interfaith is in my DNA. It is my prayer that future prophets and teachers of religion will be directed less toward the strengthening of interreligious barriers and more toward the enhancement of religious community and spiritual fellowship. This is precisely what URI does, and, precisely why I support URI's work. The hope of the planet lies in the geometric growth of such community and fellowship.

Why do you believe planned gifts are important?

As a CPA, CFP and Director of Financial Planning for a major regional CPA firm, planned giving has always been on the tip of my tongue as I speak with folks about their own legacy planning. There is a tremendous transfer of wealth in the works and it is my prayer that institutions such as URI will be the beneficiary of some of that transfer. I have personally established a family foundation to enhance the bond of the next generation by getting them involved in philanthropy, with URI as a named beneficiary! Everyone—no matter their means—can do something to make URI a part of their personal legacy.

Why did you choose to make a bequest to URI?

What better investment is there on the planet than an institution that is dedicated to the enhancement of peace and the reduction of violence? What better investment is there than an institution that is the largest global contributor to interfaith dialogue and good works? What better investment is there than an institution that is promoting a global tsunami of goodwill and peace efforts? URI is that institution!

To find out more about the Legacy Circle and making a planned gift to URI, please contact the Development Office at 415-561-2300 or email development@uri.org.

MORE NEWS FROM THE NETWORK

RE-INTRODUCING: THE YOUTH AMBASSADORS PROGRAM

The year-long **Youth Ambassadors Program** provides emerging youth leaders with focused training and mentoring, support to develop their own community interfaith projects, and incorporating them as points of change at various levels within the global network. While past Ambassadors were expected to start their own CCs, this cycle focuses on developing age-inclusive and sustainable leadership within existing CCs in Bosnia, Uganda, Rwanda, Nigeria and India. CCs select their own Ambassadors, and they and the new youth leaders are positioned to become more effective drivers of change in their communities and URI.

Visit URI.org to read more about each Youth Ambassador and their work, or email youth@uri.org for more information.

BE PART OF A GLOBAL CHORUS TO END NUCLEAR MADNESS

The bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki took place 71 years ago on August 6th and 9th, respectively. To mark this somber occasion with our shared conviction that the world will never again see the death and destruction that occurred on those fateful mornings, **Voices for a World Free of Nuclear Weapons** Cooperation Circle invites you to recite The Nuclear Prayer as a call for the abolition of all nuclear weapons. You can find the prayer here: www.TheNuclearPrayer.org.

Take a photo or video of yourself, friends, congregation, etc. reciting the prayer and email it to voices@uri.org or post it on Facebook or Twitter using the hashtag #TheNuclearPrayer.

The louder our voices ring, the sooner we can see change!



UNITED RELIGIONS INITIATIVE

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www.uri.org

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Find out more at tiny.cc/URlglobalgiving

1 NO POVERTY 	2 NO HUNGER 	3 GOOD HEALTH 	4 QUALITY EDUCATION 	5 GENDER EQUALITY 	6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION
7 RENEWABLE ENERGY 	8 GOOD JOBS AND ECONOMIC GROWTH 	9 INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE 	10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES 	11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES 	12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION
13 CLIMATE ACTION 	14 LIFE BELOW WATER 	15 LIFE ON LAND 	16 PEACE AND JUSTICE 	17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS 	

THE GLOBAL GOALS
For Sustainable Development