



INTRODUCTION PIECES TO URI 2008

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Tap your creativity to use this piece in a variety of way for website pages, PowerPoint presentations, slide shows, or oral presentations. It was originally conceived to be used as an introduction page on a website – each phrase is meant to appear one after the other. Have fun!

1. Introduction to URI—Part One

The URI sparks hope. It calls forth people everywhere, from every background, to contribute to global change.

The URI believes that all voices, especially those that are not often heard, are needed.

URI's purpose is ... to promote daily and enduring interfaith cooperation.
... to stop religiously motivated violence.
... to create cultures of peace, justice and healing for the Earth and living beings.

URI taps people's creativity and passion.

URI encourages people to see a need and reach out to meet it:

- In Delhi, a URI Cooperation Circle (CC) works with school children from different faith backgrounds to reforest the land;
- In Rio de Janeiro, a URI Circle helps organize a campaign to turn in hand guns;
- In Manila, a Circle has launched the first Priest-Imam Dialogues and is advising the Inter-religious President's Council;
- In Jerusalem, Israeli, Palestinian, Christian and Druze women meet regularly to deepen understanding and forge friendships in the face of violence;
- In Addis Ababa, a Circle participates in peacekeeping between the governments of Ethiopia and Eritrea;
- In Helsinki, a Circle pioneers an interfaith talk show on the radio;
- In Uganda, Muslim, Jewish and Christian coffee farmers are cooperating to bring coffee beans to market more efficiently;
- In Hendersonville, North Carolina, a Circle has organized a intensive Peace Academy to educate in non-violent communication and religious differences.

Circles like these are in motion everywhere.

With URI, local efforts big and small, in over 67 countries, make up a global community that is growing.

URI is sustained by the dedication of people.

Groups and organizations of all kinds, profit and non-profit, formal and informal, new or pre-existing, young people and old people, local, regional or international, are a part of URI.

URI touches what is in people's hearts and forges relationships that build bridges among diverse people.

It is grounded in values listed in URI's Preamble, Purpose and Principles and its Charter.

The URI Charter upholds people's shared values and honors their participation. All people who are in accord with the Preamble Purpose and Principles are welcome.

2. Introduction to URI—Part Two

Imagine a night sky filled with stars.

Imagine that each star is a unique crystal jewel and each jewel reflects the other jewels and all parts of the whole cosmos.

Imagine belonging to an organization that, like a glistening web, is composed of these reflections and endlessly amplifies everyone's strengths.

You are seeing the unique quality of the URI.

URI is an organization that believes that people's passions and initiative when organized, connected and amplified, create a sustaining global force for good.

People in URI deepen friendships through communication and help each other achieve their aspirations. Together as a collective global body, the URI works to achieve unprecedented acts of interfaith cooperation and peacemaking.

Any person committed to URI's Preamble, Purpose and Principles is welcome and encouraged to participate in the URI. No one is kept away because of religion, spiritual expression, and indigenous tradition, or because of their color, ethnicity, age, gender, education, social and economic standing, occupation or language. Open and inclusive membership is balanced with a standard of organizational integrity and reliance on relationships based on trustworthiness.

URI Cooperation Circles can join with other CCs to create structures for ongoing coordination and mutual support. The freedom to organize from the grassroots up, rather than from a "central office-down" creates a decentralized global body.

The governing body for the whole URI is called the Global Council. The Global Council (the majority are elected by the URI membership) and the global staff comprise the Core Trust, serve the Circles and manage the affairs that affect the whole.

Leadership is shared among Global Council trustees, Staff and Cooperation Circles.

URI practices organizational learning. Attention is given to developing and deepening expertise in the areas of leadership, peacebuilding, communication, and regional growth.

"It's impossible, so let's do it!" was often heard in URI's early years. Today, there are still more questions than answers. There is not a clear cut path ahead.

The actions and conversations that create the URI every day are rooted in stillness, gracious hospitality and respect. People in the URI depend on silence as the bedrock from which all action emerges and where the Ultimate might be experienced.

URI honors the Sacred, no matter how many different ways are used to name it. URI is not a religion but is devoted to building bridges of understanding among people of diverse faith backgrounds.

URI looks for the beauty in people and provides a process for people to contribute as valuable members of one human family. URI honors listening, silence, prayer, meditation, good conversation, appreciation, voices that are not often heard, inquiry, and co-creation of its organizational life by ever-increasing numbers of people.

Today, people on every continent trust the URI to be an international organization with a spiritual heart and soul that provides solutions to ancient hostilities, and alternatives and to traditional hierarchical organizational behavior. The rallying cry is still – “Impossible! So let’s do it!”