

## The Coming One World Religion - pt 1

### **Revelation 13:8-9**

8 And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

9 If any man have an ear, let him hear.

What is interfaith? According to dictionary.com interfaith means

Interfaith - of, operating, or occurring between persons belonging to different religions: an interfaith service.

What does Ecumenical mean?

Ecumenical - promoting or fostering Christian unity throughout the world.

During the course of this teaching on The Coming One World Religion we will be reading directly from the websites of the organizations who are involved in bringing about this coming together of religions. In each case I will read the name of the website of each organization so that one can verify what is being read.

The first organization that I will read from is the World Council of Churches. The website for the .....

<http://www.oikoumene.org/>

What is the World Council of Churches?

The World Council of Churches (WCC) is the broadest and most inclusive among the many organized expressions of the modern ecumenical movement, a movement whose goal is Christian unity.

The WCC brings together 349 churches, denominations and church fellowships in more than 110 countries and territories throughout the world, representing over 560 million Christians and including most of the world's Orthodox churches, scores of denominations from such historic traditions of

the Protestant Reformation as Anglican, Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist and Reformed, as well as many united and independent churches. While the bulk of the WCC's founding churches were European and North American, today most are in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America, the Middle East and the Pacific.

For its member churches, the WCC is a unique space: one in which they can reflect, speak, act, worship and work together, challenge and support each other, share and debate with each other. As members of this fellowship, WCC member churches:

are called to the goal of visible unity in one faith and one eucharistic [yoo-kuh-rist] fellowship; promote their common witness in work for mission and evangelism; engage in Christian service by serving human need, breaking down barriers between people, seeking justice and peace, and upholding the integrity of creation; and foster renewal in unity, worship, mission and service.

## **Purpose**

Over the years since the Toronto statement was adopted, the issues it addresses have remained on the agenda of the WCC.

The statement in the constitution regarding the purpose of the WCC has developed from the 1948 formulation, "to carry out the work of the world movements for Faith and Order and Life and Work", to the much more specific language of Nairobi (1975), which speaks of calling "the churches to the goal of visible unity in one faith and in one eucharistic fellowship expressed in worship and in the common life of Christ, and to advance towards that unity in order that the world may believe"; to the even more detailed formulation adopted by the Harare (huh-rahr-ey) assembly (1998):

"The primary purpose of the fellowship of churches in the World Council of Churches is to call one another to visible unity in one faith and in one eucharistic fellowship, expressed in worship and common life in Christ, through witness and service to the world, and to advance towards that unity in order that the world may believe".

## **Inter-religious dialogue and cooperation**

Participants in a WCC youth interfaith forum, Geneva, November 2005. At the dawn of the 21st century, religion plays a central role in public life, and has become a significant identity marker.

In our increasingly pluralistic societies, more inter-religious dialogue and cooperation are needed if conflict fueled by religion is to be constructively addressed.

Spiritual and religious traditions are a source of values that can defend dignified life for all; these traditions need to be explored.

We need new ways to understand both particularity, universality and plurality; we must learn to live our faith with integrity while respecting and accepting each other.

### **Strengthening inter-religious trust and respect**

This project is designed to explore cutting-edge issues in today's religiously plural societies, and common concerns of and friction with people of other faiths. It does so through bilateral and multilateral encounters as well as through the use of contemporary communication tools.

A multifaith think-tank will discuss the issue of conversion via the internet and at an annual consultation. Established by the WCC in 1997, the group has dealt in the past with issues such as religion and violence, and the "other" in our religious traditions.

There is a yearning for spirituality among many young people, not always in a strictly religious sense, and often disconnected from institutionalized religion and dogmas, rites and religious practices. The project will provide a space for young adults from different regions and cultures to discuss religious identity, and meaning in pluralist societies.

Women have often challenged the ways religion is used to legitimize violence against them, and have been able step over religious divides to work for peace, particularly in conflict situations. This project will attempt to strengthen a network of women working together for justice and peace.

The project will initiate and monitor a website focusing on best practices in inter-religious dialogue. This will include a help desk where users can consult religious/inter-religious experts and exchange best practices. Other

possible site features could be a question-and-answer bulletin board, commentaries to blogs, webcast conferences with interactive features, and web-based working groups.

The next organization that I would like to discuss is the equivalent of the United Nations and is called the United Religions. The website for the .....

<http://www.uri.org/>

## **United Religions Initiative**

United Religions Initiative (URI) was founded in 2000 by an extraordinary global community committed to promoting enduring, daily interfaith cooperation and to ending religiously motivated violence. Today the URI includes thousands of members in over 65 countries representing more than 100 religions, spiritual expressions, and indigenous traditions.

URI is a global community with spiritual heart. Members from diverse backgrounds pioneer interfaith dialogue and peacebuilding skills. Its core organizational principles include inclusive membership, self-organizing initiatives and decentralized governance. Together, we are designing an effective communications and knowledge sharing network and exchanging best practices for local, regional and global organizing. We are deepening friendships and fostering solidarity. URI believes that people everywhere when inspired to cooperate for the common good, will find solutions to end religiously motivated hate and violence and will create initiatives that build cultures of peace, justice and healing. You are invited to participate in this unique global organization and imagine how to ignite the spirit of URI in your community.

## **History: Creating the Initiative**

The seed for the URI was planted in 1993 when the United Nations invited William Swing, Episcopal Bishop of California, to host an interfaith service in San Francisco. That night the Bishop found it hard to sleep ... he told himself, "If the nations of the world are working together for peace through the UN, then where are the religions of the world?" From this inspiration, a vision took shape to create an organization whereby people of diverse faiths and from all sectors of society would cooperate for peace and justice for all.

From the first global summit in 1996 to the Charter signing in 2000, URI engaged thousands of people from diverse religions, spiritual expressions and indigenous traditions to create the URI Charter. Five global summits and numerous gatherings and consultations took place in different regions of the world. URI used a highly effective methodology for positive change, Appreciative Inquiry, pioneered by Dr. David Cooperrider of Case Western Reserve University and the revolutionary insights for organizing offered by Dee Hock, founder of VISA international.

The results of this process are a URI Charter, interfaith action projects in over 70 countries, and an unprecedented network of Cooperation Circles and supporting members and Affiliates dedicated to making the Charter a lived reality all over the world. Today, hundreds of thousands of people are bringing their unique talents to URI and organizing profound acts of care, compassion, cooperation, education and peacebuilding.

### **URI is Organized Locally, Regionally and Globally**

The heart of URI is the global network of locally organized “Cooperation Circles.” The Regional teams, made up of Global Council trustees and regional coordinators, work in eight regions to sustain local Cooperation Circle (CC) membership groups, provide communication links, and develop URI through interfaith partnerships. The Global Council Trustees are elected by the Cooperation Circle member groups and serve three-year terms of office. Affiliates are individuals or groups, such as single-faith groups, who choose to affiliate with URI, are in alignment with URI’s principles, but do not have the rights and responsibilities of Cooperation Circles.

Cooperation Circle is the basic unit of URI membership and consists of local or virtual groups that include at least seven members and at least three different religions, spiritual paths and indigenous traditions. CCs organize around local needs and visions and operate within the parameters of the Preamble, Purpose and Principles of the URI.

### **Organizational Design**

The URI is a membership organization whereby members agree to act in accord with the Preamble, Purpose and Principles of the URI Charter. Each Cooperation Circle (CC) is a Member of the URI and defines its unique

purpose and directs its affairs in accord with the Charter and Bylaws of the URI.

CCs are free to organize with other CCs for mutual benefit and coordination and form Multiple Cooperation Circles (MCCs). Likewise, MCCs can form together to form (MMCCs) in order to provide more extensive coordination around shared interests.

Supporting members and affiliates support the work of the international network of Cooperation Circles. The Global Council, URI's governing Board, is composed largely of trustees selected by the URI Cooperation Circles. Trustees serve as exemplars of the core values of the URI and manage its affairs. Trustees are selected every three years. URI Bylaws, in accord with California statute for non-profit organizations, define URI's operating principles and policies.

The **URI Charter** was developed through a four year global chartering process by several hundred women, men, and youth representing a diverse array of religions, spiritual paths and indigenous traditions. It inspires, grounds and guides all URI activity. Download the full Charter

**Preamble** - The call that inspires us to create the URI now and continue to create it everyday

**Purpose** - The statement that draws us together in common cause

**Principles** - The fundamental beliefs that guide our structure, decisions and content

## **Preamble**

We, people of diverse religions, spiritual expressions and indigenous traditions throughout the world, hereby establish the United Religions Initiative 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.

We respect the uniqueness of each tradition, and differences of practice or belief.

We value voices that respect others, and believe that sharing our values and wisdom can lead us to act for the good of all.

We believe that our religious, spiritual lives, rather than dividing us, guide us to build community and respect for one another.

Therefore, as interdependent people rooted in our traditions, we now unite for the benefit of our Earth community.

We unite to build cultures of peace and justice.

We unite to heal and protect the Earth.

We unite to build safe places for conflict resolution, healing and reconciliation.

We unite to support freedom of religion and spiritual expression, and the rights of all individuals and peoples as set forth in international law.

We unite in responsible cooperative action to bring the wisdom and values of our religions, spiritual expressions and indigenous traditions to bear on the economic, environmental, political and social challenges facing our Earth community.

We unite to provide a global opportunity for participation by all people, especially by those whose voices are not often heard.

We unite to celebrate the joy of blessings and the light of wisdom in both movement and stillness.

We unite to use our combined resources only for nonviolent, compassionate action, to awaken to our deepest truths, and to manifest love and justice among all life in our Earth community.

## **Purpose**

The purpose of the United Religions Initiative is 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.

## **Principles**

1. The URI is a bridge-building organization, not a religion.

2. We respect the sacred wisdom of each religion, spiritual expression and indigenous tradition.
3. We respect the differences among religions, spiritual expressions and indigenous traditions.
4. We encourage our members to deepen their roots in their own tradition.
5. We listen and speak with respect to deepen mutual understanding and trust.
6. We give and receive hospitality.
7. We seek and welcome the gift of diversity and model practices that do not discriminate.
8. We practice equitable participation of women and men in all aspects of the URI.
9. We practice healing and reconciliation to resolve conflict without resorting to violence.
10. We act from sound ecological practices to protect and preserve the Earth for both present and future generations.
11. We seek and offer cooperation with other interfaith efforts.
12. We welcome as members all individuals, organizations and associations who subscribe to the Preamble, Purpose and Principles.
13. We have the authority to make decisions at the most local level that includes all the relevant and affected parties.
14. We have the right to organize in any manner, at any scale, in any area, and around any issue or activity which is relevant to and consistent with the Preamble, Purpose and Principles.



15. Our deliberations and decisions shall be made at every level by bodies and methods that fairly represent the diversity of affected interests and are not dominated by any.

16. We (each part of the URI) shall relinquish only such autonomy and resources as are essential to the pursuit of the Preamble, Purpose and Principles.

17. We have the responsibility to develop financial and other resources to meet the needs of our part, and to share financial and other resources to help meet the needs of other parts.

18. We maintain the highest standards of integrity and ethical conduct, prudent use of resources, and fair and accurate disclosure of information.

19. We are committed to organizational learning and adaptation.

20. We honor the richness and diversity of all languages and the right and responsibility of participants to translate and interpret the Charter, Articles, Bylaws and related documents in accordance with the Preamble, Purpose and Principles, and the spirit of the United Religions Initiative.

21. Members of the URI shall not be coerced to participate in any ritual or be proselytized.

This brings us a close to the end of part 1 of 4 on the Coming One World Religion.