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Faith, Interfaith, Freedom: February Conference

By Hal W. French

"Faith, Interfaith and Freedom." That's the theme of our IARF conference in Hilton Head, S.C. February 3-5. Sounds pretty comprehensive, doesn't it? Can we deliver transcendence in a weekend? Well, that's a tall order, but consider some items on our program that might give you a measure of enlightenment at least!

We have three plenary sessions on Saturday, with Kay Lindahl doing a

workshop on Sacred Listening, Waleed El-Ansary speaking on Islam and Interfaith, and Peter Morales, presenting as President of the UUA.

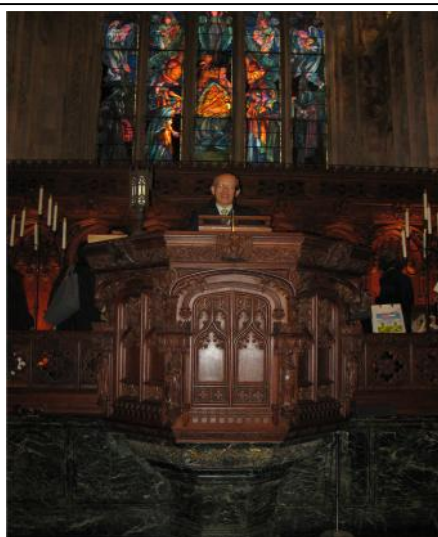
Consider just a few other highlights: a Friday evening concert by a women's a capella choir from the University of South Carolina, yoga sessions each morning for the get up and get going people, three worship services, three circle group sessions to get you acquainted with each other, two sessions by

scholars sharing insights from their latest books, a meditation session, a report on persecution of Baha'is in Iran, a panel on international outreach, plus reports on IARF activities internationally.

And for Saturday evening we have a special invitation from the Bluffton UU congregation nearby to a reception, followed by a Gullah presentation, to give you a taste of a significant element of Low Country history and culture.

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Japan Chapter East Coast tour



Rev. Sakai in Fairhaven, MA, pulpit



Tour group at the grave of Natalie Gulbrandsen. Beverly, MA.

Description of the tour is found on page 2.

Registration Information

We hope you'll be there with us!

**US Chapter Conference
February 3-5, 2012
Hilton Oceanfront Hotel
Hilton Head Island, SC**

Registration form is at the end of newsletter.

Please book your own accommodations. To secure the Hilton's special room rate of \$99 per night (1 or 2 beds), before January 6 call 1-843-842-8000, or book online on the hotel's IARF page: [IARF hotel](#)

Conference, continued.

From page 1

All of this takes place at the Hilton Oceanfront Hotel, a really nice facility where I've hosted three Asian Studies conferences. The nice people there will start us off with a sumptuous welcome reception on Friday. And whatever the weather is in February in coastal South Carolina in February, it will probably be better than where you live! Check out the hotel's web site.

You'll be attending one of a number of special

programs around the world sponsored by the United Nations World Interfaith Harmony Week. The South Carolina Interfaith Partnership will cooperate with us in promoting this conference, as will PICNA (Peace and Integration Council of North America), so the welcome mat is out for you. Look for the registration form and schedule at the end of this newsletter. ❖

EDITOR'S NOTE: At my request, two of the keynote presenters have each provided a question that will be raised by their talks. Waleed el-Ansary offers, "What is the Quranic doctrine of the universality of revelation, and what does it imply for interreligious dialogue?" Kay Lindahl submits, "How does the quality of your listening impact the future?" ❖

Japan Chapter Tour

By Richard Kellaway and Doris Hunter

On October 20th a delegation of 23 members of the Japanese Chapter of the IARF arrived in Washington, D.C. All are members of Rissho Kosei Kai (RKK), a modern Buddhist movement. In DC they visited All Souls Church. Shortly after the bombing of Hiroshima in 1945, the minister, A. Powell Davies, called on his congregation to provide assistance to the survivors. Large quantities of goods were sent to the school children of that devastated city. In return the children sent more than forty drawings to the church. They remained there until last spring when the current minister, Rob Hardies, returned the originals to Hiroshima. The group members expressed their thanks to him and the congregation and viewed reproductions of the

drawings. After touring the city, at the Universalist National Memorial Church they met IARF supporters including Hal French, up from SC, and to hear Mrs. Sueko Hada, a survivor of the nuclear blast, tell of her experiences. They also met Ms. Shizumi Manale, who is making a film of the story.

On Saturday, the group moved to Boston, where the members were greeted by Rev. Eric Cherry, Director of the UUA Office of International Resources. They toured the headquarters of our Association, and President Morales greeted them, along with members of the UUA Board and staff members of the International Office and members of the Boston Chapter of the IARF.

The following day, a Sunday, we led the

Japanese delegation to the grave sites of Rev. Dana Greeley in Concord and Dr. Natalie Gullbrandsen in Beverly. The delegation leader, Rev. Sakai, gave prayers honoring their dedication to interfaith understanding and cooperation. Flowers were placed on their graves, a gracious tribute to the lasting friendship between the Japan Chapter of the IARF and our Unitarian Universalist Association.

The group moved to Fairhaven, MA, in the afternoon. There they visited the home and museum of John Manjiro, the first Japanese person to live in the United States. In the 1840's he was rescued by William Whitfield, Captain of a Fairhaven whaling ship. Whitfield brought him home to live, since any contact with

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India: Human Rights Education Project

By Thomas Mathew

India is a country where religion is an inalienable part of day-to-day life, and freedom of religion is guaranteed under the constitution to every citizen. In spite of the rapid progress in the area of safeguarding human rights in India, contemporary evidence points to abject denial of the fundamental freedom of religion and faith in many parts of the country. Religious fundamentalism has made life miserable and intolerable for many individuals belonging to minority religious faiths and Dalit communities.

In this regard, IARF South Asia (SACC) has been a premier non-governmental organization in educating the youth about human rights, especially regarding Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief (DEIDRB). The

work of IARF has been well appreciated and encouraged from all corners of Indian civil society. IARF SACC has been conducting Human Rights Education (HRE) programs among the youth in different parts of India.

The first phase of the HRE project (August 2005 to December 2007) was a great success in India and Bangladesh in spite of many challenges faced by the organization. In the course of the first phase, 55 HRE workshops were organized in India and 8 in Bangladesh. . The two-day human rights education workshops were carried out using a well-designed and structured learning process with six different sessions.

During the second phase, from August 2008 to August 2009, IARF SACC conducted 25 human rights workshops in India. 1172 participants from all over India including North East India, Kashmir, and Gujarat were trained in these HRE workshops. Twenty-four workshops were organized in the third phase

*1172 participants
from all over India
... are now
catalysts in
upholding human
dignity*



(August 2010 -August 2011)
for youth from India and
abroad to receive training on
the UDHR and the DEIDRB.
The actual participants
always exceeded the
expected numbers. The
project aimed at training
650-700 participants, but
1145 persons actually
participated.

India now has a large pool of
educated youth who can
work as catalysts in
upholding human dignity and
ensuring religious freedom of
all people in India. The 33rd

World Congress of IARF, held
at Kochi, India, September 4-
7, 2010, attracted young
adults from various parts of
the globe. Most of the youth
were attracted to the IARF
through the HRE project.

Religious strife and tension
have become a common
occurrence, and intolerance
towards other religions is
gradually increasing. It is
urgent and absolutely
imperative for a non-
governmental organization
like IARF SACC to carry on
the noble task of imparting
knowledge of the UDHR and
the DEIDRB. Through the HRE
programs, participants are
exposed to a new world of
information about human
dignity and religious freedom

--- the path to peace.

These attempts help to mold
more peace makers to save
humanity in this divided
world. ❖

**Dr. Thomas Mathew is the
immediate past President of
IARF and now Chairman,
IARF South Asia chapter.**

Read the latest news
from the international
office at

www.iarf.net



United States Chapter
International
Association
For Religious Freedom

Renew or join!
Visit our website
iarfus.org or send
your dues to
Harold French, Dept.
of Religious Studies,
University of South
Carolina, Columbia,
SC 29208

\$30 - Individual
\$50 - Household
\$10 - Student

New Book on Women's Spiritual Leadership

Kay Lindahl, one of our chapter advisors, has launched a new book this month. She is the co-editor of *Women, Spirituality and Transformative Leadership: Where Grace Meets Power*, published by SkyLight Paths Publishing. Kay says that the book is available on Amazon.com as of

November 1, and will play a part in "mak[ing] women's spiritual leadership more visible in the cultural conversation." We can look forward to participating with Kay in "sacred listening" at our conference in February. ❖

Japan Chapter Tour, continued.

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foreigners was then a sentence to death for a Japanese. Manjiro attended the Unitarian church and became very educated about American technical knowledge, an

enormous contribution when he eventually returned to Japan. After touring the church and the museum, the group met with local IARF supporters.

Yugi Inokuma in Japan and

Rev. Richard Kellaway in the U.S. led the overall planning, with Ann Fox and Jean Kellaway arranging the Fairhaven visit. A return visit to Japan for the Fall of 2012 is being discussed. ❖

**U.S. CHAPTER
INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION
FOR RELIGIOUS FREEDOM**

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183 22ND AVENUE
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94121



CUSTOMER NAME
STREET ADDRESS
ADDRESS 2
CITY, ST ZIP CODE



We're on the Web!
See us at:
www.iarfus.org

IARF CONFERENCE REGISTRATION FORM

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February 3-5, 2012, Hilton Oceanfront Resort, Hilton Head, SC

Please register me (or us), _____,
\$125 per person, _____ (\$150 after January 2)
\$60 for student _____
\$60 Saturday only _____
\$30 Saturday afternoon only _____ TOTAL _____

Address _____

E-mail address _____ Telephone _____

Send this form with your check, payable to IARF-US, to
Hal W. French, Chair, Dept. of Religious Studies,
University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC 29208,

Meals not mentioned in program are on your own.

Check if you prefer Vegetarian _____ or Vegan _____ to standard luncheon.

Please book your own accommodations. To secure the Hilton's special room rate of \$99 per night (1 or 2 beds), before January 6 call 1-843-842-8000, or book online on hotel's IARF page [click here](#)

IARF CONFERENCE AT HILTON HEAD- Tentative Program

Friday, February 3rd:

3:00- Meeting of Board Members and Advisors

4:00- 6:00- Registration

5:00 – 6:00 Welcome Reception

6:45- First Circle group meeting

7:45- Opening Worship Service: Dr. Carl Evans,
South Carolina Interfaith Partnership

8:15- Evening Entertainment- Univ. of South Carolina women's
a capella group, The Cocktails

Hospitality Suite in late evening.

Saturday, February 4th:

7:30- Yoga with Sarah Corbett

8:30- Morning Worship: Rev. Nan White, Beaufort S.C. UU

9:00 Option One- Presentation on Slavery by Dr. Roy Kaplan

- 6 Option Two- Presentation by Dr. Peter Richardson (to be confirmed)

10:15 Morning break (breakfast breads, coffee, tea)

10:30 **Keynote:** Kay Lindahl- Sacred Listening Workshop

Noon- Luncheon and Business meeting

1:30- Doris Hunter- Report on Council activities, with Thomas Mathew from India (to be confirmed)

2:00 **Keynote:** Dr. Waleed El-Ansary- Islam and Interfaith

3:00 Afternoon Break- soft drinks

3:30 **Keynote:** Peter Morales, UUA President

4:30- Second Circle Group meeting

5:30- 8:15- Wine and cheese reception at Bluffton UU Church, followed by a Gullah presentation

Hospitality suite in late evening

Sunday, February 5th:

7:00- Second Yoga Session--Sara Corbett

8:00- Option One- Hal French, Meditation Sampler

Option Two- Nancy Songer, Baha'i persecution in Iran

9:00- Panel on International Outreach- Eric Cherry, Francie Markham, Orlanda Brugnola

10:15- Morning Break

10:30- Third Circle groups

11:30- Closing Worship- Rev. Manuel Holland, Bluffton UU, and Adjournment