



## ENGAGING THE URI CHARTER

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### Background [taken from the URI Charter]

Since June of 1996, thousands of people have shared their visions and worked together to create the URI, an organization for global-good rooted in shared spiritual values. People from many different cultures and perspectives are working to make the URI an organization that is inclusive, non-hierarchical and decentralized—one that enhances cooperation, autonomy and individual opportunity. This co-creative work, offered by people of many cultures, is producing a unique organization composed of self-organizing groups which operate locally and are connected globally.

The URI's Charter has been spoken into being by a myriad of voices from around the world. Its essential spirit, values and vision are expressed in the Preamble, Purpose, and Principles. Taken together they inspire, ground, and guide all URI activity. The Charter includes:

**Preamble** – the call that inspires us to create the URI now and continue to create it everyday;

**Purpose** – the statement that draws us together for a common cause;

**Principles** – the fundamental beliefs that guide our structure, decisions and content;

**Organization Design** – the way we organize to enhance cooperation and magnify spirit;

**Guidelines for Action** – an action agenda to inspire and guide our worldwide URI community.

### Engage the Charter

You are warmly invited to participate in our growing community and become part of this extraordinary force for good in the world. One way you can do so is to participate in the ongoing creation and revision of the Charter. Read the Charter, and meet with others for discussion. Here are some ideas for engaging the Charter in group meetings:



## a) Create Conversations

### Preamble and Purpose

Ask people to read aloud the Preamble and Purpose. Take turns reading each paragraph. Then, ask the group to reflect on the following question:



When in your life have you been a part of something that expressed the same values expressed in this vision? Please tell the story of what happened. What was it that you valued deeply? What difference did your experience make in your community? In your own life? Thinking back to the Charter, what words especially resonate for you and illuminate the experience you just described?

### Principles

Ask people to read the principles in turn, each person reading one principle. Then ask the group to reflect on and discuss the following question:

Which of these principles stand out for you as offering powerful guidance for a better way of life?

How might we change if we lived these principles in pursuit of the URI purpose? How might living these principles change our communities and our world?

### Organization Design, The Global Council, and Guidelines for Action

Ask people to work with the different sections: the Organizational Design, Global Council, Global Assembly and Guidelines for Action. (You might form pairs or small groups – each might work with one of these sections.)

Ask each group to reflect on and discuss the following:

What inspires you about this plan? For you, is there an image, a metaphor, or a gift from nature that helps you describe or better understand the ideal qualities expressed in this organizational plan?

### Guidelines for Action

As you imagine becoming a part of the living United Religions Initiative, what shared action for a better world would you like to be involved in? Which Action Area is most compelling for you? Have you already taken part in activities or projects that seek to live into any of these Action areas? Please describe your experience.

### Organizational Design Chart: Building the URI Together

The last page of the Charter document shows a picture of the different kinds of structures that make up the URI. Begin with *CC Cooperation Circles* and read counterclockwise. In pairs or small groups imagine and discuss why you might want to participate in a Cooperation Circle, or become an Affiliate.

## Conclusion

Imagine a growing global community of Cooperation Circles. Imagine how one might take root where you live or around a particular interest. Imagine how such a group could spring into being from the passion, determination, creativity and resourcefulness of the people in this group. Having ideas does not mean you must act on every one! What ideas from your group seem most needed? Explore why might a group you already belong to desire to foster a Cooperation Circle as part of this work? Imagine—what are all the benefits you might receive by being in touch with similar groups around the world? Imagine—how would your actions benefit the worldwide community?

### THE CIRCLE



*Every thing the power of the world does is done in a Circle.*

*The sky is round, and I have heard that the  
earth is round like a ball, and so are all of the stars.*

*The wind, in its greatest power, whirls.*

*Birds make their nests in Circles,  
for theirs is the same religion as ours.*

*The sun comes forth and goes down again in a Circle.*

*The moon does the same, and both are round.*

*Even the seasons form a great Circle in their changing  
and always come back again to where they were.*

*The life of a person is a Circle from childhood to childhood  
and so it is in everything where power moves. Black Elk*

Meeting and inquiring in a circle is a simple and powerful way to bring people together that invites a deeper listening, a sacred presence and a voice of spirit/soul to be heard. People gather in a circle with the intention to ease the pain around the world and envision a better way, a way that brings peace instead of war and violence, and provides mutual support for creative and effective new actions.