



international association for

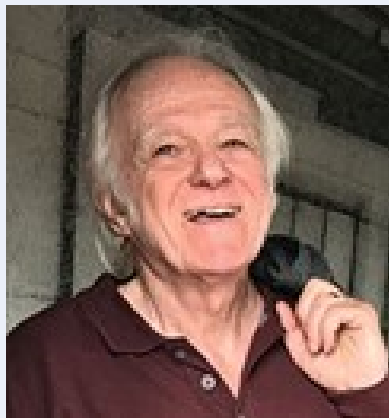
religious freedom
belief with integrity

IARF U.S. Chapter Newsletter

Spring 2024 - Volume 25 - Issue 1

CHAPTER UPDATE

Welcome George Garland to Our IARF-US Board



George Garland became a UU at St. John's in Cincinnati with David Sammons. He moved on to the Unitarian Church of Rockville, MD, (disciple of Mary Hart), and then attended All Souls UU in Washington, DC.

After four years at WHO SE Asia Regional Office, he returned to Washington, DC, to work

He was UNA-USA National Capital Area Chapter Executive Director from 2000.

He moved to New York City in 2006 as Executive Director for National Membership for UNA-USA, then Executive Director of World Energy Forum.

George is now President of Boards of HEART in Haiti and UNA-USA Southern New York Division.

At the UU Community Church of NYC he has served as chair of the Board of Trustees and is now its treasurer and is

for the USEPA Office of Solid Waste for the next 34 years as Chief Technical Advisor for Safety and Control of Dangerous Substances for India, Indonesia, Burma, Sri Lanka, and Thailand.

active on its UN Global Affairs Committee.

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DONATE

Dues are \$50 per year per family, or \$10 for students. Your membership dues and other welcome contributions help to continue our increased programming. Dues are now fully tax-deductible as a charitable contribution.

Click the **Donate** button to submit by PayPal, or send a check to IARF-US at the address shown below.

**IARF US - c/o Cedar Lane UU Church
9601 Cedar Lane
Bethesda, MD, 20814, US**

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IARF-US Invites You to a Monthly Discussion Series

Every third Wednesday of the month starting in April, presenters will share their personal global spiritualities with us, alternating with topics on how we can support the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) -- an essential element for maintaining humanity's spiritual freedom.

This nine-session, one hour Zoom series begins at 4pm (PDT) on April 17, 2024. A Zoom link will be sent to everyone on our mailing list several days before each monthly event. You are welcome to just listen or to participate after each presentation. Dates and topics are listed below:

April 17

John Young describes his daily and weekly spirituality practices drawn from many of the world's major religions.

May 15

George Garland talks about the role of the US Commission on Religious Freedom.

June 19

Professor Kunihiro Terasawa discusses his combined practices of Rissho Kosei Kai Buddhism and Evangelical Lutheranism.

July 17 - Note corrected date

George Garland addresses the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and Planetary Boundaries - A Safe Space for Spirituality.

August 21

Rahul Young discusses SDG #7: Affordable and Clean Energy - *Rewiring America*.

September 18

Stephen Schwichow describes how he combines his Buddhist practices with his UU membership.

October 16

Leela Stake addresses SDG #5: Gender Equality.

November 20

Betsy Darr shares her experience of being a UU Pagan.

December 18

John Young discusses how indigenous spiritual traditions can participate in inter-religious dialogue.

From the President: My Perspective on IARF's Shared Understanding

We believe in each person's spiritual liberty. Membership in this group means that we each support all members' spiritual liberty **and** that their denomination and IARF are expected to:

- Practice democratic procedures in their organizations;
- Expect their members to be compassionate with one another, with other IARF members and with people in general, practicing peaceful and persistent negotiation toward productive objectives;
- Expect their individual members to be active and concerned citizens within their nations, but never to allow their nation's needs to replace their spiritual goals;

- Agree that IARF has been formed to support our diverse liberal spiritual denominations, to learn from each other and to embrace spiritual wisdom, practices and effective procedures from one another;
- Acknowledge that we cannot effectively help humanity to make genuine progress or sustain our planet without becoming actively engaged with the United Nations, other international agencies and other truly ecumenical and liberal spiritual groups;
- Strive to transcend our tendencies toward selfishness and short-sightedness and to move deliberately toward a global and multi-generational perspective.

John Young

Religions for Peace-USA

Abhi Janamanchi, Senior Minister
Cedar Lane UU Church, Bethesda MD

My involvement with Religions for Peace (RfP)-USA stemmed from its dedicated commitment to fostering interfaith dialogue and collaboration for the cause of peace. Through my involvement as the UUA representative, I've gained invaluable insights into the diverse religious traditions represented within RfP, forging meaningful connections with individuals and organizations sharing common goals. Active participation in RfP has deepened my understanding of the vital role interfaith cooperation plays in addressing global challenges, inspiring continued advocacy for religious freedom, social justice and peacebuilding efforts both locally and globally.

RfP, founded in 1970, is a global interfaith organization tirelessly working to promote peace and reconciliation among the world's religions. Utilizing a network of regional and national chapters, RfP engages religious leaders, scholars and practitioners in initiatives focused on conflict resolution, social justice, environmental sustainability and humanitarian assistance.

Similarly, the International Association for Religious Freedom (IARF), established in 1900, shares a comparable mission of advancing interfaith dialogue and cooperation, with a specific emphasis on promoting religious freedom and human rights.

Despite their distinct focuses, both RfP and the IARF are guided by common values and objectives, recognizing religious diversity as a source of strength rather than division. Acknowledging the positive contributions religious communities can make to society, both organizations seek to harness this potential for the greater good. Through collaboration with each other and like-minded organizations, RfP and the IARF can amplify their impact, fostering a more inclusive and harmonious world.



International Religious Freedom Summit Held in Washington, DC

gathering of religious groups that met to discuss promoting peace and reconciliation worldwide.]

[IARF-US board member, John Gubbings, shared this write-up about a large

"*Alhumdhulillah*, by Allah's grace and mercy, the Umur-e-Kharijiyya US Public Affairs Department was asked by the 2024 International Religious Freedom Summit in Washington, DC, to organize and moderate a special event at Capitol Hill on January 29, 2024. Entitled, "In Solidarity with the Persecuted: Interfaith Models for Peacebuilding and Reconciliation," the event featured over 180 people and featured special guests Muhammad Sharif Odeh Sahib (Ameer Jama'at Kababir) and Morabbi Marwan Gill (National Sadr, Argentina), alongside rabbis and clergy from Israel and Argentina and other notable policy experts. The Honorable Rashad Hussain, US Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom, gave opening remarks. The event was particularly timely given the current conflict in Gaza."

A special extended MTA report about the event can be found here: [Religious Freedom Summit Draws Faith Leaders and Policy Experts to U.S. Capitol Hill.](#)

The full recording of the proceedings can be found here: [In Solidarity with the Persecuted: Interfaith Models for Peace and Reconciliation.](#)

IARF International Council



Ittoen

Ittoen was founded in 1904 in Yamashiro district of Kyoto. The community is populated by people who seek to live a life of not owning any possessions combined with serving in a spirit of penitence. The foundation of the belief system is that when humans live in accordance with the way of nature they are accepted and live together without the need to convert labor into money. Basic life necessities are provided by *Light* (God, Buddha, Mother Nature)

who manage these goods in ways that serve the people and which do not become a source of social conflict.

Currently, the community consists of about 300 people living in 100 households. There are a large number of people who live outside the community and do not participate directly in Ittoen life, but are inspired by and share in the ideals of their life. These followers are called *friends of Koyu - friends of Light*.

Rissho Kosei Kai Movement

Founded in 1938 by Nikkyo Niwano, Rissho Kosei Kai (RKK) is a relatively new religious movement organized as a lay Buddhist movement. RKK is focused around the Lotus Sutra. Their great Sacred Hall was completed in Tokyo in 1964. Nikkyo Niwano attended the 20th World Congress of the International Association of Religious Freedom (IARF) in 1969. In 1970, Niwano helped to form the World Conferences of Religions for Peace (WCRP) and became a leader in both organizations. In 1991, his son, Nichiko Niwano became president, and Nichiko, his eldest daughter became vice president and designated successor in 1994.



Today, RKK has more than 250 churches in 20 countries with a total membership at 6 million - most of whom live in Japan. RKK International of North America was established in 2008. RKK shares some features of other forms of Nichiren sects, including its devotion to the Lotus Sutra; it emphasizes its belief in the Buddha-like nature of all beings and venerates the Eternal Buddha. A board of directors oversees it, and many members participate in daily devotions, group worship, and hoza-a regular informal group of members with trained leaders who discuss their problems and offer mutual support. RKK strongly supports UNICEF, the United Nations, and engages in numerous campaigns to end world hunger, poverty, support for environment and work for peace including Little Bags of Dreams for children in war-torn nations.

Continuing our opposition to religious nationalism and following up on our 2023 Zoom dialogue on growing religious nationalism in the U.S. and in India:

The Hindu Nationalist government of Prime Minister Modi has implemented a law that excludes Muslim refugees from citizenship and is likely to render millions of Indian Muslims stateless, many of whom have lived in India for generations.

Resist Religious Nationalism Everywhere!

[IARF United States
Chapter Board](#)

[US Chapter Advisors](#)

George Garland
John Gubbings
Stephen Schwichow
Kunihiko Terasawa
John Young

Betsy Darr
Doris Hunter
Abhi Janamanchi
Roy Kaplan
Kathy Matsui
Nyla McCulloch
Gregory McGonigle
Peter Richardson

Don't forget to follow IARF worldwide on Facebook [here](#).

Cedar Lane UU Church | IARF-US Chapter, 9601 Cedar Lane, Bethesda, MD 20814

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