

The Inter-religious Friendship Group:
Welcome and Opening Dialogue:
An Appreciative Inquiry

June 12th 1999
Jerusalem, Israel

Becoming a Visible Force for Peace

“ Despite many material advances on our planet, humanity faces many, many problems, some of which are actually of our own creation...As we approach the 21st century, religious traditions are as relevant as ever. Yet, as in the past, conflicts and crises arise in the name of different religious traditions. This is very, very unfortunate. We must make every effort to overcome this situation. In my own experience, I have found that the most effective method to overcome these conflicts is close contact and an exchange among those of various beliefs, not only on an intellectual level, but in deeper spiritual experiences...

“I believe the purpose of all the major religious traditions is not to construct big temples on the outside, but to create temples of goodness and compassion on the inside, in our hearts. Every major religion has the potential to create this. The greater our awareness is regarding the value and effectiveness of other religious traditions, then the deeper will be our respect and reverence toward other religions...it is also important, particularly in the eyes of the public, that leaders of the various religious traditions occasionally come together to meet and pray...to go on pilgrimages together to visit one another’s holy places.”

--His Holiness the Dalai Lama
From The Good Heart 1996

Appreciative Inquiry Dialogues (Turn to person next to you)¹

1. What compels or calls you to this gathering...?

A. To start: what draws or calls you to this gathering? What kinds of feelings did you have as you anticipated our meeting together *here in Jerusalem*?

2. A story that tells something about you and your life?

A. We have all been part of initiatives where we have joined with others in compassionate, full, and loving ways to bring *dreams of a better world* into being. As you scan the years of your work, there may have been ups and downs, high points and low points. For the moment let's reflect on a high point moment-- on **one** memorable moment when you joined with others to bring visions of a better world into being. Please share with me the story... feelings... Insights that are useful for our work here, in building an interreligious friendship group?

3. Valuing your journey—and your religion or spiritual tradition?

A. *If you were to explain the essence of your faith to a group of children* and could offer them one gift from the riches of your tradition, what would the gift be and what would you say to the children?

- How has that gift enriched your life?

B. *One could say a key task in life is to discover and define our life purpose, and then accomplish it to the best of our ability.* Can you share a story of a moment or a period of time where clarity about **life purpose** emerged for you— for example, a time where you heard your calling, where there was an important awakening or teaching, where you felt the touch of the sacred, or where you received some guiding vision?

- Now, beyond this story...What supports your deepening spirituality and what do you sense you are supposed to do before your life, this life, is over?

¹ After the interview simply thank your partner and think about what insights or gifts you received from the conversation. When we return in the whole group we will ask you to share one or two of the highlights--as a way for you to introduce your partner to the group.

4. Your vision of a better world, and the special tasks and significance of the world's religions in the new century? How might we-- as leaders together-- become a visible force for peace and well being?

Dag Hammarskold, former UN Secretary General said: "I see no hope for permanent world peace. We have tried and failed miserably. Unless the world has a spiritual rebirth, civilization is doomed. It has been said that the next century will be a spiritual century or it will not be."

- A.** Put your thinking about 10 years into the future—it is about 2009. In fact, let's assume that tonight, after the meeting, you go into a great sleep and when you awaken it is 2009. But while asleep significant changes happened and a miracle occurred whereby the world changed in ways you would most want to see--for all people, for children, for the environment, etc. *So now you awaken, and you go out into the world. What do you see happening around you that is new, different, or better? And how do you know? What do you see in this vision of a better world?*
- B.** And equally important: what do you see in your image of a better world in terms of *the relationships between leaders of the world's religions and spiritual communities?* What kinds of relationships do you most hope and pray for? Have leaders— together—become a publicly visible force for peace? How? Examples of possibilities?

Notes:

