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FFF Update #1 (June 2001)

News & Information from FaithFutures Foundation, Inc.

FFFUpdate is an occasional newsletter from FaithFutures Foundation, Inc. This is a distribution only service. Please address any comments, questions or suggestions to office@faithfutures.org

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1. Introducing FaithFutures Foundation, Inc.

In developing and refining the concept of FFF, we found the organizational models adopted by the [United Religions Initiative](#) especially helpful. The value of the URI models lay particularly in their focus on autonomous local circles, where people from a variety of backgrounds cooperate for a common purpose. That brought to the surface a defining issue for our plans: were we seeking to attract people into supporting our project, or were we more interested in encouraging and supporting the efforts of others?

When expressed that way the choice was clear. The mission of FFF is to encourage and support the efforts of others in the process of re-visioning religious belief and practice so that we better integrate insights emerging from scholarship in diverse fields: arts and humanities, religion, natural and social sciences. The energy, ideas and resources generated by FFF must flow outward to others rather than being absorbed into itself.

Our distinctive focus on cooperation circles is a deliberate choice with that goal in mind. We think that the re-visioning of religion for the twenty-first century is essentially a collective task, rather than an individual interest. Individual people play a critical role in forming and sustaining such groups, including FFF itself, but the underlying intention is to connect, encourage and support groups of people in diverse situations as they cooperate in the practice of their religion or other spiritual tradition.

The essence of the FFF is to sustain an active network of religious practitioners who are engaged in the process of re-visioning religion. FFF is not simply an organization for religion scholars, although they are welcomed and their work is highly valued. FFF is not a religious organization or a faith community, although we welcome the participation of such groups as cooperative circles or affiliates.

We are convinced that there are a whole lot of things already happening in faith communities as people come to terms with the things we think we now know about human life and the universe in which we find ourselves. Much of that creative effort remains isolated. Considerable energy is put into ideas and materials as the wheel gets reinvented time after time in one creative community after another.

FFF has the potential to be a clearinghouse for creative materials already “out there,” as well as a catalyst for the development of new resources.

We also think that **how** we pursue our goal is an integral part of achieving it. Again, the experience of the United Religions Initiative has been helpful. FFF has been established as a member-based organization. The membership must own the organization, set its priorities and determine the leadership team.

The inaugural trustees are committed to exploring ways of being together as an organization that reflect the spiritual values found in the great religious traditions. We hope that what we learn about being together in this way will itself be of interest and value to other groups concerned about the future of our religious traditions.

We have expressed the core values of the Foundation, and the Principles by which we intend to operate, in the “Preamble” and “Principles” that form part of our corporate documentation. Both those statements are available on the FFF web site.

The Foundation’s immediate objectives have been identified as follows:

Community Development

Identify, encourage and support grassroots organizations, including especially local cooperation circles, with a concern to integrate the practice of religion with insights from scholarship.

Research

Raise and distribute funds to support research and publication in religion, as well as the adoption and application of historical and scientific scholarship.

Events

Sponsorship of events designed to advance the integration of religion and scholarship and especially to make such scholarship more accessible to non-specialists.

Publication

Material relating to the processes and findings of religion scholars, as well as the application of their work to both traditional and experimental religious communities, will be published in digital form.

It promises to be an interesting journey, and we appreciate your company along the way.

2. The Story So Far ...

The first task has been to establish the essential structures for pursuing the four areas of activity.

- The Foundation required an appropriate legal structure and this has been done. After several months of consultation and planning, FaithFutures Foundation was incorporated as a non-profit organization in Kansas in May 2001. The full text of the Bylaws is available on the FFF web site.
 - A leadership team reflecting the diversity of the Foundation's membership has been assembled. Information on the inaugural Trustees is available on the FFF web site, and a brief summary included below. The leadership circle will expand somewhat as the Foundation develops.
 - Development of the FFF web site has been another major focus. The site is beginning to attract attention, and will serve as both our major promotional tool as well as the point through which most of our services can be accessed.
 - Currently all materials on the site are available free of charge. Shortly we plan to add some materials for which a nominal payment will be made to the authors. That will acknowledge the value of their contributions and encourage preparation of new materials. We will also be publishing selected materials on a commercial basis. We will limit our publication to digital forms, to avoid inventory and distribution overheads.
 - An online searchable database is under consideration to manage the range of materials that will eventually be available through the site.
 - Preparations are underway for an initial round of grants to support people and groups undertaking creative projects on the interface of scholarship and religion. The timing and scale of the grants will depend on the funds available at the time.
 - We have appreciated several initial donations that have helped FFF cover some of its establishment costs.
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3. The Immediate Priorities

There are three immediate priorities: materials, membership and finances.

- Materials for the FFF resource collection

Our goal is to help people engaged in the re-visioning process share information and resources. We have already published materials by various authors, ranging from scholarly papers to sermons and liturgies. More materials are in hand, and others have been promised. Guidelines have been developed for prospective contributors and are available on the website. Just follow the link from the front page of the web site. The Science area of the resource archive is yet to be developed.

- Membership development

We have begun to get inquiries about the formation of cooperation circles (CCs) as well as individual memberships. As FFF represents a novel form of organization for most people, we anticipate that the number of CCs will grow slowly. In the meantime, we are able to accept individual members as we begin to form a membership base for the Foundation. It is possible that some individual memberships will eventually develop into CCs.

- Financial development

The primary income for the Foundation's work comes from membership contributions and direct gifts. Initially, we are especially inviting direct gifts so that we can fund the development of the web site as a high value resource for those engaged in the re-visioning of their religious traditions. We are also inviting gifts to the endowment fund so that we can offer the first cycle of FFF Grants around the end of 2001.

4. Leadership

The Trustees

A diverse leadership team has been assembled for the Foundation. The inaugural trustees for the Foundation are:

Jane Lee Wolfe (Presiding Trustee)

Jane is currently the President of the World YWCA (1999-2003). She is also Director of the Christ Church Center in Little Rock, Arkansas.

Gregory Charles Jenks (Executive Trustee)

Greg is a religion scholar and an Anglican priest. He has taught biblical studies at colleges and universities in Adelaide, Brisbane and Jerusalem and was Associate Director of Westar Institute, 1999-2001.

Eve Therese James (Secretary)

Eve teaches Math, Science and Religion at high schools in Brisbane, Australia.

George M. Wolf (Assistant Secretary)

George is an attorney with particular expertise in organizational management and conflict resolution.

Robert J. McElwain (Treasurer)

Bob is President of North American Capital Management, an investment management company. He is also part owner of a small bank of which he serves on the Board of Directors.

Nan Wolf (Assistant Treasurer, Development)

Nan is the Development Officer for the Greater Kansas City Chapter of the American Red Cross.

Cecilie Marion Lander

Cecilie practices as a specialist physician in Brisbane, Australia. Together with her husband, Mervyn Lander, she is joint priest-in-charge of St Paul's Anglican Church, East Brisbane.

Peter R. Lawson

Peter is a retired priest of the Episcopal Church USA. He continues a long time consulting practice in personal and organizational development and leads a team at St James Episcopal Church, San Francisco developing an annual public seminar on the Historical Jesus.

Samuel B. ("Pete") Tannahill

Pete spent almost 40 years with IBM in the US and Europe. As Vice President and Director of One World Foundation he has been involved in several distance learning projects involving the arts which used ISDN, broadband and the internet.

Sherri J. Weinberg

Sherri is a senior minister in fulltime parish ministry in New Zealand. She is the founding editor of "reVision" journal.

Panel of Advisors

The Foundation is pleased to enjoy the encouragement and support of the following people who have formed a Panel of Advisors:

James R. Adams

The Center for Progressive Christianity

John Dominic Crossan

DePaul University

Carole A. Crumley

Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation

John Shelby Spong

Christianity for the Third Millennium

Walter Wink

Auburn Theological Seminary

5. Membership

We are inviting applications for membership as Cooperation Circles within FFF, and also as individual members and as affiliates.

Membership confers a stake in the ownership of the Foundation, and provides an avenue for people and groups to contribute to the development of its activities.

Applications for membership are considered by the Global Council of Trustees, which meets at least twice a year.

Each member, whether a CC or an individual, is invited to offer a membership contribution to assist the work of the Foundation. These contributions may be in cash or in other forms of service. There is no minimum size for the membership contribution. All gifts are valued.

Membership forms are available on the FFF site.

6. Donations

Online credit card facilities will soon be available through the Foundation web site, but in the meantime please make payments by check in either US dollars or Australian dollars and post them to either of the following addresses:

Canada and United States

P.O. Box 6728
Shawnee Mission, KS 66206
USA

All other countries

P.O. Box 822
Kenmore, Qld 4069
Australia

Receipts will be issued for all gifts. Gifts to FFF by US taxpayers may be tax deductible.

Financial statements for the Foundation's operations will be published on the FFF web site at regular intervals so that members and supporters are kept informed of our income and expenses.

7. Travel Alert: John Shelby Spong in Europe, Australia and New Zealand

Tension between settled "householders" and "itinerant prophets" seems to have been a feature of Christian experience since the earliest days of the Jesus movement. Episcopal Bishop and FFF Advisor, John Shelby Spong, is one wandering radical who is currently disturbing the comfortable religious householders in several parts of the world. After a tour of the United Kingdom and Belgium in May, he is close to the end of his Australian tour and about to visit New Zealand. Jack has been preparing reports on his impressions of the state of the churches in these places for BeliefNet. You can read his reports at http://beliefnet.com/author/author_44.html. (You may need to register with BeliefNet before you can see the column.)

**Your interest and support is greatly valued.
Please help make FFF known among colleagues and friends.**

Prepared by Gregory C. Jenks
Executive Trustee, June 2001

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