

IN A WORLD ENFLAMED
BY DIVISION -
URI SAYS,
“ WE UNITE! ”
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FROM THE REV. VICTOR H. KAZANJIAN, JR.


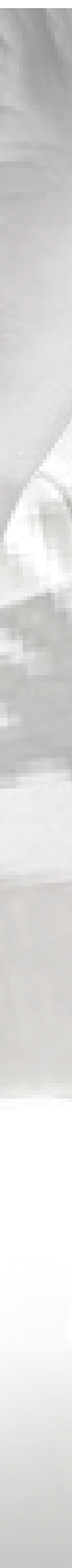
Dear sisters and brothers of URI,

There is much in our world right now that is pushing us towards division. Conflicts all over the world - conflicts between people of different nationalities, religions, and cultures - invite us to choose sides and rally around political or ideological perspectives against those with different perspectives.

At URI, our work is to unite people of different beliefs, perspectives, and opinions to bridge these differences through dialogue, so that they may work together to solve local and global challenges. The work of uniting people involves creating places of dialogue - often difficult dialogue - where people can freely bring their disagreements, deepen their understanding of each other's perspectives, and discover solutions together.

There is a difference between disagreement and division. Disagreement describes the encounter of people with different perspectives or opinions in which there is a lack of consensus. Disagreement is best engaged through dialogue that seeks understanding of the other, and a reconciliation process in which mutually agreeable solutions are discovered through compromise. Division describes a state of separation between people who have ceased engaging in a dialogue and reconciliation process.

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At URI, unity includes disagreement. Let me say that again: at URI, unity includes disagreement. While politicians throughout the world routinely foster divisions in a “divide and conquer” strategy to use their power to force their agenda, at URI, “We unite to build safe places for conflict resolution, healing and reconciliation.” While warring parties use violence as a means of promoting their cause, at URI, “We unite to use our combined resources for non-violent, compassionate action, to awaken our deepest truths, and to manifest love and justice among all life in our Earth community.”

Within URI, we are a community of people of widely different experiences and beliefs, who engage our differences in constructive ways so that we might discover truths previously unknown to us. By refusing to participate in the division being encouraged in the world around us, but rather by engaging in dialogue around our differences and disagreements, we are offering the world an alternative to violent conflict, and a pathway to peace, justice, and healing.

Blessings on this courageous work that you do.

In peace...

The Rev. Victor H. Kazanjian, Jr.
Executive Director of the United Religions Initiative