

# Interfaith Peacebuilding and Community Revitalization

Outreach • Concept Introduction • Project Development

in association with the following concept papers

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**“Community Visioning Initiatives for Peace”**

**“Centers for Interfaith Peacebuilding”**

**“Creating a Good News Network”**

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offered as a contribution towards the goals of

- 1) “... bringing to the fore what is often hidden: how many good people there are, how many ways there are to do good, and how much happiness comes to those who extend help as well as to those who receive it.”
- 2) illustrating the transforming power of love, understanding, and forgiveness
- 3) inspiring in every way a greater appreciation for the need, importance, and benefits of individual spiritual formation— as an essential first step in peacebuilding
- 4) consciously and deliberately cultivating the practical wisdom of these traditions in ways that lead only to non-violent conflict resolution
- 5) increasing the percentage of people— in every variety of circumstances— who can “earn a living” living in accordance with the beliefs, principles practices, and codes of conduct of the faith-based religious, spiritual, moral, or indigenous tradition of their choice
- 6) aspiring to the realization of the potential for peacebuilding in all faith-based religious, spiritual, moral, and indigenous traditions

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# Interfaith Peacebuilding and Community Revitalization

At no other time in the course of history has so many people had access to so much in the way of time-tested guidelines, inspiring role models, and service-oriented initiatives relevant to the actual realization of peace, prosperity, and happiness for all humanity.

And yet... consider the following statistics:

- "Among the 4.4 billion people who live in developing countries, three-fifths have no access to basic sanitation; almost one-third are without safe drinking water; one-quarter lack adequate housing; one-fifth live beyond the reach of modern health services; one-fifth of the children do not get as far as grade five in school...."<sup>1</sup>
- "Every day 24,000 people die from hunger and related causes."<sup>2</sup>
- "In the last 50 years, almost 400 million people worldwide have died from hunger and poor sanitation."<sup>3</sup>
- "The richest 20% of the world's population account for 80% of the world's consumption of goods and services."<sup>4</sup>
- Since 1985, world military expenditures have totaled over \$14 trillion....<sup>5</sup>

Clearly, we are at a critical point in the evolution of spiritual understanding.

We have the resources necessary to meet the challenges of our times. Truths introduced by the Great Spiritual Teachers have been common knowledge for centuries, and have been confirmed again and again as essential to individual well-being and social harmony by the saints of all faiths—and the good people of all generations who devote their lives to living in accordance with the beliefs, principles, practices, and codes of conduct of faith-based religious, spiritual, moral, and indigenous traditions. Even now, as you are reading this, truly inspiring contributions of genuine goodwill are being generated in a variety of ways—and in a variety of circumstances—by countless numbers of people in communities around the world.

This brochure, and the associated concept papers, represent an effort to 1) recognize the potential associated with the "time-tested guidelines, inspiring role models, and service-oriented initiatives" mentioned above and 2) contribute to the actual realization of this potential—in ways that will identify and create local community points of entry, strengthen and support efforts with similar goals, and encourage participation by people in every variety of circumstances.

There is really much that can be done to generate goodwill and promote peace that has not yet been done—and I believe every one of us has some special contribution that we can make. *I am hoping that workshops introducing these concepts can be a starting point for many practical collective efforts, based and sustained at the local community and regional level, and representing contributions towards the goals listed on the front of this brochure. I am confident that applying these concepts—at the local community and regional level—will provide for each of us more and more opportunities to contribute towards such goals, more and more understanding about why we would want to contribute—and more and more opportunities to encourage and support each other in the process.*

Collectively, we have the practical wisdom necessary to create Peace on Earth.

In the best of times, even the most profound difficulties can be overcome; for in the best of times, the faith, discipline, and perseverance required by the process of individual spiritual formation are encouraged and supported by family, friends, teachers, mentors, elders, and the everyday influences of community life and cultural traditions.

Our particular moment in time on this planet Earth *could be* the best of times.

1. From "UN Development Report of 1998: Consumption for Human Development" (in Overview, p. 2) (Research done online at [www.stone.undp.org/hdr/reports](http://www.stone.undp.org/hdr/reports); Summer, 2002)
2. From the website of the World Food Programme (Research done online at [www.wfp.org](http://www.wfp.org) Summer, 2002)
3. From the website of Bread for the World (Research done online at [www.bread.org](http://www.bread.org) Summer, 2002)
4. From "UN Human Development Report of 1998: Consumption for Human Development" (in Overview p. 2) (Research done online at [www.stone.undp.org/hdr/reports](http://www.stone.undp.org/hdr/reports); Summer, 2002)
5. An estimate derived from World Military Expenditure statistics at the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency section of the U.S. Dept. of State website (Research done online at the U.S. Dept. of State website [www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov) Summer, 2002) and World Military Expenditure statistics at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute website (research done online at [www.sipri.se](http://www.sipri.se) Summer, 2002)

## Some Notes on the Concept Papers

“Community Visioning Initiatives for Peace”— Community Visioning Initiatives have, in the past, been applied most often for the purpose of increasing citizen participation in the planning and development phases of community revitalization efforts. In 1984, the non-profit organization Chattanooga Venture organized a visioning initiative that attracted more than 1,700 participants, and produced 40 community goals— which resulted in the implementation of 223 projects and programs, the creation of 1,300 permanent jobs, and a total financial investment of 793 million dollars. “Community Visioning Initiatives for Peace” would use a similar format— brainstorming ideas, organizing the ideas into goals, prioritizing the goals, identifying doable steps, etc.— but with a specialized focus... for example, on ideas that 1) inspire in every way a greater appreciation for the need, importance, and benefits of individual spiritual formation— as an essential first step in peacebuilding 2) consciously and deliberately cultivate the practical wisdom of these traditions in ways that lead only to non-violent conflict resolution and that 3) aspire to the realization of the potential for peacebuilding in all faith-based religious, spiritual, moral, and indigenous traditions.

“Centers for Interfaith Peacebuilding”— “Centers for Interfaith Peacebuilding” is a name for local community centers and regional centers— and associated websites— which represent a revitalized appreciation of the need, importance and benefits of individual spiritual formation as an essential first step in peacebuilding, and which have many or all of the following goals.... 1) to provide a local community or regional starting point for defining, developing, and facilitating the use of Basic Elements of Interfaith Peacebuilding (possible Basic Elements— Spiritual Formation, Spiritually Responsible Investing, Right Livelihood, etc.) 2) to provide a format with the capacity to gather, organize, make accessible, and facilitate the use of information, quotations, references, notes/discussion, model project case studies, personal stories, statistics, comments, evaluations, links, etc. relating to such local and regional appropriate Basic Elements of Interfaith Peacebuilding— (with special attention given to model projects, links, etc. associated with Faith Mentoring and Non-Violent Conflict Resolution) 3) to build consensus for, organize, and encourage participation in “Community Visioning Initiatives for Peace,” a process designed specifically for developing common goals— associated with generating goodwill and promoting peace— in a community or regional setting 4) to create non-governmental, non-profit, multi-faith community centers and points of entry in as many local communities as possible, where people can go to a) discover a local community and regional specific clearinghouse of “things people can do in all the everyday circumstances of their lives” which will contribute to Interfaith Peacebuilding in their communities and elsewhere and b) access ever accumulating listings of opportunities to earn a living (“employment opportunities”) in Environments Conducive to Interfaith Peacebuilding and 5) to create (or expand) a local community or regional “good news network”— by making accessible the truly inspiring model project case studies, personal stories, and other “good news,” as would be gathered or generated by projects and initiatives along the lines mentioned above.

“Creating a Good News Network”— “Creating a Good News Network” is a name for participation by local community residents in an ongoing process of actively discovering, sharing, encouraging, and creating “good news.” One way to begin is as follows: ongoing intergenerational programs— programs that bring together the elders of the community with the young people (ages 5-18) of the community— are created at appropriate meeting places such as local places of worship. Such intergenerational programs would include the following activities: 1) collecting and sharing “good news” articles, stories, etc., and making contributions to “Good News Reference Resources,” specific to local communities and regions 2) sending notecards of gratitude and encouragement— and invitations to visit— to people who are making “good news” in the local community or region and 3) inspirational sharing meetings featuring “good news” makers from the local community or region. As more and more “good news” is discovered, shared, and created, participants can give special attention to identifying those “good news” makers who live near their specific meeting place. A local community faith mentoring network could then be established to facilitate matching young people’s preferences for faith mentors with elders and “good news” makers in their local community or region. A wealth of examples of genuine goodwill, ongoing community fellowship with a focus on encouraging and creating exemplary role models in the community, and local community faith mentoring networks can 1) “... bring to the fore what is often hidden: how many good people there are, how many ways there are to do good, and how much happiness comes to those who extend help as well as to those who receive it.” 2) increase our collective capacity to inspire and encourage individual spiritual formation— with all the beneficial consequences that follow for individuals, communities, regions, etc.

## **As an outreach specialist, concept introduction workshop facilitator, and project development assistant**

### **I can**

- facilitate concept introduction workshops in association with the concept papers referred to in this brochure
- research, network, and develop lists of people, organizations, etc. with similar goals— who might be interested in encouraging, supporting, and participating in efforts to realize the potential of these concepts
- assist with outreach, partnership formation, and consensus building related to organizing “Community Visioning Initiatives for Peace”
- assist with all phases of planning, organizing, and carrying out “Community Visioning Initiatives for Peace”
- assist with outreach, partnership formation, consensus building, project development, and ongoing development of service capacity associated with creating “Centers for Interfaith Peacebuilding”
- assist with outreach, partnership formation, consensus building, project development, and ongoing development of service capacity associated with “Creating a Good News Network”

### **Special Notes Regarding Services Provided**

- I am willing to facilitate concept introduction workshops at a rate of \$100 for a 3 hour workshop or \$200 for an all day (8:00 am— 5:00 pm) workshop. Recommended number of participants in workshops: 5-15 (i.e. if there are 5 participants for a 3 hour workshop, the cost would be \$20 for each participant; if there are 15 participants for an all day workshop, the cost would be rounded to \$13.25 for each participant)
- I am willing to re-locate for an opportunity to participate in a long term project along the lines described in this brochure

### **Requesting Copies of the Concept Papers**

Copies of the concept papers referred to in this brochure— “Community Visioning Initiatives for Peace,” “Centers for Interfaith Peacebuilding,” and “Creating a Good News Network”— are available for a minimum cost (associated with copying and postage).

For more information, contact:

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### **Autobiographical Notes**

Stefan Pasti has been actively involved in peacebuilding and community revitalization initiatives for over 20 years. As a writer, he has highlighted the potential contributions that community centers and ecologically sustainable communities can make to peacebuilding and community revitalization in short stories, a novel, and in a variety of project related correspondence. While writing, Mr. Pasti has been employed in many different settings— door-to-door canvasser for citizen action groups; field worker on organic farms; activity director, companion, and transportation provider for elders with special needs; etc. The most important influence in Mr. Pasti’s life has been, and continues to be, the teachings of Sri Sathya Sai Baba (age 76, with a main residence in Puttaparthi, India). In 1997, Mr. Pasti completed a 303 page arrangement of selected quotations from “Sathya Sai Speaks” (Vol. 1-11, early editions) (discourses by Sri Sathya Sai Baba from the years 1953-1982).