



Salt Lake Interfaith Roundtable
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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INTERFAITH MONTH 2012 BEGINS THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 2 WITH PRAYER BREAKFAST RECOGNIZING WORLD INTERFAITH HARMONY WEEK

Salt Lake City – The tenth-annual Roundtable Interfaith Month officially starts February 2 with an invitation-only prayer breakfast at the Salt Lake Marriott Hotel, recognizing United Nations World Interfaith Harmony Week, February 1–7.

Since 2003, the Salt Lake Interfaith Roundtable has celebrated February as Interfaith Month. The Roundtable commences the month's activities with a breakfast meeting, while "joining with others around the world to recognize 'World Interfaith Harmony Week,'" says Roundtable Secretary Elaine Emmi.

Commenting on the annual event, Roundtable Executive Director Ivan Cendese says that "the Interfaith Roundtable is delighted to be celebrating the tenth year of our coming together for the 2002 Olympics. The work that we began at the Olympics in fostering understanding and cooperation among the various diverse faith traditions in Utah continues. It is our hope that Interfaith Month will be a time to come together to promote love, harmony, and understanding among all faith traditions."

The theme of this year's World Interfaith Harmony Week is "We Are All Connected by Compassion."

The UN General Assembly established World Interfaith Harmony Week in 2010 in recognition of the importance of "mutual understanding and interreligious dialogue" to peace. The UN United Religions Initiative (URI), an organization founded on the principle of enduring interfaith cooperation for peace and justice, participated actively in the inaugural observance in 2011. The URI has called on its more than 530 member organizations to participate again this year.

As a representative of the Universal Peace Federation (UPF), Roundtable member Wendy J. Stovall will read the UN Resolution recognizing World Interfaith Harmony Week. The UPF, an NGO, is a global network of individuals and organizations dedicated to building a world of peace in which everyone can live in freedom, harmony, cooperation, and prosperity.

The morning's hosts are Rev. Cendese, and Josie Stone, 2012 Interfaith Month Chair. Ms. Stone says this is "[her] second year of having the pleasure and honor of chairing the Interfaith Month committee. As we seek to follow our Interfaith Roundtable mission of promoting, love, harmony and understanding among people of all faith traditions, cultures and beliefs, how better to do that than inviting each other to share in our special activities, to be welcomed with love and acceptance into each other's space."

The breakfast program will open with a welcome from Rev. Cendese. J.B. Singh of the Sikh Temple of Utah, and Roundtable member, will offer the opening prayer.

The prayer will be followed with the reading of written proclamations by Utah Governor Gary Herbert, Salt Lake Mayor Ralph Becker, and Salt Lake County Mayor Peter Carroon, recognizing February as 2012 Interfaith Month.

Ms. Emmi, Rev. Cendese, and Roundtable Board Chair Alan Bachman will present the annual awards, including the Community Award, to Safi Safiullah and the Salt Lake Downtown Main Library for promoting understanding in our diverse community. Past Board Chair Brian Farr will receive a Lifetime Achievement Award recognizing his many years of service to the Roundtable.

Mr. Bachman will introduce the morning's speaker, John Kesler of the Salt Lake Center for Engaging Community, who will address "Civility as the Civic Expression of the Golden Rule; The Special Role of Faith Communities in our Polarized Society." Following the breakfast at 9:30 a.m., he will conduct a workshop, entitled "Civility Outreach Training for Church Leaders and Their Faith Communities," at the hotel. There is no charge, and anyone who is interested may attend.

The Utah Civility and Community Initiative seeks to encourage and assist individuals, schools, civic groups, churches, businesses, local communities, the media, and elected officials throughout Utah to set goals to be more civil, welcoming, inclusive, and caring, and to act on them.

Mr. Kesler emphasizes that "(c)ivility is essentially the civic expression of the Golden Rule, some version of which is common to all major faith traditions. In today's polarized cultural and political environment it is perhaps our faith communities that have the greatest potential to provide the capacity for civic healing. Even more than 'bridging the religious divide,' it is time for our religious communities to come together in shared commitment and action to help us all to do better at treating one another as brothers and sisters in the public square. ...we will explore how to approach that possibility."

The Rt. Rev. Scott B. Hayashi, Eleventh Bishop of Utah, Episcopal Diocese of Utah will offer the benediction, which will be followed with closing remarks by Salt Lake Interfaith Roundtable Executive Director Ivan Cendese.

The tenth-annual Interfaith Breakfast is made possible by the generous financial assistance of the Salt Lake Interfaith Roundtable, The Universal Peace Federation, and anonymous donors. For donations or information about the Salt Lake Interfaith Roundtable, Interfaith Month events, and the Musical Tribute on February 26, 2012 at the Salt Lake Tabernacle, please visit our website at interfaithroundtable.org.