

A PROPOSAL TO

(Foundation or Corporation Name)

FROM

C R E S

**An Organization Promoting Understanding
Among People of All Faiths**

**Submitted by Larry Guillot, Chair
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Request for \$0000**

QUESTIONS ADDRESSED IN THE PROPOSAL

1. What is CRES? What is the Kansas City Interfaith Council? Who are the leaders?
2. What has CRES done? What is CRES proposing to do next? What issues is CRES addressing?
3. Has anything like this been done before in Kansas City? How will this event be an on-going process to change the City?
4. Who is partnering with CRES in this important undertaking?
5. How will “Appreciative Inquiry” provide a fresh approach to current challenges?
6. Who will benefit from these activities? This year? In future years?
7. What is the proposed budget for this program? What amount is sought in this grant proposal?
8. How will the program be evaluated? What is the CRES plan for the future?

1. WHAT IS CRES? WHAT IS THE KANSAS CITY INTERFAITH COUNCIL? WHO ARE THE LEADERS?

CRES is a nonprofit organization with a vision of making the greater Kansas City area a model community where persons appreciate and honor interfaith relationships. The **motivating force** is to deepen one's own tradition and spirituality, to respect what is positive in the lives of others, and to have groups of diverse beliefs and culture live together peacefully.

CRES was incorporated in 1982 and obtained 501(c)(3) status as the "Center for Religious Experience and Study." Until 1999, it was largely the activity and gift to the public of **the Rev. Vern Barnet**, a nationally recognized scholar of world religious traditions. With an eye to substantially increased activity, it was reorganized and the board significantly expanded in 1999. The name was modified in 2000, simply to "CRES" with the tag, "an organization promoting understanding among people of all faiths." The members of the **CRES board of directors** are identified in **Appendix A**.

CRES and Barnet are known to persons interested in the impact of religion on society for an informative newsletter called *Many Paths*, a weekly column "*Faith and Beliefs*" appearing in the Wednesday FYI section of the Kansas City Star since 1994, and a web site (www.cres.org). CRES is a place to call for speakers and information on the various faith traditions active in greater Kansas City. Samples of *Many Paths* and *Faith and Beliefs* are provided as **Appendix G**.

While earning a doctorate from the Meadville Theological School at the University of Chicago, Barnet studied with Mircea Eliade, one of the world's foremost scholars in the history of religion. He has also worked with other scholars such as Joseph Campbell and Huston Smith, and has experienced first hand other cultures and faith traditions in Asia, Europe, the Middle East, Central and South America.

Barnet has also taught various graduate and undergraduate classes at Baker and Ottawa Universities and the Saint Paul School of Theology. The Jewish Community Relations Bureau, the American Muslim Council and many others have awarded him honors.

In 1989, Barnet organized **the Kansas City Interfaith Council**. The Council brought together for the first time in Kansas City a much wider representation of religious faith and traditions than ministerial alliances or councils of churches.

The Interfaith Council is made up of knowledgeable and committed individuals who by faith tradition are American Indian, Baha'i, Buddhist, Catholic Christian, Protestant Christian, Hindu, Moslem, Jewish, Sikh, Sufi, Unitarian Universalist, Wiccan and Zoroastrian. **Exhibit B** lists the names of **current Interfaith Council members**.

2. WHAT HAS CRES DONE? WHAT IS CRES PROPOSING TO DO NEXT? WHAT ISSUES IS CRES ADDRESSING?

Up to the past year, the accomplishments of CRES have been significant but small in scale and not widely known.

As CRES **contributing members**, some **three hundred community leaders** receive and read the newsletter *Many Paths*. A number of civic and religious organizations use the Speakers' Bureau regularly, at a rate of about one a week. CRES was asked by Harmony in a World of Difference to prepare the chapter on "Religions Diversity in Kansas City" for its *Study Guide*. The newsletter and web site publicize a calendar of upcoming metropolitan events of interfaith interest. The web site has links to other organizations concerned with interfaith issues as well as information on CRES activities. Some features from the newsletter have been expanded and serve as independent **publications**, for example:

- ◆ Guidelines for Public Prayers;
- ◆ Guidelines for World Religions Educational Activities;
- ◆ How World Faiths Speak to Contemporary Crises of the Environment, Individual Identity and Purpose, and Social Community.

The new and developing CRES wants to build on this foundation and expand the impact of the organization significantly.

CRES has a **long range goal** of making a difference in the lives of leaders and citizens in metro Kansas City. Its **vision** is of Kansas City as a model network of active relationships between persons of different religious traditions and belief systems.

Religion and belief are fundamental sources of human values. These are inextricably tied to the meaning of each person's life and to the way persons treat the environment and treat each other. If pursued blind folded to others, deep seated beliefs can create self-righteousness, enmity and social conflict. Pursued through dialogue and with mutual respect for others, these values lead to a deepened sense of identify and purpose, strong social relationships and peaceful lives in community, in harmony with the environment.

As a means toward its goal and vision, CRES has designed a **Conference that will bring together some 300 persons** to shape the future of how religious groups work with each other and the larger community. Issues of the environment, individual development, and community building will be addressed. Called "**The Gifts of Pluralism**," the conference will be held October 26-28 at Pembroke Hill School. Pembroke was chosen as a respected educational institution, located on the Missouri-Kansas state line.

CRES activities are guided by this question: "What is so important that my life depends on it, so meaningful that I would die for it, and what may I do to understand, honor and share it?" The conference starts with that question and explores it from the diverse religious perspectives.

3. HAS ANYTHING LIKE THIS BEEN DONE BEFORE IN KANSAS CITY? HOW WILL THIS EVENT BE AN ON-GOING PROCESS?

This conference will be unique and new to Kansas Citians in many ways.

- ◆ It convenes a wider group of representatives of world religions than ever convened before in Kansas City for a meeting of this size.
- ◆ It is involving the participants in the preparation of the conference as well as attending the conference. The conference is part of an on-going process.
- ◆ It is not another education class about world religions.
- ◆ It is focused on dealing positively with aggravated contemporary problems of environmental development, self-development, and community development.

The **conference goals** are to—

- ◆ Acquaint participants with the richness of religious diversity in Kansas City;
- ◆ Learn how to learn from one another in the depths of one's faith;
- ◆ Discover new richness in one's own faiths through encounter with others;
- ◆ Articulate the wisdom of the faith traditions in ways that will help to heal the crises of environmental degradation, personal distress, and loss of living in community;
- ◆ Make deep connections with persons of other faiths, with the prospect of on-going friendships;
- ◆ Strengthen our various faith communities by working together in new ways;
- ◆ Celebrate the arts and traditions that enrich our common humanity.

The **Conference outcomes** being sought are:

- ◆ Increased awareness of the religious diversity that is Kansas City;
- ◆ Learning and appreciation for the arts and traditional practices of different religious traditions;
- ◆ Learning from and building on the perspectives of these traditions related to issues of environmental, personal and community development;
- ◆ Development of connections across faith communities to facilitate interfaith dialogue, mutual understanding and inter-group cooperation;
- ◆ Learning from current success stories in Kansas City and understanding how these successes can be a foundation for future initiatives;
- ◆ Development of a joint statement to serve as a guiding vision for continuing work;
- ◆ Development of individual skills in using “appreciative inquiry”, a process to discover values and build on the strengths of a diverse community.

The **pre-conference brochure and schedule** is attached in **Appendix C**.

As can be seen from the above, the conference is a means to an end. That end is an on-going process, facilitated by a new and strengthened group of learners, built on new and strengthened relationships, informed by commonly accepted principles, focused on what has worked well and what can work better in the future.

4. WHO IS PARTNERING WITH CRES IN THIS IMPORTANT UNDERTAKING?

The CRES board and Interfaith Council know that such an important undertaking, with so broad a scope, cannot be achieved by a single organization.

To that end, for the past year, the CRES board has enlisted the support and partnership of organizations with closely related missions. It has also been identifying and contacting those individuals and institutions most likely to appreciate and benefit from what can happen with the conference and after.

As a result, the “Gifts of Pluralism” conference will be co-sponsored by the **National Conference for Community and Justice, Kansas City Harmony, and Spirit of Service.**

- ◆ The **National Conference (NCCJ)**—Kansas City Chapter draws on national research and 70 years of experience dealing with inter-group relations, prejudice and bigotry. In Kansas City the NCCJ chapter is especially known for its “Anytown” programs that educate and develop high school youth.
- ◆ **Kansas City Harmony** is a seasoned, acknowledged local leadership agency with a history of facilitating community change processes.
- ◆ **Spirit of Service** is a unique membership organization, focused on the 1300 congregations and faith based organizations in the metropolitan area. It seeks to connect, support, equip and celebrate them to serve the common good of the area.

The Conference will be enriched by special involvement from the three religious traditions that have world headquarters in greater Kansas City, specifically:

- ◆ **the Community of Christ World Headquarters (formerly Reorganized Church of Latter Day Saints),**
- ◆ **Nazarene World Headquarters, and**
- ◆ **Unity School of Christianity.**

These groups are participating in the conference planning as official observers at the meetings of the Interfaith Council.

The **thirteen religious traditions that have representation in the Interfaith Council** will have special delegations involved in pre-conference activities, attending the conference and engaged in post-conference relationships. (For Interfaith Council representation, see again Appendix B.)

In addition, Kansas City area leaders in government, business, nonprofit and civic organizations have accepted a role of “**community conference advisors**” in preparation for the conference. These helpful conference advisors are identified in **Appendix D.**

Other organizations (such as Friends of Sacred Structures) that relate to interfaith understanding and cooperation are being invited to submit material for a resource section of the conference notebook.

5. HOW WILL ‘APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY’ PROVIDE A FRESH APPROACH TO CURRENT CHALLENGES?

Business, government, nonprofit organizations—and the media—have customarily focused their planning and development efforts on **problems: what is going wrong? What is not working?**

In recent years, numerous groups have taken another approach, for example:

- ◆ Life is more than problem to be solved. It is a mystery and a source of wonder to be lived and celebrated.
- ◆ Children cannot be raised well by focusing primarily on their mistakes. Children need praise and re-enforcement for what is done well.
- ◆ Community development falters when centered only on what’s wrong. Community leaders and planners now focus more on “asset mapping” and what is working right in the community to build capacity.
- ◆ Many businesses are focusing their organizational development and strategic planning activities on “**appreciative inquiry**” as an alternative to continuous concentration on problems and problem solving.

David Cooperrider and his associates at Case Western Reserve University are credited with introducing the term “appreciative inquiry” as a method of organizational development and creating change. Since, it has been used widely in business as an antidote to deficit focused planning and management. This approach is not proposed to create a new buzz word, or a new fad, nor to neglect real problems. It is an approach that acknowledges and factors in existing problems, but favors a more positive approach to create breakthroughs and to create positive change “from the inside”.

The **major assumptions of appreciative inquiry**, as summarized recently by Sue Annis Hammond in *The Thin Book of Appreciative Inquiry*, are:

- “1. In every society, organization, or group, something works.
 2. What we focus on becomes reality.
 3. Reality is created in the moment, and there are multiple realities.
 4. The act of asking questions of an organization or group influences the group in some way.
 5. People have more confidence and comfort to journey to the future (the unknown) when they carry forward parts of the past (the known).
 6. If we carry parts of the past forward, they should be what is best about the past.
 7. It is important to value differences.
 8. The language we use creates our reality.”
- (1998, second edition, pp. 20-21; see the selected references in **Appendix E.**)

CRES and the conference planners believe this approach and methodology offers **a fresh and fruitful avenue for interfaith dialogue and moving religious groups forward.** Sample questions to be used in the conference are included in Appendix E.

6. WHO WILL BENEFIT FROM THESE ACTIVITIES? THIS YEAR? IN FUTURE YEARS?

The **early beneficiaries** are the persons participating in the planning and implementation of the conference. **The early pre-conference benefits** of the conference include:

- ◆ The delightful, enriching experience of the sponsoring organization boards who have begun to use appreciative inquiry at board meetings;
- ◆ the contacts between organizations that had not known of or worked with each other previously;
- ◆ the establishment of new personal relationships;
- ◆ the learning that goes with the preparation of materials previously unavailable;
- ◆ the systematic research into the core issues of environmental, personal and community development that is replacing random information;
- ◆ the learning derived from the focus groups on the three issues of environmental, personal and community development.

The **targeted beneficiaries** are all those who attend the conference in October. These are anticipated to be:

- ◆ Members of the sponsoring organizations;
- ◆ Members of the religious traditions represented on the Interfaith Council;
- ◆ Delegates from religious organizations with world headquarters in K.C.;
- ◆ Members and representatives of many of the church congregations, religious organizations and seminaries from the community;
- ◆ Members of their families and close associates who have similar interests.

These persons will benefit in the numerous ways described in the outcomes earlier (# 3). This will occur through the various activities and with the resource materials provided by the conference, for example:

- ◆ Receiving and using the Conference Handbook, which will include basic information, bibliographies and web sites on all of the religious traditions and on the three issues of environmental, personal and community development;
- ◆ Viewing and receiving materials from the exhibits of traditions represented on the Interfaith Council;
- ◆ Listening to panels and then being in discussions on environment, personal and community development;
- ◆ Enjoying “open house” visits to the community facilities of various faiths traditions;
- ◆ Having multiple opportunities for networking;
- ◆ Attending the plenary sessions that will integrate the various experiences of the conference.
- ◆ Working toward a common declaration as the basis of future relationships.

The **ultimate beneficiaries** will be all the persons in the community who interact with and learn from those who have participated in the “Gifts of Pluralism” conference and who continue the conference’s purpose through on-going relationships and activities.

7. WHAT IS THE PROPOSED BUDGET FOR THIS PROGRAM? WHAT AMOUNT IS SOUGHT IN THIS GRANT PROPOSAL?

The Conference budget is as follows:

Revenue

| | |
|---|-----------------|
| Registration fees from participants and sponsors* | \$15,000 |
| Philanthropic support | \$20,000 |
| Total | \$35,000 |

Expenses

| | |
|---|-----------------|
| Conference coordination/coordinator/subcontracted services ** | \$9,000 |
| Promotion and publicity, printing and postage | \$5,000 |
| Facility*** (for custodial, signage, etc.) | \$2,000 |
| Notebooks and conference materials | \$3,000 |
| Meals and refreshments | \$6,000 |
| Equipment rental | \$1,000 |
| Gifts of appreciation for presenters | \$1,000 |
| Mileage and miscellaneous expenses of coordinator | \$1,000 |
| Administrative costs, CRES staff | \$4,000 |
| Contingencies and any overages | \$3,000 |
| Total | \$35,000 |

* Registration fees are anticipated to be a mix of individual pay, organizational sponsorship and some subsidized fees.

** Much of the conference planning time and implementation costs are being contributed through volunteer services of the sponsoring organizations.

*** Pembroke Hill is contributing much of the facility costs.

CRES' own organizational budget (shared in **Appendix F**) is a model of leveraged dollars and frugality. CRES does not have any significant surplus or reserve fund from which to capitalize the conference. *Consequently there is a need for philanthropic support to pay for the up-front conference expenses and to provide some support for specific parts of the conference..*

THE CRES PROPOSAL TO (name of foundation) FOR \$0000

(The next section needs to be tailored to the specific funder.

- ◆ CRES might ask for the foundation to be an acknowledged sponsor of the conference and/or the overall interfaith capacity building process (\$5000)
- ◆ CRES might ask for all or part of the conference planner position/function (\$10,000)
- ◆ CRES might ask for the production of the Handbook to be received by conference participants, which might also be produced after the conference (\$3000)
- ◆ CRES might ask for the foundation, corporation or individual to subsidize so many participants at the real conference cost of \$100 @, e.g. \$1000 for 10, or at half the cost, participant \$50, sponsor \$50, e.g. \$1000 for 20. (But we need to have a philosophy and consistent approach to this in all promotion and fundraising.)

8. HOW WILL THE PROGRAM BE EVALUATED? WHAT IS THE CRES PLAN FOR THE FUTURE?

A. Conference and Overall Program Evaluation

The conference will be evaluated on the degree to which it reaches the goals and achieves the outcomes described in section 3 (page 4) above.

Designated recorders will observe and note the quality of interaction and the results of the panel discussions on Saturday related to environmental, personal and community development.

The concluding session is focused on widespread feedback from participants about their experience and learning during the conference.

The Conference Handbook will contain evaluation sheets related to each part of the conference and to the conference as a whole. Participants will be encouraged to complete these at whatever point marks the end of their attendance at the conference.

Members of the boards of directors of the four sponsoring organizations will complete more detailed evaluations related to outcomes achievement. Representatives of these four sponsoring organizations will also continue to meet at least monthly after the conference and will assess the quantity and quality of ongoing activities stimulated and promoted by the conference.

The CRES Plan for the Future

As stated earlier, the CRES board and its co-sponsors see the conference as a means to an end, not an end in itself. The overall goal and vision is to build up the capacity, the social capital of the greater Kansas City community, through the linking and strengthening of the religious community, taken in its broadest sense.

The CRES plan for the future is not the unification or merging of these diverse groups, nor the promotion of any kind of syncretism, much less the conversion or changing of anyone from one tradition to another.

The CRES plan for the future is the continued and strengthened

- ◆ Enrichment and refreshment of the lives of individuals, in growing numbers;
- ◆ Mutual respect of members of diverse religious and cultural traditions for one another, achieved through exchange of accurate information and dialogue;
- ◆ Awareness and action by individuals and groups in greater Kansas City to meet the environmental, personal and community challenges of our times.

CRES invites and appreciates your support toward this future for our community.

APPENDICES

- A. The CRES Board of Directors
- B. The Interfaith Council Membership and Religious Traditions Represented
- C. The “Gifts of Pluralism” Conference Brochure and Schedule
- D. A List of Community Conference Advisors
- E. “Appreciative Inquiry”: a Select Bibliography and Sample Questions
- F. The CRES Budget for 2001 and Financial Statements Year to Date
- G. Sample copies of *Many Paths* newsletter and *Faith and Belief* columns
- H. Brief CRES organizational history