

INTERFAITH ENVIRONMENTAL CONFERENCE CONVENES IN LOS ANGELES

The Los Angeles Friendship Center was the site of an early Earth Day celebration, April 18, when representatives from more than a dozen faiths met for a discussion on "Uniting Faith and Environment." Speakers shared how their faiths value the natural world and the efforts that believers in their religions are currently making to protect our planet's future.

Larry B. Stammer, a religion writer for the *Los Angeles Times*, gave the keynote address on "The Earth As Sacred Ground." Mr. Stammer, now writing a book on the subject, emphasized how deeply linked religion and environment should be in our lives. "Most of us from time to time need something in the natural world to stir our imaginations," he said, "to move us to reflect on the quality of our lives, to bring perspective to our comings and goings, and to connect us with something bigger than ourselves."

Looking to the millennium, Mr. Stammer said that "our lives, our posterity and the future of the earth are at a crossroads. The path we take will determine whether we will be at peace within ourselves and live harmoniously with our neighbors and our life-affirming planet or remain estranged from the deepest longings of our souls...."

Later in the day, this theme of securing the future was carried into two consultations: one led by SGI-USA Vice General Director Al Albergate on the Earth Charter, the grass-roots initiative to protect the world's environment; another on the United Religions Draft Charter, an interfaith effort that is finalizing its charter at an international conference at Stanford University in June. Feedback from both consultations will be forwarded to the organizers of both initiatives.

— JEFF FARR