

**ESTABLISHING A WEBSITE FOR**  
**THE NEVADA FAITH FORUM**

**Presented to**

**The World Interfaith Harmony week Prize**

**Submitted by**

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## **Background:**

Nevada Faith Forum is a highly popular one-of-a-kind weekly dialogue on religion published in [Reno Gazette-Journal](#) (RGJ), a Gannett publication in Nevada (USA). Its objectives are to promote interfaith dialogue, educate residents of northern Nevada about different religions, and ultimately suppress hate and spread peace among the people of various faiths. Rajan Zed, a religious statesman who has been bestowed with “World Interfaith Leader Award”, assembled a panel of distinguished area leaders of various religions and denominations to produce this weekly discussion.

Posed weekly by religious statesman, Rajan Zed, the questions deal with life and death, love and loss, marriage and divorce, morality, community, politics, and everything in between. Northern Nevada has been greatly affected by this column as it has opened doors for communication, broadened acceptance, and created a dialogue between people of all faiths. Members of the community express gratitude and thanks to the contributors. The authors are frequently engaged in conversations within the community regarding their public forum. The participants represent the views of: Catholics, Orthodox, Protestants, Muslims, Mormons, Jews, Buddhists, Bahá'í, and religious educators. The representatives take readers on a journey to better understand the countless ways in which people of faith deal with loss, love, morality, and politics. Further, they elucidate an assortment of doctrine by answering questions people everywhere wonder but rarely have opportunities to ask. Readers can expect to gain knowledge, perspective, and comfort from the collective insights gleaned from reading this book. It is a must read from people with or without religion as it encompasses all walks of life.

Nevada Faith Forum offers a glimpse into the beliefs, thoughts, and doctrine of various faiths. Rather than seeking to dispute theology or doctrine, Bridge of Faith provides unity and acceptance. Though perspectives and responses are vastly different, each member of the column provides insightful, eye opening, and sometimes controversial revelations about their various faiths. Not always in harmony with one another, the authors kindly disagree and, as is more often the case, help illustrate the many ways in which they do agree. The column has brought a community closer in examining their beliefs while also forcing readers to determine what they themselves believe about so many pressing inquiries.

The Faith Forum touched two-year mark on February 4th, 2013 without any break. Due to the high popularity of the weekly articles, RGJ moved the publishing day from Fridays to Sundays in order for the forum to reach out to more audience.

## **What Inspired the Event**

Originally presented as a weekly newspaper column in The Reno Gazette Journal, the thoughtful responses to life's hardest questions have affected a community profoundly. Consequently, members of the faith forum felt compelled to reach out to more audience. In addition, although, RGJ publishes the

articles online as well as in its paper distribution, it does not offer free archiving of previously published articles. With almost 107 questions been answered about religion, the members of the faith forum wanted to provide a mechanism through which interested readers can go back and search different questions and explore how most religions deal with the issue. In summary, the members of the faith forum wanted to break through space and time barriers when extending the knowledge base. Consequently, it was decided to establish a website dedicated for the faith forum activities under the leadership of Rajan Zed and Sherif Elfass. Dr. Elfass, who is the President of [Northern Nevada Muslim Community](#) (NNMC), was responsible for designing, maintaining and sponsoring the hosting of the website.

### **Event Description**

The website, which can be found at [www.nevadafaithforum.org](http://www.nevadafaithforum.org), was designed and implemented in collaboration between Mr. Mahmoud Ahmad, a Ph.D. candidate in Physics and Dr. Sherif Elfass. On February 5, 2013, the website was launched in a ceremonial event hosted by RGJ and attended by members of the faith forum as well as other local religious and community leaders. Mayor Geno Martini of City of Sparks attended the ceremony and officially launched the website. During the event, Rajan Zed (Leader of the faith forum), John Maher (Publisher of RGJ), Beryl Love (Executive Editor, RGJ), Geno Martini (Mayor, City of Sparks, NV), and Sherif Elfass (President of NNMC) gave short talks highlighting the significance of the faith forum and its impact on the promoting interfaith dialogue, suppressing hate and spreading peace among the people of various faiths. The event lasted for one hour however its impact should last many years by the will of God.

### **Description of the Website**

The website includes eight pages. The following is a description of each page:

1. **Home**: This is the home page which includes a description of the Nevada Faith Forum and its objective. It includes a graphic art depicting the mission of the faith forum in increasing the knowledge base of the average person about the various religions in a climate of peace and harmony. Information about the sponsors and supporters, pictures from recent events and a schedule of upcoming events are provided on the home page.
2. **Questions**: This page presents the last five questions in reverse chronological order. Only the most recent five questions will always be presented. Older questions will be presented in an archive page which is currently under construction.
  - a. **Answers**: This page presents the answers to the questions which were provided by the leaders of the different religions/denominations.
3. **Religious Leaders**: This page includes a short biography of all religious leaders participating in the Nevada Faith Forum. As it can be seen, all major religions are represented on the forum.

4. **Events:** This page provides a picture archive from the recent events in which members from the faith forum participated.
5. **Suggest a Question:** Until now, all questions have been provided by Rajan Zed, leader of the faith forum. However, in effort to tailor more to readers' topics of interest, this page was designed to provide them with an opportunity suggest questions to the forum.
6. **Invite a Speaker:** This page provides a mechanism for the readers to invite member(s) from the faith forum to deliver talks on topics pertained to religion.
7. **Book Project:** This page will be used to update the readers about the progress of the book project which will be a collection of all previously published questions and answers.
8. **Endorsements:** This page provides a collection of the endorsements received by the faith forum for their effort in promoting interfaith dialogue and peace among the people of various faiths. These endorsements were provided by prominent community leaders such as Mayors of the three largest cities in Northern Nevada (Sparks, Reno, and Carson City) as well as the Governor of State of Nevada. Other endorsements were provided by Steve Keefer, Chief of Police for the City of Sparks and Beryl Love, Executive Editor in RGJ.
9. **About:** This page provides extended information about the Nevada Faith Forum.

### **Future Improvements to the Website**

The Nevada Faith Forum website is no different from any other website. It is a living project that will be enhanced and perfected with time. One immediate enhancement will be to include an archive of all previously answered questions which is currently under construction. Another improvement which to include a mechanism to track the number of visitors as well as for them to provide a feedback on the website is also under construction. Other improvements will follow.

### **Media Coverage of the Event**

The launching of the website was covered by RGJ and other media outlets. Links to the media coverage are listed below:

<http://thejetnewspaper.com/2013/02/28/interfaith-forum-at-nevada-newspaper-completes-2-years-launches-website/>

<http://www.webnewswire.com/content/interfaith-forum-nevada-newspaper-completes-2-years-launches-website>

<http://www.forpressrelease.com/forpressrelease-110734-interfaith-forum-at-nevada-newspaper-completes-2-years-launches-website.html>

<http://www.prlog.org/12088916-interfaith-forum-at-nevada-newspaper-completes-2-years-launches-website.html>

<http://rajanzed.com/rajan/index.php/2013/02/27/interfaith-forum-at-nevada-newspaper-completes-2-years-launches-website/>

### **References for the Nevada Faith Forum**

1. Mr. Nicholas F. Frey, Area Public Affairs Director, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Woodburn and Wedge Attorneys, 6100 Neil Road, Suite 500, Reno, NV 89511-1149, USA; Telephone 775-742-1343; Email [nfrey@woodburnandwedge.com](mailto:nfrey@woodburnandwedge.com)
2. Reverend Jikai' Phil Bryan, Priest, Reno Buddhist Center, 820 Plumas Street, Reno, NV 89509, USA; Telephone 775-527-9308; Email [phbry7@aol.com](mailto:phbry7@aol.com)
3. Father Stephen Karcher, Priest, Saint Anthony Greek Orthodox Church, 4795 Lakeside Drive, Reno, NV 89509, USA; Telephone 775-815-4050, Email [fatherstephen@att.net](mailto:fatherstephen@att.net)

### **Endorsements and Supporters**

For a copy of the endorsements and the list of supporters to the Nevada Faith Forum and its website, please consult the NFF website at [www.nevadafaitforum.org](http://www.nevadafaitforum.org).

## Pictures from the Event



**Nevada Faith Forum Website**



**Members of the Nevada Faith Forum during the Launching of the Website**





**Dr. Sherif Elfass, Accompanied by Mr. Rajan Zed, Describing the New Website**