

Chief rabbi advocates a 'UN of Religion'

Uniting world's faithful key to world peace

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Violence in the name of God is a blasphemy that the world's religious leaders must eradicate by working together to promote peace, says Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi Yona Metzger, one of two chief rabbis of Israel.

"There are world leaders who use God and religion to create terror and to kill innocent people," Metzger told a small interfaith group invited to meet with him Thursday at the Beth Israel Synagogue.

Religious leaders must work together to create a "United Nations of Religion" that promotes a respect for the differences among the various religions, Metzger said.

"A church, a mosque, a synagogue or a holy temple must be embassies of God and we have to spread this idea to our believers," he said.

Metzger was invited to Edmonton to help celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Beth Israel Synagogue. It is the first time a chief rabbi has visited Western Canada.

As Ashkenazi chief rabbi of Israel, Metzger is responsible for guiding Jews of European extraction. His counterpart, Rabbi Shlomo Amar, is the Sephardi chief rabbi of Jews who originated in North Africa and Spain.

Since becoming Chief Rabbi, Metzger has actively encouraged friendly relationships between var-



GREG SOUTHAM, THE JOURNAL

Yona Metzger, the Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi waits to speak to an interfaith group at the Beth Israel Synagogue on Thursday.

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Rabbi Yona Metzger

ious religious communities.

His greatest goal is to create a "United Nations of Religions" which would contain representatives of the world's religions as opposed to nations.

He has suggested that the Dalai Lama could lead the assembly.

"Instead of planning for nuclear war and buying tanks and fighter jets, it will invest in peace. Religious leaders will get the opportunity to

meet one another and discover they have more in common than they may have realized," Metzger was quoted as saying when he met with the Dalai Lama in 2006.

Sharon Pasula, vice-president of the Métis Regional Council, was among the interfaith group invited to meet Metzger on Thursday.

Pasula said she thought the rabbi's message was wonderful, and she agreed with the importance of religious co-operation.

"Christians do support Israel. I went to Israel last year for the World Christian Gathering of Indigenous people.

"We love Israel, and of course, Israel is home to Judaism, which is the mother of Christianity," she said.

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