

UPF's Think Tank 2022 Interfaith Forum: Faith Leaders and Peace in Korea

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Seoul, Korea -- The *Think Tank 2022* Interfaith Forum was held at the Cheongshim Peace World Center in Gapyeong-gun, South Korea on December 18, 2021. Attended by several hundred participants onsite and live-streamed around the world, the forum focused on the role and mission of religious and faith leaders for the peaceful reunification of the Korean Peninsula.

Mr. Gyeong-guk Cho, secretary-general of the *Think Tank 2022* policy research institute, served as the moderator. Mr. Cho briefly explained that UPF inaugurated *Think Tank 2022* on May 9 in Korea this year. On October 16, the first *Think Tank 2022* Forum was held and spotlighted former U.S. Secretary of State Hon. Mike Pompeo. The second forum was held on November 20 and featured former U.S. Vice President Hon. Mike Pence, and the third forum, convened on December 4, highlighted American investor and financial commentator Mr. Jim Rogers.



The welcome address was given by **Dr. Young-ho Yoon**, director-general of Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU) International, and chairman of the *Think Tank 2022* Forum Organizing Committee. Speaking extemporaneously, Dr. Yoon shared his personal doubts that religious leaders could actually put aside their differences and come together for a common cause. However, his experience at UPF's First Africa Summit convened in Senegal in 2018 caused him to change his opinion. At that time, UPF co-founder, Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, gave a message to a largely Muslim audience that expressed and embraced the common values of all faiths and revealed the heart of God as a parent to all humankind. All the faith leaders in attendance enthusiastically received the message.

Dr. Yoon, who had studied Buddhism and other faiths, said, "I witnessed that the substantial unification

of religions may be possible, not through knowledge and not through the knowledge I had studied in my ivory tower at the university. No matter what you call the absolute origin, whether you call this entity God, Allah, Jehovah, or the Amitābha they speak about in Buddhism, in the end, this God is our Heavenly Parent. If we can reveal God's identity as our parent, I'm confident that the unification of all religions will be possible."



Dr. Yoon noted the 30th anniversary since UPF's founders met with North Korean leader Kim Il-sung in Pyongyang on December 6, 1991. Their primary goal was to encourage the reunification of North and South Korea. He also announced that in February next year, UPF will host World Summit 2022, an international meeting of the 157 nations with diplomatic ties to both North and South Korea. The summit will culminate with a one-million-person rally for the peaceful reunification of the Korean Peninsula.

UPF International President **Michael W. Jenkins** introduced the keynote speaker, **Pastor Paula White** (Cain), spiritual advisor to former U.S. President Donald Trump, and former senior pastor of New Destiny Christian Center megachurch.

Pastor White delivered a passionate and powerful message beginning with the New Testament's fundamental teaching, as stated in Matthew 5:43-44: "You have heard that it was said, love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I tell you, love your enemies too. Pray for those who treat you badly."

"We must recognize that the role of faith leaders is absolutely essential to achieving peace on the Korean Peninsula," she said, and continued, "Peace can only come when we honor God and follow His call to love one another, and respect our divine roles in strengthening the family, society, and nation through truth and love."

Pastor White referred to the story in Exodus 3:7: "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering." Just as God delivered the chosen people from suffering and affliction then, she believes it is God's will to bring peace and resolution to the people of North and South Korea.

She announced, "God is calling Mother Moon to bring love and truth to the North, and I want to go with her," and concluded with the prayerful hope that all faith leaders -- Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish, and indigenous faiths -- "can go to the North in peace, open the door with truth and love, and bring this land together with happiness, freedom and prosperity."

After Pastor White's eloquent keynote address, **Rev. Stephen Kim**, co-chair of the Korean Clergy Leadership Conference (KCLC), gave a response. "We are living at a very important time for peace on the Korean Peninsula. Will the history of conflict continue or will a new history of ground-breaking harmony and peace arise? Now is the time that we must choose," he said.

Rev. Kim called for boldness to break away from "existing methods which use the logic of power and confrontation, and imagine instead new strategies and innovations for peace on the Korean Peninsula." In particular, he called on people of faith to "lead the way to save our nation and the world by continuing the traditions of Buddhist and Christian sacrifice and devotion to protect and save our nation when it is in trouble."

A question and answer session followed the formal presentations. Members of the panel included:

- **Rev. Stephen Kim**, co-chair, Korean Clergy Leadership Conference
- **Ven. Dr. Hyeoneung**, head, Taegu Buddhist order
- **Missionary Rocky Kent Nielsen**, missionary, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
- **Ven. Hye-won Shin**, co-chair, Cheondogyo faith, Donghak Unification Committee of the Korean People
- **Rev. Young-kyu Park**, chairman, KCLC Gyeong-in
- **Prof. Yeon Ah Moon**, chair, UPF-Korea
- **Dr. Young Ho Yoon**, director-general, FFWPU International
- **Prophet Samuel Radebe**, founder and pastor, The Revelation Church of God, South Africa



The speakers and panelists also received questions from the floor.

Pastor Chun-suk Cho of the Stream of Water Church asked Pastor White why she is so passionate and interested in a Heavenly Unified Korea. Pastor White said: "I believe it's God's will. That is the motivation of my heart, and why I'm here.... Anything that we do, starting with our prayers, must go to action, serving, believing, and doing acts of courage. It will take forums and think tanks, coming together, bringing our influence to make a difference."

Pastor White became emotional and shared from her heart. "I grew up in a very wealthy family, but my father committed suicide when I was five years old, and there was that longing in me that there must be more to life. At 18 years old, I had a real encounter with God. I decided to surrender and give my life to God. I prayed a simple prayer: "May I serve You and help people the rest of my life? God has allowed me to do that. That is why I'm here and what motivates me to see the reunification of North and South Korea."

Mr. Hyeong-woo Cho, principal of the Cheongshim International Middle and High School, noted that the world where our youth will live is changing quickly -- there are advancements but there are problems like cyberviolence and juvenile delinquency -- and asked Pastor White: Is there a message you can send to the young people who will be the leaders in the future?

She said she is very impressed by the young people. "They are the hope of our future. While there are many challenges undoubtedly, I believe the future can be brighter than ever before. What encouragement would I give to young people? Be strong and be courageous." She quoted futurist David Houle who said that "between the period of 2017 and 2037, the world will experience more transition and change than any generation and any people in 50 years of human history." Optimistically, she concluded, "while these are times of transition, these are times of opportunity."

Despite the difficulties abiding with the government's Covid restrictions, as well as the severe cold weather, the *Think Tank 2022* Interfaith Forum ended successfully. Upcoming programs will feature youth speakers and other topics relevant to the future of the peninsula.