

International Day of Peace Observed in Iceland

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Reykjavik, Iceland—The celebration of the 2015 International Day of Peace took place in the largest church in Iceland.

Representatives of many faiths were present at the event, which took place on September 24, 2015, in the Church of Hallgrímur. The minister at this church, Rev. Sigurður Árni Þórðarson, once had studied alongside UPF-International President Dr. Thomas Walsh in the United States.

The windows of the church are without colors or decoration but are designed so that if the sun shines and the angles are right, the church is bathed in shining light. Exactly this happened on the day of the celebration, whereas the previous days had been overcast.

The 50 participants stayed from the beginning to the end, with most of them participating in the Bridge of Peace ceremony. A number of visitors to the church also stopped by, especially during the musical performances by Daníel Ágúst Haraldsson, lead singer of the internationally known band GusGus, and soprano Hallveig Rúnarsdóttir.

The speakers, representing a broad spectrum of beliefs, were Sigurður Árni Þórðarson of the Church of Hallgrímur; Eyrún Ósk Jónsdóttir from Soka Gakkai; Hilmar Hilmarsson from Ása Trúa, a pagan faith; Ahmad Aseddeeq from the Islamic cultural center; Hjörtur Magni Johannsson from the free Lutheran church; Mansoor Ahmad Malik from the Ahmaddiyya Muslim Community; and UPF-Iceland Secretary General Rohan Nandkisore.

Rev. Hjörtur Magni Johannsson said he was still amazed by his participation at the World Summit in Seoul from August 27 to 31. He especially was inspired by the Sunhak Peace Prize ceremony.

The UPF-Iceland secretary general in his talk focused on the peacemaking efforts of UPF Founders Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon and Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, mentioning the aid given by UPF and affiliated organizations to Japan and Nepal after they suffered devastating natural disasters. Having a female co-founder of a religion in these times is surely an advantage, Mr. Nandkisore said.

The Bridge of Peace ceremony was highly appreciated and elevated the already bright spirit of the program. The first persons to hug each other were real “enemies: of the past: Rev. Sigurður Árni Þórðarson of the Church of Hallgrímur and Rev. Hjörtur Magni Johannsson from the Free Lutheran Church, who had been in disagreement for quite some years.

The results of this event are new contacts and a growing respect for UPF and its founders. To add to the success of the event, the Church of Hallgrímur invited UPF-Iceland to hold the International Day of Peace there next year.