

WFP Norway celebrates UN International Day of Families at Lutheran University

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The UN International Day of Families was celebrated on Thursday the 11 May 2017 at the VID Lutheran University, with the topic "Family and Society – our families' situation in 2017."

Four speakers contributed to the evening's program that was a co-operation between UPF and WFP.

Jan Harsem, former leader of the Nordic Network for Families, spoke on the topic "The new trends in family constellations and the possible consequences". He elaborated on the Norwegian process that led to the legalization of same sex marriage in 2008. He specified the five laws that were changed in order to make this new law. He explained how political and other allies had come together to make this possible. He also presented some of the dilemmas and challenges that resulted from this rather speedy process. These are

challenges that probably will gain more and more attention and that need to be dealt with in the time to come.

The second speaker Geir Jørgen Bekkevold, was from the Family Committee in the Norwegian Parliament. His topic was "The New Biotechnology – blessings and challenges". He mentioned his party's standpoint – never to compromise with the value of the human being. The new technology brings new possibilities, such as helping childless couples to have children. However, he expressed concern that our ethics and morals are struggling to catch up with the rapid development in biotechnology. There are technological market and lobby interests that are pushing for its acceptance; however, politicians have to think about the long-term consequences, something that is a challenge today.



After these two speeches, a short UPF video presentation was shown. The next speaker was Professor Emeritus from the University of Oslo, Sigurd Skirbekk. He expressed some disappointment at the response towards many of his books and publications in the western world. His conservative sociological views do not seem to be in demand by the current authorities or the public. Nevertheless, he is building his work on solid studies that should have a stronger voice in today's society. We need a long-term perspective. He mentioned studies such as i.e. Joseph Unwin, who studied dozens of civilizations, these studies are still relevant and deserves to be heard.

Steinar Murud, leader of UPF Norway, gave the final speech with the title "The family as a source of norms for our society". He mentioned that amongst the large number of UN days, the Day of the Family is of great importance for development and world peace. Today many people praise the variety of families, but Murud defined the family as the nuclear family – all other constellations are a sort of development from that. Our question should be, how can we preserve the original dream of keeping the core together when we are confronted with challenges. Finally, he mentioned four basic family values and how they could benefit the society if they could be "extended" to a larger degree to the world around us. In conclusion, there was a session of questions and comments. In gratitude to the speakers, all of them received a copy of the new Norwegian translation of Rev. Moon's autobiography.

Great refreshments and social mingling closed the evening.