

US chapters of UPF celebrate the United Nations 2016 International Day of Peace

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September 21, 2016



New York, United States—A peace forum, a dinner, meditation, and interfaith prayer were used by various U.S. chapters of UPF to celebrate the 2016 International Day of Peace.

In Lansing, the capital of the state of Michigan, staff members from the offices of state senators and state representatives gathered on September 21 at the Lansing Center, a beautiful convention and banquet center within walking distance of the state capitol, for a morning program organized by UPF-Michigan.

After a short film on UPF’s five principles of peace was shown, Teresa Ledesma, executive director of UPF-Michigan, presented one participant, Terri Barker, her appointment as Ambassador for Peace. Her commitment to peace activities is exemplary, Ms. Ledesma said. “We knew she would be the right person to receive a certificate ... because of her extensive experience in conflict resolution both in the political and business worlds,” said Rev. David Kasbow, an adviser to UPF-Michigan.

In the western state of Nevada, UPF of Las Vegas invited Ambassadors of Peace and several interfaith and religious organizations to participate in a Peace Prayer in front of Las Vegas City Hall at noon on September 21. Twenty interfaith leaders gathered, offering prayers from their faith traditions, including representatives from the Mayor’s Faith Initiative and the Interfaith Council of Southern Nevada, as well as two organizations affiliated with UPF: Family Federation for World Peace and Unification and Women’s Federation for World Peace. Included were prayers from the Hopi and Shoshone tribes, Buddhism, Judaism, Islam, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the Baha’i faith, Unificationism and spiritualism.

All the participants were free to say a prayer and express their dreams and desires for a peaceful world, as well as those representing their faith group.

Katherine Duncan, chair of UPFLV, read excerpts from Rev. Sun Myung Moon’s March 23, 2004, speech to the U.S. Congress, “Declaring the Era of the Peace Kingdom,” which focused on the role of a True Family in creating peace. Leslie Rigney, UPFLV executive director, conducted the water ceremony in which each of the faith groups participated.

UPF in San Juan, the capital of the U.S. territory of Puerto Rico, collaborated with the International Yoga Teachers Association (IYTA) Wellness & Health Center to host a Peace Forum with the theme “Elements for Peace” on September 21.

Four panelists talked about peace from their own perspective and experiences. The panelists were Pastor Antonio Grillo of the church Casa de Jubilo; Mabel Lassalle, director of a non-governmental organization

called Connecting Paths P.R.; and finally, the husband and wife team of Angel Rivera and Isabel Rodriguez, directors of IYTA Wellness & Health Center as well as teachers and practitioners of yoga for 35 years.

After the panelists gave their talks, Conchita Garcia, executive director of UPF of Puerto Rico, gave a brief introduction to the vision, mission, and works of UPF and explained the purpose and goals of the Ambassador for Peace program. The four panelists then received their appointment as Ambassador for Peace, which made them more inspired and excited to partner again in the near future to advance the work of UPF. “Everyone felt a sense of unity and as one big family under God, despite our differences,” Mrs. Garcia testified.



On September 22, in the town of Centralia, Washington, UPF of Washington state hosted a program called “Food for Peace.” Many Ambassadors for Peace as well as UPF supporters and guests gathered at the historic Windermere Mansion. At the dinner, attendees introduced themselves, creating closer bonds of heart among them. It is noteworthy to mention that attendees came from four nations on two continents plus one island nation and represented a diversity of races. It was a meeting representing the greater family of humankind.

The main speaker was the executive director of UPF-Washington, Ray McCready. He began by reading the official statement by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on the 2016 International Day of Peace. This was followed by a PowerPoint presentation on the UPF Principles of Reconciliation. “Without reconciliation, any efforts for peace will be mostly superficial,” Mr. McCready said, “and so we must address the underlying causes of conflict and deal with them through godly love for others.”

Lavanya Reddy of the Srimanirama Educational & Cultural Foundation led the group in a meditation on peace to feel connected to the Creator. Then the participants moved outside onto a large deck overlooking Lake Washington, where they formed a circle and offered prayers for peace.

The theme for this year’s commemoration is “Sustainable Development Goals: Building Blocks for Peace.”The SDGs are integral to achieving peace in our time, as development and peace are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. In his official statement, Secretary-General Ban said: “You know best of all that peace is not an accident. Peace is not a gift. Peace is something we must all work for, every day, in every country.” He stressed that peace is about far more than putting weapons aside and that it involves the hard work of mediation, conflict resolution through diplomacy, reconciliation, peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

May peace reign in our land by fulfilling our individual mandate as peace-loving citizens.