

UPF International: World Religion Day, When Faith Meets the Common Good

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January 18, 2026
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World Religion Day as a doorway into the UN World Interfaith Harmony Week and a reminder of UPF's long interreligious legacy

On 18 January 2026, communities around the world mark [World Religion Day](#), observed each year on the third Sunday in January. First initiated in 1950 by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States, the day has grown beyond its original setting and is now widely hosted by interfaith and multifaith coalitions. It invites reflection on a practical truth: when spiritual communities meet with humility and clarity, public life can regain moral depth and social trust.

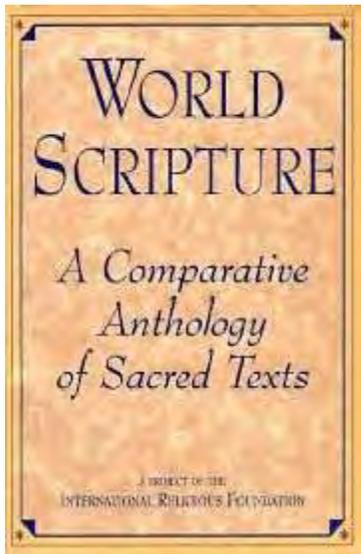
This observance arrives only days before the United Nations [World Interfaith Harmony Week](#), held annually in the first week of February under General Assembly resolution [A/RES/65/5](#), adopted unanimously on 20 October 2010. The resolution highlights the universal language of love of God and love of one's neighbour, or love of the good and love of one's neighbour, each according to one's traditions or convictions. Together, these two moments form a quiet threshold for the international community, aligned with the [2030 Agenda](#), [Sustainable Development Goal 16](#) on peaceful and inclusive societies, and [Sustainable Development Goal 17](#) on partnerships that multiply impact.

Join UK - UPF at '[Building Bridges: Faith Communities Advancing Peace and Inclusion](#)' World Interfaith Harmony Week event - Universal Peace Federation UK's Inter-religious Association for Peace and Development (IAPD) January 27th 6 pm

For the [Universal Peace Federation](#), interreligious engagement is not a seasonal theme but a continuity tested over decades. Since the early 70s, the founders invested in relationships across faith lines through repeated encounters, public education, and service. In July 1970, they welcomed senior religious leaders in Seoul as a sign that sincere dialogue can bring begin with personal respect. In 1971, they published the

newspaper Weekly Religion, creating a public space for religious literacy and social reflection. In 1977, San Francisco hosted the first Conference Toward a Global Congress of the World's Religions, expanding the horizon from bilateral dialogue to a sustained global platform.

Alongside public dialogue platforms, UPF Founders' early interreligious work also developed a scholarly and educational foundation designed to make cooperation durable. The Unification Theological Seminary opened in Barrytown, New York on 20 September 1975 and cultivated an ecumenical academic environment that welcomed sustained engagement with scholars and clergy from diverse traditions. From this setting emerged the annual "God: The Contemporary Discussion" conferences, first convened in 1981, which gathered theologians, philosophers, and religion scholars for rigorous conversation on the meaning of God in contemporary life.



In 1983, the International Religious Foundation was incorporated to support interfaith scholarship and publishing, including comparative resources designed to help readers recognize ethical and spiritual convergence across traditions. A flagship outcome was World Scripture, a comparative anthology of sacred texts published in 1991 as an International Religious Foundation project, followed by World Scripture II, published by the Universal Peace Federation in 2007, which broadened access to sacred texts as a shared moral vocabulary for dialogue and peacebuilding.

That early momentum matured into institutions and programs that linked dialogue with lived solidarity. In 1985, the Assembly of the World's Religions convened at the Great Gorge in McAfee, New Jersey, USA, demonstrating that deep conviction can coexist with deep courtesy. In those welcoming remarks, Dr. Sun Myung Moon offered a simple tone, "I welcome you from the bottom of my heart to the Assembly of the World's Religions." In 1986, the [Religious Youth Service](#) began mobilizing young people of different faiths for service projects that build trust through shared labour. In 1991, the Inter Religious Federation for World Peace was inaugurated in Seoul as a framework for sustained cooperation among religious leaders.

In the contemporary era, the legacy continues through new structures and renewed focus. Following the passing of late [Dr. Sun Myung Moon](#), [Dr. Hak Ja Han](#) continued this tradition by establishing the [Interreligious Association for Peace and Development](#) as an association of the Universal Peace Federation, strengthening the link between moral vision and practical development.

In this season, the Universal Peace Federation also honours the work of other organizations whose consistent service reflects the same ethical direction. The [United Nations Alliance of Civilizations](#) has helped anchor dialogue and mutual respect in a global policy space. [Religions for Peace](#) has mobilized multireligious leadership for reconciliation and humanitarian action across regions. The [Parliament of the World's Religions](#) continues a historic convening tradition that expands understanding through encounter. The [United Religions Initiative](#) strengthens local cooperation through grassroots circles of action. The [KAICIID Dialogue Centre](#) invests in dialogue capacities and peacemaking partnerships, especially where narratives easily polarize. The [G20 Interfaith Forum](#) connects faith perspectives with global governance conversations. Interfaith initiatives that engage youth and deep spiritual learning, including [Interfaith America](#) and the [Elijah Interfaith Institute](#), also contribute meaningfully to the shared field of practical cooperation.

World Religion Day and the approaching UN World Interfaith Harmony Week invite a gentle but clear

form of leadership. Faith leaders can host one another and model listening that preserves conviction while rejecting contempt. Youth can lead service projects that build trust through shared work and shared learning. Civil society and educators can create environments where religious literacy reduces fear rather than inflaming it. Public officials can engage religious communities as partners in social cohesion, without instrumentalizing belief or flattening conscience.

The Universal Peace Federation's [Ambassadors for Peace](#) are invited to mark this season with practical steps that fit local realities. A small interfaith roundtable, a shared day of community service, a joint message of compassion during a tense moment, or a visit across a boundary that people have grown used to avoiding can become a seed. Through such human scale actions, peace becomes believable, and humanity moves closer to a culture in which dignity is protected and difference becomes a source of wisdom, not division, as one family under God.