

December Newsletter UPF USA

Michael Jenkins
December 30, 2025



UPF USA BRIDGE BUILDER NEWSLETTER

December 2025

A monthly snapshot of peace stories, insight, and inspiration.

Peace Practice: Setting Intentions That Create Peace

As a new year begins, many of us long for peace, in our homes, our communities, and our world, but peace does not arrive by chance; it is created through intention and lived through daily action. *Holy Mother Han*, known as the Mother of Peace, describes a simple yet profound practice of beginning each morning in prayer and reflection, carefully considering whom she will live for that day, and then acting on that intention, reminding us that peace is a conscious choice renewed each morning.

This practice reflects a core principle of the Universal Peace Federation: lasting peace begins when individuals live for the sake of others. When intention is rooted in service, ordinary moments become opportunities for compassion and grace, and even amid today's conflicts, and despite Holy Mother Han's unjust detention in South Korea, her life continues to testify that peace is sustained not by circumstance, but by unwavering commitment to love and service.



[Read Full Article](#)

Religious Freedom Luncheon Strengthens Interfaith Ties

On December 13, the *Peace Starts With Me (PSWM) Alliance*, in partnership with ACLC-Washington and the Seattle Family Church, hosted a Religious Freedom Luncheon that brought together faith leaders, community representatives, and advocates committed to interfaith understanding and cooperation. The gathering emphasized the importance of religious liberty as a foundation for peaceful and thriving communities, providing space for meaningful dialogue on shared values and current challenges.

The event reflected the mission of the Universal Peace Federation (UPF) to build bridges among faith communities and promote peace through dialogue, reconciliation, and cooperation rooted in spiritual and moral values. Participants reaffirmed their shared responsibility to uphold the dignity and freedom of all people, strengthening relationships and reinforcing a collective commitment to religious freedom through continued partnership and engagement.



[Read Full Story](#)

Ambassador for Peace Spotlight

Chaplain Marisa Estrella



Born in Jersey City, New Jersey, Marisa Estrella has dedicated her life to service and compassion. She served honorably in the U.S. Army as a Chaplain Assistant, an experience that shaped her lifelong commitment to caring for veterans and families. Following her military service, she pursued studies in criminal justice, paralegal work, and business administration, while continuing to serve diverse communities in New York.

In 2015, Ms. Estrella founded Worldwide Veterans and Family Services, Inc. (WVFS) to help veterans and their families access housing, health care, and essential resources. Her work spans local and international efforts, including support for homeless veterans in the Dominican Republic. As an Ambassador for Peace, she exemplifies peace in action through consistent, selfless service.

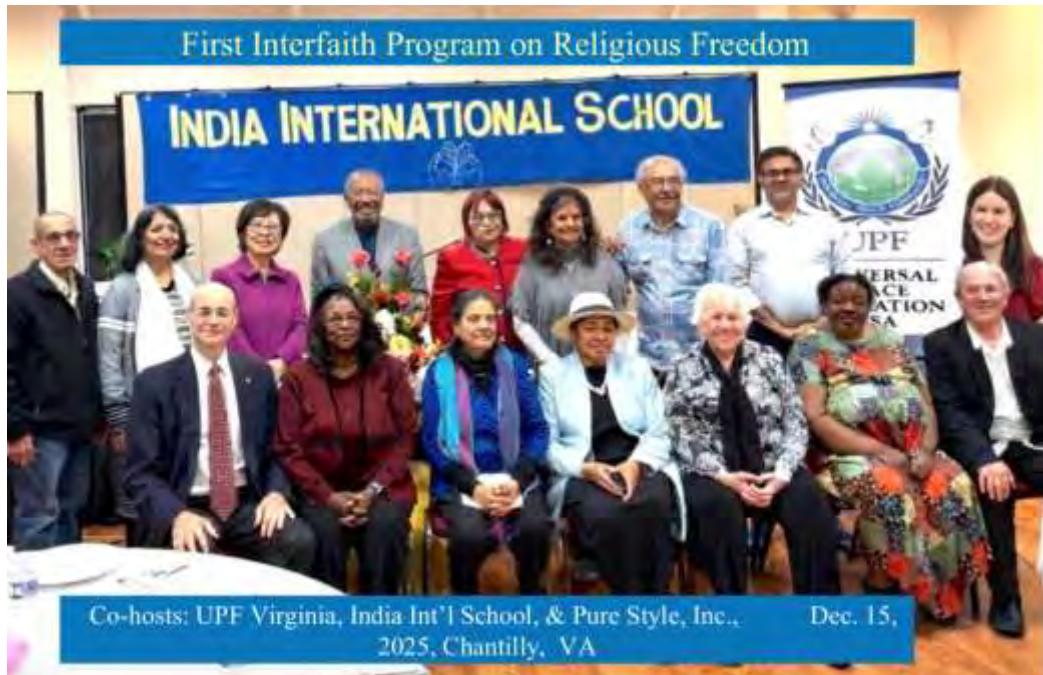
[Read Full Bio](#)

Seeds of Peace in a Season of Hope

On December 15, community leaders and guests gathered at the India International School in Chantilly, Virginia, for the First Interfaith Program on Religious Freedom, themed “*World Peace Through Reconciliation: Religious Freedom*.” Co-hosted by the India International School, Universal Peace Federation (UPF)–Virginia, and Pure Style, Inc., the event

encouraged dialogue, mutual respect, and unity among diverse faith traditions.

Speakers from multiple religious backgrounds reflected on integrity, compassion, and shared moral values as foundations for reconciliation and lasting peace. Musical moments added joy to the gathering, which concluded with gratitude to the approximately 25 participants. The program offered a hopeful reminder that when people of faith come together, peace becomes possible.



[Read Full Story](#)

Where Values Meet Vision: Building Blocks for Peace

On Saturday, December 6, 2025, the Universal Peace Federation (UPF) and the *Peace Starts With Me* Alliance hosted an educational seminar at *The Washington Times* building focused on God's ideal—original values, contemporary challenges, and human responsibility as the building blocks for peace. The seminar brought together 55 participants, including 25 Ambassadors for Peace, for a meaningful exploration of shared human values, moral leadership, and the vital role of family in building peaceful societies.

The program featured a keynote presentation by Dr. Robert S. Kittel, who drew on nearly fifty years of experience to emphasize that strong families form the foundation of strong nations. Welcoming remarks were offered by Tomiko Duggan, Senior Vice President of UPF USA, followed by luncheon reflections addressing religious freedom and personal testimony on marriage and family life. The seminar also included the appointment of new Ambassadors for Peace, celebrating continued commitment to UPF's mission of peace through cooperation, dialogue, and service.



[Read Full Story](#)





Religious Freedom Luncheon Strengthens Interfaith Ties

On December 13, the *Peace Starts With Me* (PSWM) Alliance partnered with ACLC-Washington and the Seattle Family Church to host a Religious Freedom Luncheon, bringing together faith leaders, community representatives, and advocates dedicated to strengthening interfaith understanding and cooperation. The gathering reflected a shared commitment to religious liberty as a cornerstone of peaceful, democratic, and flourishing societies.



The luncheon created a welcoming space for meaningful dialogue on the vital role of religious freedom in today's world. Participants exchanged perspectives on current challenges facing faith communities and reaffirmed the importance of protecting the dignity and rights of all people to live and practice their beliefs freely. Through open conversation and mutual listening, the gathering demonstrated how respectful engagement across traditions can foster trust and unity even amid differences.

The PSWM Alliance's participation underscored the broader mission of the Universal Peace Federation (UPF): to build bridges among religions, cultures, and nations by promoting shared moral values, family-centered ethics, and cooperation among faith leaders. Inspired by the vision of UPF's founders, Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon and Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, the Alliance works to advance peace by encouraging dialogue, reconciliation, and service rooted in spiritual principles.

By convening leaders committed to religious freedom, the luncheon strengthened relationships and reinforced a shared sense of responsibility to stand together in defense of conscience and belief. The event served as a reminder that lasting peace is not achieved in isolation, but through continued engagement, partnership, and a collective commitment to honoring the sacred worth of every individual.

Comments (0)

Newest First

[Post Comment...](#)



Ambassador for Peace

Spotlight: Chaplain

Marisa Estrella

Born in Jersey City, New Jersey, Marisa Estrella's life has been shaped by a profound commitment to service, discipline, and compassion. At just 24 years old, she enlisted in the United States Army, serving honorably through two tours of duty as a Chaplain Assistant. That formative experience instilled in her the values of readiness, precision, and selfless care for others—principles that would become the foundation of her lifelong work in community and veteran advocacy.



Following her military service, Ms. Estrella pursued higher education with determination and breadth, earning a Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice from Mercy College, a Paralegal Certificate from the New York Paralegal School, and a Bachelor of Business Administration from Monroe College in the Bronx. Alongside more than two decades of customer service experience, she has consistently demonstrated integrity, diligence, and a collaborative spirit. Whether in professional roles or volunteer settings, her compassionate nature and ability to connect across cultures—supported by her fluency in both English and Spanish—have made her a trusted presence in diverse communities, particularly throughout the Bronx.

Marisa Estrella's heart for service found a lasting institutional expression in 2015 with the founding of Worldwide Veterans and Family Services, Inc. (WVFS). Created to support veterans and their families, WVFS helps individuals access essential resources such as affordable housing, medical and mental health care, and day-to-day living assistance. Under her leadership, the organization has grown through in-kind and monetary donations from a wide range of partners, translating generosity into tangible relief for those who have served the nation.

True to its name, WVFS reflects Chaplain Estrella's global vision. Her work extends beyond U.S. borders, notably to the Dominican Republic, where she encountered homeless veterans originally from New York who had fallen on hard times. Recognizing their need for healing and stability, she did not stop at advocacy—she designed and helped build a homeless veterans' shelter to code, working directly with the Veterans Administration to ensure proper care and oversight. Back home in New York, she expanded food programs for Bronx veterans at J.J. Peters Medical Center and answered calls for support wherever need arose. When a Veterans Closet was established inside Mt. Vernon City Hall, she arrived with a truckload of brand-new clothing, shoes, and personal care items, uplifting thousands of veterans and their families with dignity and respect.

Today, Chaplain Marisa Estrella stands as a living embodiment of peace in action. As an Ambassador for Peace, she serves humbly—often pushing past her own comfort to meet the needs of others with quiet strength and unwavering resolve. Through her presence, her leadership, and her tireless service, she reminds us that peace is built not only through words, but through consistent acts of care for those who have sacrificed so much.

Comments (0)

Newest First

[Post Comment...](#)

⟨ [Seeds of Peace in a Season of Hope](#)

[Religious Freedom Luncheon Strengthens Interfaith Ties](#) ›

Join our Newsletter

Sign up with your email address to receive news and updates.

Email Address



[Sign Up](#)

Universal Peace Federation USA
3600 New York Ave. NE, Washington
D.C., 20002
info@us.upf.org
(202) 636-3236



Seeds of Peace in a Season of Hope

On December 15, a warm spirit of fellowship, reflection, and shared commitment to peace filled the India International School in Chantilly, Virginia, as community leaders and guests gathered for the First Interfaith Program on Religious Freedom. Centered on the theme "World Peace Through Reconciliation: Religious Freedom," the event highlighted the vital role of dialogue, mutual respect, and unity in an increasingly divided world. The program was co-hosted by the India International School, Universal Peace Federation (UPF)–Virginia, and Pure Style, Inc., creating a welcoming environment for interfaith exchange and cultural appreciation.



Dr. William Selig of UPF–Virginia served as master of ceremonies and opened the program by noting the spiritual significance of December across many faith traditions. From Hanukkah and Bodhi Day to Christmas and Kwanzaa, he observed that this sacred season lifts up shared values of hope, renewal, community, and peace. The gathering began with an invocation by Minister Karen Fletcher of Bethlehem Baptist Church, followed by welcoming remarks from Mrs. Barbara Moseley Marks, Executive Director of UPF–Virginia. She reminded participants that religion exists to reconnect humanity to the Creator and to one another as one human family, affirming that lasting peace begins within the human heart.

The program featured thoughtful reflections from speakers representing diverse faith perspectives. Rev. Levy Daugherty spoke on integrity as a foundational principle for reconciliation, emphasizing that peace begins within individuals and extends outward to families and communities. Minister Karen Fletcher shared her personal faith journey and her work with at-risk youth, offering a heartfelt call for greater compassion, dignity, and hope for young people in today's challenging environment. Indira Kumar, co-founder of the India International School, presented a Hindu perspective on religious freedom, highlighting harmony with nature, personal responsibility, and reverence for the divine in all life. The presentations concluded with remarks by Rev. Claire Daugherty, who affirmed that shared moral values and integrity unite all religions and serve as essential building blocks for lasting peace.

Musical reflections added a joyful and uplifting dimension to the afternoon, reinforcing the spirit of unity and celebration. The program concluded with words of gratitude to the approximately 25 attendees, acknowledging their presence and commitment to interfaith cooperation. The gathering was both inspiring and hopeful—a meaningful step toward deeper collaboration and a powerful reminder that world peace is possible when people of faith walk together in mutual respect and understanding.

Comments (0)

Newest First

Where Values Meet
< Vision: Building Blocks
for Peace

Ambassador for Peace
Spotlight: Chaplain
Marisa Estrella >

Join our Newsletter

Sign up with your email address to receive news and updates.

Email Address



Sign Up

Universal Peace Federation USA
3600 New York Ave. NE, Washington
D.C., 20002
info@us.upf.org
(202) 636-3236



Where Values Meet Vision: Building Blocks for Peace

The Universal Peace Federation (UPF) and the *Peace Starts With Me* Alliance hosted an inspiring educational seminar on Saturday, December 6, 2025, at *The Washington Times* building in Washington, DC. Centered on the theme of God's ideal—original values, contemporary challenges, and human responsibility as the building blocks for peace, the seminar brought together 55 participants, including 25 Ambassadors for Peace, for a day of reflection, learning, and meaningful dialogue. The gathering reflected UPF's enduring mission to promote peace through moral leadership, strong families, and cooperation among people of faith and conscience.



The main presentation was delivered by Dr. Robert S. Kittel, a respected scholar and educator with nearly five decades of experience living and working in Asia. Drawing from his extensive research, publications, and firsthand experience, Dr. Kittel emphasized that peace at the national and global levels begins with the family. "Building families is building nations," he explained, outlining universal and unchanging principles that undergird healthy societies. His presentation explored the value of marriage and family, the origins of human suffering, and the vital role families play in nation-building and lasting peace. A lively question-and-answer session followed, allowing participants to engage deeply with the material and share thoughtful reflections.

Tomiko Duggan, Senior Vice President of UPF USA, offered warm welcoming remarks and outlined UPF's core values, rooted in the vision of its founders, Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon and Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon. She addressed the challenges facing today's world while affirming hope for the future through education, dialogue, and principled leadership. During the luncheon program, Kaeleigh Moffitt, Director of Public Affairs for FFWPU-USA and representative of the *Peace Starts With Me* Alliance, spoke on pressing concerns related to religious freedom in Korea, highlighting the importance of vigilance and advocacy in protecting fundamental human rights.

Adding a personal dimension to the program, Larry Moffitt, Secretary General of UPF USA, shared reflections from his own marriage and family life, illustrating how the principles discussed during the seminar can be lived and embodied in everyday life. His remarks resonated with many in attendance, reinforcing the seminar's message that peace begins at home and grows outward into society.

A highlight of the program was the appointment of new Ambassadors for Peace, including Rev. Dr. Yvonne Washington-Tray and Mr. Andrew Rozario Biraj of Bangladesh, along with his wife. This recognition affirmed their commitment to UPF's ideals and their dedication to advancing peace through service, leadership, and cooperation.

The seminar concluded with expressions of gratitude to the organizers, speakers, and volunteers whose dedication made the event a success. Participants departed encouraged and inspired, carrying forward a renewed sense of purpose and responsibility. The gathering served as a powerful reminder that peace is not merely an abstract ideal, but a living practice—nurtured through strong families, shared values, and the willingness to work together for the greater good.

Comments (0)

Newest First

[Post Comment...](#)

Seeds of Peace in a Season of Hope >

Join our Newsletter

Sign up with your email address to receive news and updates.

Universal Peace Federation USA
3600 New York Ave. NE, Washington
D.C., 20002
info@us.upf.org
(202) 636-3236

Email Address



[Sign Up](#)