

UPF USA held various programs to promote World Interfaith Harmony Week 2018

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United States -- In strong support to the work of the United Nations in promoting interfaith harmony and peacebuilding, local chapters of the Universal Peace Federation (UPF) USA held various programs to promote World Interfaith Harmony Week 2018 and its goals of peace, nonviolence, and religious harmony and cooperation. World Interfaith Harmony Week was first proposed at the UN General Assembly on September 23, 2010, by His Majesty King Abdullah II of Jordan, based on the pioneering work of the "Common Word" Initiative, encouraging faith leaders to engage in dialogue based on two common fundamental religious commandments: love of God and love of neighbor. It is commonly observed in the first week of February.

In **Salt Lake City**, UPF-Utah participated in the annual prayer breakfast of the Salt Lake Interfaith Roundtable (SLIR), which was held on February 1 at the Episcopal Cathedral of Saint Mark. The event opened a month-long series of interfaith programs in recognition of World Interfaith Harmony Week. Josie Stone, chair of the Roundtable, welcomed about fifty members and guests. Lacey Harris, a Northern Paiute tribe member and Roundtable board member, opened the meeting with a Native American Blessing. Wendy Stovall, secretary to the board of the Salt Lake Interfaith Roundtable and UPF-Utah executive director, invited representatives from the Catholic, Islamic, Jewish, Sikh, and Hindu faiths to read a passage from their Holy Scriptures. Ms. Stovall, a Unificationist, read Rev. Sun Myung Moon's words about peace. The guest speaker, Mr. Sim Gill, Salt Lake County district attorney, spoke of his upbringing as a Sikh in India and moving to Utah, where he participated in Latter Day Saints activities while growing up. His parents were the founders of the Sikh Temple in Salt Lake. The event concluded with the presentation of annual awards for service to the Roundtable and the community. A local online magazine *Deseret News* reported on the event.

In **Honolulu**, the UPF-Hawaii chapter hosted a program called "Ceremony of Religious Unity: We Are One" on February 2 at the Hawaiian Studies Department of the University of Hawaii, Manoa Campus. The program was cosponsored with the local chapter of the Collegiate Association for the Research of Principles (CARP). About fifty people attended the celebration. Various faiths were represented, including Baha'i (Ms. Heidi Gagnon and granddaughter), Buddhism (Mr. Tadao Saito), Christianity (Priest Loko'olu Quintero and Takaaki Ito), Islam (Imam Matiualla Joyia), Jainism (Mr. Pradahudra) and Judaism (Ms. Claire Yasutaki).

The program started with a Hawaiian chant/blessing invocation by a Hawaiian priest and his spouse. Dr. Jeffery Nakama, executive director of UPF-Hawaii and the host, welcomed the participants and offered an explanation and short video on the significance of the World Interfaith Harmony Week. Words of encouragement from the city mayor and a city councilwoman were read. A musical presentation and explanation of *Aloha* were offered by Leon Siu, an Ambassador for Peace and minister of foreign affairs for the Kingdom of Hawaii. This was followed by a reading of the UPF founder's message titled, "The

Responsibilities of Religious Leaders in Building a Culture of Peace," done by Reverend Ho, the local coordinator of the American Clergy Leadership Conference (ACLC) in Honolulu.

Rev. Kazuo Takami, district pastor of the Family Federation and special advisor to UPF-Hawaii, special advisor gave introduction to the Sacred Water Ceremony. He said that a Japanese researcher found that kind and loving words created beautiful crystals in frozen water. "We can all feel the significance of water and our relationship to it, as it is a symbol of life and we are surrounded by it here in Hawaii," he said. In the water ceremony, sanctified water was poured in cups and the faith representatives would come up one by one. They would then read a scripture (on love, unity or peace) and pray and then pour the water into a bowl. Dr. Nakama explained that the water would be later be poured around a peace pole on campus bearing the message "May Peace Prevail on Earth," written in four languages. Musician and singer Mrs. Donna Shaver concluded the ceremony with a brilliant rendition of the song "Let There Be Peace on Earth."

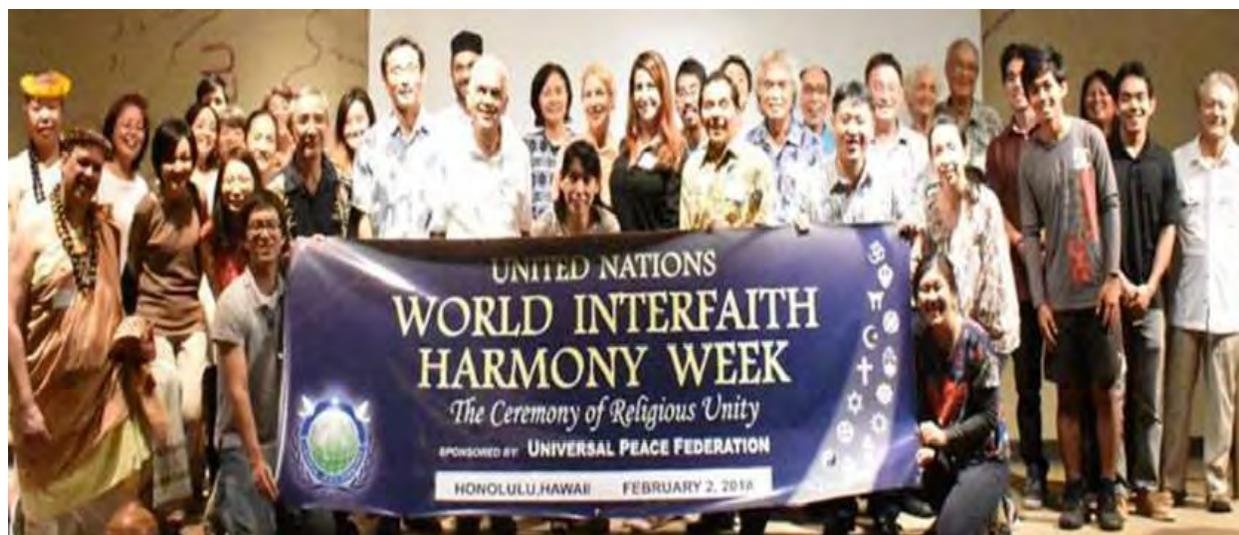


On February 3, UPF-Pennsylvania and UPF-New Jersey each held events. In **Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania**, Mr. Ray Lipowcan, UPF-Pennsylvania local coordinator, hosted a roundtable discussion on peace building at the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh. The topics of discussion included "What Role Does Interfaith Harmony Have in the Peace-Building Process?" and "How Can We Balance the Sacred and Secular Dimensions of Our Society?" Later, participants read from the Rev. Sun Myung Moon's autobiography, *As A Peace-Loving Global Citizen*. The program was supported by the local chapters of the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification and the Women's Federation for World Peace.



In **Elizabeth, New Jersey**, Emiljun Rapada, national director of Youth UPF-USA and UPF local coordinator, initiated an Interfaith and Intercultural Forum at the Elizabeth Family Church. The program was co-sponsored by the Association of Christian Evangelists (ACE) and the local chapter of the Family

Federation for World Peace and Unification. The theme of the forum was "Love of the Good and Love of the Neighbor." Rev. Dr. Gaudencio Soriano, the founder and titular bishop of ACE, gave remarks on the topic. He emphasized that no matter what religion we belong to, we are all children of God. Mr. Samie Mohammed, from the Nation of Islam, talked about the essence of Islam, which is peace. He also appreciated the opportunity of being invited to such an event where different faiths can come together and share beliefs. Rev. Georges Tegha, a staunch believer in the Ubuntu faith, shared the uniqueness of that tradition. He said, *Ubuntu* means humanity towards others. "We are all connected as one human family regardless of our differences," he added.



Darryl Franklin, a Unificationist pastor, discussed the two important commandments of Jesus Christ as revealed on the book of Luke 10:27: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind" and "Love your neighbor as yourself." He then testified to the work of UPF founders Rev. Sun Myung Moon and his wife, Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon. After cultural presentations from the Buddhist Thai community and an African group, Ricardo de Sena, president of UPF-USA shared to the more than thirty attendees about the "Five Principles of Peace." Together with Mr. Rapada, he appointed four new Ambassadors for Peace, namely Rev. Rodolfo Casuga of ACE; Wilfredo Macaraeg, former mayor and prosecutor; Mr. Samie Mohammed of the Nation of Islam; and Mr. Jacob Smith, founder and CEO of Common Sensibly. To conclude the program, five representatives from Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Unificationism, and African traditional religion were requested to join the Sacred Water Ceremony. Each of the representatives held a jar of water and then slowly poured it into a common bowl, symbolizing unity and harmony. Each faith, though diverse, is equal in the eyes of God, the creator explained the host.



On February 7, members of UPF-New Mexico participated in a World Interfaith Harmony Week celebration at the Baha'i Center in **Albuquerque**, dubbed as "Prayers for Peace and Conversations of Friendships." Around thirty-five people attended the program, which included videos, prayers and fellowship. Several religious groups were represented: Baha'is, Quakers, Buddhists, Catholics, Muslims, and Unificationists, among others. All came together in a shared desire to promote peace through interreligious harmony. The heart of the program took place in the chapel, where attendees were invited to share prayers. Prayers of many faiths were given, mostly read from sacred scriptures. Fritz Schneider, one of the three Unificationists present, gave a heartfelt spontaneous prayer. Dale Garratt, executive director of UPF-New Mexico, spoke about the beautiful unity in the 2018 Olympics, emphasizing that athletes

from North and South Korea would march together under one flag. He gave a short prayer in Korean and sang "Hollo Arirang," which says, in part: "The way is difficult, but it may become easier. Let's walk together hand in hand." Albuquerque Mayor Tim Keller through an executive order proclaimed that February 1 is the official "World Interfaith Harmony Week" in the City of Albuquerque.

Washington, DC: The Universal Peace Federation-USA's Washington, DC, Office held its annual World Interfaith Harmony Week program on February 8, 2018, with cosponsor Cece Cole, president of *Silke Endress* magazine.

The Beech Room at the *Washington Times* offered a tasty lunch before Master of Ceremonies Zagery Oliver greeted the guests. Rev. Janelle Johnson, vice chairman of the Human Rights Commission for Prince Georges County, Maryland, offered a prayer to begin the program.

Mrs. Tomiko Duggan, director of the UPF-USA Washington office, spoke on the current state of international unrest, highlighting the work of UPF's founders, Dr. Sun Myung Moon and Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon. "Nothing replaces understanding," she said.

The first speaker on the program was Rev. Joseph P. Deck, III, who directs the Institute of Radical Reconciliation at Reid Temple AME Church in Glenn Dale, Maryland. Reverend Deck told of the woman who wanted Christ to heal her daughter, Jesus told her he didn't come for her, but she persisted, saying, "Even dogs eat the crumbs off the table." He told the group, "We all need to be persistent. We need to persist to come together beyond religions, crossing the threshold of division."

Imam Qari Safiullah Shirzadi, an Islamic teacher from Afghanistan who helps new immigrants at the Mustapha Center in Maryland, noted that around the world people are losing their family members due to war and struggle. "God Almighty, created and sent us to do as He said," he offered. "The best things for us to create peace are to do as God instructs us, not for any personal credit, position or advantage. He ended with prayerful words, "Lord, you are peace, make us live in peace."

Rabbi Matthew Goldberg sang a song from Psalm 133. His presentation focused on song, teaching the participants how music enriches the religious and interfaith experience.

Leader of the Washington Buddhist Vihara Meditation Center, Bhante Mandawala Pannawahsa, said, "There is inner peace and outer peace; all is a problem of the ego. Inferiority and superiority is a complex problem; equality is free of judgement Hatred is only appeased by love, not by hatred being returned." He guided the audience in a simple meditation: "I'm breathing in, I'm breathing out. I am in the here and now, I know I am." He reminded everyone that all spiritual teachers are familiar with meditation, including Jesus and Mohammad.

Dr. Edwin Hostetter, a professor of interfaith studies at George Washington University, spoke next. He highlighted three interfaith endeavors: the Global United Religions Initiative, the Faith Community Advisory Council of Montgomery County, Maryland, and the The Guru Goband Singh Foundation in Rockville, Maryland.

Tom McDevitt, chairman of the Washington Times Foundation and UPF-USA, told the audience, "God has created a time for humans to work together. People of all faiths, all beliefs, need to come together now. We are a universal race." He then gave an overview of the work of UPF, introducing Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon's recent efforts in creating the Interreligious Association for Peace and Development and the 2018 African Summit in Senegal. He especially noted her moving prayer for liberation at Goree Island, the last doorway from Africa for over two million slaves.

Ambassador for Peace appointments were given to Reverend Deck and Bhante Mandawala Pannawahsa by Mr. McDevitt and Susan Fefferman. This was followed by a toast to peace.