

UPF Frankfurt, Germany's Interfaith and Intercultural New Year Celebration

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Frankfurt, Germany -- Pastors and representatives of various religions and cultures attended a UPF celebration of the Lunar New Year.

The reception was held on January 25, 2020, under the theme "God at the Center of the World Family."

Refreshments and a warm welcome greeted the guests and UPF members -- among whom were Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, a Sikh and several members of the Family Federation -- when they arrived in the late morning at UPF offices in the city's Sachsenhausen district.

The celebration began with an explanation by Je-Hun Yoo, elected representative of the Association of Koreans in Europe (650,000 Koreans living in 28 countries), about the family traditions in his homeland at the start of the year. He pointed out that with this year of the "white mouse" (or "metal rat"), according to the Chinese horoscope, a completely new cycle begins, bringing with it strong, winning energy for a new beginning.

Under the motto "When connections are emphasized, separation loses its meaning," all were happy to join in unison singing of some well-known religious songs, and the young singer Gabriele expressed emotions to move the heart with Musical Evergreens.

In his celebratory address, UPF-Frankfurt leader Claus Dubisz invited us to dedicate the first day of the year to our Creator. "He created our ancestors as man and woman; and because He Himself has masculine and feminine qualities, God is our Heavenly Parents. What causes the greatest pain to Him, as Parents, are wars and disunity among his children."

Mr. Dubisz then read an excerpt from *As a Peace-Loving Global Citizen*, the autobiography of UPF co-founder Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon, whose 100th birthday is being celebrated this year: "In many and varied peace initiatives the emphasis is always on dialogue and understanding between religions and cultures." As a moving example of this attitude to love all humankind, regardless of mindset or intent, he cited Reverend Moon's surprise visit in 1991 to his birth country of North Korea, where he embraced as a brother his former enemy, North Korean leader Kim Il Sung, with no trace of hatred or revenge.

A short video showed excerpts from rallies featuring Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, who since the death of her husband has continued the work they started together. Known by many affectionately as "Mother of Peace," she called upon her audiences, as well as believers the world over, to understand the essence of our Creator and to solve the pressing problems of the world centered on Him.

In this spirit, the New Year celebration became a Marriage Blessing Ceremony in the tradition established by Rev. and Mrs. Moon, starting with their own marriage 60 years ago.

The moderators of the program, the young married couple Mickey from the United States and Nicole from Germany, introduced themselves as an example of an International Marriage Blessing, as their own parents come from New Zealand, Austria and Korea.

Mickey told us how his parents' promise to be faithful saved their marriage in a time of crisis. He said: "In that we not only promise each other, but also God, to build our marriage with true love, to raise responsible children, and to live for the sake of others beyond our own family, we are working with Him to fulfill God's dream. In this way, we finally can realize an ideal world in which we all can live happily together."



Albert Mobo from Cameroon and his wife, Gudrun, from Germany guided the participants through a small Marriage Blessing ceremony. Those who currently did not have a partner were invited to think in the spirit of a future (or deceased) partner, since, as Mr. Mobo said, "Nobody is alone in this world."

The official program was brought to a close with a musical performance and the cutting of a three-tier cake. Then everyone sang and danced to a video of the gospel song "Every Praise" and the Korean song of unity called "Tongil."

As the afternoon drew to a close, there was a feeling of joy about the unity experienced between people of different cultures and a desire to carry this awareness into society and thus to positively shape the "still unknown year," as one says in Korea.

We lingered for a long time together, sharing a bountiful and very tasty Korean meal, getting to know each other better and forging plans for the new year.

Translated from German by Catriona Valenta.