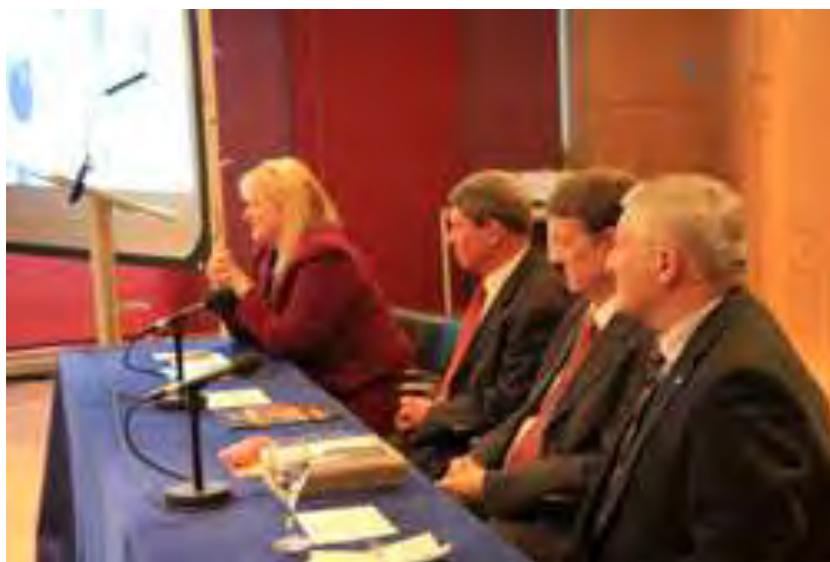


The Way to Permanent Peace

Hamish Robertson
September 21, 2012
Meeting in the Scottish Parliament



This was a historic occasion, the first meeting of the Universal Peace Federation (UPF) in the Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh. It was also poignant for the fact that Father Moon, founder of the UPF, had passed away just nine days before.

Christina McKelvie, member of the Scottish Parliament (MSP) for Lanark and convener of the European and External Relations Committee, extended a warm welcome to the gathering, which numbered about seventy. She quoted from the UPF mission statement, recognising the importance of UPF's work in healing community divisions. She has recently returned from a visit to Montenegro in the Balkans. She also concurred with the idea of a renewal of United Nations, and with emphasising the concept of family and sports in raising society. She expressed her condolences on the recent passing of Father Moon and gave a brief review of his life, from his birth in Korea 1920 to his mission in America and the world. She finally quoted from the words of Mahatma Gandhi, "When the power of love overcomes the love of power, the world will know peace".



Hamish Robertson, representing UPF-Scotland, then gave a brief appraisal of Father Moon's concepts of family and society based on the fundamental relationships of parent-child and husband-wife deriving from God's love. True love is unselfish and serving. Father Moon created a multitude of organizations and companies with the purpose of serving the world. He opposed the Japanese occupation of Korea during his youth, but was the first to forgive the enemy in their defeat. He was the most determined opponent of communism in its heyday, but embraced Mikhail Gorbachev in 1990 as the Soviet Union crumbled. In 1992 he even met Kim Il Sung, the North Korean dictator ultimately responsible for torturing him and sending him to death-camp in the 1940's. He forgave Kim Il Sung wholeheartedly. Last year Father Moon flew to Abuja, capital of Nigeria, to meet President Goodluck Jonathan, who attended a UPF conference dedicated to peace in Africa. Finally, Father Moon encouraged women in every country to enter parliament and give their own special impetus to the peace process.

John Finnie, former police officer, MSP for the Highlands and Islands and convener of the cross-party group on Human Rights, started his talk with a few words of welcome in Gaelic, the ancient language of Scotland. He applauded the concept of Ambassadors for Peace in a world where politics tend to concentrate on differences and lead to unpleasant rivalry. He was happy that it had been United Nations forces which had liberated Father Moon from prison camp. These days United Nations have abdicated much of that power to NATO, which represents a group of nations, but cannot fulfil the role of UN. There is a need for “honest brokers” to overcome divisions between nations and communities. An Arms Trade Treaty is necessary to curb the international traffic in arms. A colossal amount of expenditure has been wasted on NATO interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan. The resources could have been applied much more usefully to peaceful purposes.

David Fraser Harris, representing UPF in the Middle East, where he has spent the last fourteen years, spoke afterwards. Pointing to the connection between the UN’s theme of sustainable peace and our event’s title, he read excerpts from statements by Secretary General Ban Ki Moon and from UPF’s statement on the International Day of Peace. After pointing out that UPF had been founded exactly seven years ago, 12th September, 2005, he traced some of its earlier roots, both in the field of interfaith and in the region of the Middle East. These ranged from Father Moon’s 1965 visit blessing places of prayer in Jerusalem and Mount Nebo as well as other cities in the region, to the creation of the Middle East Times and the urgent gathering of religious leaders in Cairo at the outbreak of the first Gulf War. David included anecdotes from UPF youth projects in Jordan and Lebanon, where young Muslims and Christians, gathered for service projects or football contests, went beyond that invisible barrier to discover the goodness in each other’s lifestyle and beliefs. He spoke of the Middle East Peace Initiative (MEPI), which has arranged numerous interfaith pilgrimages to Israel and Palestine over the last nine years, where Jews, Christians and Muslims have honoured the founders, prophets and saints of each others’ religions.

Following the talks, questions were put by the audience to the panel of four speakers. Then there were discussions over tea and coffee. Christina McKelvie MSP, the parliamentary sponsor for the conference, and John Finnie MSP stayed throughout. The Scottish Parliament is a young institution, occupying a new building at the foot of Arthur’s Seat, the mountain near the centre of Edinburgh. The feeling is one of freshness, openness and innovation. A book of condolences for Father Moon’s passing was available for signing. We hope his spirit continues to guide us all in the way of universal peace.

12th September 2012 (in commemoration of the International Day of Peace)