

Nigerian Clergy Focus on Faith, Family and Finance

Raphael Ogar Oko
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Christian clergy who participated in the 2014 International Day of Peace commemoration organized by the Universal Peace Federation-Nigeria met again to deliberate on the issues of faith, family and finance.

The November 27, 2014 meeting, a joint initiative of the African Clergy Leadership Conference and UPF-Nigeria, was held at the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification worship center in the city of Mararaba in Nasarawa State.



The meeting included words of appreciation for Christian leaders who had organized activities in their churches to mark the UN International Day of Peace on September 21, 2014.

Dr. George Ikpot, director of the UPF-Nigeria office of international affairs, delivered a brief welcome address to the participants from over 30 churches in Nyanya, Jikwoyi, Mararaba, Gwarinpa and Masaka, among others. "You are the few chosen clergy among the many that were called. We are delighted by

your reports, and we are hopeful that we can work together to make every day a day of peace in our families and churches,” Dr. Ikpot said.



Rev. Sunday N. Uke, founder of the African Clergy Leadership Conference and director of the UPF-Nigeria office of interreligious affairs, praised the pastors for their commitment and determination while urging them to unite to become a powerful force for peace in Nigeria.

Rev. Uke emphasized the need for members of the African Clergy Leadership Conference to work cooperatively with UPF Ambassadors for Peace. He endorsed the new Clergy for Peace Initiative by which members of the clergy work as peace builders in their church and community.



Referring to the theme of the 2014 International Day of Peace, Rev. Uke urged the pastors to help realize “the right of peoples to peace.” He read the UPF International statement on the International Day of Peace 2014, emphasizing its key points on individual responsibility, marriage and family, interfaith cooperation and soft-power approaches to peace.

Dr. Raphael Ogar Oko, UPF-Nigeria secretary general, introduced the Universal Peace Federation and the Clergy for Peace Initiative. He invited the participants to work with UPF to address the challenges confronting Christianity in Nigeria.



Dr. Oko's presentation focused on the issues of faith, family and finance. On the issue of faith, he encouraged the participants to support ongoing efforts toward interfaith cooperation in Nigeria. "No group of people can prosper positively without building a strong faith tradition as well as becoming a united people. ... I urge you to come together as people of faith and work beyond your denominations," Dr. Oko said.

On the issue of family, UPF efforts to build a new Nigeria where all citizens become members of one family under God were described. The offer to the Karshi Area Development Council of special technical assistance to marriage registry services was applauded as an opportunity to work with the government to strengthen marriages and build peaceful families. The pastors pledged to attend a national unification summit and couples assembly on December 12 with their spouses and to mobilize their married church members for a marriage rededication ceremony scheduled for March 2015.

One of the pastors testified about the positive impact that participating in the 2013 marriage rededication ceremony had brought to his marriage and family. "Now I love my wife more than I ever did in the past. I think of my wife more than myself. I realized that my wife is a great asset and no longer a liability, as I used to understand it," he said. "Our marriage is no longer 'until death do us part.' We have resolved to become an eternal couple and will take our marriage beyond death." He called on others to begin to prepare for the March 2015 marriage rededication ceremony.

On the issue of finance, the religious leaders deliberated on their potential to create wealth and called for soft-power approaches to ending corruption. Instead of focusing only on arresting and imprisoning corrupt persons, public policies and programs that encourage corruption also should be addressed, they said. They agreed to introduce monthly "offerings for peace" in their churches in which church members make a special offering to support peace programs organized by the churches together with UPF-Nigeria.

In the closing session the pastors were presented certificates as Ambassadors for Peace. They resolved to create peace committees in their churches and peace councils in their communities as structures for the realization of the "right of peoples to peace."

A special presentation on renewable energy was made by a representative of a company working in Abuja on ensuring "light for all Nigerians." The meeting ended with a group photograph and a closing benediction by one of the Christian leaders.