

## UPF Banquet Celebrates New Ambassadors for Peace

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The New Jersey chapter of Universal Peace Federation (UPF) held a dinner banquet for its Ambassadors for Peace with the theme “Peace Building and Human Development: Beyond the United Nations.”

More than 100 participants, including nine newly appointed Ambassadors for Peace, attended the January 31, 2016, event at the Clifton Family Church (FFWPU). As they enjoyed a sumptuous meal, the program opened with an interfaith prayer offered by Rev. Reuben Rodriguez representing Christianity, Guru Dileepji representing the World Yoga Community, Dr. Dawud Azad representing Islam, Grandmother Lygia De Castro representing Native American beliefs, and Rev. Gregorio Agulan representing Unificationism.



Dr. Thomas Walsh, the president of UPF International, was the keynote speaker. He briefly introduced the work of UPF centering on its vision and mission. He described some key programs that will be held soon, such as the International Leadership Conference in Korea from February 12 to 16. And he

encouraged the current and new Ambassadors for Peace to actively participate and become agents of a peaceful and harmonious world through local involvement.

Hon. James Anzaldi, the mayor of Clifton, and Hon. Joseph Makhandal Champagne, an Ambassador for Peace and former mayor of South Toms River, New Jersey, also attended the program. In their congratulatory remarks both mentioned that despite humanity's diversities and differences, there is a powerful Being on whom we can depend and center our lives.

The evening featured three presentations: "Principles of Peace" by Rev. Richard de Sena, the president of UPF USA; "Peace Building Activities in Central Africa" by Rev. Ralph Oppenheimer, adviser to UPF Central Africa; and "Principles of Peace in Action" by Rev. Manoj Jacob, director of UPF New Jersey.

International culture enlivened the entertainment part of the evening, including an Indian classical dance (*Bharatha Natyam*) performed by Ms. Asha Kurian and a line dance performed by Ms. Elena Bahian and Ms. Christine Rapada of the Filipino International Community of America (FICA). Then a heart-pumping martial arts demonstration was given by practitioners of World Tong-Il Moo-Do Federation USA and the Unified Martial Arts School of New Jersey led by Master Shota Iwasaki and Master Ryan Abenir, respectively.

In the end, each Ambassador for Peace was encouraged to work to develop UPF in one of five areas of work: Civic Involvement; Interfaith Peacebuilding; Peace Education; Marriage and Family; and Youth and Service. They also were encouraged to become paid members of the state chapter.

Furthermore, a monthly Peace Forum will be organized to provide more opportunities for Ambassadors for Peace to interact and act upon the goal of establishing a local Peace Council.

UPF New Jersey would like to recognize and thank all those who supported and organized the banquet, especially the members of FFWPU New Jersey; Rev. Merlyn Velasco-Loja, who gave the vote of thanks; and Mr. Emiljun Rapada of UPF USA, who served as master of ceremonies.

