

UPF Hawaii's 3rd Annual World Interfaith Harmony Week at University of Hawaii

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The Universal Peace Federation (UPF) Hawaii hosts its 3rd Annual World Interfaith Harmony Week event at the University of Hawaii (UH) Kamakakuokalani Center for Hawaiian Studies on the 26th of February where about 60 people attended the event.

Hawaiian Kahu (priest) Loko'olu Quintero and three members of his Hawai'i Nei Church opened the ceremony with several loud blasts of a sea shell and a welcoming chant. Dr. Jeff Nakama, Executive Director for UPF-Hawaii, who was the host of the event welcomed all guests, participants, and Family Federation members. He then urged everyone to take a couple of minutes to greet their neighbors and find out what religion and background they came from. The quiet sound of an empty auditorium soon erupted with the energetic sounds of loud and enthusiastic greetings. The opening chant and the guest greeting each other really opened the hearts of everyone present and set the tone for the evening.



Dr. Thomas Lynch of the Interfaith Academy offered grace for the dinner. As dinner was winding down co-sponsors to the event like CARP, FFWPU and UH Center for Hawaiian Studies were acknowledged.

UH students Sejoon Nakama and Yongqi Lin read commendations from the Governor of Hawaii and Mayor of Honolulu respectively. Rev. Sage Chee, from the Ohana Family of the Living God, gave a couple of beautiful songs that lifted the already electric atmosphere and testified about Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon's event in New Jersey and the idea that "peace starts with me."

This was followed by a short but recent video clip of summit 2020 showing the recent developments of UPF, especially the IAPD which was most relevant to our interfaith event, the IAPP and their important combined role in sustaining peace. The video clip included the profound words of Father and Mother Moon.

Rev. Ernie Ho of the American Clergy Leadership Conference (ACLC) gave an exciting introduction to the water ceremony. However, before the actual ceremony the UPF video, World Interfaith Harmony Week, was played.



The host explained that the water being used for the ceremony was brought by the Hawaiian priest and is the rainwater that have fallen unto the leaves and was gathered into his gourd. This pure water has not yet touched the earth. He later instructed that the faith representatives would come on stage in alphabetical order of faith. They would be given a cup of water and they would read a minute of prepared text from their sacred writings or pray and then pour the water into a large crystal bowl.



They were 8 major world religions represented along with 2 other faiths: Bahai, Buddhism, Christianity, Hawaiian Religion (state Christian hybrid), Islam, Jainism, Judaism, Sikhism, Shintoism and Unificationism (worldwide Christian denomination). The Hindu representative had a family emergency to attend, so the Hindu religion was not represented. Both the Bahai and the Hawaiian religion had young participants so they could also represent the unity of world religions to the next generation.

It was inspiring and uplifting to see and feel the sacred ceremony. Most participants wore some elements of their traditional clothes, but the Buddhist, Hawaiian, and Shinto representatives came with full-blown

ceremonial garb. The variety of religious scriptures and clothes combined with the different cultures with the symbolism of the world religions harmonizing into oneness with the mixing of the water was a beautiful sight to behold.



After the final representative had finished pouring the water into the bowl and while they were still on stage the host urged all the participants and audience to pray out loud or in silence for world peace for a minute. This concluded the "We Are One Water Ceremony" part of the program. He later explained that the mixed sacred water would be divided into 3 parts and given to 3 representatives. The Hawaiian priest would pray and pour the sacred water on a mountain, Dr. Lynch would pour the water in the ocean and Dr. Nakama would pour the water around 2 peace poles at the University of Hawaii. Therefore, a condition was made to spread interreligious harmony on mountain, land, and ocean on Oahu and throughout the Pacific Rim Region.

While the participants were still on stage a table and resolution were brought out. Signing a World Harmony Resolution was the brainchild of Keiko Nakama and Rev. Takami and Rev. James Mitchell worded it. The MC read the resolution and then urged all the participants and religious leaders to sign it and the rest of the participants signed as well.

Finally, after a group photo, everyone came off stage, and formed a circle while Rev. Chee led the closing song "Let There Be Peace On Earth." Suddenly, one of the members of The Hawaiian Church of Hawai'i Nei began an impromptu hula of the song. It caught the audience by surprise but they all loved it. The host thanked everyone for their attendance and active participation and gave some final words of encouragement.

