

UPF Helped Organize UN World Interfaith Harmony Week in the Czech Republic

Juraj Lajda
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Prague, Czech Republic -- UPF, in cooperation with the Christian Community, organized an interfaith gathering on the occasion of World Interfaith Harmony Week.

The February 6, 2018, event was the fifth celebration of the UN-designated week by UPF and the Christian Community in as many years.

Representatives of Judaism, Christianity, Islam and Hinduism, together with about 50 people in the audience, gathered in the Prague headquarters of the Christian Community to celebrate this day and contribute thus to world peace. The motto of the meeting was "God and Religion in Our Everyday Life."

Dr. Juraj Lajda, president of UPF-Czech Republic, opened the meeting by describing the previous four gatherings. In his short speech he spoke about the purpose of religion as a way to come back to God.



People of all religions should respect each other, Dr. Lajda said. On the one hand, we have the vertical dimension of religion, which relates to one's own relationship to God, the Almighty and Absolute Being. On the other hand, there is a horizontal dimension, which means mutual relations among different religions. Interreligious dialogue is not a form of evangelism, he said. In the global era we have to deal with many different religions. The era of one exclusive religion is over, he said. What matters most is to understand God's will and true love, Dr. Lajda concluded.

Rev. Tomáš Boněk, the pastor of the Christian Community, the hosting organization, emphasized the need for interfaith meetings. The prerequisite for interfaith dialogue, he said, is mutual respect and the will to meet people outside one's own denomination or religion.

Then Rev. Boněk explained the format of the meeting. This year we decided to split into five groups of seven or eight participants to discuss this year's motto. Each group was coordinated by the leader of a religious community. In each group there were representatives of different faiths. Thus the members of each group could explain their viewpoints on God and their personal life of faith.

Afterward we had a musical performance. Young musicians from the local branch of Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU), an organization affiliated with UPF, played two pieces of classical music. Then young people from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints sang two songs.

In conclusion we heard short reports from the discussion groups. These were the main points:

- A prayer with a sincere heart and gratitude, focused on the Word, is very important.
- The family is the basic unit of society.
- The established religions are ancient, and the question is how to practice our life of faith in a modern society.
- The denominations are not so important, but what matters is how God's revelation is interpreted.
- We should not judge a religion according to particular people.
- If we want to change the society, it is not enough to give just a good example. We also must be more active in the civil society.
- The role of the arts is important.

This year's meeting was very successful because most of the participants and religious leaders expressed the will to meet again and more often. We are planning to hold more meetings in the coming months, focused on the World Scripture.

