

## UPF Central America and the Caribbean Hosts Featuring IAPD and WCLC

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Central America and the Caribbean -- The Interreligious Association for Peace and Development (IAPD) and the World Christian Leadership Conference (WCLC) conducted a webinar on the 19th December 2020 on the theme "The Responsibility of Religious Leaders for the Construction of a Heavenly Unified World of Peace."

Mr. Remy Taupier (Secretary General, UPF-Caribbean) served as emcee and introduced the panelists. IAPD is a project of UPF, he explained, working to build peace based on the vision and leadership of Dr. Hak-Ja Han Moon, who continues the successful interfaith work that she has been doing for decades with her late husband, the Reverend Sun Myung Moon. Religious leaders from all over the world are coming together through mutual respect, appreciation and cooperation, he said, and they are working to build one human family under God's love.



Dr. Charles Yang (Chair, UPF-Central America and the Caribbean; Founder, American Christian Leadership Conference) was the first panelist. He has been working directly with Reverend and Dr. Moon for various peace projects, including the Middle East Peace Initiative (MEPI), in which religious and political leaders of Christian, Muslim and Jewish faiths learned to work together for peace with mutual respect and co-operation.

There are still many conflicts between religions -- even in Christianity, which believes in the same Jesus and the same God. Racial and religious conflicts are the most serious. God called religious leaders to be

like prophets in each nation. Political leaders should listen to the spiritual leaders' guidance, and religious leaders should show an example of unity, love and compassion for the people of their nation. In this sense, we have to speak out for righteousness to protect human rights and realize justice in our society, our nations and the world.

Father Albert Smith (Priest, Soufriere Parish, St. Lucia).



We as Christian leaders have the responsibility to engender and foster peace on earth and good will to all people, as Jesus asked us to do. There must be mutual respect, no matter who we are and no matter what our religious beliefs. We cannot share what we do not have. Peace must reign in our hearts; this challenges us to look at ourselves. I really hope and pray that this work will continue and that we will be able to participate to lend our shoulders to the wheel and get our hands dirty to make peace a reality.

Dr. Michael Jenkins (President, UPF International, UPF-North America, and American Christian Leadership Conference) gave a PowerPoint presentation about the development of the American Christian Leadership Conference (ACLC) and the WCLC, which focus on building a unity of heart among Christian leaders transcending differences of theology, worship and practice.

We have to bring the love of Jesus to everybody. During the MEPI, we brought Christian pastors to the Middle East and let them dialogue with imams and rabbis. When we really love each other, bringing Jesus' love, there are no more boundaries. Jesus said: "In my Father's house, there are many mansions." That means everybody has a place in it if we turn towards Him. This is the purpose of the WCLC.

Pastor Mauricio Quintero (Pastor, Lion of Judah House of Worship, El Salvador):

Our role and mission as religious leaders are to be ambassadors of the highest level (2 Cor 5:18–20). We have to prepare and instruct everyone in the way of life and truth. Reverend Moon said that at their core, all religions seek for a peaceful life of loving and caring for others.

Major Darrell Wilkinson (Director, Salvation Army, Barbados) reminded us of the value of "talking to our enemies, and not just our friends" to promote peace:

Though many conflicts are caused by various religious groups around the world, religious leaders themselves are also to be part of the solution to bring about peace. Therefore, we must let God transform our lives and cultivate peace inside of ourselves so we can offer others the peace that all human beings desire.

Major Wilkinson shared that religious leaders should reject negatively aggressive radical ideologies that promote violence and extremism. He expressed the importance of constant education to bring about harmony among peoples of all faiths.

Thank you very much to all the panelists for their honest contributions to this important reflection.