

UPF Tokyo, Japan's 113th Inter-Religious Forum honors Interfaith Harmony Week

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February 12, 2021



Tokyo, Japan—World Interfaith Harmony Week 2021 was commemorated in Japan at the 113th Inter-Religious Forum, hosted virtually by chapters of UPF-Japan and the Interreligious Association for Peace and Development (IAPD) on February 12. Approximately 80 people, including religious leaders representing Shintoism, Buddhism and Christianity, as well as Ambassadors for Peace participated in the online event.

Following the welcome message, given by Shinto priest and IAPD-Japan Vice President Taishu Nara, "peace prayers" were offered. The first prayer was given by Mr. Humayun Mughal, representing Islam. This was followed by prayers offered by representatives from Buddhism, Shintoism and Christianity. The "UPF Founder's Prayer" concluded the prayers.



UPF-Japan Secretary-General Mr. Shunsuke Uotani gave a presentation on the "History of UPF and the Inter-Religious Peace Movement" in which he spoke about the significance of World Interfaith Harmony Week and UPF's interreligious initiatives.

Mr. Uotani also introduced the history of the inter-religious movement led by UPF co-founder the late Rev. Sun Myung Moon prior to the establishment of UPF. After the establishment of the "Interreligious and International Federation for World Peace" (IIFWP), the predecessor organization of UPF, Rev. Moon made a proposal at the Assembly 2000, hosted by IIFWP at the UN

headquarters in New York, to create an Interreligious Council consisting of world religious leaders as an Upper House of the United Nations.

Mr. Uotani pointed out the contradiction and challenge that the UN is an international peace organization driven by non-religious ideologies, even though 80 percent of the world's population believes in some form of religion. The vision to create an Interreligious Council advocated by Rev. Moon was later manifested in 2006, when the UN General Assembly unanimously adopted a resolution, submitted by the Philippines in cooperation with 48 countries, to establish an organization within the UN system to coordinate global interreligious, intercultural and intercivilizational dialogue.

After the presentation, IAPD-Japan coordinator, Mr. Shinobu Ishimaru, reported on the numerous projects that have been carried out in the past 10 years through the Inter-Religious Forum and in 2020 by the IAPD-Japan to commemorate World Interfaith Harmony Week.

Following the report, chapters across the nation presented a report of their activities. In particular, the

chief priest of Choukouan, Wako Higashi spoke about his activities in Hiroshima. He noted that the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons was ratified on January 22, which was a meaningful and inspiring occasion for religious people in the Hiroshima area. He also shared that a new peace project is being developed in observance of "Atomic Bomb Day," which takes place every year on August 6. The project endeavors to annually collect water from the 86 countries that have signed the treaty and offer it at the monument as a symbol of peace on the day.



IAPD-Japan chairman, Mr. Yoshio Kawakami, shared his thoughts on interreligious cooperation, pointing out that while there may be uneasy relations between different religions from time to time, occasions such as this event give us an opportunity to look at ourselves. Mr. Kawakami also reaffirmed his great respect for Rev. Moon and his vision and efforts to raise mutual respect among various religions.

He also quoted Victor Hugo, saying "love is action," and emphasized that the offering of prayers is a form of action. Prayer is a time to praise and express gratitude to God before making wishes. After wishing, action must take place. These actions may even inspire God to grace the

world. Mr. Kawakami concluded his remarks by encouraging all the participants to act.

The forum closed with a reading of the keynote speech Rev. Moon gave at the founding of UPF. ("The True Owners in Establishing the Kingdom of Peace and Unity in Heaven and On Earth," Vol.1, April 10, 2006.)

