

UPF and CARP Hawaii Hold World Interfaith Week Water Ceremony

Jeff Nakama
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In support of World Interfaith Harmony Week, the Hawaiian chapters of Universal Peace Federation (UPF) and Collegiate Association for the Research of Principles (CARP) held a special event titled "The Ceremony of Religious Unity: We Are One."

About 50 participants attended, representing the Bahá'í Faith, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Jainism and Judaism. Several of them had never attended any of our past events.

The program was held at the Hawaiian Studies Department of the University of Hawaii at Manoa, a neighborhood of Honolulu, on February 2, 2018.

The program started with a Hawaiian blessing chanted by Kahu Pohaleo Loko'olu Quintero (Hawaiian Church of Hawai'i Nei) and his wife. The emcee, Dr. Jeff Nakama of UPF-Hawaii, offered a warm welcome and explained the significance of the water ceremony with a short video on World Interfaith Harmony Week. Words of encouragement from Honolulu Mayor Kirk Cardwell and City Councilwoman Ann Kobayashi were presented.

Leon Siu, a prominent Ambassador for Peace, gave a musical performance. He also explained the meaning of aloha, which means more than hello and goodbye. The word, he said, conveys love, peace, and compassion.

Excerpts from "The Responsibilities of Religious Leaders in Building a Culture of Peace" -- a speech given by Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon on November 15, 1985, at the Assembly of World Religions -- were read by Rev. Ernie Ho, the American Clergy Leadership Conference (ACLC) leader in Honolulu.

Rev. Kazuo Takami, the district pastor for Hawaii and special advisor to UPF-Hawaii, gave a brief and entertaining introduction to the water ceremony. He showed through some testing by a Japanese researcher that kind and loving words influenced water before and after freezing (beautiful crystals) as compared to hateful and insulting words (ugly crystals). We could all feel the significance of water and our relationship to it, as it is a symbol of life and we are surrounded by it here in Hawaii.

In the water ceremony, each representative of the various faith traditions came up to the center of the stage one by one. They prayed or read their scripture on love, unity or peace, and then each poured a glass of water into one big bowl. Dr. Nakama explained that the water later would be taken to a spot on the University of Hawaii campus and poured around a peace pole.

Musician and singer Mrs. Donna Shaver concluded the ceremony with a brilliant performance of the song Let There Be Peace on Earth.

Finally, we all had a wonderful dinner and fellowship together. We made new friends and contacts and reconnected with longtime friends. We also found a good venue for future events at a minimum cost. Better preparation, advertising, outreach and involvement could ensure greater success in the future. However, this is a good start for developing and laying a greater interfaith and church foundation for the future.

Contributed by Dr. Jeff Nakama (UPF-Hawaii)