

UPF and IAPD Prague, Czech Republic Observes Interfaith Harmony Week

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Prague, Czech Republic -- Together with the Christian Community in Prague, UPF and its Interreligious Association for Peace and Development (IAPD) commemorated the United Nations' World Interfaith Harmony Week.

The meeting of several religious leaders took place in the church of the Christian Community on February 2, 2023.

The motto of the gathering was Swiss theologian Hans Küng's statement: "If there is no peace among religions, there can be no peace in the world. In order to have peace among religions, an interreligious dialogue and religious freedom are necessary."



Rev. Tomáš Boněk, pastor of the Christian Community, spoke about the diversity of religions. In spite of many differences we should be tolerant toward each other and avoid violence, he emphasized. We should look for the things that we have in common and fight against the things that are different.

Dr. Juraj Lajda, UPF president in Czech Republic, mentioned the importance of World Interfaith Harmony Week as the time when people of different faiths and religions around the world gather together and demonstrate their will for peace. Dialogue among religions can avoid prejudice, overcome ignorance

and help people to understand the differences among religions, he said. Dialogue can prevent violence.



He also mentioned religious persecution that is occurring in many countries. Religious freedom is the basic freedom and human right. It is the responsibility of faith-based people to stand up for religious freedom worldwide. Religion is not an ideology. True peace starts within us. Inner peace is a prerequisite for world peace, he said.

Rev. Michal Hanzel from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints said that it is people who create a religion. Conflicts start among people. We need good human relationships. When we educate peace-loving men and women, world peace will be secured. Wars and conflicts come from human hearts – like pride, egoism and arrogance. We should not allow this, but instead create and radiate peace. We should try to find a common base with other people.



The final speaker was **Rev. Mikuláš Vymětal**, an evangelical pastor from the Evangelical Church, who spoke about peace among religions. He also mentioned Pope Francis' declaration calling for brotherhood among religions.

The participants made a ceremony of pouring water into one vessel and lighting candles.

After the ceremony the participants created a circle and had a discussion. It was very interesting and valuable that people could speak their minds and discuss the role of religion, interreligious dialogue and the way to improve society and bring peace into the world.