

UPF and IAPD Czech Republic's religious meeting for Interfaith Harmony Week

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The Czech UPF, the Community of Christians in Prague, and IAPD commemorated Interfaith Harmony Week 2023 by organizing a common meeting. The meeting of several religious leaders took place in the Christian community church in Prague.

The motto of this gathering was the quotation of the Swiss theologian Hans Kueng: "If there is no peace among religions, there can be no peace in the world. To have peace among religions, interreligious dialogue, and religious freedom are necessary."

Rev. Tomáš Boněk, a pastor from the Community of Christians, spoke about the diversity of religions. Despite many differences, we should be tolerant of each other and avoid violence, emphasized pastor Boněk. We should look for the things we have in common and fight against the different things.

Dr. Juraj Lajda, UPF president in the Czech Republic, mentioned the importance of Interfaith Harmony Week, when people of different faiths and religions in the whole world gather together and demonstrate their will for peace. Dialogue among religions can avoid prejudices, overcome ignorance and help people to understand the differences among the religions. Discussion can prevent violence. The speaker also mentioned the religious persecution in many countries in the world. The fundamental freedom and human right is religious freedom. It is the responsibility of faith-based people to stand up for religious freedom worldwide. Religion is not an ideology. True peace starts with us. We need inner peace as a prerequisite for world peace, concluded the speaker.

Rev. Michal Hanzel from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints mentioned that it is the people that create a religion. The conflicts start among people. We need to have good human relationships. We need to educate peace-loving men and women, and then world peace will be secured. The wars and conflicts come from human hearts – like pride, egoism, and arrogance. We should not allow this but create and radiate peace. We should try to find a joint base with other people.

The final speaker was Rev. Mikuláš Vymětal, an evangelical pastor from the Evangelical church. He spoke about peace among religions. He also mentioned the declaration of the pope calling for brotherhood among religions.

The participants made a ceremony of water pouring out into one vessel and lighting the candles. After the ceremony, the participants created a circle and had a discussion. It was fascinating and valuable that people could speak their minds and discuss the role of religion, interreligious dialogue, and how to improve society and bring peace into the world.