

UPF Czechia: Interfaith Panels in Prague Voice Shared Beliefs, Shared Concerns

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Prague, Czech Republic – For the thirteenth time, representatives of various religions gathered in Prague to commemorate World Interfaith Harmony Week, on February 3, 2026. This year’s meeting was hosted by the Community of Christians, under the theme, “The World is One Family.”

The opening two songs performed by guitarist Mr. Jakub Slezák and singer Ms. Erika Lajdová set an uplifting atmosphere at the beginning.



There were two panels: the first focused on interfaith dialogue and cooperation, and the second on religious freedom, which is violated in many countries.

In his welcoming speech, **Rev. Tomáš Boněk**, pastor of the Community of Christians, mentioned that people should look for what unites them and avoid topics that divide them. There are several stages in interfaith dialogue before the barriers between religions can be broken down, he said. He quoted the recently deceased religious scholar Mr. Ivan Štampach, whose work contributed to creating an

atmosphere of tolerance and understanding.

Dr. Juraj Lajda, president of UPF-Czech Republic mentioned that religion is often misused for political or ideological purposes. He reminded the audience to keep in mind believers who are persecuted for their faith around the world. He mentioned Nigeria, where 50,000 Christians have been killed, as well as other parts of the world, including some European countries. Anti-Semitism is also on the rise, he pointed out.



In South Korea, Christian churches and societies have come under scrutiny, accused primarily of involvement in politics. Targets have included the Seygero Church, the Shincheonji Church, and the Unification Church, formally known as the Family Federation, with their pastors and members investigated, indicted, and some imprisoned.



Among these is the co-founder of the Unification Movement and UPF, Dr. Hak Ja Han, who, at the age of 83, was detained pre-trial in September, 2025, and continues to be held before any verdict has been pronounced. She is in very poor health, has recently undergone a cardiac procedure, has greatly impaired vision, and is confined to a wheelchair.

Mr. Jiří Hazlbauer, representing Zen Buddhism, said that the world is like a flower. We come from one source; we are one, and we return to one. He described unity in diversity as something to be celebrated.

Mr. Hynek Renza, high councilor of the Prague Czech Republic stake of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, focused on the importance of family, in the broadest sense of the word. Successful marriages are based on faith, prayer, repentance, and gratitude, he said. In interacting with others, he advised that people should stand firmly behind the values they believe in, but listening is also important, not just speaking and persuading others.

Mr. Jakub Koldovský, also a Zen Buddhist, spoke about the importance of these meetings as an opportunity for people to open their hearts, rather than just sticking to their own ideas.

Mr. Kashif Janjua, imam of the Muslim association Ahmadija, began by quoting from the Koran. He described the current times as difficult; people have lost their faith in God and have no moral responsibility. Loving the Creator, he said, opens the way to loving everyone. Ahmadija's motto is love for all, hatred for no one, as a way of life. It is better to light one candle, he said, than to complain about the darkness.



Mgr. Nina Nováková, former member of the Czech Parliament (2021-2025), said that the more people open their hearts and minds to others, the more their own faith deepens. There is a global fight against spirituality in the world, she said. Spirituality is a problem because people with a vertical connection to their Creator cannot be controlled. All people want victory, but the greatest victory is to control oneself and to love others. This is the wisdom of the heart.



Pastor Mikuláš Vymětal, priest for minorities from the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren, was the final speaker. He said that the Bible describes what a family is: all of humanity is one family. Pope Francis also spoke about universal brotherhood. Pastor Vymětal also mentioned that it is usually small marginal groups that are ostracized and persecuted, whether they are minority religions or other communities.

The speeches were followed by the symbolic act of lighting candles and a ceremony where representatives of each religion poured water into one common vessel. Then followed group discussions and an opportunity for all to express their opinions and exchange ideas.

Another musical performance by missionaries from Korea enlivened the meeting and strengthened the sacred atmosphere. Refreshments and informal conversations rounded off the meeting.