

Faith, political leaders meet virtually for second 'Global Rally of Hope'

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The Universal Peace Federation hosted a worldwide virtual 'Rally of Hope.' (screenshot)

A diverse mix of faith leaders and political figures gathered for the second time in as many months this weekend for a major international rally calling for a more unified world to be achieved through collective embraces of freedom, peace, interdependence and the pursuit of mutual prosperity.

The second "Global Rally of Hope" -- held online and drawing what organizers said was an audience of well over 1 million viewers and participants -- provided a unique platform for faith-driven global messaging aimed at addressing racial and ethnic division, poverty, environmental degradation and other issues fueling conflict in the world.

Speakers at the event orchestrated by the Universal Peace Federation (UPF) and partner groups included current and former heads of state, along with well-known U.S. political figures and prominent voices from across the religious spectrum, all joining together in a call for peace and togetherness at a crucial moment of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Former Vice President Dan Quayle said he was inspired the event had "brought together delegates from over 150 nations in search of ways to create a more peaceful world."

"Even though we are meeting in this virtual environment, we can feel connected because we share a common heart," Mr. Quayle, who served in the George H.W. Bush administration during the early 1990s,

said in prepared remarks.

"We all want peace. The question is 'how are we going to achieve it?'" Mr. Quayle said. "We have a lot of violence in the world, so much dysfunction, and unthinkable human suffering because of this. We know that true peace comes about when people can unite. And the best way to come together is to recognize that there are universal values that can serve as a compass setting for everyone."

Among the most important to consider is "the value of our families," he said. "Family is so very important -- your mother, your father, your brothers and sisters, extended family, aunts, uncles, friends. Family is everything. You see family in your neighborhoods, you see it at your place of worship. Today, especially through our technology and communications, we can see right here a global family striving for peace, decency, compassion and human flourishing."

"That's why I support one of the main themes for UPF, that we are 'one family under God,'" Mr. Quayle added. "That's a positive and powerful message."

It was a sentiment echoed by faith leaders -- Evangelical Lutheran Church Bishop (emeritus) Munib Younan and Roman Catholic Archbishop (emeritus) of Castries Kelvin Edward Cardinal Felix, among others -- as well as American political figures such former Vice President Richard Cheney, who served under President George W. Bush from 2001 to 2009.

"As always, the Universal Peace Federation has brought together an impressive collection of representatives, heads of state, and other leaders from around the world," said Mr. Cheney, who stressed the ongoing need for cohesion and clear security alliances among the world's democracies to confront tyrannical regimes.

"One thing I've learned, in 40-plus years of dealing in foreign policy and security matters: Against any set of challenges, events will always go better when free and democratic governments work together," Mr. Cheney said in prepared remarks.

It was a broader theme of unity in general, as well as reverence for human rights and respect for all people that dominated the focus of the weekend's rally.

Such tenets have long been guiding principles in the life of UPF co-founder Hak Ja Han Moon, the leader of the Unification Church and wife of the late Rev. Sun Myung Moon. The two devoted their lives to the promotion of world peace and the reunification of the Korean Peninsula -- an undergirding premise of the movement that grew from the Unification Church that Rev. Moon founded in 1954.

Mrs. Moon has led the movement since a few years before the 2012 death of Rev. Moon, whose ministry grew from a tiny, embattled church in South Korea to a global spiritual movement and an affiliated commercial empire comprising real estate, manufacturing and agricultural operations, as well as media properties including The Washington Times.

Mrs. Moon brought a sobering message to the second "Global Rally of Hope" over the weekend.

Citing the challenges of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, coupled with wars and conflict and increasingly powerful natural disasters caused by climate change, she called upon humanity "to pay attention to what is fundamental."

"Due to the ignorance of human beings, the earth is being destroyed," Mrs. Moon said. "Using all of the technologies that science has developed, let us first focus on becoming the proper stewards of creation,

returning, restoring the earth to the pristine condition under which God wished human beings to flourish and prosper. This is the responsibility we have as God's children."

The event was part of a series of online "rallies of hope" slated to be held each month through December.

There were moments of celebration and happiness during the first two rallies. Saturday's proceedings, broadcast from Cheongshim Peace World Center in Korea, began with a performance by the Little Angels Folk Ballet of Korea.

UPF Chairman Dr. Thomas G. Walsh, meanwhile, was quoted in a press release as saying the first Rally of Hope, held in August, drew several million online viewers from around the world.

The August rally also featured remarks by many heads of state, who addressed a range of issues, including the COVID-19 pandemic, environmental degradation, poverty and race relations, Mr. Walsh said. "But in their own ways and in their own words, they all expressed hope that humankind, as one family under God, has the full potential to resolve all of these issues by working together."

Former Rep. Dan Burton, a Republican who served in the House of Representatives from 1983 to 2013, said the digital setting of Saturday's event was proof "people of character and conscience will not be prevented from gathering together because of a great pandemic."

"As they say, 'When God closes a door, he opens a window,'" said Mr. Burton, who now heads a global organization known as the International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace (IAPP), a close affiliate of the UPF.

In prepared remarks, Mr. Burton said IAPP is working toward developing a more effective early warning communications system among local political leaders worldwide to more rapidly identify and respond to future diseases that might impact the whole of humanity.

"IAPP members working together from around the world could be in a position to see trends and situations more clearly and faster than other organizations," he said, noting that while the World Health Organization (WHO) first reported COVID-19 on Dec. 31, 2019, it was not until March 11, 2020, that the organization declared a pandemic.

"The virus had already spread to every corner of the world by airline passengers," Mr. Burton said. "The world does not have the luxury of waiting for big governments and big health organizations to figure out what's going on. Your own representatives in parliament can see and act more quickly."

"Resolutions are being supported to support the global communication system of pandemic early warning," he said. "Action is happening at the grassroots level."

Former Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan was among those from around the world who offered messages of hope at this weekend's event.

"I'm delighted to be at this rally of hope, which is focused on ways of mitigating the challenges that we face in the 21st century, ranging from pandemics, to climate change, conflicts and poverty," said Mr. Jonathan, who served as Nigeria's president from 2010 to 2015. "I commend Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, the co-founder of the Universal Peace Federation, who has continued to skillfully steer the ship of the UPF, taking it to loftier heights since the passing of her husband, Rev. Sun Myung Moon."