

## Archbishop George Stallings and MEPI Lauded by Leaders in Jerusalem

Douglas Burton  
May 17, 2013



*Dr. Chang Shik Yang told the Middle East Peace Initiative participants why Rev. Moon had initiated the first MEPI.*

Israeli rabbis, civic leaders, and leaders of the Christian, Jewish, and Druze communities gave high praise to the Middle East Peace Initiative (MEPI) efforts at a banquet in Jerusalem Friday, May 17, 2013.

Former Knesset Member Ran Cohen told the gathering, “I am very surprised to see all of you here in Jerusalem. It has very special significance for me. Compared to all of the government’s efforts to bring peace, the Universal Peace Federation (UPF) is making more progress than any government agency. Our conflict is not only between nations, not only between religions. The only way to make peace in this age is through UPF. It means coming to Jerusalem with peace in our hearts, peace in our minds,” Cohen said.

In an interview later that day with Korean journalists covering the MEPI anniversary, Cohen explained further: “All governments are making an effort to make a peace between politicians but politics is not with love or friendship, making believers and lovers of each other. The fact that UPF is making all these efforts of person to person, Jews with Muslims, Jews with Christians, Christians with Muslims, Christians with Buddhists, and so on, despite the fact that we are all different, it makes all of these people equal, puts them on the same level. So when they come to Jerusalem – Jews, Arabs, Christians – they become one entity, and this is the very effective part of UPF to help the peace process in the Middle East.”



*Eliezer Glaubach, former Jerusalem City council member and a participant of many MEPI gatherings, said that he and many in Israel appreciate Rev. Moon’s work in the Middle East.*

Eliezer Glaubach, former Jerusalem City council member and a participant of many MEPI gatherings gave the following reflection on the legacy of MEPI:

“I am really excited, fellow brothers and sisters. The UPF pilgrimages to the Holy Land encompass the salvation of the Holy Land and to other conflicted areas on so many continents. Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon became the prince of peace on earth. Jewish prophets in the Old Testament period communicated with God and were active in this Holy Land, but Dr Moon has implemented the effects of peace all over the universe. That is why some of our people in Israel believe he is working harder than our own

prophets! That is why a significant part of our nation appreciates his work very much. Indeed we were blessed with 45 pilgrimages and more than 15,000 participants -- all through the inspiration of the founder, Dr. Moon.”

Glaubach continued: “[I n 2003] it was a time of suicide bombings in Jerusalem and all over the Holy Land. Dr. Chang Shik Yang and Dr. Michael Jenkins were walking in front of all these marchers. They risked their lives. We [in Jerusalem] were afraid to walk in the streets, and suddenly we saw marches. Current history doesn’t record this well enough, but it was all because of UPF,” he said.



*Interfaith water ceremony. From left, Eliya Kranz, representing Judaism, Archbishop Sulanch Grant-Lewis, representing Christianity, Imam Dawud Assad, Rev. An, Ven Bessho Keisuke, representing Buddhism, Dr. Abraham Shalom Haim, representing Judaism and Sheik Ali Birani, representing the Druze Religion.*

Dr. Chang Shik Yang, a key organizer of the MEPI programs explained to the group that the late Founder of the Unification Movement, Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon, had contacted him in March of 2003 and urged him to create an interfaith rally that would counter the rising tensions in the region following the onset of the U.S. invasion of Iraq. Dr. Yang said, “Rev. Moon told me that if the Iraqi War would have spread, out, it would have become a World War III and that the center of it would have been Jerusalem. So, we began to plan a conference in Jerusalem that year.”

The guiding idea, according to Dr. Yang, was that “the biased belief that one’s religion alone is the path of salvation can easily lead to division.” He added: “My hope is that the efforts we have invested during the last 10 years can bear fruit, now that Rev. Moon’s spouse is guiding the MEPI effort with all her energy.”



*A gathering reviewing and renewing the Jerusalem Declaration of 2003 was held on the morning of May 17, 2013.*

Archbishop George Stallings, chairman of the American Clergy Leadership Conference (ACLC) explained why he had led efforts in 2003 to de-emphasize the cross as a symbol of Jesus’ triumph and resurrection and replace it with the symbol of the crown of victory. Alluding to the Gospel hymn, “The Old Rugged Cross,” Archbishop Stallings explained, “We realized that the cross was, in fact, a stumbling block for our Jewish brothers, a symbol that has been a contradiction to those who have not accepted our faith, and we exchanged the cross for a crown.”

Rabbi Itzhak Bar Dea, one of Israel’s most respected rabbis and a signer of the Jerusalem Declaration in

2003, told the gathering, “My feeling about this ceremony, is that it is so wonderful to hear how Archbishop [Stallings] has repented for the actions of those who have misused the cross. In Judaism we give a high place to those who admit their mistakes. The two embraced on the stage and joined in the signature ceremony of MEPI, the mixing of waters from the representatives of many faith traditions. Those participating today included Rabbi Bar Dea and Archbishop Stallings, as well as Eliya Kranz, representing Judaism, Imam Dawud Assad of the United States, Ven Bessho Keisuke, representing Buddhism, Rev. An, of the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification, Dr. Abraham Shalom Haim, and Sheik Ali Birani, a leader of the Druze religion.



*Nancy Schulze, co-founder of the American Congressional Wives Speakers and the American Prayer Initiative, and wife of former Congressman Richard Schulze, said her heart and mind were expanding during her first MEPI experience.*

The meeting left a lasting impression on many, including Nancy Schulze, co-founder of American Congressional Wives Speakers and the American Prayer Initiative, and wife of former Congressman Richard Schulze. She told a morning meeting of the conference: “This is my first experience with you all. And I must say my heart is full, my mind is expanding. We see it all around -- divisions within religions, between religions. If we who love God could overcome our differences or at least respect our differences, perhaps the rest of the world would be more inclined to take our lead.”

Following the morning conference and luncheon, the group of 46 clerics and scholars continued their pilgrimage to the Holy sites of Jerusalem, including the underground cave where Jesus was thought to have been jailed, the house of the Last Supper and the Wailing Wall in the Old City.