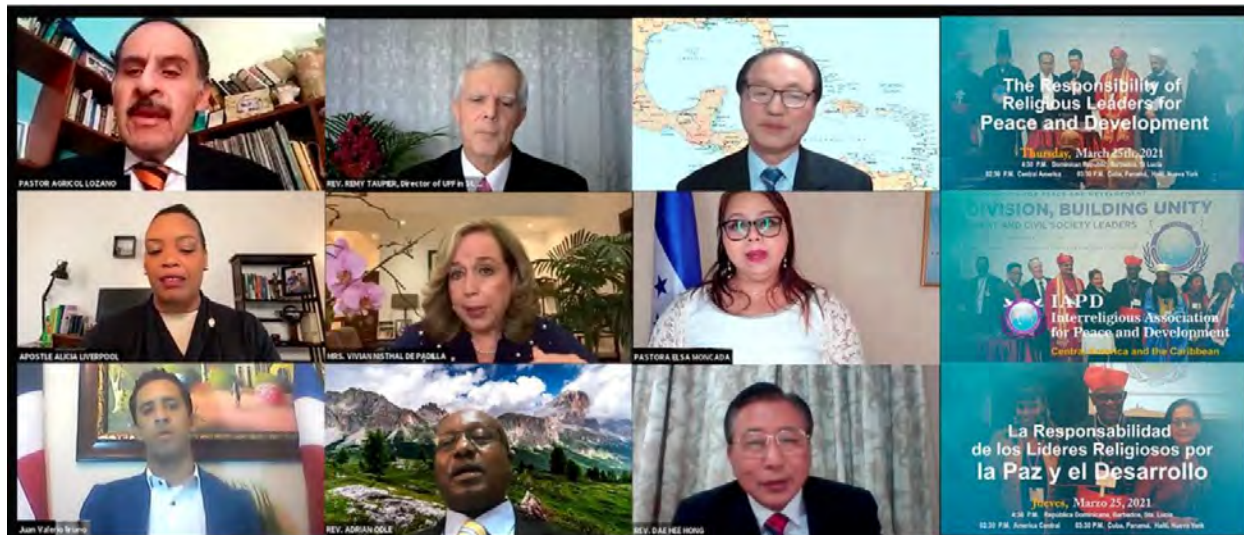


IAPD Central America: The Responsibility of Religious Leaders for Peace

Chang-shik Yang
March 25, 2021



Central America and the Caribbean -- On the evening of March 25, 2021, UPF-Central America and the Caribbean held an Interreligious Association for Peace and Development (IAPD) web conference titled "The Responsibility of Religious Leaders for Peace and Development." The conference had 110 attendees from 19 countries and more than 170 viewers on social media.

The moderator, Pastor Remy Taupier (Director, UPF-St Lucia), explained that IAPD is an association of UPF. Any successful strategy for peace must consider, the spiritual dimension of our human identity, experience, and interactions. The world's religions and faith-based organizations can provide a unique set of valuable resources for achieving a just and peaceful world. Based on this vision, Dr Hak Ja Han Moon, co-founder of UPF, initiated the creation of IAPD in 2017. Dr. Moon affirms that humanity has one common Creator, and we are "one human family under God".



Dr. Charles S. Yang (Regional Chair, UPF-Central America and the Caribbean) observed that even if all religions speak of peace, there are many religious conflicts going on around the world: in Israel/Palestine; in North Ireland; in Kashmir; Sri Lanka; the Balkans; Iraq; the World Trade Center in 2001, to name a few. There cannot be peace in the world without interreligious harmony; that's why IAPD fosters cooperation between religious leaders.

Dr. Yang showed pictures from World Summit 2020, attended by 7,000 leaders from all the various fields of human endeavor who were invited by our UPF founder, Dr. Moon. He also showed pictures of the five virtual Rallies of Hope that brought current and former heads of state and top religious leaders to interact on the theme of "Peace and Development through Interdependence, Mutual Prosperity and Universally Shared Values."

Rev. Dae Hee Hong reminded us that in Europe, 650 years ago, almost one third of the population died from the Black Death pandemic. It was followed by a strong religious reformation and a cultural renaissance. Likewise, in this era of coronavirus, religious leaders can cooperate to bring peace and happiness to the people by uplifting their hearts closer to God.

Similar to the vast ocean that can receive and unite the waters coming from thousands of rivers, our UPF movement brings together different teachings and different religions to unite to make our nations and the world better.

Pastor Elsa Moncada explained:

In our nation, Honduras, we are trying to stay connected to our culture; we strive to meet and transform areas that lead us to guarantee that we are a nation of peace.

As religious leaders we are called to carry the message of hope and peace to the discouraged, the hungry, the disconsolate, the weak in their cause; to the one who is sick, and without a way out, to the one who is deprived of freedom.

In the end, when the rivers overflow, they will flow into the sea... .In the same way, all religions converge in the great sea of providence, realizing the final divine plan, which is the establishment of the kingdom of God and his justice with peace, development, and well-being for all.



Apostle Alicia Liverpool emphasized that as religious leaders, it is our collective responsibility to be peacemakers and seek solutions that will resolve human conflicts peacefully. One of the surest ways to do that is to "fulfill the royal law according to the Scriptures, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'" (James 2:8).

To answer the lawyer's question "Who is my neighbor?" Jesus told the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 25–37). Jesus taught the lawyer not to do like the priest and the Levites who saw the dying man but "passed by on the other side." Jesus told the lawyer to "go and do like the Good Samaritan."

We, the religious leaders of today, let us not find reasons to justify why we "pass by the other side," but let us "go and do likewise," crossing the boundaries of race, religion, culture, class, country and even gender.

Rev. Adrian Odle stated that peace is an investment. Faith actors play various roles in peace building, conflict, postconflict reconstruction, developmental activities, and social cohesion.

Religious leaders are in a unique favorable position to promote peace and development:

- 1-Almost all societies respect religious leaders.
- 2-Genuine peace must always be regarded as coming from the Creator.
- 3-We are trained theologically to teach this.
- 4-We must be guided by God and be sensitive but not hesitate to speak if need be.
- 5-We convey to others that peace is part of God's plan for redemption of humanity.
- 6-Sometimes religious leaders have been the ones to create division, so we must break the walls of religious, ethnic, cultural, social and racial bigotry.

Mrs. Vivian de Padilla testified that we religious leaders have been chosen by God to be agents of change through our own testimony of life and to be congruent with what we preach. It is necessary to seriously review our life to discover if love really prevails in it: a love that is giving oneself to the other, sacrificing oneself for the other, feeling for the other. Let's practice forgiveness as a fruit of love, to sow justice and peace.

John Paul II said, "Remember that every man is your brother and become respectful defenders of his dignity. And above all social, political, ideological, racial and religious differences, the life of your brother, of every man, is always assured first. Let there be no more distance between faith and life."

Brother Agricol Lozano commented:

Paraphrasing Jesus' parable of the Sower, I am asking: what are we sowing? Fear, abuse, envy, anger, loneliness? Or are we sowing and cultivating kindness, tolerance, forgiveness and justice?

Reverend Moon declared, "The main purpose of all religions is to carry out the ideal of a world of peace, which is God's desire" (November 1985) and "We invite, all nations, peoples, cultures, and religions to live in harmony with each other and become one hundred percent tolerant of one another, which is the way to establish a world of peace" (1990). This tremendous effort is continued today by his wife, Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, who is promoting peace and harmony beyond skin color, social status, and religious belief. As religious leaders we must build a culture of peace exemplifying patience, prudence, respect, justice, and mercy.



Pastor Juan Mateo Valerio pointed out that religious leaders are important for the development of a world of peace. But they must leave the comfort of their church, only praying and preaching; they must work hard outside with the community, solving the most important problems facing their neighbors, their community, and their nation. Religious leaders should take care of their children, their wives, and their family, and they should be an example.

The founder of UPF, Mother Moon, is facing the evils of humanity by rescuing the values and ideals of the family. UPF's work in the Dominican Republic is valued and respected for educating the leaders of this country to value the ideals of the family. The campaign to reaffirm and bless marriages is undoubtedly the most effective work for the establishment of a world of peace.

The Responsibility of Religious Leaders
 UPF CA/ IAPD 25.03.21
 Among other projects, IAPD supports the Peaceful Reunification of North and South Korea

Modetator
MR. REMY TAUPIER
 Director of UPF in St Lucia; He is working to strengthen families as an essential way to deal with poverty, violence and crime in the nation.

DR. CHARLES S. YANG
 Chair of Universal Peace Federation Central America and Caribbean. He led Universal Peace Federation's Middle East Peace Initiative for ten years.

PASTOR ELSA MONCADA
 Director of Ministries of Faith in the Media. She has 30 years of experience in the media for spreading the word. She carries out various programs to offer spiritual counseling and spread the word of God on radio and television, HONDURAS.

REV. ADRIAN ODLE
 Director of Ministries of Faith in the Media. Superintendent of the Bethel Circuit of the Methodist Church and Vice-President of the Barbados Christian Council. He has also served in the Islands of St Vincent, Trinidad and St Lucia. BARBADOS

PASTOR AGRICOL LOZANO
 Commissioner for Interreligious affairs at the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights for the Development of the Americas; Former vice-president of the Interreligious Council of Mexico. MEXICO

REV. DAE HEE HONG
 Sub Regional Director of FFWPU. He graduated in architectural engineering from Yonsei University, Korea and Graduate from Unification Theological Seminary, Master Degree of Theology Education. MEXICO

APOSTLE ALICIA LIVERPOOL
 Executive Director of LEAD—Leadership Equipping in Ambassadorship and Diplomacy. LEAD provides specialized training in faith-based diplomacy and interfaith dialogue for the spiritual and social reconciliation of people, peace, and progress in the world. ST MAARTEN

MRS. VIVIAN NISTHAL DE PADILLA
 Founder and Coordinator of the Reina de Los Angeles Catholic Family Community of Tivoli, Guatemala City. With her husband, she served the Lord for 30 years coordinating communities of women, youth and couples. GUATEMALA

PASTOR JUAN MATEO VALERIO LIRIANO
 Pastor of the Church of God. School teacher in the area of comprehensive and religious human formation and social sciences. He works in the social area as a community leader in his town of Los Alcarizos. DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Watch on YouTube
 CENTRAL AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN 25.03.2021