

UPF Thailand Youth Visit Religious Sites for UN World Interfaith Harmony Week

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Bangkok, Thailand – To promote understanding of different faith traditions among young people during UN World Interfaith Harmony Week, UPF-Thailand partnered with Youth and Students for Peace (YSP) to organize a Religious Youth Service Camp on February 15, 2025.



Seventy participants, including junior high school, high school, and university students, as well as members of the public, gathered at the UPF Peace Embassy in Bangkok for the opening program. The opening ceremony began with welcoming remarks by **Mr. Kamol Thananoppawan**, secretary general of UPF-Thailand. Then **Mrs. Ursula McLackland**, secretary general of UPF-Asia Pacific, gave an inspiring lecture on the topic "Interfaith Harmony through Service Learning."

Following the morning program, participants visited three different religious sites nearby to learn about that particular religion.

First, they visited Mary Help of Christians Church, where **Father Suphot Riungam** welcomed the group and gave a talk on the teachings of Christianity and its religious customs. Then he led a prayer for harmony among religions.



Next, the group went to the Wat Ban Thung Seri Buddhist temple, where the abbot, **Ven. Phra Khru Sathit Pariyattikit**, explained the history of the temple and outlined Buddhist customs and practices. He also chanted blessings and encouraged the young people in their spiritual pursuits.

Finally, participants moved to the Foundation of the Islamic Center of Thailand, where **Professor Shafi'i Naphakorn**, imam of the center's mosque, gave the welcoming remarks. The participants watched a video about the history of the center, and important Islamic traditions such as fasting during the month of Ramadan and praying five times a day. Then the Imam took them to the prayer hall, which has separate prayer rooms for men and women.



Afterwards, the participants enthusiastically engaged in cleaning the center and collecting garbage in the neighborhood, as an act of volunteer service.

After their return to the Peace Embassy for the closing session, participants shared their experiences. Many affirmed that they had learned a lot during the day, and valued the opportunity to make new friends

from different backgrounds. **Ms. Kewalee Phangphan**, a student at Sarasas Witaed Suksa School in Bangkok, said, "The camp helped us to know more about different religions. In the past, we joined tree planting and other volunteer camps, but we never joined a camp that introduced us to religious sites and religious practices."



Ms. Sirikan Suwanich, director of the Bangkapi District Office, said she was moved by the participants' reflections, and offered words of encouragement to the youth. She said, "I would like to commend everyone who is a part of the Religious Youth Service Camp for coming to learn and exchange ideas with each other. This is an important step for creating understanding and harmony between religions, which is important for a peaceful and strong society."



Ms. Suwanich presented certificates to the participants and assured the organizers that the district office is interested in conducting further youth programs with UPF and YSP. The program ended with closing remarks by Mrs. Ursula McLackland. Though it was a long day, participants stayed on and kept chatting with their new friends.