

UPF-USA's initial Interfaith Prayer for the Nation and the World held on Zoom

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United States -- UPF-USA's initial Interfaith Prayer for the Nation and the World was convened on the Zoom platform on Thursday, April 9, at 1 PM (EST) through a call to Ambassadors for Peace, UPF members and friends of UPF.

UPF recognizes that the challenges of the COVID-19 epidemic require a unified response. With the collapse of economic life and the isolation and separation of people forced by social distancing and quarantine, many communities, families and individuals are threatened. The threats are spiritual as well as physical.

UPF initiated the program to promote greater unity among leaders and communities of all faiths as a way to bolster hope, maintain our appreciation of the profound relationships that bind us together, and inspire understanding and love of others. The brief mid-week program featured representatives from different faith traditions who offered prayers, comments and scriptural readings to those linked by Zoom views.

Dr. Michael Jenkins, chairman of UPF-North America, spoke from his home in Maryland of the importance and power of prayer in bringing about change in ourselves and the world around us. Prayer, he said, brings us closer to God and gives us the ability to unite with each other.

Rev. Dr. Wintley Phipps, a Seventh Day Adventist from Florida who traveled to many countries with Billy Graham and has performed for six U.S. presidents, reminded us that God is our refuge and fortress

in whom we trust. Reading from Psalm 91, he called us to dwell in the shelter of the Most High, rest in the shadow of the Almighty. He sang "Amazing Grace" in a beautiful baritone, expressing his deep concern for those who have lost their loved ones and those struggling for their health.



Imam Mohammad Ali Elahi from the Islamic House of Wisdom in Dearborn, Michigan, joined from his library and recited a chapter of the Koran. He prayed for us to overcome darkness, difficulty and despair by calling on God for peace and contentment, and he asked for God to inspire leaders and medical communities. He reminded us of the need for humble trust in God, for it is there, and not pride in wealth or military power, where the solutions to social ills and injustice can be found.

Venerable Katugastota Uparatana Maha Thera, from the Sri Lankan Buddhist community and chair of Buddhism on the Interfaith Council of Metropolitan Washington, recited the Buddha's words and prayed for unity and peace in mind, spirit and body during this challenging time. He called for goodwill towards all beings, for our minds to be focused on peace and happiness. He prayed for us to take on the heart of a mother protecting her child when approaching others and the world, as well as to avoid malice of any kind.

Participants from across the United States were joined on the prayer call. Based on the response of these 91 participants, UPF-USA plans to continue this outreach weekly, continuing on April 16 and each Thursday thereafter to bring people of different faiths together in a larger communion to pray for the nation and the world.