

UPF-USA's second weekly Interfaith Prayer for the Nation and the World on Zoom

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United States -- UPF-USA's second weekly Interfaith Prayer for the Nation and the World was convened on the Zoom platform on Thursday, April 16, at 3 pm EST through an invitation to Ambassadors of Peace, UPF members and friends of UPF. The brief midweek program featured representatives from different faith traditions who offer prayers, comments, and scriptural readings to those linked remotely by Zoom views and audio. Zoomers and Facebook views (963) from the East and West coasts and Hawaii joined in.

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

UPF initiated the prayer program to promote greater unity among leaders and communities of all faiths as way to bolster hope, maintain our appreciation of the profound relationships that bind us together, and inspire understanding and love of others.

Dr. Michael Jenkins, chairman of UPF-North America, again spoke from his home in Virginia of the importance and power of prayer in bringing about change in ourselves and the world around us. Prayer brings us closer to God, he said. Prayer gives us the ability to unite with each other. In praying for healing and understanding that those affected by loss of life and illness can be truly healed, we recognize that all faiths teach that prayer can bring the power of healing. He testified that God has power over all things but requires some gestures of petitioning God to bring healing.

Pastor Dante King of Forward Church in Prince Georges County, MD, who attended the World Summit program held in early February in South Korea, borrowed insight from a scriptural reading of Psalm 46. David cries out that "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble." We should not be afraid because "though the waters roar and be troubled," we are reminded that "there is river that belongs to God." At a time when everyone is called to "shelter in place," we should be grateful that the God we serve is a shelter in place, our refuge.

Iman Talib Sharif, leader of the Nation's Mosque who also attended the World Summit in Korea and was one of the faith leaders selected to pray before 30,000 at the Cheongshim Peace Center, began with acknowledging that Almighty God's bounty and blessings exceed our ability to measure or count. He spoke of the God who recognizes all of us and loves us all equally. COVID 19 is not racist, he said, though there will be greater disparities in communities where there are fewer resources; it is not nationalist though in some nations there will be more suffering. With half the world on lockdown with physical, mental, and spiritual pause all faiths are challenged with keeping faith alive -- as they are during persecution, war, and adverse times. Through patience and endurance of being tested, of turning toward universal kinship, we are called to our potential goodness, to be able to say we belong to Almighty God.

Archbishop George Augustus Stallings, leader of independent Catholics, co-founder of the American Clergy Leadership Conference, founder of the Imani Temple, and chair of the North American branch of the Interreligious Association for Peace and Development, welcomed all who believe in one God. Regardless of the name we use to approach God, we know we are children of God and that we proceed from the handiwork of God. Referring to Psalm 139, "I give you thanks, Oh God, that I am fearfully and wonderfully made," he reminded us that each one of us is an expression of a God who is all-present and all-knowing. Even while socially and physically distanced from one another, we stand together as spiritually one to show the world community that as believers we embrace the concept of one God and do not allow race or ethnicities, denomination, creed, social, economic or political backgrounds to separate us. He concluded that we applaud the different paths by which we approach to the same God; we are all on the path to the same destination.



Venerable Dr. Phramaha Thanat Inthisan, president of the International Buddhist Association of America, read the Buddha's words: "All tremble at punishment. All fear death. Comparing other with oneself, one should neither kill nor cause one to kill." He read and translated from a Sutra: "May all beings be happy, have their hearts upright. Let no one tell a lie, hurt anyone, be angry with anyone . . . Just as a mother protects her only child, let everyone have a kind heart towards all living beings." He concluded with an expression of kindness and loving compassion for all people all over the world.

The participants from across the United States joined in a brief silent group prayer to conclude the program.

On Thursday, April 23, at 1:00pm EST, UPF-USA will continue this weekly outreach of bringing people of different faiths together in a larger communion to pray for the nation and the world.

The live recordings of the Prayer for the Nation and the World can be found on UFP-USA's [Facebook page](#).