

UPF-USA Hosts Its Third Weekly Interfaith Prayer for the Nation and the World

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United States -- UPF-USA's third weekly Interfaith Prayer for the Nation and the World was convened on the Zoom platform on Thursday, April 23 at 1 PM (EST) through a call out to Ambassadors of Peace, UPF members and friends of UPF.

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. The brief midweek program features representatives from different faith traditions who offer prayers, comments, and scriptural readings to those linked remotely by Zoom views and audio. Zoomers totaling 993 from the East and West coasts and Hawaii joined in. This week's presenters included Dr. Michael Jenkins, chairman of UPF-North America; Archbishop Dr. Edward Barnett, Greater Grace Family Ministry, Washington, DC; Rabbi Mark Raphael, Gaithersburg Clergy Association; and Minister Amar Nath Gupta, head priest at the Hindu Capital Temple.

Dr. Jenkins introduced the speakers and prayer representatives on this third of a series and gave a special welcome to the participants from the Islamic faith since the program coincided with the first day of Ramadan. He remarked that it is through prayer that God can edify us, strength us, give us the ability to expand our love for others, and even bring healing

Archbishop Dr. Edward Barnett of the Greater Grace Family Ministry began with a reflection on "the world, the cosmos in which we are living in that is staggering, wavering and wobbling in chaotic uncertainty. . . . Globally, people are looking for the light, stability, and comfort. Our Heavenly Parent's influence is through our collaborative, righteous acts of love, faith, and prayer. Even today our connectivity is causing synergistic rapid elevation in the capacity and release of Heaven here on the Earth. The power of prayer is inexplicable and phenomenal in its action."

Dr Barnett recited the words of Jesus from John 17. "Jesus was looking towards Heaven and prayed: Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him." And he called us to recognize that "this is our hour, our allotted time. Together we must be steadfast in faith, unwavering in our prayer and intercessions, while giving our attention to pleasing God, loving one another, and bridging gaps with hope and flowing in pure peace to all. We must continue to submit ourselves to Him above us, so we do not fall to things beneath us."

Pastor Barnett concluded with a prayer in Jesus' name: "Father, empower us to be the true sons and daughters you have called us to be from the beginning. Where there is no light, let us be light, where there is no peace, let us bring peace, where there is no love, let us display your love."

Rabbi Mark Raphael of the Gaithersburg Clergy Association in Montgomery County, Maryland, noted that what is happening has parallels to what is being read in synagogues this Saturday, from Leviticus 12–15, regarding the laws and rituals for dealing with people who have leprosy or various skin inflammations and ailments.

From his commentary:

Those illnesses can be experienced today but must have been especially terrifying in the ancient world before the use of antibiotics. The Torah describes three stages of dealing with people who were infected: examination by the priests, quarantined for a period during evaluation, and purification.



Leviticus 13:4 instructs the priest to "isolate the affliction for seven days." It is a very important lesson in taking the verse literally, which is that the person is not the affliction, that even in the face of illness and disease we need to see the totality of the person and treat them as a sacred human being. Almost all of us have traditions that say saving a life is saving a whole world, that every life is infinitely precious. We should never lose sight of the person while trying to save millions.

At the end of the rituals of evaluation and quarantine, there were rituals for bringing people back into the community -- sacrifices and words. We do not have much like that today. When someone is cured of illness, how do we celebrate their re-introduction back into society? In my tradition there is a prayer offered after recovery or return from a dangerous journey -- "the prayer for being restored to life" -- that basically says, "Thank you, God, for my healing. Thank you for all your goodness to me."

Suggesting we need to think about rituals that empower people to feel that they are back in our sacred and larger communities, Rabbi Raphael read a prayer of hope written by California Rabbi Naomi Levy, who claims a special spirituality formed from personal and family suffering:

We are frightened, God. Worried for our loved ones, worried for our world. Helpless and confused, we turn to you for comfort, faith and hope. Teach us, God, to turn our panic into patience, our fears into acts of kindness and support. Our strong must watch out for our weak. Our young must take care of our old. Help each one of us do our part to stop the spread of this virus. Send strength and courage to the doctors and nurses on the front line of this battle. Fortify them with the full force of their healing powers. Send wisdom and insight to the scientists working day and night across the world to discover healing treatments. Bless their efforts, God. Fill our leaders with the wisdom and courage to choose wisely and act quickly. Help us to see that we are one world, one people, who will rise above this pandemic together. Send us health, God. Watch over us. Grace us with your love. Bless us with your healing light. Hear us, God; heal us, God, and let us say, "Amen."

Minister Amar Nath Gupta of the Hindu Capital Temple chanted a prayer calling for God to provide the blessing of Shanti, to provide us and the world with peace. He injected the following translation and explanation into his prayer chant:

Let us pray to God our Supreme Father and Supreme Mother, to guide us and to bring us peace, and peace to the universe: God, who is generator, operator and destructor. God is the giver of peace, the restorer of happiness and expirer of misery.

Why should we not mediate upon almighty God, who has given us great intellect to fight the Covid virus, to do what is for the best on this beautiful planet? We can get anything from any place on this earth, but the one thing is missing that everyone is searching for is called Shanti -- peace, peace, peace. We must get peace so we can promote peace everywhere on this beautiful planet.

Oh, Supreme Spirit! Together we should be united. Protect us. There should be no hatred among us. Service of humanity is service of God. Our True Parents must bestow their happiness upon us so we must be much more courageous to promote peace on the earth. We are one family under God. Aju!

Dr Jenkins asked the participants from across the USA to join in a brief silent group prayer to conclude the program, after praising the ecumenical work and interfaith responsiveness of the speakers and asking for acknowledgement of the health risks and strain placed on the lives of faith leaders, their families and their congregations and for them to be recognized our prayers.

On Thursday, April 30, at 1:00pm EST, UPF-USA will continue this weekly outreach in bringing people of different faiths together in a larger communion to pray for the nation and the world.

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