

## UPF #Peace Principles Weekend

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“If you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together”, recommended one of the Ambassadors for Peace (AFP), a head teacher at a London School who took part in the Winter Universal Peace Federation (UPF) – weekend to study Peace Principles at Cleeve House, in Wiltshire, over 16-18th of January.

Escaping the hustle and bustle of the city, 20 people (mostly ladies) from different cultural, faith and social backgrounds gathered in the stately mansion that once hosted the young writer Virginia Wolf. The purpose of our get together wasn't to draw literary inspiration but to gain spiritual insight in the universal values and principles of peace that underpin the vision and the work of UPF and its founder Father Moon.

We had a fully packed programme, which interestingly was not hectic but relaxing and spiritually invigorating.

On Saturday, the outing to the ancient village of Lacock, dating back to the 15th Century, was much appreciated by us all! We also enjoyed a heart- warming family evening with a difference! We sang, danced and shared moving stories of the way God has worked in our lives. This also presented an opportunity to pray together around the open fire and build a bond with our Creator and one another- although when the candle was passed around it was optional if one prayed or passed on the candle to the next person. The amazing thing was that every single person said a few words, religious or otherwise, Hindu, Christians and two Muslims alike prayed out loud – it felt so good to be together like one family under God!



Most presentations were very well received - indeed many questions, comments and discussions followed. Engaging the participants worked very well indeed. One presentation of particular interest was “Causes and Resolution of Conflict” which we will expand on at Lancaster Gate at Monthly AFP get together next week. However the final presentation on Father Moon's life and legacy was awe inspiring and extremely well received.

Many of the participants were deeply moved by Father Moon's exceptional life, his dedication to God and world peace, his incredible example of living for the sake of others and loving “the other” to the point of loving “the enemy” unconditionally.

One comment from a close AFP “my life has changed since I met UPF. UPF service to mankind is incredible ...I have always had a great respect for Father Moon as the founder of UPF, however it is only today after listening to his life course that I understand where UPF got the strength and spiritual foundation for doing so much for others”

The organisers urged the participants to make recommendations on how to improve future retreats but most of the participants could only find words of praise as we all felt spiritually enlightened and physically refreshed by the weekend which gave us a taste of living together as one family under God. Although many of us met for the first time, we parted as close friends who had shared a profound experience in the presence of God.

“Dear Margaret

Thank you for your e-mail and the photograph. Seeing your picture reminded me again of your

wonderful effervescence, which set the tone for a fabulous weekend. It was a joy for me to attend and meet new people and I would certainly be happy to be kept informed of other events. I look forward to keeping in touch and to the possibility of working on a common cause together. Have a great day!

Regards and blessings”

Here is what some other participants expressed in their reflections:

“This was a retreat with a refreshing difference; I did feel I could retreat from the hustle and bustle of every-day life, refreshed by the setting in beautiful natural surroundings and kind, accepting and warm-hearted people, but I also felt I moved forward in relationship with very special people seeking for a way to express our idealism and values more effectively in our professional and everyday life.”

“My idea of a retreat was to study the Bible on my own. When I discussed this with Margaret she said, “you can do that anytime, but when you come with people of different faiths it is a good opportunity to share common ground of universal values. As the Seminar proceeded this sharing was just amazing. I want to say thank you to UPF for organising this retreat. I look forward to the next one.”

“I listened, I learnt, I reflected, I made friends. I am refreshed, my soul is renewed. How beautiful is that!”

“It was a pleasure and privilege to meet such a wonderful group of people. Our journeys crossed, and I leave enriched from the experience of having other perspectives on life, besides my own.”

“This retreat crystalized my opinion of Father Moon, removing any slight doubt in my mind. I want to come again to the next retreat”.

“The workshop was fantastic, an eye-opener and a vehicle for me to do much more for God and the community, and help more in schools too.”

“The whole experience was wonderful. Great to be around such lovely people. I enjoyed all the lectures. We were well looked after. It gives me a sense of Peace to recognise who I really am.”

“The retreat was a wonderful time spent with a team of brilliant people. The presentations broadened my understanding of the Divine principles and an insight into Father Moon’s life and thinking that guides the UPF. The program was well organised and executed well. It would be useful if the evenings could be used to discuss the writings of Father Moon and other religious leaders.”

“Teachings fantastic, Team work brilliant. Jack Corley’s method of delivery and experiences were crystal clear and valuable. Joyful two days. I can go on and on...”

“What an experience - just amazing! We need to reflect how we can move the UPF concept forward and how we can work together in partnership.”

One last thing worthy of mention is that the participants were asked if they could help with tidying and washing up! Four volunteers came forward for the first meal and from then on we didn’t need to ask, they naturally volunteered and the work was done! In my experience for the first time, both cooks could sit down to eat with participants and take part in the evening programmes which they enjoyed very much. Perhaps this is the true culture of heart we should pursue?