

Report on the American Leadership Conference-2015

Ray McCready
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The 2015 American Leadership Conference for Washington State was held in the Creek Room of the Hampton Inn of Federal Way, midway between Seattle and Tacoma. Altogether seventy five persons came to the conference, including 16 youth participants. There were 4 presentations, and the conference culminated in discussion groups working to see what practical steps and projects might come out of the presentations. The majority of attendees stayed for the whole 6 hours of proceedings. Our conference title was “America at a Turning Point: Principles and Values for Building a Nation of Peace”.



Group photo of Attendees and Presenters, including all who were not busy and/or camera-shy



Photo of (from the left side) UPF Secretary-General for WA State Ray McCready, and the Presenters: Mr. Rizwan Samad, the Hon. Chad Magendanz, Dr. David Burgess, Mr. Gary Spanovich, with former UPF Secretary-General for the northwest, Rev. Larry Krishnek (right side):



Dr. David Burgess presenting on the topic: "The UPF Approach to Peace-building based on the Principles of Peace by UPF Founders, Rev. & Mrs. Moon".



The Honorable Chad Magendanz presenting on the topic: "Faith, Family and Their Role in our Elective Government".



Mr. Rizwan Samad presenting on the topic: "Faith, Family and Their Relationship to Public Service".



Next page: Mr. Gary Spanovich, of the Wholistic Peace Institute dba "Educating for Peace", presenting on the topic "Conflict Resolution".

We began with the Invocation, then the Pledge of Allegiance, and the singing of our national anthem, led by Brian Granstrom. UPF Secretary-General for WA State Mr. Raymond McCreedy gave brief welcoming remarks focusing on UPF Founders Rev. Sun Myung & Dr. Hakja Han Moon's vision and paradigm for peace, referencing the need to be able to uncover and dissolve the feelings of enmity, frustration and anger that underlie conflicts.

Our first presentation was given by former Secretary-General of UPF Northwest, Dr. David Burgess, on the title of "The UPF Approach to peace-building based on the Principles of Peace". Dr. Burgess emphasized that the first of the five UPF Principles of Peace states "We are one human family created by God (the Creator)" and so there should be certain bonds recognized that should enable us to work through our differences and hurts. He also stated that though the policies which our politicians create to deal with issues are important, we must recognize that the underlying conditions of heart of the various parties involved are more fundamental and indeed more important in solving conflicts. As Dr. Burgess, who travelled twice to Israel with the Middle-East Peace Initiative, commented using the Palestinian-Israeli conflict as an example, most involved know what needs to happen, but what is missing is the spirit and the will to make it happen.

Our second presenter was the Honorable Chad Magendanz, WA State Legislator for District 5, eastern King county. His topic was "Faith, Family and their role in our elective government". Mr. Magendanz opened by saying he had sworn several oaths over his life, including with the Boy Scouts, the Navy, and most recently when beginning his term as a Washington state legislator. That oath he noticed made no reference to anything to do with the Creator (God), which he felt missed an important element. He referenced the Boy Scout oath, which starts with the words "On my honor..." which he felt encourages the young person saying the Oath (Promise) to realize that this promise depends on something unseen and within them, referencing a moral compass they should possess. Mr. Magendanz recognized the beneficial effects in his life of building selfdiscipline, without which young persons encounter many struggles. He referred to the beneficial effects on his sons of their involvement in the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) programs. After Mr. Magendanz talk there were many questions and answers, which revealed attendees eagerness to ask questions of a sitting state legislator. Mr. Magendanz gave thoughtful and detailed answers to a wide range of questions, including on issues with schools. Mr. Magendanz used the opportunity to stress how helpful it was in his life through his military service to learn to challenge himself. He said this has served him well in life after leaving the military.

Our third presentation, on the topic "Faith, Family and their relationship to public service", was given by Mr. Rizwan Samad, a local Muslim businessman, humanitarian and activist in the community. Before speaking on the given topic, Mr. Samad addressed the situation which had taken place in Paris of hundreds killed by purported "Islamic terrorists". First, Mr. Samad pointed out, what those terrorists did has nothing to do with true Islam, which has clear restrictions on the killing of innocent men, women and children, even in war-time. He labeled the people who did those acts as murderers, who should be brought to justice. Next, Mr. Samad explained how his own father reacted as he grew and began to question whether he himself should become a Muslim, using reasoning and creating the opportunity to teach his son (Rizwan as a young man) about Islam, after which his father encouraged him to study other religions. Mr. Samad then gave a brief explanation of the five pillars of Islam. Mr. Samad then said he loves this nation of America so much, as he appreciates the freedoms it offers, and the opportunity which is

available to everyone here. Regarding public service, Mr. Samad said the basic approach is the mindset to take care of one's neighbors, and also when one sees injustices or things that need to be addressed, one's response should be to get involved and to do something.

After a break for lunch, we gathered back for photos, as some needed to leave afterwards for other appointments. Following that, we listened to our fourth and final Presenter, Mr. Gary Spanovich, the Executive Director of the Wholistic Peace Institute dba "Educating for Peace" of Oregon. Mr. Spanovich first recounted some of the history of the Institute and its work bringing Nobel Peace Prize laureates to speak on and involve in peace-building activities held at various schools and universities. The Institute began in concept in 1999 during planning for a visit in May of 2001 by the Dalai Lama to Oregon, and was incorporated as a non-profit corporation in 2001, with the help of Senator Mark Hatfield. Over the time since its start, it has invited and worked with numerous Peace Prize laureates, including Lech Walesa of Poland, Oscar Arias of Costa Rica and others. Mr. Spanovich also pointed out that they have worked over the years together with the UPF and also a sister organization, Service For Peace. Mr. Spanovich stated that they see 2 main steps in bringing compassion and healing in situations of conflict. First, those involved must work to heal their relationships with one another, and next they can deal with the specific issues at hand. This approach coincides with the principles given by our first speaker, Dr. Burgess, in that the spiritual elements are primary in solving problems between peoples.

Mr. Spanovich, who attended with his lovely wife Nancy, said that their recent focus is on creating "Peace Clubs" within middle schools and high schools in Oregon, as a way to raise up leaders for the future who are equipped with the understanding and skills to lead people in the pursuit of peace in situations of conflict. Near the end of his presentation, Mr. Spanovich led all attendees in a meditative exercise focused on healing of the hurts stemming from the recent carnage in Paris, France.

Following Mr. Spanovich's presentation, we went into group discussions. Rather than assigning attendees to groups, UPF Secretary-General Ray recommended that they organically form groups to discuss the presentations which they found most interesting in terms of providing a point from which to organize projects to create more substantial foundation for peace-building in our communities. So 3 groups were formed, one on presentation one, Principles of peace and their application, the second group addressed presentations 2 & 3, which had similar themes, and the third group gathered to discuss the development of "peace clubs" in schools in Washington state. Our Emcee and member of Group 2, Mrs. Emma Herron, came up with the idea to form an "Ambassador For Peace Legislative Advocacy Group", to prepare a position paper and to travel to our state capitol during the 2016 legislative sessions to lobby the state legislature towards bills and policies which align with the UPF-AFP principles of the importance of considering the moral and spiritual values when debating, to remind them of the importance of strengthening the families of our state, with more to be discussed over coming meetings.

At the end, many expressed that the presentations were stimulating and informative, and that the discussions were productive and could lead to substantive developments in accord with the UPF-AFP principles and ideas.