

First Assembly of the World's Religions begins

November 15, 1985



Dr. Huston Smith, author on world religions, greets True Father at the assembly.

More than 600 spiritual leaders, clergy, professors, artists, students and professionals from 85 nations gathered at the Americana Great Gorge resort, in McAfee, New Jersey, for the first Assembly of the World's Religions from November 15 to 21, 1985. Sponsored by the International Religious Foundation (IRF), it was envisioned as the first of three assemblies commemorating the 100th anniversary of the World Parliament of Religions held in Chicago in 1893.

The theme of Assembly One was "Recovering the Classical Heritage." Stylistic banners representing the world faith traditions were created for the occasion by the famed banner-maker Norman Laliberte. Participants gathered daily for meditations, plenary talks, discussion groups, and informal presentations of song and storytelling. A practical outcome of the assembly was the launch of the Religious Youth Service (RYS).

In his Founder's Address, titled "[Dialogue and Alliance](#)," True Father memorably stated, "As far as I know, God is not sectarian. He is not obsessed with minor details of doctrine. We should quickly liberate ourselves from theological conflict, which results from blind attachment to doctrines and rituals, and instead focus on living communication with God." He contended, "Only through a religious and spiritual revolution bringing great harmony, love and compassion will we finally realize the ideal world of peace." He also expressed three goals for the assembly:

First, that the world's religious traditions respect each other and at least work to keep in check any inter-religious conflicts and wars. Second, that the assembly serve the world by becoming a cooperative community of religions ... calling religious people to practical action, encouraging all people to live by God-centered values, and fostering the development of human minds and spirits. Third, that the assembly develop into an organization in which the major leadership of all religions participate.