

## IAPD-USA hosted 2021 UN World Interfaith Harmony Week - Building Bridges

Michael Jenkins  
February 4, 2021



United States -- The Interreligious Association for Peace and Development (IAPD)-USA, an association of UPF, hosted its 2021 UN World Interfaith Harmony Week program on the theme "Building Bridges Across Boundaries" on Thursday, February 4.

The IAPD webinar brought faith leaders from different denominations, experts, and concerned civic leaders to share their understanding, wisdom, and practices as steps toward creating peace and ending conflict.

We believe the World Interfaith Harmony Week provides an opportunity for expanding the foundations of unity globally among people committed to dialogue and spreading the message of peacemaking.



IAPD-USA has also been welcoming faith leaders from different religions every Thursday at 1 p.m. (EST) to read their Holy Scriptures and pray together.

Archbishop George A. Stallings, Jr., founder of the Imani Temple African American Catholic Congregation and chair of IAPD-North America, was the program's moderator.

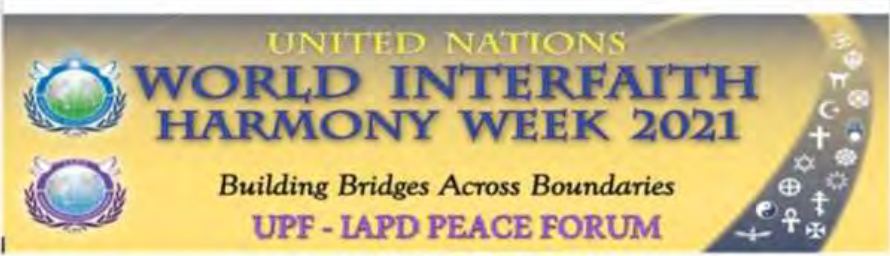
Tomiko Duggan (Senior Vice President, UPF-USA) welcomed over 1,000 guests joining on Zoom and Facebook links. She said that the faith leaders were present to share their wisdom and understanding and to share good practices regarding steps toward building bridges across boundaries.

Dr. Michael Jenkins (Chair, UPF-USA) thanked everyone and said:  
We want to come together with these great faith leaders for the annual UN World Interfaith harmony Week. We've asked some distinguished religious leaders to come forward and share their thoughts on

peace and inspirations on how we can bring peace in every country, every culture, and do it with the blessing of God.

Rev. Samuel King Kabu (Montreal, Canada) was the first participant to speak:

I always recall the vision of Father Moon: his invitation to the world community to build a highway to link all the continents. The purpose is not just for trade but it has spiritual implications: to connect all races and faiths in a common purpose of lasting peace. When we travel and meet other peoples, it changes who we are. We shouldn't be isolated; we need one another. Our time on earth is to learn God's nature and to learn how to love one another.











**UNITED NATIONS**  
**WORLD INTERFAITH HARMONY WEEK 2021**  
*Building Bridges Across Boundaries*  
**UPF - IAPD PEACE FORUM**

**Join us!**  
**2 – 3 PM (EST), Thursday, February 4, 2021**

*"Respect for diversity and peaceful dialogue are essential if the human family is to cooperate globally to face share threats and seize common opportunities," while pledging to "work with people of all faiths to rise above the tensions and misconceptions that so often divide us and find the path of harmony and dignity for all."*  
Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon (2007 – 2016)

**Program Speakers:**

 Rev. Samuel King Kabu St. Ansgar's Lutheran Church	 Bhai Sahib Satpal Singh Kalsa Sikh Dharma	 Rev. Eric S.C. Manning "Mother" Emanuel AME	 Hon. Terry Alexander SC State House Representatives	 Imam Mohamad Ali Elahi Islamic House of Wisdom
 Archbishop George A. Stallings, Jr. Founder, Imani Temple African American Catholic Congregation, National Chairman, IAPD	 Dr. Michael Jenkins Chairman, UPF-North America	 Tomiko Duggan Senior V.P. UPF - USA IAPD Coordinator		

**PLEASE REGISTER HERE: Zoom Link: Password is iapd**  
<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZYvdu2hgz4tHNIGIO7LvJ9tTx-GmEh6XANw>  
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The IAPD is a project of the UPF  
UPF is an NGO in General Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the UN  
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Where do we go from here? used to run in relay races in track when I was young. We have the means to carry out Reverend Moon's vision, linking people around the world in a common purpose.

Bhai Sahib Satpal Singh Kalsa (Sikh Dharma):

I bow before the divinity in each of you. Although religion plays a part in the daily life of almost 90% of the world's population, religious reasons are a major cause of conflicts in the world. But religious leaders can shape and influence the behavior of their followers on a peaceful path.

According to the United Nations, there are over 200,000 faith-based organizations in the world. They can make a tremendous contribution to peace. The Sikh scriptures explain that there is one Father and we are his children, one human family. Sikh scriptures teach self-discovery -- exploration of your inner self to connect with the divine.

Our founder's approach was to identify the cause of differences and to respect the teachings of the other diverse religions. Our scriptures contain the wisdom and sayings of 30 saints from other faiths. No one is an enemy, and no one is a stranger.

Religious leaders need to develop a consciousness of being bridge builders and give this to our future generations. We need to accept that we are all human children of the same God. We want to be a beacon of light for others. Sikh teachings are more recent than those of the major religions; it is a way of life, not a religion. The role of faith leaders is crucial to building bridges across differences between people.

Rev. Eric Manning "Mother" Emmanuel (African Methodist Episcopal Church):

We are definitely lacking dialogue and interaction in this day and age. There is still so much hatred and emphasizing differences, instead of celebrating commonalities. I ask people to read Genesis 1, where we see that God created everything. We see in Gen. 2:7 that God breathed into Adam and he became a living being. That same breath is in all of us. We are all created in the image of God.

This doesn't mean we that will always agree, but it means that we can disagree in a way that we don't tear each other down; instead, we can work to restore each other's dignity. Faith leaders should be able to come together and help the world regain its moral and ethical compass. We are all in this together. We can have different ways of doing things, but I can appreciate and embrace my fellow brothers and sisters as created in God's image. Getting to know our neighbor is saying, You matter; your feelings matter. When we reinforce that message, then hopefully others will understand that there is more that unites us than divides us. Martin Luther King, Jr., said, "We may have arrived on the shore in different boats, but now we are all in the same boat."

According to Edmund Burke, the only thing necessary for evil to triumph is for good people to do nothing. Faith leaders should be able to speak out against injustice and tell others how to appreciate and show love to others. When that day happens, then truly we can be free at last, as the Spiritual says.

Hon. Terry Alexander (South Carolina State Assemblyman):

I'm a die-hard country Baptist preacher, ordained for 34 years. I take pride and joy in serving humankind, and I seek to serve God's people.

We find ourselves in both the spiritual and the mundane in the world, trying to make the wrong right. I ache over the hatred that people are showing to one another. What makes a person hate someone else? My role as a pastor is to bring this question to light.

How do we make earth as it is in heaven and form a beloved community? I believe it's the charge of the faith leaders. All of us in the faith community must bear that cross. We are called to seek after God and to point people to God. I know from my experience that politicians are more concerned with being re-elected than in serving the people.

Those of us in the faith/political arenas should be guided by serving people, not the next election outcome. Politics should be guided by our religion. I tell my younger ministry colleagues that we should be concerned with eternity. Political affiliation shouldn't matter to the faith community, but instead that we all share in the one God.

If we use our faith to help, then it will help. Faith leaders called by God to serve in the political arena should always be mindful to share about God and God's beloved community, regardless of race, creed, sex or origin. Then help facilitate the fruits of the spirit. If there is going to be a change, it starts with you and me.

Imam Mohamad Ali Elahi – Islamic House of Wisdom, WI:

In 1990 was the conference in San Francisco where I met the late Father Moon. He said the reason God created us was not to collect money, power, knowledge; just to love one another. Thirty years after the conference we signed a resolution in 2020 in Seoul for a global community of peace-loving citizens.

I'm so impressed by these words of wisdom from the faith leaders who spoke today. This is exactly the religion we believe in: of love and unity. Anyone who says they are speaking in the name of religion, but they promote hate and greed, we don't believe in that. The conference then was about how we can educate ourselves and others in promoting peace, the culture of patience and forgiveness, reconciliation, respect, and humility.

The Quran says that a peaceful heart in God is the origin and end of peace. How does it start from ourselves? The biggest war is not between north and south, Vietnam or Korea. The biggest war is inside everyone -- to solidify in the army of evil or of good. That is the biggest jihad: the internal conflict between ignorance inside everyone.

When religion and intellect combine, then we can have the journey of peace -- from our heart, to our home, community, nation and world. Don't lie, don't insult or ridicule, don't spread gossip. Repay evil with goodness. Your call is to send peace even to your enemies.

President Biden said, Let's work to fight anger, resentment, hatred, extremism, lawlessness, violence, disease, joblessness and hopelessness. Seven of these are internal. If we win that internal war, we can achieve eternal peace and share it with our family and the world.

The Universal Peace Federation encouraged viewers and all faith leaders to create a One Family Under God Global Community.