

Symphony of Peace Prayers

2015

Highlights from Fuji Sanctuary



ON MAY 17, 2015, Fuji Sanctuary hosted its eleventh annual Symphony of Peace Prayers (SOPP) ceremony, its largest and most significant to date. This year, the SOPP at Fuji Sanctuary was chosen as the venue to officially inaugurate the Fuji Declaration, a new global initiative to awaken the 'divine spark' within humanity in order to forge a civilization of oneness with diversity—a world of harmony and prosperity for all life on earth. (Please see more about the Fuji Declaration at www.fujideclaration.org.) For the third consecutive year, the SOPP was broadcast live over the internet, and this year, the broadcast included live commentary to aid in viewers' appreciation of the ceremony. The recorded broadcast can be viewed for a limited time at: www.ustream.tv/channel/symphony-of-peace-prayers-english.

East-West Celebration

Events at Fuji Sanctuary began in the chilly early morning hours with a pre-dawn ceremony held as part of an East-West Celebration—a live connection between the SOPP at Fuji Sanctuary and the Gala Evening of Transition World taking place at Kronborg Castle in Denmark. As the sun set in Denmark, it rose over Mount Fuji, with over 1,000 people gathered in the Prayer Field at Fuji Sanctuary. The pre-dawn ceremony was broadcast live over the internet and viewed in real time at the gathering in Denmark. The three initiators of the Fuji Declaration—Dr. Ervin Laszlo, Hiroo Saionji, and Masami Saionji—each offered a few remarks, and then participants offered a special prayer for peace, closing with a warm goodbye.



Opening with music

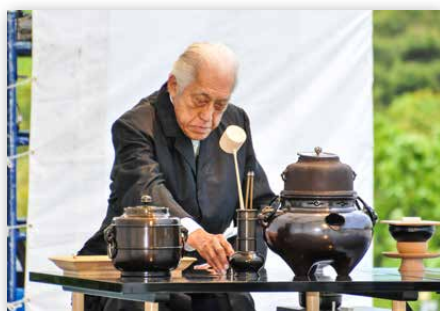
Later in the morning, Fuji Sanctuary began welcoming thousands more peace-loving people, including over 100 prayer leaders, performers, and distinguished guests. Some 10,000 people filled the Prayer Field as the sun rose high overhead, warming the air and shining on the smiling faces of the participants.



At 10 am, the SOPP ceremony began with two musical performances—a short performance on the *fujara*, a traditional Slovakian instrument played by Stanislav Ujhazi, and a musical prelude by American musicians Kenji Williams (violin) and Kristin Hoffmann (vocals), a performance of their piece *One Earth Choir*.

Introducing the Fuji Declaration

The three initiators of the Fuji Declaration took the stage to introduce this historic initiative. Masami Saionji, Chairperson of host organization Byakko Shinko Kai, spoke first, followed by her husband Hiroo Saionji, President of the Goi Peace Foundation, and then by Dr. Ervin Laszlo, Founder and President of the Club of Budapest. Each of them spoke about the significance of the Fuji Declaration at this time in human history, and about the importance of the 'divine spark' as the key to a more awakened and evolved human civilization.



Tea ceremony for world peace

Dr. Genshitsu Sen, 15th Urasenke Grand Master, performed on the stage a special Japanese tea ceremony dedicated to world peace. Dr. Sen has long been a global advocate of culture and peace, promoting his ideal of "Peacefulness through a Bowl of Tea." His beautiful ten-minute tea ceremony, performed especially in honor of the Fuji Declaration, was carried out meticulously and with utmost care, as participants looked on in silence.

Praying with the religions of the world

An international group of prayer leaders representing nine different faith traditions offered prayers for peace from their respective traditions, in a simple yet powerful demonstration of inter-religious harmony and understanding. Each prayer leader offered a prayer on their own first, and then joined with all participants in repeatedly praying a short phrase or mantra. The exception to this was the Sikh prayer leaders, whose entire prayer was sung together with all participants. Participants followed along with the prayers in their program booklets.

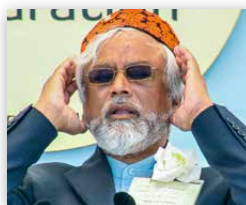
After all the faith representatives had offered prayers, Byakko Chairperson Masami Saionji offered her own short prayer, and then all participants joined in praying, "May peace prevail on Earth." Finally, all the prayer leaders came together at the front of the stage and once more prayed their short prayer or mantra.



*Rev. Masafumi Suzuki
(Shintoism)*



*Rabbi Ted Falcon, PhD
(Judaism)*



*Imam Jamal Rahman
(Islam Sufism)*



*Bibi Guru Inder and Hari Ji
(Sikhism)*



*Rev. Kocho Sasaki
(Buddhism)*



*The Reverend Canon Dr.
Charles P. Gibbs
(Christianity - Protestant)*



*Maulana Syed
Muhammad Abdul
Khabir Azad (Islam)*



*Fr. Dr. James Channan, OP
(Christianity - Roman
Catholic)*



*Ms. Shantisree Goswami
(Hinduism)*

Prayers for peace in each country and gratitude for all life

As it has each year, the SOPP included a ceremony to pray for peace in each country and region on earth. Flag bearers carrying the flags of 193 nations and an Earth Flag representing 'all the other regions of the world' ceremoniously entered the Prayer Field, accompanied by original music composed by Mr. Kenichi Yamamoto. The prayers began with the sound of a bell and the prayer *May peace prevail on Earth*. Then, as each nation's flag was presented on stage, participants prayed, *May peace be in (name of country)* in the national language(s) of that country.

Following this, participants joined together in offering gratitude for all life on earth. In Japanese and English, they prayed, "Thank you, dear Oceans. Thank you, dear Mountains. Thank you, dear Animals," and so on, concluding with, "Thank you, dear Planet Earth. May Peace Prevail on Earth."



Inaugurating the Fuji Declaration

The three initiators of the Fuji Declaration once again came on stage, along with a large group of founding signatories. In addition to being among the first to endorse the declaration, this international group of distinguished individuals had taken part in a discussion forum in Tokyo on May 15, where they shared ideas about how the Fuji Declaration can be applied in their respective fields. (The forum was hosted by the Goi Peace Foundation, which will be publishing a full report on the event later this year.)

Each of the signatories was introduced on stage, after which Masami Saionji read the text of the Fuji Declaration in Japanese, to anchor the spiritual energy at Fuji Sanctuary in each word of the declaration, while participants closed their eyes and listened intently. The last part of the declaration was read in English by five of the founding signatories, and then in Japanese by all participants.



Harmony of sacred sounds

The next part of the program was a musical medley of sacred sounds, arranged and directed by Kenji Williams. As the music began on stage, a large group of presenters made their way through the Prayer Field and in front of the stage, where they performed a short choreography using Japanese folding fans, and then performed an *IN*, or *mudra*, a wordless prayer to reawaken the divine spark in all humanity.

As the presenters exited the field, the sacred sounds continued, with a sung prayer by Humayun A. Mughal and performances by Rev. Ohashi Jihou, Kensho Koyama, Seiku Ogawa, and Tetsuji Fujioka from Tenreizan Tonenbo temple, and by members of the Gagaku Music Society of Tenri University. Lastly, Kristin Hoffmann (piano and vocals) performed a soulful composition that incorporated the prayer *May peace prevail on Earth*.



Closing with speech and song



Byakko Deputy Chairperson Yuka Saionji gave a closing address. She thanked the members of Byakko Shinko Kai, who have been praying for peace for half a century, believing on behalf of all humanity in the divine nature of human beings. She also gave special thanks to her mother, Masami Saionji, “who has devoted her life for this day, believing in the divine spark, envisioning this day, and putting all her efforts toward it.” She remarked:

We are not alone anymore. The Fuji Declaration has been launched, and the truth about the divine spark is being sent out to the world... The small drop of water is no longer a drop. It is starting to connect with other drops. Around the world, we are being connected with like-minded people. They are our family, and our noble friends. Today, the divine spark...is starting to resonate from here, and you are the ones who made it happen... The Fuji Declaration will not manifest in one or two days. It may take ten, twenty, even a hundred or two hundred years. But...the day will come when the next generation sees it and lives it as truth.



To complete the ceremony, all participants stood and joined in a finale song, “We Are All Shining Divine Sparks.” Set to lyrics by Masami Saionji, the music was composed by well-known Japanese composer Toshiyuki Watanabe. The song was performed on stage by Japanese soprano vocalist Tomoko Maekawa and the choir from Hitoana Elementary School, located near Fuji Sanctuary. A simple song that anyone can learn and sing, the lyrics beautifully summarize the message of the SOPP and the Fuji Declaration:

*Together, let us rise above our differences
Together, let us create a bright future
All exists in oneness, all is one
We are all shining divine sparks* (English translation)

MAY PEACE PREVAIL ON EARTH