(Photographed from *National Council Outlook* of September, 1955)

On 10th Anniversary of U.N.
People of Many Faiths Prayed for

PEACE FOR ALL NATIONS

TODAY, in the United Nations mankind finds new hope for the achievement of peace.

This hope was given dramatic expression last June 19 when some 16,000 persons of every race, creed and color assembled in San Francisco's Cow Palace to pray together for peace and pledge their support to the United Nations.

Under the vaulted dome of the mammoth auditorium men and women of all walks of life prayed in the words of their faith for world peace with justice.

They were Christians and Jews, Buddhists and Confucianists, Hindus and Moslems – men whose names are household words around the world, and workaday folk.

They called God by different names – speaking to Him in different tongues, but the dream for peace in their hearts was the same – and the prayers on their lips echoed the prayers of people around the world.

Initiated by the San Francisco Council of Churches, the Festival of Faith was a symbol for all men of the oneness of their aspirations and acknowledgment of their dependency upon a power transcending their own.

The spirit of the gathering was expressed in the words of the two main speakers, John Foster Dulles, Secretary of State, and Sir Leslie Munro, K.C.M.G., Ambassador of New Zealand to the United States and delegate to the United Nations.

It was echoed in the words of the presiding officer, Dr. O. Frederick Nolde, of Philadelphia, who is the director of the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs, jointly sponsored by the World Council of Churches and the International Missionary Council.

"Our participation this afternoon is not with any limitation but with a fuller expression of the freedom which we enjoy; it is not in betrayal of, but in deep fidelity to whatever faith each of us may profess. Without obscuring our differences of conviction, we share a common concern in the United Nations, and we know that its objectives cannot be attained if spiritual realities and resources are ignored.

"This Festival of Faith is a dramatic symbol of commitment by people of differing religious convictions to the struggle for world peace with justice, freedom and truth."

High point of the prayer meeting was the recitation together of the Responsive Reading composed of sentences from the sacred books of the six faiths represented–Christian, Jewish, Moslem, Buddhist, Hindu and Confucian.

News of the Festival of Faith circled the world. The story was front page in Guam and in Bombay and in cities across the U.S.A.

"The most wonderful prayer meeting I ever attended," commented a Chicago *Daily News* writer.

"Unprecedented proof of mankind's common aspirations – a spiritual service so magnificently staged few among the congregation are ever likely to forget . . ." said the San Francisco *Examiner*.

"(A meeting) to signify and bulwark their belief in the brotherhood of man," wrote another.

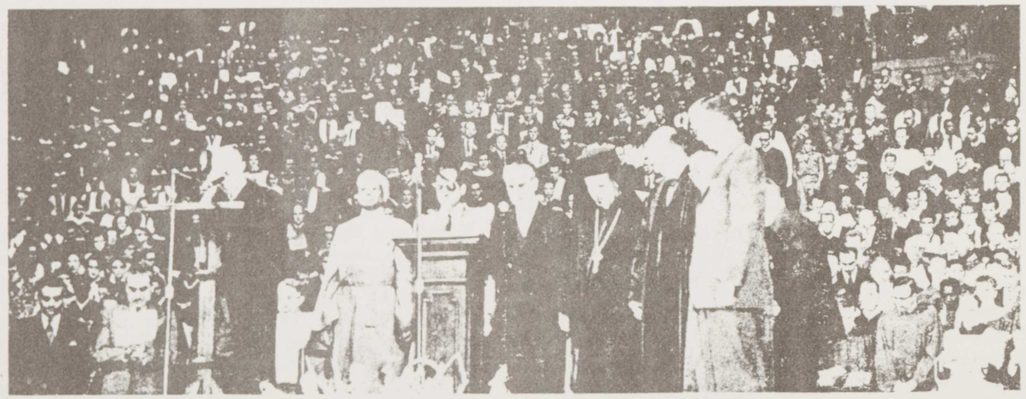
The story behind the organization of "The Festival of Faith" is one of the leadership and vision of dedicated men and women. It is also one of weeks of hard work, committee meetings, transcontinental phone calls and mountains of paper work.

As the council's executive director, Dr. John A. Gardner carried the major staff responsibility for the undertaking.

The initial idea for the service came from Mrs. William Lister Rogers, council president. Following approval of preliminary plans by the council's board of directors, Dr. Gardner and Mrs. Rogers organized a series of luncheons and interviews with leaders of various faiths to determine their interest in participating – "each in his own manner" – in praying for peace and divine guidance for the United Nations."

There were meetings with the bearded patriarchs of the Molokan sect, with Mormons, Christian Scientists, Seventh Day Adventists, with Buddhist priests and Hindu swami.

There were also negotiations with the Board of Rabbis of Northern California and with the Roman Catholic Archdiocese, which initially agreed to take part in the services and then decided to arrange for prayers for peace and the United Nations on a parochial level the same day. (The same decision was reached by the Missouri Synod Lutherans.) In some meetings it was necessary to use an interpreter.



Prayer Group and Choir Section at the San Francisco Festival of Faith in the Cow Palace on the occasion of the United Nations' Tenth Anniversary. Left to right: (behind the lectern) Dr. O. Frederick Nolde, who presided; Swami Ashokananda, Mr. Mohammed Ahmed Radwan. Rabbi Elliot H. Burstein, Rev. Paul S. Finfinis. Dr. John A. Gardner, Dr. Paul F. Fung and Mr. Arthur L. Dahl, Jr.

Moslem Jew Eastern Orthodox Protestant Buddhist

From these sessions was organized an interfaith Steering Committee the active sponsoring body, which held meetings every week for the eight weeks preceding the Festival. Each of these was begun with devotions by a leader of one of the faiths and ended with a circle of meditation, all joining hands to pray silently together.

Council offices were used as festival headquarters and the council loaned its staff for the job.

Production of the service involved arrangements such as staging, painting and installation of the backdrop (90 feet wide and 65 feet high, the largest ever placed at Cow Palace), floral arrangements, negotiations for television and radio coverage and contacts with the State Department and the Voice of America.

It involved distribution of 16,000 tickets in the face of widespread demand from the churches and public far exceeding the number available. It necessitated press conferences, news releases, editing of programs, preparation of resolutions and, following the service, the printing of 2,000 additional programs to meet public demands for extra copies.

Matters of protocol were a problem, too, including the seating arrangements for the 257 United Nations delegates who attended. Music had to be agreed upon, obtained and distributed to the 2,000 singers.

Conferences were held with United Nations officials and Mrs. Rogers visited Washington, D.C., on a mission to complete final arrangements. Transcontinental phone calls were a daily occurrence.

There were problems, too, on the composition of the service. Rabbi Elliot M. Burstein, president of the Board of Rabbis of Northern California, arranged for the composition of prayers by local leaders of the respective faiths. As his work advanced, it was discovered that the local Moslem Society represented a small group in Pakistan and its leader could not appropriately call the Moslem world to prayer. This leader's prayer could be included on the program for local use, but there must also be a prayer directly from the Koran. The Committee set about to find a representative of the world body of Moslems to give the call to prayer. The Buddhists also had important divisions and it was necessary to include two prayers for them.

The Steering Committee had earlier determined that appeals should be made to the headquarters of the various faiths

Mrs. William Lister Rogers, the president, and Dr. John A. Gardner, the director of the San Francisco Council of Churches

in the nation and the world for resolutions to be presented at the meeting and then submitted to the United Nations. Under the direction of Louis P. Gainsborough of the American Academy of Asian Studies, representatives of 13 Moslem nations were brought together in New York to discuss their participation. They framed a resolution which quoted from the Koran to prove that the Charter of the United Nations is consistent with the Islamic faith.

The Moslem Nations sent a representative, at their own expense, Dr. Mahound Yousef Shawarbi, professor at Cairo University, to read their resolution. Mr. Gainsborough cabled Ceylon to obtain a resolution from the President of the World Fellowship of Buddhists, Dr. G. P. Malalasekera. This was read by H.R.H. Prince Wan Waithayakon of Thailand. A resolution came from G. L. Mehta, Ambassador from India, representing the Hindu faith. Dr. Charles Malik read a resolution for the Greek Orthodox faith, in which he presented his own convictions, and read part of a statement by Michael, Archbishop of the Greek Orthodox Church in North and South America, which was prepared for this meeting. Strong in personal conviction as he is, Doctor Malik had to express his own conscience. The Synagogue Council of America drew up a statement for the meeting as did the General Board of the National Council of Churches. The latter statement was read by Dr. Walter W. Van Kirk, executive director of the Council's Department of International Affairs.

The musical portion of the program was under the direction of the famed conductor Robert Shaw, who led a chorus of 2,000 singers, also representing many faiths.

To carry the cost of the meeting – more than $7,500 – Mrs. Rogers organized a group of sponsors to occupy 750 of the 1,250 box seats in the auditorium. At the event itself an offering was taken for the United Nations Childrens Fund and radio and TV audiences sent in additional gifts for the fund which made the total over $4,000.

Press, radio and TV coverage of the Festival marked it as one of the city's biggest news events of the year. Forty-three newspaper and press services were represented in the press box, including the Voice of America and the United States Information Agency. Direct pick-ups or re-plays of high points were carried by 47 radio stations and by three of the city's TV stations.

The Festival itself represented both a triumph of organization and a symbol to all the world of man's hope for peace. "It is probably true that such an inclusive assembly has never before been achieved in a single service," Dr. Gardner commented.

"The forces of the world's religions as represented in a great cosmopolitan city were brought to bear on the efforts for peace of all nations."

WHICH GOD?

Nothing that we might photographically reproduce could prove apostasy more completely than the document from the *National Council Outlook* for September, 1955. Here the official organ of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States, representing 35 million people, as the Council claims, puts its stamp of approval upon and enthusiastically praises the program of the Festival of Faith held in support of the United Nations, June 19, 1955, in San Francisco, Calif. The National Council's magazine tells the story in detail and it should be read by every Christian throughout the world. Everything we have previously said about this blasphemous Festival of Faith, in which the many gods of the heathen were appealed to in a united service "of prayer for peace and divine guidance to the United Nations," is confirmed here. Actually, Protestant leadership in San Francisco and the National Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches provided the stimulus and the initiative for the setting up of this worship service with the heathen deities.

Dr. John A. Gardner, director of the San Francisco Council of Churches, goes beyond the statement we have previously made that nothing of this kind had been held before in the United States. He includes the entire world, for he says, "It is probably true that such an inclusive assembly has never before been achieved in a single service."

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