

WFWP Dublin Ireland's Welcome Dinner for Refugees

Doris McCann
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WFWP Ireland worked with the Sisters of Faith for Peace to create the second 'Welcome Dinner for Refugees' which took place in the evening of Thursday, 3 August 2017. We had a great turnout with about 55 women attending altogether. This time, St. Finian's Lutheran Church in Dublin provided the hosting venue in their 'Lutherhouse' Community Hall, and we could even enjoy the adjacent garden in the evening sunshine.

The idea behind this dinner event is to help break barriers and stereotypes, by simply getting together over a nice meal, and getting to know each other on a more personal level. We also wanted to express a warm welcome to our guests who have newly arrived in Ireland and currently reside in Direct Provision Accommodation.

Overall, there were so many nationalities present, to name but a few, ladies from Syria, Egypt, Burundi, Nigeria, Pakistan, South Africa, Australia, Germany, the US and Ireland of course. Many new and existing members prepared both sweet and savoury dishes, so we had an amazing and plentiful dinner buffet. All the meat dishes were halal, and there were kosher options as well, to make sure that all participants could enjoy the buffet, including the Muslim and Jewish ladies. Several of the Western ladies had made effort to cook with halal meat for the first time.

After the formal introductions, we had a minute of silence, inviting God into our midst, also reflecting on the many people who find themselves in desperate circumstances seeking refuge. Then, we introduced ourselves through an ice-breaker game whereby the ladies were randomly broken up into groups of 5, and after briefly introducing themselves, each group had to act out a simple but fun task. And boy, did the ice break! We were laughing in stitches and the atmosphere was very relaxed and happy. After that, we sat down to eat and chat, and we could get to know each other more closely over the delicious meal.



In the end, each refugee lady was given a flower. We parted with a feeling of gratitude, joy and new-found friendships and are already looking forward to meeting again. This event was a real team effort, with so many people contributing to making it possible.

We would like to thank sincerely: * the Lutheran Church and specifically Elke, Judy and their Women's Group for the venue, drinks, dishes and their wonderful overall support and warm welcome * Mavis, Naima and Zah for their assistance with the coordination * the Presidents' and Sabina Higgins' office for assistance in obtaining bus transport from and to Mosney Direct Provision Centre * Anna, Jane and Dee for helping with transport from other Direct Provision Centres * Tallaght Mosque for providing some additional table decor * and last but not least, all our 'hosting guests' who put a great deal of thought, heart and time into preparing so many wonderful dishes! And of course - everybody who came and contributed in many ways to making this such a memorable evening!

Reported by Doris McCann
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