



World Interfaith Harmony Week celebrated in Denmark

Copenhagen, Denmark, February 4, 2023

By Karsten Nielsen

UPF Denmark celebrated the UN International Day of Human Fraternity and World Interfaith Harmony Week in the parish hall of Nathanael's Church in Copenhagen with the theme **"Brotherhood Between Religions"**. Religious leaders, Ambassadors for Peace, local UPF members and other guests participated, total 40 persons.

In his welcoming remarks UPF secretary general **Karsten Nielsen** introduced the relative new UN Day of Human Fraternity (brotherhood) which falls in the middle of the World Interfaith Harmony Week based on the "A Common Word Initiative" with the idea that humanity is bound together by the two shared commandments of 'Love of God and Love of the Neighbor'. After he introduced the moderator **Zoraiz Khushdil**, Minhaj leader and Ambassador for Peace.

Zoraiz Khushdil participated in activities of UPF for more than 10 years and he praised UPF's initiatives and events in high tones as an example to follow. He then led the celebration with much warmth, joy, and humor.

The first speaker was **Maria Benedikte Fihl**, pastor for Internationals in The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark. Before becoming church minister 3 years ago she worked as a diplomat for 20 years involved in peacebuilding in Ukraine, Georgia, and Balkan. She said, our world and society are filled with

conflicts, but that energy can also initiate something good. As diplomat she administrated astronomical sums of money for EU, but said you cannot make a new pact with money. People's hearts need to awakened to the longing of God, a longing for love, for harmony and for the good. We need to rewrite people's hearts for the good. Referring to Corinthians Ch. 12, she said, we are nothing without each other and concluded saying God is ambitious for all of us, one day ALL of us will sit around the same communion table.

Next pastor **Wieslaw Podlach** at Sankt Annae, the local Catholic church spoke and said faith brings different nationalities together, in order to create true brotherhood we need something divine, God as our Father. Even people with no faith still have an original nature longing for love and the good. By his example Jesus taught us how to love ALL people, the washed the feet of sinners and outcasts.

Elizabeth Bramsen played the piano and sang "Feeling good" by Nina Simone.

The third speaker was imam **Basri Kurtis** from the Albanian faith community in Denmark. At the age of 16 he travelled to Albania to attend high school, went on to study religion and Islamic Studies at Al-Azhar University in Cairo to find out what he wanted with his life, before he got a degree in pastoral care at Copenhagen University. He found something universal in all religions. The Divine makes us brothers and

sisters, taking care of one person has same meaning as taking care of all humankind. Basri Kurtis emphasized the importance of the UN day of Human Fraternity and read part of the declaration “Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together” – co-authored by His Holiness Pope Francis and His Eminence the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Sheikh Ahmed El Tayeb – it is a model for interfaith harmony and human solidarity. Let us all take inspiration and renew our commitment to stand together as one human family.

In his speech dr. **Thorkil Christensen** said: “In FFWPU the dream is also a kingdom of true love, CIG, "the land where 2 become 1". It is clear to us that this can only be achieved with God in his proper role, as parents in the midst of his children. It is not only us who need God, God also needs us to realize his kingdom. In this light, it makes particularly good sense to talk about Brotherhood Between Religions. We are very different and have cultivated different paths that prepare us to form this kingdom, which is to be realized both in this world and in the afterlife.”

The **Peace Ceremony** was led by Thorkil Christensen. It consisted of music, religions and water - all something which goes beyond nationality, race, ethnicity, gender etc. Water cleanses our soul and body, gives life and connects all people. With prayer six religious leaders poured their water in a common bowl to the prelude of Wagner’s Lohrengrin.

Shohreh Shahrzad, an Iranian multi-artist played the Iranian frame drum, daff. The instrument has been used in both folk and religious music for millennia in Iran.

Monika Fossing, famous from TV talent show sang Amazing Grace before famous jazz singer and multi-artist, **Metta Carter** and Monika sang a powerful gospel potpourri.

At the end all participants enjoyed soup, coffee and cake in a warm brotherly atmosphere.

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