

UPF and WFWP Auckland, New Zealand's International Day of Peace Celebration

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Auckland, New Zealand -- UPF-New Zealand commemorated the 2018 UN International Day of Peace on Saturday, September 22, at the Te Mahurehure Cultural Centre. Co-sponsored with the Women's Federation for World Peace, it had the theme "Communities Together for Peace and Friendship."

Well over a hundred participants from diverse religious and ethnic backgrounds gathered for the event which was graced by the presence of Penny Hulse, former Auckland deputy mayor and current member of the Auckland city council, and enriched by representatives of a number of dedicated charitable and religious organizations. Among the organizations that shared their services with society with display tables the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints, the Baha'i Faith, the Church of Scientology, and the Bridgebuilders Trust.



A solemn Powhiri (Maori welcoming ceremony) led by Reverend Bill and Violet Tangariki and Mr. Geoffrey Prentice set a beautiful spirit for the event. Opening remarks by Mr. Adel Jamati, UPF-New Zealand director, set the tone for the event by emphasizing the culture of peace through service and pointing out that the essence of all religions is one: Love God and live for the sake of others.

Councilor Penny Hulse, as the chief speaker, gave warm and gracious words of acknowledgement and encouragement to all present, enveloping the ceremony with a spirit of unity, peace and friendship. She reminded us of the need for peace building in the very uncertain and sometimes hostile political

environment. She has been serving the Waitakere area of Auckland for 27 years and has great passion for its diversity.

UPF-New Zealand recognized selfless individuals who have contributed greatly to their communities through a life of service and presented them with the Ambassador for Peace award. The recipients were Mr. Prithi Pal Singh, recipient of the New Zealand Order of Merit and chairman of the Sikh Society; Mrs. Anne Pala, recipient of the Queen's Service Medal and founder of Ethnix Links; and Datin Dr. Nor Hafizah Ismail from Malaysia.



The next highlight was the Bridge of Peace ceremony, which was officiated by Felicity Cairns, president of the New Zealand chapter of the Women's Federation for World Peace. Ceremony participants meet a "sister" from a former enemy nation, a different faith, culture or race and commit themselves to bridge the gaps between them. Three pairs of women participated in the ceremony: Pauline Jamati (Europe) and Violet Tangariki (Maori), Anne Pala (Islam) and Cornelia Goijarts (Christianity), and finally, Keiko Watanabe (Japan) and Chan Ju Lee (Korea).

The audience was then dazzled by Ambika Krishnamurthi, a student at ACG Strathallan School who presented a beautiful Indian classical khatak dance symbolizing a peacock's graceful movements. Her captivating performance added an ethnic charm, reminding us of the cultural diversity of New Zealand.

Afterward, Mr. Andrew Halim, UPF-New Zealand youth coordinator, presented the local chapter of Peace Road, a global peace project. He briefly shared the background of Peace Road which aims to actualize the International Peace Highway originally proposed in 1981 by Dr. Sun Myung Moon, founder of UPF. That segment of the program was concluded by an exciting promotional video encouraging the participants to join the 2019 Peace Road activities.

After all the main components of the event were concluded, everyone was encouraged to stand up and sing "We Are the World" by Michael Jackson. An atmosphere of warmth and joy brought us together as one family.