

## Nearly 15,000 people at Peace Starts With Me Rally at the Nassau Coliseum, NY

Richard Buessing  
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On November 12, nearly 15,000 people called for an era of healing for America through a powerful display of music, inspiration, and prayer at the Peace Starts With Me Rally in the Nassau Coliseum. Co-Sponsored by the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU) and the American Clergy Leadership Conference (ACLC), the rally featured a star-studded cast of chart-topping contemporary Christian artists, influential religious figures, and even a 5,000 voice choir.

From as early as noon, members of the 5,000 voice choir trickled into the arena to rehearse for a final time before the momentous rally. Even before the program began, excitement filled the air as over 200 congregations nationwide, religious leaders from all walks of faith, and veterans from all over the tri-state area had all come together in support of one message: Peace Starts With Me.

FFWPU USA President Rev. Richard Buessing delivered a fervent opening prayer, proclaiming that peace begins with us, but blooms within the family: "Loving, peaceful families are the starting point of the kingdom of heaven on earth," he said. "It is your love, Heavenly Parent, that binds us all together. May you fill this arena with your infinite love and with your holy spirit."

The musical guests did not disappoint, as Chicago-based Christian pop band Citizen Way set the tone for the afternoon with their energetic, fiery performances of their current Christian chart-topper, "Wave Walker." Award-winning gospel artist Israel Houghton followed up the performance with a soulful rendition of his song, "I Am a Friend of God," and "Reckless Love."

Everyone in the arena joined their hands and voices together for Grammy-Award winner Bishop Hezekiah Walker. In elegant white gowns, five hundred praise dancers crowded the stage and danced to Bishop Walker's "Every Praise." In a true moment of unity through music, over a hundred youth ran forward to the main floor and joined the praise dancers in worship of God, our heavenly parent. Following the inspiring performance, Emmy-Award winning producer A. Curtis Farrow led the 5,000 voice choir as they stood up in their silky white sashes to give "Total Praise" to God. A queen of gospel and soul, Yolanda Adams delivered an inspiring performance through songs such as "I Believe I Can Fly."

Bishop Noel Jones of the City of Refuge Church in Los Angeles then took the stage, reminding those in the audience the beauty of their differences, even in their understandings of God: "The reason we share is because your conceptualization of God is different for me than it is for you," he said. "There are some things I don't know that you do. When you try to be like me, you cheat me of you." Bishop Jones continued to explain the importance of embracing the differences among one another: "I cannot say that I love God if I don't love my brother whom I see every day. I cannot have peace with God if I don't have peace with the brothers and sisters he created around me. It begins with us."

Pastor T.L. Barrett, the Senior Pastor of the Life Center Church of God in Christ in Chicago then expressed his utmost gratitude for True Parents: "When I think of all True Parents have done together to lift up fallen humanity, I feel more than 'Thank you, God.' I feel that 'Thank you, God,' is not enough for God has given us," remarked Pastor Barrett. "I must give total praise, total praise because praise is what I do when thank you just won't do. Praise is what is due to our God. Thank you, God, for our True Parents."



With Pastor Barrett's moving introduction, it was finally time for True Mother to deliver the keynote address. Recognizing that there were many people of different religious backgrounds in the audience, in a loving gesture, True Mother called for the audience to unite in achieving God's dream of world peace: "You all have responsibilities. Will you work to expand the blessing? This is the path to realizing humanity's cherished wish—a world of peace. Let us join hands and bring forth this day. Will you join me in realizing this mission? America is the nation that God has blessed. If we do not take action, there is no hope for the future. Are you going to sit idly and let the earth turn to ruin or rise up and take action? Let's build a kingdom of peace together. Wherever we go, there is hope, isn't that so?"

In honor of Veteran's Day and the hundredth anniversary of Armistice Day, the rally also honored those who have served our nation. Rev. Demian Dunkley, Vice President of Family Federation USA and executive producer of the rally, reminded the audience, "No one wants peace more than veterans." True Mother donated over \$50,000 to four veteran organizations to help support them in giving back to the people who have given so much to protect America.

Immediately after the rally, over 200 religious leaders celebrated the completion of the rally along with True Mother. As they enjoyed a beautiful banquet, True Mother expressed how much hope she felt as she gazed upon the diverse clergy and audience at the Nassau Coliseum. She again reiterated the tremendous power the clergy have in achieving God's dream:

*"The goal of this nation is to lay the foundation to welcome the return of the Messiah. Who is the center of this nation? It is not the president; it is all of you clergy members who have gathered here today. The president changes every 4 years but your commitment is eternal. As pastors, you must all receive the Blessing and guide all of your church members to also receive the Blessing. That is the meaning, the dream of True Parents and the Heavenly Parent. How greatly would this nation change if we could form ideal families? You are the owners of this nation; what will you do? I send my endless love and blessings to all of you."*