

"Peace through Friendship"

A UPF / WFWP fundraising event to support the people of Nepal

Birmingham, United Kingdom, 8. August 2015



By David Earle

Approximately 200 people came together on Saturday August 8th to help raise money for the ongoing effort to help the people of Nepal rebuild their homes, and their lives. In addition to the fundraising, we held a Bridge of Peace ceremony under the banner of 'Peace through Friendship', followed by food and a wonderful cultural programme. Mainly through the entrance fee, and with some additional donations, we made a total of around £1400 before expenses. The proceeds will be sent to Nepal and used by the branch of the Women's Federation there to support their existing aid projects.

The fundraiser was sponsored by both the Women's Federation and the Universal Peace Federation. Adults and children from the local FFWPU community worked really hard to staff the event, and were joined by around 150 guests. A lot of these were existing contacts, but over a quarter were new guests, taking part in one of our events for the first time. The venue, the meeting hall of Selly Oak Methodist Church, was quite full but with a good kitchen, stage, foyer and children's room we had the flexibility for a pleasant occasion.



David Earle introducing Ms Lorraine Olley.



Mrs Tina Coombs explains the Bridge of Peace.

David Earle began proceedings by welcoming everyone and recognising several VIP guests, amongst them Ms Lorraine Olley who was representing Birmingham's Lord Mayor, Cllr Ramesh Srivastava former Lord Mayor of Rugby and currently Chair of the British Organisation for People of Asian origin (BOPA), Davinder Prasad - Sec Gen'l of BOPA, and Mrs Chanchal Jain - President of the Indian Ladies Club. Apologies were

offered for Cllr Yvonne Mosquito, the West Midlands Deputy Police Crime Commissioner who was to have been our main guest speaker, and who had to cancel at the 11th hour. He also thanked Mrs Tina Coombs (WFWP), Mrs Margaret Ali (UPF) and Mr Bernard Chellew who had all come from other parts of the country to help with the programme.

David gave a brief summary of UPF and WFWP's work in Nepal during the last 15 years or so, helping to reign in the extreme Maoist group 'Shining Path' and bring them into the political process offering character education and peace education programmes on all levels, including national TV, and supplementing all of the above with many social and humanitarian activities to help the Nepalese people. He then introduced Lorraine Olley who spoke about the value of friendship and community, and the need to consistently strive for greater harmony and understanding between the many, diverse cultures, races, religions and ethnic groups in our society. Lorraine was followed by Mrs Tina Coombs who has held positions nationally and internationally for WFWP. She spoke about the importance and meaning of the Bridge of Peace, a flagship project of WFWP, and then encouraged everyone to come up on stage and make a new friend.



Sharing personal details.



Saying the Friendship Pledge.



Chatting together.

Many new friendships were formed, and the room began to buzz as personal details were exchanged, people chatted to each other and then we stood to say our Friendship Pledge together. (Photos of all the new friends made are at the end of this article.)

After a while we invited people up, table by table, to enjoy some delicious food, much of it provided by arguably the best Indian caterer in the West Midlands, Shankars Sweet Centre. Mr Shankar and his family business have consistently supported our events for many years. As everyone started to eat,

Bernard began the musical programme by singing 'Forever Young', followed by a variety of songs from our western, Caribbean and Asian cultures. One highlight was Frances Redihough who captured everyone's heart with her song for peace, and concluding words ... "We are One Family under God". Bernard expertly kept the programme flowing, culminating in the well-known Reggae number 'One World One Heart, performed by Basil, Catherine and Candice Gabbidon which inspired quite a few of us to get up and dance.



Bernard and Viola Dirrhofer.



The Indian Ladies Club.



Frances Redihough.



Audience enjoying the singing.



The Gabbidon family.



'Peace through Friendship'.

All in all, a great occasion with food, friendship and a family atmosphere, and around £1000 to send as our collective contribution to help the people of Nepal..







