

Hyojeong Benefit Concert for City of Refuge Church and FFPWU Family Festival

Demian Dunkley
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Hyojeong Benefit Concert for City of Refuge Church's pick up an instrument instead of a gun initiative

Hyojeong weekend in New York kicked off with a musical explosion.

Lights illuminated the stage in a multi-color array, as the countdown to the Peace Starts with Me Hyojeong Benefit Concert reached its final seconds. An amalgam of artists came together for the Peace Starts with Me Hyojeong Benefit Concert at the Manhattan Center on Saturday, May 25.

Concertgoers of all ages gathered to celebrate Hyojeong, a Korean phrase meaning a "culture of filial piety," or a culture of heart. Viewers who could not be there in person tuned into the live broadcast from states across the country, including, California, Florida, and Ohio.



All of the funds raised from the concert will go directly to the City of Refuge Church, for their "pick up an instrument instead of a gun" initiative aimed at helped inner city youth in southern Los Angeles. Throughout the night, donations to the cause more than doubled. Citizen Way, a chart-topping Christian rock band who headlined the concert, donated ten percent of their merchandise revenue to the City of Refuge.

Elder Edwin Perry, co-pastor of the City of Refuge, said, "This campaign is not just going to be in LA, it is going to take off around the world. If we start in this generation, ten years from now we will reap the benefits of what we are doing today."



The delight of the crowd was evident. As each artist took the stage, they brought their unique vigor. Some, like Shuji Hata and Elilo, mesmerized onlookers with their sheer musicality, while others, like The Group Fire and the LA Band, brought the audience to their feet with ardor.

Highlights of the night included Jason McGee and the award-winning choir P.S.A.L.M.S., who brought energy to the room with "The Blood Still Works." Citizen Way enlivened the electric audience, running through the crowd as they sang out in praise. In tandem with the City of Refuge's cause, lead singer Ben Calhoun called out, "We don't need any weapons other than the words of God."

FFWPU's Annual Family Festival at Belvedere



In continuation of Hyojeong, the annual Family Festival commenced the following morning, Sunday, May 26, in Belvedere. The sun shone peacefully and the crisp green foliage and chattering birds welcomed concertgoers from the night before, as well as new visitors coming from near and far to Tarrytown, New York.

The festival began with morning service. Vendors, staff, musical performers and guests communed with chairs and blankets in the lawn and sang songs of worship together.



Rev. Demian Dunkley, President of the Family Federation for a Heavenly USA, stated, "It's important to recognize the work that God is doing and the success that we are having, instead of thinking that it's going to happen tomorrow or next year. We are already experiencing Heaven and multiplying it."

Dr. Ki Hoon Kim, Regional Chairman of the Family Federation of North America, gave a brief sermon, emphasizing the significance of Memorial Day weekend.

"As we celebrate, we should remember all who served this country," said Dr. Kim. "Let's give them a big hand."



A mix of new and returning vendors offered a variety of international of foods, drinks, and crafts to visitors. Guests could delight in a refreshing bubble tea or full dishes of vegetables and meats with diverse spices. Many artists from the previous night performed again. People also lined up to see Rev. Dunkley, among others, dunked in a dunk tank. Children could ride ponies and compete in obstacle courses.

For many, the festival encouraged a culture of heart. One young Unificationist said, "This day is really about showing gratitude; appreciating all the people that came by giving them a high five, saying thank you and putting a smile on their face."

The weekend was a blissful transition between the Peace Starts with Me Rally in LA and the upcoming Unity Festival in Las Vegas on June 22. As for the reason behind the growing number of outreach events, Dr. Kim summed it up perfectly, "We have a whole world to take care of together, America, right?"