

Festival Promotes a Culture of Peace in Los Angeles - Hyun Jin Moon's presentation is always brilliant

October 9, 2008

The Global Peace Festival on October 9 in Los Angeles capped a 21-day focus on peace events that included the annual ringing of the United Nations Peace Bell at Maguire Gardens in Central Los Angeles, an International Day of Peace Speech and Drawing Contest, Prayers for Peace at the Pasadena City College Campus, "Pinwheels for Peace" at the Monrovia Coffee Company, "Kites for Peace" by the Brahma-Kumari sisters, a tree planting at the Malibu Canyon Peace Center, a Women's Federation for World Peace event supporting African schools, a "Clean Slate" presentation for inner peace among inner-city youth, and a kaleidoscope of other significant and colorful events designed to promote a culture of peace.

Participants at the GPF special celebration included renowned partners for peace such as Ms. Norma Foster, President of the United Nations Association of Los Angeles; Dr. Cecil "Chip" Murray, a well-known pastor, professor and social activist; His Holiness Vishwaguru Paramhans Swami Maheshwarananda, who is a Yoga master and an International Peace Ambassador and humanitarian from Rajasthan, India; Dr. Muzammil Siddiqi, an eminent Muslim scholar; Mr. Mohammad Khan; Dr. Austin Williams; Bishop Noel Jones of "the City of Refuge"; and many more.

The Westin Airport Hotel at Los Angeles Airport, the finest on Century Boulevard, welcomed a thousand guests to the Grand Ballroom that night. The event was a jubilant celebration of the oneness felt as the theme "One Family Under God" echoed in the lyrics of song, speeches, and ceremonies. The Agape International Choir, led by Tim McAfee Lewis, stunned the audience with bright spirit and overwhelming joy from 100 professional singers. This is the choir performing at the church pastored by Rev. Dr. Michael Beckwith, a visionary featured in the best-selling book, *The Secret*, by Rhonda Byrne. Another highlight was the Interfaith Water Ceremony for Peace, during which seven of the most influential religious leaders of the various faiths in Los Angeles symbolically offered their faith traditions in support of a unified peace for humanity through pouring water from a glass bowl embellished with a painted symbol of their faith into a large crystal basin representing the unity of "One Family Under God." The ceremony touched the heart and demonstrated loving unity through the presence and wisdom of each leader.

The "One Family Under God" Choir, led by Minister John Millsap, voiced a soul-filled rendition of "Lean on Me" by Kirk Franklin. The choir itself is a unity of youth from several churches and worked for more than a month to rehearse and perfect their delivery. Their international costumes together with the flags of 40 Pacific Rim nations radiated colorful brightness from the stage.

The theme song, "Where Peace Begins" was sung by Miyuki Harley, while stage left and right a video was shown highlighting all the events for peace that had been done in the weeks before the program. What better example of peace could be shown than honoring young men, now appointed Ambassadors for Peace, gathered from the notorious "Crips" and "Bloods" gangs of South Los Angeles actively making a stand for peace by organizing a truce in their neighborhoods!

The finale evoked memories of the Middle East Peace Initiative in Jerusalem. The song, "Peace, Shalom, Salaam Aleikum," written by Barry Fasman (producer of six albums of the TV show FAME) and Rick Joswick, was sung by all choirs in unison echoing the chants for peace sung by marchers in the narrow passages of the Holy City on the way to the Western Wall.

Dr. Hyun Jin Moon's presentation is always brilliant, but it was especially crisp and confident that evening. On the reflection sheets, many voiced new confidence to promote peace as the dream of God and the common ideal owned by each of us and all of us together.

Ambassadors for Peace who attended the American Leadership Conference earlier the same day in the Concourse Ballroom had already been treated to a very persuasive and highly interactive seminar outlining core values that provide common grounds for cooperation in service of peace in the Southland communities. One bishop active in the Orange County area testified that he is highly impressed and is now eager to participate, whereas he had been somewhat hesitant before coming.

The Global Peace Festival was a spectacular and deeply moving celebration. So much more than just entertainment, it provided a new beginning for the community of faith in Los Angeles. Together with the surrounding events it forged a commitment to partnership for peace. "I feel blessed to have been a part of this event!" wrote Medina Song. "We need to send the important message of unity in this world, appreciating differences and learning to love as one 'family.' Thank you. It is incredible to have the opportunity to receive such a powerful and positive message!"