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Global Peace In Washington

By GPF-USA
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Thousands of peacemakers came to celebrate peace on the lawn of the US Capitol Saturday at the Global Peace Festival USA. The gathering, billed as the largest interfaith and multicultural event ever held in Washington DC, was the second in a series of fifteen Global Peace Festivals this year, with the next planned for late August in Nairobi, Kenya.

"The great thing about the Festival is that it brings people together with neighbors from other faiths and cultures in a safe encounter," said the Festival's executive director, Paul Murray, pastor of a fast-growing church in Baltimore. "When people see Muslims and Jews from Jerusalem and other trouble spots embracing each other in tears of forgiveness and reconciliation on the stage, they naturally reach out right away with those of other faiths in the crowd."

Throughout the afternoon, the air vibrated with the sounds of prayers and songs of peace in many different keys. The Black Bear Native American singers called the crowd to order with a traditional prayer dance, and Dr. Muzammil Siddiqi and a large Muslim delegation shared traditional Islamic prayers of peace.

Several speakers reminded the crowd of the parallels with another great gathering in Washington 45 years ago, when Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., delivered his immortal message, "I have a dream." Dr. Joseph E. Lowery, one of King's closest aides during the sixties, said the time had come to fulfill King's dream of creating the beloved community. "We must become the 'Joshua Generation' that Martin envisioned," Lowery said, "leading the world into a promised land as One Family Under God."

Latin Grammy winner Juan Fernando Velasco and gospel superstars Yolanda Adams and David Phelps – with seven Grammys between them – were among the many entertainers keeping the crowd in a festive mood, with additional performances from the 500-voice Global Peace choir and a strong contingent of rising local youth groups singing the Global Peace Festival theme song, "Where Peace Begins."

The Festival also celebrated the power of service to transform people and communities. "Service is just another way of saying 'I love you,'" said Rev. Mark Farr of the Points of Light Institute, a lead festival partner. The Institute, along with the Universal Peace Federation, Boys and Girls Clubs of Washington, DC, and more than 242 partner agencies organized a recent citywide day of service. A "Food for Peace" drive helped fill the shelves of the Capitol Area Food Bank, which recently revealed to the Washington Post that thousands of families were newly at risk of hunger. Festival goers brought food from as far away as Chicago.

The global theme of the Peace Festival is "One Family Under God" – a world without the barriers of race and religion – and the leadership role of America as the model of interfaith harmony.

"I want to share a new vision for America," said Dr. Hyun Jin Moon, the Global Peace Festival founder and the third son of the Reverend Sun Myung Moon. "It is a vision rooted in our nation's founding principles, taking the ideal of one nation under God and bringing it one step further into a greater, universal ideal, of one family under God. One world family of peace is a dream for Americans and all, and all people of faith, and most of all, it is the dream of God."