

In Amsterdam, Demonstrating that Friendships Between Religions Are Possible

Christopher Vipond Davies
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UPF - Netherlands



Amsterdam, Netherlands - Dressed in kimono from her native Japan, Mihoko Ikeya Koetsier, Women's Federation for World Peace activist, opened the evening program on the UN International Day of Friendship, July 30, by welcoming everyone to the Dialogue Center in Amsterdam. Drs. Ari van Buuren, Chairman of United Religions Initiative-Netherlands, spoke on "My Interfaith Experiences and the Fight of Jacob with the Angel," telling stories of his pastoral, family, and personal experiences of the challenge to respect people of all religious convictions.

During a musical interlude, Christopher Vipond Davies, a musician, writer, and editor, sang two songs about friendship, the first about him regarding someone as a friend before any other considerations or descriptions and the second remembering a fellow artist he knew in Paris 48 years ago.



Then Mrs. Helen Baal and Mr. André Antonius, experts on interreligious cooperation in Suriname, spoke on "Friendships between Religions and the Example of Suriname," and Drs. Wim Koetsier, UPF-Netherlands Secretary General, spoke on "Friendship in the Light of One Family Under God." Drs. Koetsier also announced plans for UPF Netherlands' celebration of the United Nations International Day of Peace on September 21, in the English and American Episcopal Church of St. John & St. Philip in The Hague.



The published program announced a “Musical Conclusion” with Hans Campman, President of the Family Federation for World Peace-Netherlands and pianist, and Carlos Figueroa, guitarist, but Hans called renowned singer and peace activist Marlene Waal to the front, and she brought a great spirit of unity to the meeting with gospel songs such as "Kumbaya" and “We Shall Overcome.”

There was still time for a group photo and informal fellowship as guests and UPF activists gradually began to take their leave.