

## UPF Birmingham, UK's United We Stand, Divided We Fall interfaith meeting

Patricia Earle  
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**Birmingham, United Kingdom** -- A very diverse audience of 130 attended an interfaith meeting held in the Prayer Hall of the Al-Mahdi Institute.

The event, which took place on November 13, 2022, under the theme of "United We Stand, Divided We Fall," was organized by the West Midlands chapters of UPF and Women's Federation for World Peace (WFWP), an affiliated organization.



Following an ice-breaker, in which each person thanked the person sitting next to him or her for making the effort to attend the meeting, Shaykh Mahmood Dhalla, a leader of the Al-Mahdi Institute, welcomed everyone and briefly explained about the work of the institute.

Representatives from eight faith traditions each gave a short reading or prayer connecting to the theme of the meeting. The sincerity and spirituality of such offerings never fail to "set the scene" for a meaningful occasion.

The four main speakers then offered their thoughts. **Anthea McIntyre**, a former member of the European Parliament, spoke about the cross-party initiative she began against hate crime, following the 2016 Brexit referendum. She concluded by reciting a beautiful poem by Mary Baker Eddy, the founder of Christian Science.

**Sheikh Nuru Mohammed**, a scholar of Shia Islam and a leader of Al-Islam.org, described efforts to help young people see that they have a choice: either to be caught up with "what is" -- the difficult circumstances of our current era -- or to focus on "what can be" -- the ideal society to which we all aspire and want to see become reality.

**Kamlaish Kumari** spoke sincerely about the way in which her Hindu faith helps her to feel God's presence and see the presence of God in others -- as each person is a divine spark in the grand tapestry of life. She also mentioned about a wonderful project in India in which she has been involved, bringing hope and practical help to many people there.



Finally, **Dr. David Earle**, the director of UPF in the West Midlands region, spoke about the importance of creating peace in myself, my family and the wider world, which must involve God and strike the right balance between myself and others, always centered on the greater good and the purpose of the whole. Dr. Earle offered some practical ideas on bringing this about together.

**Elliot Yamamoto**, the leader in the UK for Youth and Students for Peace (YSP), an organization that is affiliated with UPF, spoke about YSP activities. Several young adults then reported about a youth service project in August 2022, in which they began work on a Peace Garden in Birmingham's Small Heath area.

An Ambassador for Peace awards ceremony honored Dr. Umesh Yadav, minister of religion for the Arya Samaj community; Shehla Moledina, councilor for Balsall Heath West electoral ward; Jackie Taylor, deputy lord mayor in Sandwell Council; Rev. Jasmine Browne, minister in the Church of England; Sadia Malik, former consul general of Pakistan in Birmingham; Bishop Neville and Joyce Fletcher of the Church of God of Prophecy and their daughter Shermara, a dynamic Christian youth leader who had the privilege of offering a prayer at the funeral service of Queen Elizabeth II.

Finally, a group of women who have been knitting blankets, scarves, hats and clothes for many years presented two large bags from their labors to two women who were about to depart for Syria. The beautiful items will be given to widows and orphaned children as a warm gesture of peace and good will.

After the meeting ended, the participants enjoyed refreshments in the Institute's dining area, where old friendships were renewed, new friendships made, and the spirit of togetherness continued on into the early evening.