

## UPF United Kingdom Celebrates Marriage, Family and Faith

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**London, United Kingdom** – Couples, families, faith leaders and guests joined the annual Celebration of Marriage, Family and Faith hosted on April 18, 2026, by UPF-United Kingdom, together with the North of the Thames Community of the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU). The joyful and reflective gathering affirmed the importance of marriage, family values and spiritual life in building peaceful communities.

Opening the event, **Mr. Robin Marsh**, secretary general of UPF-UK, said the purpose was not only to celebrate marriage, family and faith, but also to recognize the advice, wisdom and lived experience that help families thrive.



The program began with an invocation from **Mrs. Datta Shah** of the Jain community. She explained that her prayer honoured enlightened souls, teachers and guides who have overcome inner obstacles such as greed and anger, and who show humanity the path to higher life. She set a deeply respectful tone for the afternoon and reflected the interfaith spirit of the event.

**Dr. David Hanna**, a longstanding presenter on the Principles of Peace and a former UPF Northern Region president, then spoke on the theme “A Blessing for the World.” He reflected on the role of marriage and family in the wider pursuit of peace, especially in the context of humanity as one family loved by God.

Dr. Hanna explored how the world’s major faith traditions have long recognized the importance of marriage ceremonies and family life. Drawing examples from Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Sikh and Christian traditions, he showed how marriage has historically been understood not merely as a private arrangement

between two individuals, but as a sacred commitment involving family, community and spiritual responsibility.

He also stressed that peace begins with the individual, continues through marriage and family, and then shapes humanity's relationship with the wider world and with nature. In this way, family life is directly connected to the search for lasting peace.



Following this, **Rev. William and Ruth Haines** from the FFWPU guided participants through an interfaith marriage blessing ceremony. In their opening prayer, they gave thanks for the opportunity to renew the blessing of marriage among couples from a range of different faiths and backgrounds, while also praying for those not yet married.

Rev. and Mrs. Haines spoke warmly about marriage as a holy path of love, commitment and growth. They described it as the joining not only of two people, but of two lineages and two families, and as the foundation of family life in which children are nurtured and love matures through life's joys and trials.



A reading from the poet **Khalil Gibran** added a literary dimension to the ceremony, reminding couples of the importance both of togetherness and of honoring one another's individuality.

In a joyful celebration, couples came forward to cut the cake together, marking the occasion in a spirit of unity and shared happiness. **Ms. Jule Dyer**, a gifted singer, a barrister working in family law, and a UPF ambassador for peace, enriched the atmosphere with a song. Her beautiful performance of "Friend of the Wounded Heart," brought an emotional and compassionate close to the celebration, offering comfort and hope to all those who have experienced difficulty in family or married life.

Guests then watched an extract from Mark Gungor's "Tale of Two Brains," part of his "Laugh Your Way to a Better Marriage" seminar. The video humorously explored differences in the way men and women respond to stress, communication and emotional processing. It elicited laughter, while also opening a

practical conversation about understanding one another better in marriage.

**Dr. Zohra Zaidi** then offered a practical reflection on family life, marriage responsibilities and the importance of raising children well.



Two families were then presented with Exemplary Family Awards. **Fatemeh Haji and Masoud Hajian**, together with their children, were honored for the peace and harmony they radiate as a family. In their response, they reflected that peace begins at home through communication, patience, forgiveness, quality time, love and respect.



The second award was presented to **Gwendolyn Khan and Tahir Hussain**, whose blended and intercultural family offered another powerful example of commitment, shared values and faith. **Ms. Khan** spoke honestly about the challenges and blessings of remarriage, blended family life and building unity across cultural and religious backgrounds.

The event concluded with reflections from guests and a commentary from Mr. Marsh, who affirmed that family is both a place of great blessing and real challenge. He described it as a vital safety net and a place where people learn to keep talking, keep understanding and keep growing for the sake of the whole. The event ended with a renewed appreciation for marriage, family and faith as foundations for personal happiness, community strength and lasting peace.