



## Message of Peace from The Mayor of Croydon Celebration and Fundraise

South London, United Kingdom, December 14, 2019

By Dolores Read

**W**e are going to combine all the community together, and I give them a challenge to come up with music so that all these 4 or 5 different ethnic communities in Croydon can do music together and dance together” was the declaration by the Mayor of Croydon, Councillor Humayun Kabir, expressing his vision of bringing harmony among the diverse groups resident in the borough. He emphasised that although individual communities are good at promoting their own art, culture and music, there is a need to bring everyone together – this is the driving force behind his 11 March community celebration event planned in the New Year. Addressing a 50-strong audience at the joint WFWP and UPF Christmas Celebration held at the Peace Embassy, Haslemere Hall, in Thornton Heath on 14th December 2019, the Mayor also spoke about his 5 chosen charities which he has been earnestly supporting, all reflecting concerns faced by people in the borough today, including the mental health and self-esteem of young and vulnerable people, and easing refugee hardship. He concluded by recognising the valuable role played by the hosting organisations and the Haslemere Hall venue as a welcoming place that people of all different faiths and backgrounds could use to their mutual benefit.

The programme was opened by the Master of Ceremonies, Tina Coombs, who introduced the celebration theme “Peace and Goodwill to All” by affirming that underpinning the desire for peace there has to be love, and that Christmas is a special time to share love within our families and communities. She

introduced two speakers, Trisha Muirhead-Hewitt and Ashley Crosthwaite, who provided excellent insights into their respective charities’ purposes and activities. Trisha spoke about the genesis of the Ashdown Jazz Academy as the legacy of her daughter Ashdon, who tragically died in 2014. Ashley Crosthwaite, Director of IRFF-UK, a sister organisation to UPF and WFWP, spoke about how the Destiny Junior School in Uganda has grown through the support of IRFF and various organisations contributing funds. He explained the challenges faced by the children such as access to clean sanitation, health services and education, and mentioned how relief provided by IRFF has dramatically improved their lives and future opportunities.

A prize-draw raffle held at the close of the proceedings raised monies to support both the IRFF and Ashdon Jazz Academy charities.

The varied programme also included entertainment in the form of a topical quiz, titled “Christmas in Croydon”, as well as wonderful musical contributions from young performers, including renditions of “Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing” and “When Christmas Comes to Town”. Towards the end of the formal programme, the Mayor led a toast to celebrate the people of Croydon who have worked so hard in giving to the community, and the audience participated in singing “We Wish You a Merry Christmas” in a resounding finale. The participants stayed on to enjoy a delicious Christmas dinner and a lovely time of fellowship together.