FFWPU UK: 9/11 - Watford Bridge of Peace

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September 11, 2001 - do you remember that dreadful day when two planes crashed into the Twin Towers of the World Trade Centre in New York City? It felt like time had stood still; the world was in shock. So many people died. We all wondered what the consequences of this horrific event would be on the stability and peace of our world. That day, True Father stopped everything he was doing and urged America to lead the way in practicing Jesus' teaching of 'Love your enemy'.

At that time in 2001, I had been a member of the Watford Interfaith Association for over three years. The following year, they asked me to speak at one of their conferences on women's contributions to world peace. I spoke about the work of the WFWP and the Bridge of Peace. I didn't want just to give a speech; I wanted to offer something concrete for our town. Watford has a high percentage of Muslim residents. I made an announcement that I would organise a sisterhood ceremony between Christian and Muslim women.

On March 2, 2003, at the outbreak of the Iraq War, 40 women from the Christian and Muslim communities in Watford responded to our invitation to cross the Bridge of Peace. It was an amazing sight to witness these women coming together under the Peace Arch, embracing each other and pledging to become peace sisters learning about each other's communities. The Mayor of Watford was present. She congratulated us and promised to offer her continuous support for our outreach. Later that year, she attended the Middle East Peace Initiative in Jerusalem.

In 2007, the Watford Bridge of Peace received a grant from the Prevent programme of the Home Office. I continued my outreach work with the Muslim community for many years afterwards. I was invited by my Muslim peace sister to join her community centre, where she was the Chair. I became a Trustee and Vice Chair for a while. As the years passed, I ended up being the only non-Muslim on the committee. Eventually, last year, the community centre had to close.

Our Peace Arch is now standing at the entrance of the Peace Garden in Cassiobury Park, a reminder of our sisterhood ceremony and a symbol of harmony and friendship between the various communities of Watford. A few days ago, we commemorated the events of 9/11. As I was reminiscing about my outreach work, I was reading about True Father's reaction to 9/11 and how he had launched the Middle East Peace Initiative in 2003 and the UPF in 2005. I was then amazed to find out that the Middle East Peace Initiative was inaugurated on March 2, 2003, the same day as our Bridge of Peace here in Watford. I was astonished and realised that, at that time, I must have tuned into True Father's mind and heart.

Two years later, on September 12, 2005 True Father inaugurated the Universal Peace Federation and twelve days later in Watford on September 24, 2005 we hosted the Watford Celebration, an annual community event celebrating the rich diversity of cultures and faiths of our town.