

Durham, North Carolina Holds First American Leadership Conference (ALC)

John and Sharon Pace
November 4, 2017



Durham, NC – Early Saturday morning of November 4th, Miyako Savage and Sharon Pace arrived at the Triangle Family Church building and began setting up for the registration and continental breakfast that would begin from 9:30 am. Surprisingly, before 9 am, many guests started arriving to register and even some helped in the final preparations for breakfast.

At around 9:30 am the registration and sign up sheet was full. Guests received their conference materials and name tags and had coffee and a light breakfast. By the beginning of the program at 10:00 am at least 50 guests had arrived. Everyone was ushered to the main lecture room, the church Sanctuary, where six large round tables and several long tables were beautifully set up for the conference.

The conference moderator, Pastor John Pace, invited Mr. Joshua Angelucci to give the invocation prayer while Mrs. Sharon Pace, executive director of Universal Peace Federation (UPF) in North Carolina welcomed everyone. A UPF introductory video presentation was shown to the audience then Mr. Thomas McDevitt, President of UPF International and Chairman of the Washington Times Foundation began explaining about the history and purpose of UPF. He gave an excellent presentation about recent UPF activities around the world. He also talked about the purpose and intention of the American Leadership Conference (ALC) and how we should all make close relationships with everyone especially to those at our tables, Pastor Pace said.

The room was filled with wonderful guests from many walks of life. Asian-American, African-American, European-American... all races were represented. Other guests were also from India and South America. Protestants, Catholics, Muslims, Jews and Hindus representing the major faith traditions were all present as well. High school students and elderly grandmothers and grandfathers were sitting across the tables from each other.

The first session was on "True Character and Family Values". Minister Amon Muhammad, from Mosque number 34, representing the Nation of Islam, was the first reader. He came to the conference with two other ministers from the Nation of Islam. A copy of the newly revised North Carolina ALC Source Book was given to each participant and they read silently along. Rev. Dr. LeVonder Brinkley gave insightful commentary after the 12-minute reading. Then each table discussed the subject matter amongst themselves guided by questions and had an authentic and respectful discussion about good character and family values. Several facilitators from the tables gave a report about their group discussion. Everyone seemed to be enjoying the opportunity to share and learn from each other.

After the first session, Mr. Jack Hopper stood and read out loud the proclamation letter of inspiration and congratulations from Mayor William Bell of Durham, North Carolina.

Lunch was served buffet style and everyone enjoyed the delicious food and great conversation with new found friends. During the lunch program, Rev. Dr. LeVonder Brinkley sang "The Wind Beneath My Wings". Stephanie Nishida and Bob Huneycutt also gave a beautiful rendition of "The Rose". The Mayor Pro-Tem of Morrisville, North Carolina, Mr. Steve Rao gave an inspiring talk about his joy at seeing such a diverse group of people coming together. He said he felt such a strong, purpose-driven energy in the room. Bishop Cotton spoke about recognizing the greatness of Jesus. She and her people sang a Christian hymn.



The second session was about uniting our communities and America's role in the world. Dr. Tyler Hendricks, former president of the Unification Theological Seminary, read passages again from the North Carolina ALC sourcebook. Mr. Ron Pappalardo, a local author, and historian spoke about the challenges America faces today from Islamic extremism and even a drug epidemic. Participants enthusiastically engaged in a group discussion at the tables for about twenty minutes and people shared honestly and openly. Reports were shared by the table facilitators about the conversations that they had.

After these robust readings and discussions, it was time for the appointment of new Ambassadors for Peace. Mrs. Carolyn Sampson, President of Women's Federation for World Peace (WFWP) in North Carolina, gave a powerful presentation on the five essential principles of peace recognized by UPF. Mrs. Sharon Pace announced the newly appointed "Ambassadors for Peace" which include Elaine Whitworth, Katrina Rogers, Nwachukwu C. Okafor, Carine Siltz, Craig Seman, Minister Amon Muhammad and Tawana Valentine Sampson. All came to the front of the stage and received their Ambassador for Peace certificate from Tom McDevitt and Mrs. Sharon Pace. Pictures were taken of each new AFP with Tom and Sharon and John Pace. A group photo of all seven AFP members was taken after which Mr. McDevitt gave an inspiring Call to Action.



The program ended at around 2:45 pm with a group song 'Let There Be Peace On Earth'. Pastor Joshua Angelucci concluded the conference with a prayer.

Interestingly, many guests remained and talked with each other more while refreshments were served. Some even helped to clean up the building. "This was a wonderful conference with a total of 65 adult guests and more than a dozen of teenagers and younger children", Sharon Pace exclaimed.