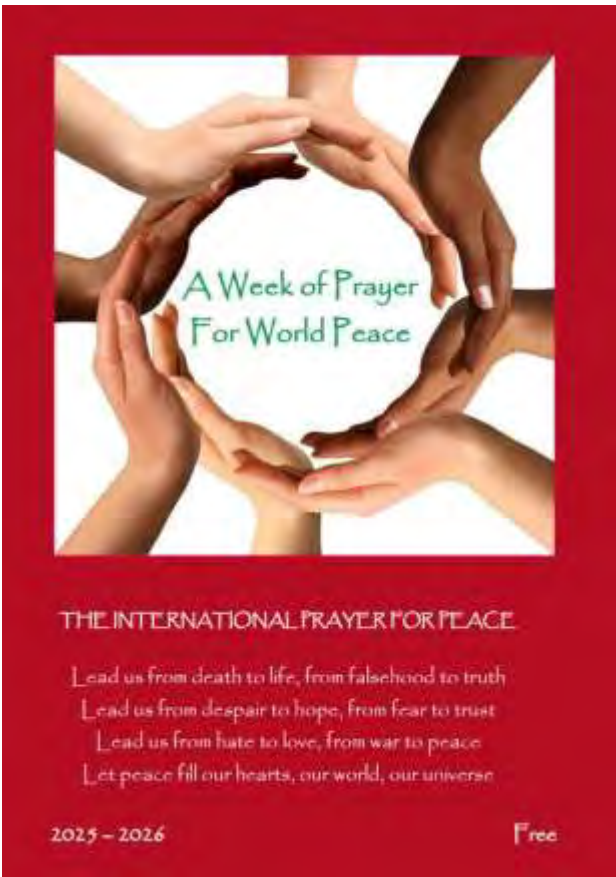


WFWP UK: Week of Prayer - Continuing to pray with hope in a troubled world

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November 13, 2025



Week of Prayer for World Peace 'Continuing to pray with hope in a troubled world'



It was a rainy day. We didn't know how many would come. Watford Interfaith Association(WIFA) had organized its annual gathering for the Week of Prayer for World Peace on Sunday 19th October. The theme of this year WPWP was "Continuing to pray with hope in a troubled world," People from all faith communities of Watford and beyond had been invited to the Watford Peace Garden for a time of reflection and prayer for peace and healing in our society, in our world. Despite the weather a few came from the Hindu, Muslim and Christian community and Jeffrey B. and I contributed as well.

Few days earlier I had visited my Peace sister Sharifa. I have known her since she participated in 2003 in a sisterhood ceremony between Christian and Muslim women. She is now quite elderly. I told her about our gathering at the Peace Garden, and she said that she would come. I wondered then how she would come as she can barely walk and stand up for long. Her daughter did not allow her to drive any more. Sharifa insisted. 'I will come and bring samosas' she said with a bright smile. How can you stop such a determined woman wanting to come to pray for world peace. I had no choice but

to find a lift and a chair for her to sit in the Garden.

That Sunday afternoon, it was still raining when we arrived at the Peace Garden. We took shelter underneath two large horse chestnut trees. Jeffrey B., Chair of WIFA welcomed everyone and invited us to offer our contributions for the day. The Watford Town Centre Chaplain had sent his apology, and we read his inspirational message for the day. Sharifa stood up from her chair and sang in Arabic a beautiful song about God's immense mercy. They were also readings from the Bhagavad Gita and the Bible, the prayer of St Francis was sung as well as other prayers and reflections on the world's situation. I was standing next to Abdool E. I knew him from listening to his call for prayer at the Mosque and for him attending some of our interfaith meetings. Showing me his mobile phone, he whispered: 'Françoise would it be OK for me to sing this song' and I answered: 'Yes, if you like, please, go ahead' You wouldn't believe what song he had chosen. With a hesitating voice he started singing: 'What a wonderful world!' by Louis

Armstrong and we all joined in. Who would have expected this song coming from such devout Muslim? Watching everyone from such diverse backgrounds singing together this uplifting song made me really think. After all it may be well possible to see one day a peaceful world.



The rain had gradually stopped once we gathered under the horse chestnut trees and now the sun was shining. We concluded our gathering by reciting together the international prayer for peace. But that was not the end. There were still the delicious samosas of Sharifa to enjoy and our friendly conversations to go on.

And I said to myself 'What a wonderful day, a day of hope for a better future'

P.S. The Week of Prayer for World Peace was started as a Christian initiative in 1974. It soon became an interfaith activity. The first Chair, the Late Dr Edward Carpenter, former Dean of Westminster Abbey, established the guiding principle of the week in the words: 'The peace of the world must be prayed for by the faiths of the world'.

