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WFWP - Testimony by Patricia Earle
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Sharing love between our city's faiths

By Jan Tchamani

I T HAS been 19 long years since Patricia Earle first arrived in Birmingham. From an early age she has been inspired by the idea of helping people resolve their conflicts and make friends with their neighbours. She brought that vision to the city and has not looked back.

The Women's Peace Group began in Patricia's living room with just a few friends. They met once a month to pray for conflicts around the world and to learn about what women go through when they are trying to survive in a war zone or where a lack of basic rights makes life difficult.

Since then, Patricia's house has had to be extended twice to make room for the dozens of women who have joined the group.

"The highest attendance we have had was 120, and we regularly see 90-100 women at our events - at times we have women of up to

40 different nationalities present," says Patricia, aged 57.

In the early days, the group saw Christians from various local churches attending, but very soon Hindu, Sikh, Muslim, Jewish and Buddhist women friends were invited to come along. Together they began to share their different faiths and found lots of common ground. "Peace, neighbourliness and hospitality are key concepts in all our religions," says Patricia. "So learning about each other's beliefs brought us closer together. We centre on our common humanity and desire for peace."

Meetings regularly involve guest speakers from areas of conflict across the globe and women are inspired to follow their progress and help in practical ways.

The Peace Women's key annual event is their Bridge of Peace ceremony, where women walk through a floral arch in pairs, picked at random, and pledge friendship to one another



Caring: Patricia Earle visits the Hyderabad orphanage.

and to each other's families and communities.

Exciting projects have been consistent with the aim of reaching out in love and friendship. So 12 years ago the group founded an orphanage in Hyderabad, India, which now has the capacity to house 40 children. Those who leave are helped to find jobs and accommodation, and often come back to visit.

Women from the Peace Group spent four years sewing a Peace Tapestry to be a symbol of religious harmony in Birmingham. The tapestry, which was displayed at the

Town Hall before touring local places of worship, shows places of spiritual importance to local people, including a mosque, a church, a gurdwara, Hindu and Buddhist temples, a synagogue - and the Botanical Gardens.

Community cohesion is work that women do well, Patricia believes.

"Peace Women can inspire whole communities to work for peace, respect, equal rights and freedom for all," she said.

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I have been working as the WFWP representative in the Midlands for the past 17 years, developing a foundation with the help of many amazing women, the main activity being the regular Women's Peace Meeting. What began in 1993 as an ecumenical, mainly Christian, Prayer Meeting became truly Interfaith, and then moved beyond that to become a Peace Meeting where we have genuinely come to put aside our differences of race, religion and ethnicity, discovering our common essence on the level of the human heart.

Many times over the years, as we listened to different women sharing their stories, we could feel the presence of God, and also during the time of prayer towards the end of each meeting. This, more than anything, is the reason why women want to come back again and again, often bringing a friend with whom they want to share the experience. We have created an intimate, safe space where women have been able to share their thoughts and feelings, and in the process build many wonderful friendships. Having these meetings in a home, rather than a public building or place of worship, has been a key factor in establishing trust amongst one another and creating the sense of being a large, extended family.

During the past 12 months, with David and myself also being FFWPU leaders, I have been trying to find a way to balance and integrate this WFWP, and our UPF, foundation into the new framework of outreach and sharing of the Principle. It has not been an easy process and has involved a lot of internal pain and soul-searching, together with a number of key discussions with senior members of our movement.

We have always tried to align what we are doing with the key focal points of the Providence, and the directions and requests coming down vertically through True Parents representatives. Also, in

relation to this, to try and find the proper balance between our local foundation and the need to support national and international activities. Having three different responsibilities, FFWPU, WFWP and UPF, has allowed us to search for the right balance between the more exclusive (FFWPU) and more inclusive (WFWP and UPF) approaches to outreach and witnessing. These 2 approaches are both valid, but are quite different and require us to relate to people in a different way, and use a variety of methods depending on each person's character, foundation and circumstances.

The ultimate purpose of these 2 approaches is exactly the same : to bring people into a relationship, or a deeper relationship, with God, by connecting them to True Parents and by receiving the Blessing. A parallel goal is to be able to teach the Principle, as this is very often the way in which people come to fully realise the identity of True Parents, and the value of the Blessing. It is therefore very important for me to give people every opportunity to hear the Divine Principle. Each person is different, even within the same religion for example, and the art of witnessing is to discover the way by which each person can begin their special journey towards the above goals.

FFWPU Outreach Campaign.

All the UK FFWPU community leaders discussed and developed a National Witnessing Campaign with Simon, earlier this year, and we decided to hold a series of themed Public Sunday Services in May and June to which we could invite our guests. In our Birmingham / Midlands region, we also decided to begin a series of 'old-style' weekday Family Evenings to which we could invite people to study the Principle. Several sisters and myself began doing more street witnessing on a regular basis. Wearing my 2 hats, FFWPU

and WFWP, was not easy in the beginning but I gradually found myself talking about peace, and universal values, to begin the conversation, and then gauging which approach to use and which route to go down with each person, based on their response.

Personally, I didn't find it so helpful to speak about God, or religion, when starting a conversation. Especially young people, although they have lots of questions, are often put off by speaking about God directly, and several who are studying the Principle have said they were grateful I didn't do that, otherwise they wouldn't have stopped to talk. So I either invite people to a Family Evening, which is a social event where they can meet others and study the Principle, or to the Women's Peace Meeting if they are more attracted to that type of gathering. As a general rule, people attend one or the other but there can be overlap. I have had several women come to study the Principle, and then also attend the Women's Peace Meeting where they get a broader appreciation of our work, but this is case by case.

When new people come to the Peace Meeting, from street witnessing or having been brought by a friend, I try to invite them to my home afterwards, as soon as possible, to explain about the origins of the WFWP and our movement. I am not at all afraid of speaking about my identity - I have been doing that for many years, but I want to introduce True Parents and our movement in a way which gives each person the best chance to receive the information, and to want to find out more, or to continue the relationship and build trust and friendship.

I always feel it is God who introduced the person to me and, if that is true, I have a certain responsibility towards them because God has entrusted them into my care. I can't simply dismiss them because they don't agree with everything I have to say.

It is a bit the same with Interfaith work. When meeting people from other religions, it's very important to be clear about our identity, but you cannot be involved (or not for very long) if you are doing it in order to evangelise. Interfaith and evangelism are mutually exclusive, but when you build trust and friendship with people of other faiths there comes a time when they naturally want to know what you believe.

The existing WFWP foundation.

With regard to those women who have been involved with WFWP and the Peace Meeting for some years, quite a number have already heard the Principle taught in a broader, Interfaith context, either in our home or at UPF European Leadership Conferences, particularly women from non-Christian faith backgrounds. For those who have a Christian foundation I have tried this year, case by case, to invite some of them either to our Public Sunday Services and/or to the Family Evenings to study the Principle. So far, it has been a very positive experience.

In our Public Sunday Services, the women who have been coming are from several different Christian denominations, and sometimes bring their children or husband. We make a point of emphasising our effort towards Christian unity, and in addition the guests have a chance to hear aspects of the Principle through the sermon, and to learn more about True Parents and their love for Jesus. They often participate in the Service, offering either a prayer or a Christian song, and we try to have them feel it's their Service, as much as ours.

At our Family Evenings, we have been gradually going through the Principle for some months now, with guests being a mixture of new people from street witnessing, and existing contacts from WFWP activities with whom we have a long-standing relationship, and whom I feel would benefit from studying the Principle. It is so rewarding to be teaching the Principle directly. We can feel it is the right time to be doing it, and there is often a very high spirit in the room, with good questions and much discussion. The guests are also getting to know one another, and have something of a group identity, expecting to see each other at the next Family Evening. They are often amazed at the logic and depth of the Principle, and

its insights into the life of Jesus in particular, as well as other historical figures. There is a sense of anticipation developing, now that we are going through the parallels of history.

Conclusion.

The goals of the WFWP, FFWPU and UPF are the same, but the approach is quite different. There can be overlap between them, and they can very nicely complement each other. For example, someone who is studying the Principle through FFWPU can have their experience, on the level of the word, enhanced by discovering the practical expression of our faith in all the many activities we are involved in, through WFWP and UPF. These activities also have tremendous potential to change the negative image which some people have of both True Parents and our Unification Movement.

The Women's Federation approach to outreach is a very broad, inclusive way of working with people. It reflects the parental, nurturing heart of a mother - wanting to embrace everyone, while at the same time wanting to treat each person according to their individual uniqueness, and circumstances. Trying to meet the same challenges we face in our family when there are several children to look after.

The WFWP can also lead us to be able to meet the husbands and children of the women we are connected to, especially when we have established trust between one another. A large part of building this trust has been the effort to consistently keep in touch with people, and show genuine concern for them and their families - a phone call here and there, a visit now and again, remembering birthdays - simple things, but the groundwork and foundation on which so much else can be built.

I have found in the last 12 months, and especially this year with the emphasis on FFWPU development, that I could introduce some new women contacts to WFWP through the Peace Meeting, subsequently explain to them about my involvement with the Unification Movement, and then have them attend either our public Sunday Service or Family Evening, on a case-by-case basis.

Also, with some individuals I have known for a long time through WFWP, and especially those having a Christian background, I felt I could invite them to either a Sunday Service or to a Family Evening where they could begin to hear different aspects of the Principle. That has been surprisingly rewarding.

Equally, the other way around, I met some women on the street and invited them to our Family Evening to study the Principle with us, and then after a while felt I could invite them to attend the Women's Peace Meeting, to see another side of our work.

It has been important to have these 3 activities, Peace Meeting, Family Evening and Sunday Service, held on a regular basis to allow this to happen. Trying to keep God at the centre, and having the same ultimate goals for each organisation and activity, in a sense bigger than the organisations themselves, makes it possible for everything to fit together, in spite of differences of approach.

But it is most important to treat each person as a unique individual, and try to find what is best for them, depending on their background and where they are coming from, rather than a one-size-fits-all approach.

In fact, this approach makes outreach and witnessing so much more rewarding. And leads to a place where everything we invest in others is never lost, giving us the energy to keep going and sustain our efforts.

Finally, I would like to add that Peace Making and Peace Building, which reflect a mother's concern for peace and harmony, in individual lives, in families and in society, are deeply spiritual activities. But of course Unificationist Peace Making, with the overall goal of allowing people to come into a deeper relationship with God through their encounter with True Parents and the Blessing, merging their own spirituality and values with the spirituality and values which we are able to bring centring on True Parents and the Principle.



Experiencing Japan

Edinburgh, Scotland, October 29th, 2010

The night of 29th October had continuous heavy rain and wind but 30th (Saturday) turned to be a beautiful autumn day for the 'Experiencing Japan', a Japanese Cultural Festival, which was organized by Women's Federation for World Peace – Scotland at St George's West Church in Edinburgh. This is the annual culture event. It was funded by Awards for All Scotland this year. We'd like to thank the Lottery Fund, which made this event so enjoyable.

The event was advertised using community papers, Gumtree, emailing, posters leaflets and words of mouth. Many guests who had come to previous events brought their friends as well.

After a brief introduction of WFWP by Chantal Robertson, MC, the event consisted of various demonstrations of Japanese culture on stage by various performers. Harumi Currie and Tae Baillie showed how to wear the kimono, with all its elaborate stages and accessories. Harumi then started with a tea ceremony according to the traditional manner, called otemae. A Scottish lady, Alyson Cameron, who has lived in Japan performed on the koto, the national musical instrument. She also gave a demonstration of traditional story-telling, using illustrated boards, known as kamishibai. azue Allard gave sushi rolling. The result was offered to the audience to taste and three volunteers tried Sushi rolling first time in their life. Finally, the JKA Karate do Shotokan group gave an impressive demonstration of karate. After the demonstrations, many guests started asking questions to understand the culture of Japan and many conversations developed.

In the meantime, volunteers were waiting for guests to enjoy hand-on experience of Japanese culture at tables all around the room. There are tables for calligraphy, Origami, Go (traditional Japanese game similar to chess), Japa-

nese language, colouring on Japanese fairy tales, getting written their names in Japanese, Fukuwarai (Japanese 'put the tail on the donkey) and Karate information. People could try a kimono on as well and they were busy taking photos. Guests enjoyed free green tea and rice crackers. You could hear excited voices from the guests who gained new knowledge and skills. The volunteers were from the Japanese community in Scotland and from various organisations including university and Edinburgh Go Club.

The atmosphere was lively and buzz from the beginning to the end with well over 180 guests in attendance. We could meet people not only from UK but from Africa, Bangladesh, Iceland, Korea, China, Nepal, Peru, Russia and so many other countries. It was a very international event.

Comments from guests; 'Great Day! Thank you.' 'Fantastic. I learned a lot.' 'I enjoyed everything.

It's all good!' 'I hope this event is longer and have bigger rooms.' 'I enjoyed meeting many people who are interested in Japan.' "This was very educational, much more than main stream media, like books and TV programmes." "I don't know how this organization started such an interesting project. I hope this develop to an international culture event. I thoroughly enjoyed.'

A comment from one of the volunteers ; 'I was doing calligraphy workshops in the event and we had many enthusiastic visitors. People enjoyed the Japanese calligraphy experience and we were asked questions about the history, structure of Japanese letters and so on. The conversation which started from calligraphy became broader and deeper. Each activity in the event triggered the dialogue among diverse people about culture, history, themselves or ourselves ... this was fantastic.'



Women's Federation Advent Evening

South Norway, December 11th, 2010



The evening opened with a video of Pavarotti singing the beautiful "Ave Maria". The main focus of the program was a video speech given by our new WFWP president in America – Angelika Selle. She spoke about the role of Women's Federation in revealing the feminine heart of God to the world. And the role we, as women, play in God's providence in the coming years before 2013. Marinette Murud, WFWP president in Norway, commented on the content of her speech and inspired us to begin a new year with new hope, vision and inspiration. We then watched a dance by the Little Angels who we hope to receive in Norway next year. All the participants had brought homemade Christmas food which we shared in the candlelight. We then joined together to sing Christmas carols accompanied by our talented duo – Berit and Tone.



WFWP - Elimination of Violence against Women

Tirana, Albania, November 25th, 2010



Already second year in a row Albanian Women's Federation organized activities in connection to the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. This day was first announced by UN General Assembly in 1999; in 2008 current UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon launched a campaign UNiTE to End Violence Against Women and in 2009 men's network with the same purpose. Our activities were a part of a rich calendar of activities by various NGOs in Albania. What makes us different, however, is the fact that we concentrated more on the prevention of the problem and education against violence.

Starting from November 25th through December 2nd we distributed leaflets, sensitizing society about the problem. Besides encouraging people to denounce cases of violence and providing them with needed telephone numbers for those who need a legal or psychological help, our leaflets offered advises for parents on how to educate boys and girls in the spirit of mutual respect and equality, as well as some guidelines for men and women of all ages on how to treat and respect each other. Most of the leaflets were distributed in Tirana but some went also to the cities of Vlora and Fier.

Also on November 25th we had a chance to introduce our campaign through a TV interview at the local "NTV" station, where Ms Marinela Stefanc, WFWP board member, had a chance to present our founding ideals as well as the problem of violence in Albanian society. The interview lasted around 15 minutes and was very successful.

At the end of the campaign, on December 2nd we organized a conference with the title "Self-assertiveness and Leadership

Without Violence". The conference was held in the morning, in the hall belonging to UPF. It featured four short presentations by various speakers and was moderated by Ms Drita Rexhepi, AWFWP treasurer. At first, Ms Shega Murati, a gender specialist and vice-chairwoman of Tirana Peace Council, spoke about various forms of violence, making specific references to Albanian society. Then followed Mr Gani Rroshi, president of FFWPU in Albania who spoke on the "Reasons and Solutions of Conflicts", making a point that violence has its roots in a person's heart and it has to be fought on this level first. Referring to the title of the conference, Ms Marinela Stefanc, FFWPU Tirana director, spoke on self-assertiveness as a way to avoid aggression and defend one's rights. She presented self-assertiveness as an ability to express one's opinion, rights and needs, respecting simultaneously the rights, opinions and needs of others. Her presentation was full of practical guidance and examples. The last panelist was Ms Katarzyna Minollari, WFWP president, who presented a topic of leadership without violence, discussing various ways of exerting influence on others, contrasting natural leadership that leads by example and inspiration with leadership based on force and authority. Conference was concluded by a lively discussion and snacks.

Altogether around 40 people participated, including 2 ladies from the cities of Fier And Vlora, where WFWP has its branches. Among participants were also guests invited during the leafleting campaign, who were new to WFWP activities, as well as regular members and some Ambassadors for Peace. We expected more participants but considering the fact that there were two other conferences happening in Tirana at the same time, we can consider our activity as a success.



Women's Role in Face of the Violation of Human Rights and the Creation of a World of Peace

Madrid, Spain, November 27th, 2010



On Saturday November 27 the Women's Federation for World Peace in Spain held a sisterhood event between women coming from the region of the Balkans, living in Spain, and women from the rest of the world in Spain.

The program consisted of two round tables on the theme **Women's Role in face of the Violation of Human Rights and the Creation of a World of Peace**.

There were several speakers representing some of the Balkan countries, Spain and Europe:

Ramona Camelia Pascu President of Spanish-Romania Integration and Development Association; Aspasia Raftopoulou, 1st Secretary at the Embassy of Greece; Valbona Leka, WFWP, from Albania; Teresa San Segundo, Law Professor at Spanish University; Guergana Tsenova, Hispanic-Bulgarian Center in Madrid; Djurdica Kovalj, Professor of Music from Bosnia-Herzegovina; Ksenija Pavlovic, Serbian Journalist; Dominique Haan, European Team; Mercedes González, UPF, from Spain; Zeljana Zovko, Ambassador of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Very enlightening and interesting presentations kept the audience's attention, motivating an exciting debate with the public.

The Bridge of Peace took place immediately after the round tables and approximately 40 pairs of women crossed it. The Ambassador of Serbia, who arrived late to the bridge of peace, showed interest in crossing it too. By then, the musical program (performed by a Bulgarian group) was already in its course, but we made an exceptional parenthesis there, and to the music played by the group, Marcia de Abreu crossed the bridge with Jela Bacovic, Ambassador of Serbia. It followed that the speaker from Bosnia-Herzegovina stood up and spontaneously expressed her desire to cross with the Ambassador of Serbia, and both became sisters. That was very moving to see!

Once the musical program had ended the Ambassador of Bosnia-Herzegovina delivered the closing remarks, referring to the many significant bridges in Bosnia, such as the one in Mostar, that have been rebuilt after the war.

About 100 people attended, counting the staff. All in all, for being our first attempt to do a program dedicated to women from this region in Europe, we felt it was a great success.