

Women's Peace Meeting - Women of Liberia Recognising the UN International Day for Peace

Bournville, Birmingham, United Kingdom, 14. September 2012

The story of how the ordinary women of Liberia brought peace to their war-torn country.
Jack Corley



About 100 ladies, from 35 nations, gathered together on the evening of September 14th to watch a very moving video, with the dramatic title of *'Pray the Devil back to Hell'*. It is the most inspiring story of a group of 'ordinary' women - Christian and Muslim, rich and poor, urban and rural - who demonstrated incredible courage and perseverance to bring peace to their beloved Liberia, a country which had been torn apart by war. A consequence of this concerted action was the subsequent election of the first woman President of an African nation - Ellen Sirleaf Johnson.

A mixture of prayer, fasting, solidarity and increasing friendship, sacrifice and determination, allowed the women to achieve the impossible, against all the odds. We could identify with much of the womens' struggle and achievement, not just by virtue of having a number of African women in our Peace Group but also because the gradual evolution of our group, over the last nineteen years, has involved many similar elements. We have been meeting together on a regular basis, overcoming prejudice, fear and barriers of race, culture and religion, building trust and genuine friendships, praying together, comforting and empowering one another, developing a shared vision, and believing in our capacity and strength to make a real difference. Out of this shared experience have emerged a number of concrete, practical projects - hospital chaplaincy, the Interfaith Children's Home in India, the Women's Tapestry Group, help for refugee families and victims of domestic violence, etc - which we believe are the result of our coming together with a sincere heart, under God's guidance, to try and make a difference and a more peaceful, harmonious society and world.



Following the video, the floor was open for comment and ten ladies, mainly from African nations such as Sierra Leone and the Congo, shared their heartfelt, and often tearful, stories with us all. We then had interfaith prayers, offered by women representing the Hindu, Muslim, Sufi, Christian, Jewish and Sikh faiths, expressing the longing in each of our hearts for peace to come to all nations.

As always, we concluded by singing 'Make Me a Channel of Your Peace', then spending time enjoying refreshments, chatting and networking.