

WFWP Norfolk, VA's Bridge of Peace for Christian and Muslim reconciliation

Claire Daugherty and Joan Mwamlima
December 1, 2018



"There are no constraints on the human mind, no walls around the human spirit, no barriers to our progress except those we ourselves erect." - Ronald Reagan

Too often we create barriers in our minds, and overcoming this mindset is quite a challenge. At a time of increasing divisions in our nation and world, opportunities to bring people together to reconcile their differences and focus on common ground can be a powerful agent of change. WFWP's Bridge of Peace ceremonies provide such opportunities.

The local WFWP chapter in Norfolk, Virginia, decided to hold a Bridge of Peace ceremony last month for reconciliation between women of Christian faith and women of Muslim faith. This was especially significant in December, a time when Christians celebrate the birth of Jesus, the embodiment of God's love, while here in America Christians are still aiming hateful words and actions at Muslims.

The event, which was held on December 1st, attracted a diverse group of participants, the majority of whom were new guests. Of the 23 people in attendance, 17 were joining us for the very first time. WFWP members had reached out to their personal and professional contacts to bring these ladies together. This included eight participants from the Nation of Islam, an African American religious movement, and four guests from Virginia Wesleyan University Center for the Study of Religious Freedom.

The Bridge of Peace also drew some media attention. A representative from the Hampton Roads Gazeti, Norfolk's newspaper for nonprofits, was present.

The lively program included a Muslim guest speaker who gave an informative presentation about Islamic beliefs and customs regarding women. We then introduced the history of WFWP with a video of the women's Middle East Peace Initiative and shared our founder Mother Moon's words.

The highlight, of course, was the ceremony itself. It was moving to see the Christian and Muslim women coming together in a sisterly embrace and pledge to fight the barriers of hate and prejudice that still exist between different religious groups. Each pair of sisters also exchanged beautiful roses and our guests expressed an eagerness to work together.

After the main program, we enjoyed a lively fellowship with seasonal refreshments and raffled off door prizes. Any guests who did not win a door prize received a handmade angel ornament. Participants were very positive about the event and stayed afterwards to ask questions and socialize. They also expressed interest in further activities and we look forward to welcoming them to future events.