

UPF, WFWP and FFWPU Netherlands participate in Together One Amsterdam

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Amsterdam, Netherlands -- UPF was one of the organizations that took part in an afternoon of interfaith and intercultural harmony held in a public park.

Members of UPF and Women's Federation for World Peace, an affiliated organization, participated in Samen Een Amsterdam ("Together One Amsterdam"), which was organized by a committee of the Council for Religions and World Views in Amsterdam. This committee is connected to 90 organizations.

To prepare for the annual event, a core group of 15 persons convened every six weeks. The respective groups took turns to host the meetings.

As the acting treasurer of the organization, I was present at most of the gatherings. Before each meeting started, the hosting organization gave a short introduction about its purpose and activities. In this way all the groups got to know each other on the way to holding the annual event.

In Vondelpark on the afternoon of Sunday, June 17, 2018, twenty-two organizations set up small tables. Christian, Jewish and Muslim organizations and Asian and Far Eastern movements were represented. For the occasion, Vondelpark was called Verbindings-park ("Connection Park").

The event started with the singing of Loka Samasta, a song in Sanskrit language meaning "May all people be happy."

A "dome" made of bamboo sticks bearing the logos of the participating groups clearly indicated to the public where the event was taking place. At each table one could get information about the objectives and activities of the various organizations, particularly how the group defines its significance for Amsterdam.

Many participants visited each other's tables, which has strengthened the connections among us all. Eighteen members of UPF and WFWP, a mixture of "young and older," participated wholeheartedly in the event.

At the end of the afternoon we all left our tables behind and walked to a podium at the statue of Joost van den Vondel, a famous Dutch poet of the 17th century. Our march was led by the Worldhouse Fusion Band with its drums.

At the podium, the next part of the program commenced with the reading of a letter written to the citizens of Amsterdam by their former mayor, Eberhard van der Laan, shortly before his death in 2017, calling on them to take good care of the city and each other. Miss Patricia Mensink of the Alawareness [sic] Foundation, who has a local radio and television program, acted as the emcee.

The first speaker was a Franciscan monk of the city monastery La Verna, who was the person who had conceived this event. He emphasized the meaning of religion as "to reconnect" and as a source of inspiration to work together with each other despite differences of how we see the world.

Next, on behalf of UPF and WFWP, Christopher Davies performed some songs that he had written.

His performance was followed by a harmonious dance by dervishes, which radiated a prayer of divine peace. Next a passionate lady, Miss Patricia Haveman of the organization Mundo Unido, offered a vision of a world in which all people are connected as world citizens; in her view signs of this world emerging can be found everywhere.

After Hare Krishna members chanted a mantra, the organization Oma's Art presented a painting to Samen een Amsterdam in appreciation for its efforts toward cooperation and connectedness.

The afternoon ended with the whole group singing, with one voice, Loka Samasta.

