

Telling Our Stories - Women's Peace Meeting

Birmingham, UK - David Earle - January 2019



Just over 100 women gathered together for the most recent Peace Meeting, in which several women shared their personal stories. When we each briefly introduced ourselves, our name and country of origin, we found there were just over 40 different nationalities in our gathering. This unique richness never fails to be a source of wonder! We heard from several different speakers during the evening. Razia, Managing Director of Himaya Haven, explained about her important work supporting the family members of people in prison, describing them as 'silent victims on the outside'. Himaya Haven enables them to access appropriate and timely support at every stage of the Criminal Justice System.



Razia



Serina Kaur



Liri

Selina Kaur, from the Sikh faith tradition, then shared about her work as a Life Coach, helping people one-to-one, particularly young people, and trying to give them the necessary social and life skills to make a success of both their careers and relationships.

Liri, originally from Albania, then spoke to us about her years of experience in foster care in the UK. She told us about her recent visit to Albania, with her daughter, Denada, and close friend Fatmira, to attend a WFWP conference there, part of which was in the Albanian Parliament. When they shared in Parliament about foster care, there was some interest from several Albanian MP's. Before returning to the UK, they held a separate meeting with those MPs, and will be invited back later this year to further discuss the Possibility of introducing foster care into the Albanian nation.

Finally, Aliya shared her story with us, of growing up here in the UK in a conservative Muslim home, with all the expectations which that brings regarding dress, behaviour, marriage, etc. However away from home, at school and socially, she felt like a different person, and had to deal with the tension of having almost a 'double life'. Not easy at all.



Aliya



Denada



Jordano and daughters

Following the speakers, the meeting was then open for contributions from the floor, and a number of other women, young and old, both responded to the speakers' content, and shared stories from their own life experience. It was very enriching for everyone, to listen and to share.

We then had our usual time of quiet reflection, music, readings and prayers from our different faith traditions, and concluded by drinking a toast for peace together for the New Year, wishing God's blessing on each person, their family and friends.



Responses from the audience



Collection for St Basils



Food items, clothes & toiletries

Prior to our Peace Meeting, a close friend, Amelia, had asked if it was possible to collect items which could be donated to St Basil's in Birmingham, a wonderful organisation dedicated to helping vulnerable, homeless young adults, and where Amelia volunteers some of her time each week. Particularly during the Winter months, there is a great need for blankets, warm clothing, food items and toiletries. Our ladies did not disappoint, and we were able to collect a whole range of useful items, and a substantial amount of money. Our donation included 6 beautifully hand-crafted, iced cakes from Elizabeth,

and the tremendous gratitude expressed by the staff at St Basil's, when we delivered everything to them was indeed 'the icing on the cake' after such a rich and wonderful Peace Meeting.

