

## Charity Concert for Syrian Refugee Families and Blessing at the Syrian-Orthodox Church in Vienna, Austria

A Charity Concert at the Syrian Orthodox Church of Vienna took place on Saturday, October 21<sup>st</sup> 2017. Prof. Dr. Stefan Sacu, chairman of the church's parish council, warmly greeted the almost 300 participants. He thanked the concert's organisers, the Austrian Women's Federation for World Peace and their President, Mrs. Renate Amesbauer, as well as Universal Peace Federation and the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification.



The Syrian-Orthodox church in Vienna.



Dr. Sacu's opening remarks

In the first part of the concert, the wonderful soprano singer Seiko Lee presented classical songs, such as "Ave Maria", "O Mio babbino caro" - among others. The highlight then being three pieces from the Peace-Cantata Halelu, composed by Dr. David Eaton, Director of the New York Symphony Orchestra – who personally directed the singers and chamber orchestra. It was an impressive performance that inspired all present.



Afterwards Dr. Emanuel Aydin, the local parish chorepiscopus, spoke about: “Peace begins with me and my family”. He emphasised the central role of the family in building a peaceful society and noted: 'the family is the only institution that was founded by God Himself.'



Dr. David Eaton



Prof. Dr. Emanuel Aydin

His impressive words prepared the way perfectly for the next part of the program: a blessing ceremony to renew the marriage vows. Dr. Michael & Fumiko Balcomb, Regional Directors of the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification for Europe and the Middle East, guided us through the ceremony, concluding with the prayer of blessing which True Father had prayed at the 2009 blessing ceremony. Close to 100 guests received that blessing.





In the following part of the concert, all attending were invited to 'sing along' Schubert's "Am Brunnen vor dem Tore", together with Seiko Lee – who concluded with a song in Arabic, as well as The Lord's Prayer in Aramaic – the language Jesus spoke. Many were deeply moved, and some reported after the concert that they had felt Jesus' close presence. We were greatly blessed to have Dr. David Eaton, Seiko Lee and young members of our 2<sup>nd</sup> generation perform this concert!





Gratefully through the generosity of the participants almost 4000.-€ could be collected for the refugee families who are accommodated in the building beside the church. Mrs. Renate Amesbauer offered the donations to the chairman of the church's parish council.

In the audience were the newly appointed FFWPU regional leaders of Europe-Eurasia-Middle East, as well as UPF leaders, National Leaders and Blessed families of the surrounding countries. The Austrian Unification family was represented by blessed families from every region as well. Through the sincere support of all of them, a strong unity could be created which made this event to a success, so that everyone could receive Heavenly Parent's abundant love and blessing.



WFWP President Renate Amesbauer



Regional leaders



Dr. & Mrs. Balcomb with Dr. Aydin, Dr. Eaton and the musicians

This Blessing Ceremony was the first one in Austria to take place in a Christian church with their priest, bishop and some of their membership participating. The beginning point was that one blessed couple, Dietrich & Elisabeth Seidel, had cultivated the relationship to the leadership of this church for many years, sharing True Parents' vision with them in many ways. It is our prayer that through this event a door can be opened to share True Parents' Blessing in many more churches of our Christian brothers and sisters!



The Sacu brothers (church leaders of their parish), with their wives, Elisabeth Seidel and Seiko Lee



The Austrian Unification family's thanks go to all the brothers & sisters who supported the event, specially to Dr. Michael & Fumiko Balcomb, who's encouragement and determination to bring success could bear fruit in this uplifting concert and Blessing Ceremony!

Elisabeth Cook