

WFWP South London, UK's Family and Peace Christmas Celebration

Lance Gardiner
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"On a bitterly cold and blustery winter's day, the MC Cecilie Fortune, warmly welcomed the gathering in the festively decorated Hall with the words "Christmas is all about relationships and feeling closeness of heart", sincerely expressing the hope that the evening's celebration would give the participants a taste of peace and love to take into the festive season.

"If we had more family peace we can better secure world peace" was the central message delivered by the Mayor of Croydon, Councillor Bernadette Khan, at the joint WFWP and UPF Christmas Celebration.

Her address to the nearly 80-strong audience focussed on the contribution of the family in nurturing core values to enable individuals to become givers not takers. She contrasted our own situation to families in troubled parts of the world who struggle to feed their children and ensure adequate medical care, and surmised that Christmas is a time to recognize how extremely fortunate we are to live in this borough of Croydon.

Citing the many exchanges she has had with volunteers in the fields of health care, education, elderly and youth support while performing the mayor's duties, she was inspired to see that "so much goodness, caring, loving and giving goes on", which reflected the grand diversity of a borough where each community works towards the wellbeing of the whole. Later in the programme, she presented Ambassador for Peace awards to three individuals, who have exemplified the standard of service for others through their valuable community projects.

The programme opened with a powerful rendition of "Hallelujah" by two cousins, Miranda and Alicia. There were also excellent musical contributions from Gabrielle as well as a husband and wife duo, Ashley and Susan, all evoking the spirit of Christmas through seasonal refrains. Another wonderful performance was delivered by Bharat Korla, with a song played on the harmonium dedicated to the mayor with words set to an Indian melody containing the chorus "Remember, friends, the world is one."



The musical entertainment included audience participation in a medley of Christmas carols led by Hannah and Russell. A fun general knowledge quiz hosted by quiz master Nigel fully engaged the audience and rounded off the evening's schedule of entertainment. Towards the end of the formal programme, the MC introduced Ashley Crosthwaite, Director of IRFF-UK, a sister organisation to UPF and WFWP, that is dedicated to long-term relief efforts mainly in Africa. Ashley presented highlights of projects he recently visited in Uganda, recounting the incredible work performed by key volunteers supporting farming, primary school and medical health projects, following the motto "Go the extra mile – the second mile is never crowded". He offered sincere thanks for the efforts of several groups including the hosting organisations, the Tricycle Shop in Alton and the Bromley Rotary club to raise funds to bring real hope to communities, especially for children, towards making a better future. A prize-draw raffle held at the close of the proceedings raised a generous sum to support IRFF projects in Africa."

Report by Lance Gardiner

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