

WFWP Ireland, GWPN Initiative with Irish First Lady

Doris McCann
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WFWP Ireland President



WFWP Ireland co-sponsored the launch event of the Sisters of Faith for Peace (SFP). This initiative was inspired by the Global Women's Peace Network, and is bringing women from the 3 Abrahamic faiths together, while it is open to all faiths.

This official launch event took place under the theme 'Building Bridges and Nurturing Peace by Understanding and Dialogue'.



We were deeply honoured to have the current First Lady of Ireland, Sabina Higgins, officiate the event and endorse this program. Our keynote speaker was Marilyn Turkovich, Interim Director of the Charter for Compassion. It took place in Dublin on 19 March 2015 and was hosted and co-sponsored by the Islamic Cultural Centre of Ireland (ICCI), one of the largest Mosque's in Europe.

Whilst the development of the Sisters of Faith for Peace has been a work in progress for about one year, the recent Charlie Hebdo attack in Paris created a strong sense of urgency to build bridges between the different faith groups.

For this event, we were privileged to have many dignitaries present among the 180 participants, including

many high level religious and political figures from different faith and cultural backgrounds, to name but a few: Dr. Nooh, CEO of the ICCI, as well as Imams Hussein Halawa and Mohammed Ibrahim; Estelle Menton, former President of the Jewish Representative Council of Ireland; the Archbishop Most Rev Dr. Michael Jackson; Emer Costello, former Lord Mayor and MEP; as well as several key political figures, and a representative of the Nigerian embassy.



The program began with 10-year old Viviana McCann presenting a prayer that has been jointly developed by the SFP group, and in this way was appealing to all faiths present.

After a welcome to the Islamic Cultural Centre by Summayah Kenna, SFP Chairwoman and WFWP President Doris McCann introduced the 'Sisters of Faith for Peace' initiative, and encouraged all participants to join their quest to nurture peace based on the understanding that we are all one family under God, and the need to step out of our comfort zones by reaching out to people different to ourselves, in the spirit of compassion.



She also emphasized that the true message of all our religions is one of peace and respect for life and that we need to unite and engage our faiths to demonstrate the true meaning of religion. We believe passionately that women play a crucial role in global peace-building at this time as they are the natural

voice of love and compassion as the essential ingredient for lasting peace.

After this, the First Lady of Ireland, Sabina Higgins, addressed the audience as the officiator.



Speaking very passionately, it was clear that the fear of segregation between the different faith groups in Europe and Ireland was very much on her mind, in particular in light of recent attacks and global developments. She spoke whole-heartedly when endorsing the SFP initiative as one that is addressing these issues.

Following Sabina Higgins' speech, the children's choir of the Muslim Primary School performed three songs including a traditional song performed in the Gaelic language.

We then listened to the key note address by Marilyn Turkovich, Interim Director of the Charter for Compassion. We were very fortunate to have her with us, as she flew in all the way from Seattle/US to be with us. The SFP have endorsed the Charter for Compassion, founded by Karen Armstrong.

Marilyn emphasized that compassion is a verb, a call to action, and she shared about ways in which the Charter for Compassion is promoting international understanding and cooperation by creating compassionate communities. It was inspiring to learn more about concrete steps how to put our compassionate intention into action.

Following this, we held a Unity Tree Ceremony:

We had three female representatives of Islam, Judaism and Christianity symbolically plant a tree together on stage, by adding soil into the planter, in this way expressing their unified intent to nurture peace. The remaining members of the SFP group then watered the tree. We had been able to locate a tree with an intertwined trunk that was most appropriate for this purpose. This tree will remain in the Islamic Cultural Centre for the time being, but will be taken to future venues of other faiths. The guests were also invited to add soil to the planter before leaving.

After this, we listened to a beautiful and professional vocal performance of 'Make me a Channel of your Peace' by Irish singer Katie Dunleavy. And we officially offered gifts to both Sabina Higgins and Marilyn Turkovich. The MC then closed the formal program and guests mingled over refreshments, including The First Lady who spent quite some time engaged with many of the guests, and was visibly inspired by the event.

Overall, this event was an occasion whereby people of the different faith beliefs and cultures truly came together and clearly demonstrated our unified intent to nurture peace!

It was deeply inspiring and moving, and many guests testified to this later on, expressing their appreciation and interest to further support this quest.