

Let us cultivate a global culture of peace!

To bridge gaps stemming from differences in the name of country, language, religion, gender, and socio-economic status, it is vital to 'cultivate a global culture of peace' that allows individuals from diverse backgrounds to coexist harmoniously and appreciate life's richness. This culture enables individuals from diverse backgrounds to coexist harmoniously while embracing the richness of life's diversity. To emphasize and promote this vital theme, the Sisters of the Good Shepherd joined forces with *Amaithi Sangamam*, also known as the 'Peace Collective' based in Salem, to celebrate the International Day of Peace. This significant event took place in Salem on the notable date of September 21, 2024.

During this celebration, participants, as many as 350 of them took part in a peace awareness rally that was designed to raise consciousness about the importance of peace in our communities. The rally was attended by Mrs. Hari Shankari, Assistant Commissioner of Police (Salem Town range), Bishop Arul Selvam Rayappan, Catholic Bishop of Salem Diocese, Sister Maheshwari from Brahma Kumari's, and Mr. Moulavi H. Saifulla, Board Member of Tamil Nadu Manila Imangal Peravai, Mr. Fairoz Bukhari, Secretary of Salem district Imangal peravai along with religious leaders from different faiths, charities, and students of Shri Shaktikailashh Women's College of Arts and Science. The awareness rally was launched from Fort Maidanam by the Assistant Commissioner of Police and religious leaders by flying doves and waving flags for world peace. The awareness rally ended up reaching the YMCA campus. Finally, religious harmony awareness programs were held at the YMCA campus. Additionally, there was a public meeting that brought together a diverse array of attendees, including religious leaders, college students, representatives from various non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and local community members. The gathering served as an invaluable platform for promoting understanding and encouraging cooperation among the rich tapestry of cultures present within the region. Through these efforts, the event aimed to reinforce the message of unity and solidarity in pursuit of a more peaceful world.

Following is a short account of the Rally and the Public Meeting:

Rally for Peace Awareness

Prior to the awareness rally, religious leaders addressed the participants with the following message:

- Peace is a multifaceted concept that encompasses inner tranquillity, social harmony, and global stability. Peace originates within individuals and expands to benefit others. It requires deliberate actions to cultivate harmony, starting with everyday gestures like a smile. To achieve lasting peace, it's essential to foster positive relationships with people and the environment, recognizing their interconnectedness and promoting a balanced coexistence.
- Mother Teresa says, "Peace begins with a smile". This quote encapsulates a profound truth about the transformative power of a simple smile. It only suggests that by harnessing the power of a smile, we can foster inner peace, forge connections, and contribute to the creation of a more harmonious and compassionate society. Let us embrace this philosophy, for peace truly does begin with a smile.

- In the complex landscape of our current socio-economic, political, and cultural contexts, the topic of peace emerges as a matter of profound significance that demands our focused attention and increased emphasis. It is vital to acknowledge the intricate ways in which these diverse factors interact and influence our collective understanding of peace. This interplay not only shapes our perceptions but also highlights the importance of peace as a crucial subject for discussion and analysis in the contemporary world. Given the challenges we face today, a deeper exploration of peace is essential for fostering dialogue and promoting a more harmonious society.
- The concept of peace initiates at the individual level and radiates outward, ultimately benefiting the broader community and environment. It commences with a simple act such as a smile, emphasizing the fundamental understanding that the journey toward achieving true peace necessitates deliberate and conscious efforts to cultivate a sense of harmony not only with fellow human beings but also in relation to the natural world around us. This interconnectedness underscores the importance of personal actions and attitudes in fostering a peaceful existence that spreads to others and nurtures the planet.
- Peace is cultivated from within, originating with the individual and radiating outward to positively impact those around them. This process begins with simple yet profound actions, such as a genuine smile, demonstrating the intentional effort required to establish harmony. Achieving lasting peace necessitates a dual focus: fostering meaningful relationships with others and promoting balance with the natural environment. By recognizing the interconnectedness of human well-being and environmental sustainability, individuals can actively contribute to a culture of peace that resonates throughout communities and beyond.
- Peace-making requires a supportive language that supports and respects the feelings of others because we are living in a country where we even unwilling to see a crop withered.
- In the Bible we read that Jesus says, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God”.
- In Arabic, this word, “*slm*”, means peace. When Muslims greet each other, they say “*As-salaam alaikum*”. It means “Peace be with you”. In reply, a Muslim will say, “*Wa-alaikum as-salaam*” – which means “And peace be with you too.”

Public Meeting at YMCA, Salem

Shortly after the 'Peace Awareness Rally,' participants gathered at YMCA Hall to hear from the Chief Guests and Peace Activists. Here are some key messages shared by the special invitees:

Key Messages during the Public Meeting

A public meeting was held at the YMCA in Salem as a follow-up of the public peace awareness rally. Religious leaders from various faiths, along with academicians and peace activists, shared their point of views to promote peace. Below is a summary of their remarks.

- It is essential for human beings to recognize and understand that within nature, there exists a profound sense of peace, harmony, and tranquillity. This understanding can lead to a deeper appreciation of the natural world and its restorative qualities. Expanding on this idea, it is

important to articulate how the serene environments found in nature can positively influence our mental and emotional well-being, allowing us to reconnect with ourselves and find solace amidst the chaos of modern life.

- In the profound depths of the ocean, there exists a notable sense of calm and tranquillity. This environment embodies a state of harmony and balance. Similarly, if we wish to immerse ourselves in the metaphorical sea of experiences or emotions, it becomes essential for us to adopt a posture of silence and reflection. In doing so, we can better navigate these depths and truly appreciate the serenity that surrounds us.
- In environments that are characterized by peace and stability, the opportunities for development and progress are greatly enhanced.
- Respecting other religions and learning the inner currents of other religions will help a person to build peace.
- In a family setting, in order to build and maintain peace, cultivate a loving, unified relationship with your partners and children.
- Learn to tolerate with those who try to induce you or provoke you without knowing your ideals.
- ‘Forgiving your loved ones as well as the unknown ones’ can be a way forward to find peace and move forward in your life:
- ‘Seeking Forgiveness’ is a way forward to build peace; it can lead to improved mental health, lower blood pressure, and a stronger immune system.
- ‘Sharing Pains’ is a way forward to build people; it can help people feel less alone and open the door to receiving support and guidance.

Release of Posters on Peace

In celebration of the International Day of Peace, the Sisters of the Good Shepherd took the initiative to release a series of posters that highlight the importance of cultivating peace within families and communities. These thoughtfully designed posters serve to raise awareness about the significance of peace in our everyday lives. Copies of these posters were distributed to participants during the event, aimed at fostering a deeper understanding of the concept of peace and encouraging individuals to reflect on their roles in promoting harmony both at home and in society at large.

Release of an Awareness Song

Good Shepherd Sisters and their Partners-in-Mission came out with an awareness song on Peace by utilizing AI technology. The song is about embracing all and how the universe serving / treating everyone equally with dignity. Shortly after the release of a song on interfaith and inter-caste peace that was written and composed by Staffs working on Inclusive Community Development Services (ICDS) which was appreciated by an applause by the participants.

Play on Interfaith Peace

At the public meeting, a play on Interfaith Peace underscored the significance of comprehending the Indian Constitution, which focuses on the rights and responsibilities of individuals in fostering

peace, rather than promoting superiority based on religious identities. The play emphasis on inter-religious harmony on the perspective of Indian Constitutional Values. The play cautions the factors and persons who instigate the general community only to win the electoral votes. The play also educates the need and responsibility of respecting the other faiths and their beliefs.

Vote of Thanks

Mrs. Priyanka, Community Organizer of Inclusive Community Development Services (ICDS), expressed her gratitude in a vote of thanks, highlighting Mr. Sam, the Project Coordinator, for his efforts in rallying participants for the peace rally and public meeting. On behalf of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd and their Partners-in-Mission, she expressed her heartfelt gratitude to Mrs. P. Hari Shankari, the esteemed Assistant Commissioner of Police for the Salem Town Range, as well as to Rev. Bishop Dr. Arulselvam Rayappan, the Bishop of the Salem Diocese, and religious leaders from different faiths for their valuable presence at the event. She commended their impressive and thought-provoking messages, which resonated deeply with the attendees and served as a significant inspiration during the inauguration of the Peace Awareness rally. Furthermore, she conveyed her appreciation to all other invited guests, acknowledging their contributions as well. Their uplifting messages played a vital role in igniting a spirit of conscious effort towards cultivating peace, emphasizing the importance of nurturing harmony not only within oneself but also within families and extending to the broader community. Such sentiments shared during the event were essential in fostering a collective realization of the significance of peace in our lives.

Expressing Gratitude

Sisters of the Good Shepherd express their gratitude to all those who have contributed towards their Peace Mission. In a special way Sisters express their gratitude to Religious Leaders from Different Faiths, Sri Sakthi Kailash College of Women, Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), Government Officials, SKS Trust, Christ Holiday's & Travels Pvt Ltd, NGOs, Peace Activists, and those who have contributed in many ways in organising the International Day of Peace.

Conclusion

Peace education is essential, particularly in the current global context, as well as in the specific context of India. Peace education should be aligned with the Indian Constitution, which emphasizes peaceful coexistence. In today's India, negative forces threaten this harmony. Citizens must be aware of these challenges and strive to become conscious advocates for peace and harmony. There is a strong need to promote Constitutional Rights Education to the present generation, as this is not being the part of the formal education in the Indian school curriculum. As change agents, each one of us has a role to promote secular values and spread the good news that all are children of God and practising discrimination is sin and against the nature.

Documented by

Mr. A. John Aruldass, Partner-in-Mission, and
Mr. Sam, Project Coordinator (ICDS)

PHOTOGRAPHS

International Day of Peace – 21st September 2024



Come, let us Create a Culture of Peace & Harmony
ஒன்றிணைவோம் வேறுபாடுகளை களைந்து ஒற்றுமை மற்றும் அமைதியை வலுப்படுத்துவோம்

சர்வதேச அமைதி தினம்
International Day of Peace
21 SEPTEMBER 2024

Our Partners

Logos of partner organizations: Sisters of the Good Shepherd, S.K.S., CHRIST HOLIDAY'S & TRAVELS, YMCA.

ஒருங்கிணைப்பு : நல்லாயன் கன்னியர் இல்லம் & அமைதி சங்கமம், சேலம்.



Mr. R. Sam, Project Coordinator of ICDS Project of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd briefs the participants the purpose of coming together on the International Day of Peace and the theme.



"Conflict begins with communication; therefore, we should communicate carefully. Our words should unify, not divide," says Mrs. P. Hari Shankari, Assistant Commissioner of Police, Salem Town Range.



Rev. Dr. Arulsevam, Bishop of Salem Diocese, emphasizes the importance of awareness regarding pluralism and inclusivity in the current socio-economic, and political context.



Sister Mageswari from Prajapita Brahma Kumari's Ishwarya Vishwa Vidyalaya emphasis on the internal peace which has the potential of doing miracle in one's life.



Religious leaders and Lay Leaders Jointly Flagging off the Peace Awareness Rally



Participants march towards the YMCA Campus holding placards with Interfaith, Inter-caste, and Gender Peace messages and raising their voices in support of them.



Awareness Peace Rally aims to inspire positive change, foster dialogue, encourage individuals & communities to work towards resolving conflicts, and creating a more peaceful society.



Sr. Rani, Sub-site Director of CHALICE Educational & Community Sponsorship Programme of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd join the special invitees in lighting the lamp.



“When you forgive people, you are free from the emotional burden of resentment and anger; and you are free to perform better your duties” says Rev. Fr. Albert, Assistant Parish Priest of Udayapattay



Mr. Xavier, Project Director of Don Bosco Anbu Illam, Salem was felicitated by Sr. Rajakumari, Project Director of Inclusive Community Development Services (ICDS) for his contribution towards building peace



Mr. Moulavi H. Saifullah, Chief Imam of Nadhimullah Makkan Majit felicitates Rev. Rajan Daniel, CSI Steel Plant for his contribution towards peace



Pastor Justin, President of Salem Christian Church Protection Association emphasizes that understanding the spirituality of other religions can foster interfaith peace.



Prof. Malar from Sri Sakthi Kailash Women's College of Arts and Science felicitated for participating along with her colleagues and students



Posters on 'Family Harmony', 'Preamble of the Indian Constitution', 'Equality', and 'Social Justice' were released on the International Day of Peace 2024



Awareness Play on Interfaith Peace & Harmony by the Partners-in-Mission of the Good Shepherd Sisters on the International Day of Peace 2024.

