

## **Report 1: Women Encounter: Women's Stories and Feast**

### **First Women Activity in observance of UN World InterFaith Harmony Week**

on January 28, 2022. Women Encounter is a monthly event which takes place every Saturday in a month. Two women encounter events, were set aside in January and February to mark UN World Interfaith Harmony Week 2023.

**Place:** Simon Peters Hus at Islandsvej 4 in Kolding from 13-18 pm

Preparations at 1 and start of the program at 2 pm.

**Who attended:** 25 women and 10 children from 10 countries of origin Iran, Iraq, Syria, Lithuania, Afghanistan, Philippines, Bosnia, Denmark, Poland, Ukraine, Liberia, representing religions of Islam and Christianity, most of them came to Denmark as refugees and obtained residence permit, others are citizens, have acquired Danish citizenship by marriage and work, others are Ukrainian refugees coming to Denmark under Special Law because of war, and some refugees, still waiting for grant of asylum status, and those who are Danish citizens.

**Languages used in the meeting:** Danish and English and translation into Ukrainian language.

The program started with welcome words from Elizabeth Padillo Olesen, who gave the historical background of the World InterFaith Harmony Week with the resolution of Kong Abdullah 11 in Jordan, and the ratification of the resolution at UN General Assembly in October 2010. The principles of Love of God and Love of Neighbor as ground principles in three monotheistic religions: Islam, Christianity and Judaism in Koran, Torah and the Bible, and love of the Good and Love to include those who belong to other faiths and no faiths.

**Welcome Song;** "*Jeg er så glad, når jeg ser dig*" ("I am so glad when I see you," (sung with actions.)

Women got time to introduce shortly their name, country of origin and whatever they would like to share about themselves to the group.

Children got a room with toys and books, and papers for creative art.

Coffee and tea with cakes and fruits were served as women arrived.

## What transpired:

1. Presentation by every participant to the group on one's life story as an immigrant coming to a new land, Denmark, and the struggles involved for integration. Some women presented certain objects from their country of origin and shared the significance of these objects.
2. **Presentation of a Danish food, *lavkage*** layer cake with cream and some fruits done by Bente Beckham, showing how this Danish cake is prepared in a simple, economic and tasty way which can be tried at home. Recipe was made available to everyone.
3. **Reflection by Lilly Biswas on *God's way of caring for us through nature and the food and fruits that grow in our gardens. God as source of blessings, and the source of love and our call to share love and blessings to others.***
4. **Presentations of some objects which some women came with:**
  - 1) Presentation of Elsebeth Fischer Nielsen on the kind of dress, worn by women in Bangladesh. Elsebeth had worked in Bangladesh in more than 25 years and has learned the language.
  - 2) Lilly Biswas came with water jug from India, demonstrating how women nicely use it to carry water on their head and the long distance of carrying water from the well.
  - 3.) Angel Aboah from Liberia: on the traditional dress and piece of cloth, worn around waists or body in many ways.
  - 4). Presentation of Elizabeth: of an attire from the Philippines and from Nepal
  - 5) Presentation of Jolanta from Lithuania, the attire made for winter, and how they are worn, demonstrating the joyful colours and the lightness of the material.
5. **Cultural presentation by *Vahida Hadziya Ajdarlar*** from Bosnian Organization in Denmark, telling about her life, coming to Denmark as Muslim and her struggles for integration. How coming to a new country, makes one more conscious of one's own religion from home, as a positive inspiration in difficult times. She and her family managed to learn the language well and she comes well-integrated with a stable job as teacher in Denmark and is also involved in politics within the Danish Radical Party.

6. **More time for women in small groups** to share about their personal stories of integration and struggles in Denmark and how their faith has helped them cope with the situation to be in the new country.

### **Concluding threads:**

1. Learning songs with bodily movements: songs from Philippines, Africa, USA, Denmark, Israel on songs of love, joy, faith and hope made the women happy and  
Dramatic song in bodily movements: "Jeg er en lille ørn" I am little eagle, wanting to find a friend... and the song on "London Bridge..." 'dramatizing the act of building bridges and the times when bridges fall down...
2. Short recap on what transpired in the small groups.
3. Announcements on other activities to mark the UN World InterFaith Harmony Week in Kolding from January 8 to March 1.
4. Blessing song from Africa: "Masithi Amen, Siyaku Dumisa" (Bless us, Lord, as we go.)

### **Impact of the Event:**

1. Giving a voice to silent women around the table of confidence. The atmosphere of friendship makes women more open, happier, and active. Songs and body movements in songs are simple exercises, which if done together, add to the atmosphere of fellowship among women.
2. That it is possible to meet together as Muslim and Christian women, or women without faith, free from being discriminated against or made objects of other's judgment and prejudice. That it is possible to know each other by sharing life's stories together, cooking together, eating together and dancing together and be able to call each other by their names.
3. Meeting together has given place to faith and religion in women's encounter with each other. It is not something to be ashamed of but something being valued.

Links and photos and poster

Women Encounter: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/2371908593028121>



Poster made by Jårliny Spence Swanlake Petersen

Photos: