International Peace Day Celebrated at CTTB

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International Peace Day was celebrated again this year at the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas by over 200 people. It was held on September 21st, which is the date the United Nations General Assembly has designated as the day on which people and countries worldwide should observe peace and nonviolence. Last year more than 3,500 peace events took place in over 200 countries, including all 192 member nations of the United Nations.

Chanting “Om Mani Padmi Hum”, students of Instilling Goodness Elementary School, Developing Virtue Secondary School, and La Vida Charter School, teachers, parents and guests walked from the entrance gates through the Buddha Hall and on to Confucius (Daoyuan) Hall. Many children carried red, blue, green, yellow and purple balloons emblazoned with the word “Peace” and a dove on them, while others dangled small paper doves from bamboo sticks.

Leading the peace parade were the high school girls flying high the three giant white dove kite/puppets that they created several years ago. Directly behind the large doves were the second grade students flapping their wings while dressed in white peace dove costumes.

Dr. Jane Goodall, a primary promoter of International Peace Day, says, “With the peace doves we remind everyone of the truth they sometimes forget - that peace is possible. We celebrate all that is free and noble in the human spirit. And we celebrate all that so many people have done throughout the year – and will do next year - to create a better world.”

Once seated in Confucius Hall, Dharma Master Heng Lyu, in his welcoming speech, said that being peaceful toward others begins by being peaceful with oneself. He said, “Confucius told us we should be patient and put ourselves in others’ shoes and the Buddha emphasized we should be gentle with each other and ourselves. Then we can create inner peace.”

Heng Yin Shr led the group in a short meditation following crystal bowl ringing by part native-American Judy Clark and her granddaughter Ellie.
The program consisted of each class from the Girls Division dancing or singing songs for peace. The 7th - 8th grade girls, under the expert tutelage of Ms. Misri, wrote, created and directed themselves a short skit about a debate between warmongers and peace-lovers, which was very well received. In their skit, this time, Peace won!

This year many from the boys school in grades K-10 attended and the K-1 boys also performed.

The audience was also entertained by Madge Strong and Tom DeMarchia playing their guitars and singing lovely and humorous songs. Steve Smith played a song called “God Loves All the Animals,” accompanying himself with his guitar and harmonica. We had the good fortune of having David Smith-Ferri, local poet laureate, be our main speaker. As always his words touched the hearts of all present.

The afternoon event ended with everyone present forming a large circle and doing an earth healing dance lead by Charlene Light. Professor Bing also read a poem written by Venerable Master Hua and then the Dedication of Merit was sung by Melody Ishihara.

International Peace Day concluded with an evening meditation held at the University Building from 7:30 to 8:30. Those attending were graced by two beautiful songs performed by Voices 3, a singing group from Willits. Judy Clark was there, as well, to ring her beautiful crystal bowls. The evening was crowned by light refreshments and visiting with one another.

I must say that I observed the most beautiful sunset ever while sitting on the porch of the University Building in the twilight hours of International Peace Day. The peace that abounds and permeates these 480 acres of sacred land must surely be reaching out and touching all in this beautiful valley and beyond.