

A showcase of tolerance in ‘Kingdom of Kindness’

By MELISSA NAZARETH

THIS Is Bahrain, in partnership with St Christopher's Cathedral of The Gulf, hosted an inspiring and heartfelt multi-faith gathering titled 'What Tolerance Means to Me' in celebration of United Nations Day of Tolerance 2025.

The event brought together Bahrain's richly diverse communities, representing a spectrum of faiths, cultures, ethnicities, and generations, to share reflections, prayers, music and personal stories celebrating the kingdom's enduring spirit of peaceful coexistence and unity.

Chairperson of This Is Bahrain, Betsy B Mathieson, praised the remarkable diversity and harmony on display, noting that Bahrain continues to stand as a global example of compassion and coexistence.

"Bahrain, 'the Kingdom of Kindness', does not simply tolerate others, we warmly embrace them and welcome them as part of Bahrain's rich tapestry of faiths, ethnicities and cultures," she said. "Under the visionary leadership of His Majesty King Hamad,



■ A member of the Bohra community reciting verses from the Holy Quran



■ Father Penrith giving a talk

differences to divide us," he noted, commending the diversity on display at the event.

Other speakers representing the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahado Church, the National Evangelical English Language Church, the Bahrain Buddhist community, and more, showed their love of the kingdom.

Each shared personal reflections on what tolerance means to them in the context of Bahrain's inclusive society. GDN-Media editor-in-chief Stanley Szcwoka, for example, talked about his experience as an English expatriate living in Bahrain, forging friendships with people of different cultures, whether it is breaking bread at

Bahrain has shone ever brighter on the world stage as a beacon of hope in a conflicted world."

The sharing session opened with Father Rob Penrith, interregnum priest at St Christopher's Cathedral, delivering a thoughtful address, followed by a musical performance from the Tamil community.

Pastor Trevor Howard of Saar Fellowship skilfully served as Master of Ceremonies, introducing a diverse lineup of speakers, including US Fifth Fleet chaplain Captain Tom Cook, who said: "It is embracing what it means to be human and not allowing our



■ Delightful diversity

Iftar with his Muslim brothers or enjoying sweet dishes with his Indian friends during Diwali.

Among the most touching contributions were those from schoolchildren, who confidently took to the stage to express their love for Bahrain and gratitude for growing up in such a welcoming, peaceful and diverse country.

Eight-year-old Indian expatriate Senai Shivkar shared how she learned about tolerance during Ramadan, trying not to eat in front of her friends who were fasting. And, Jason Nkhandwe, also eight, from Malawi, said: "Tolerance starts with us – how we speak, act and treat others."

Their heartfelt words captivated the audience and served as a powerful reminder that Bahrain's values of tolerance and kindness are passed naturally from one generation to the next.

Musical highlights included the beautiful Yaredic hymn *Kedusan Hizb*, performed by the Hamere Noah Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahado Church Sunday School Choir & Theological Scholars, and *Inta Elahi – You Are My God*, performed gracefully by the National Evangelical Church United Voices.

A deeply moving segment of the evening featured Interfaith Prayers for Peace, bringing together representatives from the cathedral's congregation, the Bohra community, Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahado Church,



■ Chaplain Captain Cook giving a talk



■ Mr Szcwoka



■ Jason sharing what 'tolerance' means to him

Buddhist monks of Bahrain, Sikh Gurudwara, the British Royal Naval Base Bahrain and the National Evangelical English Language Church.

Each offered a prayer or reading from their sacred tradition, demonstrating the spirit of unity that defines daily life in Bahrain.

The celebration concluded with a sermon and vote of thanks by Pastor Blaine Newhouse, Senior Pastor of the National Evangelical English Language Church, who praised the unity, goodwill and joy shared throughout the gathering.

The 'What Tolerance Means to Me' celebration once again highlighted why Bahrain is admired globally as a nation where people from all backgrounds not only coexist peacefully but are embraced with warmth, dignity and friendship.

Organisers said that the participation of children underscored Bahrain's enduring legacy of nurturing future generations in an atmosphere of love, respect and mutual understanding.

"A fantastic event," said David Axtell, chair of St Christopher's Cathedral Council. "Thank you to everyone who participated, it was such a



■ Showcasing the spirit of unity

tolerance and peaceful respect runs through all.

"We tried to provide a platform and voice to many that may feel unheard which offered new and interesting perspectives. Youngsters were also encouraged to share their experiences and it was these that will live longest in the memory; in particular Senai with her passion, Jason and Chris for their clear and important messages, along with Wouter's poem and Angela's resistance to bullying.

"Wisam and Mohamed from Al Raja School also interacted, detailing how as a Christian and Muslim studying together, they support each other and enjoy learning about each other's beliefs.

"Faithful musical interludes and prayer provided a suitable balance. The event also represented an opportunity for several residents new to Bahrain to experience the open and free worship, ironically demonstrating that the kingdom has moved beyond 'tolerance' to 'co-habitation'. St Christopher's Cathedral is proud to support such endeavours and thanks everyone who participated, especially This Is Bahrain."

melissa@gdnmedia.bh



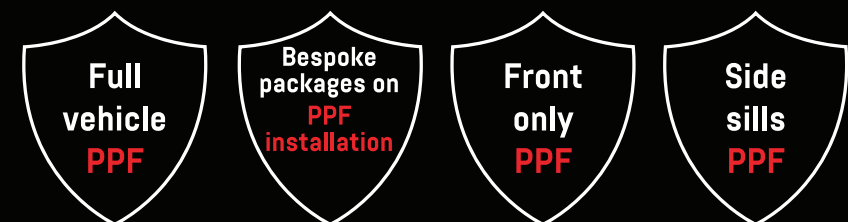
■ The National Evangelical Church choir



■ The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahado Church choir



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