

Monday, January 2, 2006

New year starts with vision of peace, unity

Small group gathers to promote compassion

By Cindy Kranz
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ZOOM

The Enquirer/Ernest Coleman

Mercie Goldberg, 6, of Anderson Township take's part in the New Year's Day candlelight vigil to reflect on unity and peace.

WHAT'S NEXT

Greater Anderson Promotes Peace will sponsor Opening Doors: Community Conversations, to draw the Anderson Township, Mount Washington, Newtown and West Clermont communities together in a series of discussions about diversity in the community. Conversations begin Feb. 23.

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ANDERSON TWP. - Greater Anderson Promotes Peace started 2006 with a New Year's Day candlelight vigil to reflect on unity and peace, fully aware its work is far from over.

"One of the things that called us together tonight was discussion about the bombing of the mosque that happened just before Christmas this year," Louise Lawarre told the group of 16 assembled at the Peace Pole Garden in Beech Acres Park. "We're aware that with our dreams of peace, it's not yet a reality in our world."

Lawarre, executive director of Greater Anderson Promotes Peace, was referring to an explosion that damaged a door Dec. 20 at the Islamic Association of Cincinnati Mosque in Clifton. No one was injured.

Greater Anderson Promotes Peace encourages education and dialogue about various faiths and cultures to develop a better understanding of commonalities and differences. The group was formed in 1999 in response to white supremacist groups that distributed hate literature in

Anderson neighborhoods. An Anderson family's home had been spray-painted with swastikas in late 1998.

Participants in Sunday's candlelight vigil were invited to bring a brief reading to share, such as a poem, meaningful quote, prayer or story.

Readings were excerpted from a variety of sources, from Maya Angelou's "Amazing Peace: A Christmas Poem" to Nelson Mandela's inaugural address.

Helen Buswinka of Anderson Township read a quote from the late priest and spiritual writer Henri Nouwen:

"In a world so torn apart by rivalry, anger and hatred, we have the privileged vocation to be living signs of a love that can bridge all divisions and heal all wounds."

Buswinka, with her husband, Pete, attended the vigil to start the new year with like-minded people.

"I think you ought to begin the year the way you want to live the year, so I wanted to gather with people who are committed to living lives of peace and compassion," she said. "It sets the tone for the whole year."

Participants also offered concerns that weigh on them for the world, either locally or globally. They ranged from peace in Iraq to peace in Over-the-Rhine.

The vigil ended with the group singing "Let There Be Peace on Earth."

The Peace Pole Garden, a project of Greater Anderson Promotes Peace, was dedicated last September. This is the first New Year's candlelight vigil at the garden. Organizers hope to make it an annual event.

"This is an important place," said Michael Goldberg, who attended with his wife, Sue, and 6-year-old daughter, Mercie.

"This is an important symbol, because it transcends race, it transcends religion and reaches the core of all people. ... It's just simple. There's no political agenda. There's no religious agenda. It's just peace."

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