



home > city hall > press releases

Night of Prayer Promotes Unity and Harmony



Perris City Councilwoman Rita Rogers on stage with local ministers during the Aug. 14 Night of Prayer in Perris. Rogers: "It is awesome to come together in praise. We are gathered in unity for a night of prayer."

Twenty ministers from Perris gathered on the City Hall Campus Monday (August 14) for the community's second annual "Night of Prayer," pleading for unity and harmony for the United States, California, the Perris community and its elected leaders.

About 100 people turned out at Foss Field Park to hear messages from ministers in English and Spanish.

The Night of Prayer took on added significance in the wake of last weekend's violent confrontations in Virginia, North Korea's threat to attack Guam with nuclear weapons, and recent violence in Kenya and Burkina Faso that left dozens dead.

"Our nation and our world is in turmoil," said Perris City Councilwoman Rita Rogers, who organized the Night of Prayer. "It is definitely a time we need to come together in prayer. It is awesome to come together in praise. We are gathered in unity for a night of prayer. Lord knows our nation needs prayer."

Perris Mayor Pro Tem David Starr Rabb and City Councilwoman Tonya Burke attended the Night of Prayer.

Rabb called the show of solidarity "a great event." Burke called it "a true and absolute blessing."

"It's wonderful to be able to come together in a city where people gather to pray for their leaders," she said. "Being a Christian woman, being here and being a leader, it's comforting to know you have people in the community praying for you."



Perris Mayor Pro Tem David Starr Rabb and City Councilwoman Tonya Burke clap as they listen to ministers speak during the Second Annual Night of Prayer Aug. 14 at Foss Field Park.

The ministers addressing the crowd are part of the group Cops and Clergy, which Rogers founded as a conduit between law enforcement and the Perris community. The group meets with Perris Police Chief Brandon Ford once a month to discuss issues of importance to both sides.

Ford said he hoped the Night of Prayer would strengthen the already tight bonds between Perris cops, the City and the public.

"The police are the community and the community are the police," Ford said. "The better we connect with other members of the community, the better we can do our job. Faith-based organizations are the heart of everything that is right in a community. They represent the best of us."

The Night of Prayer began with a musical performance by members of the Free Indeed Christian Fellowship. The event concluded with pastors counseling individuals one-on-one.

Rev. Brenda Hunt of the First Congregational Church of Perris, the first minister to take the stage, urged the audience to "treasure these moments with each other" and to put aside individual differences to bring about a common goal—a united City, state, nation, world. She prayed to "ease our sense of judgments and make us merciful people."

"For all of our differences we are so much more the same than we our different," Hunt said. Pastor Wade Forde, who ministers at two Seventh Day Adventist congregations, called upon Americans to "substitute peace for frustration, faith for fear" and to "create change in our hearts to create change in our community, our state and our nation's capital."



Pastor Brenda Hunt of the First Congregational Church in Perris addresses the audience during the Aug. 14 Night of Prayer. Hunt prayed to "ease our sense of judgments and make us merciful people."

Other speakers prayed on behalf of veterans and military men and women keeping the peace in far corners of the world today. Prayers were offered for those debilitated by disease, the disabled, for families and children, for safe schools, for law enforcement officers and firefighters and for unity everywhere.

Jose Luis and Sylvia Ramirez, husband and wife pastors at Real Christian Community Church, wrapped up the public remarks with a call for "unity in spirit, unity in the heart." Jose Luis Ramirez urged Christians to fight against the "disunity that divides and smashes nations and cities" and to stand guard against "all darkness, against every wall that is raised up to bring disunity.

"Where there is unity, there is power," he said.

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