



# INTER FAITH

# UPDATE

Spring 2005 Issue 27

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## Commission for Equality and Human Rights and new "equality" reviews

The Government introduced its Equality Bill into the House of Commons on 3 March. In addition to including provisions offering further protection against discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief it also creates a duty on public authorities to promote equality of opportunity between men and women and prohibits sex discrimination in the exercise of public functions. However, the primary purpose of the Bill is to create the legal framework for the new Commission for Equality and Human Rights, following the extensive consultations which the Government has carried out, as reported in past issues of *Inter Faith Update*. The Bill is due to have a Second Reading in the House of Commons on 5 April.

The Bill provides for the new Commission to bring together the work of the Commission for Racial Equality, the Disability Rights Commission and the Equal Opportunities Commission. The CEHR will also have responsibility for the new equality areas of age, religion and belief, and sexual orientation and will work to promote human rights, therefore bringing together expertise on equality, diversity and human rights issues in one organisation. The present intention is that the new Commission will be established in October 2007 for all areas except those for which the Commission for Racial Equality is responsible. These would transfer to the CEHR by April 2009.

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### Subscribing to Inter Faith Update

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## New legislation on religious discrimination

The last issue of *Inter Faith Update* reported the Government's intention to end discrimination on the grounds of "religion or belief" in the provision of goods, facilities, services and premises, following the legislation already introduced dealing with discrimination on these grounds in employment and vocational training. As was anticipated, the relevant

legislative provisions have been included in the Equality Bill, whose primary purpose is to establish the framework for the new Commission for Equality and Human Rights. As reported above, the Bill was introduced into the House of Commons on 3 March and is due to have its Second Reading on 5 April.

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## NETWORK NEWS

### Executive Committee

Rev Daniel Otieno-Ndale, a nominee of the Minority Ethnic Christian Affairs Reference Group of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, which brings together representatives of the different strands of the ethnic minority Christian presence in Britain, has been coopted as a member of the Network's Executive Committee to fill the place left vacant by Rev Simon Reynolds who stood down at the 2003 AGM.

Rev Guy Wilkinson, currently acting as part time adviser to the Church of England on inter faith matters, has been coopted onto the Committee to fill the place left by Ven Michael Igrave, who has now become the Anglican Archdeacon of Southwark, as reported in the last issue of *Inter Faith Update*.

### Staff

Gaylina Nguyen, who has worked part time, while a student, for the Network since Autumn 2002 was appointed in March as full time Finance and Administration Assistant.

## NATIONAL UPDATE

### Commission for Equality and Human Rights and new "equality" reviews

*(continued from page 1)*

The Bill sets out a range of powers for the CEHR to promote equality and tackle discrimination. These include: a new duty to consult with stakeholders to ensure all groups have an opportunity to participate and engage in its work; a new duty to monitor progress on equality, human rights and good relations between communities, through publishing a regular 'state of the nation' report; a new duty to promote good relations between and within communities, across all sections of society, (the Commission is required to pay "particular regard" to exercising their responsibilities in this sphere "in relation to communities defined by reference to race, religion or belief"); an explicit role to combat prejudice and to work to reduce crime affecting particular communities, including new powers to monitor hate crimes; and provision for a regional presence across the country, and in Scotland and Wales.

## The Inter Faith Network

The Inter Faith Network was founded in 1987. It works with its member bodies to promote good relations between the faith communities in the UK, to combat inter religious prejudice and intolerance and to help make the UK a country marked by mutual understanding and respect between religions where all can practise their faith with integrity. The Network:

- provides information on faith communities and on inter faith matters
- advises on multi faith projects and inter faith issues
- publishes materials to aid work in the religious and inter faith sectors
- fosters inter faith co-operation on social issues
- holds regular meetings where social and religious questions of concern to the different faith communities can be examined together
- links 105 member organisations including: representative bodies from the different faith communities; national and local inter faith organisations; and educational and academic bodies.

## Inter Faith Update

*Inter Faith Update* is the newsletter of the Inter Faith Network for the UK. It keeps a wide range of organisations and individuals interested in developing good inter faith relations in the UK in touch with UK events and projects with a significant inter faith component.

Please send any items and diary dates for consideration for inclusion in the next issue by **28 June 2005** to: The Newsletter Editor, Inter Faith Network, 8A Lower Grosvenor Place, London SW1W 0EN or email to [harriet.crabtree@interfaith.org](mailto:harriet.crabtree@interfaith.org) marking your email 'newsletter'.

It will also have general powers to publish or disseminate ideas and information, to give advice and guidance, to undertake research, to provide education and training and to publish and disseminate ideas and information. It will have the power to work in partnership with and provide grant aid to others in support of its functions and to work with individuals, communities, businesses and public services. Copies of the Bill (and the explanatory notes) can be found on the Parliamentary website at [www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk/pa/pabills.htm](http://www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk/pa/pabills.htm).

On 25 February, a few days before publication of its Equality Bill, the Government announced an Equalities Review which will be chaired by Trevor Phillips, the Chair of the Commission for Racial Equality, who will be joined by a panel of experts from the public and private sector social policy arenas. The Review panel is due to start work in March 2005 and to report to the Prime Minister by the Summer of 2006. It will look at barriers to opportunity and will make practical recommendations on key policy priorities for the Government and public sector; employers and trade unions; civic society and the voluntary sector. Its findings will inform the modernisation of equality legislation and the development of the new CEHR.

In the Government's earlier consultations on its equality and discrimination proposals, many respondents argued strongly that a new comprehensive "Single Equality Act" is needed. The Government has announced that in conjunction with the Equalities Review there will be a Discrimination Law Review, led by the Women and Equality Unit of the Department of Trade and Industry, which will consider how Britain's anti-discrimination legislation can be modernised to fit the needs of the 21st Century. This review will benefit from the background and analysis that will be provided by the Equalities Review and it is intended to be the basis for developing a single equality legislative framework that will be fairer to individuals and simpler for employers and service providers.

**The Inter Faith Network's  
website:  
[www.interfaith.org.uk](http://www.interfaith.org.uk)**

## New legislation on religious discrimination

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The provisions would ban:

- direct discrimination where a person, on grounds of religion or belief, is treated less favourably than another;
- indirect discrimination where a requirement, condition or practice has the effect of putting people of a particular religious belief at a disadvantage which cannot be justified; and
- victimisation where someone is treated less favourably than others because, for example, they have complained of discrimination or have assisted someone else in a complaint.

The new measures would make it unlawful to discriminate against people because of their religion or belief or their lack of religion or belief. 'Belief' is defined as 'any religious or philosophical belief'. The courts have previously ruled that a religious belief "must attain a certain level of cogency, seriousness, cohesion and importance, and be worthy of respect in a democratic society and not be incompatible with human dignity". 'Philosophical belief' only includes beliefs which are similar to a religious belief, so the provisions would apply to discrimination against atheists and humanists, but not supporters of a political party or football team.

There are important exemptions for: faith-based schools to allow them to continue to operate a selection policy based on faith; charities and religion and belief organisations (which would, for example, allow faith-based charities to discriminate in favour of that faith in the provision of services on the grounds of religion or belief); and acts safeguarding national security.

It will be of particular interest to inter faith organisations that they are covered by these exemptions in a way which would allow them to restrict their membership to particular religious groups or restrict the range of faiths which are involved in their activities.

The Home Office press release relating specifically to the religious discrimination provisions in the Bill can be found at [http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/n\\_story.asp?item\\_id=1249](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/n_story.asp?item_id=1249).

## Legislation on incitement to religious hatred

As foreshadowed in the last issue of *Inter Faith Update*, the Government introduced into Parliament at the end of last year legislation to create a new offence of incitement to religious hatred. The relevant provisions, included in the Serious Organised Crime and Police Bill, are along the same lines as those contained in the Anti-Terrorism Bill debated by Parliament in the Autumn of 2001, which were dropped before its enactment following opposition in the House of Lords. The Bill has passed through all its stages in the House of Commons and received a Second Reading in the House of Lords on 14 March. However, in the course of the debate a number of members expressed their opposition or disquiet about the provisions dealing with incitement to religious hatred and it is unclear whether the provision will be agreed at the House of Lords Committee stage, due in April.

The new Bill expands the existing criminal offence of incitement to racial hatred contained in the Public Order Act 1986. The relevant provisions make it an offence knowingly to use words, behaviour or material that is threatening, abusive or insulting with the intention, or likely effect, that hatred will be stirred up against a group of people targeted because of their religious beliefs or lack of religious beliefs. During the progress of the Bill through the House of Commons the name of the expanded offence was changed (through an amendment tabled by the Government in order to clarify the purpose of the provisions) to "Hatred against persons on racial and religious grounds". An amendment to provide for the repeal of the blasphemy law (which did not have the support of the Government) was heavily defeated.

The proposed legislation on incitement to religious hatred has been the focus of widespread public debate over recent months. Some critics have argued that the provisions would impose unacceptable restrictions on freedom of speech and might curtail freedom to engage in missionary activities. Others have suggested that the legislation will arouse excessive expectations of its effect, on the mistaken assumption that it will prevent straightforward vilification or abuse, which it is not designed to do. It has also been suggested that existing provisions under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 provide sufficient protection, but this is disputed by supporters of the legislation.

The Government has made it clear that the purpose of the legislation is to protect groups of people against the consequences of the incitement to religious hatred and that it is not intended to limit the freedom to criticise religious beliefs and practices or to engage in robust argument about these or to tell jokes. Under the legislation the consent of the Attorney General would be required for any prosecution in order to protect against frivolous or vexatious court actions or unintended consequences of this extension of the law.

The Network's Faith Communities Consultative Forum discussed the legislation at its meeting in mid-December and there was general support for it. The Forum is precluded by its terms of reference from issuing any statement of public policy, but a number of faith community members subsequently issued a joint *ad hoc* statement on 18 January welcoming the proposed legislation. This followed a similar *ad hoc* statement in April 2004 which had urged the Government to legislate against incitement to hatred on grounds of religious identity.

The January statement pointed to "an unjust and anomalous gap in the present law". The Jewish and Sikh communities are already protected from incitement to hatred under the provisions relating to incitement to racial hatred, while other faith communities are not, by contrast with the position in Northern Ireland where a similar provision extends to all faith communities. The statement argued that the present legal position "leaves the way open for extremists to incite hatred of religious groups not covered by the law at present, setting one group against another, in ways which could significantly undermine the good community relations painstakingly developed by ethnic and faith communities in Britain over recent decades. Where this happens it is not just specific communities who are vulnerable - the bonds of our common society are put under strain..... Stirring up hatred on grounds of religion is as damaging as stirring up racial hatred."

It remains to be seen whether the argument about the relevant provisions in the Bill can be resolved before the widely anticipated dissolution of Parliament prior to a general election.

There is detailed information about the legislation to be found on the Home Office's website at <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/comrace/faith/crime>.

## Watch your language!

It is widely anticipated that a general election will be held shortly. Elections often trigger complaints from members of the public concerned about the content of some electoral addresses and leaflets.

Trevor Phillips, the Chair of the Commission for Racial Equality, has written to a wide range of community-based organisations inviting them to encourage members of the public to report to the police and other public agencies any racially or religiously motivated criminal acts or materials they consider incite hatred. This might include graffiti and slogans in public places or election materials. He suggests that any concerns about the effectiveness of current legislation in this area should also be raised with local MPs and parliamentary candidates. In his letter he says: "Elections should be a time for the fullest debate of the issues faced by the people of Britain. This debate should be informed by fact and directed towards solutions; it should not be an occasion for peddling prejudice and stirring up and exploiting fear and anxiety."

The Commission for Racial Equality would be grateful to receive copies of any controversial election material so that they can raise this with the leaders of the relevant political party. Such material should be sent to the CRE's Senior Parliamentary Officer, Finola Kelly at the Commission for Racial Equality, St Dunstan's House, 201-211 Borough High Street, London SE1 1GZ. Her email address is [fkelly@cre.gov.uk](mailto:fkelly@cre.gov.uk).

## Improving Opportunity, Strengthening Society

Following its consultation last year on *Strength in Diversity: Towards a Community Cohesion and Race Equality Strategy*, the Home Office published on 19 January a document entitled *Improving Opportunity, Strengthening Society* setting out its strategy in the light of that consultation. The main focus of the new document is on the Government's policies and programmes in the field of race equality and community cohesion more generally and it does not address inter faith relations in any detail.

The document does, however, contain two specific policy announcements of particular interest to faith community and inter faith

organisations. It announced that the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister will be setting up a 'network' of officials from the 50 local authorities whose areas are the most diverse in terms of faith. The 'network' is to be coordinated through Government Regional Offices but the arrangements for it have yet to be worked out in detail.

The document also announced that the Government intends to establish a new £3 million programme to help faith communities, making it clear that this would not be "a programme to promote particular faiths", but "to encourage dialogue and understanding between faith groups and others in the community so that they can work in partnership for the good of all. It will also help build leadership in faith groups in a way that contributes to good race and faith relations." Details of the way this programme will operate are not yet available.

*Improving Opportunity, Strengthening Society* can be found on the Home Office's website at [http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/docs4/race\\_improving\\_opport.pdf](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/docs4/race_improving_opport.pdf).

## CPS religious crime data published

The number of defendants dealt with by the Crown Prosecution Service for racially motivated crimes rose by 13 per cent last year according to a report published on 17 January. The report also includes figures for religiously aggravated crimes in 2003-04. 49 cases (each of which can have a number of defendants and charges) were finalised. A total of 60 offences were prosecuted, of which 44 were religiously aggravated. The actual or perceived religion of the victim in 22 of the 44 cases was Muslim. In the remaining cases, the victims were Christian (8), Jewish (5), Hindu (3), Sikh (2), Jehovah's Witness (1), and unknown (4). A guilty plea was submitted in 50 per cent of offences with an overall conviction rate of 77 per cent.

The breakdown of religiously aggravated offences mirrors racially aggravated offences. Public order was the predominant offence followed by assault, criminal damage and harassment. The majority of the charges were prosecuted in the magistrates' courts. In magistrates', crown and youth courts the overall conviction rate was 77 per cent on religiously aggravated charges and 86 per cent on all charges.

## Holocaust Memorial Day

Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) took place on 27 January. It coincided with the 60th Anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz concentration camp and the theme was 'Survivors, Liberation and Rebuilding Lives'. The national HMD event took place in Westminster Hall, London in the presence of the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh. Earlier that day they had hosted a reception at St James's Palace for survivors of the Holocaust and British veterans who liberated the camps in 1945. The ceremony in Westminster Hall brought together over 600 Holocaust survivors living in Britain, as well as British soldiers who helped liberate the Bergen-Belsen death camp. Religious and political leaders also attended. The Queen led survivors in lighting 60 memorial candles and grandchildren of survivors read the names of 3,000 relatives who perished at the hands of the Nazis.

HMD events were held around the UK, including a number with a strong inter faith dimension. Some had a particular Christian-Jewish focus. For example, Birmingham Council of Christians and Jews hosted a meeting at Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre on 16 January where Dr Hannah Holtschneider, of the Centre for the Study of Jewish-Christian Relations, spoke on Liberation and Rebuilding Lives: Topics for Jewish-Christian Relations. Other events had a multi faith dimension. Political leaders in Wales and religious representatives marked HMD on 26 January in an event also reflecting on the 90th anniversary of the Armenian genocide.

Brighton and Hove City Council in collaboration with the Brighton Inter Faith Contact Group organised a civic event which included key speakers on three main elements: hearing local survivors; teaching the lessons to younger generations; and how the city supports today's 'survivors'. Nottingham Inter Faith Council and the City Council hosted an event at Nottingham Council House. This included, among other contributions, a Statement of Commitment by a member of the Jewish Community and drama performed by Nottingham Youth Theatre. In Lewisham, a multi faith service was held at the Catford Synagogue on Crantock Road when candles were lit in memory of those who died. In Derby an evening of prayers, readings and prose from different faiths took place on 24 January at the Multi-Faith Centre at The University of Derby. This was organised by Derby HMD

Working Group in conjunction with the Forum of Faiths for Derby. Members of all faiths and cultures came together to remember victims of oppression and torture across the world at a short ceremony on 30 January on the steps of Blackburn Town Hall on King William Street in the town centre. This was arranged by Blackburn with Darwen Council and the Interfaith Council for Blackburn with Darwen whose chair, Madhubala Pandya, led the ceremony. Reverend Leslie Olsberg, Minister of Heaton Park Synagogue in Manchester, gave the main address. Following the Mayor's closing address there was a lighting of candles ceremony.

## Does free speech have boundaries?

In recent weeks there have been several events which have raised in an acute form the question of how to balance the claims to freedom of speech with the sensitivities of faith communities and others.

Performances of *Behzti* (which means 'dishonour') written by Gurpreet Kaur Bahtti and depicting scenes of sexual violence in a *gurdwara* were cancelled in December after violence by a few of those members of the Sikh community demonstrating outside the theatre. There had previously been discussions between representatives of the theatre and of the community about some of its concerns. The community were not seeking to have the play banned but to have changes made to it, including its setting within a *gurdwara*, in view of the offence which they said would be caused to many Sikhs by this.

Events surrounding the play gave rise to widespread debate about the extent to which artistic freedom should be constrained by regard for the sensitivities of those of particular faiths or cultures in a diverse society. The discussion recognised that there are separate but overlapping issues of where the law should intervene and where restraint should be shown in cases where the law itself will not limit freedom of speech. The Birmingham Faith Leaders' Group (which includes Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh representatives) expressed support for the concerns of the Sikh community and anxiety about "the harm that this play will do within Birmingham and the wider society" and asked for "a higher degree of

sensitivity and understanding” from the management of the theatre, particularly given its financial subsidy “by local and national public funds”.

The fact that these issues arise in relation to concerns within both minority and majority communities was demonstrated by the pressure brought to bear (unsuccessfully) against the BBC by many Christian activists seeking the withdrawal from its programme schedules on 8 January of *Jerry Springer: The Opera*, whose characters include portrayals of God and Jesus which many find offensive.

It has been made clear by the Government that its current legislation on incitement to religious hatred would not cover cases of this kind.

## Merger of Home Office's Faith Communities Unit and Community Cohesion Unit

The Home Office set up a separate Faith Communities Unit in the spring of 2003 (as reported in Issue 22 of *Inter Faith Update*). The Unit has now merged with the Community Cohesion Unit to form the joint Cohesion and Faiths Unit. The Head of the new Unit is Judith Lempriere, who became Head of the Community Cohesion Unit in the summer of 2004. Tony Heal, Deputy Head of the new combined unit, is carrying responsibility for faith issues. Godfrey Stadlen, who was Head of the separate Faith Communities Unit, will have continuing responsibility for a separate project team dealing with the Government's legislation on both incitement to religious hatred and religious discrimination.

## New entry restrictions on ministers of religion cause problems

Last summer the Government introduced a new pre-entry English language requirement for overseas ministers of religion coming to the UK so that they have “the skills needed for ministry in a diverse and cohesive society” (as reported in Issue 25 of *Inter Faith Update*). Both the Hindu and Sikh communities are experiencing difficulties as a result of the restrictions. The Hindu Council for the UK has pointed out that

priests (known as *pujaris*) who work in Hindu temples, while carrying out important functions in relation to ritual and worship, do not preach or have a role in pastoral care and therefore that the language requirement is less relevant in their case. It poses a major problem because Hindu priests are trained in Sanskrit and generally come to this country only from India or Sri Lanka, normally only for one or two years at a time, because most temples rotate their priests. The operation of this system has been made much more difficult by the new legislation. There are no training institutions yet in this country.

The Sikh community have had similar problems with the new restrictions. *Granthis* also do not traditionally have a pastoral or preaching role. *Gurdwaras* traditionally have a system of visiting preachers who come to this country for around six months at a time. They may well not have fluent English skills and normally preach in Punjabi. *Gurdwaras* provide English translations or accompanying literature for those who need these.

These concerns have been taken up with the Home Office which has promised that there will be a review of the impact on faith communities of these restrictions, but this has yet to be initiated.

## Religious slaughter of animals

The Government published on 8 March its final response to the Farm Animal Welfare Council (FAWC) report on the Welfare of Farmed Animals at Slaughter or Killing. In its response, the Government rejected a recommendation by the Farm Animal Welfare Council that religious slaughter of animals without prior stunning should be banned. Mr Bradshaw said the Government had maintained its position in not accepting FAWC's recommendation that slaughter without prior stunning should be banned. He said the Government respected the rights of communities in Britain to slaughter animals in accordance with the requirements of their religion.

## Religious dress and uniform

On 2 March a Muslim girl from Luton, Shabina Begum, won the right to wear “head-to-toe” dress (*jilbab*) in the classroom after the court of appeal ruled her school had acted unlawfully in barring her. The school allows girls to wear the *hijab*, a headscarf, and trousers and tunic, but had refused Ms Begum permission to come to classes in full-length dress. Lord Justice Brooke, Vice-President of the Civil Division of the Court of Appeal, ruled that her school had: unlawfully excluded her; unlawfully denied her the right to manifest her religion; and unlawfully denied her access to suitable and appropriate education. He called on the Department for Education and Skills to give schools more guidance on how to comply with their obligations under the Human Rights Act. The appeal has important implications for schools across the country.

## The swastika

The swastika (sanskrit *svastika*) is a cross with its arms bent at right angles to either the right or left. The symbol has been used by a variety of cultures throughout the ages as a sign of good fortune and stability and is often seen in Hindu architecture and Indian artwork. It connotes well being and blessing. The image of the swastika has, sadly, become associated for decades across much of the world with Nazism. Because of this there were calls, following the wearing of the image at a fancy dress party by Prince Harry earlier this year, from German MEPs for the use of the swastika to be banned in Europe.

On 20 January, the Hindu Council UK called on all MPs and MEPs to oppose this move. Anil Bhanot, general secretary of the Hindu Council, said: “The Hindu Council is asking all MPs and MEPs to influence the European Union to respect the right of religious freedom of a billion people of this globe, by not allowing a general ban on one of the most sacred Hindu symbols. We condemn Nazism, which uses the swastika in an inverted form signifying ignorance, but that does not mean that the true spiritual symbol worshipped by a billion people can be subjected to any legislation of the temporal world, in any form, whatsoever.” In the event, EU legislators decided against the blanket ban proposed and suggested instead that member states tackle the problem individually. At the end of February the UK government said that it did not intend to ban

the swastika, because Britain’s current race hate laws were sufficient to prevent its improper use. Holocaust Educational Trust chairman Lord Janner highlighted the difficulty of banning the symbol. “Having been a war crimes investigator in Germany and hating the swastika symbol I would love to have it banned, but it is totally impossible in the UK. Not least because of its perfectly proper use by my Hindu friends.” For further information, see <http://www.hindu counciluk.org/swastika.asp>

## National identity cards

The Home Secretary published proposals for legislation on identity cards in April 2004 and the findings of a subsequent consultation exercise were published, together with the Government’s response to the report of the relevant Home Affairs Select Committee of the House of Commons in October 2004. The Identity Cards Bill was introduced on 29 November 2004 and has now passed through all its House of Commons stages.

The Government’s proposed scheme involves a database linked to cards carrying basic information, such as name, address and date of birth, together with biometric information, such as the image of face, iris of the eye or fingerprints. According to the Government, it is not planned that it will have details of religious identity, ethnicity, marital status or health records. Individuals will have subject access rights under the data protection act but strict safeguards will be placed on others who can access the information. A new Executive Agency, which incorporates the functions of the UK Passport Service and works closely with the Home Office Immigration and Nationality Directory, will operate the scheme. The scheme will be overseen by an independent commissioner. Identity cards will be mandatory but there will be no requirement to carry them. The purposes of the scheme are to: tackle illegal working and immigration abuse; to disrupt the use of false and multiple identities by organised criminals and those involved in terrorist activity; to help protect people from identity fraud and theft; to ensure free public services are used only by those entitled to them; and to enable easier and more convenient access to public services.

A faith community consultation consortium was formed in 2004 by the Hindu Forum of Britain specifically to look at aspects of the

Government's plans to introduce national identity cards. The consultation was sponsored by Fujitsu. It led to a report, *A Response to the Introduction of Identity Cards*, which was launched in the Jubilee Room at the House of Commons on 14 March. Speakers included Des Browne, Minister of State for Citizenship, Immigration and Nationality and Stephen Pound MP.

The consultation was carried out in order to explain the details of the scheme to faith communities; to inform the Government of the issues that different groups will face during enrolment and to identify ways by which faith communities can communicate the benefits of identity cards to their constituent congregations. Focus groups met in London, Birmingham, Leicester and Manchester. The concerns expressed by the participants related to: the security of the scheme itself and the information held within it; how to ensure the accuracy of the information recorded; verification methods; the costs of applying for the card and for any replacements; access to enrolment centres; physical contact with biometric sensors such as fingerprint systems; hygiene issues linked to multiple use of equipment during enrolment and verification; issues linked to physical appearance and national dress; and lack of confidence in the police service and other authorities.

## Scotland's first 'Inter Faith Week'

The first 'Scottish Inter Faith Week' was held between 20-28 November. The objective was the promotion of dialogue, understanding and cooperation between Scotland's diverse religious communities in order to build a better Scotland for all. Inter Faith Week was supported by the Scottish Executive and Ministers and MSPs attended several events during the week. See page 17 for news of some of the events that took place during the week.

As part of the week, SIFC held a national youth conference on 28 November. This brought 150 young people together from the Baha'i, Brahma Kumaris, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Latter Day Saints, Muslim, and Pagan communities of Scotland to dialogue about inter issues, to get to know each other better, to have fun and to interact with other young people not affiliated with any faith. There were workshops

with representatives from all the faith communities to discuss service projects throughout Scotland and also to prepare questions for a panel of religious leaders.

## Visit to the Scottish Parliament

A group of 23 people took part in the Scottish Inter Faith Council's visit to the Scottish Parliament on 15 December. A total of 23 people, from across Scotland's faith communities attended the tour of the new building. Their guide was Shiona Baird MSP, the Reporter to the Parliament's Equal Opportunities Committee on issues of religion and belief. Afterwards Ms Baird took questions and discussed issues of concern with members of the faith communities. SIFC plan to build on the good relations begun at this visit and hope there are many opportunities for faith communities to engage with Parliament in future.

## Diversity and Dialogue North West

The Diversity and Dialogue Project is an inter faith project working with young people in the UK and inviting them to look outward beyond their own communities. It is funded by the Department for International Development and led by Save the Children working in partnership with a range of humanitarian organisations. Project workers are based in Leeds, London, and Manchester. On 11 March, a seminar was held in Manchester at UMIST for people working within faith based organisations, education and the local community. Participants listened to presentations from Oldham LEA and local and community faith groups, shared experiences and talked about some of the problems faced by young people and about the potential for inter faith work with youth groups and schools. A report on the day is planned and a second event is likely. For further information, contact [s.dunbar@savethechildren.org.uk](mailto:s.dunbar@savethechildren.org.uk)

## Principles of working together – new CTE guidance on inter faith relations

Churches Together in England (CTE) published, in March, *A Statement of operating principles relating to other faith communities*. It is described by CTE as seeking to combine respect, integrity and working collaboratively for the common good. It shows how CTE as an ecumenical organisation is committed to function, and though it does not comprise a complete statement of the views of all CTE's 23 member Churches, CTE believes it will be a useful resource for Christian groups working in a multi faith context. The statement draws material from the Churches Commission on Inter Faith Relations' *Principles of Inter Faith Dialogue*, from *Working Together - Cooperation between Government and faith Communities* (Home Office, February 2004) and the *Millennium Act of Reflection and Commitment* (January 2000). The document can be found at [www.churches-together.org.uk](http://www.churches-together.org.uk).

## Faith groups and inter faith bodies respond to Tsunami disaster

The Tsunami disaster which occurred on 26 December was responded to on a wide scale by faith and inter faith organisations in the UK.

Across the UK, special prayers were offered in places of worship. Services of remembrance and memorial events were held in many areas, often with a multi faith dimension and still others are planned. In Wales, the First Minister held a simple ceremony of silence as a mark of respect for the victims and invited members of the Inter Faith Council for Wales to attend. A national memorial service attended by the Queen and Prime Minister for the British victims of the Asian Tsunami will be held at St Paul's Cathedral on 11 May. Prime Minister Tony Blair announced in January that the Queen would attend the ceremony and other senior royals and politicians are expected to attend. Guests will include representatives of communities and faiths with close ties with the countries affected by the disaster, and of the relief agencies involved. As well as remembering the UK victims, the service will also recognise the suffering endured by all the countries affected and the overwhelming humanitarian response.

The World Congress of Faiths arranged an inter faith service on 26 January at Essex Hall, London, hosted by the Unitarian and Free Christian Churches. This was led by WCF Chair, Rabbi Jacqueline Tabick with devotions led by Buddhist, Christian, Hindu and Muslim members. In Glasgow, an inter faith gathering of prayer and reflection in memory of victims was held on 23 January at the University of Glasgow's Bute Hall. The event was supported by the Lord Provost of Glasgow, the Scottish Interfaith Council and the Glasgow Forum of Faiths and featured speakers from diverse faiths, including Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Humanism, Judaism, Islam, and Sikhism. In Edinburgh, Cardinal Archbishop O'Brien offered a special mass at St Mary's Catholic Cathedral for victims of the disaster. The Moderator of the General Assembly, Dr Allison Elliot and the Episcopal Bishop of Edinburgh, Rt Rev Brian Smith, also participated in the service which was attended by many members and friends of Edinburgh Inter Faith Association.

In Southampton, the Mayor, MPs, and 400 people attended a 'Tsunami Act of Commitment' held at St Mary's Church, City Centre, with involvement from seven faiths affirming their unity and common commitment in the face of disaster. In Harrow, London, a 'multi faith/no-faith' memorial service took place at the Zoroastrian Centre on 22 February, organised by Harrow Interfaith Council. This was followed by a linked community conference on local relief projects and further aid work. Speakers during the service and conference included the Leader of Harrow Council, Cllr Navin Shah; the Deputy Leader, Cllr Sanjay Dighe, and the Chief Executive of Harrow Council, Joyce Markham. A Tsunami Interfaith Commemorative Service was held on 13 February at the House of Meditation, Monastery of Christ the King in Enfield, London with Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh prayers and readings from sacred texts.

A service was held on 3 February at Oxford University's University Church where the Chancellor Rt Hon Lord Patten introduced the service and the Rt Revd Richard Harries, Anglican Bishop of Oxford, was among the speakers. Readings were given by different faith groups and there were musical contributions by the Oxford Gamelan Society, the University Church choir and St Hilda's String Quartet.

Faith linked aid relief agencies, such as CAFOD, Christian Aid, the International Buddhist Relief Organisation, Islamic Relief, Khalsa Aid, Muslim Aid, SEWA International, and World Jewish Aid have moved to assist. Hindu Council UK, worked



closely with international agencies such as UNICEF to raise support or encouraged their followers to give through the combined Disasters Emergency Committee, as did other bodies. Many faith and inter faith bodies also led or participated in fundraising drives and relief programmes. There has been coordinated relief work undertaken within some faith communities. Hindu Forum of Britain, for example, organised a disaster task force linking over 50 organisations to launch a media campaign to appeal for funds.

Across the country, individual places of worship swung into action to gather donations and channel these to the affected countries. In Sparkhill Birmingham, for example, with support from Buddhist and Sikh relief organisations, scores of volunteers at the local gurdwara packed and sent donations to Sri Lanka, the Maldives and South India. The London Buddhist Vihara in Chiswick, with a significant Sri Lankan Buddhist congregation, was the focus of an aid effort to assist the Sri Lankan areas devastated by the recent Tsunami. Prince Charles visited the Vihara on 6 January to support the temple's ongoing effort. He commented, "We hear how people's faith may be challenged but, nevertheless, it has also helped in a strange way to reveal the love and compassion that exists in people's hearts."

On 14 January, the Earl and Countess of Wessex, visited Southampton to support the Southampton Inter Faith Council's initiative to raise funds and support for the Tsunami victims. They also visited a local gurdwara and the Vedic Temple to meet with local people who had been helping organise the donated clothing, blankets and provisions. In Northern Ireland, the Laxmi Naryan Temple in Belfast became a fund raising hub, with donations, channelled on through UNICEF, coming in from communities across Ireland.

There were also inter faith fund raising events. In Glasgow, an inter faith Tsunami relief concert took place at the Couper Institute. People of all faiths took part, including young people working together to help people affected by the Tsunami.

Individual faith linked bodies also responded in a variety of ways to the tragedy. The Jewish charity, Tzedek, produced a special educational pack for schools to explore Jewish responses to the disaster.

Natural disasters such as the Tsunami raise difficult religious and philosophical questions and these have been the subject of discussions at a number of inter faith meetings. For example,

during the visit of the Earl and Countess of Wessex to Southampton, they visited the Medina Mosque where they took part in a discussion with Christians, Jews and Muslims about how natural disasters are understood within different faiths and how they can work together following them. On 25 February Cambridge Inter Faith Group held an open discussion on the theme 'Faith and Natural Disaster' for participants to listen and share views on how people from different backgrounds deal with disasters like the recent Tsunami. In Bath, on 17 March, the Bath Interfaith Group held an event, 'Reflections after the Tsunami', where, after a period of reflection there was a discussion on faith and response to natural disasters.

*Note: The sheer scale of the events and programmes responding to the disaster is so enormous that in this newsletter we have only been able to include illustrative examples.*

## Consultation paper on 'Spirituality and Spiritual Development in Youth Work'

The National Youth Agency is inviting individuals and organisations to take part in a consultation exercise on the subject of spirituality and spiritual development in youth work. The consultation was introduced at a policy meeting at the Agency in February and will run until the end of July.

The Agency has issued a consultation paper, commissioned by the Department for Education and Skills and written by Maxine Green, *Spirituality and Spiritual Development in Youth Work*. Copies can be requested from Helena Ferrao-Read e-mail: [helenafr@nya.org.uk](mailto:helenafr@nya.org.uk) or the document and comment form can be downloaded from the NYA's website: <http://www.nya.org.uk>

## Issues at the heart of Jewish-Christian relations

Sion Centre for Dialogue and Encounter held three linked one day seminars during the Autumn of 2004 on issues at the heart of Christian-Jewish relations, looking at fundamental questions regarding God's covenant with Jews and Christians; the heights and depths of human behaviour in the Shoah (Holocaust); and the role of Jesus from Christian and Jewish perspectives. Speakers included Dr Ed Kessler, Dr John Pawlikowski, Frank Dabba-Smith and Rabbi Mark Solomon.

On 6 December, the Centre for the Study of Jewish-Christian Relations hosted a conference on 'The Place of Covenant in Judaism, Christianity and Jewish-Christian Relations' which brought together Archbishop Rowan Williams, Chief Rabbi Dr Jonathan Sacks and Cardinal Walter Kaspar.

## Grand Mufti of Bosnia visits Three Faiths Forum

The Grand Mufti of Bosnia, Dr Mustafa Ceric, visited the offices of the Three Faiths Forum during his visit in February to London's Muslim community. The meeting, on 18 February, was hosted by Sir Sigmund Sternberg, one of the Co-founders of the Three Faiths Forum, which promotes dialogue and understanding among the Muslim, Christian and Jewish communities.

## Jewish-Muslim lectures at SOAS

In November and December a Jewish-Muslim lecture series took place at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London arranged by the Maimonides Foundation and Leo Baeck College Centre for Jewish Education, in association with the London Middle Eastern Institute and SOAS. The theme this year was 'The challenge of living with multiple identities'. The specific topic of the series was chosen as relevant to both Jewish and Muslim young people.

The series enabled the audience to explore their national and religious identity without compromising one at the expense of the other.

Speakers included Sarah Joseph, Editor of Emel magazine; Professor Haleh Afshar, University of York; Rabbi Jacqueline Tabick, North West Surrey Synagogue; Dilwar Hussain, Islamic Foundation, Leicester; Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg, New North London Synagogue; and Imam Monawar Hussain, Eton College. Chairs included Rt Revd Richard Harries, Anglican Bishop of Oxford; Professor Doris Abouseif, SOAS; and Sheikh Dr Zaki Badawi.

## Healing through remembering

The Corrymeela Community ran a special one day conference at St Ethelberga's Centre for Reconciliation and Peace on 12 March. It was called 'Healing through Remembering: Dealing with the Past'. It explored issues of peace and reconciliation with particular consideration of the lessons from truth and reconciliation processes around the world. It examined how lessons learned through the reconciliation work in Northern Ireland and South Africa could be applied to reduce current divisions in our society, such as the tension between communities arising from war in Iraq. Speakers included Professor Roy McClelland, Brandon Hamber and Oliver McTernan. That evening there was a concert at St Martin in the Fields, London and the following day a service there, both marking the Corrymeela Community's 40th anniversary.

## Chief rabbi's reception for Hindus

Chief Rabbi Dr Jonathan Sacks hosted a reception on 1 March to celebrate the relationship between the UK Jewish and Hindu communities. He told the gathering that Hindus had added "colour, grace and warmth" to British life, and praised their "gentleness and dignity". He said that both communities "seek to honour our traditions while contributing as members of British society. We both cherish our communities, our families and our children. We both think we have something more special than the individualism and consumerism of contemporary culture.....What we have in common unites us and our differences enrich us."

## Archbishop Rowan Williams visits Swaminarayan Mandir, Neasden

Dr Rowan Williams, the Archbishop of Canterbury visited the Swaminarayan Mandir, Neasden, the largest traditional Hindu Mandir outside India, on 29 January. He was greeted by A P Patel, Trustee of the Mandir, Sarah Teather MP, Brent East, Kamlesh Sharma, the High Commissioner for India, the Mayor of Brent, Cllr. Ahmed Shahzad and Cllr. Ann John, Leader of Brent Council. As the Archbishop entered the *Haveli* he was welcomed in the traditional Hindu manner by Sadhu Atmaswarupdas, Head of the Mandir. Dr Williams was formally garlanded in the main prayer hall in the presence of 2000 worshippers. Sadhu Atmaswarupdas in his address spoke of the Hindu tradition of welcoming visitors from all faiths. He went on to say that the message of Hinduism is that the entire world is but one human family. He added ...“Let us teach our followers that religion does not grow by quantity of numbers, but by quality of spirituality. We want to stress the unity in diversity, that there are more things that unite us than divide”.

## BBC Faith to Faith

During March BBC Radio 4 ran a series of three programmes produced by Phil Pegum where believers from across a religious divide spent time in each others communities to discover the reality behind the hype, headlines and prejudice. *Faith to Faith* brought together Samina, a young British Muslim and Jenny, a Pentecostal Christian from a black majority church, the Church of God of Prophecy. Jenny experienced Ramadan firsthand as she joined Samina in her fast, with no eating or water for 12 hours and prayers five times a day. Jenny also wore the Muslim headscarf, or *hijab*, for the first time. Samina attended a Pentecostal service and challenged the church over its missionary work in a predominantly Muslim area of Birmingham. *Faith to Faith* explored what it means to be religious in Britain today as Jenny and Samina recorded their reflections and Religious Correspondent Jane Little asked them both what they had learnt about each other's communities and their own faith. In the second programme in

the series, Jagroop Singh, a Sikh, spent time with Hindu Girish Patel and in the third programme, Munisha, a Buddhist and Irene, a Jew met. You can hear the programmes using the BBC's 'Listen Again' option at [http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/programmes/misc/faith\\_to\\_faith.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/programmes/misc/faith_to_faith.shtml)

## Islam Awareness Week

Islam Awareness Week took place last November. The theme was 'Your Muslim Neighbour' and the aim was to highlight the valuable contributions to society made by Muslims from all walks of life. The launch of the Week took place at Shakespeare's Globe in London and throughout the week special activities took place there. More than twenty speakers gave talks on subjects from Islamic gardens to Abrahamic dialogue. As part of the week, the Three Faiths Forum led a discussion on Shakespeare and Islam.

## Year of the volunteer

Early in 2004, Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown designated 2005 as the Year of the Volunteer. The Home Office, as the government department with responsibility for encouraging active citizenship, is working in partnership with Volunteering England (<http://www.volunteeringengland.org.uk/>) and CSV (<http://www.csv.org.uk/>) to coordinate the Year. Its main aims are to: increase the number of volunteers, particularly individuals from marginalised groups and young people; open up more volunteering opportunities in the public and voluntary sector; raise the profile of the work volunteers are doing nationwide; and thank volunteers everywhere for their time and commitment.

All volunteer organisations are encouraged to participate in, and benefit from, the Year of the Volunteer 2005. It offers the chance to increase engagement by providing opportunities for the public to volunteer, and to increase awareness of volunteering in general, and in particular that of participating organisations by branding existing work under the Year of the Volunteer banner. To get involved in the Year of the Volunteer campaign, go to [http://www.yearofthevolunteer.org/html/involved\\_organisations.html](http://www.yearofthevolunteer.org/html/involved_organisations.html)

## INTER FAITH PROFILE

**In this issue, we interview Brian Pearce, who has been the Director of the Inter Faith Network since it was set up in 1987.**

**Q Can you tell me why the Inter Faith Network was founded?**

In 1987 there were a number of national inter faith organisations in the UK, such as the long established Council of Christians and Jews, with its local branches, and the World Congress of Faiths, and separate local inter faith initiatives had also begun to emerge in different parts of the country. But there was no structure for linking these various national and local initiatives or for directly engaging the different faith communities of the UK in inter faith work in a structured way. So there was a need for a framework to enable those involved in this activity to share their experience and concerns and to discuss together ways in which inter faith work needed to develop in the future.

**Q How did the Network begin?**

A two year process of consultation took place to discuss with faith communities and inter faith organisations what kind of structure might be helpful. Following extensive discussions, 60 organisations came together in March 1987 to set up the Inter Faith Network for the UK with the late Rabbi Hugo Gryn and the late Bishop Jim Thompson at the helm as its first Co-Chairs, together with Vice-Chairs Dr Indarjit Singh, Dr Mughram Al-Ghamdi and Mr Om Parkash Sharma. We have been very fortunate throughout the Network's life to have particularly committed Officers and other Trustees to guide and oversee its work.

**Q Has the Network helped raise the profile of inter faith work?**

Together with its member organisations, the Network has helped to raise public awareness of the importance of working for good inter faith relations. Its own work and publications, and its cooperative work with Government and other public bodies has contributed significantly to this process. I think we crossed a watershed with the work we did through the 'Lambeth Group', advising on the "faith" dimension of the Millennium celebrations and working with the Department for Culture Media and Sport on the Shared Act of Reflection and Commitment by the Faith Communities of the UK in the Houses of Parliament at the beginning of 2000. This focused on values held in common by different faiths and was part of the official Millennium celebrations.

**Q The Network links faith community representative bodies; inter faith organisations; local inter faith bodies; and educational and academic bodies. Why has this broad pattern of membership been so important?**

Each type of member body has a vital contribution to make to building good inter faith relations in the UK. Faith communities have a key role in developing dialogue between their traditions and in educating their followers to understand their own faith well and to engage with respect with followers of other faiths. National inter faith organisations have dedicated programmes of activities which enable deep dialogue and shared action on particular

issues. The establishment of Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish inter faith bodies has added an important strength. Educational and academic bodies help to increase knowledge of different faiths and to educate for a positive inter faith future. Local inter faith bodies make a direct contribution to the development of grassroots inter faith understanding.

**Q In recent years, the Network has worked closely with central and local government on a range of issues. Why do you think this is important?**

There has been increasing engagement between Government and faith communities in recent years to ensure that policies and service delivery respond to the different needs and concerns of all its citizens. The Network has contributed in a major way to this process because its member bodies are clear that good inter faith relations can only develop securely where people of different faiths feel they are justly treated as truly equal members of a shared society rooted in common values. The development of the "community cohesion" agenda since the disturbances in northern towns and cities in 2001 and 9/11 later that year (and the events following that) has been of particular importance in this respect.

**Q But will Government agendas bump 'real' inter faith work out of the picture?**

Work on the public dimension of inter faith relations is 'real' inter faith work. But it must always go hand in hand with the more traditional inter faith work carried out by the Network and its member bodies, including in depth dialogue to achieve greater mutual understanding and to tackle the difficult burdens of past history; multi faith cooperative projects; inter faith education; and special focus work, such as the engagement of young people with inter faith issues.

**Q What do you see as the challenges facing the Network in the next few years?**

The proposed Commission for Equality and Human Rights is due to begin its work in 2007 and one of its major responsibilities will be in the field of 'good relations'. There is a need to work out what the implications of this will be for inter faith work in the future.

Like most voluntary bodies, the Network faces challenges of staffing and funding. However, across the last three years its member faith communities have committed themselves to providing structured financial contributions for the Network and we have just received an assurance of sufficient Government funding to ensure that most of the Network's core work forward over the next two years can be sustained. Some additional funding needs, however, to be found, particularly for key projects, from trusts and other sources.

**Q What are the best things about working for the Inter Faith Network?**

The wonderful people I meet and work with, the amazing variety of the issues with which we deal and the strong conviction that we are making a genuine contribution to ensuring that this country's greater religious diversity is enriching our society in very positive ways.

## Trade Justice Movement seeks to broaden faith involvement

The Trade Justice Movement (TJM) was formed in 2000 to work for change of the rules and institutions governing international trade to make trade work equitably for all. In 2005 Britain will host the G8 Summit and hold the Presidency of the European Union and TJM sees this as a particularly crucial campaign period. TJM links 50 UK organisations, including aid agencies, environment and human rights campaigns, trade unions, faith and consumer groups. Together, TJM's member organisations have over 9 million members, but until now the faith groups represented have been predominantly Christian. TJM is actively seeking to increase its diversity and involve other faith groups in its membership, policy and decision making. To find out more see [www.tjm.org.uk](http://www.tjm.org.uk) or contact Glen Tarman, Trade Justice Movement Co-ordinator, [glen@tjm.org.uk](mailto:glen@tjm.org.uk) Tel: 020 7404 0530

## Make Poverty History

Make Poverty History is a UK alliance of charities, trade unions, campaigning groups, faith communities and celebrities and is the UK mobilisation of the Global Call to Action Against Poverty. They are keen to engage faith and inter faith bodies in this year's campaign. See [www.makepovertyhistory.org](http://www.makepovertyhistory.org)

## The 2007 Project

2007 is the bicentenary of the abolition of the Slave Trade Act. Churches Together in England will be heading up a project to mark this. It has recently appointed Richard Reddie as Project Director. The Project Executive is chaired by Rev Dr Inderjit Bhogal of the Methodist Church. For further information contact [richard.reddie@cte.org.uk](mailto:richard.reddie@cte.org.uk)

## PEOPLE AND PLACES

### Scottish Inter Faith Council appoints new staff members

In November, the Scottish Inter Faith Council appointed a new Chief Executive Officer, Pramila Kaur, to replace Sister Isabel Smyth on her retirement from the post. Vanessa Taylor has been appointed as SIFC's Equality and Policy Officer and Calum Henderson as full time office administrator. They join Maureen Sier who continues as Development Officer.

### Board of Deputies

Jon Benjamin took up post in January as Chief Executive of the Board of Deputies of British Jews. He was previously Chief Executive of British ORT. A retirement reception was held on 15 February at Gray's Inn for Neville Nagler, who had been Chief Executive of the Board since 1991, following a civil service career in the Treasury and Home Office. He has now become part-time Director of the Sternberg Foundation, which deals with a variety of inter faith activities, including the Three Faiths Forum, but will be continuing to serve as a consultant to the Board on inter faith matters.

### Faith-based Regeneration Network

FbRN have recently secured funding to appoint two staff and move to offices at: J2, 4th floor, Charles House Charity Centre, 375 Kensington High Street, London W14 8QH. Their Executive Director is Dr Doreen Finneron and their newly appointed Development Officer is Malcolm Deboo. The Faith Based Regeneration Network (FbRN) is drawn from nine faith traditions: Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jain, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh and Zoroastrian. It was established in 2001 by and for regeneration practitioners who identify with faith traditions, or who work with or for faith community organisations. Further information from [admin@fbrn.org.uk](mailto:admin@fbrn.org.uk).

## Council of Christians and Jews moves office

The Council of Christians and Jews has moved offices to a different suite within its current building. The new address is: 1st Floor Camelford House, 87-89 Albert Embankment, London, SE1 7TP.

## Honours for inter faith workers

In the New Year's Honours list, Mehri Nikham, Director of the Maimonides Foundation, received an MBE for services to Jewish-Muslim inter-faith relations. Malcolm Stonestreet received an MBE for services to the community in Cumbria. He is the Chief Executive of United Religions Initiative UK. The Rev Dr Inderjit Bhogal, Methodist Minister and theologian and former President of the Methodist Conference of Great Britain, received an OBE for services to inter-faith relations. Dr Syed Abdul-Aziz Pasha, founder of the Union of Muslim Organisations, received an OBE for services to race relations.

## A farewell to inter faith friends

The Very Revd **Archpriest Sergei Hackel**, Russian Orthodox priest, died aged 73 on 6 February. As well as being a lifelong contributor to the Christian ecumenical movement, he was a Board and Executive Member of the Council of Christians and Jews and had made a very active contribution to Jewish-Christian understanding at national level as well as in Sussex where he was joint chairman of the CCJ branch in Brighton and Hove. He was also a well known broadcaster on the World Service

**Hamid Husain**, a much valued member of Manchester Interfaith Forum's Committee since its early days, died suddenly on 27 November 2004. He was born in Muradabad in India in 1932 and came to the UK in 1957, where he trained in chartered accountancy with a Birmingham based firm. He settled in Manchester in 1962. In his spare time he shared his knowledge of Islam both with fellow Muslims, through a study circle and Sunday school talks, and with members of other faiths.

He was an official visitor for HM prisons, and a speaker for Muslim patients at NHS hospitals as well as a Rotarian and a member of Amnesty International. Manchester Inter Faith Forum's Committee paid tribute to him as a 'tower of strength' for them and will miss his open mindedness, dry humour, courtesy and constant readiness to help.

**Gulam Hussain Musa** died on 26 December aged 84. He was well known to many for his work with Gloucestershire Interfaith Action, of which he had been Chairman for many years, and for his role within the Gloucester Shi'a community. Mr Musa came to Gloucester in 1969 from Kenya having been born in Zanzibar. Over the years he served on numerous committees and boards. The current chair of GIFA Mr Ahmed Bham said at his memorial service on 7 March, "Gulam Musa was a well respected and much liked elder statesman like figure who will be sadly missed. His legacy of inter faith work in Gloucestershire will be carried forward with much enthusiasm as he would have dearly liked."

### Inter Faith Relations: The UK and Europe

ISBN 1 902906 14 4

Looking at the impact of the UK's membership of the European Union on faith communities and the inter faith agenda here. Report of the 2004 National Meeting held in June. Available from the Inter Faith Network office at £3.00 plus £1 postage and packaging.



## REGIONAL AND LOCAL UPDATE

### Scotland

#### Edinburgh

Edinburgh Inter-Faith Association held a series of events during Scotland's Inter Faith Week (see page 9), including the Scottish Film Premier 'Mother Teresa: The Legacy'; an Open Space Evening at Augustine United Church; a Christian Buddhist Dialogue held in St Georges West Church, and the first Annual Meeting of Edinburgh's Religious Leaders, which was followed by a 'Question Time' when young people from Edinburgh had the opportunity to question the Religious leaders. This was filmed by Edinburgh Education Department for future use. On Sunday 21st November the Edinburgh Inter Faith Association also coordinated the visits of religious leaders and representatives, and MSP's to a Mosque and Islamic Centre and to a Sikh Gurdwara.

#### Dundee

In Dundee, Inter Faith Week was marked with a Shared Meal in Meadowside St Paul's Church. Baha'is, Christians, Jews, Muslims, Quakers, Sikhs enjoyed sharing food and fellowship. Maureen Sier, the SIFC Development Officer was also present. An inter faith display provided the backdrop to the meal, comprising information about SIFC and recently produced materials, as well as some local information about Dundee Inter Faith Association.

This display, augmented by further leaflets and panels from SIFC, formed a small exhibition for the concourse at Ninewells Hospital from 30 November to 3 December, and was seen by the many hundreds of people who use the hospital, as well as medical professionals. Many stopped to ask questions or take leaflets. This was initiated by NHS Tayside Spiritual Care Committee, and supported by the hospital chaplain, Rev David Gordon, who is keen to develop a multi faith dimension to the work of the Chaplaincy in the hospital.

#### Glasgow

On 20 November leaders and representatives from the Baha'i, Christian, Sikh, Muslim and Hindu communities and from SIFC and 'Glasgow Churches Together' visited Garnethill

Synagogue for their morning service. The following day leaders and representatives from the Buddhist, Baha'i, Christian and Muslim communities, with members of SIFC and 'Glasgow Churches Together' visited Blessed John Duns Scotus Priory Catholic Church proceeding then to Glasgow Central Mosque.

### England

#### Meeting on regional faith forums

A meeting was held on 29 November by the Inner Cities Religious Council of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, in partnership with the Home Office Faith Communities Unit and the Inter Faith Network, to enable participants from different regional inter faith structures in England to reflect on their roles and share experiences. It also enabled regional and national government to catch up with recent developments in this field. Further information from Nigel.Wright@odpm.gsi.gov.uk.

#### East

**Bedford** A gathering of 120 people attended a celebration at The Place, Bradgate Road on Tuesday 25 January to mark Bedford Council of Faiths' recent acquisition of charity status. A variety of food generously given by the different communities was enjoyed by guests and music contributed by different faiths provided a tapestry of background sound. There were speeches by the High Sheriff of Bedfordshire, Clifton Ibbett, and Brian Pearce, Director of the Inter Faith Network who provided a perspective on the national inter faith scene. Members of ten different faiths gave presentations conveying their essential beliefs and values. Rabbi Daniela Thau, chair of Bedford Council of Faiths, presided over the event, inviting organisations to link with BCoF, and to benefit from its experience and knowledge of local religious and cultural diversity.

**Cambridge** On 20 March, Cambridge Faith Fair took place at the Small Guildhall under the auspices of the Cambridge Inter-Faith Group, Cambridge City Council and Cambridgeshire County Council.

**Luton.** The Luton News/Gazette reports that on Christmas Day, a group of Muslims from Bury Park Central Mosque, with support from Luton Council of Mosques and Luton Council of Faiths, came to Bury Park United Reformed Church to greet the Christian community. They were warmly welcomed by the church and Luton Council of faiths congratulated the Central Mosque for this initiative. The gesture was reciprocated by the Christians on the eve of Eid-ul-Adha on 19 January when a representative group from Bury Park United Reformed Church, along with other representatives from the Bury Park/Beech Hill Council of Churches delivered a Happy Eid message to the Central Mosque.

**Peterborough.** Peterborough Inter Faith Council held an event at Peterborough Town Hall on 16 January to celebrate 25 years of its work. This brought together members of Peterborough's Christian, Sikh, Hindu, Jewish and Muslim communities. There were presentations by faith speakers, including PIFC's chairman, Mr Jaspal Singh; Chuck Salamon of the Peterborough Jewish community; Dr Ataulah Siddiqui of the Islamic Foundation and Dr Indarjit Singh, Director of the Network of Sikh Organisations. Maqsood Ahmed of the Home Office's Cohesion and Faith Unit gave a talk about how the Government is working to cement improving relationships between Britain's religious leaders. City Council Chief Executive Gillian Beasley also spoke. She said, "All faith groups have a major and important role in helping to contribute to the city's vision to develop Peterborough and its growth into a bigger and better city. We look forward to continuing our work with Peterborough Inter Faith Council and the positive support and help they provide."

## East Midlands

**Northampton.** On 3 March, Northampton Faiths Forum held an evening on 'Fasting in Faith' with contributions from John Josephs of the Hebrew Synagogue and Njla Momen of the Bah'ai faith.

**Nottingham.** At a meeting on 1 February Nottingham Inter Faith Council met with a representative of Nottingham City Council, who made a presentation on the work currently being prepared with the City Council on Social Cohesion. There are to be further discussions on how NIFC can cooperate with the Council in this area.

## London

**East London.** The Anglican Bishop of Chelmsford, Rt Rev John Gladwin, was the guest speaker at a meeting of the East London Three Faiths Forum on 3 February at the Community Centre attached to the Ilford Mosque. His topic was: "The Importance of Peace in the Middle East – A Christian Perspective".

**Kensington and Chelsea.** The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea have published an eighth edition of their *Guide to Ethnic and Faith Organisations in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea*. It is compiled by the Community Relations Section. For further information, telephone 020 7598 4632.

**Southwark.** The London Borough of Southwark has developed, with voluntary organisations, and the Southwark Multi Faith Forum, a booklet called 'Mark of Faith' which gives an insight into how people's faith impacts on their daily lives - births, marriages, death, worship, and special celebrations. The booklet is part of a project 'Celebrating Southwark' which is supported by the Southwark Alliance as part of the Home Office's Community Cohesion Programme. For further information, contact [kevin.dykes@southwark.gov.uk](mailto:kevin.dykes@southwark.gov.uk) or [Julie.Humphreys@southwark.gov.uk](mailto:Julie.Humphreys@southwark.gov.uk)

**Tower Hamlets.** Tower Hamlets Inter Faith Forum have been working in partnership with secondary schools and the SACRE to develop a model to support religious education and community cohesion by encouraging faith leaders to visit schools. Three schools will be piloting the project. A workshop took place on 21 February, led by Deborah Weston, Head of RE at Mulberry School, to look at how visits would be structured and to encourage faith leaders to be volunteers for the pilot. The idea is that volunteers would visit the classroom in pairs, as part of a lesson planned by the class teacher. They would be able to give faith perspectives and would also be role models showing respect and understanding across religions.

**Westminster.** Westminster Interfaith held its annual inter faith conference on 21 November at the Maria Assumpta Centre in London in association with the World Congress of Faiths. The main speakers at the November conference were Imam Dr Abduljalil Sajid, Sr Chandasiri, Rev Lawrence Hillel and Fr Michael Kirwan SJ. The theme was Buddhist, Christian and Muslim views on violence. On 27 February, WI arranged a visit to Bajtul Futuh Mosque in Morden.

## North West

A report 'Faith in England's Northwest: Economic Impact Assessment', was launched at an event on 3 February at Manchester Town Hall supported by the Northwest Regional Development Agency (NWDA) and Manchester City Council. According to the report, faith communities in England's Northwest contribute between £69.6 million and £94.9 million per annum to the region's economy. At the same event, the North West Forum of Faiths was launched; and the 'opening' of faithnorthwest.org.uk, a website dedicated to faith communities in the region was celebrated.

Among the speakers at the event were Cllr Afzal Khan, Deputy Lord Mayor of Manchester and Muslim Council of Britain; Claire Curtis Thomas MP for Crosby; Rt Rev Nigel McCullough, Anglican Bishop of Manchester, Louis Rappaport, President of Manchester Jewish Representative Council; and Mgr John Devine, Churches' Officer for the North West; and Steven Broomhead, Chief Executive of the NWDA who said "The NWDA is pleased to support this unique event which brings together the Northwest's faith communities to ensure they are involved in the regeneration of England's Northwest. Faith communities make a valuable contribution to the regional economy and the drive to improve our local communities. They have an excellent record of bridging the gap between the affluent and the deprived, with their infrastructure and volunteer network. As key stakeholders in the region's future, it is only right that they should be consulted and involved in the regeneration process. We are happy that the North West Forum of Faiths and the faithnorthwest website will enable them to do exactly that."

For further information and to view a copy of the 'Faith in England's Northwest: Economic Impact Assessment' report, visit:  
[www.faithnorthwest.org.uk](http://www.faithnorthwest.org.uk)

**Altrincham.** The Altrincham Interfaith Group held an Any Questions session in Timperley, which was attended by more than one hundred people. In the chair was District Judge, Michael Jackson. He fielded the questions to Fr David Roberts, a Catholic priest, Dr Kamal Rauniar, a Hindu from Nepal, Basil Hatahet, a Muslim orthodontist from Damascus and Julian Levy, the Jewish son of an Orthodox rabbi and father of Conservative and trainee Reform rabbis. AIG also held their second annual inter faith supper on

26 February at St Ambrose RC College, Hale Barns. Guests included the Mayor of Trafford, Cllr Pamela Dixon. The evening's theme was 'family values' and this was addressed by Professor Ram Gokol from the Hindu community, Michel Sharp from the Jewish community and Dr Sara Saigol from the Muslim community and Revd Alan Morris from the Christian community. The evening was chaired by AIG treasurer Iftikhar Awan. There were blessings from different faiths before the meal.

**Bolton.** Gary Titley, MEP, was the guest of the Bolton Interfaith Council at the Friends Meeting House on 19 November 2004. The MEP spoke about legislation going through the European Parliament and Commission. He also told the audience how the European Commission worked and the consultation processes that enabled legislation to eventually be passed. He stressed the importance of meeting and sharing experiences between the faith communities throughout Europe and that positive steps should be taken to break down barriers caused by misunderstanding or ignorance of the members faiths and customs.

**Manchester.** On 20 January, Manchester Interfaith Forum held an event called 'Endings?', to discuss beliefs and practices related to death. It was a follow-up to an earlier meeting on 'Beginning, Belonging and Continuing'. Participants split up into groups of five or six to discuss their beliefs about what happens to beings at death and after; what this means for our obligations to those dying and those who have died; and our attitudes to our own mortality. At the end they reassembled in one group, and shared thoughts that had come out of the discussions. Particularly timely, in the wake of the tsunami tragedy, was the question of how communities cope with widespread loss of life, caused by atrocity or natural disaster.

A Muslim-Jewish Forum has been started in Manchester. Its Co-Chairs are Cllr Afzal Khan, Deputy Mayor of Manchester, and Henry Guterman of the Jewish Representative Council.

**Rossendale.** On 23 February, a meeting was held in Rawtenstall, 'A Day to Decide', to discuss the setting up of a Rossendale Faith Communities Partnership. This followed earlier work by East Lancs Together (ELT) and Community Action in Rossendale and by a steering group with representation from the two main faiths in Rossendale (Christian and Muslim) and community partners. Speakers at the event

included Rev Keith Garner, Bolton and Rochdale Methodist Circuit, Dr Mahmood Chandia, Lancashire Council of Mosques, Fawad Bhatti, Hyndburn Borough Council, and Brian Pearce, Inter Faith Network. Further information from Anayat at [anayat@elp.org.uk](mailto:anayat@elp.org.uk)

## South East

**Brighton and Hove.** Brighton and Hove Inter Faith Contact Group held its AGM on 20 February. Revd Johanna Boeke, President of the International Association of Liberal and Religious Women, spoke from a Unitarian perspective on 'Many are our names: In harmony with diversity.'

The Jewish Chronicle, 11 March, reports on an inter faith art project at the Brighton and Hove New Synagogue involving 20 young people, aged 8 to 14, from the synagogue, a church, a mosque and two local schools. They are working together on a mosaic, 'Pillars of Faith' which they hope to donate to the prayer room of the children's hospital in Brighton.

**Medway.** Medway Inter Faith Action Forum (MIFAF) has been working with staff at the Demelza House Children's Hospice to develop links between the hospice and local religious communities. Its programme began on 23 November with a training evening for care workers at the hospice. Representatives from some of the local faith communities gave talks to staff. These started by outlining the basic beliefs and structures of their religions before moving on to speak about the beliefs and practices surrounding death, dying and bereavement in their different traditions. Staff found the evening to be very helpful and moves are now being made to build on these early links that have been made between the hospice and local faith communities. It is hoped that MIFAF will be able to offer further assistance to the hospice as it develops its 'quiet room' into an area with resources for a number of different faiths to use. In addition plans are being made for staff training days that will include visits to local places of worship. This contact will give the hospice a number of religious communities to draw upon in the event that patients and their families need faith support beyond that which is currently offered by the chaplain. It is hoped that this will be the start of an enduring and fruitful relationship that serves to educate both the hospice staff about important faith issues and the local faith communities about the excellent work carried out at Demelza House.

**Guildford.** A Surrey branch of the Three Faiths Forum was launched on 2 March at Guildford Cathedral. Addresses were given by the Co-Founders of The Three Faiths Forum, Sheikh Dr M A Zaki Badawi KBE (Director, the Muslim College) and Sir Sigmund Sternberg KCSG. This initiative has been brought to fruition by Rev Andrew Facey (Vicar of Christ Church, Epsom and Inter-Faith Adviser to the Bishop of Guildford), Imam Shahid Hussain (Inter-Faith Adviser at the Islamic Cultural Centre, Regent's Park and Kingston Mosque), and Rabbi Danny Rich (Chief Executive, Liberal Judaism and Kingston Liberal Synagogue) with the support of Sydney Assor (Chairman of Three Faiths Forum Surrey and Advisory Board Member of the National Three Faiths Forum) and Sidney Shipton OBE (Co-ordinator, The Three Faiths Forum). Further information from [sidney@sternberg-foundation.co.uk](mailto:sidney@sternberg-foundation.co.uk)

## West Midlands

The West Midlands Faith Forum held its first conference on 16 March at Aston University. Further information from [emmap@rawm.co.uk](mailto:emmap@rawm.co.uk)

**Birmingham.** Birmingham Council of Faiths (BCF) celebrated its 30th anniversary on 5 December at Birmingham City Council House. Speakers included Brian Cooper, Ramona Kauth, Nila Parmar, and Jalal Uddin of BCF; the Lord Mayor of Birmingham, Cllr Michael Nangle; Councillor Alan Rudge; Rt Rev John Austin, Chair of the Church of England Synod's Inter Faith Consultative Group; and Dr Harriet Crabtree of the Inter Faith Network.

**Stoke-on-Trent.** The North Staffordshire Forum of Faiths was launched at Victoria Hall Hanley on 3 February. Over 450 people were present, representing faith groups across the city and North Staffordshire. The theme was Peace and Harmony. Presentations were made by five of the major faiths in North Staffordshire. Mohamed Tufail, director of North Staffordshire Race Equality Council, spoke of the need for the forum and its ability to represent faith groups across the area. The Chairman of the Forum, Mgr Patrick McKinnney, gave a short address and then a letter was read from the Mayor, who had been the instigator of the event but had sadly fallen ill and could not be present, formally launching the Forum. Further information from NSFF Coordinator, Keith Perrin, [keith@kperrin.freemove.co.uk](mailto:keith@kperrin.freemove.co.uk)

**Wolverhampton.** Wolverhampton Inter Faith Group celebrated its 30th anniversary with an event “Wolverhampton Alive” at the City of Wolverhampton College on 27 November. This was attended by the Mayor, MP’s, local dignitaries, faith communities and members of the public.

On 5 March a memorial service was held for Ivy Guttridge, a WIFG founder member and a former Vice Chair of the Inter Faith Network (see obituary in issue 25 of *Inter Faith Update*).

### South West

**Bristol.** A civic inter faith celebration, ‘Faith in the Future’ took place at the Council House on 18 March, by invitation of the Lord Mayor of Bristol, Cllr Simon Cook. An evening of readings, prayers, music and sacred songs was followed by an informal meal over a light buffet. The occasion was planned by Bristol Inter Faith Group in partnership with Bristol’s faith communities and the Lord Mayor’s secretary.

**Truro.** A madrassa or ‘Sunday school’, as local Muslim leaders call it, for Truro’s dozen young Muslims aged 5-14 has been opened in an office at Truro Cathedral. The Acting Dean, Canon Perran Gay, told the Church Times that the cathedral had offered one of its offices after some locals had objected to the school being held in the Imam’s house. Muslim worship is not held at the cathedral but will take place at a new multifaith facility at Truro College.

### Yorkshire and Humber

**Bradford.** On 1 December the new Bradford District Faiths Forum was launched at the Conference Suite of Bradford City AFC. The day was given the theme ‘Faith in Citizenship’ and it was chaired by Sharmila Gandhi, Chief Executive of Bradford Vision. Speakers included Fiona Mactaggart MP, Parliamentary Secretary for Race Equality, Community Policy and Civil Renewal, the Lord Mayor of Bradford, Cllr Irene Ellison Wood, members of the Faith Forum Advisory Development Group, the Forum’s Development Worker, Cath Bromwich, Rt Rev David James, Anglican Bishop of Bradford, Sher Azam, Bradford Council of Mosques, Rajinder Singh, Sikh community, Rajendra Pal Johar, Hindu Cultural Society, and Brian Pearce of the Inter Faith Network. There were also contributions from local children, music and dance.

**Leeds.** Leeds Concord Inter Faith Fellowship held a meeting ‘Should they go or should they stay’ on 9 March at Thomas Danby College to look at asylum issues. The speaker was Gill Gibbons of Leeds Asylum Seekers Support Network. She talked about refugees and asylum seekers and some of the challenges they face. The multi faith meeting participants discussed ways that they might help, perhaps as volunteer hosts who can put people up for a few nights in crisis situations or by donating to the LASSN hardship fund.

**Sheffield.** An event was held on 21 November at Cutlers Hall in Sheffield by the Open Forum for Economic Regeneration (O.F.F.E.R.) to celebrate, inform and provide opportunity for networking between the various groups which have been working in the city to promote harmony and to support disadvantaged and socially excluded people. Agnostics, Christians, Muslims and Pagans were among those involved. Presentations were given by faith based groups and inter cultural organisations about their work.

## DIARY DATES

### Conferences, courses and seminars

**22 March, London.** Conference on ‘Employers’ Compliance in the Field of Religious Discrimination’ being held by Faith Regen UK to raise awareness about issues of religious discrimination in employment and training. Further information from [jennifer@faithregenuk.org](mailto:jennifer@faithregenuk.org)

**3 May, London.** ‘The National Media: Getting on the national media agenda.’ Guest speakers: Stephen Bates (Religion Correspondent, Guardian) and Roger Bolton (Presenter, *Sunday* and *Feedback*, Radio 4). 10:00-16:00.

A vegetarian lunch will be provided. Cost: £70 per person. Further information from: Simon Cohen at ‘Tolerance’ [info@tolerancelimited.com](mailto:info@tolerancelimited.com) or call 01727 833 209. Tolerance is part-funded by UnLtd and the Millennium Awards Trust

**4 May, London.** ‘The Regional Media: Securing regular and positive media coverage’. Guest speakers: Mike Anderson (Managing Director, Evening Standard); Jumoke Fashola (Presenter, *Inspirit*, BBC London Radio); Ian Pearce

(Presenter, *Melting Pot*, BBC Three Counties Radio). 10:00-16:00. A vegetarian lunch will be provided. Cost: £70 per person. Further information from Simon Cohen 'Tolerance' info@tolerancelimited.com or call 01727 833 209. Tolerance is part-funded by UnLtd and the Millennium Awards Trust.

**14 May at St Martin in the Fields, London and 19 June at West London Synagogue, London.** 'Our search for community'. Two days arranged by the Council of Christians and Jews in conjunction with St Martin in the Fields and West London Synagogue for participants to experience each others' worship and to explore, through texts and discussion, how Jews and Christians can contribute to the common good of the world. Further information from cjrelations@ccj.org.uk

**5 June, London.** 'Moving from dialogue to action for justice and peace'. A one day seminar held by Religions for Peace. Developed out of inter faith dialogue for peace and reconciliation in West Africa, this one day interactive workshop is designed to help communities turn dialogue into action and for participants to discover for themselves how to make a difference for justice and peace locally, nationally and across the world. Free but places available on a first booked basis. For further details or booking contact Dr Brian Walker, hopeis@btinternet.com or Tel 01962 774221.

**13 June, Belfast.** Stranmillis College. 7.30 pm Northern Ireland Inter Faith Forum host a showing of the film 'The Messenger'. Further information from vivek.regina@tesco.net

**19 June, London.** One day conference on Moses Maimonides arranged by the Maimonides Foundation and the Assembly of Masorti synagogues in Great Britain. Further information from info@maimonides-foundation.org.

**4-12 July** CCJ Young Adults' Study Tour of Israel. The study tour, designed for those 18-35, will take place in Givat Haviva, the Arab-Israeli centre for peace, near Tel Aviv. Participants will be offered the opportunity to see the green line area and to visit the Arab villages just outside Givat Haviva. In Jerusalem, participants will spend the Jewish Sabbath with a Jewish family and on Sunday go to a service in Bethlehem. £600 but some bursaries of up to 50% available. Further information from louise@ccj.org.uk

**3-13 July, Rome.** At the Waldesian Theological Faculty. Centre for the Study of Jewish-Christian Relations summer school 2005 led by Dr James Aitken: "Roma Aeterna - The enduring symbol of Rome in Jewish-Christian relations". Looking at the religious, cultural and political roots of Jewish and Christian symbols in Roman antiquity. Cost: £700 for bookings made before 28 February and £800 after. Contact Lucia Faltin Tel: 01223 741 038 or email l.faltin@cjcr.cam.ac.uk.

## Local Events

*Space only permits one event to be listed for each organisation. For details of other events contact the relevant local groups. Local inter faith events are also listed in the One Family Newsletter available from the World Congress of Faiths, c/o London Inter Faith Centre, 125 Salisbury Road, London NW6 6RG.*

**23 March, Edinburgh.** Edinburgh Inter-Faith Association host a discussion with Jeremy Purvis, Liberal Democrat MSP for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale, who will present his draft proposal for a Bill in the Scottish Parliament to allow capable adults with a terminal illness to access the mean to die with dignity. The purpose of the evening is to stimulate wider debate on end of life issues and encourage written submissions to the Parliament. 7pm Augustine's United Church, George IV Bridge. Further information from victor@eifa.wanadoo.co.uk.

**3 April, 1 May and 5 June, London.** "Sacred Silence". Meditation shared by those of different backgrounds. 3-5pm at the London Inter Faith Centre, 125 Salisbury Road, London NW6 6RG. Further information from info@londoninterfaith.org.uk.

**5 April, London.** Lambeth Multi-Faith Action Group meeting, 'Faith in Schools', with speakers Rev Stephen Kuhrt and Firdos Qazi. 7-9 pm, South London Liberal Synagogue, Prentis Road, London SW16.

**12 April, Bradford.** Bradford Concord Interfaith Society hosting a joint meeting with Leeds Concord Interfaith Fellowship on 'Inter faith: where next?'. 7.30 Interfaith Education Centre, Listerhills Road, Bradford. Further information from secretary@concord-leeds.org.uk

**13 April, Bristol.** Bristol Inter Faith Group AGM followed by 'Reflections on Interfaith Dialogue', with guest speaker Jonathan Marshall from the Plymouth Religious and Cultural Resource Centre. 7.15pm in the Apostle Room, Clifton Cathedral Church of SS Peter and Paul, Clifton Park, Bristol 8. Further information Tel 01454 313042.

**21 April, Bolton.** Launch of the new Bolton Faith Trail at 12.00 noon, Town Hall steps. Further information from CarolH@Boltoncvs.org.uk.

**7 May, West Somerset/Exeter.** West Somerset Interfaith Group trip to the Islamic Centre at Exeter. Further details Tel 01643 862525.

**11 May, Bath.** Bath Interfaith Group meeting on the theme 'Prejudice - How have different faiths experienced prejudice and responded?', with contributions from different faiths in the presence of the Mayor of Bath. Further information Tel 01225 422252.

**15 May, Dundee,** 2-6pm, Networking conference for Scottish local inter faith groups. For further information contact Maureen Sier, Scottish Inter Faith Council Tel 0141 429 4012.

**6 June to 11 July, Nottingham** at the Nottingham Bluecoat School and **11 July to 13 August** at Nottingham Central Library. "Flowerings of Belief" - an exhibition of visual arts by local artists, reflecting what their beliefs mean to them. Organised by Nottingham Inter Faith Council. Further information from info@interfaithnottm.org.uk

**11 June, Bradford.** 'Challenges to Democracy in a Multi Faith Society'. Talk by Baroness Kathleen Richardson as part of the Faith in Dialogue series at Bradford Cathedral. 10am to 2pm with lunch provided. Free but booking essential. Further information from Rev Sam Randall 01274 561640 or Rev Geoff Reid 01274 721626.

**23 June, Wavertree.** A Sikh perspective on Creation. Part of a Merseyside Interfaith Group and Merseyside Council of Faiths series on different faith perspectives on the topic of creation. 7.45 for 8pm at the Sikh Gurdwara, Wellington Avenue, Wavertree. Further information on this event and others in the series Tel 0151 733 1541.

**9 July, London.** Stockwell Faith Forum's annual Peace Space at Larkhall Park, Stockwell, London SW8 from 12 - 6pm. Activities, talks, games, resources and refreshments for all ages around the theme of practical peace-building in a beautiful yurt tent. Anti-bullying, mediation, massage, restorative justice, anger management, conflict transformation, education, labyrinth, inter faith discussion, mandala. This year we welcome the South London Inter Faith Group for tea at 4pm as part of their annual walk. Further information from 020 8674 4610 or faith.forum@btinternet.com.

**10 July, Bedford.** Bedford Council of Faiths annual study outing. Visit and guided tour to Norse Road Bedford Crematorium and Cemetery with a workshop on burial and mourning rites of the different faiths. Starts 1.30pm. £5 cost for the afternoon. Further information from bcof@24hrs-a-day.org

**17 July, Altrincham.** Altrincham Interfaith Group picnic in Tatton Park.

For further information contact the Honorary Secretary Alf Keeling Tel 0161 929 9585.

## Inter Faith Organisations in the UK: A Directory

ISBN 1902906 179

£6.50 including p and p

In January 2005 the Network published a second edition of this A5 size, 248 page directory which contains contact details for and information about the work of over 200 national, regional and local inter faith bodies.

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