



INTER FAITH

UPDATE

Summer 2005 Issue 28

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The London bombings

On Thursday 7 July suicide bombers struck three tube trains and a bus in central London, killing 56 people and injuring 700. Four further bomb attacks took place on 21 July but no one was injured as the devices failed to explode.

Condemnation of the bombings has come from all quarters, including leaders of the UK's faith communities.

On the day of the bombings, Churches Together in Britain and Ireland and the Muslim Council of Britain issued a joint statement expressing sympathy at the death and suffering caused by the attacks; condemning these criminal acts; and noting that the scriptures and the traditions of both the Muslim and Christian communities repudiate the use of such violence.

“.....These attacks strengthen our determination to live together in peace, and to grow together in mutual understanding. This crime must inspire us to work unceasingly together in pursuit of peace, justice and respect for difference.” Churches Together in Britain and Ireland and the Muslim Council of Britain, 7 July.

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Government consultations

On 8 July Home Secretary Charles Clarke held a meeting with Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh faith leaders to reassure them of the Government's commitment to allaying any fears felt by the faith communities and encouraging them to work together in the aftermath of the tragedy.

On 19 July, Prime Minister Tony Blair and the leaders of the Conservative and Liberal Democrat parties, Michael Howard and Charles Kennedy, met with Muslim leaders at Downing Street to discuss response to the recent bombings and, more generally,

tackling extremism and the practical steps which can be taken.

On 20 July Charles Clarke, with Home Office Ministers Paul Goggins and Hazel Blears, held a meeting attended by a wide range of faith and community group representatives to discuss how to prevent young people being drawn into extremism. It was agreed, following this meeting, to set up a number of working groups, led by community members, to focus on: engaging with young people; tackling extremism and radicalisation; supporting regional and local initiatives and community actions;

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NETWORK NEWS

Network's 2005 AGM

The Network's 2005 AGM was held in Coventry on 27 June in conjunction with its National Meeting.

Rt Rev Dr Tom Butler and Jagjiwan Singh were re-elected as Co-Chairs, and Dr Manazir Ahsan as a Vice-Chair, for the coming year. Hon Barnabas Leith and Dr V P Narayan Rao were elected as a Vice-Chairs in succession to Jehangir Sarosh and Om Parkash Sharma.

Others who stood down from the Executive Committee included Archbishop Kevin McDonald and Abdul Rauf Mirza, as well as Sister Isabel Smyth who had served on the Committee since 1997. Ann Noonan, Gul Muhammad and Pramila Kaur were elected in their place. Ven Tawalama Bandula (replacing Ven Pandit Wilamajothi); Rev Daniel Otieno-Ndale (filling the vacancy left last year by Rev Simon Reynolds); and Rev Guy Wilkinson (replacing Ven Michael Ipgrave, who resigned as a Committee member following his appointment as Archdeacon of Southwark) were all co-opted to the Committee in the course of 2004-05. They were elected at the AGM to serve on the Committee for the coming year, along with Dina Gold who filled the place left vacant by Rosalind Preston.

Seven organisations were accepted into membership of the Network: Minorities of Europe Inter Faith Action Programme; Altrincham Inter Faith Group; Coventry Multi Faith Forum; Hounslow Friends of Faith; Newham Faith Sector Forum; Telford and Wrekin Interfaith Group; and Warrington Council of Faiths. This brings the total number of Network member bodies at the present time to 112.

Network thanks Rosalind Preston

Rosalind Preston stepped down at the AGM not only as a Vice-Chair, in which post she has been succeeded by Neville Nagler, but also from membership of the Executive Committee, on which she had served from 1993. During this time she served once as a Co-Chair and twice as a Vice-Chair. A presentation was made by Bishop Tom Butler and Jagjiwan Singh to Mrs Preston on behalf of all the members of the Network to mark her very significant contribution to the life of the Network over these years.

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 and inter faith issues;
- 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 112 member organisations including: representative bodies from the different faith communities; inter faith organisations; local inter faith groups; 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 **30 September** to: The Newsletter Editor, Inter Faith Network, 8A Lower Grosvenor Place, London SW1W 0EN or email to harriet.crabtree@interfaith.org marking your email 'newsletter'.

NATIONAL UPDATE

The London bombings

(continued from page 1)

At a meeting on 15 July at the Regent's Park Islamic Cultural Centre, London, over forty leading imams, muftis and ulama (Islamic scholars) representing a wide range of strands within the Muslim community in Britain made a public statement on the events of 7 July and responded to questions from the media. Their statement, read out by Maulana Shahid Raza of the World Islamic Mission, noted that "There can never be any excuse for taking an innocent life. The Qur'an clearly declares that killing an innocent person is tantamount to killing all mankind and likewise saving a single life is as if one had saved the life of all mankind....this is both a principle and a command. We are firmly of the view that these killings had absolutely no sanction in Islam, nor is there any justification whatsoever in our noble religion for such evil actions. It is our understanding that those who carried out the bombings in London should in no sense be regarded as martyrs". The full text and list of signatories can be found at www.mcb.org.uk/Signed_Ulama_statement.pdf Further responses from faith communities can be found below on pages 7–8.

Government consultations

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engaging with women; imam training and accreditation and the role of mosques as a resource for the whole community; providing a full range of education services, in the UK, that meet the needs of the Muslim community; security – Islamophobia, protecting Muslims from extremism, and community confidence in policing. These working groups will be supported by the Home Office and will draw up proposals for discussion at a follow up meeting in September.

In the coming weeks, Home Office Ministers Hazel Blears and Paul Goggins are holding a number of meetings across the country to meet members of the Muslim community in different areas. The police, local authorities, members of other faith communities and local MPs will also be involved in this programme of meetings and the outcome of them will be fed into the working groups being set up following the Home Secretary's meeting on 20 July.

The aftermath – community relations

The Metropolitan Police held a joint communication and consultation event, Communities Together, on 11 July to engage and reassure communities about police response. It was attended by 300 community and faith representatives from all over the capital. Following the shooting of an innocent man in error at London's Stockwell tube station, further efforts have been made to reassure those who are anxious about the implications of the 'shoot to kill to protect' policy which is currently in operation as a last resort for responding to suspected suicide bombers.

Following the bombings there have been reports of a number of attacks on places of worship and on individuals. The Metropolitan police have recorded a sharp rise in hate crimes following the London attacks, including attacks on mosques, physical attacks on individuals and verbal abuse. Metropolitan Police figures released on 2 August show that there were 269 religious hate crimes in the three weeks after 7 July compared with 40 in the same period of 2004. Metropolitan Police Assistant Commissioner Tarique Ghaffur said "There is no doubt that incidents impacting on the Muslim community have increased."

Immediately after the bombings the Commission for Racial Equality, through its Safe Communities Initiative, set up an 'observatory' to monitor any possible community tensions that might arise as a result of them. This is still operating and community conflict incidents, including attacks on places of worship, can be reported to the observatory. Contact Alexander Goldberg on 020 7939 0178 or agoldberg@cre.gov.uk.

On 8 July, the Inter Faith Network for the UK issued a document, *Looking After One Another: The Safety and Security of Our Faith Communities*. This gives practical guidelines for faith communities to respond jointly to such problems as attacks on their places of worship and encourages building strong and effective inter faith links at local level. The document was sent to all Network member bodies and went early the following week, with a covering press release, to local authority officers with responsibility for faith and inter faith issues; Race Equality Councils; and key faith

community contacts, it has been circulated more widely by these contacts. The text of the document and of the accompanying press release can be downloaded from www.interfaith.org.uk

The document had been under development since last year in consultation with the Commission for Racial Equality, the Association of Chief Police Officers and the Chief Fire Officers' Association, as well as Network member bodies. The Crown Prosecution Service advised separately on aspects of the text. The document was finalised rapidly given the possible repercussions for community relations of the terrorist attacks in London last Thursday.

The preparation of guidelines of this kind was suggested at a meeting of representatives of faith communities and other organisations convened some time ago by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams.

To download *Looking After One Another: The Safety and Security of Our Faith Communities* go to www.interfaith.org.uk

The Local Government Association issued 'Alerts' for local authorities on 13 July and 20 July, and a letter was sent by its Chairman, Sir Sandy Bruce-Lockhart on 25 July. All drew attention to community cohesion resources which can be of use in the current context. A press release issued on 13 July also highlighted some immediate actions local authorities may wish to take.

Vigils, prayers and observances

Around the UK, vigils, special prayers and observances have been taking place since the bombings and more are planned. Some examples of these follow.

On 8 July, during the *jumu'ah* prayers, Muslims throughout the UK offered prayers for the victims and families of the bombings.

Also on 8 July leaders of various faith groups, trade union members, school children and representatives of community organisations formed a group of over 200 people who held a silent vigil outside Aldgate station in sympathy for the victims of the explosions across London. Setting out after Friday prayers at the East London Mosque in Whitechapel, the group

walked to the edge of the cordoned off area in Aldgate. Speaking on behalf of the group, the Bishop of Stepney, Rt Rev Stephen Oliver, said: "We are here as an act of solidarity, remembering those who have died, the injured, and the grieving."

On 10 July a service for those affected by the terrorist attacks was held at the London Buddhist Vihara in Chiswick.

On 14 July, one week after the bombings, a two minute silence was observed at noon through the UK as well as in many other places around Europe. Train stations and airports fell quiet, buses and cabs pulled into the kerb, and busy streets became still, as people stopped what they were doing to observe the silence. Short observances were held at this time by people in many different parts of the country. In Wolverhampton, for example, a fifteen minute event with contributions from all the faith communities, organised by Wolverhampton Inter Faith Group, preceded the silence.

In London, thousands gathered later that day in Trafalgar Square to remember those who died, to thank the heroes of the transport and emergency services who saved so many lives on 7 July and to hear speakers including the Mayor of London, Ken Livingstone. Ben Okri opened the vigil with a poem for London and Lord Coe, Chairman of the London 2012 bid, Tessa Jowell, the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, Brendan Barber from the Trades Union Congress and faith leaders from the Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh communities were amongst others who read poems, prayers and shared their thoughts.

Other events, linked to the midday silence, took place across the UK on 14 July. In Luton, for example, where unused bombs had been found in an abandoned car after the 7 July bombings, hundreds of shoppers and office workers gathered outside the Town Hall for the two minutes silence and also to hear words from civic leaders, including Luton's Mayor Haji Abid, and faith leaders.

On 17 July, during a young people's Jewish-Muslim football day, children and their parents and members of the organisers, Maimonides Foundation and Arsenal FC, remembered the victims of the 7 July terrorist acts in London by observing a one minute silence. The adults signed a letter of condolence to be sent to Ken Livingstone, Mayor of London, for inclusion in the London's Book of Condolence.

On 19 July a Hindu memorial service took place at Victoria Embankment Gardens in London. It was organised by the Hindu Forum with the Metropolitan Police Hindu Association. According to Hindu tradition, the period of mourning after such tragedies is 12 days and a special prayer is usually held on the last day. The service was attended by faith leaders from Jewish, Muslim Council of Britain, Hindu, Sikh and Christian organisations, Sir Ian Blair, Commissioner of Metropolitan Police; Lord Mayor of Westminster, Cllr Tim Joiner; and Home Office Ministers, Hazel Blears and Tony McNulty.

On 21 July, a memorial service was held at the British Medical Association where doctors at the Tavistock Square building had worked with ambulance crews to help the injured after a bomb exploded on the number 30 bus outside. The Bishop of Edmonton, Rt Rev Peter Wheatley, led the multi faith service and leaders of other faiths were also present. Lesley Garrett sang at the memorial in the courtyard which was attended by many members of the emergency services. Security workers who helped after the attacks were also present. Messages of support from doctors around the world were read.

On 21 July the Three Faiths Forum, Central London Mosque and Islamic Centre and the St John's Wood Liberal Jewish Synagogue held a multi faith service of remembrance and hope at the synagogue. The service was led by Rabbi Alexandra Wright, Senior Rabbi at the Liberal Jewish Synagogue, the Revd Dr Anders Bergquist, Vicar of St John's Wood Church, and Sheikh Salah al-Ansari of the Central London Mosque.

A number of other services and commemorations are planned, including an Inter Faith Commemoration Ceremony at the Al Khoei Islamic Centre, London on 6 August and a Jain Prayer for Peace in Harrow on 7 August.

Acts and messages of solidarity

There have also been many acts and messages of solidarity in the weeks following the bombings. Three local examples are:

On 14 July people of all faiths gathered at Gulshane Mosque in Bedford to remember in silence the victims of the London bomb blasts. The members of All Saints Parish Church presented to the mosque a book of condolence and solidarity, inscribed thus: "We, the people of Queen's Park in Bedford, are united in prayer for the victims of the London bombings, in sympathy for those who suffer and grieve, in anger that innocent people have been killed in God's name, in friendship as neighbours of different faiths, in hope that peace and goodwill will continue in Queen's Park and beyond". The book is being passed between the two mosques, the two churches and the gurdwara in Queen's Park for people to express their sympathy for the bomb victims and their solidarity as neighbours of different faiths.

On 16 July, the Cambridge Inter Faith Group led a multi faith visit of solidarity to the Cambridge Mosque.

In Oldham, 'Standing Together', an event organised by the Council and Oldham Inter Faith Forum, brought the communities there together in Alexandra Park on 22 July to remember the victims of the London bombings to show support for the emergency services, and to commit themselves to work together, across the communities of Oldham, to build respect and understanding and overcome the divisions and hatred which lead to such atrocities. Speakers included representatives of the Christian, Hindu, Jewish, and Muslim faiths and the Leader of the Council, Cllr David Jones.

Altrincham Unitarians sent a message of support to the Altrincham Islamic Cultural Centre: "In the wake of the recent London bombings and certain hostile responses towards Muslims and their property, we send you our support and good wishes – and our pledge to work for a community free from fear, prejudice and violence."

Other events linked to the bombings

On 12 July St Ethelburga's Centre for Reconciliation and Peace held a commemoration for those who died in the bombings. Contributions in personal statements, reflections, poetry and music made up a reflective inter faith occasion where participants also discussed how people of faith can respond to terror in London.

On 19 July, the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police Service, Sir Ian Blair, addressed the Advisory Board of the Three Faiths Forum. The Commissioner spoke about the need for dialogue between different faith communities at this critical time and the role of the Muslim community in helping tackle terrorism. He said that it is essential to identify the preachers of hate: such people can no longer be ignored in view of their clear influence on the young. He also stressed that it is essential for the Metropolitan Police Service to become far more representative of minority communities, particularly the Muslim, Hindu, Sikh and Jewish communities.

On 23 July, a conference, entitled 'A Call for Unity and Understanding', involving Muslims and those of other communities as well as local MPs, took place at the Hanfia Institute in Bentley Street, Lockwood, Huddersfield. Participants examined how to move forward from the attacks in London on 7 July.

On 24 July, community leaders and local people from Stockwell, South London, met to reflect on recent disturbing events in the area, including the shooting of Jean Charles de Menezes. Speakers from the local churches, Stockwell Green Mosque, the Latin American community and the police spoke of their sorrow at his death. The room was packed as speakers from the many ethnic and religious groups in Stockwell appealed to the community to hold together during this difficult time and not to allow this tragic event to divide them.

Within a few days it became known that the four bombers who committed the 7 July murders were British born and from Leeds and Dewsbury and there has been particular concern for community relations there since this discovery. Faith leaders, police and others in these areas have worked hard to help hold communities together.

On 14 July an Act of Remembrance was held in Millennium Square in Leeds. Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh leaders spoke alongside the Leader of the Council, Cllr Mark Harris. Afterwards some fifty faith leaders met with civic leaders. Those of other faiths asked to be present at Friday prayers in the city's mosques and were warmly welcomed there. On Friday, many attended the prayers and some civic and faith leaders were asked to speak alongside the imams. On 21 July, Cllr Harris again asked faith and black and minority ethnic community leaders to meet with him and together they began to look at ways of bringing faith communities closer together for the good of all and of helping young people to understand the faiths of those who are not part of their own religious community.

In response to the police raids in Beeston and Holbeck on 12 July, and the Government's call for a two minute silence to be observed on 14 July to remember the victims of the London bombings, Muslim, Sikh and Christian community leaders invited members of all the communities in Beeston and Beeston Hill to come together at the Hamara Centre as a visible sign of their shared resolution to oppose the use of terrorism and of their refusal to be divided by it and as a symbol of strength in light of recent difficulties the community has faced.

There was also a march organised by the 'Together in Leeds 11' organisation. The Leeds Evening Post reported "Several hundred friends of the Beeston community in Leeds filled the streets for a three-mile peace march into the city centre on Saturday. A colourful display of unity was created by demonstrators as they set off from the Hamara Healthy Living Centre on Tempest Road, Beeston, Leeds, on their way to Millennium Square in the city centre..... They had one collective purpose: to show a sense of harmony following the disturbing revelation that two of the suicide bombers responsible for the merciless attacks on London that claimed more than 50 lives a fortnight ago once lived among them..."

Faiths unite to condemn the actions of the bombers and call for continued good community relations

Statements on the bombings came from many faith linked organisations in the UK and beyond. Here are excerpts from just a few of these:

“...The Lancashire Council of Mosques and Churches Together in Lancashire...utterly condemn without reservation this act of terror. We hope that the Prime Minister will take steps to ensure that those responsible are swiftly brought to justice. We also hope that the Prime Minister will take steps to avoid any unwarranted backlash against vulnerable sections of the community.”
LCM/CTL, 7 July

“...Together, as citizens of the global village, we need to redouble our efforts in the struggle for peace, dialogue and understanding, to prevent such carnage occurring again.”
International Association for Religious Freedom, 7 July

“Sussex Muslims utterly condemn the cowardly attacks and explosions on the London Transport system...May Allah bring comfort to those who have suffered. *Inna lillahi wa inna ilayhi raji'un* (We belong to Allah and we will return to Him). This is a very serious attack on our country's soil which every British citizen has a duty to protect.”
Council of Imams and Muslim Leaders (London and Southern Counties), 7 July

“Britain is a good example of a multicultural society where all faiths have been living together peacefully. It is now more important than ever to ensure that we do not succumb to terrorism by allowing ourselves to become divided.” Hindu Forum of Britain, 7 July

“We are united in our shared concern for the people of London following the terrorist bombings on 7 July....Our faith communities are supporting them in prayer. Members of the faith communities of Kirklees..are united to a common commitment to peace and rejection of the ways of violence...” Faith leaders and Mayor of Kirklees, 8 July

“...Clearly this was not a religious act, whatever those who were responsible thought. It is condemned by true Muslims, here in Birmingham as elsewhere, as an insult and injury to their faith. We stand united with them and refuse to let men of evil infect us with the disease of their hatred.”
Birmingham Council of Faiths, 8 July

“People of faith must support each other in such difficult times. Many people blame religion for spawning such atrocities, but it is not true religion that causes such evil, but the misuse...for twisted and perverted purposes.” World Congress of Faiths, 8 July

“..The scriptures and teachings of all our faiths – Baha’i, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh – denounce the use of all indiscriminate violence. To justify such actions in the name of any religion is totally contrary to our values and practice...” Religious Leaders of Scotland, 8 July

“Whilst we abhor any action which causes the destruction of life, we also call for compassion and understanding to be extended to the perpetrators of these acts. Their minds are filled with hatred and non-understanding. We should try to help them to realise that violence is not the answer to their grievances and that all mankind

must strive to develop better tolerance and understanding, and mutual respect for the one life we share.” Sri Lankan Sangha Sabha UK (Buddhist), 8 July

“...As we unite to resist terrorism, we must also address forms of injustice that afflict so many in the world and are misused by some to justify and foment terror...” Dr William Vendley, International Secretary General, Religions for Peace, 8 July

“As religious leaders from several different faiths we came together this morning to pay tribute to the courage, commitment and sacrifice by which the evil of Nazism was resisted and ultimately overcome sixty years ago. We stand together now for a further purpose: to express our shared commitment to resisting and overcoming the evil of terrorism, which the events of recent days here in London have brought home to us afresh and with such devastating clarity. It is an evil that cannot be justified and that we utterly condemn and reject.....We want to signal the common ground on which we stand as faith leaders, and to reaffirm the values we uphold at this time of sorrow and pain. It is vital, when many will be feeling anger, bewilderment and loss, to strengthen those things we hold in common and to resist all that seeks to drive us apart. Central to what we share as people of faith is a belief in God's compassionate love for us. It is a love that compels us to cherish, not to disfigure, our common humanity. We commend and embrace the continuing efforts to build a Britain in which different communities-including faith communities-can flourish side by side on the basis of mutual

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respect and understanding.....”
 Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster, Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O’Connor, the Free Churches Moderator, Dr David Coffey, the Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth, Sir Jonathan Sacks, and the Chair of the Imams and Mosques Council, Sheikh Dr Zaki Badawi, 10 July

“... We are glad that there are warm and cordial relations between people of different faiths in our region, and we, as Muslim and Christian leaders, refuse to be diverted by acts of terrorism from continuing to work together to acknowledge our diversity, to affirm our common humanity, and to seek ways to share life together... We encourage all people of faith and goodwill in our region to continue to work together unceasingly in pursuit of values which build up our common life.”
 Regional leaders of the Christian and Muslim communities in Surrey and North East Hampshire, 11 July

“We, members of the Hounslow Friends of Faith, people from different faith communities in the [London] Borough of Hounslow, have met to respond to the terrorist attack in several parts of London... Our hearts go out to the innocent victims, ordinary people travelling by public transport, young and old, of different religious and ethnic backgrounds or visitors to London. We express our deep sorrow and convey our condolences to the bereaved families. We pray for the speedy recovery of those injured.”
 Hounslow Friends of Faith, 12 July

“... There can be no justification for deaths and injuries to civilians – whether those deaths are in London or Baghdad, Kabul or New York, Falluja or Madrid... It is important that we stand together and do not let people use terrorism to divide our communities and foster suspicion at the normal daily activities of some within the minority communities in this country.....” Faith leaders of Waltham Forest, 12 July

“We... condemn in no uncertain terms the terrorist actions of last Thursday which by no means can be justified. We express deepest condolences to all those who have been affected by this tragedy – Muslims, Jews, Christians, Hindus and Sikhs – all of whom have been targeted. We would also like to reiterate Londoners’ heartfelt gratitude for the amazing and courageous work carried out by our emergency services, a sentiment that can never be overstated..... It is our firm belief that Islam is a religion of peace and justice and that attacks such as those carried out on Thursday have no place in Islam or amongst Muslims..... As the leaders of tomorrow we find hope in the resilience and unity exemplified by Londoners. We will not be defeated in our quest to maintain London as a beacon of freedom, diversity and tolerance. We shall continue in our efforts to eradicate terrorism, racism and war – through education and understanding; for only through these methods can we truly claim to have mutual understanding and respect for one another.” National Union of Students; Federation of Student Islamic Societies; British Organisation of Sikh Students National Hindu Students Forum; and the Union of Jewish Students, 13 July

“.... We praise the prompt actions of the national police in searching for the truth, and, at a local level, the high level of consultation that we have received from local police leaders. We pledge our full support to them in ensuring community harmony in these coming days when all need to remain calm and focused in maintaining Leicester’s reputation for good relations. As after 9/11, we affirm our declaration that faith leaders will consider any attack or act of vandalism against any religious building or individual connected with that community, as an attack on all of us.” Leicester Council of Faiths, 13 July

“The perpetrators of this outrage had one purpose and that was to divide us [but] our strength is in unity.... In Luton, as a representative of the Council of Faiths, I am proud to be a Lutonian because over the past seven days I have received a tremendous amount of friendship and support from colleagues and that is our strength.” Zafar Khan, Chair, Luton Council of Faiths, 14 July.

“We are united in deploring the use of murderous violence to achieve political or religious ends. We are most strongly distressed when perpetrators of violence claim they are serving God in this way. Such actions are no part of an honest observance of any of our faiths...”
 Merseyside Council of Faiths, 13 July.

“... As we pray for peace and justice and remember the sorrow of the recently bereaved, we wish it to be known that any harm to, or provocation of, one faith community will be received as though it was intended for us all.”
 Lancashire Forum of Faiths, 18 July.

Reflection by the Network's Officers

In place of the usual Inter Faith Profile interview, this issue includes the following short reflection offered by Co-Chairs and Vice Chairs of the Inter Faith Network after their meeting together in July:

We continue to remember the pain and grief of those whose loved ones have died or been injured in the criminal terrorist attacks which have taken place in London. Our prayers are with them.

All our faith communities have condemned unequivocally the attacks and have stood together in solidarity with one another in recent days. Vigils, services of remembrance, and acts of witness in towns and cities across the UK have borne witness to a powerful desire to remember the dead and injured and to oppose the violence used by the terrorists.

Bonds of respect and trust between people in Britain's different communities have been formed patiently and steadily over recent decades. These close relationships have become part of the fabric of our society at national, local and neighbourhood level. We can now see how strongly this fabric has been woven. It is resisting the attempts of those who wish to tear our society apart.

The Muslim community has condemned the terrorists for their criminal acts and for the twisted interpretation of Islam which they have used to support these. We welcome the widespread public recognition that this evil ideology is far removed from the character of the faith held by the vast majority of Muslims in this country. We express our solidarity with Muslim organisations and individuals as they work to tackle the challenges which face them.

From time to time, in the course of history, faith traditions have been betrayed and perverted by some who claim – wrongly – to be their genuine followers. Hatred and violence have often been the bitter harvest.

The fruits of true faith are the pursuit of justice, wisdom and peace and acts of care and compassion. When we celebrated the new Millennium some five years ago, representatives of the UK's different faith communities came together to express their commitment to work together with one another, based on these values we hold in common. Now, more than ever, we need to redouble our efforts to build, together, a society where there is mutual respect, cooperation for the common good and commitment to a shared and positive future.

Rt Revd Tom Butler and Jagjiwan Singh (Co-Chairs) and Dr Manazir Ahsan MBE, Hon Barnabas Leith, Neville Nagler and Dr Narayan Rao (Vice-Chairs)

The death of Pope John Paul II

On 2 April Pope John Paul II, born Karol Józef Wojtyła in 1920, died. He had been Pope for nearly 27 years. Nearly 4 million people came into Rome in the days between his death and funeral mass.

Pope John Paul II's death was marked across the world. Over 2000 people attended the Vespers of the Dead at Westminster Cathedral to give thanks for his life. The Vespers were led by Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor. The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, gave a scripture reading and the Prayers of Intercession were read by leaders of other Christian denominations. Representatives of the UK's other major faiths were also present at the Vespers.

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan said of the late

Pope "Quite apart from his role as a spiritual guide to more than a billion men, women and children, he was a tireless advocate of peace, a true pioneer in inter faith dialogue....." Tributes were offered to him not just by fellow Catholics and other Christians, but by people of many faiths.

During his papacy, John Paul II had made strenuous efforts to improve relations with people of other faiths. He visited the Rome synagogue in 1986 and made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 2000 which helped deepen relations between the Catholic Church and Jews, as did the fact that during his papacy the Catholic church issued the document, "We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah," which criticised historic Christian anti-Semitism and challenged Holocaust denial. He also made attempts to deepen links with Muslims, for example, through his visit to Egypt where he initiated dialogue between the

Vatican and Al-Azhar. A number of Azhar-Vatican meetings subsequently took place. In 2001, in Damascus, Syria, he became the first pontiff to visit a mosque. In 1986, for the World Day of Prayer for Peace, he brought leaders of all the main world faiths together for prayer and conversation. A number of religious leaders, such as the Dalai Lama, developed close links with the Pope, visiting him on many occasions.

“There are some who claim that religion is part of the problem, blocking humanity’s way to true peace and prosperity. ...[But] religion and peace go together; to wage war in the name of religion is a blatant contradiction. The task before us, therefore, is to promote a culture of dialogue. I have always believed that religious leaders have a vital role to play in nurturing that hope of justice and peace without which there will be no future worthy of humanity.” *John Paul II, Closing Ceremony of Interreligious Assembly, Rome November 1999*

Pope Benedict XVI

On 19 April, Cardinal Ratzinger was elected as the new Pope and, as Pope Benedict XVI, was enthroned on 7 May. The name ‘Benedict’ comes from the Latin for ‘blessed’. Cardinal Cormac Murphy O’Connor noted that, in choosing the name of Benedict, the new Pope had had in mind Benedict XV, a dedicated reconciler and peacemaker, and had told the cardinals that he intended his name to signify peace and reconciliation. Many world and religious leaders were present in Rome for the occasion of Pope Benedict XVI’s enthronement and he met shortly thereafter those leaders who had attended. Included in his first message as Pope Benedict XVI was a call for dialogue with other religions.

Tsunami victims remembered

On 11 May a national service of remembrance was held at St Paul’s for victims of last December’s Asian tsunami. The Queen, the Duke of Edinburgh, the Prime Minister and Cabinet colleagues and leaders of the opposition parties joined 1,800 mourners in the Cathedral to remember those who perished in the Boxing Day

disaster. Among the congregation were members of 126 bereaved families, 73 survivors and aid workers, as well as representatives from the 12 affected countries. The sermon was given by Dr Rowan Williams, the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Remembering those who served in World War II

Between 4 and 10 of July the nation celebrated sixty years of the end of World War 2, with the main events taking place in London. Thousands turned out on National Commemoration Day to commemorate the 60th Anniversary of the End of Second World War in London on 10 July.

G8 summit

The G8 summit was held from 6 to 8 July at the Gleneagles Hotel in Perthshire in Scotland. It was hosted by British Prime Minister Tony Blair as the UK has held the presidency of the G8 since January this year. Poverty in Africa was one of the key issues discussed at the summit.

The G8 summit has been pivotal in the campaign of Make Poverty History, a British and Irish coalition of charities, religious groups, trade unions, campaigning groups and celebrities, which has been working to increase awareness of poverty and to pressure governments to alleviate this. In the run up to the G8, the Make Poverty History campaign, and other movements campaigning for trade justice and third world debt relief and increased and appropriate international aid, held numerous events to highlight these themes. A series of concerts called Live 8 took place before the G8 summit to encourage activism and debate within the G8’s member countries, with the aim of increasing political pressure on the leaders and around 225,000 people came to Edinburgh on 2 July to demonstrate and make their demands to the G8.

London wins Olympic bid

On 6 July, International Olympic Committee President Jacques Rogge announced that the Games of the 30th Olympiad in 2012 had been awarded to London. A key aspect of the bid had

been the argument that London is a diverse world in miniature – many faiths, races, and cultures in one city. Faith groups in London had been actively involved in supporting the bid, with support from the London Civic Forum which had arranged a number of events to help brief and involve them.

Update on new legislation

The last issue of *Inter Faith Update* reported on the position which had been reached on the Government's legislation on religious discrimination and on incitement to religious hatred.

Prior to the dissolution of Parliament in April the Equality Bill received an unopposed Second Reading in the House of Commons. Following the General Election it was reintroduced (in slightly amended form) in the House of Lords and received a Second Reading there on 15 June. Since then, the Committee stage in the Lords has been completed and the Report and Third Reading stages will follow after the summer recess.

The Equality Bill has three parts: Part I covers the setting up of the proposed new Commission for Equality and Human Rights; Part II covers discrimination on grounds of religion and belief in the provision of goods, services and premises; and Part III places a new duty on public authorities to promote equality of opportunity in terms of gender. The changes from the Bill introduced into Parliament in the previous session are mostly minor and technical, but the exemptions in Part II on the application of the discrimination provisions to religion or belief organisations were widened.

The attempt by the Government in the last Parliamentary session, using the vehicle of the Serious Organised Crime and Police Bill, to create a new offence of incitement to religious hatred failed, as had its earlier attempt to introduce this legislation through the Anti-Terrorism Bill debated in Parliament in the autumn of 2001. On that occasion the relevant provisions were dropped in order to secure the Bill's enactment following opposition in the House of Lords. The Government dropped the provisions from the Serious Organised Crime and

Police Bill in order to secure the passage of that legislation, after the General Election had been announced, before Parliament was dissolved. Following the election, legislation dealing only with this incitement issue was introduced into the House of Commons on 9 June and the Racial and Religious Hatred Bill has since then passed through all its stages there. The Bill was introduced into the House of Lords on 12 July and will be considered by it after the recess. The Bill's provisions reproduce those included in the Government's previous attempts to legislate on this issue.

The Government has also reintroduced its Charities Bill in the House of Lords where it has reached the Report and Third Reading stage which will follow after the recess. As before, it includes important provisions about the position of new and existing charities, including religious organisations. The Bill sets out the activities which would qualify an organisation to be given charitable status. The categories of these are not being changed significantly by it and include the advancement of religion and the promotion of religious or racial harmony. The Bill also requires that the purpose for which a body is established is carried out for the "public benefit". In this regard, its provisions change the present position substantially, since it abolishes the previous presumption that religious bodies (and certain other categories or organisations) are operating for the public benefit and instead places an onus on all charitable organisations to demonstrate that this is so. The Bill requires the Charities Commission, in due course, to produce guidance on how they propose to assess "public benefit". Before this guidance is finalised, there will be a consultative process to which faith communities, along with others, will be able to contribute.

Data on religious identity in the 2011 census and of school pupils

The Office for National Statistics has been carrying out a consultation on arrangements for the 2011 Census. The consultation, which closes on 5 August, is linked to the publication of a number of documents by the ONS, which can be

found on its website at www.statistics.gov.uk/about/consultations/2011Census.asp. The consultation material makes it clear that the present intention is to collect data in the 2011 Census on religious identity, as was done in the 2001 Census. Therefore discussion is likely to focus on this occasion on the form which the relevant question should take and on the categories of religious identity which should appear on the Census form, rather than on the issue of principle itself.

The Department for Education and Skills is conducting a consultation on its guidance for local authorities on their collection of "Inclusion, Equality and Diversity Data". At present, schools in England do not report data on pupils' faith to the DfES, although many schools collect this data for practical and pastoral reasons. The Department is now considering collecting this data, along with data on disability, first language and traveller status. The DfES believes that it will be a helpful addition to the data already collected on the ethnic background of school pupils.

No final decision has been made on whether faith data will be collected and DfES Ministers will be considering, among other factors, the additional burden on schools which this additional data collection will involve. Information about this consultation, which closes on 9 August, can be found at www.dfes.gov.uk/consultations.

The Network office drew the attention of all its member bodies in June to both the ONS and DfES consultations.

Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme extended

In the 2005 budget, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced that the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme would be extended until 2008. The scheme, set up in 2001, returns to faith groups the equivalent of the VAT paid on eligible repairs and maintenance to their listed buildings. The scheme is open to applications from any formally constituted faith group, and successful applications have been made by most of the major faiths in the UK.

Around £28 million has been paid out since the scheme began. The scope of the scheme is

restricted to repairs or maintenance to the fabric of a listed building, and alterations to buildings, and works to fixtures and fittings, including plumbing and wiring, are ineligible. The scheme covers works to a building that is used solely or primarily for worship, and in which at least six religious meetings are held each year. It does not cover work to ancillary buildings.

Further information on the scheme is available from www.lpwscheme.org.uk or nptcallcentreuk@liberata.com or 0845 601 5945

Connecting for the future: young people and inter faith relations in Britain.

The Inter Faith Network held its national meeting in Coventry on 27 June on the theme "Connecting for the Future: Young People and Inter Faith Relations in Britain."

As the UK becomes increasingly religiously diverse, it becomes ever more important for young people to become involved in inter faith projects and initiatives and to build bridges of friendship and understanding. In the last few years, an increasing number of inter faith youth projects have been taking place in many parts of the UK. The meeting was a chance to reflect on the challenges of this vital area of work and to hear from, and talk with, some of the UK's younger contributors to building good inter faith relations.

Gaurav Prinja, Hindu participant in the Golden Jubilee Youth Forum and advisory board member for the *Connect Guide*, offered opening reflections on the vital importance of young people who are active and involved members of the distinct faith communities engaging in work to promote inter faith understanding and cooperation.

Dr Harriet Crabtree, Deputy Director of the Inter Faith Network gave an opening taster of the range of different kinds of youth inter activities happening in the UK and Sue Houlton of the National Youth Agency discussed how faith and inter faith issues fitted into the NYA's work. In a later workshop, Maxine Green talked about the NYA's new resource, *A Sense of Respect: Inter*



Faith Activities for Groups of Young People.

Further information on this can be found on NYA's website: www.nya.org.uk

Jagtar Singh, Sikh member of the Scottish Inter Faith Youth Council, and Dr Maureen Sier of the Scottish Inter Faith Council told the story of the second Scottish inter faith youth conference, which was held in Glasgow in November and attended by over 150 young people from all over Scotland. During a workshop later in the day, SIFC Youth Council colleagues, Haroon and Fariha Ahmed shared their experiences of taking part in the conference.

Rebecca Niknam of the Maimonides Foundation gave an insight into how the Foundation helps develop good relations between young people through football and art, as well as more traditional modes of dialogue.

Sofia Maskin from the Muslim tradition and Rachael Gilbert from the Catholic Christian tradition talked about their involvement in the Intercultural Leadership School in Bradford and Leicester respectively and the impact taking part has had on their lives.

Graham Langtree, RE Adviser at the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, looked at the contribution which RE can make to promoting understanding and respect for different faiths and beliefs. He explained how the first non-statutory National Framework for RE in England, recently published by the QCA, flags up the importance of pupils studying not just different religions but also how people of different faiths and beliefs relate to each other.

In a closing panel, reflections on the way forward were offered by Preet Majithia, President, Cambridge University Hindu Cultural Society, a member of Leicester Youth Inter Faith Group; Rowena Loverance, Commission for Inter Faith Relations of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland and member of the Society of Friends; Rauf Bashir, Building Bridges Project and Nelson Muslim community; and Rosalind Preston OBE, Vice-Chair Inter Faith Network.

Workshop topics included: youth inter faith forums and conferences; inter faith dialogue across the generations; youth organisations and inter faith activity; developing inter faith understanding and cooperation on campus;

educating for inter faith awareness; and Europe, the Commonwealth, the world (the wider picture for youth inter faith work).

- Dr Sarah Smalley and youth contributors including Lisa Elliott, Raihanna Hirji and Rebecca Owen, discussed the experience of involvement in successful SACRE youth faith forums in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough;
- Malcolm Stonestreet, Chief Executive of United Religions Initiative (UK), described its Spiritual Elders and Emerging Visionaries (SEEV) programme which brings older members and young people of faith traditions together to talk, and Musarrat Tariq, Clare North and John Murray talked about the SEEV event run recently by Nottingham Inter Faith Council.
- Maxine Green, consultant to the National Youth Agency and co-author with Carmel Heaney of the recently published NYA book, *Interfaith Action: A Resource Pack for Use with Young People*, discussed this new resource.
- Mark Waghorn, Scout Association Programme and Development Adviser, Faiths, Beliefs and BME communities and Daljit Singh, Sikh representative on the Scout Association Faiths and Beliefs Team and member Minority Support Team and Group Scout Leader, 13th Southall discussed Scouting and inter faith activity.
- Louise Mitchell, Council of Christians and Jews' Youth Officer, talked about CCJ's work on campus and Pritesh Karia, student member of Warwick Inter-Religious Roundtable for Dialogue discussed the Roundtable's role and activities.
- Becky Hatch and Imogen Gregg from the Diversity and Dialogue Project talked about its work to get young people of different faiths to come together and find out about global issues and work together constructively for a better world.
- Rauf Bashir, Project Manager, Building Bridges Pendle, Community Inter Faith Project described the Project's work with local schools. Ramona Kauth, Rev Jo Mason and Yvonne Stollard described the Ladywood Interfaith Education Project, Birmingham

jointly run by volunteers from different faith communities, which brings primary school students to visit the local places of worship.

- Susanna Darch, of the Royal Commonwealth Society talked about the “Youth CHOGM” project, together with Clare Linton and Niamh Quille, youth presenters from the recent Coventry Youth CHOGM.
- Preet Majithia and J R (Adseina) Alli from the multi faith youth team who went with Minorities of Europe to the Council for a Parliament of World Religions in Barcelona last year spoke of their experiences.

A strong team of volunteer facilitators and note takers and very good support from the conference team helped ensure a most successful and worthwhile day. A full report on the meeting will be available in the Autumn from the Network office.

Meeting of national inter faith bodies of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales

A meeting for the national inter faith bodies of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales was held by the Inter Faith Network for the UK at St Mungo’s Museum, 2 Castle Street, Glasgow on 21 June. It was hosted by the Scottish Inter Faith Council and chaired by SIFC’s Convenor, Diana Wolfson. Topics of discussion included: how information can best be shared between the different national bodies and the UK Network so as to learn from each other’s experiences; involving faith communities effectively; how to make bodies ‘representative’ of the faiths; working with Government and other agencies; funding and staffing questions; and work on diversity training and equal opportunities. There were reports on the recent work of all the bodies represented, as well as a chance to hear about how they came into being and the ways they work.

Scotland

The Scottish Inter Faith Council held their annual inter faith event for women on 26 July. This year the event took place in the Scottish Parliament and women from diverse faiths and from the different geographical regions of Scotland came together to enjoy a day of activities including a tour of the Parliament building, workshops on contemplation and presentations from Parliamentary Departments, including a welcome from Shona Baird MSP and former Religious Reporter to Parliament.

The third local inter faith group networking conference took place in Dundee on 15 May. Members of Scottish groups convened to discuss how to sustain and develop their activities.

An East Renfrewshire Faith Forum has recently been formed, with participation from eight faiths and from East Renfrewshire local authorities. Members travelled together on 10 April to attend the annual Vaisakhi celebrations in Glasgow, to join in holy day celebrations of two of the Forum’s members. A new inter faith group has also recently been formed in Fife. Further information about the new bodies from sifc@interfaithscotland.org Tel 0141 429 4012.

Wales

Schools from across Wrexham County Borough came together from 11–16 July to celebrate the fourth biennial ‘Tapestry of Life and Faith’ festival. Events and workshops helped Wrexham’s school children to explore their own as well as different cultures and traditions. Alan Schwartz of the Inter Faith Council for Wales was the keynote speaker at the festival’s launch and talked about the importance of good inter faith relations.

Alif-Aleph report

A new report from Alif-Aleph UK – A Mapping Report of Positive Contact between British Muslims and British Jews – was launched at Westminster Central Hall on 5 July 2005. Home Office Minister Paul Goggins, Secretary General of the Muslim Council of Britain, Sir Iqbal Sacranie, and the President of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, Henry Grunwald QC spoke at the launch.

The report reveals positive relations between Jews and Muslims in the UK and explodes the commonly held assumption that Muslims and Jews have no contact with each other, know little about each other and fear or even hate each other. It also underlines the common experience of discrimination that both communities face in the form of Islamophobia and anti-semitism. Among the report's findings are that dialogue and inter faith activity can be at its strongest where there is tension between Jews and Muslims or discrimination from others outside of either community and that many Muslims and Jews recognise the benefit of addressing Islamophobia and Anti-semitism together. The report issues recommendations in the area of education, creative activities, 'safe space', the role of leaders and facilitating better relations on campus. For further information about the report, contact Alif-Aleph at 020 7472 6061 or download the report from the 'downloads page' at www.aauk.org

Wyndham Place Charlemagne Trust discusses Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia

The Wyndham Place Charlemagne Trust held a lunchtime discussion, "Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia: Two Sides of the Same Coin?" on 7 April with presenters Imam Dr Abduljalil Sajid and Sidney Shipton of the Three Faiths Forum and discussant Dr Edie Friedman of the Jewish Council for Racial Equality. The meeting took place at St Ethelburga's Centre for Reconciliation and Peace, in London, whose Director Simon Keyes was in the chair.

Maimonides

Around 90 participants from the Abrahamic faiths took part in a one-day seminar at the Gustave Tuck Lecture Theatre, University College London on 19 June. The seminar commemorated the 800th anniversary of Maimonides' death and celebrated his legacy to the Jewish and Muslim world. It was arranged by the Maimonides Foundation in association with

the Assembly of Masorti Synagogues and called "Moses Maimonides: Bridging the Divide". Jewish and Muslim scholars (religious and secular) presented papers on Maimonides' contribution to, and influence on, the development of philosophy and theology in both Judaism and Islam. Further information can be found at www.maimonides-foundation.org.

Religions for Peace – from dialogue to action

Religions for Peace (UK) held an inter faith workshop on 5 June on the theme 'Moving from dialogue to action for justice and peace'. The workshop was developed out of inter faith dialogue for peace and reconciliation in West Africa. Further information about the workshop and about Religions for Peace's work is available from hopeis@btinternet.com.

Mystic India

The Royal World Charity Premiere of a new film, Mystic India, was held at the Imax Cinema of The Science Museum, London in the presence of their Royal Highnesses The Prince of Wales and The Duchess of Cornwall on the evening of 7 June. The event was co-hosted by the Mayor of London, Ken Livingstone, and BAPS Care International. The gates of the museum were draped with flowers and the royal party were garlanded and had customary threads of friendship tied to their wrists. The Science Museum was transformed into an exhibition of Indian culture and art with various artefacts, dances, musicians and craftsmen creating an authentic atmosphere. Over 50 young children from different nations across the globe assembled together waving flags from their respective countries and were dressed in their national attire as a symbol of such unity. The guests of many faiths were guided through the presentations and were offered a selection of Indian sweets and snacks after the film to complement their cultural experience.

Europe's local and regional authorities encourage inter faith engagement

The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities (CLRAE) met in Strasbourg between 31 May and 2 June. Its 12th Plenary Session considered a Resolution and a Recommendation on 'Intercultural and inter-faith dialogue: initiatives and responsibilities of local authorities'. These were presented for adoption by Cllr Mary Hunt of Waverley District Council. The tabled report contained a separate annex reviewing inter faith activity in the UK and the support given to this by central and local government here.

CLRAE's 2/2005 Bulletin reports: "Local and regional executives are in a key position to work together towards better cohesion of their communities, which are increasingly diverse in religious and cultural terms. ... The [Congress] Rapporteurs list a whole host of possible initiatives, ranging from efforts to combat exclusion through the teaching of tolerance and respect to young people to the setting up of local inter faith councils".

In its Recommendation, the Congress asks all relevant Council of Europe bodies to organise jointly a major conference in 2006 to promote greater public recognition in Europe of the cultural and religious diversity that enriches the continent.

For further information see www.coe.int/t/e/CLRAE/. The website includes the report presented to this spring's conference and the full text of the Resolution and Recommendation adopted at it.

Toc H 'Tea and Cake' project

The charity Toc H is launching a nation-wide 'Tea and Cake' Campaign which will run from 11 September to 11 November. The campaign encourages people to invite members of another religious or minority group for refreshments as a way of building friendship and community. A copy of the leaflet about the campaign, including guidance on holding a 'Tea and Cake' event can be found at www.toch.org.uk/documents/teaandcakeleaflet.doc or Madeleine Fone, tel 01296 642020 email info@toch.org.uk, can provide further information.

BBC Charter Review

The House of Lords Select Committee on the BBC Charter Review is extending its inquiry into the BBC. Among other issues, it is asking for views on Religious Broadcasting, and, in particular, the questions: "Do different faiths (including no faith beliefs) figure sufficiently in BBC programmes and services? How should faiths be represented in BBC programmes, services and governance?"

The deadline for submitting written evidence is 10 October. Submissions should be sent to : Rita Logan, Select Committee on the BBC Review, House of Lords, London SW1A 0PW Tel 020 7219 5765 Fax 020 7219 4931 and preferably also as an email attachment to loganr@parliament.uk

The Committee's first report on the Government's Green Paper "*Review of the BBC's Royal Charter: A strong BBC, independent of Government*" will be published in late October. Alongside new evidence submitted in the context of this extension of the inquiry, any relevant written evidence already submitted to the current inquiry into the Green Paper will be considered and there is no need to resubmit it for this purpose.

British delegation to Bali inter faith dialogue

Foreign and Commonwealth Office Minister, Kim Howells and the Indonesian Foreign Minister, Hassan Wirayuda co-chaired an Interfaith Dialogue with the 38 Asia Europe Meeting (ASEM) countries on 21 July in Bali. Dr Howells delivered a keynote speech highlighting the shared responsibility to encourage inter faith dialogue to counter rising extremism. Sir Iqbal Sacranie, Secretary General of the Muslim Council of Britain, Dilwar Hussain of the Islamic Foundation and Rt Rev David Gillett, the Bishop of Bolton, accompanied Kim Howells. The dialogue concluded with an agreed Bali Declaration on 22 July. This included an expression of sympathy for the victims of the London bombings and stressed the need to stand united against those who misused religion to further their aims. The Bali declaration can be found at www.fco.gov.uk/Files/KFile/BALI%20DECLARATION%20ASEM220705.pdf

PEOPLE AND PLACES

Two leaders of the UK's Jewish and Muslim communities knighted

Dr Jonathan Sacks, the Chief Rabbi, and Iqbal Sacranie, Secretary General of the Muslim Council of Britain, were knighted in the Queen's Birthday Honours in June. Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks has led the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth since 1991 and Sir Iqbal Sacranie has played a key role in the Muslim community, including helping establish and leading the Muslim Council of Britain. The Chief Rabbi was knighted for his services to the community and to inter faith relations and Sir Iqbal for his services to the community, charity and community relations.

New Archbishop of York appointed

The current Bishop of Birmingham, Rt Rev Dr John Sentamu, has been appointed as the next Archbishop of York, with responsibility for fourteen dioceses from Carlisle to the Midlands.

Dr Sentamu was born and brought up in Uganda. He practised law there and became a high court judge before having to flee to Britain in 1974 following persecution by the Idi Amin regime. He studied for his doctorate in theology at Cambridge University and was ordained in 1979. He went on to become Bishop of Stepney in 1996 and, while there, was an adviser to the Stephen Lawrence judicial inquiry and became chairman of the Damilola Taylor review in 2002. In 2002 he became Bishop of Birmingham. He has been involved in a number of inter faith initiatives.

Guy Wilkinson

Rev Guy Wilkinson has been appointed as the Church of England's National Inter Faith Relations Adviser and Secretary for Inter Faith Relations to the Archbishop of Canterbury. This new post combines the staff responsibilities of the national inter faith work of the Church of England with support for Archbishop's work in this area.

Sternberg Interfaith Award

On 31 May, the presentation of the 26th Annual Sternberg Interfaith Award took place at the National Portrait Gallery in London. The two recipients were George Mallinckrodt KBE (a Patron of the Three Faiths Forum) and Dr Khalid Hameed CBE. The award is given as a mark of recognition and encouragement to an individual who has made a contribution to furthering Christian- Jewish-Muslim relations.

Rabbi Tann's inter faith work recognised

Rabbi Leonard Tann was awarded a Doctor of Letters (DLitt) on 13 July by Aston University in recognition of his inter faith work in Birmingham. For almost 19 years Rabbi Leonard Tann has held the position of Chief Minister at the Singers Hill Synagogue in Birmingham. During this time the Rabbi has been involved with many church groups and faith leaders within the City to pursue his passion for inter faith work.

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. Available from the Inter Faith Network office at £3.00 plus £1 postage and packaging.

REGIONAL AND LOCAL UPDATE

East of England

On 21 July the East of England Faiths Council (EEFC) held a launch, at the Cheneygates Room in Westminster Abbey, of a report 'Faith in the East of England'. The report is a study of faith based activity in the region. The day was chaired by Rev Erial Kirby, faiths representative on the East of England Regional Assembly (EERA). Speakers and panellists included Lord Ahmed of Rotherham; Rt Rev Christopher Herbert, Bishop of St Albans; Rt Rev Dr John Inge, Bishop of Huntingdon; Lord Janner of Braunstone; Zafar Khan, EEFC Co-Chair; Andrew Lansley, MP for South Cambridgeshire; Dr Roland Lovatt, University of Cambridge; David Rayner of the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit of the ODPM and Secretary to the Inner Cities Religious Council; Ellis Weinberger, EEFC Co-Chair; and Chris White, Deputy Chair of EERA.

The study was funded by the East of England Development Agency and the research was undertaken by the East of England Faiths Council and the University of Cambridge. It estimates that there are over 630,000 active members of worshipping communities in the region, which has a population of 5,388,000. The report reveals that faith communities in that one region alone are contributing over £30 million in volunteer time every year. An enormous range of activities supported by worshipping communities are taking place every day, from the 'traditional' such as visiting the sick (80% of faith groups do this) and running lunch clubs (36%) to the more innovative such as IT training (7%) and environmental groups (11%). Reaching beyond the worshipping community is important. For example, the report found that 20% of respondents work with homeless people, 32% undertake food distribution, and there is also assistance provided to those abusing alcohol (16%) and drugs (11%). 26% of faith groups are involved in community liaison of various types: for example, 18% have anti-racist projects; 12% have crime prevention projects, and 14% are part of emergency planning programmes. The report draws attention to the way that all faiths can speak with one voice on the value of human life, and that almost every section of society benefits from the presence and work of faith groups.

For further information about the report, contact Jenny Kartupelis at ecen@cambcatalyst.co.uk or 01223 421606

Bedford

Bedford Council of Faiths' annual pilgrimage took place on 13 April. It visited the Jame Mosque, the Roman Catholic church of St Francesca Cabrini, and Sri Guru Ravidass Bhawan.

Bury St Edmunds

On four evenings in April and May, St Edmundsbury Cathedral hosted a series of Christian/Muslim dialogues organised by Suffolk Inter-Faith Resource and the Lay Education Adviser for the Anglican Diocese, in conjunction with Churches Together in Bury St Edmunds. These looked at: Globalisation and Consumerism; Governance and Democratic Society; Human Rights; and Justice and the Rule of Law. Discussions on these themes are being held in 80 venues around the world and the results are to form the basis of a report to the Archbishop of Canterbury's Observer at the United Nations on whether there is evidence for a so-called "clash of civilizations" between Islam and the West.

Over 100 people from different Christian and Muslim backgrounds and from other faiths, took part in the seminars in Bury St Edmunds. Each evening consisted of introductory talks by a representative of each of the two faiths, followed by a discussion with an invited panel and then with the audience. It was emphasised by all the speakers that both Christians and Muslims are taught the importance of living in peace and harmony with their neighbours, whatever their faith. A report of the discussions can be found on www.sifre.org.uk and copies can be obtained by emailing mcdm@sifre.org.uk. Follow up meetings are now being planned.

East Midlands of England

Local artists contributed paintings, photographs and other forms of visual art to an exhibition entitled 'Flowerings of Belief', arranged by Nottingham Inter Faith Council and held at Bluecoat School from 6 June to 10 July and subsequently at Nottingham Central Library until 13 August. The purpose of the exhibition is to reflect people's artistic responses to what they believe, how their beliefs affect their life and how they have sought to communicate their feelings to others through the visual arts.

London

Camden and Islington

Westminster Interfaith's annual pilgrimage took place in North London on 4 June, wending its way through Camden and Islington. The pilgrimage set off from Friends House, Euston Road, and took in a mosque in Crowndale Road; the Greek Orthodox Cathedral in Kentish Town Road; Our Lady Help of Christians Roman Catholic Church in Kentish Town (where a sandwich lunch was served by members of the Sachkhand Nanak Dham International who had brought this down specially from Birmingham); the Shaolin (Chinese Buddhist) Temple in Junction Road; the Murugan (Saivite Hindu) Temple in Archway Road; and St Mellitus Roman Catholic Church, Tollington Park where a meal had been prepared by their Justice and Peace group.

Islington

During June–July, 20 Muslim and Jewish 9–12 year old boys and girls played football in mixed faith teams for three Sundays at Arsenal FC. This was organised by the Maimonides Foundation with coaching support from Arsenal in the Community. The programme was initiated by the Maimonides Foundation over five years ago. The children are recommended by Muslim, Jewish and secular schools, mosques, synagogues and faith-based community centres. This year, ten Muslim organisations and schools across greater London, and Jewish children from Orthodox, Reform and Liberal congregations participated in the programme.

Kensington and Chelsea

A group of women from St Pius X Roman Catholic Church in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC) recently visited the Muslim Cultural Heritage Centre and a meeting was arranged between them and some Muslim women who work at the Centre. The women found they had a lot in common to talk about and felt that anything that helps them to learn about each other's faiths will bring women of all faiths together to work for the common good of the whole community. Forum of Faiths Kensington and Chelsea has decided that across the coming year arrangements will be made to give women of all faiths linked to the Forum a chance to meet and talk. The process will be serviced by the Community Relations Section of RBKC.

South London

In April, South London Inter Faith Group and Wimbledon Inter Faith Group were invited by the Sikh Khalsa Centre in Tooting to join in their Vaisakhi celebrations.

In July, members of South London Inter Faith Group took part in its annual inter faith walk which this year took place in Lambeth, beginning at the Caribbean Hindu Temple and finishing at Jamyang Buddhist Centre.

Tower Hamlets

The Diversity and Dialogue project is running an inter faith project in Island House community centre in the Isle of Dogs. The centre has a Christian basis but is also used as a Mosque and for Qu'ran classes by the Muslim community. During the project Diversity and Dialogue is working with a Muslim and a Christian group of young people. They are discussing their own faiths and learning about the symbols and art of the two religions. This will lead to the creation of a welcome sign, combining the two artistic traditions, which will be displayed in the entrance to the centre, after touring around different venues on the island. Further information from Becky Hatch, r.hatch@savethechildren.org.uk or on 020 7012 6438.

North West England

In May about forty members of Churches Together in Cumbria with their chair Rt Rev James Newcome, Bishop of Penrith, visited Preston for a “Meet your Neighbour” event. They visited the Gujarat Hindu Society Temple and heard about the Hindu community and the Hindu religion from the GHS president Ishwer Tailor. Lunch was South Asian food in a community centre with members of Preston Faith Forum. Father Michael Murphy spoke about inter faith practice in the city. The event ended in the Clarendon Street mosque with an explanation of Islam and an opportunity for questions with the imam Maulana Said Ahmed. This is the third year such a visit has been arranged.

Rev Malcolm Stonestreet, chair of the North West Multi Faith Tourist Association, organised a visit to Cumbria for Churches Together in Cumbria on 30 April for nearly 50 faith leaders and family groups from Accrington, Blackburn, and Nelson to visit Muncaster Castle and St Catherine’s Church in Eskdale. At the church the vicar gave a brief presentation about the Eucharist. At the end of the day there was a meeting to discuss possible future events and projects. Ideas included a possible inter faith festival in Cumbria (which is now being planned for next July at Rydal Hall); a mixed faith outward bound week; and tourist information leaflets in Asian languages.

South East England

Crawley

The launch of Crawley Interfaith Network took place on 25 June. The keynote speaker was Dr Indarjit Singh of the Network of Sikh Organisations and Thought for the Day. Further information from fatima.mirza@crawley.gov.uk

South West England

Bristol

Bristol Inter Faith Group’s annual Inter Faith Walk took place on 9 July. One of the places its visited was the Shah Jalal mosque where, sadly, they were still clearing up broken glass after windows were smashed on the night of 8 July.

West Midlands of England

Bishop’s Tachbrook

The Anglican Diocese of Coventry reports on a recent story of Sikh-Christian friendship and goodwill. Manjit Singh, the proprietor of the local village stores in Bishop’s Tachbrook, presented Rev Mervyn Roberts, Vicar of St Chad’s, Bishop’s Tachbrook with cash collected in his shop for £222.67 matched with a cheque for the same amount. The friendship between the shop owners and the church has grown over the years. The presentation to the church was made at the Village Fete. Rev Roberts said, “We are very fortunate to have a local shop and a village church both alive and active. It is particularly good to have developed a link that means we can respect, support and learn from each other’s faiths as well as work for the material and spiritual needs of our community.”

Yorkshire and Humber

Bradford

On 19 May, the Bradford Concord Inter Faith Society Pauline Stefanuti memorial lecture was given by Adeeba Malik on the topic of ‘Turning Challenges into Opportunities’. She addressed the challenges of living in a multi faith society – particularly Bradford – and looked at how these can be turned into opportunities for change and development in the community.

On 24 June, Bradford Concord held its annual Multi Faith Walk for Friendship, visiting places of worship and meeting people of different faiths. This year it visited the Brahma Kumaris Centre, the Hussainia Islamic Mission, St Joseph’s Roman Catholic church, and Guru Nanak Gurdwara.

Kirklees

On 6 July ‘Interfaith Kirklees’ was launched at Huddersfield Town Hall. This unique educational project involves the development of seven ‘faith centres’ where school children will actively engage with the faith of the community at that place of worship. The seven centres are: the Minster Church of All Saints, Dewsbury; Huddersfield Parish Church; the Hindu Society of Kirklees and Calderdale, Huddersfield;

Masjid-e-Noor, Batley; Nafial Institute, Huddersfield; Vajrapani Buddhist Centre, Huddersfield; and a Sikh faith centre involving the Shri Guru Singh Sabha Temple and Guru Nanak Sikh Sangat Temple in Huddersfield.

At each centre, students find artefacts, displays and on-line facilities. Trained guides from the faith community are there to welcome pupils and support them through an interactive experience using packages designed by practising teachers and other professionals within the community. The project is not just for students – the centres are places for Kirklees residents to find out more about the faith of their neighbours.

The project is funded from the Home Office's 'Connecting Communities Fund' and is overseen by Kirklees Racial Equality Council, with project partners Kirklees SACRE, North Kirklees Interfaith Council, Huddersfield Interfaith Council, faith communities across Kirklees, Kirklees Metropolitan Council and the Government Office for Yorkshire and Humber. Further information from Terry Murnane, Project Manager, tel 01484 540225 or www.interfaithkirklees.org.uk

North Lincolnshire Council

Multi Faith Partnership members from different religions, in a first for North Lincolnshire Council, gathered to say prayers at the annual meeting of the council on Wednesday 11 May at Pittwood House in Scunthorpe, when the new Mayor and Deputy Mayor was elected. The council invited the public to attend. The Mayor elect Cllr William Eckhardt, at all future full council meetings, will take prayers from a wide range of religious beliefs.

Sheffield

Sheffield Interfaith held their AGM on 8 May at the Quaker Meeting House. It featured storytelling, poetry and music from members of different faiths and cultures, including the poet Debjani Chatterjee.

DIARY DATES

Local Events

The following are just a few examples of local inter faith events happening around the UK in the coming months. To find out more about events in your area, you can contact the nearest local inter faith group. A list of local bodies can be found at www.interfaith.org.uk/locallist.htm

6 August, Edinburgh. The Festival of Spirituality and Peace opens with a Hiroshima Day 60th Anniversary Commemoration event. On 6 August 1945, the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. Local faith and community leaders join with other Festival participants for an event to mark the 60th anniversary and for the inauguration of a peace installation. Co-organised with the Consulate General of Japan. 12.30pm – 2pm at St John's Church, Princes St. Further information from Victor Spence, victor@eifa.wanadoo.co.uk

17 September, Luton. A 'British Cultural Evening' will be held by Grassroots and Luton Council of Faiths. 5-8pm at Stopsley High School, St Thomas Road, Luton. Further information from David Jonathan at Grassroots, 01582 416949 jgrassroots@aol.com

27 September, Bedford. Inter faith game evening, using 'Diversity', 'the game of inter faith and multicultural life'. 7.30pm at Bedford Quaker Meeting House, 5 Lansdowne Road. Further information from George Chaplin, 01480 212931.

5 October, Oxford. Oxford Round Table of Religions preparations for Week of Prayer for World Peace, 7.30pm at 12 Norham Road, Oxford. All welcome. Further information from Canon David Partridge 01865 202745.

15 October, Newport, Gwent. "Promises! Will 'Make Poverty History' result in yet more 'promises'?" Newport Interfaith Group's contribution to One World Week. 3–5pm at Eaton Road Community Centre, Newport, South Wales. All welcome. Further information from Mary Cook, tel 01633 484154.

23 October, London. The opening event of the Week of Prayer for World Peace. 3 – 4.30pm at the London Fo Kuang Temple, 84 Margaret Street, near Oxford Circus. Further information from Rev Sidney Hinkes sidney@fish.co.uk 01666 825249

Conferences, courses and seminars

In most cases, there is a registration fee for these events and the contacts listed can provide details.

Glasgow. From this Autumn, the University of Glasgow is offering a new designated post-graduate degree in Inter Faith Studies. Further information at www.religions.divinity.gla.ac.uk/Centre-Interfaith

Edinburgh, 6 August – 4 September. Festival of Spirituality and Peace: Tomorrow's World, St John's Church, Princes St. Further information at www.stjohns-edinburgh.org.uk/festival.shtml

London, 20 September. Faith Based Regeneration Network national conference, "Seeds of Enterprise", looking at social enterprise and, in particular, faith based enterprise. 10.30am to 5pm at the Zoroastrian Centre for Europe, Harrow Middlesex. For further information see www.fbrn.org.uk

Birmingham, 1 October. 11am to 4pm. Gandhi Celebration Event at the Unitarian Church in Birmingham. Speakers include Clare Short MP, Om Parkash Sharma MBE, and Dr Daryl Balia. Co-sponsored by IARF and the Unitarian Interfaith Panel. Further information from r.boeke.virgin.net.

London, 2 October. The Diversity and Dialogue project is working with the British Museum to create a trail on the theme of 'Living in a multi faith society'. 15–20 young people from all of the nine major faiths will work with curators to select objects that are relevant to them and their lives today and will write their own interpretations for the trail. The trail will be launched at a conference at the Museum on Sunday 2 October. This will involve around a hundred young Londoners in talking and thinking about faith and how we can work towards a successful multi-faith society. Further information for young people who may be interested in attending from: Becky Hatch, r.hatch@savethechildren.org.uk or tel 020 7012 6438.

Birmingham, 11 November – 13 November. 'People of Faith at Prayer'. A residential workshop at the United College of the Ascension, Selly Oak. The course, led by Dr Elizabeth Harris, will explore faith and meditation in the Buddhist, Hindu and Muslim traditions and includes a visit to a local faith community. Offered as part of the Methodist Year of Prayer but all welcome. Further information from Joan Marks, j.marks@bham.ac.uk tel 0121 415 6810.

Bilbao, 11–13 December, International Congress on Intercultural and Interreligious Dialogue: "New Challenges in a World Longing for Peace". Organised by Barandiaran Kristau Alkartea – Pax Romana (International Catholic Movement for Intellectual and Cultural Affairs) in collaboration with UNESCO Etxea. Further information at www.icii-bilbao.org

Edinburgh and Glasgow, 9 February to 5 March 2006. Third annual Edinburgh International Festival of Middle Eastern Spirituality and Peace. Further information from Neil Walker, neillw@hotmail.com or see www.eial.org

Montreal, Canada 11–15 September 2006. 'World's Religions after September 11: A Global Congress'. Further information at www.worldsreligionsafter911.com

Inter Faith Organisations in the UK: A Directory

ISBN 1902906 179

£6.50 including p and p

A5 size, 248 page directory containing contact details for and information about the work of over 200 national, regional and local inter faith bodies.

To order, please send a cheque for £6.50, payable to The Inter Faith Network, to:

Gaylina Nguyen,
The Inter Faith Network,
8A Lower Grosvenor Place,
London SW1W 0EN

or email gaylina.nguyen@interfaith.org.uk requesting to be invoiced with publication.

SPECIAL 'DAYS' AND 'WEEKS'

11 September, Racial Justice Sunday. This year's theme is 'One Race, the Human Race'. Further information from Churches Commission for Racial Justice, Churches Together in Britain and Ireland ccrj@ctbi.org.uk tel 020 7654 7254

21 September, UN International Day of Peace. More information at <http://www.internationaldayofpeace.org>

23–30 October, One World Week. This year's theme is 'Promises, promises! Make poverty history'. 2005 is described by OWW as a promising year because the UK holds the presidencies of both the EU Council of Ministers and G8, the Commission for Africa has reported, and progress towards the 2015 Millennium Development Goals will be assessed. But will the promises be kept? Will poverty really be history by 2006? During this week events linked to the theme are happening around the UK. To find out more or order an activity pack, contact enquiries@oneworldweek.org tel 0118 9394933 or see www.oneworldweek.org

23–30 October 2005, Week of Prayer for World Peace. Further information from sidney@fish.co.uk

27 November–4 December, Scotland's inter faith week. Events taking place throughout Scotland. For further information contact the Scottish Inter Faith Council 0141 429 4012.

CSV Make a Difference Day – 29 October

CSV (Community Service Volunteers) Make a Difference Day is the UK's biggest day of hands-on volunteering and takes place on 29 October 2005.

Everyone has skills and experiences that others would benefit from. As an individual, you could join a local group that needs volunteers for their CSV Make a Difference Day activity, or organise your own. You can get involved in a whole range of projects, from teaching young people the basics of web design to building a sensory garden for the disabled.

You can search the online Activity Locator service for opportunities taking place in your area. As an organisation or group, arranging your own activity for the day gives you a great opportunity to attract new volunteers; build good relations in your local community; bring people together to meet a particular local need; and raise awareness of a particular campaign issue. For more information, activity ideas and to register, log onto www.csv.org.uk/difference or call the CSV Make a Difference Day freephone on 0800 284 533.



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