



# INTER FAITH

# UPDATE

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## Commission on Integration and Cohesion publishes Interim Statement

In early November the Commission on Integration and Cohesion published a consultation paper with questions for national bodies, local bodies and individuals and additional sectoral questions, such as those for faith organisations. The Commission published its Interim Statement on 21 February. This offers a short summary of some of the key issues flagged up by respondents to the consultation and

also reflects some of the Commission's thinking so far on these. It also signposts several of the areas the Commission thinks will be important to consider in more detail in its final report, but in an attempt to be brief does not deal with each in full. The interim statement can be found at [www.integrationandcohesion.org.uk/Interim\\_Statement.aspx](http://www.integrationandcohesion.org.uk/Interim_Statement.aspx)

*(continued on page 2)*

## Religious dress and symbols

Over the last few months, there has been renewed debate about the wearing in public of items of religious dress and of religious symbols in a religiously diverse society like Britain. A wide variety of views and concerns have been expressed in the course of this. At times these have shown a lack of appreciation of the reasons why religious dress and symbols are significant to the wearers or have made the inappropriate assumption that a person is somehow less 'British' or less of a full member of this society because of items they wear for religious reasons.

The Network's Executive Committee has issued a document, 'Wearing of Religious Dress and Symbols', setting out the wider context for discussion

about religious dress and symbols: the deeply held beliefs which underlie choices about the wearing of these; the need for courteous and sensitive handling of the issues involved; and some of the factors to be taken into account in considering limits on the wearing of particular items for reasons of security, organisational corporate identity or health and safety.

The reflections close with a statement of three basic principles:

- The wearing in public of religious dress and symbols can be an important aspect of an individual's religious identity and discussion about the wearing of these should at all times be conducted in a courteous and sensitive way.

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## Commission on Integration and Cohesion publishes Interim Statement

*(Continued from page 1)*

The Commission's programme of visits to projects in the different English regions, consultations, special focus 'round tables', meetings and events will continue until May 2007. So too will its programme of research.

*Background note:* In August 2005 a proposal to set up a short term Commission on Integration and Cohesion was announced by the Prime Minister as part of a package of responses to the July bombings in London. Subsequently, Charles Clarke, who was then Home Secretary, consulted faith leaders inviting their views on this proposal. It was decided around the turn of the year that the proposal should be modified and that a Commission on Faith should be set up, to be chaired by Charles Clarke himself and plans for this were well advanced by the time when he ceased to be Home Secretary at the time of the Ministerial reshuffle last May. It was intended that this Commission should address a wide ranging agenda of issues relating to the place of faith in the Britain of today with the aim of its reporting before the end of this year. In a change of plan, following the reshuffle in May it was decided to revert to the initial idea of a Commission on Integration and

Cohesion. In June 2006 it was announced by Ruth Kelly, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, that she had asked Darra Singh, Chief Executive of the London Borough of Ealing, to chair a Commission on Integration and Cohesion which will report to her.

The terms of reference of the Commission, which is due to report by June 2007, are to consider how local areas themselves can play a role in forging cohesive and resilient communities, by: examining the issues that raise tensions between different groups in different areas, and that lead to segregation and conflict; suggesting how local community and political leadership can push further against perceived barriers to cohesion and integration; looking at how local communities themselves can be empowered to tackle extremist ideologies; and developing approaches that build local areas' own capacity to prevent problems, and ensure they have the structures in place to recover from periods of tension.

The Commission was asked to undertake its work within the context of existing Government policy and to focus on developing practical solutions for local communities based on the best existing practice. It was also asked to consider the needs of communities defined by a shared characteristic (such as race or faith), which may require regional or national solutions. Recommendations for local areas will cover England only, but will consider issues which affect Scotland and Wales, and good practice from other countries.

### 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

## NETWORK NEWS

### Religious dress and symbols

(Continued from Page 1)

- A choice to wear religious dress and symbols should be respected wherever other overriding factors such as security or health and safety do not come into play. There are situations in which some compromise is needed. However, any restrictions – whether because of the need to establish personal identity or because of the requirements of a particular job or the wearing of a uniform in accordance with the policy of a school or other corporate body – should only be imposed where these requirements are clearly necessary and after appropriate consultation.
- Careful and sensitive handling of issues linked to the wearing of religious dress and symbols is part of the wider commitment of our society to religious freedom and to valuing diversity alongside the shared pursuit of the common good.

The full document can be found at [www.interfaith.org.uk](http://www.interfaith.org.uk)

### Reflection document on faith and citizenship

During the last year there has been renewed discussion about the place of faith communities within society, the nature of citizenship, and the different ways we belong to, and help shape, our common society in Britain today. During the Autumn the Network's Office worked with the Executive Committee on a reflection document entitled *Faith, Citizenship and Shared Life in Britain Today*. A draft of this was sent to member bodies for comment in November and also put on the Network's website for wider comment. A final version of the document is under preparation.

### Meeting with representatives of Northern Ireland Inter Faith Forum, Scottish Inter Faith Council and Inter Faith Council for Wales

A meeting was held on 7 December in the Welsh

National Assembly building in Cardiff between Inter Faith Network staff and representatives of the Northern Ireland Inter Faith Forum, the Scottish Inter Faith Council and the Inter Faith Council for Wales (which made the arrangements for the meeting). The meeting was a valuable opportunity to exchange news of developments since a similar meeting held in 2005 in Glasgow and to reflect on the ways in which the relationship between the Northern Ireland, Scottish and Welsh bodies and the work of the Inter Faith Network are currently developing.

### Meeting of regional faith forums in England

A meeting of representatives of regional faith forums in England, convened jointly by the Inter Faith Network and the Faith based Regeneration Network, was held in London on 5 December. The meeting discussed the relationship between the work of the forums and other emerging multi faith initiatives; and the relationship between the Network, on the one hand, and the regional faith forums, on the other, and local inter faith initiatives.

The meeting also discussed a paper on the future handling of meetings of regional faith forums and it was agreed that these should continue to be facilitated by the Network and FbRN.

### Regional 'link' meeting for local inter faith initiatives

A Network regional 'link' meeting was held, in association with the Yorkshire and Humber Faiths Forum, for organisers of local inter faith initiatives in the Yorkshire and Humber region in Leeds on 20 February. The meeting took place at the Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha in Beeston which kindly provided, through the Yorkshire and Humber Faiths Forum, a meeting room and *langar* lunch for participants.

### Building Good Relations on Campus

On 30 November the Inter Faith Network, in association with the higher education Equality

Challenge Unit held a consultation meeting on “Building Good Relations on Campus”. The meeting brought together a range of those interested in this topic, including representatives of national student religious bodies.

Participants were welcomed by the day’s chairman, Brian Pearce, the Network’s Director, and by Nicola Dandridge, Chief Executive, Equality Challenge Unit. Harriet Crabtree, the Network’s Deputy Director, gave a presentation looking at inter faith activity in the UK, the significance of good inter faith relations on campus and offered some preliminary reflections on taking this agenda forward. This was followed by national perspectives offered from a range of student organisations on the importance of working for good inter faith relations on campus. Contributors included: Jo Merrygold of the Student Christian Movement; Bijal Bhagwan of the National Hindu Students Forum; David Myers of the Union of Jewish Students; Simrit Sandhu of the British Organisation of Sikh Students; and Sabeen Akhund of the Federation of Student Islamic Societies (FOSIS). Additional input was offered by Richard Cunningham of UCCF (the Christian Unions); Adam Berry of the Catholic Student Forum; Parizad Avari and Tina Mistry of Young Zoroastrians; Alyaa Ebbiary of FOSIS; and Nava Hinrichs of the Baha’i Youth Committee for England.

Moussa Haddad, of the Equality Challenge Unit, then spoke on the role of the Unit and the work it has undertaken recently on promoting good relations on campus, within the context of its work on equality and diversity on campus.

After discussion, a presentation was given by Ronnie Millar, Director, Corrymeela Centre, Ballycastle, of the Corrymeela Community in Northern Ireland about the importance of creating safe spaces for encounter and dialogue.

Co-convenor of the University of Cambridge Faith Forum, Preet Majithia, talked about this recently formed example of a student multi faith forum and Sarah Talcott, Inter-Faith Education Officer at the University of Surrey, gave an overview of work to develop a multi faith student council there and of the wide ranging programme of inter faith activities which she and colleagues are taking forward with support this year from a grant from the Faith Communities Capacity Building Fund. This was followed by a presentation from Revd Hugh Shilson-Thomas, National Adviser for Higher Education and Chaplaincy, Church of England, on chaplaincies and their role in helping build good inter faith relations on campus.

A report on the day is under preparation. Further information from [ifnet@interfaith.org.uk](mailto:ifnet@interfaith.org.uk)

## **Women’s Inter Faith Initiatives in the UK: A Survey**

**ISBN 1902906276, £5.50 plus £2 for postage and packaging**

A4 size, 63 page report looking at the pattern of women’s inter faith initiatives.

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Or email [gaylina.nguyen@interfaith.org.uk](mailto:gaylina.nguyen@interfaith.org.uk) requesting to be invoiced with publication.

## **The Local Inter Faith Guide: Faith Community Co-operation in Action**

**ISBN 1902906195, £6.95 plus £1.75 for postage and packaging**

Guidance on setting up and developing successful local inter faith initiatives. Includes case studies from around the UK. Revised and expanded second edition.

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## NATIONAL UPDATE

### Machinery of Government changes

As part of the machinery of government changes accompanying the Ministerial reshuffle last May the Prime Minister created a new Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) with Ruth Kelly as its Secretary of State. This brought together the responsibilities for regeneration, neighbourhood renewal and local government previously exercised by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, with the communities and civic renewal functions previously undertaken by the Home Office, including the work of its Cohesion and Faiths Unit.

The new Department also has responsibility for equality policy, including policy on race, faith, gender and sexual orientation, where functions were previously split between several Government departments. In consequence, the Women and Equality Unit moved to DCLG from the Department of Trade and Industry and DCLG is the sponsor department for the new Commission for Equality and Human Rights. Responsibility for policy on disability and age equality remained with the Department for Work and Pensions.

Phil Woolas, as one of DCLG's Ministers of State and a former Minister in ODPM, has responsibility for work on community cohesion and faith issues (along with local government policy, local government finance, neighbourhood renewal, supporting people; fire and civil resilience; and cities). He is supported in work on community cohesion and faith by Meg Munn, one of the Parliamentary Secretaries in the new Department. She was previously a Minister in DTI where she was responsible for piloting the Equality Act 2006 through the House of Commons. She is also responsible for women and equalities work and issues relating to gypsies and travellers and planning case work. Baroness Andrews, also a Parliamentary Secretary, is the Department's spokesperson in the House of Lords.

The machinery of Government changes also involved the creation of a new Office of the Third Sector (ie the voluntary and community sector) set up in the Cabinet Office, with Ed Miliband as the Minister with responsibility for its work, reporting to Hilary Armstrong.

### Planning for the new Commission for Equality and Human Rights

The Equality Act, which received the Royal Assent a year ago, makes provision for the setting up of a single Commission for Equality and Human Rights. The new body now exists as a legal entity and is due to become operational in October of this year when it will take on the work of the Equal Opportunities (EOC) and Disability Rights Commissions (DRC) and also (as decided in the autumn) of the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE), together with responsibilities in the fields of age, religion and belief and sexual orientation, for which there have been no existing commissions of this kind. For some time, the agreed position had been that the CRE would not immediately become part of the CEHR but would do so "no later than 2009". However, it has now been agreed that it will become part of the CEHR at the same time as the EOC and DRC. The Department for Communities and Local Government will be the sponsor department for the new body.

It was announced in September that the Chair of the new Commission is to be Trevor Phillips, then Chair of the Commission Racial Equality. The following Commissioners were appointed in December:

- Kay Allen – Diversity Manager, BskyB
- Dame Jane Campbell – Health and Social Care Policy Adviser
- Kay Carberry – Assistant General Secretary, TUC
- The Baroness Greengross – Chief Executive, International Longevity Centre
- Francesca Klug – Professorial Research Fellow, Human Rights Centre, LSE
- Ziauddin Sardar – Writer and academic
- Ben Summerskill – Chief Executive of Stonewall
- Neil Wooding – Director, Public Service Management Wales, Welsh Assembly Government

Also appointed in December were three 'Transition Commissioners', one from each of the existing equality commissions – who will support the Chair and Commissioners through their knowledge and

experience of equality and diversity issues: Jeannie Drake (EOC); Kay Hampton (CRE) and Bert Massie (DRC). There are further appointments yet to be made for the position of Scottish Commissioner and “up to four GB Commissioners with expertise in business, government and faith and belief issues”.

Dr Nicola Brewer, formerly on the staff of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, has been appointed as the Commission’s Chief Executive and took up post on 1 March. Work is in progress on staffing issues relating to the transfer of staff from the existing Commissions.

The Religion and Belief Consultative Group on Equality and Diversity and Human Rights, described in the last issue of *Inter Faith Update*, has continued to keep in touch with these developments and also with progress on the Equalities Review and Discrimination Law Review.

## Equalities Review

The final report of the Equalities Review, chaired by Trevor Phillips, was published on 28 February. The Equalities Review was jointly sponsored by the Equality Minister in the Department of Communities and Local Government and the Minister for the Cabinet Office. It was established to carry out an investigation into the causes of persistent discrimination and inequality in British society. The Equalities Review report recommends a ten step programme for making Britain a fairer and more equal society. These include supporting employers to take positive action, an enforcement regime overseen by the Commission for Equality and Human Rights and targeted action on the most persistent inequalities. Trevor Phillips said: “Today, we report that greater equality would benefit the whole of society. But we also warn that inequality still scars our entire society and holds back too many individuals from realising their potential.” The report can be downloaded from the Equalities Review website:

[www.theequalitiesreview.org.uk](http://www.theequalitiesreview.org.uk)

Parallel to the Equalities Review, the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) is working on a review to assess how anti-discrimination legislation can be modernised to fit the needs of Britain in the 21st century. More information about the Discrimination Law Review, which is due to publish its proposals shortly, is available on the DCLG’s Women and Equality Unit website: [www.womenandequalityunit.gov.uk](http://www.womenandequalityunit.gov.uk)

## Discrimination on grounds of religion and belief in the supply of goods and services

Part II of the Equality Act 2006 contains provisions to prohibit discrimination on the grounds of religion and belief in the supply of goods and services and the letting of premises. It had been anticipated that these provisions would be brought into force last autumn, but it is now expected that they will be brought into force this Spring, along with the parallel regulations covering Great Britain to be made under the Equality Act dealing with discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation.

A move to annul the secondary legislation making parallel provision on discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation in Northern Ireland was defeated by the House of Lords on 9 January.

The content of the regulations for Northern Ireland and the consultation on the forthcoming regulations for Great Britain gave rise to sharp exchanges between the Government and the Roman Catholic Church, focusing in particular on the requirement for Catholic adoption agencies in receipt of public funds from local authorities to be required to be willing to place children for adoption with gay couples. In a letter to Tony Blair, the Prime Minister, Cardinal Cormac Murphy O’Connor said that “to oblige our agencies in law to consider applications from homosexual couples as potential adoptive parents would require them to act against the principles of Catholic teaching”. However, the Government refused to provide an exemption to cover the point, although there is to be a transition period to the end of 2008 for the agencies to prepare for the change.

## Meetings of the Faith Communities Consultative Council

The last issue of *Inter Faith Update* reported the setting up by the Government of a Faith Communities Consultative Council, bringing together the work of the Inner Cities Religious Council in the then office of the Deputy Prime Minister and of the Steering Group of the Home Office’s Working Together Review. The Council’s Chair is now Phil Woolas, a Minister in the Department for Communities and Local

Government (DCLG). It has representatives on it from the nine faith communities in direct membership of the Network, together with representation from Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales and from the offices of the Inter Faith Network and the Faith-based Regeneration Network.

The Council first met on 27 April when discussion focused on its terms of reference. Its second meeting was held on 26 July. This discussed plans for the Government's Commission on Integration and Cohesion; the review by the Treasury and Office of the Third Sector of the role of the third sector in social and economic regeneration; the work of the Immigration Services Commissioner; and the report of the Church of England's Commission on Urban Life and Faith. The Council's third meeting took place on 6 December. The agenda included items on plans for a working group on emergency planning; teenage pregnancy strategy; the role of faith communities in local public partnerships (linked to a recent report by the Church Urban Fund); work on 'preventing extremism together'; and the national reducing reoffending delivery plan (with a presentation by Baroness Scotland, the relevant Home Office Minister).

The Council held its latest meeting on 28 February. An update was received on the work of the Council's Emergency Planning Working Group from Monsignor John Devine (who is chairing this). Members heard and discussed presentations on the work of the Commission on Integration and Cohesion and on its Interim Statement from Sayed Shah, Head of the Commission Team in DCLG; from Terrie Alafat, Director of Housing Strategy and Support Directorate in DCLG, on its work on Supporting People and Chaotic Adults; from David Rayner of the DCLG's Cohesion and Faiths Unit on the work that he is doing on issues relating to the engagement of faith communities with Local Public Partnerships and on a number of other issues relating to local authority engagement with faith and inter faith issues; and from Brian Pearce, Director of the Inter Faith Network, on the role of local inter faith forums.

## Meeting of the Faith Communities Consultative Forum

A meeting of the Faith Communities Consultative Forum was held on 1 June. It noted that the Government had decided not to proceed with its

earlier proposals to take powers to close places of worship given the strong support which had been expressed by respondents to its consultation for joint working and information sharing as the most effective way of stopping any abuse of places of worship by extremists. The meeting also noted the outcome of further consultation by the Government on entry requirements for 'ministers of religion', which had led to a distinction being made for this purpose between those with 'pastoral' and those with 'non-pastoral' duties. The meeting discussed the planned Commission on Integration and Cohesion and preparations for the setting up of the Commission on Equality and Human Rights; and heard also a brief presentation on the recently published report by the Church of England's Commission on Urban Life and Faith.

The latest meeting of the Faith Communities Consultative Forum was held on 22 February. Members discussed the relationship of the work of the Forum to the work programme of the DCLG's Faith Communities Consultative Council; the work of the Commission on Integration and Cohesion; the membership pattern of the Inter Faith Network; and heard a presentation from Belinda Pratten of the National Council for Voluntary Organisations about work to develop a link between umbrella organisations in different areas of voluntary sector activity and discussed ways in which the faith sector might best engage with this.

## Incitement to religious hatred

The Racial and Religious Hatred Act (which applies only to England and Wales) which received the Royal Assent in February last year following a controversial passage through Parliament, has yet to come into force. It is expected that it will do so this Spring.

## Rise in prosecutions for religiously aggravated cases

On 4 December the Crown Prosecution Service's Racist and Religious Incident Monitoring Report for 2005-2006 was published. It showed an increased in prosecutions on the previous year for both types of offences.

Prosecutions for racially aggravated offences rose by 28 per cent with 7,430 defendants, of which the CPS prosecuted 6,123 defendants or 82 per cent. Religiously aggravated cases rose by 26.5 per cent with 43 defendants, of which the CPS prosecuted

41 defendants or 95.3 per cent.

The Director of Public Prosecutions, Ken Macdonald QC said: “Racist and religiously aggravated crimes are particularly nasty because victims are targeted solely because of their identity or beliefs. These crimes don’t just affect individual victims and their families but whole communities.”

## Charity news

The Charities Act 2006 received the Royal Assent last November. The Act defines a charity as a body or trust which is for a charitable purpose and is for the public benefit. The descriptions of the main purposes which are charitable include “the advancement of religion”, “the advancement of citizenship or community development” and “the advancement of human rights, conflict resolution or reconciliation or the promotion of religious or racial harmony or equality and diversity”.

In the past the assumption has been that all “religious” charities were acting for the public benefit. This is no longer the case. Both existing charities and organisations seeking charitable status for the first time will need to demonstrate, if their charitable status is linked to “the advancement of religion”, that their work is “for the public benefit”. The Charity Commission has already initiated consultation on the application of this “public benefit” test and it is due to issue a formal consultation document on 7 March. It will be made available on the Commission’s website [www.charity-commission.gov.uk](http://www.charity-commission.gov.uk)

The Charity Commission has recently published *Stand and deliver* which offers guidance for charities delivering public services or contemplating doing so. It comments on the fact that, according to a survey it has carried out, over 40% of charities delivering public services are not achieving full cost recovery. It also comments on the extensive use of one year funding. The Commission’s Chair, Dame Suzi Leather, said in launching the report: “The future for public service delivery by charities needs careful consideration. Charities can bring something unique to service delivery but their independence must not be compromised by short-termism or expediency – either by government or by charities themselves.”

## Review of Citizenship and Diversity

Early last summer Sir Keith Ajegbo, the former headmaster of Deptford Green School in London, was invited to carry out an independent review, helped by a small team, of the way in which issues of identity and diversity are currently addressed in schools in the context of Citizenship Education. The report of the review was published on 25 January. The report can be downloaded at [http://publications.teachernet.gov.uk/eOrderingDownload/DfES\\_Diversity\\_&\\_Citizenship.pdf](http://publications.teachernet.gov.uk/eOrderingDownload/DfES_Diversity_&_Citizenship.pdf)

Education Secretary Alan Johnson has accepted Sir Keith’s key recommendation that there should be a new strand in Citizenship education for pupils aged between 11 and 16 on ‘Identity and Diversity: Living together in the UK’, with a focus on the historical understanding of issues that shaped British life today and discussing shared values. The report recognises the role which Religious Education can play in contributing to this.

The main new elements in Citizenship will be:

- encouraging critical thinking about ethnicity, religion and race, with an explicit link to political issues and values;
- using contemporary history to illustrate thinking on contemporary issues related to citizenship; and
- an understanding of the make-up of the UK, immigration, Commonwealth and Empire, the European Union and extending the franchise.

Alan Johnson also accepted the review’s recommendations:

- that there should be a national “Who we think we are” week which will be the starting point for schools to launch local projects, cultural celebration, debates on identity and values – this would be an annual ongoing event; and
- that schools should be active in “twinning” with other schools of different ethnic, cultural, social and religious backgrounds so children can meet and work together on various activities.

The second of these points had been stressed in evidence submitted to the review from the Inter Faith Network office in line with the report of last year’s seminar, held by the Network in association with the Citizenship Foundation, on “Faith, Identity and Belonging: Educating for Shared Citizenship”, which is mentioned in the review’s report.

## QCA secondary curriculum review

On 5 February the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) published a review of the secondary curriculum for 11-14-year-pupils in England with an online consultation on proposed changes to the national curriculum at key stage 3 through this review. The revised programmes of study and supporting materials can be viewed online at

[www.qca.org.uk/secondarycurriculumreview](http://www.qca.org.uk/secondarycurriculumreview) along with more information about the consultation. The consultation runs from 5 February until 30 April prior to final Ministerial decision in early June and implementation from September 2008.

Alan Johnson, Secretary of State for Education and Skills, said: "The new draft Curriculum is designed to create greater flexibility for schools so they can ensure pupils master the basics as well as offer more stretching opportunities for those who excel". He added that "the curriculum should evolve to meet a rapidly changing world, and enable teachers to teach in a way that will continue to interest and enthuse their pupils. These proposals move us away from a 'one size fits all' curriculum to one that offers more flexibility to tailor teaching to pupils' needs and aspirations. More flexibility for teachers, more interesting for pupils."

Schools are legally required to teach RE according to their local agreed syllabus or, in schools with a religious character, according to their governors' policy. However, there are no statutory programmes of study for RE at national level. In 2004, the Department for Education and Skills and the QCA published a non-statutory national framework for religious education, to be used by local agreed syllabus conferences for the development of agreed syllabuses for RE, and by faith communities for the development of RE programmes in their schools.

The non-statutory national framework for RE is included in the revised curriculum outlined in the Review in two forms: the current form, reflecting the structure of the 1999 national curriculum; and a re-presented form, reflecting the structure of the revised secondary curriculum. The content is the same in both versions of the framework but the re-presentation is designed to help ensure coherence across subjects and across the curriculum, and ensure clear progression in the transition between key stages. Inter faith issues therefore remain, as the non-statutory national framework indicated an

important area for students to learn about. The re-presentation is currently in draft form and has a restricted distribution. [www.qca.org.uk/secondarycurriculumreview/subject/ks3/re/approaches/index.htm](http://www.qca.org.uk/secondarycurriculumreview/subject/ks3/re/approaches/index.htm)

## New national centre for Religious Education being developed

RE Online reports that it is intended is to transform the closed Wren church of St Nicholas Cole Abbey south of St Paul's Cathedral into a national centre for Religious Education. The plan is for a centre with its multi-purpose hall, offices, resource room, café/restaurant and display areas which will become the hub for national work on RE. It will be linked electronically to RE teachers throughout the country, provide a focus for RE teachers wherever they are working and will be a showcase for RE nationally and internationally. It is intended that the centre will also be the home of the Religious Education Council. A design has been prepared by architect Maxwell Hutchinson and plans have been submitted recently to the City of London planners. A £7million pound fundraising programme is about to start. £5.5million of this is for converting the building. Full details of the proposal and design can be seen at [www.culham.ac.uk/coleabbey](http://www.culham.ac.uk/coleabbey).

## The future role of the third sector in social and economic regeneration – interim report

In his 2006 Budget Gordon Brown, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, launched a review looking at the vital future role third sector organisations, such as social enterprises, voluntary and community groups, and charities play in society. To inform the review the Chancellor promised the largest ever consultation with the third sector. It involved over 2,000 people, representing over 1,000 organisations across the country and included a variety of regional events and targeted events for equalities and faith groups, social enterprises, the private sector and local government.

On 6 December an interim report on the review was published, "The future role of the third sector in social and economic regeneration". It can be downloaded at [www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/pre\\_budget\\_report/prebud\\_pbr06/other\\_docs/prebud\\_pbr06\\_odthirdsector.cfm](http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/pre_budget_report/prebud_pbr06/other_docs/prebud_pbr06_odthirdsector.cfm). In his Pre

Budget Report in the House of Commons on the same day, the Chancellor set out the main findings from the consultation and announced:

- a commitment from Government to see three-year funding settlements passed to third sector organisations as the norm rather than the exception;
- a community assets fund of £30m to enable communities and community groups to take on the management and ownership of assets;
- allocation of an extra £6.5 million within the Safer and Stronger Communities fund in Local Area Agreements, with a focus on building the capacity of local community groups and to help strengthen the voice of the local third sector.

The review is continuing, in consultation with the third sector, with a view to setting out “a common vision for the partnership between Government and the third sector”.

## House of Lords reform?

On 7 February the Government published a White Paper, ‘The House of Lords: Reform’, “to set the stage for the free votes on the composition of a future House of Lords promised in the Government’s 2005 manifesto”. It proposes that a reformed House of Lords should be a hybrid House, part elected and part appointed by a new and independent Statutory Appointments Commission; and that the representation of the Church of England should continue in the new House.

The reform of the House of Lords has been under discussion for many years. A Royal Commission on this issue published in January 2000 a report entitled *A House for the Future*, which included detailed recommendations relating to faith community representation in any reformed second chamber. In a subsequent White Paper, published in November 2001, the Government proposed that the representation of the Church of England in the House of Lords should be reduced from 26 to 16 but did not accept the Royal Commission’s recommendations for formal representations for other denominations and religions on the grounds that “the practical obstacles are simply too great. ... Most other denominations and faiths do not have a hierarchical structure which deliver readily

identifiable representatives. There are many more denominations and faiths than could be accommodated by the numbers proposed,” (ie by the Royal Commission which had suggested that there should be 26 representatives of the Church of England and other Christian denominations and that the proposed Appointments Commission “should ensure that at any one time there are at least five members of the Second Chamber specifically selected to be broadly representative of the different non-Christian faith communities.”).

The Government’s new White Paper says that “it is important that faith communities are represented in the House of Lords. ... It is... right for there to continue to be special representation of the Church of England in the reformed Lords. ... but it would be difficult to justify retaining the current number of 26 Lords Spiritual. ... It is equally important that a reformed House of Lords reflects the wider religious make up of the United Kingdom, though the formal nominated representation of particular faith groups may not be possible. ... The Government will look carefully at how the views of those of faith and those of none can be represented in a reformed House of Lords. This will of course only be realistically possible if there is a significant appointed element in a reformed House.”

It remains to be seen what views are expressed by Parliament in the forthcoming debates on the White Paper and what legislation the Government brings forward in due course in the light of these.

## Holocaust Memorial Day

This year, the UK’s national commemorative event to mark Holocaust Memorial Day was in England and was hosted by Newcastle upon Tyne. Its theme was that of HMD 2007: ‘The Dignity of Difference’. The event took place on 28 January at the Theatre Royal. The programme included personal testimony, song, poetry, music, film and speeches. Sir Jonathan Sacks, Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth, and Ruth Kelly, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, joined a range of other speakers, including Auschwitz survivor Harry Nagelsztajn and Mary Blewitt from the Rwandan Survivors Fund, to remember the victims of the Holocaust and other genocides, and



to highlight the importance of respecting difference throughout society. Further details of the event can be found at [www.hmd.org.uk](http://www.hmd.org.uk)

Across the UK an estimated 25,000 people attended 600 events, many of which had an inter faith dimension. For example, in the London Borough of Redbridge, the Borough's Faith Leaders, Councillors, Officers, and members of the Jewish community and other communities gathered in the specially dedicated Holocaust Memorial Garden in Valentines Park, Ilford, to mark HMD and show their respect for victims of the Holocaust and all genocides. In Wolverhampton, a multi faith service was organised at the city's Cenotaph in St Peter's Gardens. At the Cenotaph in Swindon a short ceremony took place with participation from members of different faith groups and town dignitaries, including the Mayor, who spoke and laid a wreath. After this, at the Quakers' Friends Meeting House, Eastcott Hill, there was a time for further reflection and contemplation with speakers from different faith groups and community groups in Swindon.

Walsall Multi Faith Forum and Walsall Council marked Holocaust Memorial Day with a special service on Saturday 27 January at The New Art Gallery, Walsall, attended by representatives of local faith groups and the Council. The event was held to bring people of different faiths and backgrounds together to focus on, or pray for, peace and reconciliation. It included a short interview with Marcianne Uwimana, who lived through the genocide in Rwanda in 1994 before she came to live in the area.

Telford and Wrekin Council organised an HMD exhibition, 'The Long Goodbye', about the experiences of 10,000 children who left Nazi Germany. This was followed by an evening service where there was music, readings and presentations by representatives of different faiths and community groups. In Plymouth, the Centre for Faiths and Cultural Diversity held a Holocaust Memorial evening of reflection, with readings and music, in the presence of the Lord Mayor. In Brighton, the Jubilee Library hosted a small exhibition depicting the experiences of European Gypsies during World War II. This was arranged by the Traveller Education Service and Friends, Families and Travellers and there was also a screening of a short film 'Sticks and Stones' in which Gypsy children describe the abuse they suffer today. Lancashire County Council held an exhibition to mark Holocaust Memorial Day. There

was also a Book of Commitment to sign on behalf of the people of Lancashire plus a selection of library books with a reading list and workshops were held with young people, youth workers, librarians and members of the community in the run up to HMD.

Holocaust Memorial Day has a special significance for York where, linked to the commemoration, a candle vigil remembered the destruction of some 150 Jews at Clifford's Tower in 1190. Prayers and poems were read to mark the occasion.

In Northern Ireland, a Holocaust Memorial Day commemoration was organised by the Office of First and Deputy First Minister in partnership with Lisburn City Council. This provided local community representatives with the opportunity to reflect on the meaning and relevance of HMD. A number of other HMD linked events also took place in Northern Ireland, such as the event held by Belfast City Council Event looking at the impact that the Holocaust and the events of the second World War have had, and continues to have, on local people in Belfast. Two members of Belfast City Council's Youth Forum, who were part of a recent Council visit to Auschwitz and Birkenau, shared some reflections on this experience and a DVD documenting the experiences of 92 year old Rev Dr Ray Davey, who was a prisoner of war, was shown. He followed on from his experiences by founding the Corrymeela Community for peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland. Millisle, a small village in Co. Down was a final destination for many Jewish children who were evacuated from Europe during the second world war. The children of the school reenacted these events and produced a DVD telling this story and excerpts from this was also shown.

In Scotland, Anne Frank's cousin joined a memorial service to mark the deaths of millions of Jews persecuted during the Nazi Holocaust. Bernd 'Buddy' Elias, a cousin of Anne and Margot Frank, visited Kirkcaldy as part of the town's Anne Frank and You festival programme which ran throughout January and was organised by Fife Council, Adam Smith College, Fife and other public sector partners. In Aberdeen, over 100 people attended an HMD event at The Tunnels, organised this year by Grampian REC (GREC) with funding from Aberdeen City Council. A range of speakers shared their experiences along with music and a variety of food from around the world.

In Wales, Cardiff Council's annual ecumenical service to mark HMD was held at the Assembly Room. Representatives from schools throughout the city participated in the service, which included

interdenominational readings and prayers. A candle was lit in memory of the victims of genocide during the service, which was led by Revd Stewart Lisk. Cardiff County and the Vale of Glamorgan Youth Orchestra and Youth Choir gave performances during the service while dignitaries laid official wreaths of remembrance. Alan Schwartz, Chairman of the South Wales Jewish Representative Committee, joined Revd Lisk to give a departing Levitical Blessing. In Swansea, Swansea Council and the city's Faith Forum organised an HMD event at the Dylan Thomas Centre to promote good community relations and racial harmony in the area. Speakers included Holocaust survivor Ellen Davis; Uzo Iwobi, a commissioner for racial equality; Faith Forum chairperson, Rev Alan Bayes; and Norma Glass, a member of Swansea's Jewish community.

The Muslim Council of Britain continues to decline to be represented at HMD events on the basis that it does not see this as sufficiently inclusive of all genocides. Its Central Working Committee is currently holding a consultation with its 400 plus affiliate bodies about the issue.

Bolton City Council decided to hold an event as part of a genocide memorial day in June rather than to mark HMD, on the basis that this would be more inclusive, but flew its flag at half mast on HMD. Lord Janner, Chairman of the Holocaust Educational Trust, told the Jewish News: "I have no objection to having a Genocide Memorial Day but it should not be in place of a Holocaust memorial." "Other massacres", he added, "are included in the commemorations."

The Holocaust Memorial Day Trust has announced that Liverpool had been chosen as UK host city for HMD in 2008.

## Queen's Christmas Day broadcast highlights contribution of faith communities

The Queen, in her Christmas Day broadcast recorded at Southwark Cathedral, urged greater efforts to bridge the generation gap. In her speech she focused on the relationship between different generations, what old and young have to offer each other, and how all faiths highlight the need to nurture and guide young people, and to encourage respect for elderly people. The Queen said: "It is very easy to concentrate on the differences between the religious faiths and to forget what they

have in common – people of different faiths are bound together by the need to help the younger generation to become considerate and active citizens."

## Jewish Community marks 350th anniversary

During 2006, the Jewish community celebrated its 350th year of continuous presence in Britain since resettlement in 1656 under Oliver Cromwell after their expulsion during the Middle Ages. Celebrations included a special celebration at Bevis Marks synagogue in the City of London, addressed by Prime Minister Tony Blair; a reception hosted by the Queen at St James's Palace; a dinner at the Mansion House and a cultural fair at Trafalgar Square.

At the royal reception at St James's Palace on 28 November, Sir Jonathan Sacks, Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth, presented the Queen with a *hanukia* and Rabbi Tony Bayfield of the Reform Movement presented a *kiddish* cup to Prince Philip. Sir Sigmund Sternberg, co-chair of the 350th Anniversary Steering Group commented, "I have been especially pleased by the way in which Jewish communities countrywide have joined together in the 350 celebrations, and there can be no higher accolade than this reception hosted by the Queen and Prince Philip. In our celebrations, we are not only marking a special anniversary in the history of this community but we are sending out a message to new communities, still struggling to find their way in Britain, that service and commitment to crown and country do not require a loss of cultural or religious identity. We are no longer Englishmen of the Jewish persuasion but, proudly, British Jews."

A special booklet to commemorate the anniversary, edited by Zaki Cooper, *Living and Giving: The Jewish Contribution to Life in the UK 1656-2006* can be ordered from [350@bod.org.uk](mailto:350@bod.org.uk) or downloaded from [www.britishjews350.org.uk/uploads/LivingGiving.pdf](http://www.britishjews350.org.uk/uploads/LivingGiving.pdf)

## One World Week

One World Week is an annual opportunity to join a world-wide movement of people taking action for justice locally and globally. It aims to enable groups at local level to work across boundaries such as culture and is also about stimulating

imaginative activities which nurture values of *ubuntu* (an African term for 'active togetherness'). The theme for OWW 2006 was 'Mind the Gap', which focused on the gaps between the world's rich and poor, between words and actions and between 'friends' and 'enemies' in a world divided by conflict.

Numerous local groups and schools across the country marked the occasion during the month of October, celebrating the diversity of cultures; learning and sharing in caring for the earth and its resources; and taking action for justice, equality, peace and fullness of life for all. Activities ranged from talks, discussions and workshops to concerts, art exhibitions and poetry competitions. Some had an inter faith dimension. For example, Chelmsford OWW's inter faith celebration, in the presence of the Mayor at the Friends' Meeting House. Members of various faith and community groups gave reflections, readings, music and prayers on the theme 'Mind the Gap', looking at environmental, poverty and diversity issues. In St Albans, the Parish Church of St Michael organised an education programme during the month of October with four speakers from different faiths, focusing on dialogue between the Christian faith and those other faiths with each having an opportunity to understand and learn from the other. The programme culminated during One World Week with a Muslim speaker.

## CSV Make a Difference Day

CSV (Community Service Volunteers) is the largest volunteering organisation in the UK. 'Make a Difference Day' (MDD) is a campaign which it runs annually. It is the UK's largest single day of volunteering. Over 100,000 people across the UK take part, giving time instead of money to improve communities. The 11th Make a Difference Day took place between 21 October and 4 November (according to local arrangements).

Among the bodies which took part were around 30 groups which identified themselves as 'faith-based' and, between them, involve around 860 volunteers. Many other people of different faiths also took part in activities not specifically 'faith based'. Some of the activities highlighting the faith and inter faith dimension included a multi faith cooking and gardening project organised by the Dashmesh Sikh Community Centre in Manchester; the Spitalfields City Farm (London) project where Israeli and Palestinian students joined other volunteers on the farm to help brighten up local park, Allen Gardens; and an activity for men

aiming to help them improve their parenting skills, interact more with their children and share their experiences with other dads which was organised by St Andrew's Church in Plymouth. Muslim Youth Helpline reached out to imprisoned Muslim women through their CSV MD Day activity where the Helpline's volunteers collected donated gifts and information on where to get support after their release, which they packed into boxes and sent to prisoners for Eid.

## Remembrance service for victims of Tsunami Disaster

The London Buddhist Vihara organised a 2nd year remembrance service on 26 December for people of all faiths for those who lost their lives in the 2004 disaster.

## Hindu bodies oppose possible European ban on swastika symbol

On 1 January Germany took over the EU Presidency for 6 months. Early in January, Germany indicated that it wanted to harmonise rules throughout the 27-member bloc for dealing with Holocaust deniers and for punishing displays of the symbol of Adolf Hitler's Nazi party, the swastika, banned in Germany and several other states. The proposed ban on the swastika was strongly opposed by national Hindu representative bodies in the UK and by Hindu groups in Holland, Belgium and Italy and, in setting out plans for an EU-wide anti-racism law at the end of January, Germany said it would not seek to prohibit 'specific symbols such as swastikas'.

This was the second time in recent years that a ban on the swastika has looked imminent. It was under consideration in 2005 but EU legislators decided against the blanket ban proposed and suggested instead that member states tackle the problem individually. At the end of February 2005, the UK government said it would not pursue a ban on the swastika as the Home Office said that Britain's current race hate laws were sufficient to prevent improper use of the swastika. 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.”

*Background Note:* 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.

## Conferences to combat extremism

On 14 December, a national conference, ‘Tackling Extremism Together: Building Safer and Stronger, Cohesive Communities’, was held in London. It was organised by Neil Stewart Associates in association with the Muslim Council of Britain and Policy Review Magazine to bring together representatives from local government, the police, various educational institutions and communities to consider effective approaches to improve cohesion and strengthen relationships.

On 22 February, the British Muslim Forum and Birmingham City Council held a conference, Islam in Britain: Policy to Action, in Birmingham, hosted by Councillor Rudge and Zareen Ahmed Chief Executive of the BMF. The conference was addressed by Ruth Kelly, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government. The aim of the conference was to develop partnerships between the community and the public sector to tackle issues of alienation, disadvantage and extremism. There were presentations setting out the theological, juridical and spiritual context for strategies to address issues of citizenship, civic engagement and de-radicalisation. Workshops explored questions relating to the implications of *Shari'ah* within a modern western democracy, faith based citizenship and the role of civic institutions in policy and engagement.

## New funding for local authorities to tackle extremism

The Communities Secretary, Ruth Kelly, announced on 7 February the launch of a new funding programme aimed at overcoming violent extremism in England. Financial support will be given to support local councils and communities in increasing their role in isolating extremists. The new £5 million Preventing Violent Extremism

Pathfinder Fund will support local authorities and the guidance sets out how they can play a key role in building strengthened partnerships with the peaceful majority in communities to isolate and defeat violent extremism. Government Offices are working with around 50 local authorities, primarily from main urban areas, with the guidance to develop programmes of activities which the new fund will support. They will work in partnership with Muslim communities in bringing forward proposals. The guidance indicates that partnerships are to be with ‘...other agencies locally – including the police, third sector and local Muslim (and perhaps other faith) organisations.’ *Preventing Violent Extremism Pathfinder Fund, Guidance Note for Government Offices and Local Authorities in England*, is available at: [www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1506075](http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1506075)

## Evangelical Alliance and MCB meet

Dr Abdul Bari, Secretary General of the Muslim Council of Britain and Dr Manazir Ahsan, Chair of MCB’s Mosque and Community Affairs Committee met on 6 February with Dr Joel Edwards, General Director of the Evangelical Alliance and Dr David Muir, its Public Policy Director, for an informal opportunity to share information about their work and activities.

## Hindu-Christian Forum

The Hindu-Christian Forum held a meeting at the St Philips Centre in Leicester on 3 March. To help clarify its aims and broaden its base it is currently developing a ‘listening exercise’ modeled on the Christian Muslim listening exercise which led to the formation of the Christian Muslim forum in 2004. The Forum is also planning to hold a national conference on Hindu-Christian dialogue in April 2008.

The Hindu-Christian Forum, which began its work in 2004, is a national forum involving several Christian denominations and a range of Hindu bodies. Current Co-Chairs are Canon Andrew Wingate and Dr Girdhari Lal Bhan. Its purpose is to facilitate understanding between Hindus and Christians in the context of their living together in a positive way in Britain. A significant achievement early in its life was to agree a statement of good practice in relation to issues of mission and conversion. Further information from Canon Andrew Wingate

andrew.wingate@stphilipscentre.co.uk or  
Sudarshan Bhatia info@nchtuk.org

## Hindu-Christian dialogue

On 9 November, the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies held a conference at Regent's Park College in association with the Centre for Christianity and Culture. This one-day symposium brought together Christian, Buddhist, and Hindu perspectives on the theme of Desire. This was part of a series of Comparative Theology seminars and symposia in which scholars compare Hindu ideas with other theologies.

## Christian Muslim Forum statement on religious festivals and celebrations

On 12 November, the Christian Muslim Forum issued a statement by the Forum's Chair, Rt Revd David Gillett, and Vice-Chair, Dr Ataullah Siddiqui, emphasising the value of all religious communities in the UK and the importance of recognising major festivals within each community. This was in response to various calls to move away from public celebration of festivals, such as Christmas, on the basis that these could offend members of other religious traditions. The CMF statement stressed that Christmas is a celebration of the birth of Jesus and this significant aspect of the Christian heritage should be acknowledged in national life. It said "We believe that our open and democratic society should promote freedom of religion in the public space rather than negatively restrict its observance... This is a positive way of affirming the public contribution that people of different traditions bring to our society." The statement can be found at [www.christianmuslimforum.org/downloads/Religious\\_Festivals.pdf](http://www.christianmuslimforum.org/downloads/Religious_Festivals.pdf)

## Christian and Muslim youth workers engage

On 22 February, nearly 100 youth workers Christian and Muslim youth leaders from around the UK came together in for the Christian Muslim Forum 'getting engaged' event at the Second City Suite in Digbeth to explore how they can 'get engaged' with each other, share their resources and help young Christians and Muslims to contribute

better to community cohesion. The day event included presentations from Steve Chalke, founder of Faithworks; Muhammad Khan, founder of Muslim Youthwork Foundation and lecturer at Birmingham University; as well as discussion and interactive workshops with trainers Andrew Smith and Wahida Shaffi, the respective Christian and Muslim youth specialists for the Christian Muslim Forum. For more information about 'getting engaged' and other Christian Muslim Forum youth work, see [www.christianmuslimforum.org/youth.asp](http://www.christianmuslimforum.org/youth.asp)

## Ahimsa Day

The Institute of Jainology celebrated Ahimsa Day in the House of Commons on 1 November. This year's meeting, with the theme, 'Ahimsa and the Environment', attracted over 35 MPs. Invitations were extended to the major faith communities and representatives from many of these attended the event. Speakers included Elliot Morley, MP, Special Representative for Global Climate Change Affairs in the Office of the Prime Minister; Martin Palmer, Secretary-General of Alliance for Religions and Conservation (ARC); John Vidal, Environment Editor of *The Guardian*; and Harshad Sanghrajka, of the Institute of Jainology.

## World Congress of Faiths holds 70th anniversary conference

On 23-24 October, the 70th anniversary conference of the World Congress of Faiths, 'Seeking Transformation for a Fractured World', was held at Selly Oak, Birmingham in association with the University of Birmingham. It was sponsored by the Hibbert Trust. 'Religion' is sometimes accused of being responsible for the world's violence and the aim of contributors was to draw attention to the potential for 'religion', and in particular for 'inter faith work', to become part of the solution to conflict.

Contributors to the conference included Professor Scott Appleby, Director of the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, at the University of Notre Dame, Indiana, USA; John Hick, Fellow of the Institute for Advanced Research in Arts and Social Sciences, University of Birmingham, UK; Jim Kenney, Director of the Interreligious Engagement Project, Chicago; Perry Schmidt-Leukel, Professor of Systematic Theology and

Religious Studies and Chair of World Religions for Peace, University of Glasgow; Professor Gurharpal Singh, Nadir Dinshaw Professor of Interreligious Relations, University of Birmingham, UK; Dr Geraldine Smyth, OP, Irish School of Ecumenics; and Professor Jonathan Webber, UNESCO Professor of Jewish and Interfaith Studies, University of Birmingham. Further information about the topics which they addressed can be found at [www.worldfaiths.org/2006%20Events.htm](http://www.worldfaiths.org/2006%20Events.htm) Some of the conference contributions will be published in *Interreligious Insight*, the journal of the WCF ([www.interreligiousinsight.org](http://www.interreligiousinsight.org)).

## Muslim women's inter faith initiative

A Muslim Women's Network for inter faith work was launched at the Markfield Conference Centre, Leicestershire on 25 February. Speakers included Sughra Ahmed, the Coordinator of the Women in Faith Project; Irshad Baqui, Executive Director of the Islamic Foundation; the Inter Faith Network's Deputy Director, Harriet Crabtree; and Wahida Shaffi of the Muslim Christian Forum. There were also testimonials from Farah Alvi and Nazneen Amin-Belmour, who had been studying on the Women in Faith course (see below). The Network will work to promote, support and enhance inter faith dialogue. Further information from Sughra Ahmed, tel. 01530 244 944 ext 222, email: [sughra@islamic-foundation.org](mailto:sughra@islamic-foundation.org)

The new Network emerged from a course which The Islamic Foundation, funded by the Faith Communities Capacity Building Fund, ran over six weekends finishing in February. The course, 'Women in Faith' was designed to give the participants training in the field of faith, a chance to learn about a variety of faiths in the UK and to visit places of worship and gain understanding of a number of dimensions of worship and prayer. The women have also studied extensively some of the issues and concepts which relate to Muslims in Britain as well as the wider communities. Participants also received specialist training on working with the media and setting up inter faith projects. Participants were awarded a certificate from The Islamic Foundation.

## Faith Communities Capacity Building Fund

On 6 March, Communities Minister Phil Woolas announced grants totalling more than £4.3 million to 343 organisations to promote a common sense of citizenship, following bids from more than 1,200 organisations to the Faith Communities Capacity Building Fund. This is the second round of a £13.8 million fund to help organisations promote community cohesion and shared citizenship at a local community level. Applications came from a wide range of faith, inter faith and non-faith based community groups. A full list of the 343 organisations that have been recommended for funding is available at [www.communities.gov.uk](http://www.communities.gov.uk)

Announcing the grants, Phil Woolas said "Faith organisations play an important role in our communities and know their communities well. We want to draw on the expertise of faith, inter faith and non faith based community groups and do all we can to support them". He commented that "This local approach will help reach directly into communities to promote shared citizenship and integration. It is vital that we find ways of bringing people from different faiths and cultures together to understand their differences and celebrate their shared experiences."

The fund is administered by the Community Development Foundation (CDF) [www.cdf.org.uk](http://www.cdf.org.uk) The Faith Communities Capacity Building Fund was first announced in the Government's 'Improving Opportunity, Strengthening Society' strategy in January 2005.

The Community Development Foundation (CDF) is currently providing support to organisations funded in Round 1 of the Faith Communities Capacity Building Fund (FCCBF) through its own staff and a group of CDF consultants. As many projects as possible are being visited and CDF is using a range of case studies and learning in its reporting of the fund. Some were drawn on at its forthcoming conference: *Integration: if not now, when?* which took place on 8 March in London.

CDF is also producing a publication "Setting up for success, a practical guide for community organisations" for FCCBF and Connecting Communities Plus, Community Grants (also administered by CDF) funded organisations as well as unsuccessful applicants to each of the funds. This publication builds on CDF's experience of supporting community groups and those it is funding. It has also been asked to audit 10% of those who received FCCBF funding in

Round 1, and to ask all funded organisations to complete a second evaluation questionnaire so it can identify progress / trends they have made and therefore the overall impact of the fund.

CDF received over 1,200 applications for Round 2 of FCCBF by the closing date. Notification of awards is expected in the first week of March once funding has been approved by the Minister for Communities and Local Government.

## New centre aims to build bridges between Jews and Muslims

The Centre for the Study of Muslim-Jewish Relations (CMJR), has been established in Cambridge by Dr Edward Kessler and Dr Amineh Hoti. Dr Hoti will be its first Director. CMJR is a sister organisation to the existing Centre for Jewish-Christian Relations (CJCR).

The Centre was opened on 1 February by Sir Jonathan Sacks, Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth. In his presentation he said “We as Jews, Christians and Muslims have to keep talking. It doesn’t matter if we don’t agree...Difference makes a marriage work.”

The objectives of the CMJR include the development of the UK’s first ever curriculum on the study of Jewish-Muslim relations at undergraduate and postgraduate levels and an examination of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia, and the training of Jewish and Muslim lay leaders as well as rabbis and imams. Its programme begins in September. The Centre will, like CJCR, be under the auspices of the new Woolf Institute (for further information about the Institute see [www.cjcr.cam.ac.uk/news/mk3leaflet.pdf](http://www.cjcr.cam.ac.uk/news/mk3leaflet.pdf)).

## Flexible Interfaith Education Programme launched by CJCR with CMJR and CCJ

In October CJCR launched the Flexible Interfaith Education Programme, working in partnership with the Centre for the Study of Muslim-Jewish Relations and the Council of Christians and Jews. The project has been funded by the Faith Communities Capacity Building Fund to provide an educational resource in inter faith relations and citizenship. FIEP brings together a cross section of

local communities’ cultural, religious and professional groups including police, teachers, clergy, local government and members of different faith communities to develop their skills in inter faith dialogue, improve their understanding of the inter faith encounter and learn to deal with difference in their community. The first of the FIEP events took place in Newcastle in the autumn and the second in February in Manchester (launched by the Lord Mayor) and in Hillingdon in London (launched by the Mayor, who is also participating in the course). FIEP will also be going to Birmingham,. For more information please see [www.cjcr.cam.ac.uk](http://www.cjcr.cam.ac.uk) or contact Esther Haworth [ech40@cam.ac.uk](mailto:ech40@cam.ac.uk) or 01223 742178

## Council of Christians and Jews develops new programme of work

A number of new events and projects have been set up recently by CCJ, following a re-structuring of its work. These include a programme of seminars for Christian clergy and theological students under the ‘Yehi Or’ heading (Hebrew for ‘Let there be light’). One of these will take place in conjunction with the Three Faiths Forum at Sarum College on ‘Visions of the Other’, looking at discourses in society and texts from Jewish, Christian and Muslim perspectives. Others include a Jewish/Christian text study day for ordinands, to be held at Ripon College, Oxford, and a 10-day seminar for Christian clergy at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem. Also under the ‘Yehi Or’ banner, CCJ is carrying out a nationwide survey of attitudes of church-goers today to Jews and Judaism, and matters of inter faith dialogue in general. Currently a pilot survey has been carried out of Anglicans and Free Churches in four main areas. Further information about CCJ’s work can be found at [www.ccj.org.uk/](http://www.ccj.org.uk/)

In February, CCJ Youth Programmes ran a study tour to Israel and Bethlehem for young Jewish and Christian educators. Participants visited Israeli and Palestinian schools and looked at opportunities for educating for co-existence. Further information about CCJ’s Youth Programme can be obtained from Louise Mitchell [louise@ccj.org.uk](mailto:louise@ccj.org.uk)

## Faith, Homophobia and Human Rights conference

A one-day conference on Faith, Homophobia and Human Rights took place in London on 17 February. It was opened by Cllr Brian Coleman, Chair of the Greater London Assembly. The opening speech was delivered by Lord (Chris) Smith, former Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, Chairman-designate Advertising Standards Authority. Speakers at the conference also included Lord Smith, as well as Vic Codling of the Gay Police Association; Revd Malcolm Duncan of Faithworks; Revd Giles Fraser, broadcaster and Guardian columnist and Team Rector of Putney; Sandhya Drew, Barrister, Tooks Chambers and specialist in Equality and Human Rights Law; Kay Carberry, Assistant General Secretary, TUC who is currently an Equal Opportunities Commissioner; and Arpita Dutt, a partner at Russell Jones and Walker solicitors and chair of the London Anti-Racist Alliance.

## Face 2 Faith – Methodist Church month of prayer for inter faith relations

The Methodist Church is one of the largest Christian churches serving Great Britain, with nearly 300,000 members and regular contact with over 800,000 people. It has about 5,800 churches in Great Britain, and also maintains links with other Methodist churches totalling a worldwide membership of 70 million. During February, the Methodist Church's month of prayer for inter faith relations, Face 2 Faith, took place. Churches have been taking part by praying for better inter faith relations in Britain and the world; by doing something to encourage inter faith understanding in their community; and by entering the Face 2 Faith photo competition.

## Face 2 Faith Photo Competition

The Face 2 Faith photograph competition was launched as part of the Methodist Church's month of prayer for inter faith relations (see above). It is open to anyone in Britain and Ireland of all ages and faiths, with young people especially encouraged to take part. Up to four pictures can be submitted with digital, print and even camera

phone images being accepted. There is a first prize of £350 worth of Jessops vouchers. The aim is to find images that communicate something powerful about inter faith relations.

Sponsored by Methodist Insurance, the competition will be judged on how well an image expresses something about inter faith relations and how people of different faiths in Britain and Ireland can live, work and love together. The competition will run until 31 May and entries will be displayed on the Face 2 Faith website: [www.face2faith.org.uk](http://www.face2faith.org.uk) All the competition details can be found on the website or requested by post from: Inter Faith Office, Methodist Church House, 25 Marylebone Road, London NW1 5JR or from Anna Drew, Media and Information Assistant [drewa@methodistchurch.org.uk](mailto:drewa@methodistchurch.org.uk)

## National Portrait Gallery Exhibition Faith and Church: Portraits by Don McCullin

3 February saw the opening at the National Portrait Gallery in London of a display of ten newly commissioned photographs of leaders and senior representatives of the major faiths in the UK. It is the latest in a sequence that has previously charted the health sector and the field of telecommunications. Taken by Don McCullin, internationally recognised as one of the greatest of British photographers, the subjects are captured in locations that reflect their spiritual lives. Sitters include Rabbi Tony Bayfield (Head of The Movement for Reform Judaism); Reverend Esme Beswick (the first black woman to become a President of the Churches Together in England); Cardinal Cormac Murphy O'Connor, (Archbishop of Westminster); Dr Syed Aziz Pasha (General-Secretary of the Union of Muslim Organisations); Rev Baroness Kathleen Richardson of Calow (former Moderator of the Methodist Church); Sir Jonathan Sacks (Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth); Sir Iqbal Sacranie (former General Secretary of the Muslim Council of Britain); Dr Indarjit Singh (Director, Network of Sikh Organisations); Om Parkash Sharma (former President of the National Council of Hindu Temples); and the Archbishop of Canterbury Dr Rowan Williams.

A reception for the subjects of the portraits took place at the Gallery on 5 February. Speaking about the series, Rabbi Dr Tony Bayfield, said: "Arriving

and seeing the ten photographs for the first time, I realised that, not only do we all know each other, but most of us are on first name terms. I was struck by the fact that I am part of a group who are committed to working together to restore the good name of religion and for the benefit of British society. It was both moving and hopeful.”

The exhibition runs until 7 May. Gallery opening hours are Saturday to Wednesday 10am-6pm, Thursdays and Fridays 10am-9pm

## Diversity and Dialogue Moves to Citizenship Foundation

Diversity and Dialogue, the joint agency project which aims to create better understanding and friendship between young people from different faith and cultural backgrounds has moved to the Citizenship Foundation after more than two years based at Save the Children. Diversity and Dialogue supports individuals and organisations interested in building better relations between young people from different faiths and backgrounds. It acts as an information, support and ideas sharing network, publicising good practice, producing resources and giving advice. Diversity and Dialogue also works directly with young people, developing innovative projects and models of dialogue. Projects create spaces where young people from different faiths and backgrounds can come together to discuss controversial issues, then work together for change. Further information from Shula Maibaum, [shula.maibaum@citizenshipfoundation.org.uk](mailto:shula.maibaum@citizenshipfoundation.org.uk)

## Joseph Interfaith Foundation

A new inter faith organisation was launched in December. Its focus is improving Muslim-Jewish ties. It is the initiative of Mehri Nikham, previously the Director of the Maimonides Foundation.

The inaugural lecture of a series of national lectures organised by The Joseph Interfaith Foundation took place at the School of Oriental and African Studies on 30 January. Shahid Malik, MP for Dewsbury, Rabbi Danny Rich, Chief Executive, Liberal Judaism GB and Dr Reza Shah Kazemi, Author, Research Associate IIS, addressed the question ‘Is Religion the cause of integration or isolation in today’s British society?’ The event was chaired by John Battle MP, Prime Minister’s Envoy to Faith Communities. For information about the Joseph Interfaith Foundation, contact [info@josephinterfaithfoundation.org](mailto:info@josephinterfaithfoundation.org)

## Conversation with Jack Straw

On 2 November at University College London the Three Faiths Forum and the City Circle arranged an evening, ‘In Conversation with Jack Straw MP’. The Leader of the Commons, MP for Blackburn, and former Foreign Secretary, whose comments on the *niqab* earlier in the autumn had sparked great debate, spoke on a range of issues including this and responded to questions and points from the audience.

## ‘Tea and Cake’ – Toc H spread neighbourly hospitality

From 11 September to 11 November, the national charity Toc H ran a ‘Tea and Cake’ campaign encouraging people to invite others of different faiths in to talk over tea and cake with the idea that by offering simple hospitality people can help create common bonds between communities and forge a safer and fairer society. Madeleine Fone of Toc H said “Most groups are good at putting the kettle on and getting out the juice and biscuits, so why not do what we do best. The campaign is about offering a gesture of friendship. It is not about converting people of other faiths or of none and it’s not about fundraising. It is to simply engender goodwill and share time together.” Events took place around the UK and there was also a special reception at the House of Lords on 18 October. Further information about the campaign from [madeleinef@toch.org.uk](mailto:madeleinef@toch.org.uk)

## Inter Faith Organisations in the UK: A Directory

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## INTERVIEW WITH RICHARD REDDIE & INDERJIT BHOGAL

**25 March 2007 is the bicentenary of the 1807 Abolition of the Slave Trade Act. We talk with Richard Reddie, Project Director and Inderjit Bhogal, Chair, of *Set All Free*, an initiative established by Churches Together in England to commemorate the bicentenary this year of the Act and to respond to its legacies.**

**Q How do you see the significance of the bicentenary?**

**Richard Reddie:** Its significance was enormous. The 1807 Act outlawed the slave trade throughout the British Empire and made it illegal for British ships to be involved in the trade, marking the beginning of the end for the transatlantic traffic in human beings. Although it marked just the start of the road to the eventual abolition of slavery itself, it is the key date to mark and this year sees a programme of linked events. You can find out about these at [www.direct.gov.uk/en/slavery/DG\\_065970](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/slavery/DG_065970) and at [www.setallfree.net/whats\\_on.php](http://www.setallfree.net/whats_on.php). There is a particular significance in the date for Christians. Because of the involvement of the Christian churches in the slave trade and also because of the role of Christians, both black and white, in working for its abolition, many events are being organised by Christian bodies. A National Service is being held at Westminster Abbey on 27 March to mark the bicentenary.

**Q Is there an inter faith dimension to projects marking the bicentenary?**

**Inderjit Bhogal:** Very much so. For example, the Yorkshire and Humber Faiths Forum (of which I am Director) and East Riding's Council Community Cohesion Group have developed the 'Wilberforce Way', a new 35 mile walk which will be launched in May 2007, linking Hull, the birth place of abolitionist William Wilberforce, and Pocklington where he went to school and from where wrote his first letter of protest from there against the African slave trade at the age of 14, and went on to become MP for Hull and then for Yorkshire. You can find out more about this at [www.eastriding.gov.uk/newsflash/archive/07020207896.html](http://www.eastriding.gov.uk/newsflash/archive/07020207896.html). The Wilberforce 2007 team at Hull City Council and the Hull and East Riding Inter Faith have worked with editor Rev Tom McCready of the Hull Unitarian

Church to produce a special inter faith prayer book, *From Every Heart in the City of Hope*, as part of the 2007 Wilberforce Commemoration. Local young people have produced a music CD, Freedom Road, to accompany this. (Further information from [thomas.mcready@tesco.net](mailto:thomas.mcready@tesco.net)).

**Q But did the 1807 Act actually end slavery?**

**Richard Reddie:** Slavery was finally abolished in the Americas in 1888 but it is estimated that over 20 million people are still in forms of servitude today. And even where slavery has ended, there are bitter legacies that remain.

**Q What factors have contributed to slavery and what can we do today to respond?**

**Inderjit Bhogal:** Sadly, one of the factors has been justifications of slavery based on religious beliefs. Faith and the slave trade have links historically and even today. You can find out more about understandings of slavery of different religions at [www.bbc.co.uk/religion/ethics/slavery/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/ethics/slavery/). Most 'contemporary slaves' come from countries where the major world religions are practised and we believe that the fight to end the legacies of the Transatlantic Slave Trade and contemporary enslavement must involve all faiths. All faiths uphold a belief in the sanctity of human life and faith can once more play an inspirational role in ending global slavery. I hope that people of all the faiths will work to help end contemporary forms of servitude.

**Q You spoke of slavery's legacies. What are these and what role can faith communities play in helping end these?**

**Richard Reddie:** The legacies are many, but in particular forms of racism and injustice. Much has changed in this country since the initial campaign to end the Transatlantic Slave Trade, and Britain is a richer society for its diverse religious and cultural influences. There is little doubt that these faith communities have a key role in the work to break down the barriers of exclusion and the vital task of building a fairer, more cohesive society where the legacies of slavery which affect many in minority ethnic communities are finally ended.

## PLACES AND PEOPLE

### Zoroastrians working for good inter faith relations

The Inter Faith Network links communities of nine world faiths in its representative body category: Baha'i; Buddhist; Christian; Hindu; Jain; Jewish; Muslim; Sikh; and Zoroastrian. The communities are all developing programmes of work to build good relations with other faiths and to increase understanding between faiths. In this issue we highlight the Zoroastrian contribution.

There are only around 6,000 Zoroastrians in the UK but in inter faith terms they make a very significant contribution. Recently, Dorab Mistry was elected as the Vice Chair of Faith based Regeneration Network (FbRN) and he is also a member of the Executive Committee of Inter Faith Network for the UK. Zoroastrian Malcolm Deboo is a staff member at FbRN.

Some other prominent Zoroastrians involved in inter faith work include: Jehangir Sarosh (Religions for Peace Europe and a former Vice-Chair of the Inter Faith Network); Shahin Bhekhradnia (World Congress of Faiths); Ervad Rustom Bhedwar (Week of Prayer for World Peace); Mark Gifford (Minorities of Europe); Marzbeen Jila (Religions for Peace UK); Phiroza Gan Kotwal (Harrow Interfaith Council); Homai Modi (World Council of Religious leaders of WCRP International); Aspi Cichiger (Inter Faith Council in Milton Keynes) and Tehmtan Framroze (Brighton and Hove Inter Faith Contact Group).

A number of other leading Zoroastrians also have an interest in this field, such as Zerbanoo Gifford, the Founder Director of the ASHA Foundation, which encourages and supports philanthropy worldwide and works for inter faith and intercultural understanding.

### New Chair for MCB Interfaith Committee

Sheikh Ibrahim Mogra has become the Chair of the Interfaith Committee of the Muslim Council of Britain. The Committee handles MCB's inter faith related correspondence and arranges for attendance of inter faith events. For further information about the Committee's work, contact its Secretary, Mary Barber at [mary@islamic-foundation.org.uk](mailto:mary@islamic-foundation.org.uk)

### CTBI appoints new Secretary for Inter-Faith Relations

Churches Together in Britain and Ireland have appointed Rev Peter Colwell as its Secretary for Inter-Faith Relations (part-time) in which capacity he is serving the Churches Commission on Inter Faith Relations. A United Reformed Church minister since 1994, he has served as Deputy Director of the London Inter-Faith Centre and URC Adviser on Christian-Muslim relations. Contact details: [ccifr@ctbi.org.uk](mailto:ccifr@ctbi.org.uk)

### Churches Together in England appoints its first Inter Faith Officer

Churches Together in England has appointed Celia Blackden as its first Inter Faith Officer (part-time), in response to the Churches' requests that this area of work should be given a higher priority. Celia Blackden is a Catholic and a member of the Focolare movement who has worked for many years in the field of inter faith relations. She took up post in the autumn and will focus on encouraging and resourcing relations between Christians and other faith communities in the regions and counties, and working through 'Churches Together' groupings. For more information about this work see [www.cte.org.uk/group/group.aspx?id=43001](http://www.cte.org.uk/group/group.aspx?id=43001)

### Board of Deputies appoints new Interfaith Officer

In December, the Board of Deputies of British Jews appointed Aviva Dautch as its new Interfaith Officer to work with the community in facilitating and promoting inter faith relations. Her role at the Board will include promoting both strategic and grassroots inter faith dialogue and will involve steering a Home Office funded research project on the Jewish community's involvement in inter faith work; sitting on governmental advisory bodies; and working in education with students and teachers.

## Office of the Chief Rabbi appoints new Projects Director

Leonie Lewis has recently been appointed Projects Director for the Office of the Chief Rabbi. This is a new post and its primary remit is to focus on inter faith issues.

## Hindu Forum GB

Harsha Trivedi has become the Interfaith Representative for Hindu Forum GB.

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## OBITUARIES

### Most Venerable Dr Medagama Vajiragnana

The Most Venerable Dr Medagama Vajiragnana, Buddhist scholar, teacher and inter faith pioneer, died in December after a long period of illness. His funeral at Kensal Green Crematorium was attended by many hundreds of mourners both Buddhist and of other faiths. Born in 1928 in Sri Lanka, where he was ordained, he studied in Sri Lanka and India. His roles in Sri Lanka included that of Principal at the Parama Dhamma Cetiya Pirivena in Ratmalana and Principal at Pirivena Teachers' Training College in Ratmalana.

Dr Vajiragnana spent the years from 1966 to 1980 and from 1984 until his death in Britain where he made a major contribution to the development of Buddhist teaching. From 1984 he was the Head of the London Buddhist Vihara. In this role, he became involved in the setting up of the Inter Faith Network for the UK in 1987. He played a leading role in its work for nearly 20 years, tirelessly speaking at meetings and with visitors and emphasising the importance of respect, tolerance and informed dialogue. Dr Vajiragnana served as a Network Executive Committee member until 2004 and as Vice-Chair from 2000 to 2001.

Dr Vajiragnana also represented his community in many other contexts, from the annual Commonwealth Day Observance to the Remembrance Day service at the Cenotaph. He took particular pleasure, however, in the opportunities for deeper dialogue and friendship afforded by inter faith meetings and, alongside his multi faith engagements, took an active role in Buddhist-Christian dialogue. In the New Year's Honours list 2006, he was appointed OBE for his services to inter faith relations.

Brian Pearce, the Network's Director, spoke at Venerable Vajiragnana's funeral of the enormous contribution he had made to the development of good inter faith relations in Britain and the great loss that was felt by his many friends of all faiths.

### Natubhai Jagivan

Nathubhai Jagjivan died on 19 October 2006. Born in Nairobi, Kenya, in 1925, he came to the UK in the exodus of Asians from Kenya. He was a founder member of the Leicester Council of Faiths, where he served as Vice-Chairman and also as Honorary President. Leicester colleagues note that he devoted his time and tireless efforts throughout



his life for the benefit of the community as a whole. His affiliations with a large number of different organisations in Leicester and across the UK, both Hindu and multi faith, demonstrated the importance of good cross-cultural links for an integrated and peaceful society. His efforts in charitable fundraising, community events, organisation of religious programmes and his leadership qualities of being a well-respected, honest and hard-working member of the community will all be very greatly missed.

### **Dr Beman Khosravi**

Dr Beman Khosravi, a leading member of the Northern Ireland Baha'i community and founder member and former treasurer of the Northern Ireland Inter Faith Forum died in August, aged 73.

## **NORTHERN IRELAND**

On 18 January the Northern Ireland Inter Faith Forum held its AGM at Stranmillis University College, Belfast. This was followed by a presentation from the Rev Inderjit Bhogal Director of the Yorkshire and Humber Faiths Forum

An open meeting of the Northern Ireland Inter Faith Forum took place in the Conference Hall of Stranmillis University College on 18 October. It was in the form of a symposium on the theme of Religious Education in a Multifaith Context, with contributions from a range of people concerned with the development of a broad and inclusive approach to RE in Northern Ireland's schools.

## **SCOTLAND**

On 29 October the Scottish Inter Faith Council hosted its AGM, with representatives of faith communities and inter faith groups present from all over Scotland and an open public meeting. The public meeting featured a key note address by Catriona Noonan, from the Department of Film and Media, Stirling University who gave a presentation on 'The Media, Religion and Scottish Identity'. This was followed by workshops on the same subject.

Throughout October a number of training events were held. Some focused on delivering training to faith communities on the 2003 (Religion and Belief) Employment Regulations and others were delivered to organisations keen to raise their general awareness of faith communities in Scotland. This training is on-going and is currently

part of SIFC's remit.

SIFC also facilitated workshops at the Scottish Women's Convention on 26 October on the 'needs of women from faith communities'.

Scottish Inter Faith Week took place from 25 November to 2 December. The aim of the annual Inter Faith Week is to promote dialogue, understanding, and co-operation between Scotland's diverse religious communities. The 2006 Week was launched at Glasgow University with around 150 people from all the major faith traditions in attendance. Short presentations were given by representatives of the Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist and Baha'i traditions. A welcome was given by the Convener of the Inter Faith Council and representative of the Jewish Community, Dianna Wolfson, and Professor Andrew Nash, Clerk of Senate, Glasgow University. Interspersed between the presentations Glasgow University Chapel Choir sang and chanted. The event also included the launch of the NHS (Education for Scotland) Multi-Faith Resource for Healthcare Staff.

Religious Leaders of Scotland also hosted their first national conference during Inter Faith Week 06. Keynote speakers included Cardinal Keith O'Brien and Professor Haldane from St Andrew's University. Workshops were held exploring such topics as 'spiritual identity and social cohesion', 'faith communities in dialogue and cooperation', 'education and faith schools' and 'religion and the media'. SIFC acted as secretariat for the conference.

Throughout inter faith week local events were held in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee, Skye, Aberdeen, East Renfrewshire, Fife, Dumfries and Galloway and Ayr. In Glasgow and Edinburgh a whole week of activities took place. The finale of Scottish Inter Faith Week is an annual Youth Conference. The conference theme was 'Visions, Dreams and Realities'. The conference included a key note address from Shiona Baird MSP who commended the SIFC Youth Group for their publication 'Our Sacred Earth' and encouraged those present to work together on practical projects to help save the planet. The conference also included storytelling, drumming, clay meditations, music, a Religion and Human Rights DVD, faith exhibitions and vegetarian lunch. Despite atrocious weather conditions around 85 young people from diverse faith traditions and none attended.

## Dumfries

An inter faith seminar took place on 4 December at the University of Glasgow Dumfries Crichton campus with speakers Louis Bezuidenhout, Church of Scotland minister; Samier Hamad, who is doing a PhD on the identity of British Muslims; and Venus Carew, a member of the local inter faith group. The event included group discussion on creating a culture of respect and getting dialogue between faiths and a 'Time for Reflection', with words of peace, love, tolerance and forgiveness from all the world's religions, led by Jan Lethbridge, with music by Rosalyn Blake and singing by Rosalind Connell.

## Fife

Fife Interfaith Group held its first inter faith event on Saturday 11 November in Rothes Halls, Glenrothes. It was open to anyone interested in finding out more about the different faith communities in Fife. Information on different faiths was available to be picked up or people were able to speak directly with faith representatives. The Scottish National Museum in Edinburgh loaned information about a range of faiths. Playing in the background throughout the event was music from various faith traditions and a light buffet with food from the different communities was also available. One of the speakers provided information on the work being done nationally with the different inter faith groups across Scotland through the Scottish Inter Faith Council.

The Group has produced an information leaflet on the different faiths in Fife and this is available through Frae Fife. Further information from: Zahida Ramzan, tel. 01592 413652.

## Glasgow

In November, the Secretary of the Churches' Agency for Inter-Faith Relations in Scotland (CAIRS), Sr Isabel Smyth, addressed a meeting in Falkirk attended by members of Falkirk Churches Together and of the Falkirk Islamic Centre. Sr Isabel's talk was entitled, "Islam has nothing to do with us!" The ensuing discussion convinced all present of the continued desirability and need for dialogue and cooperation between members of the

two faith communities, particularly in the light of a recent arson attack on the local Islamic Centre. Further information from CAIRS Education Officer, Andrew Sarle on 0772 456 8259 or at [andrew.cairs@acts-scotland.org](mailto:andrew.cairs@acts-scotland.org).

As a follow on to a study day led by Rabbi Nancy Morris of Glasgow Reformed Synagogue (GRS), the Churches' Agency for Inter-Faith Relations in Scotland (CAIRS) arranged a visit to GRS to attend *Shabbat* service, join in *Kiddush* and dialogue with members of the Synagogue on Saturday 24 February.

## WALES

Funding across the last year from the Faith Communities Capacity Building Fund has enabled the Inter-Faith Council for Wales (IFCW) to develop its work further with the assistance of Project Worker, Brigid Bowen. IFCW continues to meet regularly, and is in the process of applying to become a Charitable Company. Members of the Council are looking forward to enjoying new links with Welsh regions and local inter faith groups through a new network of inter faith initiatives being developed which Brigid Bowen describes as enabling dialogue groups to enjoy a new sense of fraternity with a larger inter faith community. IFCW hopes that its website – [interfaithwales.org](http://interfaithwales.org) – will help these diverse groups meet.

IFCW helped to support the launch of the Swansea Faiths Forum in November. The Forum's work with environmental charities and with Swansea Council is a beacon example of how larger civic Faith Forums can contribute to cohesion in cities. Such forums can also be a platform for religious and other spiritual communities to make their voices heard on issues of current concern.

For more details of what's new in Wales go to [www.interfaithwales.org](http://www.interfaithwales.org)

## Cardiff

In December Cardiff's Rabbi Mordechai Wollenberg invited members from Muslim and Christian communities to the Orthodox synagogue, to share a Friday night *Shabbat* supper with members from both the Reform and Orthodox Jewish communities.

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

## ENGLAND – REGIONAL AND LOCAL UPDATES

### East

The East of England Faiths Council (EEFC), the regional body that brings together the major faiths of the six counties, has been active in recent months in facilitating debate and increasing its support for faith groups engaged in community activity. This support is provided through the FaithNetEast programme funded by FCCBF, and run jointly with Anglia Ruskin University. Information and Learning Events held in September (Chelmsford) and January (Norwich) have attracted more than 100 delegates from faith groups involved in a whole range of projects, from youth activity to language classes. Delegates were able to network, and find out more about topics including funding, governance and evaluation. FaithNetEast is also providing development advice to selected pilot projects, and a monthly e-bulletin to the 2,300 faith groups on its database.

EEFC itself, which is the main point of contact between faiths and regional governance, has secured funding from its RDA to extend the Faith in the East of England research by looking in more detail at certain aspects of faith-based community activity; it has also undertaken a further study with faith representatives on Local Strategic Partnerships, Local Area Agreements and SREPs that will result in a summer event to address their expressed needs.

The Council has also been invited by a number of organisations, including the Environment Agency in the region to work with them on literature reflecting the contribution of the faiths in addressing climate change.

### Luton

Yasmin Aktar, Luton Council of Faiths' Development Worker, writes: "On Saturday 2 December some young people from Luton, made history by speaking in the Council Chamber, nestling into the seats usually occupied by Luton Borough councillors. Let's face it together, a Youth Conference organised by Luton Council of Faiths, featured a variety of speakers, presentations and workshops involving statutory and voluntary organisations, community representatives from different faith backgrounds, local councillors, as well as LCoF and Luton Borough Council's community cohesion team. Organising Representatives from LCoF and Grassroots and various other colleagues and organisations from

Luton were impressed by the understanding shown of issues such as drugs, crime, immature/premature sex, teenage pregnancies, late night party culture, faith and education. There was also an issue based play presented by performing arts students from Luton Sixth Form College."

### East Midlands

#### Derby

The Forum of Faiths for Derby in conjunction with the University's Multi-Faith Centre held a poetry competition for the people of Derby and Derbyshire. The theme was "How I Feel About Faith Or Religion Or Spirituality". It stimulated a response from many budding poets of different faiths and none and 140 poems were submitted to the three judges, Adrian Buckner, Julie Lumsden and Sean Woodward, all local poets with an interest in faith. The prizes were presented at an event held at the Multi-Faith Centre in November attended by the prize winners and local people and presented by the Mayor of Derby. Following the prize giving and a buffet the five winners read their poems and then there was entertainment by local Asian dancers and Baha'i singers. All the places of worship in Derby and those whose entries were published have received a free copy of the poetry booklet which contains the best, as agreed by the judges, 48 poems. It can be purchased for £4.00 to include post and packing from The Multi-Faith Centre, University of Derby, Kedleston Road, Derby DE22 1GB or tel 01332 591574 or email [mfc@derby.ac.uk](mailto:mfc@derby.ac.uk) All proceeds to help the Forum of Faiths for Derby.

#### Leicester

Leicester Council of Faiths has recently appointed a new Co-ordinator, Dr Ajay Aggarwal.

#### Peterborough.

A Festival of Faith and Foods in Peterborough took place on Sunday 21 January at Peterborough Town Hall. The annual event was organised by the Peterborough Inter-Faith Council and hosted by Peterborough City Council. The topic of discussion was the view of different faiths on Environmentalism. Peterborough City Council chief executive Gillian Beasley said: "Global concern about the environment and climate change means that people of all faiths need to consider

how their beliefs and moral values can influence the way they care for the planet.” Jaspal Singh, chairman of Peterborough Inter-Faith Council, added: “It is important that all individuals work together with national and local government organisations to protect the planet. This festival will promote community and cultural cohesion as delegates reflect on how the sacred writings of different faiths encourage us to care for the earth.” Participant Gaurav Prinja writes “The event begun with a fantastic spread of foods from different cultures in a buffet style lunch. Having filled our stomachs with different foods that were all delicious, we then took our places in the main hall and filled our intellects with different faiths that were all environmentally friendly. There were eminent speakers from the Sikh, Christian, Muslim, Hindu and Jewish communities who each gave informative insights into the view of their faiths on the planet and the role and responsibilities of mankind.”

## London

### Faith Forum for London

Leaders of London’s faith communities gathered on 29 November at St Ethelburga’s Centre for Reconciliation and Peace to hear the findings of the first feasibility study into the setting up of a Faith Forum for London and to discuss the next steps. The findings reveal strong support for a London-wide independent forum whose primary purpose would be to enable faith communities to develop responses to local, regional and national government policy initiatives. Kate Monkhouse, Director of London Civic Forum, said that the study has produced a blueprint that could bring the project to life.

### Inter Faith Event for Young Londoners

On 20 February, Diversity and Dialogue worked with the British Library to put on a youth inter faith event for young Londoners. This followed on from its event at the British Museum in October 2005 and formed part of the lead up to the British Library’s Sacred Texts exhibition. Young Londoners of all beliefs and backgrounds were invited to a day of dialogue and activities. The event focused on issues including freedom of speech and religious conflict. There were small group discussions and also space for more creative expression and the learning of new skills during arts and spoken word workshops. After the event, the young people’s views were recorded and will

be edited into a resource that can be used by schools to provoke dialogue in Religious Education.

### Barnet

Barnet Multi Faith Forum held a plenary session on 8 November in the presence of the Mayor of Barnet, Councillor Eva Greenspan. Representatives from the Christian, Muslim, Jewish and Hindu and Jain Faith Communities participated in an “Any Questions” programme on the topic of faith schools. The chairman for the evening was Superintendent Richard Walton of the Barnet Police.

### Clapham

Christian communities came together in the first week of February for a series of talks in Clapham. Shi’a Muslim leader, Maulana Kamzi, spoke at the Clapham Methodist Church each evening from Sunday 4 to Wednesday 7 February. At this time of year, Shi’a Muslims remember the martyrdom of the Prophet’s grandson, Imam Hussain. The theme of the event was “The sufferings of Imam Hussain and Jesus.” Accompanied by Christian leaders from around Clapham, Kamzi explored themes such as the love of God, according to the New Testament. Around 30 Muslims and 30 Christians, along with people of other faiths and of none, participated each evening and learned about each others’ beliefs and shared traditions. The event was supported by the Clapham and Stockwell Faith Forum and the South London Interfaith Group. For information or to get involved in similar events, email Hannah Barker at [info@csff.co.uk](mailto:info@csff.co.uk)

### Hillingdon

The local authority held a meeting on 12 September to discuss the development of an inter faith network for Hillingdon. The meeting was opened by the Mayor Cllr Routledge and chaired by Director of Social Services, Hugh Cunnachie, with presentations from Hillingdon SACRE, Hillingdon Metropolitan Police and from Sutton Faith and Belief Forum and the Inter Faith Network for the UK and contributions from a range of members of local faith communities. Further information from Fiona Gibbs [fgibbs@hillington.gov.uk](mailto:fgibbs@hillington.gov.uk).

## Islington

An inter faith conference, 'Strengthening Communities and Promoting Well Being', supported by the Faith Communities Capacity Building Fund, took place on 12 October at historic Wesley's Chapel in London. Hosted by Islington Faiths Forum, the conference aimed to bring together the leaders and representatives of Islington's faith groups to identify and share common values; present IFF's aims and objectives, achievements to date and future plans; acknowledge and celebrate contributions of faith groups that support community well being; and explore how faith groups can develop the capacity to get more involved in local and national initiatives.

## Lambeth

Faith Around the Elephant is a new network growing up for people of faith living, working or worshipping around the Elephant and Castle in the London Borough of Lambeth who would like to meet their neighbours from different religious and spiritual traditions. On 7 November they held a meeting at the Keyworth Centre for interested individuals to share stories about elephants from religious sources with Sarah Clive from 'state of the heart' storytelling and to discuss ideas for future meetings and events. They are planning to meet roughly every 6 weeks in 2007. Further information from [suzanne@abcfilm.clara.co.uk](mailto:suzanne@abcfilm.clara.co.uk)

## Tower Hamlets

An Inter Faith Week was held from 12 to 19 November, as part of the Tower Hamlets Inter Faith Forum programme for 2006-2007. Funded by the Faith Communities Capacity Building Fund, Inter Faith Week was the first project of its kind celebrating the diversity of faith communities in Tower Hamlets. Objectives of the project included the celebration of the vital contribution religious faith makes to the lives of the local communities; fostering greater understanding and respect between communities; and breaking down prejudice and discrimination based on faith while promoting social cohesion. Events included an *Eid* party; an opening gathering bringing together faith leaders, people interested in inter faith work and members of the local authority to engage in discussion; a film night; a children's art exhibition; a tour of the Museum of Immigration and Diversity, a workshop titled 'Tolerance and Diversity' for young people; a comedy night; faith trail; and a music and food festival.

The events were enjoyed and contributed to by over 450 people of all backgrounds and beliefs. Further information from [interfaith@towerhamlets.org.uk](mailto:interfaith@towerhamlets.org.uk)

## Wandsworth

In October, young people in Year 9 or above taking Religious Studies at school in Wandsworth attended a 'speed-dating' event at the town hall. Here, they were able to fire a series of quick-fire questions at representatives from the borough's different faith groups. The Faith Direct initiative was organised by Wandsworth Local Strategic Partnership Multi Faith-Sub-group. It brought together speakers from local Muslim, Christian, Hindu, Sikh, Jewish and Buddhist communities. 65 students from seven secondary schools conducted a whistle-stop tour round the room interviewing each faith representative in turn. Executive member for children and young people's services for Wandsworth, Kathy Tracey, said: "Wandsworth is a modern and diverse borough which is home to many communities. This unique event set out to improve young people's understanding of different faiths and the common bonds that exist between them."

## Wimbledon

The Wimbledon Interfaith Group organised a meeting last October at a local RC Church where Robi Damelin, an Israeli mother who had lost her son to a Palestinian sniper, spoke with Ali Abu Awwad, a Palestinian who had lost a brother shot by an Israeli soldier. Both speakers are active in the Bereaved Families Forum: Israeli and Palestinian Bereaved Families for Peace, set up in 1994. This organisation, comprising 500 families across the divide, channels their grief towards work for reconciliation and non-violence through many educational and artistic initiatives. 55 people came to the meeting including Jews, Christians and Muslims. More information from [www.familiesforum.co.uk](http://www.familiesforum.co.uk)

## North East

### Middlesbrough

Cleveland Interfaith Group held its annual 'Cultural Evening' on 24 January at Middlesbrough Council of Faiths. It was an opportunity to share the ways and thoughts of the members of the different faith group as well as to share food brought for an inter faith supper. 20

people attended the gathering and each member was given an opportunity to share their thoughts, which were diverse but not divisive. As always, the event closed with those present joining hands and saying 'The Lord Watch Between You And Me, While We Are Absent One From Another.'

A Festival of Faiths was held on 12 December in Middlesbrough, organised by Middlesbrough Council of Faiths and Middlesbrough Council. 120 people attended the event which was planned in response to a request from the Community Councils in the town to learn more about the different faith traditions. There was singing from Muslim and Christian groups and the 'Diversity Game' (developed by Suffolk Inter-Faith Resource to extend players knowledge of different faiths and beliefs) was played at round tables. Representatives of five different faith communities gave 5 minute summaries of the key aspects of their faith, followed by questions from the floor. The evening ended with a shared meal.

A number of social events have been organised by the Women's Initiative of Middlesbrough Council of Faiths to build social contacts between women members of all the faith communities, to break down barriers of misunderstanding, build friendships, and identify issues that women members wish to work on together. These events include social gatherings at which women present have a conversation with other women in an adaptation of 'speed dating'; and women only swimming classes in which each group of 12 women normally comprise 6 different faith traditions. As a result of these activities, friendships across faith groups are being developed.

## Newcastle

The Hindu Temple Newcastle held an inter faith service as part of a Shat Chandi Maha Yagya event on 22-25 February which had as its purpose prayer for peace and prosperity for people of the North East and of the world. Rt Revd Martin Wharton, Bishop of Newcastle, chaired.

## North West

### Manchester

On 9 January, some Manchester Christians and Muslims joined to celebrate their common father, Abraham. The idea came from a Muslim youth worker, who involved his mosque committee and then ran it past the Anglicans' European Officer,

who involved the Christians. The event took place at the Al Khizra Mosque in Cheetham Hill, Manchester. Some Christians and a Muslim talked about what Abraham meant to them, followed by further discussion and a meal. The next step may be an evening at a church after Easter, to talk about Jesus, a figure of great importance to both faiths.

### Pendle

A Peace Vigil to mark the first anniversary of the earthquake disaster in Pakistan, where an estimated 75,000 people died and over 3.3 million were left homeless, was organised by Building Bridges Pendle on 6 October. The vigil was held in remembrance of those who had died and also in recognition of the reaction of the local community in responding to the devastation. The welcome address was made by Dr Malik, followed by speeches from guests and a two minute silence to pray for the victims.

### Rochdale

Rochdale Multi Faith Partnership held a meeting on 10 February in Littleborough to help people learn about other faiths. There were displays on the details of birth, death and marriage and charity in the different faiths. A Hindu guest speaker was invited from Vishwa Hindu Parishad to explain in slightly more detail about these rites in the Hindu faith. The Hindu speaker, along with a Muslim and two Christian representatives then took questions from the floor ranging from the queries about specifics of how rites are performed to philosophical questions about the nature of death. Similar meetings, but with variation in inputs from different faiths, were held by RMFP in Heywood and Middleton on 27 January and 17 February.

### Stockport

Stockport Inter-Faith Network held a meeting in November on 'Young people and faith'. Samantha Dunbar from Save the Children gave a presentation about its "Diversity and Dialogue" project. The aim of the project is to build better understanding between young people living in a multi faith society. Following her presentation, three discussion groups formed to look at questions prepared by Samantha from her experience of the project. This was followed by a showing of the DVD produced by the young people from the project. The DVD has been designed as a resource for youth groups and classroom settings to stimulate discussion amongst young people. Further information about the project at [www.diversityanddialogue.org.uk](http://www.diversityanddialogue.org.uk)

## Warrington

At the invitation of Warrington Council of Faiths, and hosted by the Mayor of Warrington Cllr Linda Dirir and her Consort Allin Dirir, himself a Muslim, Christian leaders came together at Warrington town hall at the close of Ramadan. About 20 gathered for conversation and refreshments, as part of the Toc H 'Tea and Cake' initiative, which encouraged simple acts of kindness and occasions of hospitality between 11 September and 11 November, two dates significant in the 'war and peace' calendar.

## South East

### Brighton

Brighton and Hove Inter-Faith Contact Group held its AGM on 18 February at the Brighthelm Church and Community Centre in Brighton. Dr Indarjit Singh, Director of the Network of Sikh Organisations, spoke on 'The relevance of Sikh teachings in today's multicultural society'.

### Crawley

In November the Crawley Interfaith Network hosted a visit by two members of the Jerusalem Peacemakers, Eliyahu McLean and Sheikh Bukari, the former an Israeli Orthodox Jew, and the latter a Palestinian Sufi Sheikh. The organisation is dedicated to bringing peace in Israel-Palestine by encouraging people of different faiths and social groups to come together to speak with one another and share their experience of loss and conflict, and the vision which their respective faiths offers them. Jerusalem Peacemakers is composed of Jews, Muslims, Christians and Druze, Israeli and Palestinian. The speakers described how the leaders have succeeded in bringing together people of very radical views and opposing ideologies.

### Guildford

Between February 19-23 a Festival of Faiths was held at the University of Surrey. Lunchtime exhibitions on faith took place and evening panel discussions were held on such topics as 'building inter faith understanding' and 'women's leadership in religion'. Further information from Sarah Talcott, Inter Faith Education Officer [s.talcott@surrey.ac.uk](mailto:s.talcott@surrey.ac.uk).

### Portsmouth

On 6 December, there was a Muslim-Christian evening to celebrate jointly the birth of Jesus.

Around 80 people of all ages took part in the event at St Thomas's Cathedral in Old Portsmouth. The evening started with prayers followed by a tour of the Cathedral. The tour was followed by a meal where all the Muslims brought halal meat dishes and all the Christians brought vegetarian dishes, so everybody could indulge without having to worry. Taki Jaffer of the Portsmouth Interfaith Forum commented "There was genuine engagement all round where everybody seemed to have someone to talk to....This was community cohesion at its best."

### Thames Gateway

Thames Gateway Women's Multi Faith Forum members spoke to a meeting in Maidstone of an inter faith group interested in offering spiritual support to people suffering from Alzheimer's disease or dementia. There are to be follow-up meetings with TGWMF's local Alzheimer's and Dementia Support group. The Forum has also been advising their area's Supporting Fosterers' Service, on issues of concern when fostering a child of a faith different to that of the host family. Together with other local Partners, the Forum organised a well attended seminar on domestic abuse, "Why Suffer In Silence".

## West Midlands

A Conference. "Cohesion Through Faith – Good Practice and Positive Action in the West Midlands" was held by the West Midlands Faiths Forum (WMFF) in collaboration with North Staffordshire Forum of Faiths in November 2006 to look at community cohesion and practical actions that can be taken locally to foster inter faith dialogue and understanding. A conference report highlights examples of good practice and outlines a wide range of ideas for practical actions to strengthen community cohesion. The Report is available from [www.wmfaithsforum.org.uk](http://www.wmfaithsforum.org.uk) or from Ruth Wagstaffe, WMFF Secretariat Tel: 024 7652 1326.

### Birmingham

Birmingham will be hosting a wealth of special events to mark European Capital of Culture 2008. Birmingham Council of Faiths is planning to develop a series of "pulpit exchanges" among leaders of different faiths in the run up to 2008. The aim will be to promote greater understanding and appreciation of other cultures and faiths. In 2008 there will be a major conference to celebrate and share experiences.

## Sandwell

Sandwell Multi-Faith Network hosted a conference, 'How we use sounds and silence in our worship', on 3 February at Christ Church C of E Primary School in Albert Street, Oldbury. It provided an insight into the rituals of various religious beliefs. Network Officer, Barbara Dixon, commented: "People will work with or live near people of a different faith and may have wondered why they engage in certain rituals or behaviours. Hopefully the conference answered some of these questions in a user friendly way." Further information from: Barbara Dixon, tel. 0121 544 6423, or email: sandwellmultifaith@yahoo.co.uk

## Telford

Over 120 people attended two public meetings organized by Telford and Wrekin Interfaith Group (known as 'TWIG') on two consecutive Tuesday evenings in November. A local councillor chaired and each participating faith was invited to provide a speaker who would take some ten minutes to offer a personal perspective on 'What I believe'. Questions from the floor were then invited before the turn of a speaker from another faith.

## Wolverhampton

The Wolverhampton Inter Faith Group, which is one of the older local inter faith organisations in the country, has been renamed as the Wolverhampton Inter Faith Council to reflect the organisation's coalition of diverse faith communities, groups and agencies. The new name underlines the significance of collaboration in the organisation's work.

## Worcestershire

Worcestershire Inter-Faith Forum (WIFF) have been engaged in two major activities. The first, titled 'Engaging Faith Communities in the Youth Justice System', is in partnership with the Youth Offending Service. The Forum is overseeing the project through a small steering group. Currently, the research worker, Roy Griffiths, has commenced interviews and mapping work. The second activity has been with Worcester Cathedral in a two day 'Faith on the Move' project for 6th formers. A panel of speakers from different faiths addressed the students, who were provided with food prepared by the Forum's Vice Chairman, Malik Fazaz. Three WIFF members also led an afternoon for the RNIB New College in Worcester. A teacher fed back: "The students appreciated the non-patronising and gentle tone of the debate and the great role models provided...people of different

faiths who clearly have great liking and respect for each other."

## South West

On 31 January 30 people from seven different faith groups met in Taunton to explore their shared concerns for their communities and for the region. The event was organised by faithnetsouthwest, in partnership with the SW Council of Faiths. Edson Burton, Development Worker with the Bristol Multi Faith Forum, outlined the scope of work for faith communities engaging with Bristol City Council, and the limitations of capacity and sustainable funding. The Forum works in two directions: providing information and developing understanding of faith issues in the public sector and maintaining links between faith groups. Jonathan Marshall, Director of the Plymouth Centre for Faiths and Cultural Diversity, spoke about the work of the Centre in bringing people of different faiths together and in the education in faith matters both of school students and public service workers: the dialogue with the public sector is important, suggesting that most important of all is to retain the core values of one's own faith in all these contexts. Rev Heather Pencavel, Director of faithnetsouthwest and Faith Communities Representative on the SW Regional Assembly, spoke of the place of faith in shaping public policy – remaining true to one's beliefs, but listening with openness to the agendas of others and working with them for change.

In the group discussions which followed, there was agreement that more meetings would be helpful – perhaps an annual regional event and more frequent meetings at sub-regional level. Three themes emerged from the day: the need for inter faith understanding; the possibilities of multi faith working; and the related theme of the government's faith agenda, which often moved at a different speed than the faith groups could achieve and so risked failing to hear their voices.

## Yorkshire and Humber

'Faith 2 Faith. was the first ever region-wide inter faith event for 16 to 25 year olds in Yorkshire and the Humber. Organised by Yorkshire and Humber Faiths Forum, the event was attended by over 100 young people from a variety of faith backgrounds from across the region. It was held at Leeds University on 12 December to discuss discrimination and injustice, celebrate different



faiths and ensure that young people's voices are heard on issues that matter to them. The conference formed the start of a programme of activities by the Yorkshire and Humber Faiths Forum to create a platform for young people of faith for dialogue and to influence policymaking. Kiran Bali, spokesperson for young people from the Yorkshire and Humber Faiths Forum, said: "Young people are young citizens in all communities with their own particular needs and hopes. By creating platforms for young people to discuss views, we encourage their direct contribution to the agendas of democracy, citizenship and social inclusion."

The conference included a wide range of young people from diverse faiths talking about their experiences of discrimination and a variety of workshops looked at ways to tackle discrimination positively through creativity and working with the media, dialogue and partnership. The event also explored innovative ways in which young people can continue to engage in issues of importance to them and can be involved in the ongoing work of the Yorkshire and Humber Faiths Forum including the setting up of a Youth Council.

Further information on the event from Yorkshire and Humber Faiths Forum, tel. 0113 245 6444, email: [info@yorkshireandhumberfaiths.org.uk](mailto:info@yorkshireandhumberfaiths.org.uk) or at [www.faith2faith.org.uk](http://www.faith2faith.org.uk)

### Calderdale

Calderdale Interfaith Council (CIC) held its Annual Interfaith Celebration Event on 6 December at the Square Chapel, Halifax. The theme chosen was 'Peace and Respect'. Faith representatives including the Bahai, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh and Quakers all provided a brief overview of the significance of the theme in their traditions. The event was jointly chaired by the Mayor of

Calderdale Councillor Colin Stout (CIC's Chair), and CIC Vice Chair Rev Wendy Wilby, Vicar of Halifax. The event was attended by over 170 delegates. Presentations were delivered jointly by young people and faith representatives. The Hindu presentation included young people playing instruments and the *bhanja*, the Muslim presentation included a young person reciting the *Qur'an*, the Jewish representative sang their own songs dedicated to the theme and the Sikh young people played various instruments. At the end there was a minute's silence followed by an evening buffet supper.

### Leeds

On 18 October, Leeds Concord Interfaith Fellowship held its annual Peace Service at the Quaker Meeting House. The service involved readings, music, meditation and the lighting of candles for peace by representatives of the faith communities in Leeds. Two new items to the programme included 'passing the Peace Flame' and signing the Peace Flag, which was then taken to Faslane in a peaceful protest over Trident.

### York

York Interfaith met on 14 January. A volunteer from each faith represented read some teaching, offered a prayer or gave a brief synopsis of ideas from their faith background on making a peaceful world. A discussion followed on how to move forward on building good inter faith relations in York, especially in involving young people. The York Interfaith calendar of events, a calendar of festivals in various faiths and other literature from Yorkshire and Humberside Faiths Forum and the Inter Faith Network for the UK were made available.

## RESOURCES

### Women's Inter Faith Initiatives in the UK: A Survey

Commissioned by the Inter Faith Network from Dr Fatheena Mubarak and published in October. The report examines some of the different types of inter faith initiatives set up and run by women, gives many examples of 'good practice' throughout the report, reflects on the role of women in inter faith work more generally and provides a basis for further work in future on this important area. The report can be downloaded from the Network's website or bound hard copies can be ordered from the Network office at a cost of £5.50 plus £2 postage and packing. ISBN 1 902906 27 6

### Faithful Representation: Faith Representatives on Local Public Partnerships

Report by the Centre for Local Economic Development at Coventry University, the Church Urban Fund and the Faith-Based Regeneration Network (FBRN) on behalf of the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG). The report details findings of research exploring the experiences of representatives of faith communities on local partnerships, such as Local Strategic Partnerships. Among other findings, it indicates that over 80% of faith representatives on local public partnerships surveyed would like to see the establishment of a national network for them with an easily accessible expertise database to enable them to communicate more effectively and draw upon the support, experience and expertise of one another. A downloadable summary of the report is available at [www.cuf.org.uk/resources](http://www.cuf.org.uk/resources) Further information about the research from [billy.dan@cuf.org.uk](mailto:billy.dan@cuf.org.uk)

### Faith in LSPs?: The experience of faith community representatives on LSPs

Report published in December by the Churches Regional Network, by Phillip Escott and Pat Logan. The report analyses how faith communities are involved in Local Strategic Partnerships and looks at the experience of faith community representatives on these. It can be downloaded at [www.cte.org.uk/Publisher/Article.aspx?id=63910](http://www.cte.org.uk/Publisher/Article.aspx?id=63910)

### Faith and Nation

A report by the Evangelical Alliance, was published on 23 October. Christian denominations and representatives from other faiths were invited to contribute. The report offers 100 recommendations on areas such as religious liberty, the environment, and constitutional matters, including the call for the Coronation ceremony to retain the phrase 'Defender of the Faith'. Launching the report, the Evangelical Alliance's Public Policy Director, Dr David Muir, said, "The report offers Christians, people of other faiths, and those of no faith, resources for engagement, discussion and action on a wide range of contemporary issues. We hope the report will help people understand the continued importance of the Christian faith in 21st century Britain". The report can be downloaded from <http://www.eauk.org/faithandnation/upload/faith%20and%20nation%20finalrevised.pdf>

### The Imam and the Pastor

A 40-minute documentary, *The Imam and the Pastor*, had its first public screening on 9 December before an audience of nearly 300 people in the Friends House, Euston in London. The film tells the story of Imam Muhammad Ashafa and Pastor James Wuye of Kaduna, northern Nigeria. Both once led armed gangs in defence of their communities at a time of religious and ethnic conflict in their city in the early 1990s, and now they are joint directors of an Interfaith Mediation Centre. The film shows how, drawing on their respective faith traditions, they have succeeded in overcoming their animosity towards each other, and have created a partnership which has been effective in calming tensions in Nigeria and elsewhere. The event was co-sponsored by Initiatives of Change ([www.uk.iofc.org](http://www.uk.iofc.org)) and the Nigerian High Commission. For further details contact: [info@fltfilms.org](mailto:info@fltfilms.org)

### Faith Perspectives on Climate Change

A 12 page booklet produced by Redbridge Faith Forum. Further information from Urmi Acharya [urmi.acharya@redbridge.gov.uk](mailto:urmi.acharya@redbridge.gov.uk)

### Our Sacred Earth

The Scottish Inter Faith Council Youth Committee has produced a new booklet, called *Our Sacred Earth*, which encourages faith communities to be environmentally friendly. For details on ordering contact Calum at [admin@interfaithscotland.org](mailto:admin@interfaithscotland.org)

### **Churches' Agency for Inter-Faith Relations in Scotland (CAIRS)**

Publishes a monthly e-journal, highlighting local, national and international inter faith news and events. Copies of recent issues can be read at [www.acts-scotland.org/cairs/articles.shtml](http://www.acts-scotland.org/cairs/articles.shtml). To register for your own e-mail copy, contact [andrew.cairs@acts-scotland.org](mailto:andrew.cairs@acts-scotland.org).

### **Local People, Global Faiths**

Book 2 of *Local People, Global Faiths* by James Nelson and Norman Richardson, published by Colourpoint Press, was launched at the October Forum meeting of the Northern Ireland Inter Faith Forum. It features sections about Muslims, Buddhists and Baha'is in Northern Ireland and complements the earlier volume which covers Jews, Hindus and Sikhs. Further information from [info@colourpoint.co.uk](mailto:info@colourpoint.co.uk)

### **Reflecting on the past and looking to the future: The 2007 Bicentenary of the Abolition of the Slave Trade in the British Empire**

Department for Culture, Media and Sport/Home Office booklet. Information on ordering from 020 7211 6200.

### **Leicester Council of Faiths 20th Anniversary Brochure**

Available from the office of Leicester Council of Faiths, 1st Floor, Pilgrim House, 10 Bishop Street, Leicester, Leicestershire LE1 6AF. Illustrated and full colour Cost £2 to cover postage and handling. Or view at [www.leicestercounciloffaiths.org.uk/pdf/files/20thBrochure.pdf](http://www.leicestercounciloffaiths.org.uk/pdf/files/20thBrochure.pdf)

### **Women's Interfaith Media Literacy project website**

Coming soon – [www.wiml.org](http://www.wiml.org) a 'One stop shop' interactive media web site. On 27 March Clare Short MP will launch this web site designed by the Women's Interfaith Media Literacy project of National Board of Catholic Women(NBCW). Regional, interactive, media taster days are planned to encourage women to meet together and become more media active. The site and taster days will help people in faith communities become more easily informed and actively engaged in understanding and influencing the ways in which all forms of media affect our lives and those of our children. The project has been developed with ecumenical and inter faith partners and was set up

with the help of a grant from the Faith Communities Development Fund. The project has a small management group and an Advisory Panel of women from different faith networks. The impetus for the project was concern on the part of NBCW and partners about the premature sexualisation of and marketing to children in the media, the portrayal of faith and faith communities in the media and the continued exploitation and stereotyping of women in the media. Further information from Angela Perkins [enquiries@nbcw.org](mailto:enquiries@nbcw.org)

## **Victoria and Albert Museum launches free intercultural tours**

The Victoria and Albert Museum, in London, has launched a new programme of tours relating to objects of relevance to the Jewish, Christian, Islamic, Hindu, Jain, Buddhist and Sikh heritages. Visits last one hour and are led by V and A trained intercultural guides. Visitors can choose one faith or from a number of themed intercultural tours which compare and contrast different traditions. The tours are free for youth and communities organisations, supplementary schools and charitable faith organisations. For further information or to book a tour (2 weeks advance notice required) call 020 7942 2211 or email [bookings.office@vam.ac.uk](mailto:bookings.office@vam.ac.uk)

## **Faith, Identity and Belonging: Educating for Shared Citizenship**

**ISBN 190290625X**

The printed report is no longer available but it can be downloaded from [www.interfaith.org.uk/publications/index.htm](http://www.interfaith.org.uk/publications/index.htm)

Report on a seminar held by the Inter Faith Network for the UK in association with the Citizenship Foundation.

## FUNDING

### Roger Hooker Memorial Trust

The Roger Hooker Memorial Trust offers grants of up to £500 (and occasionally more by agreement) to organisations and individuals involved in inter faith work or who wish to run an inter faith event. The trust was established six years ago in memory of Dr Roger Hooker and its aims are to promote good relations between faith communities in the Birmingham and adjacent urban areas through encouraging and developing interfaith and intercultural understanding at all levels, but particularly among young people. Bids are considered quarterly and forms can be obtained from our secretary at [margaretozanne@fsmail.net](mailto:margaretozanne@fsmail.net) or ring 0121 449 3839. For other enquiries call its Chair, Mr S S Mandla, on 07980 44 85 83.

### Inter Faith Youth Trust (Alma Royalton-Kisch Trust)

The Inter Faith Youth Trust is part of the Alma Royalton-Kisch Trust which was established to promote the education of children and young people about the religions of the world and funds projects that bring together young people of different faiths to improve collaboration and understanding. Chair of the Trust, Simon Abbott said, "The Trust funds a variety of different projects ranging from safeguarding children from child abuse to inter faith conferences and arts and environmental projects. Priority is given to projects which are organised and run by young people." Grants of up to £3,000 are available to fund or part-fund projects. Further information and grant applications forms are available at [www.kisch.org.uk](http://www.kisch.org.uk). All applications and work reports should be on the Trust form downloaded or supplied on request. Applications should be submitted in the previous month for decision at meetings held in March, July, and November.

### NASACRE/Westhill Awards

The National Association of Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education (NASACRE) have announced the NASACRE/Westhill Awards 2007/8 for Young Inter-Faith Projects. The programme has been made possible for the third year through a grant from the Trustees of the Westhill Foundation. Local SACREs are invited to apply for awards for projects which promote dialogue between young people of different faith positions and seek to benefit the local community. All SACREs have already received full documentation, but further information and an application form may be found at [www.nasacre.org.uk](http://www.nasacre.org.uk) Applications for an Award should be received at NASACRE's office in the University of Birmingham by 31 March.

### Connecting Communities Plus: Community Grants, Round 2

In December, CDF announced Round 2 of a grants scheme for local communities, on behalf of the Department of Communities and Local Government, to increase race equality and community cohesion within communities. This £1 million fund is aimed at a local level and CDF believes local communities are in an excellent position to work with others to improve their own situations. Applications are welcomed from small, locally run and managed voluntary and community organisations who want to improve opportunities for people locally and to improve relations between people of different ethnic and/or faith backgrounds. The Fund has four key priorities derived from 'Improving Opportunity, Strengthening Society', the Government strategy to increase race equality and community cohesion, one of which is: 'bringing together communities from different races and faiths, and promoting a shared sense of belonging (community cohesion)' Guidance notes and application forms are available to download at [www.cdf.org.uk](http://www.cdf.org.uk) To talk with CDF about the fund, ring 01223 400343. Closing date for applications is 29 March.

## DIARY DATES

### Local Events

The following are just a few examples of 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](http://www.interfaith.org.uk/locallist.htm)

**8 March, Ilford, LB Redbridge.** Redbridge Faith Forum is organising an event to mark International Women's Day. It will comprise speeches from a variety of speakers, readings from a range of poetry and prose, and issues affecting women in today's modern world will be discussed. 6.45pm-9pm at Gloucester Room, Ilford Central Library, Clements Road, Ilford. Further information from Urmi Acharya, tel. 020 8708 2478, email: [Urmi.Acharya@redbridge.gov.uk](mailto:Urmi.Acharya@redbridge.gov.uk)

**10 March, London.** Sakinah Forum is hosting a joint session, 'Muslim and non-Muslim women in dialogue' as part of a series of sessions to deepen the dialogue between Muslims and non-Muslims in Britain. 2-5pm at St Ethelburga's Centre for Reconciliation and Peace, 78 Bishopsgate, London EC2N. For more information tel. 020 7496 1610 or email [tent@stethelburgas.org](mailto:tent@stethelburgas.org)

**13 March, Crawley.** A joint inter faith day on the theme 'Meditation and Social Action' at Worth Abbey hosted by Horsham Interfaith Forum, Crawley Interfaith Network, Brighton and Hove Interfaith Contact Group and the World Congress of Faiths. 10am-4pm, Paddockhurst Road, Turners Hill, Crawley. Further information [toc@worthabbey.net](mailto:toc@worthabbey.net) or tel Pam Spencer 01403 248165.

**14 March, Plymouth.** 'Promoting and facilitating multifaith and interfaith understanding and dialogue' at Plymouth Centre for Faiths and Cultural Diversity, led by the Centre's Director, Jonathan Marshall. At PCFCD, 3A Watts Road, St Judes, Plymouth, PL4 8SE. £35 including refreshments and lunch. Pre-booking required. Further information from [pcfcd@plymouth.gov.uk](mailto:pcfcd@plymouth.gov.uk) or tel 01752 254438.

**20 March, Bristol.** Bristol Inter Faith Group meeting on Islamic banking. Speaker Amjid Ali, Head of HSBC Amanah UK. The City Academy, Russell Town Avenue, Bristol BS5 9JH. Further information from [info@bifg.org.uk](mailto:info@bifg.org.uk)

**22 March, Derby.** "Should Religious Groups be allowed to Censor the Arts?" Discussion with local

performing and graphic artists. University of Derby, Kedleston Road, 7.00-8.30pm Charges: £3.00, £2.00 concessions, free for students. Contact: Jo on 01332 591285 or email [mfc@derby.ac.uk](mailto:mfc@derby.ac.uk) [www.multifaithcentre.org](http://www.multifaithcentre.org)

**1 May, Bedford.** Bedford Council of Faiths Faith Walk commencing at 6.30pm in Queen's Park covering All Saints Church, Guru Nanak Gurdwara and Jamia Masjid Gulshani Baghdad. Further information at [www.bcof.org.uk](http://www.bcof.org.uk) or tel. 01234 307281, email: [bcof@bcof.org.uk](mailto:bcof@bcof.org.uk)

**29 May, Bury St Edmunds.** West Suffolk Festival of Culture, 10:00am to 4:00pm Corn Exchange, Bury St Edmunds. Further information from Suffolk Inter Faith Resource. Further information from [office@sifre.org.uk](mailto:office@sifre.org.uk) or tel 01473 343661

**27 June, London.** 'Music from the Faiths'. Brent Interfaith presents an evening of music from many of the world's religious traditions. 7.30pm London Inter Faith Centre, 125 Salusbury Road, London NW6 6RG. Free but please reserve a place by contacting [info@londoninterfaith.org.uk](mailto:info@londoninterfaith.org.uk) tel 020 7604 3053.

### Conferences, Exhibitions, Festivals and Seminars

**Until Sunday 11 March, Edinburgh** The 4th Annual Edinburgh International Festival of Middle Eastern Spirituality and Peace is bringing together people from a wide range of spiritual backgrounds, educators, teachers and scholars, people from artistic and cultural backgrounds, people from diverse cultures and traditions, and people from across Scotland and internationally. All of the principal faith and spiritual traditions of Scotland have been invited to participate in this spiritual, educational, artistic and cultural, and international festival which celebrates peace and mutual understanding. The Festival is jointly organized by the Edinburgh International Centre for World Spiritualities, EICWS, and the Edinburgh Institute for Advanced Learning, EIAL. Further information at [www.eicws.org](http://www.eicws.org)

**15 March, Cambridge.** Faith Communities and Social Enterprise. A seminar introducing the idea of social enterprise and giving practical guidance for faith communities on getting involved. Organised by the Faith-based Regeneration Network and supported by East of England Faiths

Council and St John's Innovation Centre. 9.30am to 4pm at St John's Innovation Centre, Cowley Road, Cambridge CB4 0WS Registration begins at 9.30 am £40.00 Statutory & Commercial Sector £25.00: Community and Faith Based Voluntary Organisations with funding Free: Individuals and Faith Based Voluntary Organisations without funding.

**Feb-29 March Edinburgh, 7-9pm Course –** An Introduction to the Heart of the World Faiths Edinburgh Inter-Faith Association is partnering with Creative Space at St George's West Church to provide a second course on introducing the major world religions. This course consists of nine evening sessions which are each presented by a practitioner from that particular faith tradition. Further details and a downloadable registration form can be obtained at this weblink:

**[www.creativespacesgw.org.uk/events/event\\_details.asp?id=171](http://www.creativespacesgw.org.uk/events/event_details.asp?id=171)**

**2 April, London.** Conference on the Role of Faith and Faith Communities in supporting Mental Well-Being amongst Refugees. University of East London, Docklands. 10.30-4.30. Sponsored by the Department of Health. No charge to attend or for the lunch but places must be prebooked. Further information from Sue Hearsom at [suehearsom@aol.com](mailto:suehearsom@aol.com)

**27 April-23 September, London** at the British Library, Euston Road, London. "Sacred: discover what we share – The world's greatest collection of Jewish, Christian and Muslim holy books". An exhibition bringing together some of the world's most important and beautiful religious texts for the first time. Exquisite and rare examples of Jewish, Christian and Muslim sacred texts from the Library's collections will be presented alongside treasures on loan from other institutions in a unique and compelling modern context. 'Sacred' marks the first time that sacred texts from these three faiths will have been displayed and explored together, side by side, in a major UK exhibition. To accompany this exhibition, the Learning Team at the British Library are running a wide range of events for young people and teachers to engage with exhibition themes through free, onsite workshops. Participants will focus on similarities between texts as well as engaging with differences and contradictions. These free workshops are available on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 7 May until 14 September. To find out more or to make a booking, please contact Ria Bartlett on [ria.bartlett@bl.uk](mailto:ria.bartlett@bl.uk) or call 020 7412 7797.

**8 May, Birmingham.** AGM of the National Association of Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education (NASACRE) on the theme 'Working Together for a Healthy Community' will take place at the Birmingham Council House. Main speakers will include Rev Nims Obunge of Freedom's Ark, Minister of a black-led London church, and Prof Brian Gates, Chair of the RE Council. Participants normally attend on behalf of their local SACRE, but members of the public are also welcome. Cost £70 per person, to include refreshments and lunch with dietary options. Places should be booked in advance.

Further details at [www.nasacre.org.uk](http://www.nasacre.org.uk)

**14-17 May, Kettlewell.** Welcoming the Stranger. How do we value and appreciate a sense of God in 'the other'? How might we recognise the presence of God in the stranger, both in our individual relationships and in the public space? Through the insights of three major faiths – Islam, Judaism and Christianity – the course will explore the concept of the Stranger, drawing deeply on the spirituality of these three traditions. Contributors: Dr Musharraf Hussain, Principal of the Karimia Institute, Nottingham; Rabbi Dr Michael Hilton, Kol Chai Hatch End Jewish Community; Rev Dr Alan Race, Editor of Inter religious Insight and Anglican Priest Scargill House, Kettlewell, Skipton, N Yorks BD23 in the Yorkshire Dales National Park. The course will begin at 6 pm and conclude after lunch on the final day. Cost £162. For more information contact Dilly Baker: [warden@scargilhouse.co.uk](mailto:warden@scargilhouse.co.uk)

**15-17 May, Hertfordshire.** Christian Interfaith Practitioners' Annual Consultation. The Christian Imperative to Inter Faith Dialogue – Good News for Everyone? All Saints Pastoral Centre, London Colney, Hertfordshire. Keynote Speaker Revd Marcus Braybrooke, The cost for this consultation is £120 full board or £70 day-visitor (lunch and evening meals). The Christian Inter Faith Practitioners' Association (CIPA) is a support group for Christians of all denominations involved in inter faith work and a group endorsed by the Churches Commission for Inter Faith Relations (CCIFR), a commission of the Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI). Further details from, and bookings to : [jgrassroots@aol.com](mailto:jgrassroots@aol.com)

**5-7 October, Turvey Abbey.** Meditation and mindfulness: A Christian-Buddhist weekend learning from each other's spiritual tradition. Led by a Buddhist nun, and a Turvey Benedictine nun. Turvey Abbey. Cost £85 (£60 plus non-returnable deposit of £25) Further information from [courses-retreats253@turveyabbey.org.uk](mailto:courses-retreats253@turveyabbey.org.uk) or tel 01234 881432.

**20 November, 2007, Dunblane.** In Dialogue with Hinduism. An opportunity to learn more about Hinduism, the Hindu community in Scotland, and ways to improve dialogue between Christians and Hindus, led by Rev Professor Frank Whaling, Methodist Minister, President of the Edinburgh Inter-Faith Association, and Emeritus Professor of the Study of Religion at Edinburgh University. 10.30am to 3pm, Scottish Churches House, Dunblane. A study day, jointly promoted by SCH and CAIRS. Further details from [andrew.cairs@acts-scotland.org](mailto:andrew.cairs@acts-scotland.org)

## CONSULTATIONS

The Office for National Statistics is holding a series of open meetings in London, Sheffield and Cardiff on the content of the 2011 Census in England and Wales. These are on 9 March in Sheffield; on 16 March in London; and in Cardiff (date tbc). In the morning session of each meeting, ONS will give its latest views on the likely content of the 2011 Census questionnaire, and the afternoon will focus on the ethnicity and identity questions in particular. Attendance can be for morning or afternoon sessions only if preferred. Further details and how to register for attendance at a meeting are available on the National Statistics website at [www.statistics.gov.uk/events/2011Census\\_updated/default.asp](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/events/2011Census_updated/default.asp)

### Connect: Different Faiths Shared Values

ISBN 1902906128

Single copies of the booklet free with a C5 sized SAE (23p postage) or available online at: [www.interfaith.org.uk/publications/index.htm](http://www.interfaith.org.uk/publications/index.htm)

A 28 page full colour inter faith action and resource guide for young people aged 16-25.

## CALLS FOR INFORMATION

### South East mapping exercise to identify faith groups working with offenders

The South East Reducing Re-Offending Strategy was published in March 2006 and applies to all activity with offenders and those on community sentences in the South East. The work of Pathways, Partnerships and Alliances, under the auspices of the Regional Offender Manager (ROM), is to “facilitate effective partnership working across the statutory, private, voluntary and community and faith sectors.” A Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) and Faith Alliances Steering Group has been set up to ensure that the interest and perspectives of partners from this sector are taken into account on an ongoing basis as well as act as a conduit for informing and advising the ROM commissioning process. The Department of Social Responsibility in Guildford Diocese is undertaking a mapping exercise to identify different faith groups working with offenders. A questionnaire has been produced and the Diocese would appreciate anyone involved in this work completing it. Please contact Jane Schofield at [Janeschofield@cofeguildford.org.uk](mailto:Janeschofield@cofeguildford.org.uk) or tel: 01483 790333.

### Growing up in a Mixed-Faith Family: A Project at the University of Warwick Is Looking for Participants

A three year study, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council on growing up in a mixed-faith family, will take place from June 2006–May 2009 at the University of Warwick. Currently, there are few solid statistics on the number of mixed faith or inter faith marriages and academic research in this area is scant. Yet every faith community is aware that such marriages are on the rise, particularly among young adults. The research team, comprising Dr Elisabeth Arweck, Dr Eleanor Nesbitt, and Prof. Robert Jackson, is building on previous studies of religious nurture in the Warwick Religions and Education Research Unit (WRERU) in investigating how children, whose parents have different faith backgrounds (namely Christian, Hindu, Muslim or Sikh) form their own religious identities. The research team would welcome any relevant information and contact with members of mixed-faith families. Please contact: Elisabeth Arweck, tel: 02476 528 434, email: [elisabeth.arweck@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:elisabeth.arweck@warwick.ac.uk)

### **Carnegie Trust – Inquiry**

The Carnegie UK Trust is actively seeking public participation in its [http://democracy.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/civil\\_society](http://democracy.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/civil_society) Inquiry into the Future of Civil Society. The Inquiry will explore the possible future threats and opportunities for the development of a healthy civil society, looking out to 2025; Identify how policy and practice can be enhanced to help strengthen civil society; enhance the ability of civil society associations to prepare for the challenges of the future. The Inquiry will last 18 months starting in November 2006. The Inquiry Commission is keen to hear views about future threats and opportunities for Civil Society in the UK and Ireland as well as contributions that reflect on the European and global dimensions of civil society, especially in so far as they relate to the UK and Ireland. Further information at [www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk](http://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk)

### **Bridge Building at the Grassroots – Aston Centre study**

In the Autumn, the Aston Centre for Voluntary Action Research (ACVAR) at Aston Business School, Aston University ([www.cvar.org.uk](http://www.cvar.org.uk)) began an 18 month research project on 'Bridge Building at the Grassroots'. The research is exploring local and neighbourhood-based activity intended to build bridges between people and communities traditionally divided by ethnic or religious differences. It is focusing on London Borough of Tower Hamlets; the City of Birmingham; and Oldham Metropolitan Borough. At this stage of the project, the research team are finding out what bridge building activities are taking place in each of the three areas and would welcome help in this since many of these activities are not well known or widely publicised. If you are aware of any examples of organised formal or informal interpersonal bridge-building activities in any of these three areas, or if you can put the team in touch with appropriate local people, please contact the Project Leader, Professor Margaret Harris on [m.e.harris@aston.ac.uk](mailto:m.e.harris@aston.ac.uk) or ACVAR's Research Support Officer, Selena Teeling on [s.teeling@aston.ac.uk](mailto:s.teeling@aston.ac.uk) or tel: 0121 204 3253.

### **Network newsletter**

The Network Office apologises to readers for the delay in the production of this Winter/Spring double issue of Inter Faith Update.



## 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 **14 May** to:  
The Newsletter Editor, Inter Faith Network, 8A Lower Grosvenor Place, London SW1W 0EN or e-mail to [ifnet@interfaith.org](mailto:ifnet@interfaith.org) marking your e-mail 'newsletter'.



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