



INTER FAITH

UPDATE

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Inside this issue	
Network News	2
National Update	4
Interview	19
Places and People	20
Regional and Local	21
Europe and Global	28
Diary Dates	29
Conferences and Exhibitions	31
Course and Training	32
Funding	33
Resources	33

Inter Faith Network marks 20 years of working for good relations

The Inter Faith Network for the UK was founded in 1987 to promote good relations between people of different faiths in this country and to “advance public knowledge and mutual understanding of the teachings, traditions and practices of the different faith communities in Britain, including an awareness both of their distinctive features and of their common ground”. Its member bodies include the representative bodies of the Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jain, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh and Zoroastrian faiths; national, regional, local and other inter faith bodies; and educational and academic bodies specialising in

inter faith relations. Together, and through their individual programmes, they work to promote understanding and respect between the faith communities in the UK.

The Network's National Meeting in Coventry on 16 July had an anniversary theme: 'The Inter Faith Network for the UK: 20 Years of working together for inter faith understanding and cooperation.' At it, member bodies looked back at some of the key moments of the first two decades and celebrated their work together as well as considering some of the continuing challenges.

(Continued on page 2)

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Inter Faith Update Subscriptions,
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8A Lower Grosvenor Place, London SW1W 0EN

Commission on Integration and Cohesion

The final report of the Commission on Integration and Cohesion, Our Shared Future, was published on 14 June. It puts forward a wide-ranging set of recommendations for practical action to address cohesion and integration issues at a local level, along with suggestions for a national framework to support these. It followed an interim report published on 21 February. The Government has said that it will be making its response in the Autumn to the Commission's findings.

The report reflected a programme of commissioned research; visits by

Commissioners to a number of communities in England to hear about the barriers to integration and cohesion in different local situations and conversations with researchers; and practitioners working on integration and cohesion related projects. Commissioners also visited Northern Ireland to explore how issues of integration and cohesion are being handled there. It also reflected the 600+ responses to its consultation paper. These included a very high return level from the faith and inter faith sectors.

(Continued on page 4)

NETWORK NEWS

Inter Faith Network marks 20 years of working for good relations

(Continued from page 1)

Dr Indarjit Singh reflected in his keynote presentation on some of the most significant developments of the Network's first 20 years. Then, in 'Local inter faith work – a visual journey across 20 years', Chas Raws, Secretary of Merseyside Council of Faiths and member, Society of Friends and Urmi Raval, Project Officer of the Inter Faith Network, looked back across 20 years at how this vital area of work has developed and at the Network's role in this.

At lunchtime, Ven Bandula of the Sri Lankan Sangha Sabha and a Network Vice-Chair during 2006-07 spoke of the achievements of the Network and of the importance of the harmonious spirit of friendship characterising the relationships it has helped build. He spoke of the endeavours of members, staff and trustees who, across the 20 years, have helped the work come this far. He closed by saying "I pray that our work continues in the same peaceable, cooperative and effective way that it has done since 1987. Let us give thanks and join in a moment of celebration". Then a special 20th anniversary cake was officially cut by outgoing and newly elected Officers and by the Director and representatives of the four categories of Network membership.

Afternoon discussion groups were facilitated by Professor Brian Gates, Chair, RE Council for England and Wales; Rev Dr John Hall, Chair, West Midlands Faiths Forum; Pramila Kaur, Chief Executive of the Scottish Inter Faith Council; Dorab Mistry, Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe; Deepak Naik, Minorities of Europe; and Ann Noonan, Roman Catholic Conference of Bishops for England and Wales. Participants discussed the particular strengths of past work of the Inter Faith Network on which they thought the Network should build for the future; how the Network's role might develop most fruitfully across the coming years; whether there were any particular needs or tasks they wanted to identify; and how the framework of the Network, and the links which it provides can best be used to work together to deepen inter faith understanding and cooperation in Britain. Key points were fed back into the plenary in a short report back by

Stella Opoku-Owusu, Inter Faith Network Project Officer.

Panellists Shaykh Ibrahim Mogra, Chair of the Inter Faith Relations Committee of Muslim Council of Britain, Rabbi Jacqueline Tabick, Chair of the World Congress of Faiths, and Dr Harriet Crabtree, Deputy Director of the Inter Faith Network reflected on some of the key themes that emerged during the day.

The meeting was chaired by Network Co-Chairs Bishop Tom Butler and Dr Nawal Prinja.

A full report on the National Meeting will be available from the Network office in the Autumn.

Network AGM

At the Network's AGM held in Coventry on 16 July in conjunction with its National Meeting the following organisations were admitted to Network membership: Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (in place of its Commission on Inter Faith Relations); Churches Together in England; Faiths Forum for the East Midlands; Joseph Interfaith Foundation; St Ethelburga's Centre for Peace and Reconciliation; St Philip's Centre for Study and Engagement in a Multi Faith Society; Blackpool Faith Forum; Bradford District Faiths Forum; Crawley Interfaith Network; Horsham Interfaith Forum; Keighley Interfaith Group; Faith Network for Manchester; Middlesbrough Council of Faiths; Portsmouth Interfaith Forum; Redbridge Faiths Forum; Rugby Inter Faith Forum; Swansea Faiths Forum; Tameside Interfaith Network; Westminster Faith Exchange; Centre for Christianity and Interreligious Dialogue at Heythrop College in the University of London; and Cambridge Inter-Faith Programme.

The AGM noted that the Centre for the Study of Jewish-Christian Relations, in the University of Cambridge, under its Director, Dr Ed Kessler, (which had been in Network membership since 2004) now formed part of the Woolf Institute of Abrahamic Faiths, which also incorporates the new Centre for the Study of Jewish-Muslim Relations which was set up in 2006.

The number of Network member bodies is now 150.

Bishop Tom Butler and Dr Nawal Prinja were elected as Co-Chairs for 2007-08, with Dr Manazir Ahsan, Dr Natubhai Shah, Dr Indarjit

Singh and Vivian Wineman as Vice-Chairs and Ramesh Shah as Treasurer. Dr Fatma Amer, Dina Gold, Dr Elizabeth Harris and Harsha Trivedi stood down from the Committee. The new members elected to it were Sughra Ahmed, Rev Peter Colwell, Aviva Dautch and Nitin Palan. Outgoing officers and other trustees were warmly thanked for their contribution to the Network's work.

Network document on faith and citizenship

The last issue of *Inter Faith Update* referred to a reflection document entitled "Faith, Citizenship and Shared Life In Britain Today" which had been sent to Network member bodies for comment last November and had also been put on the Network's website for wider comment. The final version of the document is now on the Network's website.

We are currently in the process of gathering pictures, quotes and memories about the Network's first 20 years for a special '20 Year' supplement to the Annual Review.

If you have any memories or stories that you would like to share about the Network please ring or email Urmi Raval at 020 7931 7766 or urmi.raval@interfaith.org.uk by Friday 7 September.

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.

To order, please send a cheque for £7.50, payable to The Inter Faith Network, to:

Gaylina Nguyen,
8a Lower Grosvenor Place,
London SW1W 0EN

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

NEW EDITION Inter Faith Organisations in the UK: A Directory

ISBN 1 902906 314. £8.95 (£11 including postage and packaging) from the Inter Faith Network ifnet@interfaith.org.uk 8A Lower Grosvenor Place, London SW1W 0EN. Cheques payable to The Inter Faith Network or request invoice.

This fourth edition of *Inter Faith Organisations in the UK: A Directory*, published July 2007, lists more than 250 inter faith bodies promoting good relations. The directory is a valuable resource for all those engaged in the work of developing mutual respect, understanding and encouraging good relations between faith communities of the UK. It lists contact names, addresses, telephone numbers, websites and email addresses for 217 local, 14 regional and 25 national inter faith groups as well as brief information about the activities of each of them. Over recent years, there has been a steady increase in the establishment of local inter faith groups and this year alone, there are 27 new additions among those listed in the directory. There are also 11 other new entries, among them academic centres focusing on inter faith relations which is a category of listing new to this edition.

In the last 20 years the work of local inter faith bodies has become varied and local groups are engaging with public, private and education sectors on a daily basis. Since the 70s the number of local inter faith groups has nearly tripled. The increase of local inter faith bodies shows that dialogue and action among faith communities is increasing active.

NATIONAL UPDATE

Commission on Integration and Cohesion

(Continued from page 1)

The terms of reference of the Commission, which was chaired by Darra Singh, Chief Executive of the London Borough of Ealing, were 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 were to cover England only, but the Commission was able to consider good practice from Scotland and Wales, and good practice from other countries.

The report notes the contribution that faith groups make to the life of local communities. In its recommendations it picks up, however, the fact that this contribution could be strengthened if there was a higher level of 'religious literacy' on the part of public agencies and recommends that 'faith communities should be encouraged to work with Government, the LGA and other relevant agencies to develop a programme to increase 'religious literacy''. The report notes also a possible under use of faith-based bodies by some local authorities 'due we think in part to the lack of understanding about faith groups, but also to a squeamishness about the possibility of their proselytising...[and] some evidence of a concern that engaging with faith groups might undermine the inclusiveness of the local authority's wider strategies.' It recommends that 'A set of clear guidelines should be developed to enable local

authorities and others to be able to award public service contracts to faith based bodies without fear that there will be issues over whether this will lead to proselytising or pressure on users of services to accept the religious beliefs of the providers."

More broadly, the report notes the fact that 'Religious faith is profoundly important to those whose lives it shapes' and that is 'is potentially a unifying force within society'. At the same time, the report notes that 'At times religious identity can be advanced in divisive ways or can become a factor which separates people from the wider community – for example in many of the areas where 'parallel lives' are most in evidence.' It underlines the importance of inter faith engagement: "We believe that the way relations between people of different faiths and beliefs develop in the coming years in England's diverse local areas will be very important to integration and cohesion. There has already been much effective work to develop these relationships but more needs to be done." The Commission recommends that 'Local authorities and LSPs conduct a brief 'audit' of opportunities for cross-cultural and inter faith engagement in their areas" It also calls for 'A nationally sponsored 'community week' with a focus on celebrating all communities and inter-community engagement' which could be a time, among other things, for individual faith and other groups to open their doors to each other. In an annex responding to the consultation of the then DfES on the Duty to Promote Cohesion, the Commission again picks up the significance of inter faith issues in relation to schools.

As well as stressing the important of inter faith engagement, the report also highlights the need for broader intercultural dialogue and for a more constructive conversation between those who are religious and those who are not. The report, overall, has a strong emphasis on interaction and shared citizenship.

The report is available free of charge from Communities and Local Government Publications, PO Box 236, Wetherby LS23 7NB. Tel: 0870 1226 236, fax: 0870 1226 237, textphone: 0870 1207 405, email: communities@twoten.com. Please quote the product code when ordering. Delivery will be 5 to 7 days from receipt of order. A maximum quantity restriction may apply. It can also be downloaded

at www.integrationandcohesion.org.uk/upload/assets/www.integrationandcohesion.org.uk/our_shared_future.pdf

Government changes under the new PM

In the new administration formed in late June when Gordon Brown became Prime Minister the Department for Communities for Local Government continues to carry the main responsibility for relations between the Government and faith communities. However, the Department has new Ministers dealing with this issue and with issues of community cohesion. The Department's new Secretary of State is Hazel Blears; and a new Parliamentary Under Secretary, Parmjit Dhanda, who will be chairing the Faith Communities Consultative Council.

There have been significant machinery of Government changes affecting equalities issues including general responsibility for the new Commission for Equality and Human Rights.

A new Equalities Office has been established which is located within the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) but will have its own Vote from the House of Commons. The Women and Equalities Unit, previously based in the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), (and before that in the Department of Trade and Industry), are being transferred to the new Office. However, because of the links to the community cohesion agenda, race and faith issues remain located with the rest of the community agenda in DCLG.

Harriet Harman, who is Leader of the House of Commons, will be responsible for the Equalities Office at Cabinet level as Secretary of State for Equality. Barbara Follett, in addition to her current role as Parliamentary Under-Secretary at the DWP, will be Parliamentary Under-Secretary in the Equalities Office, with the title Minister for Equality. There continue to be lead Secretaries of State and Ministers for individual policy areas as follows:

- Harriet Harman is the lead Cabinet Minister for women and is supported in this role by the Women and Equality Unit in DWP
- Peter Hain, Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, is the lead Cabinet Minister for disability issues, supported by Ann McGuire, Minister for Disabled People, and the Office

for Disability Issues in DWP.

- Hazel Blears, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, is the lead Cabinet Minister for race and faith issues.
- Stephen Timms, Minister of State at the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform, is also to play an important role in advising the Government on issues of concern to faith communities.
- Baroness Ashton, Leader of the House of Lords, will cover the equalities agenda there.

The Sub-Committee on Communities and Equalities, a sub-committee of the Domestic Affairs Committee, will bring together Ministers from across Government to discuss key policies on equalities and is to be chaired by Ed Miliband, Minister for the Cabinet Office.

The Governance of Britain

In early July the Government published a substantial document, under the title *The Governance of Britain*, setting out a wide range of proposals relating to constitutional arrangements in Britain. It covers proposals to limit the powers of the executive; to make the executive more accountable; to reinvigorate democracy; and to address issues relating to the citizen and the state.

There are a number of proposals which may be of particular interest to faith communities.

The document says that the Government intends "through an inclusive process of national debate to develop a British statement of values that will set out the ideals and principles that bind us together as a nation." As a starting point, over the next few months the Government will release a series of discussion documents and materials to inform this debate. The Government wishes to build on the current and ongoing work of various "expert and representative groups". The process of developing a British statement of values will involve local, regional and national level events and opportunities for contributing to it and the Government will engage with a wide range of people and groups, from individual members of the public to community groups, schools, academics, local authorities and other interested parties. The aim is the production of "a British statement of values that reflects the voices of citizens across the country". The document says the debate will also provide valuable insights into national views on citizenship and Britishness,

which may be published after a period of dialogue and feedback.

The document also says that the Government plans to bring forward a comprehensive set of proposals to complete reform of the House of Lords and will develop proposals for a substantial or wholly elected second chamber.

It is also intended that the Prime Minister should in future not have an active role in the selection of individual candidates for appointment as Bishops of the Church of England. At present the Prime Minister receives two nominations and decides which to recommend to the Queen. It is proposed that in future the Prime Minister should receive only one nomination which he would then recommend to the Queen.

Preventing Violent Extremism – winning hearts and minds

In early April the Government published a new action plan to step up work with Muslim communities to isolate, prevent and defeat violent extremism. *Preventing Violent Extremism – winning hearts and minds* says that the Department for Communities and Local Government, working with others, will take this forward through four key approaches: promoting shared values, supporting local solutions, building civic capacity and leadership, and strengthening the role of faith institutions and leaders.

It set out the Government's immediate priorities as being to: broaden the provision of citizenship education in supplementary schools and *madrassahs* within the Muslim community; ensuring the most effective use of the education system in promoting faith understanding; supporting local authorities to work with their communities in tackling violent extremism; increasing the number of local forums on extremism and islamophobia; supporting the developing of "tackling violent extremism roadshows"; fundamentally rebalancing the Government's engagement towards those organisations that uphold shared values and reject and condemn violent extremism; strengthening the role that women can play within their communities; working with the Charity Commission to raise standards of governance in mosques; developing a new fully accredited Continuous Professional Development

Programme for faith leaders; and establishing a framework of minimum requirements for all imams engaged by the state.

In launching the report, Ruth Kelly, then Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, announced that the Government would be providing £600,000 to the Charity Commission to help it create a new Faith and Social Cohesion Unit; and would provide an additional £6 million to fund work in around 70 local authorities to tackle violent extremism. This work would include support for local authorities in establishing at least 40 new local forums on extremism and islamophobia in addition to the 12 already in place.

Accompanying the main document was a separate set of case studies of preventing violent extremism initiatives funded from the Preventing Violent Extremism Pathfinder Fund.

The Government's proposals were discussed at a meeting of the Government's Faith Communities Consultative Council on 6 June. Faith community representatives expressed concern that there had not been prior consultation with faith communities generally on these proposals and emphasised the need for more involvement of all faith communities in tackling this agenda. Plans are being made for further briefing and engagement of faith community representatives towards the end of August.

Condemnation of terror attacks in London and Glasgow

Following the attempted terror attacks in central London and at Glasgow airport at the end of June, statements condemning them were issued by the British Muslim Forum and the Muslim Council of Britain and also by religious leaders in Scotland. The statement from the British Muslim Forum spoke of "the duty of every British citizen to assist the Police in safeguarding national security and ensuring the safety of all our citizens." The MCB said that "those who deliberately seek to kill or maim innocent people are the enemies of all of us... Those who engage in such murderous actions and those that provide support for them are the enemies of all, Muslims and non-Muslims, and they stand against our shared values in the UK." Scottish religious leaders voiced their concern "that the public reaction to such attacks is

not mis-directed against others by association of race or religious belief, and in particular against the Asian community” and said that “... any act of terrorism carried out in the name of religion is a gross perversion of the purpose of faith and is not supported by either the tenets of any of the faiths in Scotland nor by the vast majority of the followers of each faith.”

New counter terror proposals

In a statement to the House of Commons on 25 July Prime Minister Gordon Brown proposed fresh measures to tackle terrorism. He referred to three lines of defence: overseas at other countries’ ports and airports where people embark on journeys to this country and from where British embassies issue visas; security within Britain’s own borders; and ID security within Britain. He said that “the British way is that every measure we take to enhance security is complemented by additional protections against any arbitrary treatment and in defence of the liberties of the individual.”

The Prime Minister emphasised that the Government wants to consult widely and seek all party consensus on proposals relating to the treatment of intercept evidence and new provisions for pre-charge detention and post-charge questioning. He went on to say that there is a need to “work with all communities in all countries through debate, discussion, dialogue and education as we tackle at root the evils that risk driving people, particularly vulnerable young people, into the hands of violent extremists”. The proposal which has attracted most public comment is for an extension of the current limit of 28 days in the period for which a suspect may be held without charge, subject to certain judicial and Parliamentary checks.

Gordon Brown said that over the next three years the Government would provide an additional £70 million to support local authorities and community groups in improving the capacity of local communities to resist violent extremism. This would include developing leadership programmes for young people, strengthening capacity of women’s groups and local projects to build citizenship. This approach builds on the announcements in the Government’s earlier document on *Preventing Violent Extremism – winning hearts and minds*.

The Prime Minister said that the Government would “propose inter faith bodies in every community in the country to build greater understanding”. He had already mentioned in his responses during Prime Minister’s Question Time on 4 and 11 July his wish to encourage the development of local inter faith bodies across the country.

There are a number of ways in which anyone who is interested in the proposed new counter terror legislation can become involved in the Home Office’s consultation exercise on this. There is a website dedicated to the Bill which can be accessed at <http://security.homeoffice.gov.uk> and this contains a number of documents relevant to the Bill and related issues. Any queries or concerns about the Bill, the measures proposed for inclusion in it or pre charge detention can be emailed to CTBill2007@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk

Commission for Equality and Human Rights

As reported in the last issue of *Inter Faith Update*, the Commission for Equality and Human Rights came into being as a legal entity at the end of last year following the appointment of its Chair, Trevor Phillips, in September and a number of other Commissioners in December. The Commission begins operations on 1 October when it will take over the work of the existing Commissions for Disability Rights, Equal Opportunities and Racial Equality commissions, together with responsibilities in the fields of age, religion and belief and sexual orientation. However, it has been made clear in recent statements that while the new Commission will be “open for business” from 1 October it will not be fully operational from that date.

In addition to its Chief Executive, Nicola Brewer, who was previously a civil servant in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, a number of senior management posts have been filled and arrangements have been made for the transfer of staff from the existing Commissions. The transition team has held meetings with a wide range of the Commission’s key stakeholder organisations, including the Inter Faith Network and the Religion and Belief Consultative Group.

There are still further Commissioner appointments which remain to be made, including one for which a candidate was sought with expertise in “faith and belief” issues.

Part 2 of the Equality Act 2006 providing protection against discrimination on the grounds of religion and belief in the supply of goods, facilities and services took effect on 30 April. Regulations made under the Act relating to discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, which include certain exemptions for religion and belief organisations, also came into effect on 30 April.

Discrimination Law Review: proposals for a Single Equality Bill

In June the Government published a lengthy consultation document setting out proposals for a Single Equality Bill covering Great Britain (ie England, Scotland and Wales). These proposals have been developed through the Discrimination Law Review which was launched in February 2005. The Government subsequently announced that it is considering publishing such a bill, in draft, in the next Parliamentary session.

This is clearly a most important document which will contribute to the shaping of equalities legislation for Great Britain, including provisions relating to discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief. Among the many issues it addresses, the Review proposes the retention in a new Single Equality Bill of the present exemptions for religion or belief organisations from existing legal requirements dealing with discrimination on the grounds both of religion or belief and of sexual orientation in the fields of employment and vocational training and in the supply of goods, facilities, services and premises. It also opens up discussion on whether the duty on public authorities to promote equality should be extended to cover religion and belief.

The consultation document is available at www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=15112. Responses to the consultation need to be sent by 4 September to the Women and Equality Unit, which, following recent machinery of government changes, is now in the Department for Work and Pensions. They should be addressed to Kate Hepher, Discrimination Law Review Team, Women and Equality Unit, Ashdown House, 123 Victoria Street, London SW1E 6DE or sent by email to kate.hepner@communities.gsi.gov.uk

The Government has said that it wants to take forward its proposals on a participative basis with the full involvement of all those who have an interest in this area and comments from everyone are welcome. Contact with stakeholders will continue during and after the consultation period as the proposals contained in the consultation document are further developed and refined. There are to be special arrangements to ensure that the Single Equality Bill is tailored to the needs of Scotland and Wales.

Part 1 of the paper asks for views on proposals to promote a culture of compliance with the law; to simplify and standardise definitions and tests in discrimination law; to simplify and harmonise exceptions; to simplify and harmonise the way the law treats public functions and public services; and to bring the law of equal pay into the Single Equality Bill and update it in line with case law.

Part 2 asks for views on proposals to allow a wider range of balancing measures to effectively address entrenched discrimination and disadvantage; to simplify the current duties placed on public authorities to promote race, disability and gender equality in order to tackle disadvantage more effectively; to consider extending the coverage of public sector equality duties to cover age, sexual orientation and/or religion or belief; to explore how public authorities can actively take account of equality issues in procurement; ways to improve equality practice in the private sector; and to improve the resolution of discrimination disputes outside the workplace.

Part 3 asks for views on whether changes should be made to the statutory protected grounds; the case for prohibiting age discrimination in areas outside employment; whether to strengthen the protection on grounds of gender reassignment outside employment; whether to strengthen the protection on grounds of pregnancy and maternity outside employment; whether to strengthen prohibitions on discrimination by private clubs; how to improve access to, and use of, let residential premises for disabled people; and whether express statutory protection from harassment should be extended outside the employment area for the different grounds of discrimination.

**Visit the Network's website
at www.interfaith.org.uk**

Racist and religious crime

The Crown Prosecution Service has produced a draft of a revised policy statement on the way in which they deal with racist and religious crime. This is because there have been changes in the law and CPS procedures since the publication of their first policy document in July 2003. The draft of the revised document can be found at www.cps.gov.uk/consultations/rrc_index.html and comments on it are invited by 14 September which should be sent to jonathan.bushell@cps.gsi.gov.uk or in writing to Jonathan Bushell, Crown Prosecution Service, Cambria House, Merthyr Tydfil Industrial Park, Pentrebach, Merthyr Tydfil, CF48 4XA.

Faith Communities Consultative Council

A meeting of the Government's Faith Communities Consultative Council was held on 6 June. The agenda included Ministerial presentations on work with faith communities of both the Department for Work and Pensions and the Department for International Development (by Jim Murphy and Gareth Thomas respectively); the REACH Group's recommendations on work on raising the aspirations and attainment among black boys and young men; and the DCLG's document on *Preventing Violent Extremism and the Winning hearts and minds*.

Improving Opportunity, Strengthening Society

The Department for Communities and Local Government has published a 'two years on' progress report on taking forward the agenda set out in January 2005 in *Improving Opportunity, Strengthening Society*, the cross-government strategy to increase race equality and improve community cohesion. The report covers many areas of work across a range of Government departments.

In the chapter dealing with "Building cohesive communities" there is a section on engagement with faith communities. This says that in developing partnership working with faith communities the focus will be on:

- increasing faith communities' contribution to active citizenship and community cohesion, their role as agents of change within communities, and provision of services as part of the voluntary and community sector;
- drawing in the other faiths to work alongside, and support, Muslim communities in addressing radicalisation and extremism;
- developing the role of faith communities in wider social action and regeneration; and
- developing local and regional interfaith forums and structures, in line with the commitments we have made in the Local Government White Paper.

The document can be found at <http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1512143>

Faith groups and the BNP

A number of faith leaders and organisations including the Archbishop of York, the Muslim Council of Britain and the Jewish Council for Racial Equality, encouraged voters not to support the British National Party (BNP) in Yorkshire and other target areas in the local elections in May. The BNP is a legal political party but its perspective on a range of issues, including its perspective on Islam, have led many to see it as a threat to a harmonious and respectful multi faith Britain. Target areas for the BNP included Bradford, Sandwell and outer Essex. The party failed to gain significant numbers of seats in council elections, but did win increased support in some areas such as Windsor and Maidenhead.

Change in the English regions

In July the Government announced that the existing unelected regional assemblies in the English regions are to be abolished, with their powers split between local councils and Regional Development Agencies. The change does not affect the elected Greater London Assembly. No timetable has been announced and primary legislation will be required. It is understood that the change is unlikely to take place for two or three years.

These changes have been decided following a review of "sub-national economic development and regeneration" launched in the spring of 2006.

The Green Paper on *The Governance of Britain* launched earlier in July by Prime Minister Gordon Brown said that this sub-national review would “signal a shift of focus to local authorities, open up the possibilities of powerful city regions and give a clearer role for the regions of England”.

More details of how the roles of local authorities and of Regional Development Agencies will be affected are set out in the statement made to the House of Commons on 17 July by John Healy, now a Minister of State of the Department for Communities and Local Government. The full report of the review is to be found at www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/spending_review/spend_csr07/reviews/subnational_econ_review.cfm.

When he formed his Government the new Prime Minister appointed eight Regional Ministers to provide a “clear sense of strategic direction for their region” and more is said about their role in paragraphs 115 to 120 of the Government’s Green Paper, *The Governance of Britain*. The functions of the new Regional Ministers are mostly clustered around the responsibilities of the regional Government Offices providing “central government in the regions” and implementing a wide range of policies on behalf of 11 Whitehall Departments); and the Regional Development Agencies, which drive and coordinate regional economic development and regeneration. Regional Ministers will be able to take questions in Parliament on the work of regional bodies, and on regional strategies. The Government suggests that one means of achieving effective Parliamentary scrutiny would be through the establishment of nine regional select committees.

The list of Regional Ministers is: North East of England – Nick Brown; North West – Beverley Hughes; Yorkshire and the Humber – Caroline Flint; London – Tessa Jowell; South West – Ben Bradshaw; East Midlands – Gillian Merron; West Midlands – Liam Byrne; East of England – Barbara Follett.

Consultation on consultation!

The Government is reviewing its consultation policy and has issued a consultation document, *Effective Consultation: asking the right questions; asking the right people; listening to the answers*.

This consultation exercise is intended to seek evidence from a wider range of stakeholders to help in the design of an updated consultation policy which will lead to better consultation practices across Government. It forms the centrepiece of a review of the Government’s consultation policy and follows discussions within Government and with a number of external organisations on how consultation exercises can be improved.

The document, which can be found at www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/regulation/documents/consultation/pdf/effectiveconsultation.pdf, is in two parts. The first discusses how Government currently consults and how this can be improved upon. It asks questions about the principles on which Government consultations should be based and how fulfilment of these principles should be monitored. It also explores the relationship between consultation and impact assessment and discusses how departments should consult. Issues which are addressed include awareness-raising, Government responses to consultations and consultation fatigue.

In the second part of the document three options for consultation policy are presented. These options have been designed to address, to varying degrees, some of the issues explored in the first part of the document. They are intended to stimulate discussion rather than being exhaustive.

Responses to the consultation need to be sent to the Cabinet Office by 28 September. These can be submitted in writing to Cabinet Office, 4th Floor, 22 Whitehall, London SW1A 2WH or by email to consultation.policy@cabinet-office.x.gsi.gov.uk

Religion and the law

Three cases over the last few months have involved the courts adjudicating in matters affecting religious belief and practice.

In February a ruling was given in a High Court case in which a Muslim schoolgirl sought judicial review of a decision reached last September by a head teacher to refuse to allow her to wear the niqab at school. This claim was dismissed, but the judge who heard the case made it clear that his judgment did not “concern or resolve” the issue of whether the wearing of the niqab should be permitted in the schools of this country which “is not a question that a court could or should be asked to resolve”. The judgment was concerned

simply with the case in question. The full text of the judgment can be found at www.judiciary.gov.uk/docs/judgments_guidance/x_v_y_school_full210207.pdf

In a second High Court judgment it was decided that a Christian schoolgirl was not discriminated against when she was banned from wearing a purity ring (which symbolises chastity) in school and that the school had not breached her right to “freedom of thought, conscience and religion” under Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights. The judge rejected the submission that the ring was a “religious artefact” and therefore exempt from the school’s uniform policy which bans jewellery.

In both these cases the legitimacy of the uniform policy operated by the schools in question was upheld.

The third and most recent case involved the decision by the Welsh National Assembly to slaughter Shambo, a bullock kept in the sanctuary of the Skanda Vale Temple near Carmarthen in South Wales, because it tested positive in a routine test for tuberculosis. The Government’s current policy is to kill any animal suspected of carrying bovine TB because of the threat to other livestock. Cows and bulls are considered sacred by Hindus who refrain from eating beef and both the Hindu Council for the UK and the Hindu Forum of Britain appealed for the life of Shambo to be spared. The Skanda Vale community took the Welsh National Assembly to court in the hope of preventing the implementation of the slaughter notice. The temple community argued that the bullock had been placed in isolation to prevent infection of other livestock and was also isolated from contact with the public in a specially constructed shrine within the main temple. The High Court in Cardiff upheld the appeal against the slaughter notice but this decision was overturned on an appeal by the Welsh National Assembly and Shambo was taken away from the temple for slaughtering shortly afterwards.

New cremation, burial and death notification and certification proposals

In July the Government circulated to a range of organisations, including a number of faith community bodies, its proposals for new cremation regulations. The consultation by the

Ministry of Justice on these proposals ends on 22 October. The document is available on its website at www.justice.gov.uk. The proposals reflect two main policy changes. Firstly, the bereaved would have a right to inspect the medical forms before cremation. The Government is still considering what further changes might be required to death certification legislation in the light of the deaths of patients of Dr Harold Shipman. Secondly, cases involving contagious diseases would be handled differently. At the time of a pandemic the regulations would be amended to allow for a simpler procedure for the cremation of bodies.

The Ministry of Justice has also just published the Government’s responses to the consultation carried out in recent years on the basis of a consultation document produced in 2004 on burial law and policy which covered a wide range of issues concerning the provision and maintenance of burial grounds and the legislative framework within which burials and exhumations are conducted. The Government will now be proceeding to implement changes in these by making use of existing legislation wherever possible and by developing new guidance, introducing other changes by new primary legislation when the opportunity to do so arises. The Government’s conclusions were summarised in a statement to the House of Commons on 5 June by Harriet Harman, Minister of State in the Ministry of Justice. The full report is available at www.justice.gov.uk/docs/burial-law-policy.pdf

Also just published by the Ministry of Justice is a preliminary consultation paper on the statutory reporting of deaths to coroners, making proposals in relation to: the public service personnel on whom the duty to report deaths should rest;

the specific circumstances and categories of death that should be reported to the coroner; and the sanctions that may apply if there is a failure to report a relevant death to the coroner.

The document is available at www.justice.gov.uk/docs/cp1207.pdf Responses to the consultation are to be sent by 7 September to Coroner Reform Team, Coroners’ Unit, Ministry of Justice 5.08, 5th Floor Steel House 11 Tothill Street London SW1H 9LH or emailed to coroners@justice.gsi.gov.uk

In its third report in July 2003 the Shipman Inquiry proposed a radical overhaul both of the Coroners’ system and of the arrangement for death certification. The draft Coroners’ Bill published by the Government in June 2006 embodied the Government’s response in terms of

the Coroners' system. The Department of Health has now circulated proposals for improving the process of death certification in England and Wales in order to address the weaknesses identified by the Shipman Inquiry. The proposals are intended to provide a more transparent, proportionate, consistent and affordable system, which improves the surveillance of causes of death and removes current inequalities in the way burials and cremations are dealt with.

The consultation document is available on the Department of Health's website at www.dh.gov.uk/consultations Responses to the consultation are due by 24 October.

Organ donation

'Can we count on you?' is a new campaign encouraging the UK's black and Asian communities to become organ donors. The drive aims to dispel common myths that are known to affect the rate of organ donation and highlights the fact that people of black and Asian origin are three times more likely to need a kidney transplant due to increased diagnosis of diabetes, high blood pressure, kidney diseases and heart disease, which can lead to organ failure. The campaign is backed by comedienne Nina Wadia and Gina Yashere, as well as other prominent celebrities

Visit www.uktransplant.org.uk or call the Organ Donor line on 0845 60 60 400.

As a part of this national campaign, a leaflet titled 'Organ donation and religious perspectives,' is being distributed. Different faith communities helped some years ago in the development of this. The leaflet explains that none of the major faiths practised in the UK forbids becoming an organ donor and it lists the support religious leaders from Buddhist, Christian, Hindu,, Jewish Muslim, and Sikh faiths.

The leaflet can be downloaded at: www.uktransplant.org.uk/ukt/newsroom/factsheets/religious_leaflets/general_religious_lflet-2005.pdf

There are also six leaflets covering the views of the six faiths which helped develop the material and they can be downloaded from: www.uktransplant.org.uk/ukt/how_to_become_a_donor/religious_perspectives/religious_perspectives.jsp

Religious charities and public benefit

To meet the statutory definition of a charity included in the Charities Act 2006 an organisation must both have purposes falling within the list of charitable purposes set out in the Act and operate for the public benefit. It removes the presumption that currently exists that those charities relieving poverty or advancing education or religion benefit the public.

The Charity Commission is under a statutory obligation to publish guidance on the way it proposes to exercise its powers and duties in relation to this 'public benefit' test. The 2006 Act does not define what is meant by 'public benefit' which continues to be governed by existing law, based on decisions made by the courts and the Charity Commission over the years. But in future all charities will have to demonstrate that their purposes benefit the public and the trustees of charities will be required to take account of the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit when this has been finalised, reinforcing the general duties that Trustees already have to act for the public benefit.

The last issue of *Inter Faith Update* foreshadowed the publication in early March of a consultation document by the Charity Commission on the application to charities of the 'public benefit' test. The Charity Commission's consultation document can be found at www.charitycommission.gov.uk The formal consultation exercise by the Charity Commission on the basis of this document has now closed and it is due to issue in October general guidance on the public benefit test. However, the Commission will be launching towards the end of this year a three month public consultation on more detailed guidance dealing with the public benefit of charities established for the advancement of religion; as well as for the prevention and relief of poverty; and the advancement of education.

It is due also to publish in September next year the results of pilot public benefit assessments and to begin then its formal assessments. There is a commitment to review in 2010 the impact of the public benefit requirement.

In May the Charity Law Association held a day conference to discuss the public benefit test and the Charity Commission's consultation document. The report of this conference, *For the Public Benefit*, is now available from Plaza Publishing,

3 Rectory Grove, London SW4 0DX (020 7819 1200). The report includes a section on the application of the public benefit test to charities set up for the advancement of religion based on contributions to one of the workshops held in the course of the day.

Third sector developments

The last issue of *Inter Faith Update* reported on the publication in early December of an interim report of the Government's review on "The Future Role of the Third Sector in Social and Economic Regeneration". The final report on the review was published in late July by the Office of the Third Sector in the Cabinet Office. It sets out a strategy to promote the partnership between the Government and the third sector over the next ten years.

Most of the measures will be led by the Office of the Third Sector, which will invest more than £515 million in third sector programmes to support thousands of community organisations across the country.

The main aims outlined in the report are to help give third sector organisations a greater voice and to work with the sector to strengthen communities, transform public services, encourage social enterprise and support the conditions for the sector to thrive.

The Government will give third sector organisations more of a voice and ensure that third sector organisations are able to speak out and represent their communities.

The Government will develop innovative approaches to consultation, work to protect the rights of organisations to campaign and mechanisms to ensure Ministers hear the views of third sector organisations on policy. The Office of the Third Sector is planning to create a single advisory body drawing in expertise from across the third sector.

The Government will also work with third sector organisations to bring people from different backgrounds together to improve life in their communities. It will invest £50 million in endowments for community foundations to make sure they can provide grants in the future for community groups, and at least £10 million of new investment in community anchor organisations and community asset and enterprise development. In addition, the Government will provide £117 million of new resources for youth volunteering.

The report recognises the vital role of some organisations in helping to deliver public services, and contains a commitment to improve public services by fully drawing on the understanding and experience of the sector in designing, developing and delivering services. The Government will build the capacity of third sector organisations to improve public services, though the Futurebuilders Fund, which provides loans and grants to organisations looking to deliver public services, training for public sector commissioners and work to build the evidence on opportunities for the third sector.

The Government will also encourage 'social enterprises' – businesses with social and environmental aims. The Government will promote awareness of the social enterprise business model, and support its departments to investigate areas for social enterprise delivery, including getting social enterprise into the Key Stage 3 and 4 of the curriculum framework from 2008.

Finally, the Government wants to improve the environment in which all third sector organisations work. The Government will improve funding arrangements for the third sector, and make three-year funding the norm, rather than the exception; create a new national research centre as part of a programme to build the third sector evidence base; and implement a new third sector skills strategy. It will also invest over £85 million of new resources in developing third sector infrastructure through the Capacitybuilders agency, and continue to focus on the Compact as a means to build the relationship between the third sector and all levels of Government.

The full report gives details of all the proposals and can be found at www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/third_sector/documents/review/ots_review.pdf

The report says that the Office of the Third Sector will champion and provide support to Government departments wishing to provide strategic and long term funding to third sector organisations to provide a consistent voice in public policy making, alongside the development or updating of departmental third sector strategies.

In this context the Department for Communities and Local Government is planning to develop a strategic partnership programme for engaging third sector organisations to provide a strategic voice and to support local action in the Department's policy areas. Subject to the

outcome of this year's Comprehensive Spending Review, the Department plans to develop a new strategic partners grant programme providing core funding over a three year period for strategic partners. It will encourage the pooling of small grants programmes to the third sector to provide certainty, efficiency and the potential to develop deeper relationships with the third sector. The Department published a discussion paper on its plans in June, *Third Sector Strategy for Communities and Local Government*. Comments are invited by the Department on this by 20 September. Comments can be sent by email to thirdsector@communities.gsi.gov.uk or by post to Towards a Third Sector Strategy, DCLG, Zone 1/E5 Ashdown House, 123 Victoria Street, London SW1E 6DE. The document is available at www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1510989

The Department has also provided an Expressions of Interest Form for organisations to complete if they wish to enter a strategic partnering relationship with the Department, together with accompanying information on these arrangements. This makes it clear that the Department will not accept applications from certain categories of organisations including those the scope of which is solely local or regional; or whose work is primarily "the promotion of religious activity". Applications from partnerships/consortia may be submitted through a lead organisation. Only organisations that register their interest by 20 September and are subsequently given the status of strategic partners will be eligible to apply for strategic funding from the Department.

OFSTED reports improvement in Religious Education

In June the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (OFSTED) reported on its findings on Religious Education in schools and the impact of locally agreed RE syllabuses.

The report says that RE has improved overall in the past few years but there are still variations in the quality of provision and achievement by pupils remains very inconsistent. It questions whether RE in non-faith maintained schools is best served by the current statutory arrangements under which it lies outside the National

Curriculum, with all 151 local authorities in England having responsibility for developing their own locally agreed RE syllabus. It suggests that this means that there is insufficient consistency in the quality of RE across the country and that RE cannot respond quickly enough to important national initiatives, such as the emphasis on a more flexible curriculum and the drive to promote community cohesion.

The report finds that RE often makes a positive contribution to the development of pupils' understanding of diversity and to the promotion of community cohesion. Nonetheless, it argues that the curriculum and the teaching of RE, particularly in secondary schools, do not place sufficient emphasis on exploring the changing political and social significance of religion in the modern world and that, as a result, the full potential of the subject to contribute to community cohesion, education for diversity and citizenship is not being realised.

The report argues that RE should not ignore controversy or the changes in the role and significance of religion in the modern world. Pupils should be taught that religion is complex but its impact is ambiguous and should be given the opportunity to explore that ambiguity. The current focus in RE on ethical or philosophical issues needs to be complemented by consideration of questions about the social role of religion.

The report finds that Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education (SACREs) provide valuable support for RE when they are led and resourced properly. The report recommends that consideration should be given to extending the role of SACREs to reflect the priorities of promoting community cohesion and educating for diversity. However, many local authorities do not have sufficient resources to ensure that SACREs fulfil their responsibilities effectively. The report welcomes the recent submission to the (then) Department for Education and Skills by the Religious Education Council for England and Wales proposing a national strategy for RE.

The OFSTED report can be downloaded from www.ofsted.gov.uk/assets/Internet_Content/Shared_Content/Files/2007/june/mkngnsnsofrlg.doc

Good relations on campus

The report of a conference, 'Building Good Relations on Campus', held by the Inter Faith Network with the Equality Challenge Unit (reported on in the last issue of *Inter Faith Update*) last November has been widely circulated and further work in this area is under discussion. The report can be downloaded free at <http://www.interfaith.org.uk/publications/campus.pdf>

Across the last two years, the Inter Faith Network has helped facilitate a series of conversations between national student religious bodies. In May, the following statement on building good relations was agreed by the Baha'i Youth Committee for England Catholic Student Forum (Catholic Youth Service); British Organisation of Sikh Students; Federation of Student Islamic Societies; National Hindu Students Forum; Student Christian Movement; Union of Jewish Students; Young Jains; and Young Zoroastrians:

Good Relations on Campus: A Joint Statement

The primary purpose of national student faith-based bodies is to resource, support and work for students of their own particular faith. At the same time, a commitment to dialogue and to working together to encourage good relations between our members on campus is of great importance.

Representatives from the national student faith-based bodies and relevant faith community youth committees have held a series of informal conversations across recent months, facilitated at our request by the Inter Faith Network for the UK. These have focused on the desire of our bodies to strengthen their mutual links in order to discuss together issues of common concern and to work to promote good relations on campus. Future work in pursuit of these aims is under discussion between our bodies, and also with the Inter Faith Network and the National Union of Students. This includes a programme of activities and of training opportunities to help students of different faiths on the UK's campuses to work with confidence and commitment to promote understanding and respect on campus between those of different faiths and beliefs.

On 29 June, Universities UK and Association of Managers of Student Services in Higher Education (AMOSSHE) held an event "Delivering good campus relations" which looked at new reports and developments since the publication of UUK guidance on related issues in November 2005. The event explored tackling discrimination on campus including anti-semitism and Islamophobia, as well as institutional approaches to good campus relations. Further information from info@UniversitiesUK.ac.uk

RE programmes of study for Key Stage 3

Alongside the new national curriculum for secondary schools in England launched by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) on 12 July a programme of study (which unlike the national curriculum material is non-statutory) for Religious Education at Key Stage 3 was also published. The content of this is substantially the same as the Key Stage 3 element of the non-statutory National Framework for RE published by QCA in 2004 offering national guidelines for the subject. The material can be found on the QCA website at www.qca.org.uk/qca_12228.aspx

Faiths in FE

The National Ecumenical Agency in Further Education (NEAFE), Faiths in FE Forum (FiFE) and the Centre for Excellence in Education published, in July, *Making Space for Faith: Values, Beliefs and Faiths in the Learning and Skills Sector*. It is the report on a national enquiry carried out by NEAFE and FiFE into opportunities for spiritual and moral development in the Further Education Sector. Launching the publication on 16 July, the Minister of State for Lifelong Learning and Further and Higher Education, Bill Rammell, said: "This report comes at an important time for further education when we are working with colleagues from across the system to review how to strengthen its contribution to community cohesion."

The purpose of the enquiry was to build up a picture of:

- the role of the sector in enabling all members of society, irrespective of age, gender, ethnic background, values, beliefs and faiths, to engage with one another in shaping a positive approach to 21st-century pluralism

- the views of learners and staff in colleges and in workplaces on issues of values, beliefs and faiths
- how the system and its stakeholders could improve responses to learner and staff needs in relation to issues of values, beliefs and faiths in a way that is in keeping with the sector's economic, educational and social missions

A total number of 41 colleges and 924 individual students and staff participated in the enquiry, which found that:

- almost three quarters of students (74%) were more likely to feel part of a college or workplace that actively encouraged dialogue and activities between people and communities of diverse faiths and beliefs
- 79% of students, regardless of their own personal beliefs, thought that colleges should provide for people's faith and belief needs
- almost three quarters of staff surveyed (73%) thought that legal entitlement to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development provided for learners in school sixth forms through the *1944 Education Act* should be extended to cover students and trainees over the age of 16 in the learning and skills sector

The report offers a number of recommendations for the government, agencies, colleges, learning providers, churches and faith communities.

Further information from NEAFE on 020 7898 1529

The Queen receives inter faith award

On 17 May leading members of nine faiths were present at Buckingham Palace when The Queen was presented with a specially struck Interfaith Gold Medallion with diamond. The award was conferred in gratitude for the lead The Queen has given personally in the search for mutual tolerance, respect and brotherhood.

The traditional Jewish blessing upon meeting with royalty was recited by Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks. Sir Sigmund Sternberg, one of the Founders of the Three Faiths Forum, then presented the award, making reference to Her Majesty's 2006 Christmas message in which she said that "it is very easy to concentrate on the differences between the religious faiths and to forget what they have in common". This, he said,

summed up what the gathering on this occasion represented.

Moulana Shahid Raza of the Muslim College read out the accompanying scroll in which the leading members of the major faith communities placed on record their deep and sincere appreciation of the lead The Queen has given to the nation "in the promotion of respect and understanding for minority faiths and in seeking to include new communities as natural components of this society."

Three Faiths Forum celebrates 10 years

200 people gathered at the National Portrait Gallery on 9 May to celebrate the achievements of the Three Faiths Forum in its first decade. Speakers included Forum co-founder Sir Sigmund Sternberg; Sandy Nairne, Director of the Gallery; Rev Dr Marcus Braybrooke, a co-founder of the Forum; Henry Grunwald QC, President of the Board of Deputies; and Faris Badawi, son of the late Sheikh Dr Zaki Badawi, the third co-founder of the Forum; and Stephen Shashoua, Director of the Youth and Education Division of the Forum;

Imams and rabbis conference

On 26 March a conference of Imams and Rabbis took place in Manchester. 'Building Alliances, Respecting Differences'. Hazel Blears, then Minister without Portfolio at the Home Office, was among the speakers. In the course of her speech she said, "It is through inter faith dialogue and learning that true respect can be forged. Many Christians are simply unaware that the Qur'an reveres Jesus as a prophet. Many Jews, Muslims and Christians are unaware of the rich Abrahamic heritage we share in common. A study of other people's religions is a prerequisite for a greater understanding of one's own. There has been much discussion about the tensions between religions, races and ethnic groups. But I believe that Britain is an exemplar of how a multi-faith, multi-ethnic nation can work in practice. We are an immeasurably richer country for the contribution of people arriving here, often in search of a better life." John Battle MP, then Prime Minister's Envoy to Faith Communities, also addressed the Manchester conference.

Jewish-Muslim dialogue at conference for women

On 28 March in London a conference was held to bring together Jewish and Muslim women, including community leaders, congregational religious leaders, educators, social activists and grass-root members as well as young women in order to work towards greater inter faith interactions in a multi-faith and cohesive society. The conference was organised on behalf of the Imams and Rabbis Committee by the Joseph Interfaith Foundation and Alif-Aleph. Meg Munn MP, then Deputy Minister for Women and Equalities, addressed the conference. She said, "Having inter faith dialogue is important to the creation of a society that reflects positive interaction between people of all faiths and none. It can act as the social glue that joins our differences in culture, faith and ethnicity together. Inter faith activity is not just about conversation and discussion; it is about co-operation and devising practical examples which can inspire real change."

Jain Manuscript Catalogue launched

In the presence of H R H The Duke of Edinburgh over 300 Jain dignitaries, both local and international, and guests of other faiths attended the launch ceremony on 15 May at Buckingham Palace of the three volume catalogue of Jain manuscripts of the British Library. They included delegates from India, Singapore, Oman, Kenya and UAE. It has taken the Institute of Jainology over fifteen years to complete the project. Visit www.jainology.org for further details.

Younghusband lecture

On 26 April the annual Younghusband Lecture of the World Congress of Faiths took place at Essex Hall in London. Writer and broadcaster Jonathan Freedland spoke on "Multiculturalism: Is the British Model Failing?"

Jews and Christians consider slavery and redemption

Jews and Christians met together at Westminster Abbey on 19 April to explore shared values of social justice under the title 'Let My People Go'. The seminar, held by the Council of Christians and Jews to mark the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the slave trade, involved leading Jewish and Christian speakers and activists. The emphasis was on practical outcomes from shared traditions. Those present heard Clive Lawton, founder of the informal Jewish learning initiative 'Limmud' and Director of 'Tzedek', and Dave Tomlinson, writer and Anglican priest, on the question of 'redemption'. Malcolm Duncan, leader of the Christian social initiative 'Faithworks' spoke about the "shared commitment of Christians and Jews to affirm the dignity of humanity" and Rabbi Dr Jonathan Romain, historian and congregational minister, recalled the Biblical prophetic imperative to seek justice and righteousness in practical ways. The seminar was chaired by Jane Clements, CCJ's Director of Programmes. Canon Robert Reiss welcomed speakers and guests on behalf of the Dean and Chapter.

Alif-Aleph launches interactive web forum

On 29 March, Alif-Aleph UK, a grass-roots organisation promoting positive contacts between Muslims and Jews, launched the first interactive web forum for cross-community dialogue. The website, funded by through the Faith Communities Capacity Building Fund, provides the tools for a new and dynamic discourse to take place between Muslims and Jews of all ages throughout the UK and beyond. Alif-Aleph UK members were treated to a night of music from a variety of Jewish and Muslim traditions to celebrate the launch. To post on the forums, users need to visit <http://www.aauk.org/> and register some basic details. From there they can join already existing discussions or start new feeds on any subject they want.

Brian Pearce thanked for his service as the Network's Director

Brian Pearce stands down as Director of the Inter Faith Network at the beginning of September. At the close of the Network's National Meeting in Coventry on 16 July member bodies thanked him for his 20 years of dedicated service.

Dr Manazir Ahsan, a Vice-Chair of the Network, made a formal presentation on behalf of the Network. He spoke of the remarkable gift of time and skill which Brian had made, full time on a voluntary basis since the Network was founded. He said "The Inter Faith Network and Brian Pearce are so intertwined that these two appear to me as synonymous. The image that permeates the Inter Faith Network and makes it the cohesive and successful organisation has no doubt been shaped by Brian's mild and humble persona, his dedication and above all his handling of faith with care and sensitivity....Brian always downplays his role and never refers to himself as a 'founder' of the Network.....However, his dedicated, patient and determined work was probably the most significant factor in enabling the Inter Faith Network to come into existence. Likewise, it has been his careful, diplomatic engagement with people of the different faiths, as well as his tireless willingness to talk through difficulties on occasions when these occur,

which has helped hold together, through nearly twenty years, a highly diverse network of faith community organisations and local inter faith bodies. His ability to bring out the best in people and to inspire work to build trust and understanding has helped the Network's own work prosper but also helped support and strengthen many other faith community and inter faith initiatives."

Bishop Tom Butler added his personal appreciation and read out a range of tributes that had been received. Following a presentation of a bouquet to Brian Pearce's wife Michelle, whose support of the Network has also been of enormous importance, Harriet Crabtree then joined Dr Ahsan to present to Brian Pearce a set of annual reviews from each year of the Network's existence; a bound photo book of twenty years of photographs put together especially for the occasion; and a selection of other gifts, culminating in a small Royal Crown Derby owl painted in beautiful colours which "seemed the most appropriate present we could find for one of the wisest directors that you could possibly imagine".

The meeting closed with those present marking their appreciation of Brian's contribution with a standing ovation.

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 150 member organisations including: representative bodies from the different faith communities; inter faith organisations; local inter faith groups; and educational and academic bodies

INTERVIEW WITH BRIAN PEARCE

In September Brian Pearce will be standing down from his post as Director of the Inter Faith Network for the UK, having served in this capacity for just over twenty years.

Q You left a career in the Civil Service to help set the Network up and work full time for it. What was it that motivated you to do this?

My initial interest in questions of religious diversity came from my desire, as a Christian, to explore how I could relate theologically to other religious traditions. But I soon realised that there were important issues more concerned with relations between the communities here in the UK linked to these different religious traditions and their place in society. I became involved in the World Congress of Faiths and the Council of Christians and Jews, helped to set up a local inter faith group in South London and was asked to join the Committee of the Churches' Committee on relations with other faiths. Then the idea emerged of my taking a year's leave of absence from the Civil Service to explore ways in which the profile of inter faith work might be enhanced and links between those involved in it developed further. And I never went back to work in Whitehall.

Q As you look back on your time as the Network's Director, what are some of the main changes you have seen in the inter faith landscape?

The changes have certainly been considerable. Twenty years ago inter faith activity was, in general, relatively marginal and indeed seen by many as being vaguely heretical! Now it is a key item on the mainstream agenda of all our main faith communities. There were far fewer national inter faith organisations than now. Some pioneering work had been done in setting up local inter faith organisations over the previous decade. But by 1987 there were only 27 of them across the whole of the UK. Today there are 217. There was little interest on the part of Government, whether central or local, in inter faith issues and that continued to be the case until the setting up of the Inner Cities Religious Council in 1990 in which the Network was involved.

Q Are there moments in the work on which you look back with particular pleasure or satisfaction?

In many ways the most important times have been personal encounters and conversations with people from many diverse backgrounds. These have been a great enrichment for me. I am very sad when I hear initiatives to bring together people who might not otherwise meet being dismissed as "tea and samosas". Active projects and cooperation are important but so is building mutual respect and understanding at a personal level. More publicly, the Network's contribution in helping plan the faith dimension of the Millennium celebrations was a watershed and the Shared Act of Reflection and Commitment which we helped to organise in the House of Lords on 3 January 2000 was a very special occasion.

Q Do you have any thoughts about how you hope inter faith work in this country might develop in the coming years?

With over 250 inter faith bodies in the UK a good deal of the organisational fabric needed for this work is in place. But in many cases these structures need to be strengthened and the level of dialogue and cooperation to be deepened. And we need to ensure that inter faith work at UK, national, regional and local levels fits together well.

I am sure that the greater interest of Government in recent years, at both central and local level, in faith and inter faith matters has been of significant benefit, but the relationship is still settling down. I hope there will be greater stability in future in the Government's handling of its engagement with faith communities and that longer term funding will be provided for inter faith work. It makes an important contribution to the community cohesion agenda. But building good inter faith relations is an even broader long term task for faith communities themselves, both in tackling prejudice and stereotyping in their internal teaching and through their engagement in inter faith work.

I believe the Network itself will continue to have a vital role to play as a central source of advice and information, complementing and promoting the work of its member bodies. I am naturally delighted to know that the work of the its office will be in such good hands as my colleague of many years, Harriet Crabtree, becomes the Network's second Director.

PEOPLE AND PLACES

Diversity and Dialogue

James Sevitt has been appointed as a Project Officer at Diversity and Dialogue which is an inter faith and intercultural project working with young people based at the Citizenship Foundation. For further information see <http://www.diversityanddialogue.org.uk/>

Muslim dialogue development worker begins work at Blackburn Cathedral

A Muslim is working to promote dialogue between communities from Blackburn Cathedral. Anjum Anwar, previously an education officer at the Lancashire Council of Mosques, has been appointed to the newly-created post of Dialogue Development Officer. Her post is being funded by the North West Development Agency (NWDA) for an initial two year period. Canon Chris Chivers, who has responsibility for inter-faith issues, said he knew the move would raise eyebrows, but said: "We are not trying to convert each other, and we are secure enough in our own faith to do this." He said it is believed to be the first time a Muslim has been appointed to work from an Anglican Cathedral in an outreach role. Welcoming the development, Abdul Hamid Qureshi, Chairman of the Lancashire Council of Mosques, said: "This is very happy news for us in the Muslim community. It indicates the level of trust already developed between communities, and can help to take things to a new level." Further information at <http://www.ekklesia.co.uk/node/4962>

Church of Scotland

Iain Stewart has been appointed as the Church of Scotland's Inter-Faith Support Worker. His main role will be to offer advice and encouragement to local churches on inter faith matters.

Alan Race

In October, Rev Dr Alan Race, editor of *Interreligious Insight*, will take up the post of Dean of Postgraduate Studies at St Philip's Centre for Study and Engagement in a Multi-Faith Society as well as that of priest in charge of St Philip's Church, Leicester.

Obituaries

Henry Guterman MBE

One of the UK's best known Jewish community and inter faith activists Henry Guterman has died, following a stroke. He came to the UK with his family after the 1938 Kristallnacht pogrom and dedicated much of his adult life to working to encourage understanding and respect between people of different races and faiths. He was a central figure in most of Manchester's inter faith groups, including the Muslim-Jewish Forum and Indian Jewish Association, the Black Jewish Forum, the Council of Christians and Jews, and Manchester Interfaith Forum. He was a founder of the Black Jewish Forum. He also represented the Jewish community on the Manchester and Trafford Standing Advisory Councils for Religious Education, as well as on the Manchester Council of Community Relations. Some years ago Mr Guterman received an MBE for his work.

REGIONAL AND LOCAL UPDATES

NORTHERN IRELAND

On 23 June a small group of members of the Northern Ireland Inter-Faith Forum travelled to Rostrevor in County Down to visit the Benedictine monastery. The group included representation from a range of faith communities including Hindu, Buddhist and Bahá'í. The purpose was to visit the Benedictine Monks and to be present at their celebration of the Eucharist. The group was welcomed at the Monastery by Brother Thierry and had an opportunity for a conversation about the nature of inter faith dialogue and the opportunities that the Brothers have for inter faith encounter. They then joined the congregation that was gathering in the church for the celebration of the Eucharist and had the opportunity to be able to observe the Monks leading worship. They then travelled a short distance to Kilbroney park for lunch, where they were joined by some other members of faith communities in Rostrevor.

A week long Inter Faith Peace Walk from Dublin to London took place in May. Full details of the background to the walk and its route can be found on the following web site

www.footprintsforpeace.net People from various communities organised accommodation and hospitality along the route and many even joined in parts of the walk. Civic receptions were being given by several towns along the route. Following this event a musical evening was held at the South Belfast Friends Meeting House where a varied programme of music was performed by many local musicians and there was an opportunity for those attending to speak with organisers of the walk.

SCOTLAND

Women from across Scotland from a variety of faith traditions joined together in an inter faith event at the Albert Halls in Stirling on 28 March 'Looking After One Another: The Safety and Security of Our Faith Communities'. This explored how to 'look after one another as women of faith' and hear about the work women within faith communities are doing to create a more cohesive and caring society. Guest speakers included women from Amina Muslim Women's Centre; the Samaritans; the Association of Baha'i Women Scotland; the Hindu Mandir, Glasgow;

the Sikh Sanjog, Edinburgh; and from Rokpa Buddhist Centre, Dundee. Leah Granat the Jewish Parliamentary Officer also spoke. Pramila Kaur, Chief Executive of the Scottish Inter Faith Council, gave the opening address and highlighted the need for more effective engagement between representatives of the Police force and faith communities. At the event Association of Chief Police Officers Scotland (ACPOS) launched its Religion and Belief Action Plan which sets out a strategy for the more effective engagement of Police Officers and the faith communities.

Just a few of the local inter faith events which have been taking place in Scotland in recent months are:

Ayr

50 students attended an inter faith seminar on 17 April at University Campus, Ayr. Anwar Din and Fahed Kayani of Shawlands Academy, and Zam Zahid of Ashcraig School, gave a personal account of their Muslim faith. Discussion touched on family life, education, growing up in Islam, responses to stereotyping and discrimination, and partnership between the religions. It was an opportunity to put faith in context, from three different perspectives.

Dundee

Dundee people of Christian, Buddhist, Sikh and Baha'i Faiths, as well as some of no religion, participated in a walkabout, visiting places of worship in Dundee. These included the Rokpa Centre in Meadowside; St Paul's Church; the Hindu Mandir; and the Sikh Gurdwara, where the children gave presentations about their faith, in Punjabi and English, followed by a Sikh hymn.

Fife

Fife Interfaith Group visited various places of worship in Kirkcaldy on 19 May to raise awareness and gain a better understanding of other faith communities in Fife. The Group started their visit at Fife Islamic Centre, Cumbernauld Terrace and were met by the Committee who explained how the centre was run, the different prayer times and how they pray, and hold classes for children in Arabic. They were shown the body washing facilities where they prepare the deceased for burial. The next visit was to St.

Mary's Church in Dunniker Road - a Roman Catholic Church which had formerly been used by the Church of Scotland and is one of two Catholic Churches in Kirkcaldy. The Group completed their tour with a visit with the Buddhist Group who meet monthly at the Volunteer Centre and had a short introduction to the basic principles of the daily practice of gongyo and daimoku (chanting the title of the Lotus Sutra – Nam Myoho Renge Kyo).

Shetland

In June Shetland Inter Faith and friends gathered for the public launch of their constitution. Maureen Sier, Development Officer from the Scottish Inter Faith Council, gave a public address.

Skye

In April 'Faiths Together' in Skye held a meal and ceilidh to celebrate 'Our Sacred Earth'. In June representatives of the group attended 'The Power of Compassion' a programme of dance, chants and prayers by Tibetan Monks from Tashi Lhunpo Monastery at the Kyleakin Village Hall.

WALES

On 9 July the Centre for the Study of Islam in the UK and the Muslim Council of Wales held an event attended by over 400 people, entitled "Interfaith Dialogue: Muslim and Christian Perspectives". Cardinal Cormac Murphy O'Connor, the Archbishop of Westminster, spoke of the importance of inter faith in today's modern times. Dr Jamal Badawi, an internationally known speaker on Islam and Professor Emeritus, commented on the aims of inter faith work and how they can be achieved.

Swansea

Interfaith Swansea is developing a new website at interfaithswansea.org funded jointly by the Faith Communities Capacity Building Fund and the Communities @One Welsh Assembly Government initiative to help people in Communities First areas make the most of new technology.

ENGLAND

Meetings of English regional multi faith bodies

A meeting of representatives of the English regional faith forums, convened jointly by the Inter Faith Network and the Faith based Regeneration Network UK, was held in London on 17 April. The meeting endorsed plans for the setting up of a new 'English Regional Faith Forums Network'.

FaithAction (a consortium of Faithworks, Faith Regen Foundation and Lifeline) is carrying out a project funded by the Office of the Third Sector relating to the creation of a framework to support faith based organisations in tendering for the delivery of public services and to provide a 'voice' for them. Representatives of FaithAction attended part of the meeting on 17 April to facilitate discussion of the relationship between its work, which has an important regional dimension, and that of the regional faith forums. The meeting also heard a presentation from Faithworks on the second round BASIS bid that they will be submitting to the Lottery for funding for work on supporting Christian, and possibly multi faith, structures.

A further meeting of representatives of those regional faith forums in membership of the Network took place on 30 April to discuss the Network membership review and associated issues. It was agreed to undertake further work on clarifying the relationship between inter faith work at national, regional and local levels.

East

Faith Making a Difference, a networking event for faith representatives on Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) in the East England, took place on 13 June at the offices of Stevenage Borough Council. It was organised by the East of England Faiths Council, the regional faith forum that brings together the major faiths in the Region, together with Welwyn Hatfield Interfaith Group. Jenny Kartupelis, Director, East of England Faiths Council, spoke about faith communities connecting with regional governance and supporting local action; Terry Osborne, Chief Partnerships and Performance Officer, Welwyn Hatfield Council, addressed the topic of engaging the local community in partnerships and looked at

the possibilities for joined up working in the future; Christine Novelli, Chair of Welwyn Hatfield Inter Faith Group, looked at the contribution of faith communities to Local Strategic Partnerships; and Natubhai Solanki, a trustee of the Hindu Community Centre, Luton, spoke from the experience of a community worker. Participants had the opportunity to put questions to the speakers and there were two workshops: 'Finding our way in a new territory with a new language' and 'What am I meant to do?: Developing the role'.

Bedford

An inter faith cricket match was held on 10 June between Luton Council of Faiths and Bedford Council of Faiths. This event was a return match between the two groups after one held last June. The aim of the game was to use the widespread interest in cricket as a catalyst to bring different faiths together. Spectators were welcomed and refreshments were provided. Visit www.bcof.org.uk for more information about the event.

Cambridge

Cambridge Inter Faith Group held its 5th Cambridge Faith Fair at Guildhall, Market Place, in the Small Hall on 24 June. Visit http://www.cam.net.uk/home/interfaith/ifg_diary.html to find out more.

Suffolk

A celebration of the people who make up Suffolk's past and present was the focus of a week long series in May of seminars, workshops and a photographic exhibition, 'The Faces of Suffolk'. The events were organised by Suffolk Inter Faith Resource and Suffolk Racial Harassment Initiative and other partners. The seminars held in St Michael and All Angels Church Occold were on faith and cultures and were aimed mainly at staff of statutory bodies and local industry but were also open to others interested. On different evenings evening there were guest speakers from the Hindu, Muslim, Jewish, Sikh and Buddhist faiths traditions where the topic of My Life and Faith was covered. Three presentations for schoolchildren were also held during the week. A film called A Gypsy's Wish gave insight into the area's traveller community followed with a presentation by The Romany Theatre Company. For more information about these events visit www.sifre.org.uk

East Midlands

Leicester

Last year in Leicester, imams and clergy fielded competing cricket teams for a match. This year, on 26 May a joint cricket team of imams and clergy played their counterparts from Bradford at the Leicestershire Country Cricket Grounds. The game was organised by the Federation of Muslim Organisations and the St. Philip's Centre.

Hundreds of people came to watch the game, which the Leicester team, which included the Bishop of Leicester, Rt Rev Tim Stevens, and Dr Ashraf Makadam of the Federation of Muslim Organisations, won. The entrance to the grounds was free by courtesy of the Leicestershire Country Cricket Club, a partner in this unique event, and all donations and contributions went to the Clean Drinking Water project for the people of Mozambique.

Loughborough

An evening of multi-faith performances organised by Loughborough Council of Faiths took place at Loughborough Town Hall on 22 March to celebrate the different faith traditions in the area. The diverse performances, from the young and old, included devotional songs, music with a variety of different musical instruments, and acting. The event was funded by a Faith Communities Capacity Building Fund and Charnwood Borough Council.

Nottingham

"The spirit of Nottingham and Nottinghamshire", a photographic exhibition by young people in Nottingham, was launched on 30 May. The display, at Nottingham Council House, was of a collection of photographs taken by young people of different faiths in the county. The subjects covered included people of faith at work, leisure and worship. The exhibition was organised by Nottingham Inter Faith Council. It was sponsored by the United Religions Initiative (URI) and Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County Councils.

London

Thursday's Child, an inter faith and peace festival with exhibition and activities that promoted the message of peace, was held on 7 and 8 July at

West Ham Memorial Recreation Ground. The event was an educational exploration and a 'Celebration of Faith'. Individuals and organisations representing a range of faiths and inter faith initiatives gathered to take part and unite in an understanding and mutual respect of each other's beliefs. Workshops, talks, dancing, singing, Newham School children singing for Peace, and story telling took place over the weekend. Further information at <http://www.thursdays-child.co.uk/>

City of London

An evening dialogue took place on 26 April at St Ethelburga's Centre for Reconciliation and Peace in London exploring the message of nonviolence from different faith perspectives. Speakers included Imam Abduljalil Sajid, Jay Lakhani and Mohinder Singh.

CCID at Heythrop College

The Centre for Christianity and Interreligious Dialogue (CCID) at Heythrop College held an event on 11 May on 'Catholics in Encounter with Hinduism'.

Brent

The London Inter Faith Centre hosted an event on 27 June on 'Music from the Faiths', in partnership with Brent Inter Faith Forum. The evening showcased music from many of the world's religions.

Croydon

Nearly 500 people from Christian, Muslim and other faith backgrounds from Croydon, gathered for a dialogue session between Imam Quasim Ahmad of the Al-Khair Foundation and Rt Revd Nick Baines, Anglican Bishop of Croydon.

The theme for the event was 'Two faiths, one world, where do we go from here?' and it focused on different aspects of Christian – Muslim relations and the basic beliefs of each faith with the intention of improving understanding of the faiths.

Finchley and Golders Green

The 21st Annual Multi Faith Pilgrimage of Westminster Interfaith, the inter faith programme of the Catholic Diocese of Westminster, was held in the Finchley and Golders Green area on 3 June.

Each year the pilgrimage goes through different areas within the diocese and on this occasion the tour started at the Swaminarayan Hindu temple and

'Health preachers'

Waltham Forest Faith Communities Forum has published a report on the outcomes of the health preacher's scheme that was held last year. Early in 2006, through WFFF's participation in the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), they held discussions with the local Primary Care Trust (PCT) on how the Forum could help to convey key health messages to people within Waltham Forest's religious congregations. The idea of a "Health Preachers" scheme developed from these discussions. The key concept behind this idea was that religious people might be motivated by their faith to make positive health changes, especially if they were able to access health messages as part of their faith community experience. The PCT had previously run a course to train local people as Community Health Outreach Workers (CHOWs) and agreed to re-run this scheme for a group of faith community leaders recruited by the Forum. The local authority agreed to provide LSP funding for the scheme.

The volunteer trainees were recruited to train as "Health Preachers" who would communicate key health messages to their congregations in a way that would seek to engage others with health as a faith issue. There was an enthusiastic response from the faith communities and WFFF recruited 3 Muslim, 3 Sikh and 9 Christian leaders, the last from a wide variety of church traditions. Out of the 155 people who took part in the sessions 137 recorded that the event had encouraged them to live a healthier lifestyle, whilst 125 people said they would eat more healthily, exercise more or do a combination of both. Father Steven Saxby commented, "Health Preachers' was, we are sure, the first scheme of its kind in the UK and we were enthusiastic to promote it as something for others to emulate, a model for faith community engagement on the issue of health as well as a for inter faith co-operation. However, the proof of the low-fat, high-fibre fruit pudding had to be in the eating. The course made a difference to our health decisions as trainees; could we convince others, through our preaching and activities, to make positive health changes? This results of the evaluation work indicate that we could and did and demonstrate the success of the scheme!"

To order the report, contact:

Marion.Waruguru@Walthamforest.gov.uk

ended at Trinity URC/Baptist Church. The group visited two synagogues, an Islamic cultural centre, a Catholic Church where a Sikh group provided lunch and a Methodist church, where a member of the Brahma Kumaris gave a talk.

Wandsworth

Perspectives from Judaism, Christianity, Islam and Hinduism on the Evolution of Marriage were the discussion point for Wandsworth Multi-Faith Forum at an event on 12 June in Nightingale House, South West London.

Westminster

Voluntary Action Westminster hosted a Celebration of Faiths event at Westminster Cathedral Hall. The theme of the gathering, held on 22 March, was 'Love Thy Neighbour'. The event marked the launch of an updated version of *Westminster Directory of Faiths* and was sponsored by Westminster Faith Exchange and Westminster City Partnership for Racial Equality. The directory can be downloaded from <http://www.westminster.gov.uk/communityandliving/faithsbeliefsandreligions/> For more information about Westminster Faith Exchange visit: contact Nazia Mirza on 0207 6413047 or at nmirza@westminster.gov.uk

North East

Meetings have been taking place in the North East of England to establish the basis of a framework to develop a regional faith forum for the area. At a meeting held on 16 April at the Centre for Life Jenny Kartupelis, the Director of East of England Faiths Council, and Revd John Hall, Chair of the West Midlands Faith Forum, were keynote speakers. The Inter Faith Network's Director, Brian Pearce, also contributed to the days proceedings.

This event was the first of two organised through the regional Faiths Task Group that has been set up to work on developing a structure that best reflects the needs of local and regional inter faith organisations in the area. Paul Southgate, the Chief Officer of the Churches' Regional Commission, who is working on this development said that local inter faith bodies need to be able to link to, and learn from, each other, to cooperate and learn how to support each other at a regional level. He added that there are some notable local examples of inter faith work including initiatives in Middlesbrough, Newcastle, Darlington. Participants in the

workshops at the conference made recommendations on developing the foundations for the regional forum.

The Faiths Task Group held a further networking meeting in Durham on 4 July for members from faith communities in the North East.

North West

Bolton

Faith, food, and identity are topics that have been covered by the Bolton Interfaith Council in recent meetings. The discussion on faith and food was held at the Swaminarayan Temple in 2 June. In March, participants took part in a tour of the Zakariyya Central Mosque, in Peace Street, and observed prayers there. This was followed by a panel discussion at the open forum meeting titled: 'What does it mean to be British? What does it mean to you?'

Burnley

A group of faith community representatives and faith leaders from Building Bridges Burnley explored the sights and sounds of London on a three-day visit. The group visited the Houses of Parliament, the Department for Communities and Local Government, the National Observatory in Greenwich, the East London Mosque and London Muslim Centre in Whitechapel and three places of Christian worship, including Westminster Cathedral. The programme had various objectives which included developing broader thinking; providing an opportunity to travel, learn and explore together; and understanding political and religious power bases. The visit also helped the participants, through spending time together, to achieve a better understanding and relationship between Burnley faith leaders.

Nelson

A church and a mosque opened their doors for members of faith and non-faith communities to learn about the Christian and Muslim faiths. Christ Church and Central Ghausia Mosque, in Nelson, Lancashire, hosted the event on 27 March where participants were encouraged to learn together about the role of faith and places of worship in society. The day was organised by Building Bridges Pendle and started with morning meeting and refreshments at Christ Church followed by lunch at the Ghausia Mosque.

South East

Crawley

On 10 June Horsham Interfaith Forum, Crawley Interfaith Network and Brighton and Hove Interfaith Contact Group held a joint inter faith day at: Worth Abbey, near Crawley with the theme: 'Holy Living'.

Elmbridge

Elmbridge Multifaith Forum held a faith and community supper on 28 June at the Claygate Village Hall. Jewish, Islamic, Christian and Hindu speakers discussed how their faiths support the development of friendship and respect in the wider community with a focus on working towards integration and cohesion. A curry supper was provided and the Mayor of the Borough of Elmbridge attended the event.

Hampshire

At the inaugural meeting of the Hampshire Interfaith Network on 16 May, Rageh Omaar, the broadcaster addressed participants about his experience as a British Muslim. The aim of the event was to bring people of influence together including county and district councillors and LSP members as well faith group representatives from the Hampshire Interfaith Network, to explore how it feels if you belong to minority faith group in Hampshire. The lecture was attended amongst others by the Lord Lieutenant of Hampshire, Mary Fagan, as well as the Anglican Bishop of Winchester, Rt Revd Michael Scott-Joynt. The HIN website was launched at the event too: <http://www.hants-interfaith.org/news.htm>

Maidenhead

The faith groups of Maidenhead held a series of events during the first half of 2007 to allow members of the faith communities of Maidenhead to meet together and to share their faiths and values with each other. At the events, each speaker discussed either their faith or current issues from their faith's perspective. The other half of the session was time set aside for discussion between everyone on the topics raised. The programme was open to the public and had speakers from a range of faiths. Further information from Nigel Cohen of Maidenhead InterFaith nigel.cohen@softwaredesign.co.uk

West Midlands

West Midlands Faiths Forum (WMFF) launched two reports at the Government Office for the West Midlands on 31 July. The first, *Widening the Net*, is an account of the proceedings of WMFF's third annual conference held in March. The second, *A Faith Group Engagement Strategy*, maps the level of engagement of faith groups with infrastructure support providers and ChangeUp Consortia across the region. The research for the second report was carried out by b:RAP (a strategic equalities based advisory organisation in Birmingham) which was commissioned by WMFF. WMFF had received funding for this from the Capacitybuilders Improving Reach programme. The research is part of the development of an Engagement Framework, for implementation in 2007-2008, which will assist faith based organisations in the region to access capacity building resources including funding and help in enhancing governance and workforce development. Speakers at the meeting included Angelina Jetson who introduced the FaithReach project, which is a part of Capacitybuilders' Improving Reach programme; Jane Gallagher from WMFF who spoke about policy and priorities from the faith sector in relation to the *Widening the Net* report; Mary Jane Peach, Capacitybuilders regional manager for West Midlands; and Dr Chris Allen, Director of research and policy for b:RAP. More information about WMFF's activities can be found by visiting www.wmfaithsforum.org.uk

Birmingham

The role of women in nurturing faith within the family was the subject of an inter faith mother's day conference that was held on 31 March by Sutton Asian Women's Forum and Sikh Nari Manch UK. The event was held in Fellowship Hall, Sutton Coldfield. The aims were to develop a better understanding of different faiths and to help the empowerment of women. There were speakers from the Buddhist, Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, Jewish and Rastafarian faiths. Keynote speakers were Andrew Mitchell MP for Sutton and Coldfield and Shadow Secretary for International Development, and Neena Gill, a Member of European Parliament.

Coventry

Coventry Inter Faith Forum held an exhibition on 'Sacred Writings of World Faiths' on 5 May at the Coventry Multi-Faith Centre. There was a special attraction for children on the day which included

storytelling by Kusumika Chatterjee and Pru Porretta who is known as Coventry's Lady Godiva, who has for the past twenty years, brought Lady Godiva to life for the people of Coventry and visitors to the city by telling the tale of her life. She was accompanied by African Drummer Jahman Aggrey. Viewing of the Sacred Writings of World Faiths exhibition can be arranged by telephoning Coventry Multi-Faith Forum on 024 7625 7594.

Wolverhampton

Wolverhampton Interfaith Council held its annual pilgrimage event on 30 June. Participants met to board the coach at the starting point at the Shri Krishna Hindu Temple, Marston Road. The first visit was Balaji Temple in Oldbury where lunch was provided and then the group visited Guru Nanak Nishkam Jatha Temple in Birmingham.

South West

Faithnetsouthwest is acting as regional representative for the One World Week Inter Faith Project, which will bring together three faith groups to exchange ideas on OWW events they are organising, before and after the event. The project will help produce guidance on inter faith involvement specifically for One World Week which will be published on the OWW website for others to use. For more information, contact Alistair Beattie at alistair@faithnetsouthwest.org.uk

Bristol

A tour of places of worship on the afternoon of 21 July was organised by Bristol Inter Faith Group. Participants had an opportunity to visit the Sri Guru Singh Sabha, Shah Jahal Mosque, the local Baptist Church, the Bristol and West Progressive Synagogue and Bristol Hindu temple.

Yorkshire and Humber

On 12-13 May, people of diverse faiths and from key government organisations from across Yorkshire and Humber walked together to demonstrate their partnership in tackling modern forms of slavery and injustice, and to inaugurate a permanent new trail, 'The Wilberforce Way'. Members of the Yorkshire and Humber Faiths Forum and the East Riding Community Cohesion Forum, who developed the walk to commemorate the bi-centenary of the Abolition of the Slave Trade

Act, were joined by representatives from the Government Office for Yorkshire and the Humber and Yorkshire Forward. The walk inaugurated the new 35 mile trail linking Hull, the birth place of William Wilberforce and Pocklington. Wilberforce was educated at Pocklington School and 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.

A free guide leaflet outlining the route and key landmarks has been published by the East Riding County Council and distributed in the county to encourage walkers and to raise awareness on issues of community cohesion in the area. Further information from Inderjit Bhogal, Director, the Yorkshire and Humber Faiths Forum 0113 245 6444, mobile 07793780588 email: inderjit.bhogal@yorkshireandhumberfaiths.org.uk

The second regional 'faith and food' day took place on 10 June. Guidelines for local events can be seen on the Yorkshire and Humber Faiths Forum site at www.yorkshireandhumberfaiths.org.uk/activities/food/

Keighley

'Being British and Muslim' was the focus of a talk organised by Keighley Interfaith Group. Around 45 members and friends of the groups attended the event that was held at the Balti House Restaurant in 14 March to listen to Wahida Shaffi speaking on the topic. The aim of the meal and talk was to hear the views and experiences of a young Muslim woman living in Britain today. On 7 July the Keighley 'Walk for Friendship' gave faith communities and their families the chance to come together and walk through Keighley Town Centre. The walk, organised by Keighley Interfaith Group, began at the Town Hall Square, and went on to Cliffe Castle Park where there was entertainment and a picnic tea.

Leeds

Members of different faith traditions gathered in Leeds for the annual Walk of Friendship sponsored by Leeds Concord Interfaith Fellowship and visited places of worship in Leeds. Participants walked along Chapeltown Road with a rainbow banner and enjoyed each other's company on the tours of Catholic, Pentecostal and Anglican Churches, a gurdwara and a mosque. The Lord Mayor, Mohammed Iqbal, and Favian Hamilton MP led the walk. Photographs of the walk can be viewed at www.concord-leeds.org.uk

Europe

WCRP women's initiative

The World Conference of Religions for Peace (WCRP) invited women from different faiths to come together at a meeting in Rome, in May, to form a Women's Coordinating Committee of Religions for Peace in Europe. The meeting followed a gathering in August of last year at the World Assembly of Religions for Peace in Kyoto, where women of faith from Europe expressed their desire to create a network to promote peace in Europe and to elect a committee to coordinate its activities and projects. Ravinder Kaur Nijjar, from the Sikh community in Scotland, and one Executive Committee member of both the Scottish Inter Faith Council (SIFC) and the Inter Faith Network was invited from the UK. She was selected to be coordinator of the European Women of Faith Coordinating Committee (EWCC), which will bring together and work in partnership with faith-based and inter faith women's organisations to form a European Women of Faith Network. The Committee, together with the Religions for Peace European Governing Board, visited the Vatican and met with senior members of the Pontifical Council and discussed inter faith dialogue. They also met with the Mayor of Rome and the newly formed inter-religious council, an initiative introduced by the mayor.

Global

United Nations

In 2005 the 'Alliance of Civilisations' was founded, at the initiative of the Governments of Spain and Turkey, under the auspices of the United Nations. A High-level Group was formed by former Secretary-General Kofi Annan to explore the roots of polarization between societies and cultures today and to recommend a practical programme of action to address this issue. Further information about the initiative can be found at http://www.unaoc.org/repository/implementation_plan.pdf

In April of this year the UN announced that Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon had designated Jorge Sampaio, the former President of Portugal, as High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations. His role is to 'promote the Alliance of Civilizations as a credible and viable attempt to diminish the dangerous tensions between diverse societies and their threat to international stability,

as assessed in the report of the High-Level Group of the Alliance of Civilizations'. Speaking in May, the High Representative told the Member States of the Organization that many of the political conflicts facing the world today are underpinned by intercultural and inter-religious tensions. "What is at stake in these conflicts is not religion or culture themselves, but the ways in which cultural identity or religious beliefs are often exploited in pursuit of political ends". He noted that intercultural tensions around sensitive issues have the potential to inflame passions and can act as lightning rods for expressions of anger and resentment and that these, in turn, can have widespread political repercussions. Mr Sampaio invited the members of the General Assembly to develop a better understanding of the interaction between the world of politics, on the one hand, and cultural and religious factors, on the other. "And it is crucial that this understanding is reflected in political decision-making and global diplomatic efforts".

The Alliance of Civilizations, he said, will be one of his key priorities in the coming months as it can play an important role in facilitating and fostering partnerships among key players at the levels of government, international organisations and agencies, civil society and the private sector.

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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 regional and local inter faith bodies can be found at www.interfaith.org.uk/locallist.htm

26 August, Redbridge. Redbridge Faith Forum, in East London, in partnership with IG-SOC, an umbrella organisation for Muslims living in Redbridge, will be hosting a multi-faith barbecue at the Drive Methodist Church, on the corner of The Drive and Easter Avenue, Ilford, from 1pm to 7pm. Refreshments and halal, kosher and vegetarian food will be available. Call 020 8708 2478 for more information.

1 September, Bolton. Bolton Interfaith Council are holding an open forum meeting exploring 'The Role of Women and Faith' at Friends Meeting House, Silverwell St, Bolton, BL1 1LS from 12:30 to 2:30pm. Email tony.mcneile@virgin.net for further information.

5 September, Lancaster. A full meeting of Lancashire Forum of Faiths will be held at Friends' Meeting House, Meeting House Lane, Lancaster from 7pm. It will focus on the work that local inter faith organisations are doing at grass roots level as well as the work that local authorities are undertaking with faith groups. For further details about the meeting contact Shahida Akram at shahida.akram@communitygateway.co.uk or telephone 01772 268031.

6-9 September, Coventry. The Coventry Multi-Faith Forum invites people to visit the Coventry Multi-Faith Centre, which is taking part in this year's Heritage Open Day event. The open day celebrates England's fantastic architecture and culture by offering free access to properties that are usually closed to the public or normally charge for admission. Visit www.coventry-multifaith.org for more information.

6-9 September, Leicester. A peace pilgrimage, organised by Leicester Council of Faiths, will take place as part of a Heritage Open Day event. It will start from City Centre, at Fountain Square near Council Hall, at 9.45 am. The walk will cover visits to the Jain Centre, the Shri Sanatan Temple, Guru Teg Bahadur Gurdwara, Hebrew Congregation Centre, Leicester Central Mosque

and St Margaret's Church. Email info@leicestercounciloffaiths.org.uk for more details.

11 September, Suffolk Inter Faith Resource (SIFRE), Ipswich. SIFRE will hold its first annual gathering of members, associates, affiliate representatives and friends. It will be an informal get together that will give those attending an opportunity to learn about what SIFRE's staff have been doing over the last year, which will be followed by a garden party. The events will start at 7:00pm to 9:00pm, but *the venue is to be confirmed*. Contact 01473 343661 for more information or check the website <http://www.sifre.org.uk/index2.htm>

15 September, Greenwich, London. Join the Greenwich Multi-Faith Forum's faith walk from 10am to 5.30pm for a day of visiting places of worship in the Greenwich area. The purpose of the walk is to encourage friendship and understanding amongst people of all faiths in the Borough of Greenwich and in South London. For further information contact Revd Jesse Van Der Valk on 020 8854 2302.

15 September, Telford. Telford and Wrekin Interfaith Group (TWIG) are holding an evening of music and dance featuring the Driftwood Quartet (eclectic mix of Western music), bhangra music (Sikh folk music from the Punjab), Indian Dandia (stick) dance and Jewish circle dancing from 7.30 to 11.00pm. Admission by ticket only: Adult £7, Concessions £5, Children & Young People age 5-16 £2. Includes a buffet and soft drinks. Email twigweb@twig.org.uk to book a place.

18 September, Bradford on Avon. West Wiltshire Inter Faith Group will be celebrating International Peace Day at St Laurence School, Trinity Hall, Ashley Road. The meeting is open to all. The film Peace One Day by Jeremy Gilley will be screened followed by a group discussion. For further information call Farzana Saker on 07834 812 663, or email farzana_saker@yahoo.co.uk

24 September, Taunton. The Somerset Faith Forum will be launched in the Lutterall Room, County Hall, The Crescent from 6.30pm to 8.30pm. The event will have exhibitions, displays and presentations by different faith groups in Somerset. For further details contact Revd Bruce Thompson on 01823 275 756 or email at revbrucet@tiscali.co.uk

26 September, London. 'Inter faith marriages.' A dialogue with Heather al-Yousuf and guest speakers exploring some of the issues faced by couples in mixed faith marriages, from managing aspects of daily life like food, fasting and festivals in a home with two faiths, to deeper questions of identity, parenting, dilemmas about conversion and respect for the unique spirituality of each partner. A collaboration of St Ethelburga's with the Interfaith Marriage Network, who will be launching a new resource pack. 6.30pm at the St Ethelburga's Centre, 78 Bishopsgate, London EC2N 4AG. Further information from enquiries@stethelburgas.org

28 September, Battersea, London. South London Inter Faith Group is holding an informal lunch meeting to share inter faith news and reflect on inter faith experiences. From 12.30pm to 2pm at All Saints' Church, Prince of Wales Drive, Battersea Park, SW11 4BD. For further information call Alan Gadd on 020 8678 8977 or email secretary@southlondoninterfaith.org.uk

1-5 and 12-15 October, Crawley. Crawley Interfaith Network is holding an Interfaith Exhibition. Images from the exhibition show a variety of celebrations, festivals and events that have taken place, over a period of 18 months, within Crawley's faith communities. The exhibition will be on display at the K2 Leisure Centre between 1 to 5 October and at The Hawth Theatre, Hawth Avenue, from 12 to 15 October. Call 01293 438565 or email Vikki Jacobs at vikki.jacobs@crawley.gov.uk for more information.

13 October, Esher, Surrey. Elmbridge Multi-Faith Forum will be holding its Annual Gala at The Joyce Grenfell Centre, Claremont Fan School, Claremont Drive. This is famous for its delicious food, varied and eclectic entertainment. Tickets include food, soft drinks and entertainment and we ask that you make a donation of £5 per person (children are free), to help to meet the costs of the event. Tickets can be booked by calling Geoffrey Morris on 01932 868454.

27 October, Luton. Luton Council of Faiths in conjunction with Grassroots is holding a One World Week faith and citizenship evening with music by Berakah, an inter-faith music initiative, at 6.30pm for a 7pm start. The venue is to be confirmed and reservations are on a first come first served basis. Call 01582 416 964 or email jgrassroots@aol.com

31 November, Gloucestershire. South Gloucestershire Faith Forum will be holding an

event on teenage pregnancy. Participants will include members of faith communities, primarily professionals and representatives of voluntary and community organisations. The event style will be a lively and engaging debate from people who are passionate about the issue. Email Alistair Beattie at alistair@faithnetsouthwest.org.uk or by telephoning 0117 304 2298 for venue details.

13 December, Bradford. At this year's annual conference the Yorkshire and Humber Faiths Forum will showcase the work of local faith forums and facilitate partnership working between faith communities and local and regional agencies. The programme and detailed arrangements are currently under development. To register your interest visit <http://www.yorkshireandhumberfaiths.org.uk/events/>

Local inter faith focus on the environment

Sharing different faith perspectives on the environment and looking after the earth is increasingly becoming a part of local inter faith bodies' programmes.

Luton Council of Faiths and Bedford Council of Faiths held an open day on 18 May to launch a 'Faith Woodlands' project. An area of Maulden Woods, which lies between Bedford and Luton, has been provided by the Forestry Commission to be transformed into a permanent spiritual and educational space. Local faith communities and inter faith will work together in partnership with other organisations to change the area.

Watford Inter Faith Association held a public meeting on 18 June with speakers from four different faith communities addressing the topic of the environment. As part of a Hull and East Riding Interfaith meeting on 17 July aspects of plants in the Bible and the views of different religions on climate change were discussed. London Sustainability Week 2007, from 5-12 June, focused on Faith in London's Environment with seven events looking at a multi-faith action approach encouraging working towards achieving a sustainable London environment, were held. For further details visit <http://www.london21.org/page/36/show/1277>

See under Conferences, Exhibitions and Seminars for details of a forthcoming seminar on the Earth Charter and faith groups.

SPECIAL DAYS AND WEEKS

21-28 October, One World Week. One World Week is an annual opportunity for people from diverse backgrounds to come together to learn about global justice, to spread that learning and to use it to take action for justice locally and globally. The theme this year is 'All Together Now'. For further information about the week and how to take part, see www.oneworldweek.org

19-27 November, Islam Awareness Week. An annual festival of events. This year's theme is 'One World' and many events will focus around both historic similarities and environmental necessities that bind people of all faiths together. Exhibition listings, teachers materials and more will be available on the website <http://www.iaw.org.uk/>

25 November-2 December, Scottish Inter Faith Week at various locations. The aim of Inter Faith Week is to promote dialogue, understanding, and co-operation between Scotland's diverse religious communities. This initiative was born out of the recognition that religious communities can no longer afford to exist in isolation from each other but must seek, instead, to replace barriers of prejudice and fear with bonds of friendship, in order to build a better Scotland for all. The week will open at Aberdeen University on 25 November, launched by John Battle, MP. The national youth conference will take place at Glasgow University on 2 December. For further information contact the Scottish Inter Faith Council on 0141 420 6982 or email admin@interfaithscotland.org

27 January 2008. Holocaust Memorial Day. Holocaust Memorial Day commemorates all of the communities who suffered as a result of the Holocaust and Nazi persecution and provides a focus – through national and local events and activities – for people to think about the continuing repercussions of the Holocaust and more recent genocides on society. This year's theme is 'Imagine...remember, reflect, react'. Remember the past; -Reflect on the present; React to create a better future. Further information at www.hmd.org.uk As 27 January (the annual HMD date) will fall on a Sunday, which may be unsuitable for faith, community and school events, the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust advises organisers to plan their event on a day convenient to them in the weeks either side of 27 January.

CONFERENCES, EXHIBITIONS AND SEMINARS

Until 23 September, British Library, Euston Road, London. "Sacred: Discover what we share". A major British Library exhibition bringing together for the first time some of the world's most important and beautiful religious texts of the Jewish, Christian and Muslim faiths. A series of events will be taking place over the coming weeks at the British Library including musical evenings and talks. A touring programme, "Sacred on Location", being provided in partnership with museums, libraries and heritage organisations is bringing activities inspired by Sacred and based around the theme of faith to a wider audience. For more information about events and booking visit www.bl.uk/sacred

25 September, Taplow. UNESCO UK, in association with the Earth Charter, is holding a day seminar on 'Active Faith: The Earth Charter' to engage people from faith organisations in discussing how and in what ways the Earth Charter can be a vehicle for learning for change towards a just, sustainable and peaceful world. Plans for developing a network of interested organisations from faith perspectives to support and endorse the Earth Charter will be discussed at the seminar. The seminar is being hosted by Soka Gakkai International. Attendance fee is £20 and includes lunch and refreshments. Venue: Taplow Court, Taplow, near Maidenhead. Further information from Toni-Ann Hirayama at Toni-Ann.Hirayama@sgi-uk.org by 7 September.

12 October, Leeds. Day conference 'Faith Schools and Social Cohesion – part of the problem or the solution?' The keynote speaker will be John Battle MP. The event is being organised by Chance Your Arm, an education and training provider. The cost is £149 (less £25 for delegates observing Ramadan). Email cyaconf@aol.com for further details or to book a place.

1-2 November, Belfast. 'Rights and Righteousness: Religious Pluralism and Human Rights'. A conference being organised by the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission and the Irish School of Ecumenics to stimulate discussion about the relation between faith and rights. Some of the questions to be explored at this conference include: What role do cultural and religious traditions have in the articulation of human rights? Are human rights secular necessarily as some advocates would argue? Or perhaps, as others argue, is a religious commitment

necessary to believe that human beings have an inherent dignity that should be respected? By what means should we hope to achieve consensus when we differ?

Visit <http://www.tcd.ie/ise/news/events.php> for further details.

October and November, Liverpool. Liverpool Community Spirit will be holding faith literacy training sessions at Liverpool Cathedral. The first session exploring Judaism, Christianity and Islam, will run on 31 October from 9.30am to 3.00pm and on 7 November from 9.30 am to 3.00pm Hinduism, Buddhism and Sikhism will be covered. The training is to develop understanding and awareness of identity, values, traditions and customs of the faith. For more information call Cressida Godding on 0151 709 3171, email cressida.godding@community-spirit.org.uk or visit www.community-spirit.org.uk

December 2008, Israel. The theme for the 2008 ICCJ (International Council for Christians and Jews) conference in Jerusalem will be the impact of Israeli-Palestinian Conflict on Jewish-Christian dialogue. A variety of lectures, workshops and study visits will take place. From September 2007 onwards the conference will "start" on the Internet. An internet forum composed of experts will discuss the impact of the conflict in the Middle East on Jewish-Christian relations. All those interested in the topic, are invited to read the contributions of the invited experts and to take part in the discussion. If you are interested, please let the ICCJ know at info@iccj-buberhouse.de

COURSES AND TRAINING

Workshops for development workers. SkILD, a project of NAVCA (National Association for Voluntary and Community Action), is running courses in different cities in England to provide skills and knowledge for local development through relevant training to support voluntary and community groups. It particularly welcomes applications from development workers who are supporting faith-based organisations. Courses available cover seven areas, some of which include governance, funding and financial management and organisational development. The cost is £45 for voluntary and community organisations. For an application pack and further course details visit www.skild.org.uk

Roehampton University is launching a new postgraduate programme called Management of Religious and Faith-based Organisations MSc. This programme is aimed at enabling managers and leaders of religious and faith-based organisations to understand their organisations better. For more information visit <http://www.roehampton.ac.uk/pg/mrfo/index.html>

Faith in Maintenance aims to provide training and support for the thousands of volunteers in England and Wales who help to maintain historic places of worship.

Thirty training courses are offered each year for volunteers to look after a variety of faith buildings across the country. Courses are free and are available to any faith group using an historic building for its worship. Faith in Maintenance is supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, English Heritage and the Council for the Care of Churches. For more information telephone 020 7456 0913 or email info@spabfim.org.uk

London, East Midlands and East of England.

'Diversity and Interfaith' is a 10 week course where participants choose to study one of the following: tools of inter faith dialogue, an introduction to Jewish-Christian-Muslim relations or 'Citizenship and interfaith'. Participants are required to attend three seminars, one at the beginning, middle and at end of the course. The courses will be taught by Centre for Jewish Christian Relations (CJCR) and Centre for Muslim Jewish Relations (CMJR) tutors. Much of the course will be via e-learning therefore access to a computer is a necessity. On successful completion participants will receive a certificate from CJCR and CMJR, Cambridge. The London courses begin on 13 November and finish on 29 January 2008. The middle seminar date will be on 11 December. The seminars will run from 7pm to 9pm on these dates and will take place at Friends House, 173 Euston Road (opposite Euston Station). There is a £20 registration fee which includes all materials. Information about the application process can be found at www.cjcr.cam.ac.uk/courses/adie.html The deadline for completed forms is 3 November. Email Trisha Kessler at t.kessler@cjcr.cam.ac.uk or by telephone on 01223 742 352 for details about the East Midlands and East of England courses.

Praying for Peace Domestic Violence and Faith Communities Project. The Greater London Domestic Violence Project (GLDVP) will run a Praying for Peace Domestic Violence and Faith

Communities Project. The scheme aims to build on the dialogue and recommendations put forward at a meeting that took place in between domestic violence service providers and faith leaders at City Hall London, in November 2006. Over the coming year the GLDVP intends to produce guidelines for faith communities and domestic violence services providers detailing the important role faith communities through their interaction with children and young people in challenging, preventing and educating them about domestic violence. It will also highlight information about interventions that can be made to hold perpetrators responsible for their violent behaviour. Training for faith leaders and domestic violence service providers to help build partnerships and understanding will be developed and run over the year. If you are interested in this project and would like more information visit www.gldvp.org.uk or call 020 7785 3860.

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES AND COMPETITIONS

Insight Film Festival. The Insight Film Festival is encouraging young filmmakers to make films to explore faith in modern society and contribute to the growing understanding of faith and faith related issues as an important part of life today. Applicants must be 16-30. The winner will receive a prize of £1,000. Judges will include Sarfraz Manzoor, writer, broadcaster and documentary film maker; Anna Cox, senior development executive with BBC Religion and Ethics; and Rajinder Dudrah, Head of Drama and Senior Screen Lecturer at the University of Manchester. The deadline for entries is 28 September. For more information on the entry rules and for an application pack visit www.insightfestival.co.uk

Community Foundation Network. The Community Foundation Network is a charitable trust supporting local community causes. Community foundations are charities located across the UK dedicated to strengthening local communities, creating opportunities and tackling issues of disadvantage and exclusion. There are 60 community foundations in the UK and they can be found in the East of England, East Midlands, London, North East, North West, Northern Ireland, Scotland, South East, South West, Wales, West Midlands and Yorkshire and Humberside. Visit www.communityfoundations.org.uk to find information about grants available in your area.

Building Communities Fund (East of England).

If you are based within the six counties of Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Norfolk and Suffolk, are a 'community owned' organisation and your work benefits groups of people in the wider community, you can now apply for funding to purchase and develop buildings and land. A new £3m Building Communities Fund is available as part of the East of England Development Agency (EEDA) Investing in Communities programme. The Fund provides both capital grants and bursary awards to help communities achieve greater potential. The Fund will be active for two years until March 2009, and provides capital between £250,000 and £750,000. Bursary awards up to £15,000 to help work up a business plan and grant application. Visit www.buildingcommunitiesfund.org.uk or telephone Andrew Hibbert on 01223 243 087, or email at andrew.hibbert@copandcommunityfinance.coop

The Department for International Development have a mini grants scheme aimed at organisations or networks with an interest in development education work in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales who want to undertake 1-3 year projects which seek to raise awareness and understanding of international development issues; of our global interdependence; of the need for international development; and of the progress that has been made and that is possible. DFID's contribution to a project will be a minimum grant of £1,000 and a maximum grant of £10,000 per year. Find out more at <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/funding/dafminigrants.asp>

RESOURCES

Religions in the UK: 2007-2010 Directory ISBN 9 78 0 901437 30 1 £25.00 (£30 including post and packing) Edited by Paul Weller. A joint project of the Multi-Faith Centre at the University of Derby and the University of Derby, 2007. A 'one stop shop' providing reference material and information about the nine world religious traditions with substantial communities in the UK. A CD-ROM with addresses of over 20,000 Christian places of worship and contact details for 3,500+ other organisations and places of worship across the religions is included. Order from The Multi-Faith Centre, University of Derby, Kedleston Road, Derby DE22 1GB, cheques payable to "The Multi-Faith Centre" For further information contact 01332 591285 or email mfd@derby.ac.uk

A Global Guide to Interfaith Reflections from around the World by Sandy and Jael Bharat ISBN 978 1905047970, published by O Books, 2007. £19.99 (with royalties to UNICEF). An insight into what the authors call ‘the inter faith movement’ through varied personal reflections from more than one hundred activists and academics from all corners of the world looking at the “when, why, who, how and what” of inter faith issues and considering the origins of the inter faith movement, its cause, its issues and its resources. From their differing perspectives the contributors present their inspirations and insights, concerns and motivations and their thoughts about the future. Practitioners also give pointers on organising inter faith events and projects.

Tools 4 Dialogue The Youth and Education Division of Three Faiths Forum has developed *Tools 4 Dialogue*, religious text-based educational programme inspired by the methodology of Scriptural Reasoning. It uses texts from the Tanakh, Qur’an and New Testament to bring Christians, Jews and Muslims to an understanding of each other through their own written teachings while focussing on themes that are relevant to young people today. It is currently being piloted in a number of colleges, universities and schools. For more information, see www.3ff.org.uk

Improved Understanding of South London’s Multi Faith Situation by Sarah Thorley and *An Evaluation of Different Models of Inter Faith Activity* by Siriol Davies. Two pieces of research on inter faith activity published by South London Inter Faith Group. The second of these publications comes with a CD containing interviews relevant to this project. For more information contact Revd Alan Gadd at secretary@southlondoninterfaith.org.uk or telephone 020 8678 8977. Visit www.southlondoninterfaith.org.uk for more details about the group’s activities.

Interfaith Relationships: A Resource Pack for Couples, Heather al-Yousuf and Rosalind Birtwistle for the Interfaith Marriage Project. A resource pack for people in a relationship with someone of a different faith, wanting to know whether it can work, and looking for information and support. At a national consultation seminar in 2006 a number of religious leaders and academics, experts in cultural studies, psychology and relationships, as well as people with personal experience of inter faith and inter racial relationships, identified some of the questions and dilemmas faced by couples in mixed marriages. There were discussions about how to arrange a

wedding ceremony, and how to manage religious rules about food and hygiene, fasts and festivals in a home with two faiths, as well as deeper questions of identity, including dilemmas about conversion and respect for the unique spirituality of each person. Lastly – and most important for many families – there was discussion on how children are brought up when their parents have different beliefs. This resource pack draws on the expertise of those at the seminar to highlight the issues that are likely to affect people involved in marriages between people of different faiths and beliefs. It contains resources such as books, websites and organisations, as well as personal stories. The appendix includes brief descriptions of the main faiths found in Britain today, and what, if anything, they have to say about mixed marriages. The pack can be downloaded at

www.interfaithmarriage.org.uk

Setting up for Success: A practical guide for community organisations. ISBN 978 1 901 974 75 1. £9.95 A new handbook written by Anna Allen and Catriona May published by CDF (Community Development Fund) providing practical tips, templates, case studies and links to resources to help community organisations. Subjects including financial management, promoting your organisation, policies and procedures and employment. The guide was inspired by the experiences of groups across the country that received funding from round one of the Faith Community Capacity Building Fund, Connecting Communities Plus Community Grants, administered by CDF. More information about the handbook and how to order is available at www.cdf.org.uk

Keeping it Together: A Reflective Practice Tool for Faith-Based Community Development Practitioners by Steve Miller (£7) and *Priceless, Unmeasurable? Faith and Community Development in the 21st Century England* by Adam Dinham (£5)

Published in partnership between the FbRN UK (Faith Based Regeneration Network), Anglia Ruskin University, the Churches’ Community Work Alliance and the Community Development Exchange. Two new publications developed from a series of seminars, funded by the Faith Community Capacity Building Fund, drawing together community development practitioners from different faith traditions to reflect and share good practice and issues they encounter. To order either publication visit www.fbrn.org.uk or telephone 020 7471 6791.

Faith and Voluntary Action: An Overview of Current Evidence and Debates.

Faith in the community: The contribution of faith-based organisations to rural voluntary action.

The National Council for Voluntary Organisations, 2007

The first report addresses some of the questions and misunderstanding surrounding faith based organisations, explores some of the more commonly used concepts associated with their work and reviews current evidence regarding their scope, coverage and activities. It reviews the Government's policies and initiatives relating to faith based organisations and the current diversity of views regarding the involvement of faith based organisations in the public realm. The report contains suggestions that whilst faith based organisations are distinctive, by treating them as separate from secular charities or community groups there is a danger that policy makers will alienate civil society. It suggests that both secular and faith based organisations can at times be discriminated against when applying for Government funding and excluded from policy discussions.

The second report was produced in partnership with the Commission for Rural Communities and forms part of the NCVO's programme of research and policy development focusing specifically on the needs of voluntary and community organisations working in rural areas. It examines the contribution of faith based organisations to community life in rural areas, drawing on the experience of those working in this field to identify the type of services and activities faith based organisations provide and the resources they are able to mobilise in support of these activities. There is a particular focus on the changes and challenges they face and how they are responding to these. The report contains 15 case studies.

Both reports are available on the NCVO's website at www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/publications and hard copies can be obtained from NCVO (telephone 020 7520 2484 or email to referral@ncvo-vol.org.uk

Local faith directories

Directories listing contact details and places of worship in areas have become very popular over the last few years. An increasing number of local authorities, SACREs, colleges and local inter faith organisations are researching and developing their own handbooks with the help of faith communities in a bid to promote greater awareness of different communities and to make it easier to draw them into consultation or projects or to arrange visits to their places of worship. Directories also, of course, help those of a particular faith find out where their own places of worship are located. As Councillor Genevieve Hibbs says in the introduction to the directory recently published by the London Borough of Hounslow, "For many people who arrive in the borough, their faith can be a reassuring anchor in new and unusual surroundings." Many directories are available on line. For some examples see:

www.merton.gov.uk/directoryplacesworship.pdf

www.kirklees.gov.uk/community/localorgs/orgdirectory.asp?CatCode=S03/02

www.wandsworth.gov.uk/Home/CommunityServices/RegisterOffice/About/regfaithAtoZ.htm

www.uwe.ac.uk/chaplaincy/faith_communities/ (Bristol)

http://www.ifcg.co.uk/category_idtxt_directory.aspx (Brighton)

http://www3.westminster.gov.uk/docstores/publications_store/Westminster%20Faith%20Directory%202007.pdf (LB Westminster)

<http://www.prescap.co.uk/Faith%20Forum%20website%2016,3,05/directory.htm#buddhist> (Preston)

Correction

MCB's Committee is called the Inter Faith Relations Committee and not Inter Faith Committee as reported in the last issue of *Inter Faith Update*. Further information from interfaithrelations@mcb.org.uk for the attention of Mary Barber.

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 31 October** to: The Newsletter Editor, Inter Faith Network, 8A Lower Grosvenor Place, London SW1W 0EN or e-mail to harriet.crabtree@interfaith.org marking your e-mail 'newsletter'.



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

Tel: 020 7931 7766

Fax: 020 7931 7722

E-mail: ifnet@interfaith.org.uk

www.interfaith.org.uk