

Faith to Faith Newsletter



Newsletter 27

Winter 2007/8

Welcome to our second electronic newsletter, somewhat later than planned, but we hope that you will find some items of interest or challenge. A recurring theme this time is our welcome of people from other faith backgrounds, into our Christian fellowships and churches; this topic is explored in articles by Richard McCallum and Manjulah Shah. Michael Iprgrave looks at Co-belligerence as we seek to work 'honestly and faithfully' with those of different faiths. Three books are reviewed including a new publication, *Distinctly Welcoming* by Richard Sudworth our Faith to Faith Mission Consultant – a highly recommended 'must' for all our readers!

The Faith to Faith Forum of Global Connections is still developing, as we work together and endeavour to maintain the aims and ethos of Faith to Faith. We have had a lovely welcome into the new office and plenty of encouragement for this part of the work. We plan to have two main meetings for all Faith to Faith trainers and supporters each year, the first of these, *Is Evangelism a Sin?* is on Tuesday 10 June in Warwick. Please look out for details on www.globalconnections.co.uk and note the date.

Ann Bower, Co-ordinator of the Faith to Faith Forum and Resource Centre

CONTEXTUALISED WORSHIP OR CONTEXTUALISED CHURCH?

Richard McCallum writes...

September found me at *All Nations Christian College* praying with fir cones and re-telling the story of King David, the warrior worship-leader. I had been invited to lead a time of 'contextualised worship' from the 'non-conformist' tradition at the *Christian Responses to Islam in Britain* conference

This request immediately threw up a lot of questions in my mind. 'Contextualised' to what and for whom? Can you have contextualised 'worship' without contextualised 'church'? For that matter 'what is worship'? Is it just something that happens in a 'slot' during the church 'service'? After all who are we 'serving'? Do we only serve them (or Him?) at 11am on Sundays? And above all what is it that I am not supposed to conform to?!

Now I know what the 'non-conformist' label means with relation to the established church. But it strikes me that even the most non-conforming of us still conform to a pattern of church life and worship that is centred on a one-hour slot (two if you're radical) on a Sunday morning. Non-conformists may replace a spoken liturgy led by a priest with a spontaneous (or not so spontaneous) sung liturgy led by a band (or organ) but in essence the fundamental idea is the same. We come to this building (church?) to meet God, do our duty, shake hands with each other and then go about our daily lives again.

The question is not so much how we can contextualise the 'worship slot' to the needs of believers from other faith backgrounds but rather whether the whole pattern of 'church' as it has developed in the West is contextually relevant to anything at all. Have we generally conformed to something that is not even meeting the needs of the majority population let alone those of the new immigrant communities?

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Of course there is a huge literature today looking at the meaning of church and the shortcomings of the present model. However, in thinking through how we welcome those from other faith backgrounds into our church gatherings we would do well to remember that we are not just providing a 'service' on a Sunday but rather we are forming a new community for them to be part of.

What that community looks like will depend on the context and who is part of it. A community of white working class believers from an unchurched background will look different to a community of mainly middle class professionals. One including those from Hindu families will be different to one including those from Sikh families. A community that includes older Muslims from a practicing orthodox background will look different to a community that includes young Muslims from a secular background, or a radical background, or a Sufi background or..... The first question to ask is 'what is the context'? Who is or will be part of this community?



One thing is certain: community will require time. We cannot be community in a 'one-hour slot'. Community will mean time to get to know one another, to listen to one another, to cry with one another and to pray with one another. Community will recover the importance of eating and drinking together. Our gatherings will include a meal and as part of our eating together we will recover the original context for bread and wine and again make it central to our worship.

Community will also mean inclusiveness. The old will be respected and valued, and the young will be welcomed and involved rather than shunted off into 'junior church'. Families will feel at home and will embrace those who are single or have been rejected by their own families. In this Western European culture has much to learn from other cultures.

Within the community our worship and learning will not just be focused on 'the slot' but will permeate all we do. We will use all of our strength and creativity to worship our maker. Worship will no longer mean just 'the singing bit' (often embarrassing to the unchurched) but will recover silence and awe, psalms and liturgy (yes even a non-conformist can find beauty in liturgy!), the symbolic and movement. Learning will not just consist of a didactic monologue from the front but will recover the art of story telling, group discussion and prayer over the scriptures.

.... And so at CRIB we were trying in a somewhat artificial way to experiment with gathering as a 'contextualised' community that those from a Muslim background (or not) might find familiar and welcoming. We drank coffee and everyone greeted everybody (very important in non-western cultures). There were facilities for people to wash before the formal worship started and space for people to sit on the floor as well as on chairs (both normal for Muslims). There was time for silent reflection and preparation. Psalm 62 was used liturgically to express longing, repentance, confidence and exhortation. Different bodily positions were used during the psalm to reinforce what was being said (after all the psalms are full of standing, kneeling, prostrating and speaking to one another). After the psalm there was a dramatic telling of the story of David and Goliath engaging both adults and children alike, followed by discussion in groups about what people liked (or not) about the story and what they learned. Then there was an application of the story and the opportunity to pray for one another in small groups. Some worship songs followed as a response including one in two languages using an Arab lute. This led into a time of praying for the world, with fir cones being brought and placed on a sheet, symbolically representing our prayers. Afterwards no-one had to rush away. Lunch was served in the same room and over lunch everyone took bread and wine as part of their meal and remembered Jesus Christ, the head of the body, the new community which is called to be open, relevant and contextualised to all.

Richard McCallum is currently doing doctoral research into Muslim-Christian relations in the UK at Exeter University. Richard and his wife Heather lived and worked in the Arab world for 10 years and are currently leading Yeovil Community Church.

WOMEN LEARNING TOGETHER

Manjula Shah writes ...

After a session on women at the first Jewels in His Crown Conference we recognised that women wanted to have a platform. A few of us felt that the timing was right for the vision to encourage women. We met together a few times to seek His face to guide and lead us in the way forward. We meditated on Ephesians 4:11-13 which talks about “discovering, accepting and fulfilling your calling in the body of Christ and finding your place in God’s Kingdom.”



We decided to have weekends for women where they can get away from the daily pressures and learn together to discover themselves and their role. Since then the Women Learning Together project has worked to enable women, especially Asian women, to assess their lives holistically in order to contribute to society in a positive way. Initiated in July 2000, the project was linked to the Alliance of Asian Christians, founded in England in 1990. Through its work, the Alliance has identified that the majority of Asian women lack the knowledge, skills, confidence and support that would enable them to participate effectively in leadership and decision making processes in their homes, work and communities.

The Women Learning Together project has sought to address this gap by providing training and mentoring to women participants and through building up the capacity of the management committee and volunteers. The residential weekend workshops and one-day conferences have provided a safe space for women to share their experiences in small group settings. The majority of the participants have been Christian women, some of whom come from disadvantaged backgrounds. Our goal is to empower enough women through this project so they can run projects within their own organisations for their own benefit.

The vision of the Alliance of Asian Christians is to see the integration of Asian Christians as equals within the wider society at every level providing leadership, inspiration and fellowship that will bring about a reconciled and just society which is pleasing to God. In particular the Alliance has sought to help Asian Christians be culturally relevant and prophetic in:

- Providing a refuge for Asian Christians
- Representing Asian Christians in the wider church and society
- Challenging, collaborating with and inspiring the mainstream church
- Strengthening and develop Asian Christians towards leadership responsibilities.
- Providing advice for denominations and agencies
- Strengthening Women's ministries
- Racial Justice

Sixteen years later the Alliance's network incorporates the majority of independent Asian Fellowships and a growing number of denominational congregations that have Asian minorities within their fellowships. 40% of all Asian Christians attend 'English Churches'. Members of the Alliance come from all the mainstream denominations and the Evangelical Alliance.

The vision of the Women Learning Together project is to:

- Equip trainers with materials and skills to deliver training for groups in different parts of the country.
- Identify and equip more women to deliver training in their own communities.
- Expand resource pool i.e. Working Group Members, seasonal volunteers and equipment like books, training manuals etc.
- See women grow in wholeness, through working collectively and learning together.
- See women released to use their gifts with confidence within their communities.
- See women discovering, accepting and fulfilling their purpose in life for the wider community.

Women participants have developed a variety of skills at the workshops:

- Interpreting skills from regional languages to English and vice versa
- Leadership / pastoral skills of lay persons;
- Release of specific talents in leading small working groups;
- Networking skills to keep in touch with women from other areas and organisations;
- Presentation of activities at national-level Asian Christian conferences.



“For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” Eph 2:10

Manjula Shah is the Co-Chair of the Alliance of Asian Christians

REFLECTIONS ON ‘CO-BELLIGERENCE’

Michael Ipgrave writes ...

Should Christians see themselves as ‘co-belligerents’ with people of other faiths? That was a question raised recently through the ‘Faith to Faith’ discussion e-group, arising out of discussions on the theological basis of co-operating with other faith community organisations in the area of international development and aid. ‘Co-belligerency’, it had been suggested,¹ could be a useful term to describe an arrangement whereby two parties fundamentally different from one another come together to engage in a common struggle for (or, more usually, against) a particular cause. In a Jubilee Centre paper entitled ‘Can the enemy of my enemy be my friend?’ Daniel Strange defines the concept as follows: “‘Co-belligerence’ is a political or military term usually meaning an alliance between parties against a common foe.² Co-belligerence works on the basis of distinguishing between lesser and greater evils, and of setting short-term objectives to achieve a particular purpose.’ As a recent example from the United Kingdom, Strange gives the example of the concerted lobbying against Government plans to legislate against incitement to religious hatred which brought together the unlikely combination of the Islamic Human Rights Commission, *The Gay Times*, the comedian Rowan Atkinson and the Christian Institute.

The example given, of a fiercely fought political campaign, is perhaps significant, for the imagery embedded in the word ‘co-belligerency’ is that of struggle, hostility, embattlement. Why, one might ask – and many respondents to the e-group discussion did ask – should the aggressive (and rather arcane) ‘co-belligerency’ be preferred to the more eirenic (and much more readily understood) ‘co-operation’.³ There seem to be two related factors here, which together point to some of the challenges which Christians face in relating to people of other faiths – issues which are perhaps felt with a particular force by those who would describe themselves as evangelicals.

In the first place, even amongst Christians who want to affirm wholeheartedly the propriety, even the necessity, of making common cause with people of other faiths in relation to particular issues, there is still an understandable desire to say in the next breath, ‘but you would have to understand that this does not mean that we do not disagree’. ‘Co-operation’, at least as that word is commonly used, seems to suggest some sort of a partnership based on shared values, and that is the point at which many Christians become rather nervous in inter faith encounter; ‘co-belligerence’ may seem more appropriate to some because of the limited, task-specific, and perhaps rather wary nature of the common working which it indicates. Yet surely this is to misunderstand the nature of the practical co-operation called for in inter faith encounter. Shared commitment to a common cause need not imply a convergence of values more far-reaching than that which is sufficient to build an effective platform for

¹ The term, which to the best of my knowledge is found only among evangelical circles, was promoted notably by the late Francis Schaeffer. It appears to be much more current in the USA than in the UK.

² Jubilee Centre Article:

http://www.jubilee-centre.org/online_documents/CobelligerenceandcommongraceCantheenemyofmyenemybemyfriend.htm

³ In what follows, I draw on the insights of the majority of e-group respondents who urged that ‘co-operation was a term preferable to ‘co-belligerence’. It should also be noted, though, both that a small minority of respondents felt that the term did have a definite, if limited, use, and also that one person drew attention to an article by Steve Camp, entitled ‘The Dangers of Evangelical Co-belligerence’ which attacked the concept from the other end, as it were, i.e. because in validating even a limited area of shared action with other faiths (or with Roman Catholics or other non-evangelical Christians), co-belligerence compromised the integrity and purity of Gospel proclamation. This is not a line of argument I wish to explore further here. Steve Camp’s article:

<http://www.alm.org/page.php?page=template1.php&pageid=374369ca34d106db5e6e196671d8d42d>

action; what it does require, though, is a genuine and mutual trust which can acknowledge continuing and deep-seated differences between parties.

This point is made powerfully in a sermon preached by John Wesley on the unlikely verse 2 Kings 10.15, which describes how, after killing Jezebel and the house of Ahab in a bloody palace coup in Jezreel, Jehu meets Jehonadab son of Rechab and asks: “Is your heart as true to mine as mine is to yours?” Jehonadab answered, “It is.” Jehu said, “If it is, give me your hand.” Reflecting on this unpromising text in light of the divisions of the Christianity of his time which so often inhibited co-operation, Wesley asks, and answers his own questions: ‘Although a difference in opinions or modes of worship may prevent an entire external union, yet need it prevent our union in affection? Though we cannot think alike, may we not love alike? May we not be of one heart, though we are not of one opinion? Without all doubt, we may’.⁴ Later in the sermon he insists that this building of trust, and hence co-operation, within a recognition of difference is precisely the opposite of what he calls ‘speculative latitudinarianism’. If we translate his insight from the world of eighteenth-century denominations to that of twenty-first-century religions, we can see ‘liberal relativism’ as the equivalent of the ‘speculative latitudinarianism’ he was keen to avoid.

Relating honestly and faithfully with the religious other, then, does not require us to think in terms of co-belligerency rather than co-operation. But the term implies, of course, not just a bilateral relationship, but a third point, the common foe against which the two parties are to combine, and it is this reference to a shared enemy which may provide another reason why co-belligerency seems a more appealing challenge to some than the rather more anodyne co-operation. Christians can become easily frustrated by the way in which the Gospel message, with all its powerful imagery of spiritual warfare, is so often emasculated to become little more than an injunction to be nice to people. Given that successful inter faith relations do in fact begin in the first place with treating people of other faiths in a spirit of kindness and friendship, it can be quite tempting to transpose this frustration onto an absent third party, particularly if that helps to strengthen the relationship with the immediate person who is present. Certainly my experience of interfaith relations has often been that this is a powerfully cohesive force: nothing binds people of faith together so effectively as identifying a common foe, whether that be the Government, the media, or just the world at large.

Yet Christians cannot for long rest satisfied with the identification of a common enemy as a basis for common action. For one thing, in the British context at least, the obvious candidate against whom ‘the faith communities’ would be making a common *bellum* would be what may be vaguely described as ‘secularism’. Whatever the precise content of that word – which can often function as little more than an ill-defined ‘boo-word’ for the religious – there will be some causes, such as safeguarding freedom of religion or ensuring equal rights for women and men, where most British Christians will want to align themselves firmly with a ‘secular’ position, even when that is under assault in the name of ‘religion’. More deeply and more problematically, however successful a struggle against a common foe may be in bringing together people of differing opinions, this surely is a sign of the fallen nature of our humanity, rather than a foundation on which a Christian approach to inter faith encounter should be built. After all, Luke reports that it was on the day of the Lord’s passion that Herod and Pilate ‘became friends with each other; before this they had been enemies’.⁵ That biblical hint of a co-belligerency which is forged in precise opposition to God’s own Son should surely make Christians pause before adopting such an attitude themselves.



The Ven Dr Michael Ipgrave is Archdeacon of Southwark and a former national inter-faith advisor to the Church of England.

⁴ Sermon XXXIV, ‘On the Catholic Spirit’, in *Forty-Four Sermons on Several Occasions* (London: Epworth, 1952), p. 443.

⁵ Lk 23.12.

NEWS – OUT AND ABOUT ...

News from the London School of Theology:

After 12 years as founding Director of the Centre for Islamic Studies and Muslim-Christian Relations at London School of Theology, Peter Riddell has returned to his native Australia. From 1 January 2008 he will take up the position of Professorial Director of a new Centre for the Study of Islam and Other Faiths at the Bible College of Victoria in Melbourne.

A magazine for Muslim-Christian dialogue:



Phil Martin of the School for African and Oriental Studies (SOAS) writes ...

“As Muslims and Christians in the University of London, we don’t talk to each other enough. It follows that we don’t know much about each other and don’t spend much time together. The ultimate aim of this new magazine is to provide a channel for discourse which would at least sow the seed for a “network of open, honest and committed personal relationships between Christians and Muslims” in London’s student population.” Quoted are the words of Ataullah Siddiqui (lecturer at the Islamic Foundation) in his speech as co-chair of the national ‘Christian Muslim Forum’ at its launch in 2006.

Read more about the magazine proposal on:

http://www.christianmuslimforum.org/downloads/Aims_of_the_Magazine.doc where there is also a list of suggested articles mainly needed from Muslim writers. The Christian Muslim Forum is supporting this initiative to encourage and deepen dialogue between Christian and Muslim students. (Christian Muslim Forum, Ludgate House, 107 - 111 Fleet Street, London, EC4A 2AB, 0207 936 9650 or www.christianmuslimforum.org)

Lapidomedia

The recent launch of this new charity, the brainchild of Dr Jenny Taylor, set up to promote religious literacy in world affairs, was well supported by the media, leaders of interested groups, friends and family, all of whom gathered to hear Dominic Lawson in conversation with The Rt Revd Dr Michael Nazir-Ali on the subject of *Neutrality or Truth? Reporting Islam Post-7/7*. It was an inspiring and challenging event. Do visit www.lapidomedia.com for more information and to hear the conversation.

Ann Bower, Faith to Faith Forum and Resource Centre



RESOURCES

In the Beginning – a month of Daily Meditations from al-Taurat

This book of meditations on the first three chapters of Genesis by Yaqub Duncan offers thoughtful, sensitive and helpful answers to some basic questions that may be asked by Muslims. It would make a lovely gift for those amongst you may be working. Available for £4.50 plus post and packing, from Kitab, <http://www.kitab.org.uk/>

Christian responses to Islam, Islamism and 'Islamic terrorism'

Do take a look at Colin Chapman's Cambridge Paper written in July 2007, available at http://www.jubilee-centre.org/cambridge_papers/

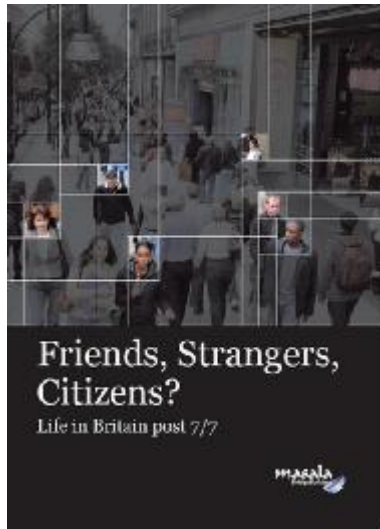
From the Jubilee Centre Website: *Why is it that some Muslims become Islamists and some Islamists turn to violence? A summary of some basic convictions held in varying degrees by all Muslims is followed by an explanation of how Islamists have developed these ideas in response to various challenges (especially political) of the modern world. This analysis brings us face to face with what has been called 'the struggle for the soul of Islam'. It is only against this background that we are in a position to suggest how Christians can respond at many different levels to Muslims in general and to Islamists in particular.*

Donations and Subscriptions

Many of you were kind enough to subscribe to Faith to Faith, when it was a separate trust, often also using Gift Aid for your donations and some of you took out Standing Orders. We are very grateful indeed for your past support. As we are now working under the umbrella of Global Connections, future donations are payable to *Global Connections* but can still be earmarked for the *Faith to Faith Forum*, if you would like to do that. Old Standing Orders need to be cancelled and replacement forms for all donations will be available with this newsletter. Thank you!

Talking honestly

Charmain Rasiah recommends a new resource from the South Asian Development Partnership



Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.
Matthew 5: 9.

Most of us can probably remember where we were on the morning of 7th July 2005. The events of that morning have had a profound effect on British society, not only in terms of the nation's security, but on relations between communities. Although the attack had been anticipated after 9/11, there was genuine shock when it emerged that the bombers were born and bred in the UK. It soon became apparent that the bombings were not a one-off incident. Underlying tensions were heightened, and relations have been further strained over issues such as multiculturalism and some responses to terrorism.

It may be harder to remember where you were on the 21st July 2005, the date of the first set of failed London bombings. The entire South Asian Concern team was meeting together that day to discuss and pray about our work. As we watched the breaking news

story, we realised that we urgently needed to think about what we were going to do to respond. Although not all those involved in terrorism are from South Asian backgrounds, the fact that many are initially described as 'Asian' meant that these events were going to affect Asians in a specific way, whether they were Muslim or not.

Our first response was to organise a conference in November 2005, under the auspices of South Asian Development Partnership (SADP): **7/7 and Beyond: A South Asian Response to the London Bombings**. This was followed by **7/7 and Beyond: Peace for our Communities** in Reading, in September 2006. Although it was good to bring people together, we realised that these one-off events would not be enough and so started working on a resource that could be used in the local context.

Friends, Strangers, Citizens? Life in Britain post 7/7, our new DVD discussion resource, is the result. It is the latest module in the Masala BridgeBuilders series and aims to give people the opportunity to voice their opinions, as well as listen to the perspectives of others. Talking openly, rather than ignoring the issues, is a key step in promoting understanding between people and building bridges - part of the long term solution for damaged community relations.

The DVD is split into 5 short sections (approx. 6 minutes each) covering the following topics:

- What happened on 7/7?
- Is religion the problem or the solution?
- Is multiculturalism dead?
- Freedom of speech vs respect?
- What kind of Britain do we want?

Community leaders, young people and people on the street give their views on issues such as the threat of terror, the role of religion, multiculturalism and freedom of speech. The DVD also includes worksheets with further material and discussion questions, which can be printed and copied freely.

The content and format of the material means it can be used in a range of contexts. It is particularly suitable for PSHE, Citizenship and RE lessons and is an ideal discussion starter for community groups and youth groups, allowing people to look at the issues in depth. It has already been taken up by various education authorities and community groups, receiving warm commendations from teaching professionals and youth leaders. As the new academic year starts we are planning a second wave of publicity.

It was church groups that we had in mind when first developing the Masala BridgeBuilder material. As well as helping people to explore the issues and gain an insight into the views of others, the DVD is a resource for those who want to reach out into their local communities. It can be used with existing community activities that churches are involved in, such as carer and toddler groups, youth groups and senior citizen clubs, or as part of a new outreach initiative. As well as prompting discussion, the

questions and material aim to help people think about their own attitudes and beliefs. Talking about these issues together is an ideal way to build relationships that can pave the way for deeper conversations.

The DVDs are £10 each, plus 15% postage and packing, up to a maximum of £10 in the UK. To place an order or for more information, contact SADP, PO Box 43, Sutton, Surrey, SM2 5WL, 020 8770 9717, office@southasian.org.uk

View clips on www.southasian.org.uk or www.YouTube.com (search for 'friendstrangercitzn')
timely... a useful and provocative discussion starter
Andrew Smith, Youth Specialist, Christian-Muslim Forum
a high quality discussion resource, especially for Key Stages 4 and 5
Jenny Rowley, Lead Advisor PSHE & Citizenship Education, London Borough of Sutton

OPPORTUNITIES

A sense of Respect – workshop, 'Developing youth work across the faiths'

On Monday 21 January at The Priory Rooms, The Friends Meeting House, 40 Bull Street, Birmingham, B4 6AF, this workshop sponsored by the Department of Children, Schools and Families, is run jointly by The National Youth Agency and the Church of England and the day itself will be led by Maxine Green and Carmel Heaney who have considerable experience in this area of work. At the workshop there will be a free book of ideas and resources for interfaith work, a chance to hear from local projects, to look at youth work approaches that work well, opportunities for sharing and networking and lunch. Details and booking form from Maxine@isbd.co.uk



Faiths, HOPE and Diversity: Bringing hope amongst people of different faiths

Hope 2008 is a great opportunity for Christians to make a difference to their communities. For many this means working amongst people of different faiths. What are the issues and questions that we might face as we work in this situation? Should we be about mission or dialogue or both? How do we share our faith whilst acknowledging that they are committed to theirs? And what do we say when people ask why we're taking part in Hope 2008?

Faiths, Hope and Diversity is a training day to help Christians think through the issues that working amongst people of other faiths raises. Each day is led by Gill Marchant and Andrew Smith of Scripture Union www.scriptureunion.org.uk who, between them, have over 25 years' experience of working with people of other faiths. The days will give people a chance to think through some of the issues, reflect on what the Bible has to say, ask questions and get practical help.

Birmingham. Saturday 2nd February 2008 10:30am - 3:30 pm, booking and details from Andrew Smith: Smeeee@scriptureunion.org.uk
Manchester Saturday 23rd February 2008, 10.30am to 3.30pm, booking and details from Tracey Jackson: tracey.jackson1@btconnect.com
Cost: £10 per person, including handouts and lunch.

Study days, led by Dr Chris Hewer, at St Ethelburga's

Saturday 9 February: **Can only Christians be saved?**

Even based on a simple reading of the Bible, it does not carry a single message on this question. It is possible to read the text to say that only Christian believers will reach heaven, or that salvation is universal, or something in between. This study day traces each of these positions through Bible, tradition and modern theological discussion. It raises critical questions to each position and leaves the outcome for personal decision. To cover the cost of additional duplication of material, the fee for this day is £20 rather than £15.

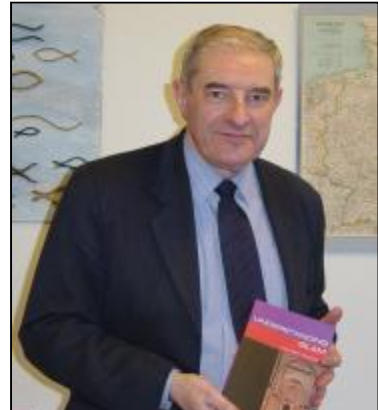
Saturday 15 March: **Muslims in Britain and Western Europe**

We explore the Muslim presence in Britain pre-1945, the patterns of migration of Muslims to Britain and other European countries, the development of the Muslim communities in the UK, the situation today and then look to the future.

Saturday 19 April: Islam: The Basics

Saturday 17 May: **From conception to the hereafter**

The life-cycle of a Muslim from conception, through birth and growing up, through marriage, divorce and family life, through the status of women, food laws, illness and medical ethics, to death, burial and the hereafter.



Dr Chris Hewer

Saturday 14 June: **Doctor Hewer's Surgery**

A day set aside for those who have done the Understanding Islam course or Islam: The Basics study day, who want the opportunity to send in or bring along particular topics or questions for discussion. Topics in advance to: ChrisHewer@stethelburgas.org

Each Study Day is held at St Ethelburga's, 78 Bishopsgate, London EC2N 4AG, from 1100 to 1700 at £15 per day (unless otherwise stated), including coffee, lunch and tea. Please book via www.stethelburgas.org or Mrs Angela West on 020 7496 1610. It is possible to run these study days free of charge in other locations. To discuss this, contact Dr Chris Hewer, St Ethelburga Fellow in Christian-Muslim Relations, 02077 389221, 07920 533589, ChrisHewer@stethelburgas.org

Opening the Door on Islam – Relating with Muslims

This popular day conference to help Christians to love our local and global Muslims is being repeated in Loughborough and Wolverhampton in March. Details from Global Connections: 01926 487755

Jesus and the Christian Gospel for All? How to offer the challenge of the Christian faith to our Hindu, Sikh or Muslim neighbours

This study day will be led by Canon Dr Andrew Wingate and Revd John McGinley on Saturday 8 March, 10am – 3 15 pm at St Philip's Church, Evington Road, Leicester LE2 1QN. It is open to both lay and ordained. The cost is £5 and participants will need to bring a packed lunch. Details from Kathy Morrison, 0116 273 3459 or Kathy.morrison@stphilipscentre.co.uk , www.stphilipscentre.co.uk

Centre for Islamic Studies symposium



This annual symposium at London School of Theology will take place on Saturday 19 April. Topic and speakers yet to be confirmed but the day will address an issue of current interest with a view to improving Muslim-Christian relations through heightened awareness. For further details please contact Lisbet Diers l.diers@lst.ac.uk, tel: 01923 456160.

Refresh for Mission

The Challenge to 'stay' in mission is a battle that many face. 'Refresh for Mission' provides input, insight and support to many who are looking for some space and time to review, recharge and 'refresh' for future mission service. Details of this course at All Nations Christian College for those engaged in mission in the UK and overseas from 12 to 18 July 2008 may be found at <http://www.allnations.ac.uk/>

Jewels in His Crown 2008

INSPIRED - Inspired to Unity, Inspired to Grow, Inspired to Go

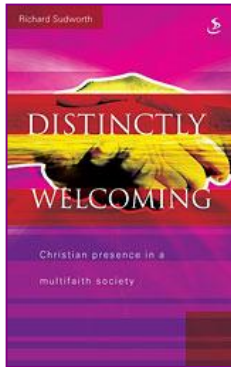
Join us for an exciting conference from 18 to 20 July at Cliff College, Derbyshire, including worship, teaching, sharing and encouragement for British Asians and all engaged in ministry amongst British Asians.

Guest Speakers Ram Gidoomal and Krish Kandiah

Do make a note of the date – now and check out the website for full details in the next few weeks: <http://www.jewelsinhiscrown.co.uk>



BOOK REVIEWS



Distinctly Welcoming, Richard Sudworth (Scripture Union, 2007)

isbn 978 1 84427 3171

Review by John Corrie

This is a superb resource for Christians and churches who want to build bridges of grace-filled and gospel-faithful relationship with other faiths. Richard is a practical theologian who earths his biblical and missional reflection in a wealth of useful and encouraging strategies for being 'distinctly welcoming'. The title gives the key to his approach; he suggests a model of mission which holds in creative tension a confident faith in our theological distinctives with a generous and open welcome to others. To hold a distinctive faith which we can articulate clearly secures us with a strong sense of identity which becomes the key to a respectful and inclusive embrace of diversity. When we know who we are in Christ we can build relationships of respect which are gracious, open-hearted and unconditional. Yes, these relationships will be risky, vulnerable and unpredictable, but nurtured by scripture, prayer and worship we have strong foundations to reach out, true to our faith, but willing to be shaped by our experiences and encounters with others. The call is to be neighbours, witness, friends and partners.

Although the theology here is treated with a light touch it is by no means superficial. The style is conversational but the content is substantial. There is a strong theoretical and biblical framework for the practical and realistic outworking of it at both individual and church level. The book gives theological and missional shape to productive and genuine encounters. Beginning from the *missio dei* Richard moves beyond the rather sterile taxonomy of exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism to the recognition that a transforming God is at work beyond our boundaries and his grace constantly surprises us. Being welcoming and inclusive does not therefore need to imply denial of the uniqueness of Jesus; having porous boundaries does not mean we compromise our distinctives. It is therefore possible to hold together dialogue and witness, the 'yes' and the 'no' of Jesus, the embrace and the critique of culture, and the love and judgment of the Kingdom.

The book is structured as ten readily assimilated chapters which integrate innumerable practical insights with very accessible and non-technical theological and biblical foundations. The big themes of evangelism, community action, youth ministry, culture, reconciliation, spirituality and ecclesiology are all given generous space and related appropriately to the main theme. Each chapter ends with a creative take on a relevant bible passage, guidance for prayerful reflection, challenges for practical engagement and a wealth of resources to follow up including internet sites. The book would be an excellent study guide for groups in a church context who need encouragement in relating to their multi-faith communities. The structure deliberately reflects Richard's creative, cyclical approach which takes us through biblical reflection, prayer and worship, relational encounter, radical lifestyle choices and back to a fresh understanding of our theology. The authority of scripture is thereby released as we live it out in a relational spirituality of mission.

The hope is that this book will nurture a whole new generation of Christians who will hear the call into relational mission in contexts of religious diversity. It's a modest sized book with a massive potential.

The Revd Dr John Corrie is a Tutor at Trinity College, Bristol and is also editor of the Dictionary of Missionary Theology (IVP, 2007), published in September 2007

Distinctly Welcoming is available from the Global Connections shop:

<http://www.globalconnections.co.uk/Shop/resources/products.htm>

And to read more on related topics, do visit www.distinctlywelcoming.com



John Corrie

Why the Rest Hates the West, Meic Pearse, SPCK 2003 isbn 0-281-05601-3

The Islamist, Ed Hussain, Penguin 2007 isbn 978-0-141-03043-2

John Ray writes ...

There is a case for reviewing, or for reading, these two very different books together because they depict in clearest detail two sides of the ideological struggle of our time.

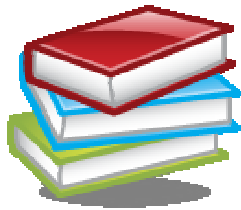
As a historian Meic Pearse, author of *Why the Rest Hates the West* brings depth and perspective to his critical analysis of current western anti-culture. He teases out with rare authority the relationships within time and culture, for instance between Protestantism and commercial success, or in the decline of over-arching expectation of progress. The book inhabits and explores a thinly populated borderland between the worlds of faith, sociology and current geo-political reality. His writing will have special value for Christians and for non-Christians who lack classical-historical education and who thus find it hard to understand how western society has reached its present impasse.

Pearse sees the West as embarked on a course of catastrophic conflict, inflicting through conscious or unconscious cultural imperialism its own 'anti-culture and anti-values' on the non-West. He is clear that the hope for healing has to begin here, not there.

British Christians who circulate largely among fellow believers may find it hard to accept the non-Western view of Westerners as 'rich, dominant, morally contemptible barbarians: - for despising tradition, despising religion, for the shallowness and triviality of their culture, for their sexual shamelessness, for their absence of any sense of honour'.

Those of us who have lived in the non-West through the later decades of the last century will more readily accept his analysis, with its grim reminder of the 'demographic trump card' reflecting the failure to reproduce in the white populations of Europe and North America.

Yet all is not doom! A beginning of a fight back is outlined, albeit one which requires Christians to confront the media-fed anti-culture which has so eroded our social well-being. As the bad fruit of sixties 'freedoms' becomes more apparent, he sees hope for renewed challenge, re-introducing the language of duty in place of rights in public discourse, demanding that authority uphold morality, family and social relations which have been branded as oppressive over the last forty years.



The book is a bracing one. We live in exhilarating times!

Ed Husain's *The Islamist* is a moving and significant personal account which also has unusual national significance. If there is one book that Gordon Brown should read, ponder and inwardly digest (perhaps he has!) it is this. His story begins in one of London's many wonderful primary schools. 'The colour-blind

humanity of most of our teachers, strength in the face of tyranny, taught us lessons for the rest of our lives. Britain was our home, we were children of this soil...And yet, lurking in the background were forces that were preparing to seize the hearts and minds of Britain's Muslim children.'

The sub-title, 'Why I joined radical Islam in Britain, what I saw inside and why I left' only hints at the extraordinary struggle for the writer's soul. It is also the arena of the battle for the loyalties of thousands of young British Muslims. As a young man on National Service inducted to MI6, I studied the Foreign Office Bible of the fifties, Carew Hunt's 'Theory and Practice of Communism'. The deep deceit and double talk promoted and practised by Lenin and Trotsky in the 1920's is paralleled and exceeded by the manner of the 16 year old Husain's seduction into radical Islam. Moving from the piety of his Bengali parents' home he is swayed by the political vision of Maududi into embracing a politicised ideology very different from the Bareillvi-Sufi Islam of most British South Asian Muslims. From there it was a slippery path into the arms of the Hizb ut-Tahrir. His journey back has been long, hard and brave.

The intuitions of my long experience of political Islam are at many points borne out and amplified by Husain's unfinished journey.

Read this book!

Review by the Revd John Ray who has worked with the Church Mission Society and Interserve and is currently involved in the Springfield Project at St Christopher's Church, Moseley, Birmingham.

SUPPORTING CHRISTIANS IN RELATING TO OTHER FAITHS

Faith to Faith, a Christian consultancy and network of individuals, groups and churches, became part of the Global Connections network in August 2007 as a Forum and Resource Centre on other faiths in the UK. We continue to offer expertise and courses for Christians who wish to engage with people of other faiths and we are planning more web-based material in the near future within the Global Connections website.

Richard Sudworth, our Mission Consultant with special concern for the 18 to 30 age group, continues as a key member of the network, is available at richardsudworth@faithtofaith.org.uk or 07891 635664 and is also happy to converse with you via www.distinctlywelcoming.com

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