



# Concord

LEEDS INTERFAITH FELLOWSHIP  
www.concord-leeds.org.uk

## Newsletter - April 2007

### Understanding Scriptures

**T**HE new series of Concord sessions on the scriptures of the world's religions kicked off in March, with a two-hour session at Thomas Danby College on the Jewish scriptures, led by Rabbi Jason Kleiman. He gave a fascinating, lively talk from the Orthodox Jewish perspective, spiced with humour.

We learned that the writings of the Torah (the first five books of the "Old" Testament) are accepted as the exact and unchanged, revealed word from God to Moses. He explained how these scriptures themselves—and translations in particular—are not always enough to give the full message. When they were first given to Moses there was a great deal of 'extra' that was 'understood'. It was

all part of the community life, handed down orally from generation to generation. It was so commonplace that it didn't need to be detailed in the written word. That was, of course, until the Diaspora, when Jewish communities and families moved and split and much of what had been 'understood' was lost. So between 2nd century BCE and 6th century CE learned Rabbis discussed, explained and debated so that the oral traditions could be written down.

The diverse ways in which any passage can be read, and the different layers of meaning it can have, were illustrated by a number of examples. Rabbi Kleiman also fielded a variety of questions.

The meeting was attended by people from eight different faiths, and it was good to see several new faces.



### Subscription Time!

Concord membership subscriptions are now due for renewal. Your subscriptions help to pay the cost of printing and mailing the newsletter, programmes and other information three times a year, and the costs of speakers at our meetings.

Membership rates are:

**Individual—£7; concessions (student, senior)—£4; family £10; Group £15.**

Please send a cheque payable to Concord, with your contact details, to Concord Membership Secretary,  
John S. Summerwill,  
263 Lidgett Lane, Leeds LS17 6PP.

## Concord Programme for Spring/Summer 2007

**Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> April 7.30pm** At the Interfaith Centre, Listerhills Rd BD7 1HD  
**Visit to Bradford Concord** for a talk by Clair Dowgill of the West Yorkshire Chaplaincy Project, "Helping ex-prisoners re-integrate after release"

**Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> April 7pm**  
in the Beech Room at Thomas Danby College  
**Understanding Scriptures: an introduction to the Christian scriptures**, looking at some specific passages and their importance for today's faith community

**Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> May 1pm**  
**Walk of Friendship** along Chapeltown Road visiting Our Lady & St Stanislav, Church of God of Prophecy, Sikh Temple, Islamic Centre, St Aidan's Church  
See separate sheet for details

**Wednesday May 30<sup>th</sup> 7pm**  
in the Beech Room at Thomas Danby College  
**Understanding Scriptures: an introduction to the Islamic scriptures**, looking at some specific passages and their importance for today's faith community

**Wednesday June 6<sup>th</sup> 7.15pm**  
**Visit to Beth Hamadrash Hagadol Synagogue.** 399 Street Lane Leeds17  
Security gate to car park will be opened at around 7.05pm. Meet at the main entrance for a short tour and talk on Orthodox Judaism (and maybe an opportunity to hear the choir)

**Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> June 7pm**  
**Annual General Meeting** at Carlton Hill Friends Meeting House (opposite Leeds University, Woodhouse Lane)  
Talk by the PeaceJam Girls on their experience of meeting Nobel Peace Laureates in Denver, Colorado last August. Review of the year. Looking ahead. Election of officers.

### Other Events of Interest to Concord Members

**Saturday 7th April**  
**Sikh Community Celebration of Vaisakhi**, starting at 10.30am from the Sikh Temple, Chapeltown Road and processing to Millennium Square

**Thursday 26th April 10am - 4pm**  
**Uniting Women of Faith Conference** at Thackray Medical Museum, Leeds  
Guest speakers Doreen Lawrence and Sister Jayanti. Workshops on Food, Cultural & Religious Dress, Gender Equality, Health & Relaxation. Cost £5 waged, free unwaged. Contact Pam Butcher, Leeds Faiths Forum, Chantry House, Victoria Road, Leeds LS3 5JB 0113 3885090

## *Religious Mapping of Leeds*

**A**T Concord's first open meeting of the new year, on 31<sup>st</sup> January, ten students from Leeds University's Department of Theology & Religious Studies gave a presentation of the project they had undertaken in Chapeltown. Unlike most pieces of university work, this was a team effort with each student taking a different strand then finally bringing everything together to produce the Religious Mapping of the Chapeltown area. Making the presentation was part of the assessed work, and several university staff were present to support and assess the students.

Prof Kim Knott introduced the students, who then gave an overview of the themes and issues covered plus the way they had approached the project. There was a brief history of the area followed by comments on the main religions found there, well illustrated in a powerpoint presentation of photos, maps and diagrams. Afterwards they answered questions from the audience.

We were told about the changes in the Christian community as migrants arrived from Eastern Europe, the Caribbean and Africa and how the Jewish community of

the early 20<sup>th</sup> century has moved further north and been replaced by Sikhs and Muslims. I must have led a very sheltered life, not being aware that Spencer Place is a 'red light' district.

Problems of racism, identity and a sense of community were also explored, it being noted how there appeared to be some segregation based on religion, nationality and language. There have been efforts to bring the different communities together, one of the most successful being the summer carnival in Potternewton Park.

The students had to admit that it was difficult to come to any particular conclusion—simply because things are always changing.

This was a most interesting meeting on several levels—because of what it revealed to us about the importance of religious identity and community, especially for migrants; for what it showed us about the methods of religious mapping, and what can be achieved by it; and not least for the introduction it gave us to Chapeltown, the area in which our multi-faith Walk of Friendship will take place on May 5th.

*Cynthia Dickinson*



## Interfaith Calendar Spring-Summer 2007

### APRIL 2007

3-10	Pesach (Passover)	Jewish
5	Maundy Thursday	Christian
6	Good Friday	Christian
8	Easter	Christian
	Baisakhi (Vaisakhi)	Sikh
15	Yom HaShoah	Jewish
21	Ridvan begins	Baha'i
23	St George's Day	Christian

### MAY

1	Beltane / May Day	Pagan
2	Wesak	Buddhist
6	Lag B'Omer	Jewish
17	Ascension Day	Christian
23-24	Shavuot	Jewish
27	Pentecost (Whitsun)	Christian
29	Ascension of Baha'u'llah	Baha'i

### JUNE

3	Trinity Sunday	Christian
7	Corpus Christi	Catholic Christian
16	Martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev	Sikh
21	Litha (Summer Solstice)	Pagan

### JULY

9	Martyrdom of the Bab	Baha'i
24	Tisha B'Av	Jewish

### AUGUST

2	Lughnassad	Pagan
11	Lailat al Miraj	Muslim
28	Rahsha Bandhan	Hindu

#### Walk of Friendship

This year our walk will take place in the afternoon, which means you will have time to visit St Martin's and St Matthew's churches, both nearby and both open to the public on Saturday morning. You can bring a picnic lunch to eat in Potternewton Park or call in at the Polish Centre cafe for a snack before visiting the Polish Catholic Church at 1 o'clock.

## Where Are They Now?

At one of our committee meetings we were given some information about the British Red Cross International Tracing & Message Service. We thought this might be of interest to Concord members, particularly if they had refugees in their religious community.

The Tracing & Message Service provides help for people who have come from conflict or disaster areas and who have lost contact via normal communications with close members of their family. In these situations the British Red Cross works worldwide with ICRC (International Committee of the Red Cross) and other Red Cross/Red Crescent societies to help restore and maintain contact between families by exchanging messages between loved ones and searching for missing relatives.

The Red Cross can also provide a record of detention ('Attestation') where someone was visited by the Red Cross whilst detained or held as prisoner of war.

The service is free and confidential and is available regardless of age, race, religion or refugee status. Where appropriate interpreters can be provided.

During the Second World War over 24 million messages were passed, including two and half million from the UK. Today, there are still people searching for relatives separated by WW2.

In 1949 the Geneva Convention gave some legal responsibility to ICRC to carry out tracing work in areas of conflict. The mandate given to ICRC is to 're-establish contact between close family members who have been separated by armed conflict and political upheaval'.

There are over 170 countries with Red Cross or Red Crescent National Societies involved with the service

The Red Cross in Leeds organises a drop-in for refugees at St Georges Crypt Wednesdays 3.30-5.00 pm

Local contact for the service: Katy 0792 1493 634; Office 01274 223 291. Website [www.redcross.org.uk](http://www.redcross.org.uk)

## *Concord Members Wed*

**T**WO of Concord's members were married on 24th February in Sri Lanka. Pippa Lee Meer is a Pagan representative on our Executive Committee. Stephen Tucker is Concord's Treasurer.

Pippa says: 'Steve and I got married in Sri Lanka. We wanted a simple ceremony outside with nature. The priest lit candles at the four quarters and called for protection and he chanted blessings. He also smudged our wedding rings. This is an ancient pagan tradition that is used to cleanse the rings before exchanging them. Smudging is still used today by some healers. The hand-fasting ritual is symbolic of bringing the couple together both physically and spiritually as they enter their life as husband and wife. This ritual involves the binding of the hands with a ribbon.

The priest then poured water over our hands and chanted a blessing. We shared our vows, exchanged rings and lit a candle together. It was a magical day and one I will always treasure.'

For more info on the pagan hand-fasting ceremony

<http://www.handfasting.info/>



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## **The Diversity Game**

**A**T the Concord meeting on 6th March we played the Diversity Game meant for twelve players (representing twelve religions). There were ten people present. This is a board game where each player represents a religion, not their own, by taking a card which briefly outlines the religious belief and custom and symbol of the religion, and also a different coloured token. (Unfortunately, some people could not remember their colour!) Each person starts at their religious symbol, throws the dice in turn and moves on. If they land on a religious symbol, the person who represents that religion reads out from their card something about the religion.

On the board there are three challenges—identity, treatment and encounter. If you land on one of them a question or statement is read out from a card and it is discussed or answered.

We found the game confusing at first, but when we got used to it, it led to discussion and we found it very interesting and enjoyable. It helps you to know and understand more about other religions and their practices. We thought it would be good to use it occasionally for meetings.

The game is meant for schools, teachers and educators. A scout group who also it tried it out found it worthwhile.

*Elizabeth Bernheim*



## Celebrating the City's Rich Spiritual Heritage

**P**LACES of worship in and around Leeds are throwing open their doors as an invitation to everyone to celebrate the rich spiritual heritage of the city. Over 50 events running from Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> May to Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> May will reveal the contribution of places of worship to the Leeds' rich cultural heritage. The programme of activities for people of all ages is predominantly free and will encompass not only the historical and architectural gems, but also the exciting range of cultural activity.

The inaugural event on Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> May is a multi faith Walk of Friendship officially launched by the Lord Mayor of Leeds and is organised by Leeds Concord to take in buildings from various faith traditions in and around Harehills and Chapeltown. Visitors can also get a taste of the art, architecture, history, heritage, music and performance that often goes unseen.

Treasures Revealed in Leeds is part of a larger programme from the CRC which aims to highlight the range of exciting church-based activities in the region that contribute to the social, cultural and economic life of their local communities. It also aims to strengthen the work of local church members through training events, resources and technical support, encourage innovation and ensure the contribution of churches is recognised by policy makers and funders. It is hoped that more churches and other places of worship will be inspired to unlock their cultural potential and take advantage of the opportunities available from CRC.

CRC's Culture Office, Zoe Kemp comments, "Churches Regional Commission recognises that activities as diverse as art, music, sport, tourism and heritage are some of the key ways in which faith communities can make a significant contribution to life in the region. This contribution has been shown to become greater when churches work together. We hope that this city-wide programme of events will lead to similar annual festivals in other parts of the region."

A printed programme of events is available FREE from CRC or visit [www.treasuresrevealed.com](http://www.treasuresrevealed.com). tel 0113 244 3413 or email [zoe.kemp@crc-online.org.uk](mailto:zoe.kemp@crc-online.org.uk).

For more information contact Gillian Murray, Media Officer tel. 0113 244 3413 mobile 07971 631049 or email [gillian.murray@crc-online.org.uk](mailto:gillian.murray@crc-online.org.uk)

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## Foreign Office Advice on Forced Marriage

**T**HE Foreign Office has published an information toolkit called *Forced Marriages—You have a Right to Choose*. It is available from the Forced Marriage Unit, Foreign & Commonwealth Office, London SW1A 2AH

The toolkit (booklet, poster and DVD) features campaign ambassadors Meera Syal and Ameet Chana, as well as a spokesperson from the Metropolitan Police and a case-worker at a refuge.

It is designed to be used as a resource to facilitate discussion, increase awareness of the help available and highlight the damaging legal and emotional implications of forcing people into marriage. It clarifies the difference between forced and arranged marriages and makes it clear that forced marriage affects people from many different backgrounds and communities.

# Religious Dress and School Uniform—DfES Issues Guidance to Schools

**T**HE Department for Education and Skills have published a consultation document including draft guidance on school uniform, dress codes and other rules on appearance.

Extract from DfES consultation on Guidance to Schools on School Uniform Related Policies:

## 1.7 Human Rights issues

The Human Rights Act 1998 protects the right to “manifest one’s religion or beliefs”.

Various religions require their adherents to conform to a particular dress code, or to otherwise outwardly manifest their belief. Some religions require adherents to wear or carry specific religious artefacts, others may hold a belief that they should not cut their hair, and a number of religions require their followers to dress modestly, for example, by wearing loose fitting clothing, or covering their head.

It may be possible for many religious requirements to be met within a school uniform policy and schools should act reasonably in accommodating religious requirements.

However, schools should note that the freedom to manifest a religion or belief does not mean that an individual has the right to manifest their religion at any time, in any place, or in any particular manner. A pupil might have the opportunity to attend a school whose uniform policy can accommodate his or her requirements: this will ensure that his/her religious beliefs are catered for even though the school may not be the one preferred for other reasons. Even if an alternative school is not available, a school uniform policy that restricts the freedom of pupils to manifest their religion may still be lawful, so long as this interference with pupils’ rights is justified on grounds

specified in the Human Rights Act. These include health, safety and the protection of the rights and freedoms of others. This has been confirmed in two recent court cases.

In fulfilling their obligations, schools may have to balance the rights of individual pupils against the best interests of the school community as a whole. Where schools have good reasons for restricting an individual’s freedoms, for example, to ensure the effective delivery of teaching and learning, the promotion of cohesion and good order in a school, the prevention of bullying, or genuine health and safety or security considerations, then the restriction of an individual’s rights to manifest their religion may be justified.

## 1.8 Equality and discrimination issues

In formulating uniform and appearance policies, a school will need to consider its obligations not to discriminate unlawfully on the grounds of sex, race, disability and religion. Schools should also bear in mind the concept of “indirect” discrimination. This involves the application of a requirement, which, although applied equally to everyone, puts those of a particular gender, race or religion at a disadvantage because they cannot in practice comply with it. Such a requirement will need to be justified. (Please note that the relevant provisions of the Equality Act are not yet in force and this section will need to be adjusted to reflect the position at the end of the consultation period.)

An example of indirect discrimination could be a school that bans ‘cornrow’ hairstyles. As these are more likely to be adopted by specific racial groups, banning this type of hairstyle without justification could constitute indirect racial discrimination.

## New Walk Links Wilberforce Landmarks

**T**O commemorate the bi-centenary of the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act, the 'Wilberforce Way', a new 35 mile walk is going to be launched in May 2007 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.

The walk, which has been developed by the Yorkshire and Humber Faiths Forum and East Riding Community Cohesion Forum, will take in historical points of interest in the East Riding and Hull including Beverley Minster, a renowned place of pilgrimage and the Wilberforce House Museum, Wilberforce's birthplace. Other relevant landmarks on the walk include Cherry Burton, which is a Fair Trade village highlighting modern day initiatives to combat enslavement in food production.

Today, 200 years after the Act of Abolition was passed, it is estimated that there are at least 27 million men, women and children throughout the world still in slavery. The Wilberforce Way is also designed to act as a challenge for participants to become involved in today's campaign to abolish modern slavery in all its forms as well as recognising the work of Wilberforce and other abolitionists.

A free guide leaflet outlining the route and key landmarks will be published later on in the year.

More information is available from Carl Duck, East Riding Local Strategic Partnership Manager on (01482) 391424 or email [carl.duck@eastriding.gov.uk](mailto:carl.duck@eastriding.gov.uk).

## REACHING OUT - A New REACH Project

Providing advice and skilled volunteers to frontline groups

Reaching Out is a significant new project providing skilled volunteers to help black and minority ethnic groups, refugee and migrant, faith, and isolated rural groups. Community groups can gain extra skills and expertise, strengthen their know-how, and benefit, at no charge, from advice and hand-picked REACH volunteers throughout England.

The project has two key parts. Assessing an organisation's current situation and identifying skill gaps is the first stage, with advice and support on offer from the project. At the second stage REACH volunteers with business, IT, HR, legal, premises management expertise, governance experience, or other skills, will be assigned to each group in the project to help them individually. The project aims to transfer new skills into each group for the long-term.

If you are, or know of, a group which would welcome this input, please let us know.

For further information contact Jill Howard of the Reaching Out Project Team on 020 7840 5663 or e-mail [reachingout@reach-online.org.uk](mailto:reachingout@reach-online.org.uk) To find out more about REACH see our website [www.reach-online.org.uk](http://www.reach-online.org.uk)

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