



Concord

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

Newsletter - April 2008

Revealing the Treasures in Leeds

THE third *Treasures Revealed* will be taking place from Saturday May 3rd to Sunday May 11th when many places of worship will be open to casual and curious visitors who might just want to have a look inside the building or might wish to know what other people believe and practise.

Concord's multi-faith **Walk of Friendship** is once again the inaugural event for the week, bringing people from different faiths and cultures together as they visit each other's places of worship. This year we will be in the Beeston area of South Leeds, starting at the Roman Catholic Church, St Francis of Assisi, then walking behind our rainbow banners to the Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha, United Reformed Church, Jamia Masjid Abu Huraira, Anglican Church of the Holy Spirit and the Hamara Healthy Living Centre. A route map and

(approximate) timetable are available and you are welcome to join and leave the Walk at any time.

Some places connected with Concord that are opening are – Holy Spirit Anglican Church and the Sikh Temple in Beeston, open on Saturday May 10th; United Reformed Church, Beeston, open each day of the week with an exhibition of Pamela Pavitt's Peace and Reconciliation embroidery; St Edmund's, Lidgett Park and St Andrew's Churches in Roundhay, open from 10am until 1pm on Wednesday May 7th for an opportunity to visit three churches in the Roundhay area, enjoy the history, gardens, architecture and hospitality, finishing off with an organ recital at St Edmund's at 2pm; the Hindu Temple on Alexandra Road will be open every morning from 11am till 12.30pm. Sorry if I have missed others; the full list is in the booklet accompanying this newsletter.

Cynthia Dickinson



Hardeep and Sewa Kalsi (Chair of Concord) with John Battle MP, guest speaker at the Peter Bell Memorial Dinner. See story and more pictures on page 3.

Faith2Faith at Corrymeela

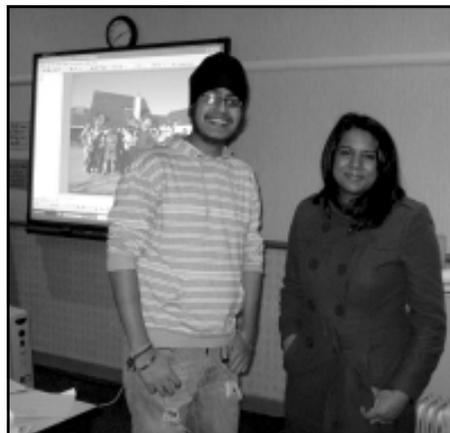
TWO young people, Ushna and Jasdeep of the Yorkshire & Humber Faiths Forum Youth Council, came along to tell us about their involvement in the launch of United Faiths and in particular their week-long conference at Corrymeela on the coast of Northern Ireland.

Their aims are to become ambassadors, challenge stereotypes and celebrate differences. They took part in conflict resolution and peace-making activities, setting out hopes, sharing ideas and learning to get on together.

Fifteen young people (aged 16 to 25) and three Y&HFF (senior) Council were assisted by two Inter Cultural Leadership School facilitators. There were cultural evenings, reflections, games and outings – including an eye-opening visit to Belfast.

They also had plenty of time to be together and talk.

At one point in the week they were joined by group of ‘senior citizens’ for a talent show that turned out to be a most enjoyable event.



The Youth Council was officially launched in December at the Y&H FF annual conference.

I have never sat down and had a mature conversation with people of different faiths and traditions before. Why can't everyone have this experience? - Jasdeep (Sikh, 16)

I have realised that although we come from a diverse range of faiths and backgrounds, this does not prevent us from working together. - Shazia (Muslim, 23)

Meet the Pagans

ONE of the problems many faith communities have with Pagans is that they don't know much about who Pagans are, where they meet, what they believe and what they do. Over the next month or so there will be opportunities for you to rectify this situation.

On Monday May 5th between 1.30pm and 3.30pm, as part of Treasures Revealed in Leeds, a group of local Pagans will be at the Stourton stone circle by the Aire-Calder canal. There you will be able to listen to their chanting and drumming, see some of the items they use in rituals and ask them about their beliefs and practices.

A very different event is taking place at the Swarthmore Centre on Saturday May 10th – the Pagan Federation Spring Conference. This is a ticket only gathering and costs £12 on the door (£10 in advance) for a full day of talks and workshops – covering a variety of topics from astronomy to wands – starting at 9.45am. Between activities you could meet and chat with Druids, Wiccans, Heathens and Odinists.

Finally, as you will see in the summer programme, the next “Introducing Scriptures” on Monday June 2nd will be from a Pagan perspective. This could prove interesting since, strictly speaking, Pagans don't have Scriptures, though they do tend to read a lot.

Cynthia Dickinson

Peter Bell Memorial Dinner

FIFTY people representing at least eight religions—and many denominations—gathered in the Farthings restaurant at Thomas Danby College to enjoy a fine meal and good company while honouring the memory of Concord's founder member, Dr Peter Bell. Describing the event as a Feast of Friendship, guest speaker John Battle MP reminded us that Peter was a geographer, a man of 'place' as well as a man of faith, the catalyst for religious literacy in Leeds, celebrating differences and discovering real friendship which enabled personal growth as a result.

John told us that from earliest times Leeds has a history of diversity, its people, its faiths, its industries and its architecture. He mentioned two prominent but very different buildings from his own West Leeds constituency – Kirkstall Abbey and Armley Jail. We heard several amusing and moving anecdotes about the people of Armley, especially in times of trouble when humour, determination and hope helped them through. Hope was the returning theme of his talk, leaving us with the conclusion that through faith we can move beyond tolerance and understanding to hope and vision.



LEEDS MUSEUM

Faith in the City

Arena Exhibition
February – October 2009

*From Gabrielle Hamilton,
Community History Curator (0113
2141559)*

THE new Leeds City Museum opens in August 2008 in the old Civic Theatre on Millennium Square and will house collections that have either not been accessible to the public previously, or only in a limited way in the Central Library after the old Museum on Park Row was bombed in the Second World War.

The museum is being funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and the renovation has cost £26m. It will have Education, Exhibition and Conference space, a café and Galleries on Natural Science, Ancient Worlds, Out of Africa, Leeds Collectors, the History of Leeds and the 'showcase' space in the Arena.

The first project in the Arena is called '*Steps in Time*' and it reflects the history of dance in the city from traditional to contemporary forms of dance, in partnership with professional and amateur dance groups. This exhibition will run from August until February 2009. The next project for the Arena will be '*Faith in the City*' funded by Hub Renaissance Partnership and will run from February to October 2009.

The plan so far is to focus on the six main Faith groups in the city for display on the 6 podiums in the Arena – Christianity, Judaism, Sikhism, Hinduism, Islam, and Buddhism. Leeds Museums and Galleries will be working in partnership with a number of Faith groups in the city, focusing on Places of

Worship within local communities. This will follow on from '*Steps in Time*' as a more in depth exploration of the cultural diversity within Leeds and sit within the community cohesion strategy for 2008/9.

The project hopes to examine the role of the Centres of Worship in relation to the contribution they make to the local community and their impact on promoting positive community relations, often providing social and spiritual support to marginalised and excluded individuals.

Film footage will also provide a visual celebration of some of the fantastic architecture of the city reflected in the Places of Worship as well as the festivals and ceremonies that take place within them.

The project will also include personal testimony from the Faith Groups and will inspire new audiences to visit the new museum and participate in the exhibition. Archive footage from the Yorkshire Film Archive will enhance the longevity of the material and reflect both the rich heritage of the major faith groups in Leeds as well as documenting changing trends and beliefs.

There are two Community cases in the Leeds gallery which will complement the Arena display with artefacts and objects on loan to the museum from different faith groups. The exhibition will also need to refer to and include other faiths to ensure it is as inclusive as possible and the pods will show generic film with an overview of faiths, alongside the six main faith groups represented.

The linking themes of the exhibition and the detailed content will be developed in partnership with faith representatives in a steering group to be set up in April 2008.

Introduction to Bahá'í Scriptures



Trevor Bates with Mark Hellaby

THERE was another good turnout on February 25th for the seventh in the series of Understanding Scriptures of other Faiths, this time from the Bahá'í tradition. Trevor Bates started the evening by quoting from a Bahá'í prayer, then introduced the speaker, Mark Hellaby.

Mark is from a Bahá'í family and has studied Persian and Arabic, enabling him to translate the scriptures into English. He began by explaining the phenomenon of 'divine revelation' as distinct from other forms of writing; this transcends human capability, comes direct from God in an unbroken, rhythmic flow of utterances, often for hours on end with no prior thought and no pauses.

Mark also told us some of the history of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh, both of whom were channels of divine revelation, their words being taken down at top speed by scribes, then checked and finally written out in a fair hand. The Báb proclaimed himself the messenger of God in 1844 and was executed in 1850. Bahá'u'lláh spent most of his life in exile, under house arrest. It was while camped on the journey from Baghdad to Constantinople in 1863 he made the declaration that he was the next prophet, foretold by the Báb.

The original documents, 100 volumes of revealed scripture, are still intact and archived. People reading these scriptures are convinced that the words are from God and their meanings can never be exhausted. Some words can acquire a new resonance with hidden depths known only to God, but can also be read as if afresh every time.

Mark's excellent talk had to be cut a bit short to give time for discussion on what would follow when this particular series came to an end in June. The general feeling of the group was to look at 'worship' from the different faith perspectives; it could include looking at scripture within worship as well as prayer and other aspects.

The last two talks on Understanding Scriptures will be by Brahma Kumaris on April 28th and Pagans on June 2nd. With the new series on Patterns of Worship starting in November. Maybe this will lead to Concord members being able to take part in worship with those from the different faiths – something that was requested at our last AGM but has not yet materialised. For it to happen, we will need members to do some groundwork at their own place of worship; see if they can identify a service that would be easy for 'outsiders' to participate in, or simply observe and ensure there will be people on hand to welcome visitors of other faiths.

"Nothing can be effected in the world, not even conceivably, without unity and agreement, and the perfect means for engendering fellowship and union is true religion."

'Abdul-Bahá, The Secret of Divine Civilization

THE 'SINAI SISTERS'

Ruth Sterne, Elizabeth Bernheim and Ethel Baker

Interviewed by Trevor Bates

It was our intention to choose one of our Jewish ladies for **Profile**, but unfortunately it became an impossible task to decide which of these three to select. Not only have all three been loyal and active members of **Concord** for many years, but they also belong to the Sinai Synagogue congregation and share a close friendship as well as their Jewish faith. So all three it must be!

RUTH STERNE



Ruth was born in Kaliningrad (Koningsberg, East Prussia) and left school soon after Hitler came to power in Germany. 1935 found her working in a Jewish Children's Convalescent and Nursing Home and from there she went to Berlin to be trained as a teacher.

Ruth met Ernest Sterne in 1938 and they were married in January 1939, earlier than intended because Hitler announced that officially recognised marriages for Jews were to be stopped. Ernest and Ruth

Profile

Second in a series of interviews with members of Concord

planned to leave Germany. Ernest's parents had already emigrated to England and the situation in Germany for Jews was increasingly problematic and dangerous.

Ernest's father managed to obtain work with a Jewish refugee organisation in London, and by a chance (providential?) meeting in one of the corridors of the building where it was housed, the director offered two trainee permits to Ruth's father-in-law, which enabled Ernest and her to come to England in July 1939.

When World War II broke out Ernest joined the Jewish Company of the Pioneer Corps with the British Army; later he was transferred to the Royal Engineers as an electrician, and was stationed in the Faroe Isls. By this time Ruth was on her own in Notting Hill, London, and life became very tough for her as she commuted regularly to Golders Green, working as a cleaner and children's nanny.

Due to the Blitz, Ruth wanted to leave London; but where to go? A friend of Ruth's from Berlin days invited her to come to Leeds and Ruth got a room with a family at Potternewton Park; however, after six months her friend moved on to Manchester.

Ruth eventually secured a place on a teachers' training course for three years, with an additional year to get her Teachers' Diploma. Ruth gained a BA in History from Leeds University, started teaching, but then opted out to work for

Cohen & Wilks as a trouser machinist for a year. Ruth returned to education at many schools, sometimes as a supply teacher, but finally held the Deputy Headship at Halton Junior School prior to her early retirement due to angina.

Both Ernest and Ruth became interested in joining Concord from its earliest days and their friendship with Elizabeth and Ethel at Sinai encouraged these to belong as well.

During Ruth's retirement years she has developed two special hobbies. First, her interest in ornithology stems from her college days, but it became a mutual interest with Ernest and has taken them all over the country on 'twitchers expeditions'. To this day she has several feeding points in her garden and regularly reports her sightings of different kinds of birds to bird watching groups.

Ruth has also been a member of the Leeds Braille Group for nearly 30 years, translating Hebrew publications into braille. Her most outstanding achievement was to translate the Jewish Singer's Prayer Book into braille, which took her a whole year to complete, 20 years ago. Ruth has also translated some Aramaic scrolls passages into braille.

Couple this with great involvement in the life of Sinai Synagogue over the years and you have a Jewish member of Concord who has lived a full life with notable service.

ELIZABETH BERNHEIM

Elizabeth was born in Reedlingen, Southern Germany, an agricultural market town on the Danube, where her parents owned a haberdashery shop, and the nearest synagogue was in Buchau some miles away. Elizabeth's younger brother left Germany in June 1939 with the Kindertransport scheme. However, Elizabeth, then 17 years old, was offered a work place with a British family in Edinburgh, a Church of Scotland missionary family home on leave from



Nyasaland whilst the husband remained in Africa until after WWII. In 1940 Elizabeth moved to Leicester to be with a family, caring for a small child with household duties.

In 1942/3 Elizabeth came to Leeds to be near another brother, who left to join the Army and never returned to Leeds. In 1949 Elizabeth started a three year training course in general nursing at St James' Hospital with an additional year to qualify in midwifery. Sister Bernheim became well-known in the Woodhouse/Headingley area as a district midwife, greatly loved and appreciated for her skills—and when asked says she has delivered over 1100 babies during those years of service!

Elizabeth's parents died in the Shoah and her nearest relatives are in other countries, so that her circle of friendships comprise a meaningful 'family' for her now.

Since her retirement in 1980 Elizabeth has remained very active and involved with several groups and with continued hobbies. For years she has enjoyed and become skilled in pottery-making, giving away excellent products of her work. Elizabeth has also been a very keen bird watcher and has travelled to many

countries on 'twitcher holidays' as well as RSPB weekends in this country. Equally a Tai Chi Class has been a fascinating source of exercise with great benefit to her.

In 1980 Elizabeth joined Concord due to the friendship and invitation of Ruth and Ernest Sterne, and believes that Concord is a 'useful venture', for 'unless people talk together you don't understand them.'

ETHEL BAKER

Ethel is the only one of the trio who was born in the UK, in Leeds.

The families of each of Ethel's grandparents came from Russia as a result of the difficult circumstances there in the 1890s. Her two grandparents met in Leeds, got married and lived in the Little London area, where Ethel's mother was born. Life for their family, as with so many others, was a desperate struggle with poverty.

Ethel was born with cataracts on her eyes, and due to unsuccessful treatment at 2½ years old she has wrestled with impaired sight ever since. Indeed this limitation has determined much of her life's journey.

Ethel's family moved to Glasgow whilst she was a child so her father could get work, and Ethel remained there until she was 24 years old. In Glasgow she went to a specialist school for the partially sighted and left with the basic skills at 14 years. Whilst there at about 7 years old she had to cope with the 'aggressive abuse of an RC child who didn't like her because she was a Jew, and the Jews killed Christ.' The teacher who witnessed the situation called the offender and in front of Ethel started to hit the child with a strap. Ethel pleaded, 'Don't hit her.' The offending child said, 'I will never call you names again. I will always be your friend.' Ethel's mother baked a cake for Ethel to give to the child, and told Ethel, 'If you stand



up for yourself, don't give in to the offender.'

Ethel started work with Lewis's in Glasgow, and eventually got a place in the Snow Freeze (Ice Cream) franchise section, which she enjoyed. Due to staff sickness in the Snow Freeze franchise at Lewis's in Leeds Ethel was asked to go and stand in for two weeks. This eventually led to a transfer and Ethel has lived in Leeds ever since.

During her time in Leeds she became a member of USDAW—Union of Shop Distributors and Allied workers—and collected membership dues week by week from other members in her lunch hour break. The Staff Manager called her to his office, and in a very hesitant manner expressed his understanding that she was collecting Union dues on the premises of Lewis's when Lewis's didn't acknowledge the Union. Ethel agreed but said she did it in her own time. The Manager then went on to say: 'From now on...' (Ethel thought he was going to stop her from doing so, and she was determined to continue no matter what it cost her and intended saying so...) , then said, 'You may continue to do the collecting in two hours of your working time!' From then

on Lewis's recognised USDAW and Ethel became one of the shop-stewards.

Ethel has been involved with the schul (an old word used for the synagogue) from her earliest years, and loves the schul music—indeed is a great lover of music. Ethel remains active at Sinai and in other Jewish activities in spite of her poor sight.

Ethel joined Concord because she was introduced by Ruth and Elizabeth, but was impressed by Dr Peter Bell—his manner, attitudes and values—and has lasting memories of the programme activities over the years. Ethel feels that just at the moment there is something 'missing' from Concord's life and for her it is 'not interesting' enough!

There is no doubt that the 'Sinai Sisters' have made a most valuable contribution to the life, fellowship and activities of Concord over many years, and those who have met them and come to know them well have been greatly enriched because of who they are.

Food and Soul

OUR first meeting of the year, January 14th, was the third in our series of Food, Feasts and Fasting – this time from the Brahma Kumari perspective. David, Maureen and Margaret came along to explain a little about their faith and the importance of food, not only for physical but also emotional and spiritual well-being, hence the title of their talk – Food and Soul.

Meditation plays a very important part in their life-style, including the preparation and partaking of meals. All Brahma Kumaris follow a life of non-violence so are vegetarian but, as we soon learnt, they don't eat all vegetables. They find that plants in the onion family are not helpful to spirituality; eating leeks, onion and garlic disturbs the equilibrium, making the mind excitable.

Preparing the food is an integral part of eating and good vibrations are put into the creation of simple, wholesome meals to share, bringing peace and gentleness to the lifestyle. They like to be aware of where the food comes from and other people in the world who have worked to produce it. They have a practice of offering food to God before the meal and regard the body as a temple so eating becomes and act of spirituality.



Concord Programme for Summer 2008

Monday April 28th

An Introduction to the Brahma Kumari Scriptures

Beech Room Thomas Danby College 7pm

Saturday May 3rd

Annual Walk of Friendship 11.50am – 4.30pm

See details on page 1

Monday June 2nd

An Introduction to Pagan 'Scriptures'

Beech Room Thomas Danby College 7pm

Wednesday June 18th

Annual General Meeting

Friends' Meeting House 7.30pm

Guest speaker Sister Brigid Murphy of St Gemma's Hospice

Tuesday June 26th

Visit to Oxford Place Methodist Church 7.15pm

Presentation on Methodism & talk on work of Leeds Methodist Mission

Wednesday July 16th

Talk by Revd Trevor Bates on Jerusalem visit

following a 10-day study seminar sponsored by Council of Christians and Jews and International School for Holocaust Studies.

Meeting Rooms 2/3 Thomas Danby College 7pm

Sunday August 3rd

Concord Summer Picnic

Roundhay Park 2pm

Everyone welcome – bring vegetarian food and/or soft drinks to share. Games for children of all ages. Bring your musical instruments.

Autumn Events

Monday September 15th

Shared Interest Venue tba

A co-operative lending society dedicated to supporting the disadvantaged in some of the world's poorest countries to trade their way out of poverty.

Wednesday October 15th

Annual Peace Service Leeds Civic Hall

Other Events of Interest

Friday April 25th

Olaf Palme Memorial Peace
Lecture, Leeds Civic Hall 7.30pm
**Senator George Mitchell – Is
World Peace Possible?**
Book for free tickets; contact Sean
0113 247 4341

Thursday April 29th

**Launch of Treasures Revealed in
Leeds**, Briggate 12 – 2pm
Lord Mayor of Leeds, Bishop of
Knaresborough
Salvation Army Band; information
leaflets

Sunday June 8th

Huddersfield Multi Faith Picnic
12.30 – 3.30pm
Share food from different cultures
at the Quaker Meeting House,
Paddock; activities for all the
family

Tuesday June 17th

**Trevor Phillips, Chair of the
Equality & Human Rights
Commission** 5.00pm
Leeds Social Sciences Institute at
University of Leeds; book for free
ticket
Contact Allison
a.j.suckall@leeds.ac.uk 0113
3433912

Saturday June 21st

**Bradford Concord Walk of
Friendship** (details being
finalised)

Saturday July 5th

**Huddersfield Annual Walk of
Friendship** 9.30am
Jamia Masjid Raza, Halifax Old
Road, Birkby – Huddersfield
Railway Station – Parish Church –
Hindu Mandir – Sikh Temple,
Prospect Street.

Two New Documentary Series on Channel 4

I have received requests from two groups producing TV documentaries for Channel 4 with an interfaith theme. Having looked at them briefly in a recent Concord Committee meeting, it was agreed that neither came under the remit of Concord as an organization, though individual members might be interested. We are not making any recommendations, simply passing on the information.

Cynthia

Christian Spirituality

Do you and your partner come from different religious backgrounds? Or do you have a relative with different religious views to your own?

Then we'd like to hear from you...

Channel 4 are producing an exciting new series in the Leeds area. If you're interested in finding out more please contact Phil on 0113 2512040 or 07782 144258, or email pmccullough@wildcarduk.com

Dispute Resolution

Are you in an interfaith relationship which is causing a divide in your family? Have you recently changed faith which others are finding difficult to accept? Do you wish someone you care for deeply chose a different way of life?

This new evening documentary series concentrates on individuals and families who are looking to mend broken bridges and work towards a fresh start. Our series aims to promote understanding, respect and peace to bring resolution in a sensitive and unique way. You can call Jean of Rival Media 0208 987 5450 in confidence for an initial chat or for more information, or e-mail peacemakers@rival-media.com

Interfaith Calendar Summer 2008

APRIL

6	New Year	Hindu
8	Birthday of Buddha	Buddhist
14	Baisakhi	Sikh
	Rama Navani	Hindu
20	Hanuman Jayanti	Hindu
20-23	Theravadin New Year	Buddhist
20-21	Pesach first two days	Jewish
21	Ridvan	Baha'i
23	St George's Day	Christian
25	Holy Friday	Orthodox Christian
26-27	Pesach final two days	Jewish
27	Easter/Pascha	Orthodox Christian
29	Ninth Day of Ridvan	Baha'i

MAY

1	Ascension of Christ	Christian
	Beltane	Pagan
2	Yom HaSho'ah	Jewish
	Twelfth Day of Ridvan	Baha'i
8	Yom Ha'Atzmaut	Jewish
11	Pentecost	Christian
18	Trinity Sunday	Christian
20	Wesak	Buddhist
22	Corpus Christi	Catholic Christian
23	Declaration of the Bab	Baha'i
	Lag B'Omer	Jewish
29	Ascension of Baha'u'llah	Baha'i
30	Sacred Heart of Jesus	Catholic Christian

JUNE

9-10	Shavuot	Jewish
16	Guru Arjan Dev martyrdom	Sikh
21	Summer Solstice Litha	Pagan
23	Sacred Heart of Jesus	Catholic Christian

JULY

9	Martyrdom of the Bab	Baha'i
18	Dharma Day	Buddhist
31	Lailat al Miraj	Islam

AUGUST

1	Lughnasadh	Pagan
10	Tisha B'Av	Jewish
15	Assumption of Blessed Virgin	Catholic Christian
16	Raksha Bandhan	Hindu
18	Lailat al Bara'ah	Islam
24	Krishna Jayanti	Hindu

Inter Faith Network UK

National Meeting

Monday 30 June in London

THE Network links in membership a wide range of bodies, the work of which involves creating inter faith engagement and understanding in many different ways. This year's National Meeting will be an opportunity to explore in greater depth some of the types of inter faith dialogue and to learn about some of the practical tools and approaches for deepening inter faith understanding and engagement. It will also be a chance to discuss the 'face to face' (and indeed the 'heart to heart') processes designed to tackle misunderstandings and prejudice. Further details of the programme and venue to follow in due course.

Anyone interested in attending as the Concord representative, please contact Cynthia.

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