



Concord

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

Newsletter - April 2005

Harsh Treatment of Asylum Seekers

ON MARCH 9TH Gill Gibbons, project co-ordinator for the Leeds Asylum Seekers Network, came to talk to Concord about her work with asylum seekers and refugees in Leeds. She started with a short quiz, asking us to write down definitions of an immigrant, an illegal immigrant, an economic migrant, a refugee and an asylum seeker. Needless to say, this created quite a bit of discussion amongst Concord members. Gill then took us through the various stages of seeking asylum in this country and provided hand-outs of general information and statistics. Most of us were surprised and shocked at the harsh treatment of people seeking refuge and even more disturbed by the fact that many such people ended up with nothing—destitute ‘non- persons’.

We were invited to lobby our MPs about the situation and those able to do so could make donations to the LASSN Hardship Fund or volunteer as short-term hosts for the destitute.

The details for sending donations to support LASSN’s Hardship Fund are:

Please make cheques payable to “Leeds Asylum Seekers Support Network” and send to: Richie McAndrew, Project Administrator, LASSN, 233 Roundhay Road, Leeds LS8 4HS



Gill Gibbons addresses Concord

Membership Reminder

We value your membership and would like you to renew.

Individuals £7

Senior Citizens & Concessions £4

Cheques or cash can be given to the Treasurer at the AGM, 23rd June or cheques—payable to Concord—can be posted to Peter Dale, 10 Helmsley Road, Leeds LS16 5JA



Intercity Interfaith Interaction

TWO CARS FULL of Concord members travelled across to the Interfaith Education Centre in Bradford in April, where we were very warmly received by members of Bradford Concord for a joint meeting on 'Where do we go from here?'

Cynthia Dickinson gave a short keynote address indicating how Leeds Concord is recovering after some loss of confidence following the death of Peter Bell and the advent of other interfaith organisations which seemed at first to be competitors. In the last year or two we have some good meetings, attendances have increased, and good relationships have developed with other groups. She saw the way forward for interfaith activity as depending on communication and cooperation, supporting campaigns such as Make Poverty History, and encouraging research such as that of Leeds University on how faith groups can help ex-offenders. Like dripping water that makes an impression in the long run, the influence of Concord and other interfaith groups may need patience and persistence but it is vital for

the welfare of the country, of society and our own souls.

Members of Bradford Concord are somewhat concerned at present about the setting up of the Bradford Faiths Forum, which may threaten their own future. **Ian Owers**, representing a Bradford project called Active Faith Communities, spoke of this concern in his address. The Bradford Faith Forum has looked at a variety of models and is following that of Leeds. There is increasing emphasis on social cohesion in the AFC programmes. There are common values that motivate all faiths, such as working for justice and equality. Interfaith activity is not only dialogue about faith but about shared concerns. It is difficult to support interfaith work because there are many organisations supported by the same people with many commitments and multiplicity of effort, yet fragmented because people work in compartments, unaware of what others are doing. Different faiths have their own different perspectives. He thought it was important not to depend only on faith groups and their official leaders: other



individuals can sometimes be more helpful. We need to pursue group relationships but not to undervalue the individual, small-scale relationships. The growing public awareness of the importance of faiths is welcome.

In the open discussion that followed, people spoke of the value they had found in belonging to such groups as Concord, particularly the friendship aspects at a personal, individual level, the sharing of music and food, and the respect for one another's faith, not seeking to convert. It was recognised that there is need for both the Concord-type personal level approach to interfaith dialogue and the Faith Forum structured approach, grappling with political realities on a community level.

Leeds Concord expresses its sincere



David Ridehough, Cynthia Dickinson, Ian Ower and Marjorie Waterman

thanks to the Bradford Concord Secretary, **Marjorie Waterman**, the Chair, **David Ridehough**, and the members of Bradford Concord for their hospitality and for an interesting and mutually encouraging evening's conversation.

John Summerwill

Update on Research

LAST YEAR PROFESSOR KIM KNOTT of Leeds University gave us an interesting talk on the research that she and Matthew Francis had been doing into Christians' attitudes to interfaith activity. This project had been undertaken for the Ripon & Leeds Interfaith Task Group, chaired by the Revd Charles Dobbin. At that stage they had conducted a questionnaire survey with some interviews among the Anglican community in the Allerton Deanery. This research is now continuing and being extended to the other Christian denominations in that same sector of Leeds. They would like to be able to include all religions and give questionnaires to the other places of worship in that area if funding could be found.

MAKEPOVERTYHISTORY

THIS IS THE LARGEST UK coalition of charities, faith groups and celebrities to join together in the fight against poverty. Its symbol is a white wrist band costing £1. If you haven't already got one, you can buy one from Cynthia at Concord events.

Edinburgh 2 July travel plans

TIDAL (Trade & International Debt Action Leeds) is organising two trains and coaches to take people from Yorkshire to the massive **MAKE POVERTY HISTORY** event in Edinburgh on Saturday 2 July 2005, where the G8 Summit is taking place.

There are train tickets back from

Edinburgh available for the Sunday night as long as you book early. Tickets are selling fast. The train will leave about 7 and costs £25 for adults and £12 for under 16's and returns on the same day. If you want to go, send Sally a text to 07800 785 702 with the number of tickets you want, or contact Annie or Jacinta on 0113 -391 7917. Their office is in the Leeds Church Institute building - 20 New Market Street - opposite the Corn Exchange.

There's lots of information about this and all other aspects of TIDAL's work at www.leedstidal.org



Heroes for Peace

CONCORD IS HELPING to work towards an interfaith event called **Heroes for Peace** which is part of the Leeds Together for Peace fortnight next November. This is the brainchild of a young Turkish couple, Hakan and Asuman Aydin from Interfaith Dialogue for World Peace, who live in Hull but come to Concord events in Leeds. We have got to know them and their organisation and invited them to our events and homes.

As with most individuals who become involved in Concord, they are ordinary people, not faith community leaders. They have had this interesting and original idea for an event to promote peace and understanding. Representatives of each faith will make an eight to ten minute presentation about an individual or group of people who are or were inspired by their faith to work for peace through using peaceful means. Hakan and Asuman were happy that their idea was taken on board by Leeds Together for Peace via the Leeds Faiths Forum and Concord. Planning meetings are taking place about once a month through the summer and nine faiths represented in Leeds are each being asked for a Heroes for Peace presentation. The hero can be male or female, contemporary or from any period during the history of the faith. The presentation will hopefully make creative use of visual means of presentation and the event will take place probably on the afternoon of Sunday November 13th at a venue in the centre of Leeds. That day also happens to be Remembrance Sunday.

Further information can be found out about this via Concord.

Evelyn Shire

“Lest We Forget”

ON SUNDAY 30TH JANUARY at the Council Chamber in the Civic Hall we gathered for the Holocaust Memorial Day. The chamber was full to capacity, with seating arranged in the main reception area and linked by video screens. Each contributor read a statement of commitment and lit a candle, stirring many emotions.

The Lord Mayor’s introduction reminded us of the role of the younger generation taking forward a powerful message for future societies. The relating of the Ginsberg story was delivered with velocity that left me reeling each moment the story unfolded.

Leeds Faiths Forum was represented by Patricia Farrell (Christian), Dr Hamed Pakrooh (Baha’i) and Marilyn Travoto (Jewish) who read parts of the statement of commitment and lit candles. The key themes that ran through the three readings were that spiritual and religious thought, feeling and belief have a real place in the public arena; that we have to remember not only the holocaust but also other terrible acts of genocide; and that a very important part of survival is about bearing witness. The third commitment stated, “We must make sure that future generations understand the causes of the Holocaust and reflect upon its consequences. We vow to remember the victims of Nazi persecution and of all genocide.”

All of the elements of the occasion contributed significantly: the students of Intake High School; the representative from the Sudanese Communities Association; the talk on the nature of the holocaust; the contribution of the survivors for the museum and collection; and the minute’s silence.

The last contribution was by Rudi Leawor, who sang the mourning song, which for me illuminated the deaths of all those who had died in tyrannical, genocide, racist, anti-semitic and xenophobic ways. It spoke the language of hope and it shouted out for us “never again”. It held for me and each person present the acute sense of account-ability and responsibility—“lest we forget”.

Patricia Farrell

This newsletter edited by John S. Summerwill, April 2005.

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