



# Concord

LEEDS INTERFAITH FELLOWSHIP  
[www.concord-leeds.org.uk](http://www.concord-leeds.org.uk)

## Newsletter - December 2003

### Praying Together for Peace

**W**E CAN FIND huge amounts of money to explore space but few resources are available to create peace on earth. Yet few matters are more important than the quest for peace and justice. This was the view expressed by the Deputy Lord Mayor of Leeds, Councillor Alison Lowe, when she spoke at the Concord's Annual Interfaith Peace Service on 15th October at Carlton Hill Friends Meeting House.

50 people. Representatives of the Baha'i, Brhama Kumari, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, Pagan and Sikh communities read a prayer, meditation or portion of scripture then lit a candle for peace and justice on behalf of their community.

When all the candles were lit, the lights were dimmed and there was a period of reflection by candlelight, during which Robin Fishwick 'played' on the Tibetan singing bowl. This is a large bowl made of an alloy of several

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*Sadeep Bhogul (Sikh), Maminder Bhogal (Sikh), Helen Williams (Baha'i), Cllr Alison Lowe (Deputy Lord Mayor), John Summerwill (Christian), Jean Claud (Baha'i), Hussein Mehdi (Muslim), Gladys Stringer (Brahma Kumari), Joyce Sundram (Christian), Cynthia Dickinson (Pagan; Chair of Concord), Henna Iqbal (Muslim), Ruth Stocks (Buddhist)*

metals. When a stick (puja) is rubbed around its rim, the bowl rings like a bell with a pure, clear sound very like that of human voices chanting. This added to the reflective atmosphere and the sense of the other-worldly.

Music was also provided by Sewa Singh Kalsi on dholak (double ended drum) and Hardeep Kaur Kalsi on harmonium. Hardeep sang two hymns from the Adi Granth, the first from Guru Gobind Singh (the tenth guru) and the other a brighter and more joyful song by Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism. These songs expressed the unity of humankind, whose light comes from the same Source, and how we must engage ourselves with each other and seek world peace.

The service included the reading together of Five Affirmations concerning respect for the natural world, the dignity and worth of all people, the need for justice and peace, the supremacy of love and our membership of one human family. A prayer for world peace and the International Prayer for Peace were said, and the service concluded with handshakes sharing 'shalom'. Friendly conversation over refreshments ensued, and many responded to the invitation to share in a short period of Quaker worship.

This was a heart-warming occasion, and it was good to have many young people present and taking part.

*John Summerwill*

## **Joy, Delight and Beauty at the Soirée**

**A**LL HALLOWS CHURCH in Hyde Park was the venue in September for an evening of music and poetry. The church is tucked away in a back street, not very easy to find, and this could have accounted for the small number who turned up on the night. Those who did attend were treated to an intimate and very enjoyable performance (soirée would be an apt description) by Robin Fishwick, Loz and Joyce Sundram.

Something more ambitious had been planned but nothing could have been more enjoyable than the fare that was served. Robin, besides singing and performing on a number of instruments, was an excellent compere and his oral programme notes were a joy. Loz, a friend of David Solomon and an exponent of the Jewish genre of klezma, played on guitar and sang delightfully, and Joyce beautifully read three poems by Betjeman, Auden and Kipling respectively.

None of these adjectives are over the top in describing this pleasurable occasion: there was joy, delight and beauty, and for me a real sense of unity as we shared these together. The importance of Concord, I feel, is the opportunity it gives us to get to know one another as friends, and so to trust one another and respect traditions other than our own. Dare I suggest that more evenings like this may be the best way forward in what I see as Concord's present phase of apparent decline.

*Peter Dale*

## Concord Members

- **Frank Watkinson** has decided to resign from the Executive Committee after many years of loyal service. As General Secretary, Frank helped the group through a difficult time following the death of Dr Peter Bell. On behalf of everyone at Concord I would like to extend our thanks and appreciation for all he has done over the years and hope to see him at future open meetings.
- Our present General Secretary, **Robin Fishwick**, and his wife, Sarah, are expecting their first baby in March 2004. We send them both our congratulations and best wishes. Now Robin would like to resign as Secretary—as soon as possible but at the latest in June when we have our AGM. Anyone who would like to take on or assist in the secretarial role (dealing with correspondence, helping to compile/organise the programme etc) please contact Robin with your offer.

*Cynthia Dickinson*

### Membership Fees

IT WAS AGREED at the 2003 AGM that subscriptions for 2004 would be raised slightly. The new rates, taking effect from 1 April 2004 are:

Senior citizens & concessions £4.00  
Individual members £7.00  
Families £10.00

Payment can be made by cheque (payable to Leeds Concord Interfaith Fellowship) and sent to Peter Dale, 10 Hemsley Road, Leeds LS16 5JA, or given to Peter at our open meetings.

## Punishment – a Discussion

**A**T THE NOVEMBER meeting Ruth Stocks, one of our Buddhist members, introduced a discussion on the topic of Punishment. We were asked to consider what the word actually meant, why we expected/wanted offenders to be punished and why it was that punishments had changed so dramatically over the years, particularly in the last two or three centuries.

It was generally agreed that our society has become more 'sensitive and humane' but, after a lively discussion, we were left with the impossible question—why are people so different in their attitudes to crime and punishment?

In the final minutes of the meeting Professor Kim Knott of the University of Leeds Community Religions Project talked a little about some research and consultation being done, in conjunction with LFCLF, on the role of faith communities in penal policy and the support of young offenders leaving prison. She said the discussion had been very helpful and asked those present to complete a simple questionnaire to further assist the research.

Since the meeting we have heard that Concord was the best group contributor to the research, with 12 questionnaires completed, and these from a mixture of faiths. In fact we provided 75% of the responses.

*Cynthia Dickinson*

## Faith & Food Event

SEVERAL MEMBERS OF CONCORD attended the September 11th commemorative event held by Leeds Faith Communities Liaison Forum at Leeds Parish Church on that date this year. Following a short sung 'compline' service, guests including the Deputy Lord Mayor, Cllr Alison Lowe, gathered in the church. After welcomes and greetings from church, civic and liaison forum representatives, we heard short presentations from speakers from each faith community on 'peace, faith and food'. During each presentation, morsels of 'special food' to taste were

passed around.

We all then adjourned to a side room where there was a buffet banquet laid out with tables provided by each faith. We mingled among the large attendance representative of faith communities across the globe. I remember learning about Jewish food, talking with a Muslim friend as she served out from a huge vat, and ending up speaking in French with a newly married Congolese Baha'i and his English born wife. A very positive and inclusive way of trying to move on from such a negative world event.  
*Evelyn Shire*

## Obituary

### Mrs Freda Kirk (1914-2003)

*In September Mrs Freda Kirk, one of Concord's oldest members, died. Alison Phelps of Chapeltown, her cousin-once-removed, has written this account of her.*

BORN FREDA FRANCES SCOTT, Mrs Kirk lived her whole 89 years in the same house in Sholebroke Terrace. The youngest of seven, she followed her sisters and brother to Cowper St School ( now Hillcrest Primary) in Chapeltown, then went to Pitman's College. Her working life was spent at the Post Office, mainly in delivering training in the telephone section. In 1964 she married Bill Kirk, whom she had met at the church of which her parents had been founder members, Trinity Presbyterian (now United Reformed) Church, Avenue Hill. They shared a thoughtful, enquiring and extremely generous outlook on life, supporting over 100 named charities as well as caring about local issues and individuals.

I believe Freda's concern for good inter-church and inter-faith relationships sprang from her concern for the

neighbourhood. Chapeltown was home to the Jewish community as she grew up, then to Eastern European, West Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Indian and Vietnamese groups. Her family had an unusually warm welcome for all, and a genuine interest in varieties of world views. This did not remain academic, Freda was much loved by her Sikh and Muslim neighbours. She valued her involvement with Concord and the insights gained from respectful sharing of ideas.

Freda died as she had lived: busy living out her Christian faith. When she had a stroke at home, her kitchen was crowded with freshly made bramble jelly and marmalade for sale for Help the Aged. Her biscuit and cake tins were full and ready for visitors. Church correspondence was in her typewriter in the dining room, and in her sitting room there were blanket squares in progress for homeless people. By her fireside chair, the Bible passage for the day was marked, her lifelong source of energy as she faithfully followed the Lord Jesus Christ, her model of warmth, hospitality and crossing human barriers.

This newsletter edited by John S. Summerwill, December 2003.

Concord Secretary: Robin Fishwick, Aire Valley Marina, Redcote Lane, Leeds LS4 2AL.

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