



Concord

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

Newsletter - January 2009

In Service of Peace

OVER a hundred people came along to Concord's annual Peace Service, which was held in the Banqueting Room in Leeds Civic Hall on October 15th. Several who were there for the first time said how impressed they were by the occasion, and some of these have subsequently joined Concord.

Once again we had the World Peace Flame as the source of light for all the candles, nine being lit by representatives of Concord's member faiths and one by the Deputy Lord Mayor, Cllr Gerald Wilkinson, on behalf of all people in Leeds. Everyone present had a World Peace Flame tea-light to take home.

Representatives of nine religions read prayers, poems or passages of scripture from their traditions relevant to peace.

A group of young Sikhs, Swara, provided a musical interlude, based on texts from the Sikh Scriptures, and a Christian group, the Harwood Singers, led the audience in a peace song to end proceedings. In addition to the final greeting of 'Shalom, salaam, shanti, peace be with you', everyone was encouraged to speak to a stranger. This was a wonderful way to end a wonderful evening, with a buzz of friendly conversation as people made new acquaintances.





**More pictures
from the
Peace Service**

The Harwood
Singers, with Kath
Harwood on flute

The Sikh singers and
instrumentalists



Informal conversations after the service



Pagan 'Scriptures'

AT the Concord meeting held at Thomas Danby on 2nd June a good number of members were in attendance for the final session in the series devoted to the scriptures of the various faith communities represented within our inter-faith fellowship.

This meeting, chaired by Trevor Bates, focussed on Paganism. There are many varieties of Pagan customs and traditions where ritual is an important part of their spirituality, often relating to the changing seasons. Most Pagans hold their meetings in a circle, usually in the open air because their practices relate to the natural life around us including rocks, rivers, trees, wells and standing stones.

There were three presenters. The first was Dr Rosemary Arthur, whose academic background includes medieval studies and theology. She gave us a brief historical survey of Paganism, some of which was practised in pre-Roman times. We have evidence of their influence in the names we have given to the days of the week (Sunday, Monday etc). The second

presenter was Ms Jay Anderson. She developed the theme of Paganism particularly in connection with the origins of Wicca and its interpretation by Charles Gardner. Our final presenter was our Concord Secretary, Cynthia Dickinson, who concluded the presentation by sharing with us her journey of faith and her own introduction to Paganism.

Unlike other faith communities, Paganism has very little by way of formal, revealed or universally accepted scriptures. Nevertheless there are many poetic writings, some of which were circulated among those members present. There is a strong emphasis on personal meditation, often with the aid of picture cards, and the movement strongly affirms the status of women.

Before the close of the meeting members were able to ask a number of questions and all who attended showed their appreciation to the presenters for a very interesting and informative evening.

Bob Shaw

Cynthia, Rosemary & Jay



Patterns of Worship in Judaism

THE first in our new series—Patterns of Worship—did not get off to a very good start when Rabbi Ian Morris was rather late, having gone to the wrong venue. However, two of our Jewish ladies, Ruth and Elizabeth, stepped forward to tell us about worship in their own liberal Jewish tradition. They told us about their Sabbath and the synagogue, different prayers and the cycle of readings from the Torah, all of which led to questions and discussions before the rabbi arrived. Their impromptu contribution to the evening was much appreciated.

Rabbi Morris then gave us an insight into the changes in worship through history

—from the haphazard system of early Biblical days to the precise, imposed pattern culminating in the centrality of the Temple, priesthood and sacrifices of the settled time, then, after the destruction of the Temple, the post-biblical move towards a focus on prayer, study and law. There are fixed forms of worship to cover all occasions, with on-going discussions and deliberations on various aspects, including the use of Hebrew as the liturgical language. Amongst many other things we learned that the number needed for ‘community’ prayer is ten, based on the story of Sodom and Gomorrah, and that rabbis are not ordained.



Winter Social

ONCE again we were fortunate to have a room in the Friends' Meeting House for an evening of socialising, singing, talking and eating at our Winter Social on December 15th. Kath Harwood brought her flute for us to join in with popular Christmas carols. Various members shared information about their particular winter celebration—the Christian Christmas, Jewish Hanukkah and Pagan Winter Solstice. Trevor (wearing his 'party' hat) and Joyce brought readings to share and everyone brought plenty of festive food. Altogether a good time was had by all.



Una Parker said: 'I came to the December social to renew my contact with Concord and felt very welcomed. I enjoyed the evening very much and was glad to meet up again with people I have met before—and new ones. On another such occasion I would bring a contribution of my own. I hope I shall get to more meetings next year.'



RUTH STOCKS

Interviewed by Trevor Bates on 6th November 2008)



RUTH STOCKS came into Concord in the early 1990s as a result of Dr Peter Bell appealing for more Buddhists to join our fellowship. Since then she has been an active and valuable member willing to serve on our Council of Faiths.

Ruth's life story holds together both her journeying to find a place of secure residence, and a pilgrimage to discover a faith and spirituality which made sense of her experience and her world.

The 1920s in Germany was a time of rampant inflation and widespread unemployment influencing the lives of countless German families. Ruth's parents lived in the Berlin area, and her father was a foundry engineer. In the late 1920s Ruth's parents moved to Madrid, her father being a sales representative for German engineering firms. Both Ruth and her elder brother Gernot were born and spent their earliest years in Madrid, and attended a school for German children.

Profile

4th in a series of interviews
with members of Concord

On the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1936 all German people were ordered to leave Madrid. So at this juncture Ruth's mother and the children left via Alicante and Genoa for Munich, Bavaria, in their homeland. Ruth's father left via Vigo, north of Portugal, for Bremen. However, living in Germany for Ruth's family became increasingly difficult because they were dependent on the goodwill of relatives to provide them with shelter. So in 1937 they returned to Spain and lived in San Sebastian prior to returning to Madrid in 1939 at the end of the Spanish Civil War and just after the outbreak of World War II. Ruth considers herself extremely fortunate that she was not caught up in the activities of either of the wars.

One of the benefits of attending a German school in Madrid was being able to learn English as an additional language. This stood her in good stead, for in later years it was whilst continuing to attend English language classes that she met her husband, William (Bill), an Englishman and a Methodist. They were married at the English Consulate in Barcelona in 1953, and emigrated to England in 1954. They lived in Giggleswick, Yorkshire, where her husband was a teacher at Giggleswick School (an independent boarding school) prior to moving to a teaching post in Roundhay, Leeds.

When Ruth's husband died, her two sons were independent. Ruth was now a competent linguist, speaking German, Spanish and English. For a time she taught Spanish classes with the Leeds Education Department, but later worked for a firm who specialised in packing machinery for shipment to other

countries, where Ruth did translation work in German and Spanish.

Ruth's spiritual pilgrimage started from a neutral basis. Whilst her parents' homeland was German Lutheran, they were not actively religious. Her father taught his children to respect people of other nationalities and religions, but never to argue about religion. However, Ruth was challenged by Roman Catholic friends in Spain with the statement: "You have to believe in something!" So she found herself puzzled by the persistent question: "Is there something greater than ourselves?"

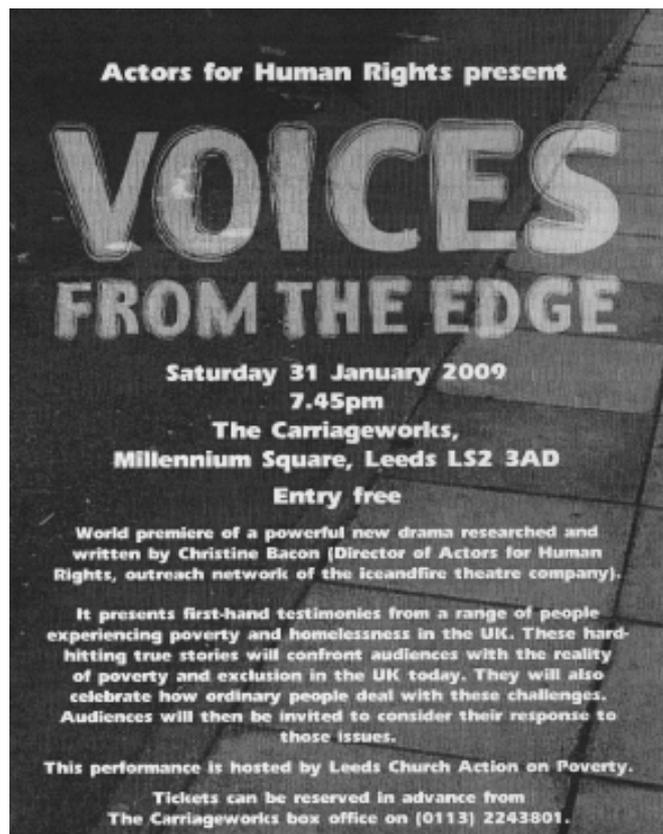
Ruth read extensively: the New Testament and Old Testament; Greek, Egyptian and Zoroastrian history; Hinduism, reading the Vedantas and Upanishads; and Islam. However she remained troubled and challenged by the word 'God'—and more and more found Buddhism opened her eyes and appealed to her need to reason things through. Finally she found a spiritual home with the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path, finally choosing the way of Theravada, realising that the Sutras are only rafts of truth taking us to a new level of learning which invite an ongoing revision of one's own spiritual position.

For some time in the 1990s Ruth was involved with the Leeds University Buddhist Society. It was whilst with them that Ken Jones and she herself responded to Peter Bell's appeal for more

Buddhists to join Concord, and she has been with us ever since. Ruth is confident that Concord helps us to understand other religious ways making for positive tolerance and acceptance of each other.

Ruth's health condition, together with living some distance from our meeting venues, makes it more difficult for her to support Concord occasions. However, her two sons, Andrew and Michael, and her four grand-children are her extended family, giving meaning and opportunities for mutual loving enrichment.

Ruth's contribution to Concord as a Buddhist has been greatly valued by all of us in the years she has been with us, and we trust that our fellowship has been a means of great blessing to her.



Shared Interest

IN mid-September Margaret Vernon travelled from York to talk to Concord members about Shared Interest, a co-operative lending society that helps finance Fairtrade producers in the world's poorest countries. Margaret, a Quaker who has lived in Peru, Cuba and Palestine, was able to give first hand accounts of the way farmers in the 'Third World' struggle against overwhelming odds and told how the low interest loans not only help producers but also the buyers in Europe to develop Fairtrade outlets. She stressed that it is a business, not a charity, helping the poorest people to earn a living through useful production, providing an alternative to the global economy run by multinationals. Over the previous twelve months loans had been made to 56 producers in South American, African and Middle East countries for a wide variety of produce from bananas to olive oil, and to 39 buyers, ensuring that the products have a ready market. After answering questions, Margaret finished with a slide show illustrating some of the enterprises supported—coffee farming in Peru, craft work in India and honey production in Mexico.



Fairtrade Fortnight

February 23 to March 8 is Fairtrade Fortnight – time to Make the Change and Choose Fairtrade. Leeds is a Fairtrade city with many churches providing and promoting Fairtrade products but there is still room for improvement. What is needed is for all churches, chapels and places of worship to do the same. Synagogues, mosques, gurdwaras, temples and meeting places – if you don't already provide Fairtrade, now is the time to do so. Encourage your volunteers to look for the Fairtrade mark on tea, coffee, sugar, fruit juice, cakes and biscuits.

Go Bananas for Fairtrade

You are invited to join the Big (Fairtrade) Banana Day! All you have to do is eat a Fairtrade banana in the 24-hour period between noon on Friday March 6th and noon on Saturday March 7th. Thousands of Fairtrade supporters up and down the country are rising to the Fairtrade challenge – how many people can eat Fairtrade Bananas?

Get together with friends at home, work, school, place of worship, club, group or organisation. Eat your Fairtrade banana for lunch, tea, dinner, supper, breakfast or snack. A Fairtrade banana counts as one of your Five-A-Day, it's good to eat, good for you, good for the growers and good for the planet. What more could you ask?

For more information e-mail fair-trade@leeds.gov.uk

Social Cohesion and Social Inclusion

Extracts from an article by John Battle MP
in *The Guardian*, 6th November 2008

THE Vatican's initiative to convene a high level Christian-Muslim dialogue should be welcomed... Dialogue is not the exclusive preserve of the church or other faith communities. Nor is it to be limited to high-level relations and negotiations... The most crucial dialogue is the daily interaction of community living. Across the world more and more people are living in cities, some of them of more than a million inhabitants. And it is in our cities that all faith communities are predominately present. In my own inner-city neighbourhood of Leeds West, we have Anglican churches, Catholic parishes, Methodist chapels (John Wesley personally visited our neighbourhood on his journeys), new Pentecostal churches, Baptist chapels, Sikh gurdwaras, Hindu temples, a community of Buddhists, Muslim mosques as well as the presence of some Jews. In other words, it is truly multifaith.

For 30 years in Leeds, the Concord interfaith group has acted as the catalyst for interaction in the city – organising talks, get-togethers, visits to places of worship, educational work and "community together" marches. Traditionally interfaith work has consisted generally of convivial open sessions of "tea and samosas" shared by some leaders and interested faithful, who tended to be of an older generation, generous, outward-looking and eager to get to know and make friends with the neighbours. But this is no longer enough...

Leeds West has a striking monument in Kirkstall Abbey in which for over 400 years Cistercian Trappist monks dedicated

their lives to prayer and silence, daily reciting the psalms. One of the Psalms they recited every Friday was number 145 (originally a Song of David and included in the Jewish Torah) which exhorted the faithful to look after the orphan and the widow, ensure justice for the poor and release those in prison. The same words appear in the beautiful calligraphy in the new dome of the local Macca mosque. A new generation of leaders, whose great grandfather came to Leeds to work in the textile mills, whose grandfathers set up corner shops and whose fathers run the taxis, have now for the first time a full experience of schools and further and higher education. Their outlook is of the professional youngsters of modern Leeds, and like the Imam of the Macca mosque, are well capable of holding their own and contributing imaginatively and intelligently to the future of the city. There is a new generation of women engaged in the Armley mosque. What this means is that dialogue is now practical and about tackling together the challenges of young people in the city, of job opportunities, training and sustainable development.

In closing the first Parliament of the World's Religions in 1893, Charles Bonney declares "Henceforth the religions of the world will make war, not on each other, but on the giant evils that afflict mankind". Young Muslims and young Christians working together on new local employment and training in the inner city is the real and effective response not only to the impact of the financial crisis but to those who proclaim the need for "social inclusion".

TREASURE REVEALED IN LEEDS will take place between Saturday May 2nd and Sunday May 10th 2009. This year the programme is being co-ordinated and publicised by an independent group of volunteers, people who have been active in previous years and – now that the ‘funded’ Treasures Revealed has moved out to West Yorkshire – are keen to see events continue in the Leeds Metropolitan District.

The group is relying on the generosity of participating places of worship and faith communities to help with finances to cover basic administrative and printing costs. So far there have been donations promised by the Anglican and Catholic Dioceses, the Baptist Association and Concord.

Several churches and chapels have already registered to take part in the week. What the group would really like to see are more mosques, gurdwaras, temples and synagogues. Once again Concord's Walk of Friendship will be an inaugural event – this time in West Leeds visiting different places of worship in Armley.

Please contact Concord's Secretary for more information and a registration form for your place of worship to be included.



Leeds Faiths Forum
invites you to an
INTER FAITH CONFERENCE ON THE ENVIRONMENT

2.30 – 7.00pm
Sunday 15 March 2009

at Gandhi Hall,
Leeds Metropolitan University
Headingley Campus, Beckett Park Site, Otley Road
(A660), Leeds LS6 3QS

Speakers to include John Battle MP and speakers from different faiths

The aims of the conference are

- *to understand environmental issues from the point of view of different Faiths and of Government*
- *to prepare for a practical interfaith environment project in Leeds*
- *to work on ideas for future projects together*

*For details, contact Charles Dobbin 0113 268 4598 cdobbin@aol.com
To book, contact Ian White 0113 257 8966 ian@stanningleyparish.org.uk*

Concord Programme Spring 2009

Wednesday 21st January 7.15 pm

PATTERNS OF WORSHIP IN CHRISTIANITY:

Revd Dr Adrian Burdon at Oxford Place Methodist Centre
(Allow time to find parking. Try Park Square, or other streets towards the south west.)

Tuesday 24th February 7.00 pm

BEHIND THE WALL:

a talk on the Palestinians by Kath Harwood
at Thomas Danby College (Meeting Room 1&2)

Wednesday 18th March 7.15 pm

PATTERNS OF WORSHIP IN ISLAM:

Imam Hafiz Asim at Makkah Masjid
(36 Thornville Road, off Brudenell Road, Leeds LS6 1JY)

Wednesday 22nd April 7.15 pm

PATTERNS OF WORSHIP IN BUDDHISM:

Shinchi Daishin at Friends' Meeting House
(Woodhouse Lane, opposite Leeds University Engineering Department)

Saturday 2nd May from 11.50 am

WALK OF FRIENDSHIP in Armley

Meet at Holy Family Catholic Church, Green Lane LS12 1HV
The walk will include a mosque, several churches, and a langar lunch
at a gurdwara

Thursday 28th May 7.15 pm

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

at Friends' Meeting House
(Woodhouse Lane, opposite Leeds University Engineering Department)

Interfaith Calendar Spring-Summer 2009

JANUARY

5	Birthday of Guru Gobind Singh	Sikh
6	Epiphany	Christian
	Christmas	Orthodox Christian
7	Ashura	Muslim
11	Mahayana New Year	Buddhist
14	Makar Sankrant/ Lohri	Hindu
18	World Religion Day	Bahá'í
	Anniversary of Brahma Baba	Brahma Kumari
18-25	Week of Prayer for Christian Unity	Christian
25	Conversion of St Paul	Christian
26	Chinese New Year	Buddhist
27	Holocaust Memorial Day	Jewish
31	Losar (New Year)	Tibetan Buddhist
	Saraswati Puja	Hindu
	Birthday of Guru Har Rai	Sikh

FEBRUARY

2	Candlemas	Christian
	Imbolc	Pagan
9	Tu B'shvat	Jewish
14	St Valentine's Day	Christian
15	Nirvana Day	Buddhist
23	Maha Shivaratri	Hindu
24	Shrove Tuesday	Christian
25	Ash Wednesday, Lent	Christian

MARCH

6	Women's World Day of Prayer	Christian
9	Mawlid al Nabi	Muslim
10	Purim	Jewish
	Magha Puja	Buddhist
11	Holi	Hindu
	Hola Mohalla	Sikh
14	Nanakshahi (New Year)	Sikh
17	St Patrick's Day	Christian
21	Ostara, Vernal Equinox	Pagan
	Naw Ruz (New Year)	Bahá'í
22	Mothering Sunday	Christian
25	Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin	Catholic Christian
27	Varsha Pratipada	Hindu
29	Passion Sunday	Christian

APRIL

3	Ramanavani	Hindu
5	Palm Sunday, Holy Week	Christian
8	Hanamatsuri	Buddhist
9	Maundy Thursday	Christian
9-12	Theravadin New Year	Buddhist
9-16	Pesach	Jewish
10	Good Friday	Christian
	Hanuman Jayanati	Hindu
12	Easter	Christian
14	Baisakhi	Sikh
21	Yom HaSho'ah	Jewish
	First Day of Ridvan	Bahá'í
23	St George's Day	Christian
29	Yom Ha'Atzmaut	Jewish
	Ninth Day of Ridvan	Bahá'í

MAY

1	May Day	Secular
	Beltane	Pagan
9	Wesak	Buddhist
21	Ascension of Jesus	Christian
23	Declaration of the Bab	Bahá'í
29	Ascension of Baha'u'llah	Bahá'í
29-30	Shavuot	Jewish
31	Pentecost	Christian
	Maha Shivaratri	Hindu
25	Annunciation of the Virgin Mary	Christian

JUNE

7	Trinity Sunday	Christian
11	Corpus Christi	Catholic Christian
16	Martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev	Sikh
21	Summer Solstice	Pagan
24	Ratha Yatra	Hindu

*This newsletter edited by
John S. Summerwill, January 2009.
Tel: 0113 269 7895
email: editor@concord-leeds.org.uk*

*Admin Secretary: Cynthia Dickinson,
Tel: 01924 863 956
email: secretary@concord-leeds.org.uk*