



Concord

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

Newsletter - January 2020

Praying for Peace in Leeds

THE ANNUAL PEACE SERVICE in the Banqueting Room of Leeds Civic Hall was a happy occasion, bringing together people from nine faiths to reflect on the values of peacemaking, tolerance, respect and mutual cooperation that we all share. It was led by John Summerwill, Co-Chair of Concord.

The Lord Mayor, Cllr Eileen Taylor, the child of one of Windrush generation and proud to be the first black Lord Mayor of Leeds, gave a brief keynote address noting how Leeds is a city committed to multiculturalism, sanctuary and peacemaking.

Leeds has had an annually elected Children's Mayor for sixteen years. This was the first time that one has attended the Peace Service in a formal capacity. Wania Ahmed, a pupil at Harehills Primary School, won her office in an election with nearly 9000 voters, with a manifesto to promote children's mental health. Her

idea, which she is spreading to schools in Leeds, is that once a week each classroom will open their doors early and welcome their pupils in to a 'chill and chat' time. Children have the chance to speak to someone else and make them feel positive about themselves, boost their confidence and be more optimistic. The aim is to reduce stress and help children realise their potential and keep out of trouble. It's a great idea. Wania is an ambassador for peace—inward peace and peace between people—which is exactly what the Peace Service is about. Wania read a passage about peace from various Muslim sources.

Young people from the Harehills-based Leeds Street Team gave a moving and well-constructed presentation, telling of the fight which resulted in the death of a young man in Harehills in 2017, and how the Street Team was formed in response. Five days a week they are out on the streets of Harehills inviting the

youth in the parks to play different games together in the main parks for the sake of building peace. They plan meals, community get togethers and community events throughout the year, in order to bring

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Jay (right) with members of Leeds Street Team.

See page 8 for full width picture



Continued from p1

people together in the hope of growing peace, resilience and love. Their talk was rooted in the faith and values taught by Martin Luther King, Muhammad, Mother Teresa, the Buddha and several other leaders whose words they wove into their reflective narrative.

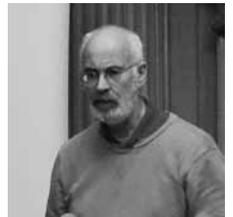
Sue Owen introduced the World Peace Flame. Candles were lit on behalf of nine faiths in Leeds, and readings were given from each of the faith traditions. The Lord Mayor's Consort lit a candle for all of the people of Leeds.

The Wesley Singers, a largely Methodist choir based in Chapel Allerton, sang three anthems: *The Prayer* (a prayer for wisdom and guidance), *Down by the Riverside* (John Rutter's ragtime setting of an African-American spiritual often associated with anti-war protest) and *The Lord Bless You and Keep You* (Rutter's setting of a blessing used in both Judaism and Christianity).

A Franciscan blessing was read by Brother Benedict.

A retiring collection raised £160 for the Lord Mayor's Charity, Support After Sexual Rape and Violence, Leeds.

Look at our website (www.concord-leeds.org.uk) for a comprehensive slideshow of pictures, the full text of the service and names of participants, and the full text of the Leeds Street Team.





Above: Candle lighters: Amalia Chimhanda, David Midgley, Primrose Agbamu, Cherry Steinberg, Shyamsunder Tah, Hilary Curwen, Idris Aslam, Freya Newton, (Gurbinder Kaur Virdee off picture)



Above: Usha Bhardwaj
Left: Sue Owen
Below: Bob Shaw

Page 2: Lord Mayor, Children's Mayor, Mayor, Consort & Concord Co-Chair

Brother Ben, Raquel Silvestre, Jane Kay, Bob Shaw

Hannah Bloom, Vicky Newton, Gurmukh Singh Deagon, David Midgley

The Wesley Singers conducted by Barry Jordan



Attitudes towards Violence

- Quaker & Hindu

THE FINAL SESSION in the series on Attitudes Towards Violence was one of the richest and most stimulating of the whole series. The two eloquent and well-informed speakers gave us clearly structured and well-focused stimulation, leading to some searching questions in the dialogue that followed.

The session was held at the Leeds Mandir, where we were welcomed by the Chair and Vice-Chair, Dr Niranjana Vakharia and Mrs Usha Bhardwaj, who had organised the session.

The Revd Dr David Randolph-Horn chaired the meeting, introducing Quaker John Margham, a special needs teacher, and Hindu Dr Shripati Upadhyaya, a psychologist with a speciality in autism.

John Margham asked for a moment's silence to remember Robert Keeble, who would have been speaking on this occasion if he had not recently been bereaved of his wife, Lea. He then gave an outline of the history of the Quaker witness against war and violence since the beginning of Quakerism in the English Revolution in the 17th century. George Fox, a 'seeker after truth', rejected a lot of Christianity in its outward form, and emphasised the inner life. To a society riven by conflict his message was that Quakers were no threat to the State: their aim was to seek peace and pursue it.

At the beginning of World War I up to a half of Quaker young men volunteered to serve in the forces. Many joined the Quaker Ambulance Unit. Many were conscientious objectors. Between the wars Quakers were much involved in peacemaking. Today many Quakers are pacifists subscribing to the Quaker Peace Testimony with a commitment to peacemaking, social justice and inner peace. War is inconsistent with the spirit of Christ. John gave numerous

examples of the involvement of Quakers in peacemaking in Northern Ireland and southern Asia, and the Quaker stances against the arms trade. Social justice is closely linked to peacemaking because its absence often creates the problems that lead to war. Attention therefore has to be given to ways of providing sanctuary, dealing with crime and establishing restorative justice. Peacemaking and a commitment to social justice first require a change within ourselves. We have to control in ourselves the attitudes that lead to conflict, so centring one's life in worship, especially in silent worship, is an essential key to overcoming violence.

John's concise and closely reasoned talk was illustrated at several points by illuminating quotations from *Quaker Faith & Practice*, read by Catherine Margham.

Dr Upadhyaya's talk traced the development of key ideas and teachings in the Sanatan Dharma, the Eternal Teaching that underlies many religious movements in India. Violence, says this teaching, can come from a disturbed mind and express itself in upsetting speech as well as violent action. The greatest teaching is *ahimsa*, non-violence, which is much promoted in the scriptures, along with obedience to the law and tolerance.

The Sanatan Dharma dates back to the Indus Valley Civilization around 5000 BCE, and was developed through the Vedic texts and rituals and the Upanishads. Out of that tradition came the Lord Buddha, whose philosophy was based on its universal truths. Nature and mankind need to protect and support each other. This is very much an issue today in the growing concern about the impact of the violence of humanity against the environment. Other issues of concern today arise when scientific knowledge is used for destructive

rather than constructive purposes, or when commercialism gets out of hand by, for example, making damaging toys for children, like guns, or when religion becomes a dividing force using violent means to secure its ends. Dr Upadhyaya briefly explored Vedic teachings as well as Hindu ideas from modern times that tried to address the questions of penalties for violence, self-defence in time of war, the concept of duty.

To deal with the violence in the world one must deal first with the violence in oneself. It is important to have positive, creative thoughts that will lead to beneficial action. Ahimsa is cultivated by, for example, the self restraint of yoga. Only in a non-violent mind is there peace. The antidote to the violence in homes, schools, work, politics and society is to be found in peaceful talking together and the uniting of hearts.

The degree of agreement between these two systems of thought was quite remarkable. Superficially Hinduism and

Quakerism can appear to be at opposite ends of the religious spectrum: symbolism vs iconoclasm, ritual vs inwardness, multitudinous gods vs the inner light, etc. Yet what emerged from the two speakers and was reinforced afterwards in their responses to questions, was a clear agreement that violence comes from within and has to be addressed at its roots if it is to be prevented from damaging both the perpetrators and the victims of violence.

The discussion that followed ranged over Gandhi's commitment to ahimsa, violence in current politics, anger, pacifism and the roots of all evil. Dr Vahkaria, from a Jain perspective, spoke of greed, anger, ego and ambition as the roots of violence, which need to be conquered.

It was an excellent evening's discussion, disappointingly poorly attended, as several recent Concord events have been. John Nottingham led the vote of thanks to the two speakers.

JSS



Concord's Thanks to Joyce Sundram

MRS JOYCE SUNDRAM has been a member of Concord since 1983. Prior to that she had lived and worked in Malaysia and Singapore as a specialist teacher of deaf children. Her astonishingly innovative work in Penang was acknowledged by the award of an MBE in 1960. She married an Indian barrister who was a second generation Christian with a Hindu background.

Joyce is a committed Christian and loyal member of the Church of England, who is also deeply committed to interfaith dialogue. Since her retirement in 1987 she has thrown herself into interfaith activity with astonishing zeal and vigour. She has a great gift for crossing cultural and social barriers and making friendships with people from all walks of life and inspiring others to do the same. She is well known in mosques and synagogues as well as churches in Leeds, and has organised many successful cross-cultural events, playing an active part in Nisha-Nasim, Leeds Faiths Forum and other interfaith organisations, as well as Concord.

On the 8th December the Co-Chairs of Concord presented her with a certificate on behalf of Concord as a way—albeit very inadequately—of saying ‘thank you’ to her. The citation, composed by the Executive Committee, is as follows:

This certificate is presented with affection and gratitude to Joyce Sundram for being such a good friend, providing guidance and encouragement to many, and in grateful recognition of her outstanding contribution to inter-faith relationships in Leeds, particularly her extraordinarily loyal, effective, enthusiastic and generous service to Concord over many years.

The presentation was made privately because Joyce is, alas, terminally ill and largely confined to her home and to St Gemma's, where she is receiving some palliative care. Supported by her daughter, Ramola, Joyce is facing her illness with extraordinary courage. We assure them of our love and prayers as well as our gratitude and admiration. JSS

John Summerwill, Joyce Sundram and David Randolph-Horn



New Light on Buddhism

THOSE WHO MISSED our January visit to the new Jamyang Buddhist Centre in Holbeck missed a treat. David Midgeley gave us a superbly clear, concise and engaging explanation both of the Centre and of Buddhism.

Jamyang is a movement in the Tibetan Mahayana tradition, which first began to appeal to westerners in the 1970s and came to Leeds in 1996. The community grew slowly and has met at several locations. From 2009 onwards it was at St Paul Street in central Leeds. Eighteen months ago it bought the present building, a former clothing warehouse with a huge amount of space on two floors. Some of it is rented out. At present the ground floor provides a spacious entrance foyer, a café area and shop and a large meditation hall with a shrine. The long term plan is for the meditation hall, library and some residential accommodation to occupy the upper floor, with the downstairs area devoted to community use.

The café, which is open daily, already draws in some people from the neighbourhood—a challenging area with much social deprivation. The centre is providing support for people with mental health problems, classes on mindfulness and Tai Chi. The shop has charity goods as well as Buddhist artefacts, books and cards. The exciting project of the Centre is to make itself a centre for the non-Buddhist community of Holbeck as well as a place of learning, retreat, meditation and worship for Buddhists.

In the shrine area David explained the significance of the various objects and gave us a fascinating and masterly commentary on the Wheel of Life wall hanging that encapsulates the central philosophy of Buddhism. He spoke too of



the connection between this branch of Buddhism and the Dalai Lama.

We very much look forward to hearing from him again at our next meeting, on 11th February at Roscoe Methodist Church, when he'll be kicking off a new series in *Attitudes Towards Wealth in World Faiths* along with Bahá'í Mark Hellaby. Definitely not to be missed.

JSS



Youth Perspective

Children of Adam

EVERY TIME I create an illusory distinction between myself and the world, I create a veil between me and God. All things come from God, yet the veil I create gives me a sense of individuality, separateness, an ego, something that feels tangible to hold on to. Iblis was a great lover of God. Yet he did not realise that when God created Adam and commanded all of the angels including Iblis to prostrate to Adam, it was not God who moved further away from Iblis, but Iblis who failed to see God in Adam, thus moving away from God. God

is love, and love knows no distinction. Iblis then found himself in hellfire. If only he had prostrated himself to Adam, I used to ponder when I was younger.

The story of Iblis is an eternal truth, not a temporal truth. It is the realisation that Iblis, or Satan, is within all of us and likes to see itself as apart from humanity. When we see ourselves apart from humanity, we begin to find other people intolerable. "Hell is other people", says Sartre. "Hell is empty and all the devils are here", writes Shakespeare. But God makes no distinction. All that exists is God. He is the Infinite, the Absolute. When we see devils, when we fail to love one another, when we see ourselves above another, we do exactly that which we condemn Iblis for. It is easy



to see God in the night sky when the stars are sparkling and when the moon is out. It is easy to find peace and serenity away from people, sipping our coffee, reading our favourite book. But when we come into contact with people, our egos clash.

An organism cannot function properly if one of its cells becomes cancerous. Every cell in the body must work in harmony with the rest. This is obviously true for humanity, yet our value systems raises the individual above the group, whilst dictating to the individual to endlessly consume. This only speeds up a cancerous process, creating more hell for individuals and society. This is true for the passions also. Man has several passions. If one passion begins to rule over the others,

it will only prevent man from reaching his destiny, i.e. finding eternal oneness with God. Instead, man must constantly recreate himself, like a gardener removing weeds. Certain passions will override others in given circumstances, and if we don't come back to harmony aiming at transcendence, then the Garden of Eden in our hearts will slowly diminish.

Belal Ahmed

Participants in the Annual Peace Service at the Civic Hall in October 2019. In the centre are the Children's Mayor and the Lord Mayor of Leeds. Members of The Wesley Singers are on both flanks, and members of Leeds Street Team and their leaders are seated. See report on p1.



Muslim & Pagan Attitudes Towards Violence

THE SESSION ON Muslim and Pagan Attitudes towards violence was held at Baab ul Ilm, a Shia Islamic Centre. From Adam Aslam, Sunni imam, we heard a passionate and eloquent defence and promotion of Islam as a faith motivated by a desire to end violence and spread salaam (peace). From Jay Anderson, a Wiccan witch, we heard a rational, critical, balanced analysis of some of the strengths and weaknesses of attitudes to violence within Pagan Witchcraft and how it is perceived by others. Both presentations were illuminating, interesting and well presented. It's a shame that so few attended, for they missed a good evening.

Adam Aslam explained how Islam was born in Arabia, a land of Pagans, Jews and Christians, in a violent era of tribal conflicts. The Prophet Muhammad refused to join in the fighting. After his day, some Muslim communities split and quarrelled, and there was fighting as Islam spread across North Africa. But the real struggle in Islam is internal. Faith cannot be imposed. Muhammad was persecuted for 13 years until Christians gave him sanctuary and signed a Peace Pact, which endured for 1400 years in friendship treaties between Muslims and others in the Middle East.

People tend to be tribalistic and

judgmental, resorting to violence when they fear for their community. The message of Islam is that people should form one united community, and if they fight it should be against injustice. Islam has a Just War Theory and a concept of martyrdom, allowing the use of force in self-defence and for good ends, such as freeing slaves and prisoners. Central to Islam is the idea that one must be merciful, and one must not be angry.

Jay Anderson focused on her own Wiccan tradition of Paganism, a modern revival of Paganism from the 1930s. Historically witches were portrayed as evil women who caused violence, and this was used to justify physical violence against them, torturing, imprisoning, silencing and killing them. In the 20th century in reaction against the past abuse of witches Wicca sought to reclaim female power, the power of the goddess, and blame patriarchal attitudes for violence against women. Sometimes there is an over-reaction in a 'fluffy' version that sees the witch as merely a herbalist and healer, and in the 'wishy washy new age idea' of 'white' witches.

Wicca teaches a threefold law of return: if you do good it will return to you threefold; if you do evil it will return to you threefold. 'This doesn't work!' said Jay.

Adam Aslam, Jay Anderson, Idris Aslam & Gurmukh Singh Deagon



But it is useful as an injunction to reward those who do good to you.

Paganism is a mystery tradition, seeking balance within and between, looking to engage with the unconscious, suspending belief and disbelief in pursuit of wisdom. Rituals allow the deity in. Let there be beauty and strength within you. Extremes of power corrupt and there is too much physical brutishness. Nevertheless, it is not realistic to be a doormat. Aim at balance.

Witchcraft can itself be a violent practice, using violence to secure the best care. Some witches practise cursing, of which Jay does not approve.

It is a worry to her that some of the violent sanctions against perceived witches that used to happen in 15th-17th century

Europe are happening again in the African continent, and some of the prejudices against people who are different—such as albino children—are being brought to the UK by migrants, raising serious safeguarding issues where witches are blamed for children's conditions.

After the two presentations, Adam and Jay responded to audience questions. We were also introduced briefly to Adam's brother, Idris, one of the young people in the Leeds Street Team organisation with which both Adam and Jay work in Harehills. He spoke warmly of how very helpful Jay had been to them. It had been quite a surprise to young Muslim men to find that a Pagan woman had wisdom worth listening to! This was a delightful endorsement of the value of interfaith dialogue. JSS

Holocaust Memorial Day Civic Remembrance Event: Sun 26th January 2020, 2.00 pm at the Town Hall

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY is the international day of remembrance of six million Jewish men, women and children murdered in the Holocaust, and millions of other people killed under German Nazi persecution, and in subsequent genocides in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur.

2020 marks the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, the largest German Nazi concentration and death camp. It also marks the 25th anniversary of the Genocide in Bosnia.

The Lord Mayor will open this year's civic remembrance event, which will include a keynote speech by Dr James Smith, co-founder of the UK National Holocaust Centre and Chief Executive Officer of the Aegis Trust.

Opera North Youth Chorus will perform a piece on the theme of 'Stand Together'. Over the last few months, young people explored how genocidal regimes throughout history have deliberately fractured societies by marginalising certain groups, and how these tactics can be challenged by individuals standing

together with their neighbours and speaking out against oppression. They have worked with composer Michael Betteridge and writer Anna Pool to create a new work entitled *Standing Together*, which also includes songs by Jewish composers.

There will be a reading of the seven statements of commitments with candle lighting, by representatives of different groups persecuted including Holocaust survivors, people with additional needs, the LGBT+ community, and Remembering Srebrenica. The event will close with a traditional Hebrew memorial prayer sung by the President of Bradford Synagogue, Rudi Leavor, BEM.

There will be British Sign Language (BSL) interpreters at the event.

It is free and open to all.

For more information about this and other events please contact the Arts Development team on 0113 378 7191 or arts@leeds.gov.uk or look at <https://www.leedstownhall.co.uk/whats-on/variety/holocaust-memorial-day-2020/5041>

Interfaith Theology

Wilfred Cantwell Smith

Wilfred Cantwell Smith (1916-2000), was a Canadian Presbyterian minister, a scholar of Islam and founder of the Institute of Islamic Studies at McGill University in Quebec. In 1963 he became the director of Harvard University's Center for the Study of World Religions and the Professor of the Comparative History of Religion at Harvard. He is acknowledged as one of the most influential scholars in the world in this field.

In The Christian in a Religiously Plural World he argues that modern Christian theologians must have an awareness of the world's religions and that religious harmony is central to world peace.

ISUGGEST that we are about to enter a comparable situation with regard to the other religious traditions of mankind. The time will soon be with us when a theologian who attempts to work out his position unaware that he does so as a member of a world society in which other theologians equally intelligent, equally devout, equally moral, are Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, and unaware that his readers are likely perhaps to be Buddhists or to have Muslim husbands or Hindu colleagues—such a theologian is as out of date as is one who attempts to construct an intellectual position unaware that Aristotle has thought about the world or that existentialists have raised new orientations, or unaware that the earth is a minor planet in a galaxy that is vast only by terrestrial standards. Philosophy and science have impinged so far on theological thought more effectively than has comparative religion, but this will not last. (p. 48)

Men have yet to learn our new task

of living together as partners in a world of religious and cultural plurality. The technological and economic aspects of 'one world', of a humanity in process of global integration, are proceeding apace, and at the least are receiving the attention of many of our best minds and most influential groups. The political aspects also are under active and constant consideration, even though success here is not so evident, except in the supremely important day to day staving off of disaster. The ideological and cultural question of human cohesion, on the other hand, has received little attention, and relatively little progress can be reported, even though in the long run it may prove utterly crucial, and is already basic to much else. Unless men can learn to understand and to be loyal to each other across religious frontiers, unless we can build a world in which people of profoundly different faiths can live together and work together, then the prospects for our planet's future are not bright.

My own view is that the task of constructing even that minimum degree of world fellowship that will be necessary for man to survive at all is far too great to be accomplished on any other than a religious basis. From no other source than his faith, I believe, can man muster the energy, devotion, vision, resolution, the capacity to survive disappointment, that will be necessary—that are necessary—for this challenge. Cooperation among men of diverse religions is a moral imperative, even at the lowest level of social and political life

If we must have rivalry among the religious communities of earth, might we not for the moment at least rival each other in our determination and capacity to promote reconciliation? Christians, Muslims and Buddhists each believe that only they are able to do this. Rather than arguing this point ideologically, let us strive in a friendly race to see which can implement it most effectively and vigorously in practice—each recognizing

that any success of the other is to be applauded, not decried. (pp. 50--1)

I rather feel that the final doctrine on this matter may perhaps run along the lines of affirming that a Buddhist who is saved, or a Hindu or a Muslim or whoever is saved, is saved only because God is the kind of God whom Jesus Christ has revealed him to be. This is not exclusivist; indeed, it coheres, I feel, with the points that I have made above in dissenting from exclusivism. If the Christian revelation were not true, then it might be possible to imagine that God would allow Hindus to worship him or Muslims to obey him or Buddhists to feel compassionate towards their fellows, without his responding, without his reaching out to hold them in his arms. But because God is what he is, because he is what Christ has shown him to be, therefore other men do live in his presence. Also, therefore, we (as Christians) know this to be so

We are not saved by our knowledge; we are not saved by our membership in the Church; we are not saved by anything of our doing. We are saved, rather, by the only thing that could possibly save us, the anguish and the love of God. While we have no final way of knowing with assurance how God deals or acts in other men's lives, and therefore cannot make any final pronouncement ... none the less we must perhaps be at least hesitant in setting boundaries to that anguish and that love.

The God whom we have come to know, so far as we can sense his action, reaches out after all men everywhere, and speaks to all who will listen. Both within and without the Church men listen all too dimly. Yet both within and without the Church, so far as we can see, God does somehow enter into men's hearts. (pp. 57-8)

Wilfred Cantwell Smith, 'The Christian in a Religiously Plural World', in John Hick and Brian Hebblethwaite (eds), *Christianity and Other Religions* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2001).

Concord

Namaste Fund

A GENEROUS DONATION from an anonymous donor has provided the seed for a new and exciting project for Concord. The Executive Committee has agreed to use this money and other money to be added to it to promote interfaith dialogue among young people. A special fund has been set up within Concord's accounts to provide grants to enable young people to engage in interfaith dialogue by, for example, attending conferences, workshops and lectures in Britain or overseas, such as the youth events organised by the Interfaith Network of Great Britain.



The word 'namaste' refers to the form of greeting commonly used in India, illustrated above. It is a respectful, peaceful way of recognising the divine in another person, which encapsulates the spirit of true interfaith dialogue.

The fund is administered by the registered trustees of Concord.

Individuals aged between 14 and 21 can apply for a grant of up to £100, and groups including young people in this age range can receive up to £250. It is hoped that this will help to cover travel expenses and other costs that might otherwise deter youngsters from going to events. They will need to make a formal application to justify the claim and to give feedback afterwards about how the activity has been of use. The application will need to be endorsed by a youth leader, teacher or faith leader and have parental approval if the applicant is under 18.

Full details of the fund and how to apply can be found on our website, which also explains the ways in which people can donate to the fund. Please join in and help us with this project by making a donation and by bringing it to the attention of eligible young people, youth leaders and teachers you know.

Light for Leeds

THE INTERFAITH WEEK event at Kirkstall Abbey on Sunday November 17th was another excellent day for showcasing the different faiths in the city getting together and celebrating our differences. Several stalls were staffed by Concord members, with displays, leaflets and some with free food from their faith tradition.

There were christingles and Christmas cards for children to make, candles of peace and a faith trail for all ages. Visitors could take a walking meditation, join in with carols from the choir then listen to sacred music and songs. There was something for everyone, and plenty of people came along to enjoy the afternoon. The event closed with a quiet candle-lit walk to the Chapter House where the Tree of Hope had been decorated with paper candles bearing messages of peace.

Our thanks go Patrick Bourne and Gabrielle Hamilton of Leeds City Museums for bringing the whole thing together and ensuring that the afternoon went smoothly.

Those of us involved with the planning of Light for Leeds have moved on to help Patrick organise a year-long exhibition in Abbey House Museum: *Embracing all we have in common through the unifying theme of light.*



We have been choosing items to represent light in our faith traditions, which will be included in the displays, and an artist has been commissioned to create a new installation. There will be a whole variety of talks, activities and workshops on themes

around faith and light throughout the year.

The Light for Leeds exhibition will be launched on Friday February 14th in the upstairs display gallery of Abbey House Museum and will be there for the rest of 2020. Hopefully you will all find time to visit the exhibition and maybe take part in some of the extra activities.

Cynthia Dickinson



Faith Leaders Climate Forum, Nov 2019

BACK IN NOVEMBER 2018 I attended an event at the Leeds Church Institute on Faith Leaders and Climate Change—and wrote about it this time last year.

In November 2019 I attended another event at the Leeds Church Institute, a Faith Leaders Climate Forum. It followed much the same format with speakers from Leeds City Council and Faith communities.

First up was Kate Locke, the Communication and Policy Officer for Leeds Climate Commission, who gave us the stark facts. The world has already warmed by one degree Celsius, impacts are happening faster than expected and climate scientists in Leeds are very concerned. Not enough is being done by governments, by businesses, by organisations, by individuals.. The outlook is grim.

But there have been positive changes. Individuals such as Greta Thunberg have inspired many more individuals to take action, to put pressure on governments and to change their life-styles. More than half the Councils in the UK have declared a Climate Emergency—but words need to translate into change. Leeds plans to be Carbon Zero by 2030.

Next was Qari Asim, who spoke about the environmental crisis from an Islamic perspective, describing it as a great moral and social issue. There are warnings in the Qur'an about overuse of resources, corruption on land and sea leading to the disasters we are experiencing. There are passages on the connection between communities, including animals and insects, which make things personal. And there are instructions on stewardship, sustainability, conservation and moderation, how to start putting things right. Finally he mentioned initiatives being taken by mosques working towards being eco-friendly, a ban on plastic, divestment from fossil fuels and investing in renewable energy.

The final speaker was Professor Carmody Grey, a Catholic theologian from Durham. She spoke about the Pope's Encyclical on climate change, *Laudato Si*. His message is to all people, to recognise what we are doing and to change course; it is everyone's problem. This is his call to dialogue, not an answer to the problem. Everything is connected; environmental problems are social problems. Human beings exist in relationship with one another, with God and with Nature. It isn't either-or but both-and. Transformational thinking is needed more now than ever, the conversations must be raised to a new level.

Following on from the Climate Forum, Jemima Parker of LCI, with Anita Shaw, facilitated a Carbon Conversation course. Both Jay and I signed up for the course which has just come to an end. Over the past four months we have attended sessions to talk about our personal carbon footprints and discuss ways of initiating similar conversations with other groups and individuals. It hasn't been easy. We will finish with a Facilitator session which will (hopefully) result in us being able to run a series of Carbon Conversation in our own faith - or interfaith - communities.

Cynthia Dickinson

THE WOMEN'S GROUP

continues to meet in the Central Art Library on the 1st Monday morning of each month. They have a small core of 4-6 people and are currently making and donating items for Baby Basics, a Christian charity. They were contributing to the Baby Bank but that is full up now due to the demise of Mothercare.

New members are welcome. Just come along, or contact Hannah Bloom hannahlbloom@gmail.com
0113 264 1868

Calendar of Festivals Autumn 2019 - Spring 2020

Bahá'í, Jewish and Pagan festivals usually begin on the evening before the given date.

JANUARY 2020

| | | |
|-------|------------------------------------|-----------|
| 3 | Vasant Panchami | Hindu |
| 5 | Twelfth Night | Christian |
| | Guru Gobindh Singh birthday | Sikh |
| 6 | Epiphany | Christian |
| 10-12 | Mahayana New Year | Buddhist |
| 13 | Maghi | Sikh |
| 18-25 | Week of Prayer for Christian Unity | Christian |
| 19 | World Religion Day | Bahá'í |
| 28 | Tu BiShvat | Jewish |

FEBRUARY 2020

| | | |
|----|--------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 2 | Candlemas - Presentation of Christ in the Temple | Christian |
| | Imbolc | Pagan |
| 5 | Chinese New Year | Confucian, Daoist, Buddhist |
| 8 | Nirvana Day | Buddhism |
| 18 | Founder's Day | Brahma Kumari |
| 22 | Maha Shivaratri | Hindu |
| 23 | Transfiguration Sunday | Christian |
| 25 | Shrove Tuesday | Christian |
| 26 | Intercalary Days begin | Bahá'í |
| | Ash Wednesday, Lent begins | Christian |

MARCH 2020

| | | |
|------------|----------------------|-----------|
| 1 | St. David of Wales | Christian |
| | Intercalary Days end | Bahá'í |
| 2 - 20 | Nineteen Day Fast | Bahá'í |
| 3 | Hindi New Year | Hindu |
| 8 | Magha Puja Day | Buddhist |
| 10 | Holi | Hindu |
| | Purim | Jewish |
| | Hola Mohalla | Sikh |
| 17 | St. Patrick's Day | Christian |
| 20 | Equinox - Ostara | Pagan |
| 21 | Naw-Rúz (New Year) | Bahá'í |
| 25 | Lady Day | Christian |
| 25-April 2 | Ramayana | Hindu |

APRIL 2020

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|------|---------------------|-----------|
| 2 | Ramanavami | Hindu |
| 3 | Laylat al Miraj | Muslim |
| 5 | Palm Sunday | Christian |
| 8 | Hanuman Jayanti | Hindu |
| 9-11 | Theravadin New Year | Buddhist |
| 9-15 | Pesach | Jewish |
| 9 | Mahavir Jayanti | Jain |
| | Maundy Thursday | Christian |
| 10 | Good Friday | Christian |

| | | |
|----|---------------------|--------------------|
| 12 | Easter | Christian |
| | Lag B'Omer | Jewish |
| 14 | Baisakhi (Vaisakhi) | Sikh |
| 19 | Pascha - Easter | Orthodox Christian |
| 21 | Yom HaShoah | Jewish |
| | First Day of Ridvan | Bahá'í |
| | Lailat al Bara'ah | Muslim |
| 23 | St. George's Day | Christian |
| 24 | Ramadan begins | Muslim |
| 29 | Ninth Day of Ridvan | Bahá'í |
| | Yom Ha'Atzmaut | Jewish |

The Police and Faith Communities

OVERALL THE VISION of Policing is to Prevent Crime and Protect the Public. A great deal of the delivery of this mission is at individual Force level where local needs are many and varied. Within the National Policing Vision and Mission, Faith communities can support the police with their non-statutory requirements.

The Police service in England and Wales wants to work in partnership with Faith groups to build safer communities and reduce demand.

To this end they have produced a Toolkit - 'Faith Communities Guide to Working with Police' which can be downloaded for free from

www.faithandpolicetogether.org.uk/

"By three methods we may learn wisdom: First, by reflection, which is noblest; second, by imitation, which is easiest; and third by experience, which is the bitterest." —Confucius

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