

Newsletter - January 2006

Annual Peace Service

ONCE AGAIN there was an excellent turnout for this annual event as people filled the Friends' Meeting Room on October 18th. Dr Hamed Pakrooh, guest Chair for the evening, ably led the proceedings and the first candle was lit by the Lord Mayor on behalf of all people in Leeds. There were shared affirmations, musical interludes provided by a small choir, aptly named Peace Offering, the lighting of nine candles for peace by people representing nine faiths in Leeds and time for meditation and reflection. Wendy Scott had brought the World Peace Flame, from which all other candles were lit.

Many thanks to all who turned up and made the occasion a wonderful success. Yet again we ran out of programmes and

seats; yet again you created a feeling of calm and serenity in this troubled world.

Although we were told originally that we would not be able to use the Meeting Room this year, as it had been booked for a Quaker meeting, the Friends very kindly reorganised their meeting to let us have the delightfully peaceful room with its lovely atmosphere.

Our thanks to Dr and Mrs Pakrooh for hosting proceedings and making sure everything flowed so smoothly.

We were delighted that the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress of Leeds could be with us to light the first candle. And our thanks to Linda and Wendy for bringing the World Peace Flame—plus a box of small candles so that everyone could take a peace flame home. An extra thank you to Linda for the photograph below.

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Student Concern for Middle Eastern Peace

LAST AUTUMN a group of ten students from the University of Leeds visited Israel and Palestine for a week to gain a greater understanding of the politics and social fabric of the region. They spent an equal length of time in each, visiting over thirty different people and groups including political, religious and social leaders, NGOs and humanitarian organisations as well as the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the Palestinian Polytechnic University in Hebron and the United Nations OCHA office in Hebron.

As a natural progression of this project, they aim to develop sustainable relationships with the Israeli and Palestinian students they met in order to form the basis for the initiation of a Leeds exchange programme. In this, its first year, they initiated an exchange with four students and two members of staff from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and four students and two members of staff from the Palestinian Polytechnic University, who came to Leeds to take part

in the 'Together for Peace' Festival in November. Their visit included meeting Hilary Benn (Leeds MP and Secretary of State for International Development), Mark Harris (leader of Leeds City Council) and Michael Arthur (Vice-Chancellor of Leeds University). The exchange students presented their experiences to local school children and took part in forums at the festival.

Concord responded to a request for financial assistance with this project by donating £500 towards the students' expenses.

In December two of the participants gave a most impressively interesting and well-presented talk to Concord members illustrated by slides at the Friends' Meeting House. They conveyed very clearly their grasp of the political and religious tensions in the region and the fears and hopes both of Israelis and of Palestinians, afterwards answering with great sensitivity a range questions from the audience.

John S. Summerwill



West Yorkshire Chaplaincy Project

IN NOVEMBER our speaker was the Revd Peter Tarleton, chaplain at Armley Jail in Leeds. After giving an insight into his background, an Anglican priest from Eniskillin, he described some of the work done by prison chaplains, in particular their concerns for the welfare of prisoners after release.

Peter and fellow chaplain Khalil felt that the present re-settlement strategy needed support. This led to the research done into prisoners' needs by Kim Knott and the successful bid for (ethical) funding to extend their work out into the community.

There is now a Project Director and Board of Trustees from different faiths whose task will be listening to and providing for prisoners after release so that they will settle back into the community and not re-offend—investing to save.



At Armley there is the Jigsaw Centre where newly released prisoners can go for breakfast and meet up with their families. Key workers and volunteer mentors help with the transition by providing advice (parenting, finance), support groups (drugs, alcohol) and individual befrienders. Peter stressed that this is not just about helping people coming out of prison but is about our society as a whole, being able to identify with each other in a meaningful way.

Cynthia Dickinson

Research into Attitudes to Inter Faith

THE LEEDS DIOCESAN Interfaith Task Group, having successfully completed research into attitudes to interfaith by members of the various Christian denominations in the Allerton Deanery (LS7, 8 & 17), is now hoping to extend its research into attitudes held by adherents of other faiths in the same geographical area.

Concord's Executive Committee has offered to help with the funding of this extra research and invited Canon Charles Dobbin, chair of the Task Group, along to its December meeting to find out what would be involved.

The first step will be for people from different faiths to spare some time filling in a questionnaire.

Concord's Chairman, Dr Sewa Singh Kalsi, has already persuaded some

members of the Sikh community to participate. Hopefully many more—perhaps Concord members—will be happy to take part.

If your Mosque, Synagogue, Temple or Meeting is situated/held in the Allerton Deanery and you (and your friends) are interested in helping this research, please contact Canon Charles Dobbin on 0113 268 4598 or cdobbin@aol.com

As each piece of research is completed, the work of developing a programme of education about other faiths will progress. This can then be used in other areas of Leeds and throughout the country, giving practical guidelines for improving relations between different faith communities.

Cynthia Dickinson

Faiths Forum Launched

ON DECEMBER 8TH the Yorkshire & Humber Faiths Forum was launched in Leeds Town Hall with Inderjit Singh Bhogal as the Director and a Council of 21 representatives drawn from the different faith communities (recognised by the Inter Faith Network) in the region. John Battle MP, Professor Kim Knott and Rt Rev John Sentamu, Archbishop of York addressed the gathering.

The objects of the Forum are to: advance the contribution of faith communities in the Yorkshire and Humber region; encourage and educate faith communities to work together in matters of policy, strategy and action within the area known as Yorkshire & Humber; challenge all forms of discrimination and injustice against persons or groups of people, particularly on grounds of religious belief.

Cynthia Dickinson

Unity in Diversity

CONCORD has been invited to support the Unity in Diversity project being developed by Leeds Voice. The main aim is to engage young people and their communities in a better understanding and celebration of their differences and similarities—ethnic, cultural, faith. A pilot scheme will run in two very different Leeds schools, focusing on Year 6 pupils, building up relations between them, involving parents, with a different feature each month (in line with curriculum activities) leading to school exchange and end of year community event.

Cynthia Dickinson

Holocaust Memorial Day 2006

Civic Commemorative Event
Leeds Town Hall Sunday 29 January
2.00 pm - 3.15 pm Free admission
Coffee and tea reception from 1.15 pm



Interfaith Calendar January - April 2006

January	5	Birthday of Guru Gobind Singh	Sikh
	6	Epiphany	Christian
	7	Feast of the Nativity	Orthodox Christian
	10-13	Eid ul Adha	Muslim
	13	Maghi	Sikh
	14	Mahayana Buddhist New Year	Buddhist
	15	World Religion Day	Bahá'i
	18-25	Octave of Prayer for Christian Unity	Christian
	27	Holocaust Memorial Day	Jewish
	29	Chinese New Year	
	31	Hijra - New Year	Muslim
February	2	Candlemas	Christian
	2	Imbolc	Pagan
	9	Ashura	Muslim
	13	Magha Puja	Buddhist
	13	Tu B'shvat	Jewish
	26	Mahashivratri	Hindu
	28	Shrove Tuesday	Christian
March	1	Ash Wednesday: Beginning of Lent	Christian
	1	St David's Day	Christian
	3	Women's World Day of Prayer	Christian
	14	Purim	Jewish
	14	Holi	Hindu
	15	Nirvana Day	Buddhist
	15	Hola Mahalla (New Year)	Sikh
	17	St Patrick's Day	Christian
	21	Naw-Rúz	Bahá'i
	21	Ostara / Mabon	Pagan
	26	Mothering Sunday	Christian
April	9	Palm Sunday: Beginning of Holy Week	Christian
	10	Birthday of Prophet Muhammad	Muslim
	13	Theravadin New Year	Buddhist
	13	Maundy Thursday	Christian
	13-20	Pesach	Jewish
	14	Good Friday	Christian
	14	Vaisakhi	Sikh
	16	Easter Day	Christian
	22	Ridvan	Bahá'i
	23	St George's Day	Christian
	23	Orthodox Easter	Orthodox Christian
25	Yom Ha-Shoah (Holocaust Day)	Jewish	

Exhibition

**"Leeds: 25 Years of
Promoting a Nuclear Free
Future"**

**Now on in Leeds Central Library,
Calverley Street, Leeds city centre
from January 4th - 15th 2006.**

The exhibition is a series of 5 panels which charts the history and progress of the Nuclear Free Local Authorities movement over the last 25 years. Leeds was one of the first 'Nuclear Free Zones' in the world and continues to play an important role in the organisation and other linked groups, such as the International Mayors for Peace and the Chernobyl Children's Project.

The exhibition also includes some local Leeds artefacts from the days of 'civil defence' nuclear emergency planning and copies of the ground breaking studies 'Leeds and the Bomb' and 'Leeds and Bradford Under a Cloud'. It was held at Leeds Metropolitan University in November and December as part of the Leeds *Together for Peace* festival.

The exhibition is free and open to the general public.

TREASURES REVEALED IN LEEDS
will be taking place from Saturday
29th April to Sunday 7th May 2006.

**Places of worship throughout
the city are invited to open their
doors and share their building,
activities and heritage with
members of the public.
Registration forms are available
from Zoe Kemp, 20 New Market
Street, Leeds LS1 6DG and must
be returned by January 31st.**

New Archbishop Encourages Interfaith Fellowship

"CHRISTIANS, go, find friends who are Buddhists, Hindus, Jews, Muslim, Sikhs, agnostics and atheists, not for the purpose of converting them to your beliefs, but for friendship, understanding, listening, hearing." This was the exhortation of Dr John Sentamu, the new Archbishop of York, in his wide-ranging, soul-stirring Inaugural Sermon in York Minster. Splendid encouragement for Concord!

One of 13 children, born in 1949, John Sentamu was brought up in rural Uganda and first studied law at Makerere University, becoming a barrister and a judge in the High Court. As a committed Christian he simply could not condone the flagrant violation of human rights in Uganda without vigorous protest and thus became a victim of Idi Amin's murderous regime. So it was that in 1974 he and his wife had to flee as asylum seekers to the UK. Here he read theology, taking his doctorate at Cambridge University and being ordained as an Anglican priest in 1979. In due course he was consecrated as Bishop of Stepney and then of Birmingham prior to the hugely popular appointment to York in 2005.

The Archbishop's aim "to reach out to all by standing at the intersection where human need and God's love meet" continues his determined efforts in London and Birmingham to forge strong links with people of other faith traditions, particularly those in urban priority areas and of greatest need.

One of the Archbishop's first engagements was as a keynote speaker at the official launch of the Yorkshire and Humber Faiths Forum in Leeds Town Hall in December.

Joyce Sundram

Annual Peace Service
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Thank you to Peace Offering for their singing, lovely musical interludes adding to the peaceful atmosphere.

Our thanks to the faith representatives—Mehran, Gladys, Ruth, Emma & Alice, Asha, Ethel, David, Gill and Rosham Singh. A special thank you to the expert candle-lighter who ensured that all the flames eventually glowed!

Last, but by no means least, those behind the scene—Peter, Pippa, Ethel, Joyce, John—and everyone who came along, too many to mention.

Thank you all for your support.

Cynthia Dickinson



At the end of the Annual Peace Service there was a very short but special event when Dr Pakrooh, on behalf of the Executive Committee and Members, awarded Honorary Life Membership to Peter Dale for services to Concord. Peter retired from the office of Treasurer last year after many years of diligent service.

PeaceLink and Together For Peace

AS A MEMBER group of Leeds Peacelink, Concord has been involved in many events during Leeds Together For Peace fortnight. Much of our effort has gone into publicising, promoting and supporting the various events and activities but there have also been Concord members on the organising side, particularly Heroes for Peace (see Evelyn's report on page 2).

Concord was given a special mention at the "Walk for Peace" finale on Sunday November 20th and was awarded not only a "Certificate of Participation in the Walk for Peace" but also a large World Peace Flame candle. Thanks to everyone who made their walks - long and short - into Walks for Peace. With your help the final distance was far greater than hoped for. The aim had been to cover 6,000 miles (equivalent to the distance between Leeds and Hiroshima). In fact a total of 10,000 miles was accumulated between July and November. Linda and Wendy were so delighted with the response that the activity has been upgraded to "Moving for Peace" - to include cycling, swimming, skiing, travelling in motorised wheelchairs or scooters for the disabled (but not driving). A new running total will be created, the goal being to cover a distance of 25,000 miles - a journey around the earth. After that - the moon!

And there will be "Time for Peace", so if you knit, crochet, meditate, sing, dance for peace, you can time your activity and keep a record of the minutes and hours.

Cynthia Dickinson

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