

Welcomes at a Mosque and a Synagogue

IN NOVEMBER 2003, we arrived at the Grand Mosque in Hyde Park to a bright sunset on a day in Ramadan. We were welcomed and escorted to the balcony from which we (women and men visitors together) could see the men praying downstairs in response to the sunset call to prayer marking the end of the day's fast. Some women prayed upstairs where we stood silently.

At the moment of sunset we were all offered delicious dates, and, following prayers, the magnificent Iftar buffet meal laid out on tables near us was shared by everyone, men coming upstairs to join the visitors and women worshippers. There were a lot of visitors via the Interfaith Liaison Forum including John Battle MP and Mike Fox. Joyce and I represented Concord. After the meal various greetings were exchanged and it was open to anyone—men or women, visitors or hosts—to participate. The Grand Mosque is very international with a lot of Muslims from middle eastern countries; some younger generation Asians like it because there is more English spoken than at other mosques. We had some very interesting conversations and look forward to maintaining some contact; a Concord visit to the Grand Mosque is being planned for early summer.

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, 22nd June or cheques—payable to Concord—can be posted to Peter Dale, 10 Helmsley Road, Leeds LS16 5JA

On a Shabbat morning in January several of us from Concord visited the Street Lane Gardens Orthodox Synagogue for the Bar Mitzvah (coming of age) of a 12 year old boy, our invitation coming via the Liaison Forum. We women were escorted to the balcony which surrounded the central area on three sides giving a very good view. All Jewish men were wearing prayer shawls and about a dozen men took a leading role in the ceremonials, including some wonderful unaccompanied part singing from the (all male) choir. (Orthodox Jews don't play musical instruments on the Sabbath). We saw the scrolls carried from the ark and there was much reading in Hebrew, including some by the Bar Mitzvah boy. Service books, which we each had, gave English translations of the passages from Exodus. The rabbi gave a short, quite informal address in English and warmly welcomed the boy.

When the boy finished his recitation of readings, sweets were, as is the custom, thrown down to him by his sisters in the balcony.

We were ably assisted in our understanding by many members of the congregation who placed themselves amongst the visitors, giving one-to-one explanations. Afterwards we all met together for food and conversation at the buffet downstairs, along with congregation and the boy's family, members of whom had travelled from London and Israel to the event.

Evelyn Shire

Join us for our visit to the Grand Mosque at 7.45pm on Wednesday 19th May

This newsletter edited by John S. Summerwill, May 2004.

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Reg. Charity No 516339



Concord

LEEDS INTERFAITH FELLOWSHIP
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Newsletter - May 2004

From the Chair

WE HAVE ENJOYED another series of stimulating and informative talks, with numbers increasing slightly each time, and we hope that even more of you will join us for our forthcoming events. **We would particularly like to see you at our AGM on Tuesday 22nd June.**

It is almost two years since I took the chair—and now it is time to appoint my successor. Although it has been a most interesting, and occasionally challenging, time I am now ready to hand over to someone else, hopefully at the AGM. Our administrative assistant, Louise, has left us now that she has had her baby and Robin Fishwick, our General Secretary, would like to spend more time with Sarah and daughter Rosa. The Executive Committee would like to thank Robin for all the work he has done over the past four years and we are hoping he will continue to help and support us. I am happy to take on parts of the administrative work—I quite like the backroom jobs—but we are in need of a new General Secretary to work alongside the Chair for Concord's future.

Besides these two posts there is always a need for new blood, new ideas, new skills and expertise. I know Peter Dale would like to have a 'shadow' treasurer prepared to take on the financial work in the not too distant future; and we could use a Membership Secretary too. If any of these positions appeal to you, do please put yourself forward for election at the AGM on Tuesday 22nd June.

Cynthia Dickinson

Congratulations to...

- **Louise** on the birth of her son, Matthew Thomas, 21 December 2003
- **Robin & Sarah Fishwick** on the birth of their daughter, Rosa Silvia, 26th March 2004

Our best wishes to both families.



Robin, Sarah and Rosa

Local and European Elections

MANY FAITH GROUPS are concerned about the possibility of BNP candidates standing at the forthcoming elections, June 10th. Concord is opposed to all forms of racism, but we know that “for evil to triumph, all that is necessary is that good people do nothing”.

The most important action you can take is to vote for one of the democratic parties—it is your right, don't lose it! The turnout at local elections is usually very low, often less than 25%, and many people say their vote will make no difference; it is a waste of time. But in the case of proportional representation, as in the European elections, every vote counts. Encourage your friends and family to vote, the more people who do the less chance there is of the BNP getting seats.

Regional Faiths Forum

THERE HAVE BEEN TEN meetings in February and March throughout Yorkshire and Humberside to find out what people from different faith groups think about the creation of a Regional Faiths Forum. Although it was often repeated that no decision had yet been made, the talk was very positive in favour of a Forum with most of the discussions concerned with “how and when” rather than “if”.

The report, based on research done by Kim Knott of Leeds University, gave arguments for and against the idea but in general the potential role of a Regional Faiths Forum was seen by many as an opportunity for faith communities to influence local decision-making, promote regional faith networking, educate people about minority faiths and receive recognition for the contributions they already make to society.

A copy of the final report (August 2003) is available from the Yorkshire and Humber Assembly or the Churches Regional Commission.

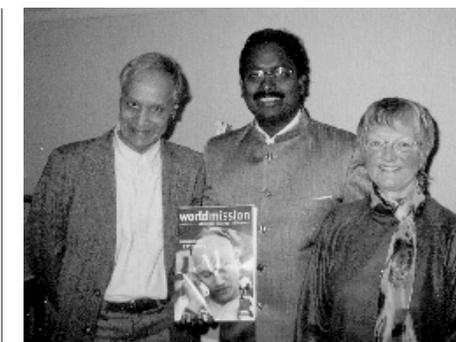


Women & Islam - a talk by Nad Fiorucci

IN FEBRUARY NAD FIORRUCCI gave an interesting talk on “Women and Islam”. Islam is found in many cultures and to some extent reflects their variety. By her presence and style Nad shattered the commonly held ‘western’ stereotype of the passive and subservient Muslim woman. She was herself born in Trinidad, one of seven children. When nine years old she came to this country with her mother, brothers and sisters, to join her father, who had emigrated earlier to pursue a career in accountancy. Her parents were our friends Maimoon and the late Haji Cassim Mohammed, who with Dr Peter Bell, Canon Howard Hammerton and Rabbi Douglas Charing founded Concord from the nucleus of an existing Jewish-Christian-Muslim Group. We asked Nad to talk also about her father, of whom she was very fond.

It was good to learn more about the man who had many gifts and interests beyond those we knew and respected, and who assumed the position of Imam in his local mosque whilst still quite young. On the lighter side she told us that he was a fan of the popular tenor, Mario Lanza, and had a good singing voice himself. Nad is in her spare time a presenter of Radio Skeba which entertains the patients of Seacroft Hospital.

Peter Dale



Sewa Singh Kalsi, Chris Gnanakan and Cynthia Dickinson

A Christian in South India – a talk by Chris Gnanakan

CHRIIS JOINED US on March 17th when he gave a most entertaining talk, describing modern India in three words—Hurry, Worry and Curry! The country is moving rapidly from an agricultural to an industrial nation, where the rich are getting richer and the poor, poorer, with a wide mix of colour, scent and style. There is freedom of speech and worship but recent anti-conversion laws have made it difficult for minority faiths. He pointed out that India has the fastest growth rate of charismatic Christianity, with the south being more liberal and less extreme than the north of the country.



Ruth Stocks, Nad Fiorucci, Hardeep Kaur Kalsi, Joyce Sundram, Ethel Baker and Peter Dale

Join us on the 1st August at the Concord Picnic in Roundhay Park at the Leeds Mela



Robin & Loz providing musical entertainment at the Winter Social in December

Oriental Theme Evening

THE CATERING STUDENTS of Thomas Danby College are putting on a four-course dinner with an Oriental theme on Thursday 10th June. Several members thought this would be an ideal opportunity to have a social get-together and enjoy an excellent meal—without having to do the organising or hard work!

We hope to make a Concord block booking but will need definite numbers as early as possible. If you are interested in joining us, please contact Cynthia or Peter—with a £5 deposit, payable to Concord—by May 10th.