



Concord

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

Newsletter - October 2014

Secretary's Retirement

THE AGM in May was Cynthia Dickinson's final meeting in the role of Concord Secretary. For a decade Cynthia has been the driving force behind Concord and its chief public representative. Joyce Sundram gave a speech thanking Cynthia for her admirable work for Concord and for interfaith dialogue, and for her personal integrity and example in putting into practice her convictions about peacemaking and care of the planet. Simon Phillips (Chair) presented a bouquet of flowers, and John Summerwill



(Membership Secretary) proposed, on behalf of the Executive Committee, that Cynthia should be awarded Honorary Life Membership of Concord. This was carried unanimously, and Cynthia was presented with a framed certificate on behalf of the membership, which read as follows:

This is to certify that Cynthia Dickinson has been awarded Honorary Life Membership of Concord in grateful recognition of her outstanding contribution to inter-faith relationships in Leeds during a decade of unstintingly generous and efficient service as Secretary of Concord.

Cynthia, we are glad to say, continues to do great work for Concord in the Women's Peace-ing Together Project, representing us in various other meetings, and writing for this newsletter.





Women Peace-ing Together

Concord's 40th Anniversary Banner

by Cynthia Dickinson

THE women's textile project has now completed its first two modules—half a dozen taster workshops followed by a series of creative workshops to design and make a peace cloth. We put into practice some of the skills we have learnt and are very pleased with the resulting rainbow cloth decorated with words of peace from many languages and in different scripts.

At the final workshop of this module at the end of September in the Museum Discovery Centre we more or less completed the cloth, which we will take to the Peace Service on Wednesday October 22nd. We hope you will come and see the results of our efforts. You can see us at work by looking for the Women's Group on Concord's website www.concord-leeds.org.uk.

The next phase will be to work on the Anniversary Banner, showing the wonderful diversity of people, faiths and cultures, plus the textile heritage of Leeds. Plans are still in hand for these workshops as more funds are needed.

Over the autumn we are taking part in Bradford Touchstone's project—Women

Weaving Wisdom—and will be creating a rug to be displayed in their yurt.

Next year we will continue our textile work on the celebratory banner to have it ready for Concord's 40th anniversary in January 2016. In June that year our banner, cloth and rug will be on display in the community cabinet of the Leeds Story gallery in Leeds City Museum.

Jenny Paton-Williams and I would like to hear from all Concord women. This will be your banner, so do come along and have your contributions included. You don't need to be expert at anything, simply happy to join in, participate in any way you can, or simply watch. If you and/or any women from your faith community would like more information, please contact

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A Buddhist Approach to Ethics

AT a session in June our Buddhist speaker, Dennis Hallam, began by saying that he could not really talk about the subject—Buddhist Ethics in Contemporary Life—nor on behalf of all Buddhists, yet he succeeded in giving us an insight into the basic Buddhist philosophy about living a good life. There are no specific written rules on good behaviour in Buddhism: rather there are pieces of advice, the interpretation of which varies according to cultural and traditional flavours.

Generally speaking, Buddhists accept the Four Noble Truths—that the world is a place of suffering and delusion which can only end by following the true path to happiness. He reminded us that worldly happiness is transient; true happiness comes with enlightenment which takes many lifetimes to achieve. A significant aim for Buddhists is to create good karma in each life in order to progress further along the path to enlightenment in the next. To do this, practitioners need to overcome the Five Poisons—anger, attachment, ignorance (self-cherishing), pride and jealousy, which lead to negative actions that could be of the body (killing, stealing,



sexual misconduct), the speech (hurtful, divisive, lying). or the mind (covetousness, malice, wrong view). They focus on the Six Perfections of giving, moral discipline, patience, effort, concentration and wisdom, aiming to renounce the world and negative actions by following the way of Buddha: transforming the mind through meditation; performing virtuous actions—seeds of good karma to blossom in future lives; developing equanimity by feeling compassion for all, enemies as well as friends; and achieving wisdom of the mind.

As is often the case, the questions and answers were lively and probing. They started quite gently with a request for advice on helping Buddhist patients with terminal illness, then delved deeper into what was for some the seemingly contradictory attitudes of regarding ‘self-cherishing’ as the root of all evil while the practice (over several life times) is concentrated on individual (self?) enlightenment.

We certainly came away with food for thought from Dennis’s very clear, well-structured and stimulating session.

Cynthia Dickinson

Oakleaf Remembrance Service November 16th at 3pm

EACH year on the Sunday following Remembrance Sunday there are services all over the the country to remember those who have been injured or killed as a result of road traffic accidents. Organised by SCARD (Support & Care After Road Deaths & Injury), the service in Leeds Minster is for everyone, of any faith or none, who has suffered bereavement or injury on the roads of West Yorkshire. The names of loved ones are written on paper oak leaves and placed on the altar to be read out during the service. Photos can be put around the font and local school children light a candle for each person who has died.

For more information see www.scard.org.uk or tel: 01484 723649

Dr Hassan Al-Katib

THE GRAND MOSQUE situated on Woodsley Road, Leeds 6, is distinctive in that its existence sprang from the Muslim student body associated with Leeds university life, and so today it has a very large international community. The leading pioneer for this venture in the 1990s was Dr Hassan Al-Katib. Dr Hassan, though quiet and reserved by disposition, is a person of thoughtful initiative and determination—in other words he is a person who on setting himself goals has the mind, the will and the skills necessary to attain them.

Hassan has lived in this country for more than 40 years, with over 20 of them in Leeds. Born in Mosul, Iraq, the second largest city after Baghdad, he was the fifth of eleven siblings. His early schooling was in Mosul, but the family moved to Baghdad when he was eight years old. There he continued his schooling up to entering Baghdad University College of Engineering in 1964, where he graduated with a BSc in Mechanical Engineering in 1968.

Hassan then applied for and gained an engineering research assistant post at Mosul University. However, one month after he was appointed he was required to do national service, and served with the Iraqi Air Force as a mechanical engineer for two and half years. It was his good fortune to be stationed at the air base in Mosul, which he still considered his home city.

On leaving the Iraqi Air Force he went back to Mosul University and eventually secured a scholarship at Paisley College of Technology, Scotland, to do an MPhil. By this time Hassan had married Sana in Mosul in 1969, who along with their first

Profile

**4th in a series of
interviews with interfaith
leaders in Leeds**

*Interviewed by Trevor Bates September
10th 2014 and revised by Hassan Al-Katib*



daughter Nada came to the UK in January 1972. On completing his MPhil in 1976 he gained a funded opportunity to do his PhD at Sunderland Polytechnic. When the funding ended after three years he moved to Sheffield Polytechnic, where he completed his PhD work in 1982.

Hassan's first venture in employment was in Sheffield, where he managed to buy a piece of development land and in cooperation with an Egyptian architect built two semi-detached houses which they sold, thereby gaining some experience in construction, which opened for him many opportunities in this field. He also helped in establishing an Islamic centre for the student community at 10 Severn Road, LS10.

In 1990 Hassan's and Sana's second daughter Maha started to study medicine at the Leeds Medical School. About that same time a friend invited Hassan to Leeds with a view to building a detached house in the Moortown area, and this led to forming a partnership which in turn led to opening the Samara Estate Agents. Hence the family moved to live in Bramhope. Hassan and Sana also have two sons, Osama and Ayman.

Hassan then managed numerous property developments ranging from blocks of flats to individual detached houses, finally building Samara Plaza on Clarendon Road, LS2, on six floors, providing shops on the ground and 78 apartments on top, ideal for student accommodation. This prompted another property developer to offer Hassan the chance to secure a major development in Leeds and to manage its construction, which led to City Island, a venture of 404 quality apartments and penthouses on 14 floors, as a waterside development on Gotts Road Leeds. The work was started in 2000, and finished in 2004; Hassan retired after its completion. In 2006 he secured planning permission to build two houses on The Drive, LS16, one being his present family home since September 2008.

On coming to Leeds in 1990, Hassan, who is a devout Muslim, linked up with the International Muslim Students community at Leeds University. He then realised the desperate need for a larger centre than Omar House on 5 Belle Vue Road to accommodate their five daily congregational prayers, and so started the search for a larger venue until the former Roman Catholic Church came up for sale. The price escalated due to competition, up to double the asking price, but thanks to God, a sheikh from Abu Dhabi purchased it for them after a delegation led by Hassan paid him a visit at his home in Al-Ain City. This not only enabled the building to be purchased, but also paid

for refurbishments, carpeting, fenced car park, the building of washing facilities, as well as decoration throughout. The Grand Mosque was opened in January 1991 by the Sheikh's son. Since then Hassan and his colleagues have taken charge of the Grand Mosque management and he has been the Chairman of the mosque for one term and for ten years the Chairman of Leeds Muslim Forum, which represented all the mosques in Leeds.

Hassan is a member of the Muslim Association of Britain, formed in 1997, and of the Mosques and Imams Advisory Board, formed in 2006; he is also a Board member of Leeds Faiths Forum and former Chaplain to Islamic students at the Leeds University. Hassan is greatly respected by civic and faiths leaders across the city. Having shared in Concord meetings over the years he has special praise for what Concord is seeking to do for Leeds.

Churches Regional Commission

CRC for Yorkshire and Humber closed on June 30th 2014 and had a farewell gathering at its base in the Leeds Church Institute on June 16th, chaired by John Battle. There were short presentations from people connected with work led or inspired by CRC including Yorkshire & Humber Faiths Forum and Treasures Revealed. Other aspects of the Commission's work involved social inclusion, the rural dimension and policy matters. Over the past 15 years CRC has helped churches of all denominations to improve their already significant contributions to the social, political and economic life of the region. It was also instrumental in helping the voluntary, public and private sectors gain a basic understanding of other faiths.

Sharing in Iftar with Shia Muslims

ON 22ND JULY Concord members were invited to attend the Baab-ul-Ilm Islamic Centre for their annual interfaith dinner, or communal *iftar* (breakfast). This has become a regular invitation extended to Concord, with the Baab always delivering a warm welcome and excellent hospitality. This year's event proved to be no different.

For members who have never visited, the Baab-ul-Ilm is a community centre which serves as a mosque located in Moortown. The community was founded by Muslims expelled from Uganda by Idi Amin, and was originally based in Beeston. The congregation aim to create a spiritual and vibrant atmosphere, based on the values of the Islamic Shia Ithma-Ashari faith by developing the potential of their members, engaging with the wider society, and serving the needs of humanity worldwide.

The event was a mixture of Quranic recitations, words of guidance and reflection by Maulana Hadi, the scholar-in-residence, and Rasool Bhamani, the Honorary President, presentations from students of the madrasah, and finally reflections from the various guests of different faiths and offices around the city. Maulana Hadi focused on how the formula of good relations in society is love and respect for all faiths and none. Everyone has a responsibility to maintain this relationship with others and strive for a better society. Rasool's words centered on how, amidst geopolitical challenges around the world,

community development is more important than ever. Different faiths need to come together to make a marked and long-lasting difference to the wider community. Guests, largely from the three Abrahamic faiths, also contributed to the cordial and enriching atmosphere. I took the opportunity to remark on the important contribution made by Muslim soldiers to the Allied war effort in World War One. The meal came two weeks before the commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the outbreak of hostilities. Perhaps the highlight of the evening, though, were the insightful and inspirational voices of the young students on the subject of peace and harmony, words that certainly offer hope that the next generation will strive for a world full of cohesion and tolerance.

Visitors then convened for the traditional breaking of the fast. As usual, there was plenty to go round and no-one went hungry! Thanks to Rasool, Maulana Hadia, and the whole of the congregation for making us so welcome again.

Simon Phillips



Muslim Ethics

THE THIRD SESSION in our series on Ethics in World Religions was a lively and inspiring one on Ethics in Islam, held in September at the Baab ul Ilm Shia Muslim Centre in Moortown. We visited this centre in May for the Walk of Friendship and to share in Iftar in July (see Simon Phillips's report), and the welcome on this occasion was as warm as it was before. The President of the Centre, Rasool Bhamani, gave a presentation which invited audience participation, and he was supported by the imam and scholar in residence, Hadi Taki.

Rasool referred to several well-known definitions and approaches to ethics, such as those of Aristotle, Freud and Kohlberg, noting their weaknesses and that their common feature is that they advocate a relative morality. Islam, by contrast, offers an absolute morality based on the teaching of the Qur'an and the sayings and practice of the Prophet Muhammad. Outlining the context of the Prophet's work, the lawless, violent and ignorant

society of Arabia, Rasool showed how in just 23 years Muhammad effected extensive reform, making life safer and better for everyone. The violent jihad today of Islamic Society (ISIS) in Iraq betrays the values of Islam, reverting to the practices that Muhammad condemned.

Rasool went on to outline ten commandments of morality in Islam, illustrating their application and relevance in everyday life today. They include: worship of one God; kindness to parents; no extravagance nor miserliness; no killing in feuds; no adultery; no unjust killing; care of orphans; keeping one's promises; being honest and fair; avoiding arrogance. All of these can be found in Sura 17 of the Qur'an.

The presentation was followed by a session of questions and comments, and conversation over tasty refreshments.

We are very grateful both for the vigorous, interesting and sincere presentation and for the hospitality we received from these good people.

John S. Summerwill

Summer Social

ON 31ST JULY, Concord members gathered at the Friends Meeting House at Carlton Hill for the Summer Social. With Concord's 40th anniversary on the horizon for 2016, the event provided the opportunity for members to view old photographs and correspondence relating to the rich history of Concord. It also allowed us to reflect on what we have achieved.

Thanks to Cynthia, the evening also provided the chance for members to play the Diversity Game, a board game where participants take on the role of a particular faith and take it in turns to go around the board learning about other faiths. Whilst the numbers attending were not as great as hoped (where were you all?), this

turned out to be a blessing in disguise as everyone had the chance to participate in the game. Particularly pleasing was the fact that the game included faiths such as Jainism and Zoroastrianism, not currently represented within Concord (but welcome of course if members know of anyone).

Thanks to everyone who provided the sumptuous refreshments and to Robert Keeble from the Friends Meeting House for his continued support of Concord.

Simon Phillips

Farewell

THE Rector of Leeds Minster, the Revd Tony Bundock, will be leaving for pastures new. You are invited to attend his Farewell Service in the Minster at 3pm on Sunday October 12th.

WW1 Commemoration

THERE have been many events commemorating the start of the First World War, one of which took place in St John's Church, Moor Allerton on Sunday September 28th. The afternoon started with an illustrated talk by Jane Abramson —*A Mayor's Life in the War Years*—based on the journal of her great grandfather, Harry Cartmell, Mayor of Preston from 1914 to 1919.

This was followed by afternoon tea and an evening service entitled Spirit of Unity, when a selection of readings—poems and extracts from WW1 novels—were read. People of all faiths and none were invited to attend and we were reminded of the sacrifices made by soldiers of other faiths and cultures, including Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs from India and African countries that were part of the British Empire.

This year, at the Civic Service of Remembrance on Sunday November 9th in Leeds, a representative of Concord will be laying a wreath in memory of those from other faiths who gave their lives for our country. And someone representing the 'minority' faiths will take part in the service with a short reading.

Cynthia Dickinson

Three Leeds Interfaith Pioneers Honoured

THE Revd Canon **Charles Dobbin** was awarded an MBE in June for his interfaith work and services to community cohesion. In July **Qari Asim** and **Harbans Singh Sagoo** were both awarded honorary doctorates by Leeds Metropolitan University for their contribution to inter-faith community life in Leeds. Warmest congratulations and best wishes to them all from Concord.

Prayer Spot

BEGINNING with this edition, we intend to include in the Newsletter a prayer from one of the traditions represented in Concord or from an interfaith source. We begin with one sent in by Simon Phillips, which was used on Thursday 29th May 2014, the National Day of Prayer for Police, organised by the Christian Police Association. This annual date saw officers and staff come together to pray for the welfare and safety of officers whilst on duty, and to pray for success in bringing offenders to justice.

In the United States of America, an anonymous author penned the following poem in recognition of the bravery of officers on a daily basis:

Almighty God we pray to you
In heaven up above
Watch over our dear police officers
And protect them with your love.

Please guide them as they keep us
Safe both day and night
And hold them firmly in your care
Should danger come their way.

Give them true strength and courage
As they serve til duty's end
And one more thing to ask dear Lord
Protect their family and their friends.

Equalities Assembly Conference

**Thursday November 27th from 10.30
AM until 1.00 PM in Leeds Civic Hall**

What's the Equalities Assembly?

Age, BME, Carers, Disabled, Faith and GLBT Hubs where local people represent different communities in Leeds.

What's the Conference about?

This year it will be about getting involved - having your say - overcoming barriers - making decisions that will affect the area where you live.

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