



Concord

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

Newsletter - September 2017

Concord Goes to Sheffield

ON AUGUST 9th eleven Concord members climbed aboard a minibus for the visit to two of Sheffield's interfaith buildings, Burngreave Ashram and Shirley House.

At our first stop, in Spital Lane, Burngreave, a built-up area with a mix of residents including students and immigrants, we were greeted by Revd Deacon Andrew Crowley of Sheffield Interfaith, Nirmal Fernando and the Revd Dr John Vincent of Burngreave Ashram. We were led downstairs to the multi-faith library and meeting room for tea and biscuits.

John gave us a brief outline of the
Below: Burngreave Ashram

Ashram community's activities with its centre and cafe, a shop and three community houses. He described it as a spiritual resource and ministry to the poor although he admitted that they were not having much effect on the newly settled immigrants that now make up a significant proportion of the local population. While we were there volunteers were busy preparing about 30 free lunches in the cafe.

Nirmal told us about the monthly interfaith meetings held in the Ashram centre and attended by a dozen or so from different faiths. They aim to understand what the founders taught and encourage participants to express faith freely. Nirmal also made an interesting point that interfaith activity (at least in the UK) was started by Christians; they have created space in their buildings for

Continued overleaf



Concord Goes to Sheffield

Continued from Page 1

interfaith activity which, as yet, no other faith has done.

Shirley House, on Psalter Lane in the south-west of the city is situated in a leafy suburb next door to St Andrew's, an Anglican-Methodist church. We were welcomed by the Revd Gareth Jones and taken upstairs to the interfaith meeting room where we met Caroline Cripps, Chair of the Shirley House Interfaith Centre, and several of the Christian, Jewish, Muslim and Pagan members. They talked about the diversity of faiths and faith buildings in the city as well as the various events held at Shirley House. The interfaith room houses a small library and is used three or four times a month for interfaith and occasionally faith meetings. Sheffield Interfaith has its Food and Friendship evenings there when participants are invited to bring and share food and stories. Recently there have been Who is your neighbour? meetings between two faith communities wanting to get to know each other better and tackle some of the more troubling topics.

Mention was made of other interfaith activities such as the Unitarian church in the city centre and Sheffield Faiths Together, a faith leaders group, operating on a different level from those at Shirley House.

We enjoyed pizza, salad and desserts that they generously provided before heading for home. It was a most interesting and enjoyable experience and, thanks to the skill and generosity of Hakan Aydin, our journey to and from Sheffield was an equally enjoyable part of the day.

Cynthia Dickinson

Date for Your Diary

On **Wednesday 25th April 2018** Concord will be honoured by the visit of the **Revd Dr Marcus Braybrooke**, a world-renowned pioneer in the field of interfaith dialogue and President of the World Congress of Faiths. At 7.30 he will give the Peter Bell Memorial Lecture in the Banquet Room at Leeds Civic Hall on '**Interfaith—A Beacon of Hope**'.

Concord and Sheffield 'interfaithers' on the staircase at Shirley House



Bahá'í Ethics

IT WAS PLEASING to see a good number of Bahá'ís at our meeting in June, when Dr Shahin Fatheazam, who has been a member of Concord almost since its inception, gave us a clear, well-ordered and thought-provoking explanation of Bahá'í Ethics, the last in the series on ethics in the world faiths.

He started by observing that there are many definitions of 'good' and many definitions of ethics. His own view was that ethics could be divided into two categories as follows:

Primary	Secondary
Honesty	Laws and ordinances
Integrity	Social rules
Trustworthiness	
Generosity	
Fairness and justice	
Other qualities (spiritual qualities)	

The primary values have existed since the dawn of civilisation and will continue; they have come to humanity through religions and are almost universally agreed. The secondary list are ethics some or all of which are incorporated into law but they change with period or culture.

Bahá'í principles are the primary ones in the list above: they are no different from those of any other religion. Bahá'ís learn them from the writings of Baha'ullah and Abdul Baha. The stability and well being of society depends on three elements:

- material & economic development (M)
- intellectual development (I)
- spiritual development (S).

These elements, whilst retaining their own identity and integrity, must interact. For stability it is essential that all three are present and proportionally balanced, as in a triangle thus:



The base (S) represents spiritual development. If that base becomes too narrow, the triangle becomes unstable. In history great empires fell when their spirituality did not keep pace with their material and intellectual development. In our society in the present world we are in danger of that happening. It would be safer for us and for government to be aware of the paramount importance of the spiritual base, for without it our material development leads to injustice and inequality.

Dr Fatheazam gave examples from The Hidden Words of Bahauallah of his teachings on such themes as generosity, justice, fault-finding and the equality of mankind.

Following this stimulating talk Dr Fatheazam answered questions on spirituality as the spark of divine grace in individuals, how ethical principles are applied, and several other topics.

It was a good evening, appreciated by all who attended.

JSS

Shahin Fatheazam and David Randolph-Horn



Women Peace-ing Together



Photos by
Steve Evans

THE CELEBRATORY DINNER mentioned in our last newsletter took place in Leeds Central Library on Monday 8th May. Eight of us had decorated our paper plates, placemats and napkins and prepared special dishes that reflected something of our lives, culture and faith. Steve Evans came along to photograph the dishes (have a look on the website) and stayed to help us eat them. The meal included red pepper salad; fennel apple and pepper with feta cheese; saag and makki di roti with cornmeal chappatis; seven biblical foods (Deut 8:8); honeymoon breakfast 1939; custard tart; rhubarb cheesecake; golden star fruit and iced sponge cake.



A couple of weeks later, on Monday May 22nd for the Leeds Food Festival, the table was laid again but this time with Steve's photographs of each dish. We had quite a few visitors, some students doing art and design courses and people simply interested in food.

Back in June Gabrielle from Leeds City Museum asked us to contribute some creative forget-me-nots, symbols of the Dementia Society, for a display in the Brodrick Hall from September 26th to October 1st. The idea is to raise awareness of the Dementia Society and celebrate the International Day of Older People. So we have cut and stitched, knitted and crocheted, painted and pasted and made around 150 forget-me-nots in many sizes, styles, fabrics and colours - though mostly shades of blue. [photo 1 Ladies] Other groups, organisations, schools and clubs have also been busy so there should be a fantastic display, covering the whole (map) of Leeds.

We are meeting as usual on Monday October 2nd from 10.30am till 12.30pm in the Art Section of Leeds Central Library. In November we are going to the

Museum Discovery Centre for a guided tour with Antonia Lovelace and Gabrielle Hamilton. We will be back at the library for our final session of the year on Monday December 4th. You are welcome to come along and bring your creative work or simply join us for a chat and a cuppa.

Cynthia Dickinson



Muslim Life in Britain

ON 27th APRIL, Concord Members were welcomed into Leeds Language Academy to hear Dr Hakan Gok talk to us about Muslim Life in Britain. “Ken”, as he asked us to call him, has an interesting, and maybe atypical, view of this topic, as his background and upbringing are firmly rooted in his former home country of Turkey. In contrast, he believes Muslim life in Britain is good, and went on to detail why—the things that we often take for granted, and can be often heard to moan about, are the



things that make his ‘new’ home country, Britain, good!

However, though Muslim life in Britain is not perfect, it is better than some of the stories Ken shared with us about Muslims who are effectively trapped and detained in Turkey for having views that do not follow those of the ruling party, including 47,000 individuals being imprisoned, with many being denied medical treatment.

The audience raised a number of stories where Muslim life in Britain was far from perfect, specifically the increase in instances of Islamophobia after the Brexit referendum. Ken asked us to strive towards tackling these issues head on and improving Britain even further by ‘doing our bit’ to bring knowledge, awareness and understanding to the authorities and politicians in order to make ‘our country’ even better, and, if we were able, to bring attention to those in the rest of the world who are not as fortunate as ourselves.

This was another departure for Concord with a focus very different from our normal meetings. A thought-provoking evening, that will hopefully have attendees reaching for their pens.

Jay Anderson

Concord's Annual General Meeting

THE CONCORD AGM was held on May 17th at the Quaker Meeting House. The meeting began with a standing silence in respect to former Chair, Dr Hamed Pakrooh, who had died a fortnight earlier.

The Chairs' Report expressed thanks to those who had helped to sustain Concord during the previous year, including the members of the Executive, and in particular Stephen Tucker (Treasurer), Cynthia Dickinson (Women's Group) and Robert Keeble for his willingness to allow us the use of the Meeting House for many of our meetings. The input of Steve Evans, photographer, and Leeds City Council has also been appreciated.

Trevor Bates expressed thanks to John Summerwill for his excellent work as editor of Concord's Newsletter.

Concord had been active in the community in many ways, including representation at Mitzvah Day in Harehills, opening of a Multifaith Prayer Room at the YCC in Headingley, Women Peace-ing Together and Leeds Quakers exhibition - Courage, Conscience and Creativity - in Leeds City Museum, an Interfaith Week celebration at Kirkstall Abbey, Faith in the Elderly and the InterFaith Network Local Groups meeting in Coventry. Members of the Executive have also represented Concord on Leeds Faiths Forum, the Holocaust Memorial Day committee, LCC Strategic Leaders Group, Peacelink and IFN-UK.

Concord had been unable to run the proposed Youth Project so had returned the anonymous donation of £5000.

The **Treasurer's Report** showed income of £2,586, expenditure of £6,574 (including the £5,000 donation returned), leaving a retained fund of £6,280.

Book Report: Trevor Bates reported that there are just 15 copies left of the 40th

Anniversary book and proposed a reprint of 100 copies. It was agreed to pass the proposal to the Executive.

Changes to the Constitution

Some minor alterations were made to the Constitution, mainly to regularise the appointments that the Executive had had to make to ensure that Concord could continue to function. These included:

E. (Voting rights) to include Honorary Members

F. The principal officers of the Association shall be: Chairperson; Secretary; Treasurer; and Membership Secretary. Other officers may be appointed as necessary. Offices may be shared by two or more persons, and one person may hold more than one office.

1. The Principal Officers shall be 18 years of age or older ...

3. Any vacancies arising and any newly created office may be filled by a decision of the Executive Committee

Elections

John Summerwill and David Randolph-Horn were appointed as Co-Chairs, Stephen Tucker as Treasurer and Membership Secretary, Darren Aydin as Secretary, and the Executive Committee was reelected en bloc: Jay Anderson, Adam Aslam, Usha Bhardwaj, Barbara Coplans, Gurmukh Singh Deagon, Cynthia Dickinson, John Fountain, David Goodman, Nima Raie, Joyce Sundram.

Under Any Other Business:

Trevor Bates recommended two books: *Heirs to Forgotten Kingdoms* by Gerard Russell and *The Enemy Within* by Baroness Sayeeda Warsi.

John Summerwill showed some artwork of a spiritual nature by former Executive Committee member Dennis Hallam, available for members to take.

Faith, Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Leeds

THIS EVENT on 10th July 2017 at the Friends' Meeting House was chaired by the Revd Dr David Randolph-Horn, who gave us a brief introduction to the work of AJAR (Asylum Justice and Release) in helping to get asylum-seekers out of detention centres and offer on-going support.

The first speaker, Ntambwe Nkomo (from the Democratic Republic of Congo) was one such person, with a harrowing tale to tell. As a university activist in 1999 he supported a rebellion to oust President Mobutu with the hope of establishing real democracy. This failed to materialise and by 2001 he realised his life was in danger, so fled to England, seeking asylum. His case was rejected and for several years he was living rough, then found work illegally which resulted in a short prison sentence. He was released on probation in 2008 with the threat of deportation, despite the fact that it was known his life would be in danger. He persisted in his application for asylum but in 2010 was sent to a detention centre which he told us was much worse than prison. In detention there is nothing to do, no information about your case and no idea what is happening or when you might be released. Unsurprisingly this led to depression, something difficult to shake off. As a Roman Catholic he was able to turn to his faith for support and his case was picked up by AJAR, who helped with his release in 2011. Ntambwe has continued to seek asylum but is still being refused. Even with the support of AJAR and help from Solace, he told us he feels 'dead, like a nonperson'. After all these years he has failed to get citizenship, his life is in limbo and, although it is still dangerous for him in the DRC, he has applied for voluntary return assistance. Even this has been refused, when a few years ago the immigration authorities wanted to deport him.

The second story was not a first-hand experience but an account of his

grandfather's journey by Imam Adam Aslam. It related to the independence and division of India in 1947 when Hindus and Muslims were told to separate and relocate. Although Adam's great-grandfather wanted to stay in his home village, a warning that Hindu rioters were coming to kill Muslims persuaded the family, with twelve children, to set off and walk to newly created Pakistan. While Muslims travelled in one direction, Hindus were travelling in the other and Sikhs were coming from the north. Later the family learned that their village had been razed to the ground, they had had a lucky escape. At one point in the journey they were sheltered in the stable of a religious Sikh household and on other occasions they were helped by and were able to offer help to Hindus travelling the opposite way.

When they reached Lahore they found themselves regarded as impure and treated as second-class citizens. But at 18 Adam's grandfather attended a Christian mission and was funded through college where he was able to complete his education. Even so he was still considered 'wrong' and in the 1980s when a Mullah came to 'cleanse' the area his grandfather, warned that his name was on the list, ran away. He passed through a Sikh area where he was offered food, no questions asked. His journey took him to Karachi where he stowed away on a boat and ended up in England.

We had a short contribution from Mustafah who, after having difficulty with the Home Office, was given a place in Leeds, far away from friends and support in London. He knew no-one, felt isolated, was advised to contact his MP. A further application was refused but, with support from All Hallows and PAFRAS, he is making another claim and awaiting the Home Office decision.

As is often the case, the talks inspired some probing questions—of us, the listeners, rather than our guest speakers.

How do we respond to people with ‘bad attitude’ to refugees and asylum seekers? How do we dispel the myths and give correct information?

What was the purpose of this meeting? Are we just listening to stories—or are we prepared to help?

Food for thought.

Cynthia Dickinson

Parsons Green Bombing, Sept 15th 2017: Responding together in solidarity

Statement from the Co-Chairs of the Inter Faith Network for the UK

IN THE WAKE of news of the terrorist attack this morning at Parsons Green on the London Underground, our thoughts and prayers go out to all affected.

Our thoughts are also with the emergency services and all those working in the wake of this attack to respond locally to keep inter faith and community relations strong, such as Faiths Forum for London, the London Boroughs Faith Network and local faith and inter faith groups. In this, as in other emergency response situations, faith groups play a key role in offering practical and spiritual support.

We restate in the strongest terms our condemnation of terrorism, noting the toxicity of spurious justifications by terrorists on the basis of religious beliefs which they claim to espouse.

In recent months, people of all faiths and none have stood together in the face of this kind of cowardly aggression. Let us continue to do so, and let us work with vigour to counter narratives of hatred and also to resist division and support all those who face hatred and the fear of discrimination due to ignorant or prejudiced minds linking them with terrorist attackers.

Nisa-Nashim:

AFTER THE BUSINESS of the AGM a fascinating talk was given by Hilary Curwen and Salma Arif, the co-founders and Co-Chairs of Nisa-Nashim in Leeds.

Hilary, a Jewess, as a member of Concord’s Women Peace-ing Together had enjoyed meeting and working with women of different faiths and cultures but still had fears for her family in London. She wanted to do something to address those fears, which meant moving out of her comfort zone. Through Concord she had met Joyce Sundram, who had introduced her to Salma Arif, a Muslim. They met for coffee and chats and found they had lots in common. Both their fathers had fought against fascism in WW2, and they realised they could be strong together, fighting the same enemies—racism, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia. But they also wanted to be friends, learn from each other, correct misconceptions. And they wanted to get to know their neighbours better, find out about each other’s traditions, with honesty and respect for attitudes to food and dress. They each asked five friends—for equal numbers of Jewish and Muslim women—to meet together in Joyce’s home.

Salma had never thought of having Jewish friends until Joyce rang her about meeting Hilary. She enjoyed get-togethers and was happy to organise something bigger, a gathering at Joyce’s where they talked about Nisa-Nashim, a national organisation specifically for Muslim and Jewish women to break down barriers, overcome prejudice and end the stereotyping.

In July 2016 the Leeds branch of Nisa-Nashim was launched at The Shine, with Laura Marks and Julie Siddiqi, founders of the first London group, as special guests. They found there was an appetite for such dialogue with over 50 women attending and the event getting plenty of good media coverage.

Jewish and Muslim Women Working Together

They now have a committee to organise events and activities—a picnic in Roundhay Park, support for Jewish Mitzvah Day and Muslim Sadeqa Day, meetings for sharing food and friendship. When possible children are included, encouraging Jewish and Muslim youngsters to play together from an early age. Salma and Hilary have attended a Co-Chairs conference in Westminster and Salma went to an international Jewish-Muslim conference in Berlin where she shared a room with Israeli and Palestinian girls.

Their next event was to be a pre-Ramadan-Shavuot celebration—Cheesecake and Dates.

At question time they were asked about food, since that seemed to feature significantly. The vegetarian option solves any problems. Some Concord women of other faiths felt they would like to join in, but as Hilary pointed out there is a special need for these two minority faiths

to develop friendship with each other and Concord's Women Peace-ing Together is available for all faiths. When asked about support from their respective communities both said they had had good response, although there are some from both sides that are not in favour. It was interesting to hear that Jewish-Muslim women's groups in the US have grown rapidly since Donald Trump was elected President!

Gurmukh Singh Deagon, in his vote of thanks, said what an inspiration they were.

Cynthia Dickinson took the opportunity to mention another organisation that Salma was involved with—Unity in Our Communities—that is planning a peace parade in Harehills. Concord member Hannah Bloom is raising money for the event and was delighted to receive over £40 in donations.

Fairtrade tea and coffee was served with biscuits as members and friends socialised.

Cynthia Dickinson

Left to right: John Summerwill (Co-Chair), Hilary Curwen, Salma Arif, David Randolph-Horn (Co-Chair)



Usha Bhardwaj

Usha Bhardwaj is a Hindu member of our Concord Executive Committee. Usha was born in Jalandhar, Punjab, India and was the third eldest child of the Kalia family—a lively family embracing eight brothers and four sisters, with two of the sisters being older than Usha.

Her schooling was all in Jalandhar city, and after graduating from High School she went to College. Whilst school work was done mainly in Hindi, Punjabi was the everyday language used at home with English being less universal. Usha's ambition was to do medicine and to become a doctor. However, after completing a two-year pre-med course at Kanya Maha Vidyalaya College she realised it would not be possible to finish that training, so Usha registered with the Hans Raj Mahila Maha Vidyalaya College, where she graduated in Psychology and Hindi.

The traditional Hindu practice of arranging marriage partners for each child in a family applied also in the Kalia household. The matching was completed for Usha Kalia to marry Amrit Lal Bhardwaj, both of them belonging to families of the Brahmin level of Indian society. Amrit went to a University College in 1956 and graduated with an MA in Maths in 1962. Later that year Amrit emigrated to the UK and lived in Cleckheaton, but returned to India in April 1966. In May 1966 Amrit and Usha were married according to Hindu custom and practice in Jalandhar. Later in 1966 Amrit returned to Cleckheaton, where he became employed as a quality controller at a wool factory. In February 1967 Usha joined Amrit living in Cleckheaton. Both of them had extended family relatives in the Leeds and Cleckheaton areas whom they hoped might help them to adjust to British way of life.

However, Usha became very unhappy

Profile

13th in a series of interviews
with interfaith leaders
in Leeds



and depressed, having to adjust to 'the environment, the people, and the culture' and with limited housing accommodation when back in Jalandhar their family home had been a twelve bedroom house! In addition Amrit and Usha experienced a lot of discrimination and resentment because they were Indian migrants. So they were encouraged by relatives to move to Leeds later in 1967.

Amrit worked for short periods first with British Rail as a porter, then as a bus conductor. However, he enrolled with the University of Leeds in 1968 to do a new degree course in computing. Regrettably he was not able to secure financial assistance—unless he was willing to become a teacher—and so did not complete the course. In 1969 Amrit secured

employment with the GPO (later BT) at their Computer Centre on Dewsbury Road, and he remained there until his early retirement in 1999.

In 1968 Usha's and Amrit's daughter Upma was born. After four months Usha started work as a machinist with a clothing factory on Meanwood Road, Leeds, but stopped when she was expecting their first son, Suresh, born in 1969. In 1971 Usha and her two children returned to Jalandhar to visit her family and relatives, remained there for a year, and returned to Leeds in 1972. Usha then started market trading in jewellery and accessories at Castleford Open Air Market. At first it was just one day a week, but eventually two days with three days between.

In 1973 a unit became vacant in Castleford Indoor Market. Usha applied to rent the unit at the last moment on the closing date, and was fortunate enough to be granted use of it. Usha and Amrit traded at that location in quality jewellery for 30 years, during which time their second son, Puneet, was born (1976).

Usha's grandfather was a volunteer adviser at a temple in Jalandhar and a devout Hindu practitioner, so from an early age Usha became aware of the activities of temple life and worship including a knowledge of the Sanskrit scriptures.

Usha and Amrit linked up with the Hindu community of Leeds in 1967 and they have been closely associated with the mandir since then with Amrit becoming the secretary of the first Temple Committee. After retirement from employment Usha became Vice Chair of the Committee (2005) and is very involved with organising events and festival occasions for their community and is a guide for groups which may visit the Temple. In addition she represents the Temple with visits to schools to talk about the Hindu way of life and religion, and she is a member of Leeds Faiths Forum (2008).

Usha is a valued member of Concord having been introduced to Concord by Lalita Kanvinde some years ago. She values greatly our interfaith fellowship, commitments, meetings and especially the annual Peace Service. Not until she became involved with community activities did Usha become aware of and appreciate the Bahá'í and Pagan ways of life and religious practices. It is our hope that Usha will be able to encourage more Temple people to both support and be involved with Concord.



Lord Mayor's Award

ON 28TH JUNE a civic celebration for small groups and charities in Leeds was held in the Lord Mayor's Banqueting Suite at the Civic Hall. Cynthia Dickinson accepted on Concord's behalf a certificate signed by the Lord Mayor, Cllr Jane Dowson which says: 'In recognition of the outstanding contribution that your organisation makes to the citizens and communities of Leeds.'

Well done us!

Hiroshima-Nagasaki A-bombs Anniversary Commemoration

ON WEDNESDAY August 9th a sizeable group, including several members of Concord, assembled in Park Square by the Mayors for Peace memorial to the singing of the Leeds People's Choir. Cllr David Blackburn, Chair of Leeds City Peacelink Group read the Nagasaki 2017 Peace Declaration and a white wreath was laid by Cllr Jane Dowson, Lord Mayor of Leeds (see below).

At 11:02 the gathering observed two minutes silence to remember all those affected in the atomic bombings and all innocent civilian victims of warfare.

Prof David Webb, CND Chair, reported on the United Nations treaty for a worldwide nuclear weapons ban. The event closed with peace songs from the Leeds People's Choir.

Inter-Faith Week at Kirkstall Abbey

FOLLOWING the success of last year's event, Patrick Bourne, curator of Kirkstall Abbey and Abbey House Museum, has organised another Light for Leeds multi-faith celebration to take place in the Visitor Centre on Sunday November 19th. From 12 noon until 4.00pm there will be faith stalls, food and activities for all the family. Concord has its own stall and several Concord members will be there representing different faith communities. As well as Light, there will also be a theme of Peace with cut-out candles for visitors to write their hopes and prayers to put on the Peace Tree in the Chapter House and World Peace Flame t-lights to take home. Musical interludes, meditation walks and a faith trail will be included amongst other activities. The event and refreshments are free and everyone is welcome.



National Inter Faith Week

12-19 November 2017

INTER FAITH WEEK, now in its ninth year, begins on 12th November. The Week aims to:

- Strengthen good inter faith relations at all levels
- Increase awareness of the different and distinct faith communities in the UK, in particular celebrating and building on the contribution which their members make to their neighbourhoods and to wider society
- Increase understanding between people of religious and non-religious beliefs

Each year, hundreds of organisations take part: faith and inter faith bodies, non-religious belief organisations, community and voluntary organisations, businesses, local authorities, emergency services, schools, colleges, universities, chaplaincies, sports organisations and others. Last year saw the biggest Inter Faith Week yet.

Inter Faith Week is a programme of the Inter Faith Network for the UK. Its Co-Chairs, Bishop Richard Atkinson and Jatinder Singh Birdi say:

“Amid challenging times, the Week is a powerful opportunity to create and demonstrate friendship and solidarity and to continue to work towards a society rooted in shared values and cooperation.

“We invite you to hold an activity for the Week – large or small. Be part of making new connections and friendships, learning about the faiths and beliefs of other people you share your daily life with, or volunteering with people of other faiths on a project to help your local community.”

Minister for Faith Lord Bourne said:

“In recent months we have seen how

faith communities have come together to offer help to people caught up in appalling incidents and tragedies – literally throwing open their doors to offer sanctuary. They have been superb.

“Inter Faith Week gives us an opportunity to celebrate the contribution that faith communities make and show how that can be strengthened by working together.”

The Week begins on Remembrance Sunday and many people of different faiths and beliefs will be marking that in some way. Among the events and activities already planned for this year are faith trails, dialogues, and social action events. In the wake of recent terrorist attacks and increase in hate crime, solidarity events and programmes will also feature.

Event listings will be added on a rolling basis across the coming weeks on the Inter Faith Week website: www.interfaithweek.org. The first events are already up.

Earlier this year, IFN published ‘Let’s Talk: Practical Pointers for Inter Faith Dialogue’ and Inter Faith Week encourages participants to draw on this to open new conversations, including about the more challenging aspects of our common lives. www.interfaith.org.uk/resources/lets-talk-practical-pointers-for-inter-faith-dialogue

Capital of Culture

ON FRIDAY 27th October Leeds will submit its first stage bid to become European Capital of Culture 2023.

People will be celebrating in the street at Quarry Hill from 12 noon till 8pm and everyone is invited.

This event will be an opportunity to meet some of the people creating our culture every day, sample some of the finest food and drink the city has to offer and have a sneak peek behind the scenes of some of our greatest cultural events.

hello@leeds2023.co.uk

<http://leeds2023.co.uk/>

Obituary

Dr Hamed Pakrooh

1930 – 2017

DR HAMED Pakrooh, a former Chair of Concord, died on Saturday 6th of May, age 86, following a year long battle with cancer. He was a long term, highly respected, and very active member of the Leeds Bahá'í community, representing the faith in many contexts.

Hamed Pakrooh's grandparents moved from Tehran to Russia in the 19th century. Hamed, the only child of Abdul-Ali and Negariyih Pakrooh, was born on 19th October 1930 in Ishqabad, in what was then the USSR and is now Turkmenistan. He was raised as a Bahá'í and grew up in the large Bahá'í community there, gathered around its hub, the Bahá'í Temple of Ishqabad.

In February 1938 the authorities arrested every male adult Bahá'í in Ishqabad, including Hamed's father. He was imprisoned and subsequently sentenced to hard labour in a Siberian gulag. Hamed and his mother were expelled across the border to Iran with only a few possessions. They settled in Mashhad, where he went to primary school aged seven. Ten years later his father returned from Siberia to rejoin his family.

In 1950 Hamed successfully took the highly competitive examination to enter Tehran's medical school, with only 250 successful candidates amongst a field of some 2500, and the family relocated to Tehran. He completed his studies in 1957 and for three years worked for the

World Health Organisation on its malaria eradication programme.

In Tehran he served on the Bahá'í Youth Committee and whilst attending activities he met Farah Hemmati, whom he later married in June 1960. In November of that year they moved to Holland, where Hamed secured a place to do general surgery at Leiden University Medical School. They remained there for four years, during which time their eldest daughter Azita was born.



After attending the first Bahá'í World Congress at the Royal Albert Hall in London in 1963, Hamed and Farah decided to move to England so that Hamed could gain greater experience as a surgeon. For four years Hamed worked in London hospitals, and then he was offered a job opportunity for six months at St James's Hospital, Leeds. He decided to accept this new opportunity which by extensions of six more

months, and then annually for a couple of years, led finally to the offer of a permanent post. So Hamed remained for 27 years in the Accident and Emergency Department of St James's. Here in Leeds Hamed and Farah had two more children—a daughter, Mina and a son, Ramin. After Hamed's mother died in Iran, Hamed arranged for his father to come to Leeds to be nearer for care and support, until his death here in 1981.

After retiring from working in St James Hospital in 1995, Hamed continued working for 14 more years, employed by the Department of Work and Pensions, until he finally retired in 2009 aged 79.

He also carried out voluntary work for the independent prison monitoring board.

Both Farah and Hamed came from families who had followed the Bahá'í faith for several generations and both were committed to the Bahá'í faith. During their time in Leiden they helped to establish a new Bahá'í local spiritual assembly, and when they came to Leeds they joined with others to establish the Bahá'í Local Spiritual Assembly here, which was formed in 1968. Hamed was an active member, serving on the Assembly from 1968 to 2016, when, after 48 years of service, he was excused on the grounds of ill health. Both he and Farah went on Bahá'í pilgrimage several times to the Mansion of Bahji (the resting place of Bahá'u'lláh) at Acre, and to the Shrine of the Báb in Haifa, Israel.

Hamed's involvement in Concord came about through his daughter Azita, who was the first Bahá'í representative to Concord. As a result of Azita's commendation of Concord's aims, and when she went away to study in Sheffield, Hamed joined around 1984/5 and became the means whereby Concord members could begin to know more about the Bahá'í faith. He served on the Executive and was Chair of Concord for four terms: in 1987, 1996, 2008 and 2012, leading on such occasions as the Annual Peace Service and representing Concord in other meetings and occasions. He represented the Bahá'í community and Concord in various ways in Leeds, including Leeds Faiths Forum.

Hamed was greatly appreciated by all who encountered him in the various aspects of his life. At the Memorial Service held for him in the Mansion House at Roundhay Park on 12th May 2017 Shahin Fatheazam and Mehran Nassiri spoke with warmth and affection of his integrity, his wisdom and dependability and of how much they had valued his friendship. His son Ramin spoke of him in these terms:

'My father was remarkable in many

ways, but perhaps one of the most remarkable things about him, is that I honestly do not believe that he ever thought that about himself or was aware of how special he was. The most genuine humility—to him it really was nothing. He instinctively knew what was right and he felt he could not rest until he had done it. ... He balanced beautifully being a man of principle with being a man of action. He was a man of substance, with real depths, but he valued simplicity. He was modest, free of affectations or pretensions, plain speaking ... And his personal attributes: resilience, a man of great stamina, mentally, emotionally, physically. a man of reason who was considered and fair in his judgements, willing to change his mind, a calm listener and sage advisor, a man of dignity and integrity. Anything he said he would do, he did. Proud but never vain or haughty. Prudent and personally frugal but generous to others ... And with all of those things said, he was a loving man, a gentle and affectionate father.'

These were the qualities we found in him as a wise and generous Chair of Concord. He exemplified the values of Concord in his active commitment to interfaith dialogue, to peace making and to justice. Concord has lost a very good friend in him. Our sympathies are with his family. His influence will live on. May he enter the glorious paradise of his Lord.

Compiled from an interview with Hamed recorded by Trevor Bates in April 2009, a timeline written by his grandson Arman Saffar, and Ramin's eulogy at his father's Memorial Service, for the use of all of which I am grateful to the authors.

John S. Summerwill

Calendar of Festivals

Summer 2017

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

OCTOBER 2017

1 Ashura	Muslim
4 Sukkot	Jewish
12 Shemini Atzeret	Jewish
13 Simchat Torah	Jewish
19 Diwali - Deepavali	Hindu/Sikh/Jain
20 Birth of the Báb	Bahá'í
Installation of Scriptures as Guru Granth	Sikh
Jain New Year	Jain
29 500th Anniversary of the Protestant Reformation	Christian
31 Samhain, Halloween	Pagan

NOVEMBER 2017

1 All Saints Day	Christian
2 All Souls Day	Catholic Christian
4 Birthday of Guru Nanak	Sikh
12 Birth of Baha'u'llah	Bahá'í
24 Martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahdur	Sikh
26 Day of the Covenant	Bahá'í
28 Ascension of 'Abdu'l-Baha	Bahá'í
30 St. Andrew's Day	Christian

DECEMBER 2017

1 Mawlid an Nabi	Islam
3-24 Advent	Christian
8 Bodhi Day (Rohatsu)	Buddhist
Immaculate Conception of Mary	Catholic Christian
13-20 Hanukkah	Jewish
21 Solstice Yule	Pagan
24 Christmas Eve	Christian
25 Christmas	Christian

JANUARY 2018

2-4 Mahayana New Year	Buddhist
5 Guru Gobindh Singh birthday	Sikh
6 Epiphany	Christian
7 Baptism of the Lord Jesus	Christian
13 Maghi	Sikh
18-25 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity	Christian
18 Founder's Day	Brahma Kumari
21 World Religion Day	Bahá'í
22 Vasant Panchami	Hindu
25 Conversion of St. Paul	Christian
31 Tu BiShvat	Jewish

FEBRUARY 2018

2 Candlemas - Presentation of Christ in the Temple	Christian
Imbolc	Pagan
8 Nirvana Day	Buddhism
13 Shrove Tuesday	Christian
14 St. Valentine's Day	Christian
Maha Shivaratri	Hindu
Ash Wednesday - Lent begins	Christian
15 Nirvana Day	Buddhist - Jain
16 Chinese New Year	Confucian, Daoist, Buddhist
26-March 1 Intercalary Days	Bahá'í

MARCH 2018

1 Purim	Jewish
St. David of Wales	Christian
2-20 Nineteen Day Fast	Bahá'í
3 Holi	Hindu
17 St. Patrick's Day	Christian
18 New Year	Hindu
21 Equinox	
Naw-Rúz (New Year)	Bahá'í
Ostara	Pagan
25 Palm Sunday	Christian
26 Ramanavami	Hindu
29 Maundy Thursday	Christian
30 Good Friday	Christian
31-April 7 Pesach	Jewish
31 Hanuman Jayanti	Hindu

Reg. Charity No: 516339

Editor: John S. Summerwill 0113 269 7895 editor@concord-leeds.org.uk
263 Lidgett Lane, Leeds LS17 6PP