



# Concord

LEEDS INTERFAITH FELLOWSHIP  
[www.concord-leeds.org.uk](http://www.concord-leeds.org.uk)

Newsletter - September 2019

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## Walk of Friendship in Beeston

**T**HE PEOPLE OF BEESTON turned out in force for our Walk of Friendship on Sunday 16th June. About 100 people took part in a very successful event, though actual Concord members were few.

We began at Beeston Hill United Free Church, where refreshments were provided, historical photos were on display, and welcome talks were given by Pauline Peacock and other stewards. The church was formed in the 1970s by the merging of two Methodist, one Baptist and one URC church. Three buildings were demolished and a new multi-purpose building was erected in place of a chapel

on the current site. The church is used for worship on Sundays both by its own congregation and by a Congolese-speaking church. During the week it is the base for brownies and guides, kidz club, badminton group, a dance school, music workshops for the disabled and a charity shop. They support the Holbeck Food Bank and local schools, and McMillan Nurses, and are currently helping St Luke's (Anglican) Church by providing temporary space whilst building work is going on.

The Lord Mayor of Leeds, Cllr Eileen Taylor, gave a brief speech to begin the walk, and several other Leeds councillors





gave their support to the event. Cllr Taylor is proud to be the first black Lord Mayor of Leeds. She is very committed to community development. We look forward to seeing her again at the Annual Peace Service in October.

It was a fairly short walk to the Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha Gurdwara, which is housed in the former Rington's Tea Factory. The community was founded in Alwoodley in 1974 and used other gurdwaras until it bought the factory in 1987 and gradually transformed its many layers into a langar, worship hall and community spaces. Our old friend in Concord, Harbans Singh Sagoo, was the leader here for many years.

We were welcomed with typical Sikh



hospitality and generosity, and served with an excellent meal. The ability of Sikhs to turn to and in an instant rustle up a tasty lunch for 100 people with no prior estimate of numbers is astonishing.

Then, upstairs in the darbar hall we soaked in the atmosphere as Sikh musicians sang kirtan (worship songs) at the close of their Sunday service, and petals were scattered among the congregation. There were no speeches, and none were needed. It was simply a joy to feel accepted in a community of faith where the atmosphere of spirituality unites people regardless of nationality, colour, language, gender, age or creed.

On then to the new Jamia Masjid Abu Huraira, opened last September to replace a previous mosque founded by the Kashmiri community in 1986 and housed in an old flour mill, which was now too small for a large and growing



congregation. The new mosque, build at a cost of £2.3m, is state of the art, a building of great beauty with many rooms for meetings as well as its main and second worship areas, which can accommodate thousands of worshippers. It includes a funeral facility which is available free for all who need it.

Mahbub Nazir was warmly welcoming and evidently (and justifiably) proud of what the Muslims of Beeston have achieved in creating this wonderful centre of worship and community. As with the other places we visited, it was clear that Beeston people want to reach out to their neighbours of other faiths and recognise that our common humanity is far more important than the differences between us. Imam Muhammad spoke briefly about the Five Pillars of Islam and the nature of prayer in the mosque. Then, to complete our afternoon, the Muslims gave us some excellent cakes, puddings, biscuits and drinks.

That the walk was so successful is attributable in very large measure to the thoroughness with which it had been prepared by Cynthia Dickinson and Gurmukh Singh Deagon, who had engaged with representatives from the church, gurdwara and mosque and planned the timings, route, refreshments and activities, the presence of police and community support officers and of the Lord Mayor. They did a superb job, and we are very grateful to them.

See our website for a slideshow of pictures in colour.



# Concord AGM

THE CONCORD Annual General Meeting was held at All Hallows Church on 23rd May 2019.

It was reported that Susan Cordwell and George Lovell had died since the previous AGM; Brian Thompson had moved out of the area.

It was agreed that the Revd Trevor Bates should be offered Honorary Lifetime Membership of Concord in recognition of his outstanding contribution to Concord over many years. (See story on page 10.)

The Treasurer reported that donations and subscriptions were up slightly but overall income was down as there had been no further book sales. The cost of printing and posting the newsletter had increased as had cost for speakers. Nevertheless, the accounts were looking healthy and the Executive Committee has held the annual subscription unchanged for 2019-2020.

Hannah Bloom is now the contact for the Women's Peace-ing Together Project,

which continues to meet for craft work, socialising and shared lunch in Leeds Central library each month.

John Summerwill and David Randolph-Horn were elected as Co-Chairs. Stephen Tucker was reappointed as Treasurer and Cynthia Dickinson as Minutes Secretary.

The Executive Committee remains unchanged except that Darren Aydin has not renewed his membership and Nima Raei has been replaced by Racquel Sylvestre as Bahá'í representative. Nima is moving to Spain. His contribution to Concord has been much appreciated.

There is a vacancy for a correspondence secretary.

Claire Howarth was reappointed as auditor of the accounts.

The new Lord Mayor of Leeds has accepted the invitation to attend Concord's Walk of Friendship. She is a daughter of the Windrush generation and Leeds' first black female Lord Mayor. She will also be attending the Peace Service in October.



Please note that David Randolph-Horn has moved and is now at 169 Ring Road, Farnley, Leeds LS12 5LU

We send our condolences to Robert Keeble, who so often hosts our meetings at the Quaker Meeting House, on the death of his wife, Lea, on 24th August

# *Climate Change: “a drama unfolding at a theological scale”*



**A**FTER THE BUSINESS PART of the AGM in May a well-illustrated, interesting and challenging talk on climate change was given by Dr Robert Dickinson of Manchester University (and son of Cynthia, our Minutes Secretary), who also answered many questions from a fascinated audience.

Robert’s presentation was given through a series of slides showing graphs, diagrams, quotations, maps and images to illustrate the work of climate scientists and the effects of climate change.

Scientists tend to be stubborn, argumentative, competitive and fiercely free thinkers, but when their separate evidence and research gives almost identical results—especially when approached from a sceptical standpoint—then the facts are accepted as reliable.

Over the last hundred years, thousands of scientists from every culture and country have made observations, collected

data, carried out research, investigations and experiments. Climate science is now strong, the evidence is solid and reliable. Scientists are united on the fact that global temperature is rising as a result of increased carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, caused by contemporary human activity.

The effects of climate change include melting icecaps and glaciers, rises in sea level, extreme weather conditions with more severe winds, floods, fires and droughts. Although caused by the richest, most industrial nations, it is people of the poorer countries who are suffering most. A moral challenge will be how to deal with the hundreds of climate refugees when their land becomes uninhabitable.

For the past 30 years warnings have been given to national leaders, but the scientists have understated the dangers and now we are facing a climate emergency. What we do next is our choice. However, the situation is not hopeless, we were relieved to hear! There is still time to slow, halt and even reverse the damage done, by, for example, planting trees, reducing our use of fossil fuels and making more use of renewable energy.

## **Quaker Wanted**

The Concord Executive would welcome a Quaker member. We meet about four times a year for a 90-minute meeting to make decisions and plan the events that make up Concord’s monthly programme. If you are interested, please contact John Summerwill (see contact details on page 20).

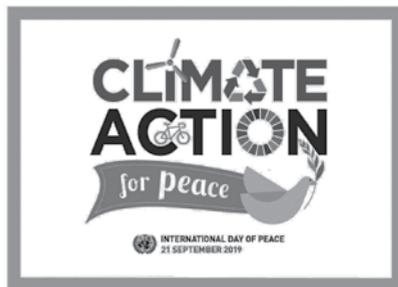
## Climate Action for Peace

THE UNITED NATIONS World Peace Day occurs each year on September 21st when people around the world are invited to join in a minute of Silence for Peace at 12 noon. This year the theme is Climate Action for Peace.

The UN realises that climate chaos is already bringing extreme weather conditions, food and water insecurity, mass migration and conflicts over scant resources. There will be less and less chance of peace if the present rate of climate change continues.

The major world religions accept that we, people of the richer industrialised nations, are the cause of the problem and need to change our ways to avert all-out disaster. People of faith all around the globe are taking this on board and forming Climate Action groups, encouraging members to make individual changes and to pressure governments and businesses to bring in new green policies aimed at reducing carbon emissions.

Carrying on 'as normal' is destroying the natural world necessary for survival. Those who are feeling the effects now are people from the poorer nations with the lightest carbon footprints. Those who will suffer most in future are our children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.



Many youngsters are well aware of this and are taking to the streets, raising awareness of the worsening situation. I want to do something to support them. So, on Saturday September 21st, World Peace Day, I will be outside Wakefield Cathedral with my own Climate Action for Peace banner, asking as many as will listen to make a pledge to reduce their carbon footprint. And at 12 noon I will observe the minute of Silence for Peace.

Wherever you are, whatever you are doing, I hope you will join with me in spirit.

*Cynthia Dickinson*

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## Fairtrade Places of Worship Conference



ON SATURDAY OCTOBER 26TH a Fairtrade Places of Worship conference is taking place in Ilkley. There will be workshops for sharing ideas and helping plan events to integrate Fairtrade into your church, mosque, synagogue, temple or other place of worship. The event runs from 1pm to 4.30pm, tickets are free and include refreshments.

Fairtrade is more important than ever as we work at reducing our carbon footprint by considering the impact of farming on soil degradation and climate change.

If your place of worship has Fairtrade status, come along and share your experiences—successes and challenges. If you curious about what is involved in becoming a Fairtrade Place of Worship, come along to find out.

Book online through eventbrite or email [joanna@fairtradeyork.com](mailto:joanna@fairtradeyork.com)

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/fairtrade-yorkshire-places-of-worship-conference-2019-tickets-62638011980>

# FAITH LEADERS AND CLIMATE CHANGE

## Leeds Church Institute

**T**HE FAITH LEADERS and Climate Change event on 26th June was a lively evening where we were thinking together about our responsibilities with regard to climate change and our distinctive contribution as people of faith. Tony Hermann of Zero Carbon Yorkshire facilitated a really engaging session about the food we eat and its carbon footprint. The general opinion was that we all have much to learn, and we are keen to learn.

Our next event based on 'Carbon Conversations' is on 18th September at 6:30. Please come to this event if you are keen to learn more, and to learn enough to facilitate others to have Carbon Conversations.

Leeds Church Institute, 20 New Market Street LS1 6DG

## Leeds Faith Climate Group Carbon Conversations Programme

### What are Carbon Conversations?

Carbon Conversations Groups help people face their complicated reactions to climate change and start to take more action personally and in the wider movement to tackle climate change. By working in a small safe group embedded patterns of behaviour can be explored and challenged. Consequently, the course has a proven track record in enabling participants to reduce their carbon footprint.

### Why should faith communities get involved with Carbon Conversations?

We share a common home and have a responsibility to care for planet earth and all who depend on it. Leeds Climate Commission have asked faith communities to play their part to raise awareness and help with the transition to a zero carbon city.

### How can we do this?

We are asking Faith Leaders to find two members of their community to step

up to take part in a Carbon Conversations course in Autumn 2019, with a view to then becoming Carbon Conversations facilitators and being able to deliver the course in their own faith community.

There is an introductory session on 18th September for these community volunteers to come and experience a taster for the course and check that this is for them.

The course will then run for 6 sessions from Wednesday 25th September, 6.30-8.30pm with food from 6pm at LCI and is free of charge.

Once the participants have undertaken the Carbon Conversations course for themselves, we will arrange for them to attend a 2-day facilitators training course at LCI.

Once trained we expect that these Carbon conversations facilitators would be able to run the course within their own communities from early 2020.

Helen Reid <director@leedschurchinstitute.org> 0113 391 7928

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## *Wisdom of the Dalai Lama*

**T**HE important thing is to have a good heart, a sense of caring for one another, a sense of community, a sense of humanity. Without these values, a person will not be happy, there will always be some frustrations inside. If you are a believer in Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and also if you are a non-believer in any religion, you can still have these values. I am not promoting Buddhism. I try to promote human values to promote a happier and more peaceful human society.

The essence of all spiritual life is your emotion, your attitude towards others. Once you have pure and sincere motivation, all the rest follows. Compassion and human affection: I call these human qualities spirituality.

# ***Domestic Violence and Abuse in Scripture and the 'White Ribbon' Campaign*** by *Simon Phillips*

**T**HE WHITE RIBBON CAMPAIGN was founded in 2007 and works with men and boys to challenge those male cultures that lead to harassment, abuse and violence. Men and boys wear white ribbons as a symbol of their opposition to violence against women, particularly on 25th November which is the UN Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women.

One of the 'male cultures' in question is, of course, that of religion and belief where the current legislative definitions of domestic violence – including physical, sexual, financial and emotional – are played out in biblical and other scriptural sources.

As a White Ribbon Ambassador, I am currently co-ordinating a project within the Jewish community, funded by the Police and Crime Commissioner's Safer Communities Fund, to raise awareness of the campaign, through engaging with a range of community organisations across all sides of the religious spectrum. The project, entitled Shalom Bayit, meaning 'Peaceful Home' or 'Peace in the Home' aims to empower Jewish men and boys to stand up against domestic violence against women and girls.

Shalom bayit signifies completeness, wholeness, and fulfilment. Hence, the traditional Jewish marriage is characterized by peace, nurturing, respect, and chesed (roughly meaning kindness, more accurately loving-kindness), through which a married couple becomes complete. It is believed that G-d's presence dwells in a pure and loving home.

Looking back through history, in biblical times, acts of sexual assault and abuse against women violated male property rights. The husband was termed as ba'al, implying ownership and lordship

(Ex. 21:28). If a wife is physically harmed by someone, compensation is paid to her husband. In Mishnaic and Talmud times, there was discussion around immodest behaviour considered worthy of punishment includes "going out with uncovered head, spinning wool with uncovered arms in the street, conversing with every man."

Responsa literature, which includes rabbinic rulings including domestic abuse (7th-10th century CE) saw some declare it unlawful; others justify it under certain circumstances. Striking a wife without a reason is forbidden by all. However, violence against 'bad wives' was justified if for 'educational' purposes, or if not performing the duties required of her by Jewish law, behaves immodestly, or who curses her parents, husband, or in-laws.

Moving to medieval attitudes in the Muslim World, Rabbi Yehudai b. Nahman (Yehudai Gaon, 757–761) wrote that: '... when her husband enters the house, she must rise and cannot sit down until he sits, and she should never raise her voice against her husband. Even if he hits her she has to remain silent, because that is how chaste women behave' (Otzar ha-Ge'onim, Ketubbot 169–170). Moses Maimonides (1135–1204) recommended beating a bad wife as an acceptable form of discipline: 'A wife who refuses to perform any kind of work that she is obligated to do, may be compelled to perform it, even by scourging her with a rod' (Ishut 21:10).

Within Medieval Europe, attitudes reflected a Jewish society in which women held high social and economic status and therefore most reject wife beating without any qualifications. Rabbi Peretz b. Elijah - 'one who beats his wife is in the same category as one who beats a stranger.' Some Rabbis considered violence as

grounds for forcing a man to give a *get*. R. Simhah argued that. like Eve, the mother of all living’ (Gen. 3:20), a wife is given to a man for living, not for suffering.

Sixteenth century views acknowledged that wife-beating is wrong, yet avoided releasing the woman from a bad marriage and Halakhah (law) based on husband’s dominant position in marriage. In more modern times, domestic abuse is not automatic grounds for Jewish divorce. An abused woman whose husband refuses to give her a divorce is considered an *agunah*, a chained or anchored woman.

The stimulus for my current community project was the partnership which took place last year between Leeds City Council’s Domestic Violence and faith communities. Religious and lay leaders were encouraged to engage with the White Ribbon Campaign through posing for ‘selfies’ to show their support. I organised a roadshow in November 2017 at the Marjorie and Arnold Ziff Community Centre, held to mark International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. I sourced quotations from scripture to demonstrate that abuse against women isn’t justified. These are shown below:

Although my primary focus is on the Jewish community, there is a range of quotes from other scriptures that complement the attitudes from the Jewish community. Some are shown below, linked to the White Ribbon Campaign branding.

The aim of the project is that a community-wide response will help to inform and empower the next generation as well as challenge misconceptions regarding domestic violence. ‘Shalom Bayit’ is something that is often seen as a female responsibility, when it is in fact a human one. Jewish Women’s Aid does a fantastic job in helping hundreds of women locally and nationally whose lives have been blighted by domestic abuse. But more needs to be done as a preventative measure if we are to break the vicious cycle and one way of doing that is to engage with men and boys from within the community.

Please let me know if you would like to get involved in the wider interfaith dimensions of this project.

*Simon Phillips is a former Co-Chair of Concord, a Community Engagement Officer for West Yorkshire Police and Director of Interfaith for the Leeds Jewish Representative Council. For further information, please contact Simon at [interfaithhljrc@outlook.com](mailto:interfaithhljrc@outlook.com) or [simon.phillips@westyorkshire.pnn.police.uk](mailto:simon.phillips@westyorkshire.pnn.police.uk)*



# Concord Honours and Thanks Trevor Bates

AT OUR JULY MEETING Concord made a presentation to the Revd Trevor Bates to mark his appointment as an Honorary Life Member of Concord. John Summerwill presented Trevor with a framed certificate signed by the Co-Chairs and Treasurer, with the following citation:

“This is to certify that The Revd Trevor S. Bates has been awarded HONORARY LIFE MEMBERSHIP of Concord in grateful recognition of his outstanding contribution to inter-faith relationships in Leeds and his unstintingly generous service to Concord, particularly as Chair (2008-2012), author of 28 profiles of members and interfaith leaders, promoter of the 40th Anniversary Celebrations, editor of *A Leeds Interfaith Story 1946-2016* and gatherer of Concord archives. Presented to Trevor on behalf of the membership of Concord at The Brahma Kumari Administrative Centre, Leeds 16, on Wednesday 17th July 2019”

Trevor and Judith are both suffering

from declining health and are making plans to move from their home in Garforth to sheltered accommodation at the Methodist Care Home in Moor Allerton. They are finding it increasingly difficult to come to meetings and have indicated that their support for Concord will necessarily be less active in the future. Both have been very regular attenders and contributors in the past.

The AGM in May agreed that Trevor should be offered Honorary Life Membership as a gesture of appreciation for his remarkable work for Concord, particularly as a speaker on numerous occasions, Chair for four years, editor of the definitive history of Concord and so much more. His wisdom, imagination and living embodiment of the peace-making values for which Concord stands have been an inspiration to us all. It was his research into our history that sparked off a review of the aims of Concord and led us, a couple of years ago, to revise our

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*John Summerwill, Trevor and Judith Bates, and David Randolph-Horn*



Constitution and clarify our purposes in two restated aims:

- To advance public knowledge and mutual understanding of the teachings, traditions and practices of the different faith communities in the Leeds Metropolitan District, and to nurture respect and friendly relations by facilitating interfaith dialogue and organising educational and cultural events.
- To promote and to work for justice, peace and social harmony for the public benefit in the multi-cultural Leeds Metropolitan District by advocacy, by focused public events and projects, and by co-operating with other organisations that have similar objectives.

These are the goals to which Trevor has been committed in his vocation as a Methodist minister.

Concord has two other Honorary Life Members: Peter Dale, who was appointed when he retired after many years of service as Treasurer, and Cynthia Dickinson, appointed on her retirement as Secretary (having also served as Chair).

We hope and pray that things will soon settle for Trevor and Judith and bring them a renewal of health, strength and peace. The will remain treasured members of Concord.

Trevor, acknowledging the award, has written: "Please convey to the members of the Executive and the general membership my personal thanks for this generous framed certificate which will have a special place in our home. May Concord continue to look forward, evolve and be a beacon of strong inter-faith relationships for Leeds and elsewhere with an illustrated message to be grasped, acknowledged, confirmed and lived by."

## TREVOR BATES

Reprint of a profile first published in the Concord newsletter in September 2010  
(Interviewed by John Summerwill  
on 9th September 2010)

THE idea of interviewing members of Concord and telling their stories in the newsletter came from the Revd Trevor Bates, and he has done the interviewing of all of the people featured since this series began. Now it is his turn, and it has been my privilege to hear the fascinating life story of this very talented and modest man.

When Trevor Bates was born in Bootle in 1928, his father was working for the Post Office. This was the time of the slump, when jobs were precious. Trevor's father moved to another branch of Post Office work in Bury, and that is where Trevor was brought up. He attended St Thomas's Parish School and from the age of 11 until his voice broke when he was 17 sang in the parish church choir. He is forever grateful for the introduction it gave him to great music. (He still sings with a Leeds choir, The Wesley Singers.)

Trevor passed the written exam to enter the grammar school but failed the oral interview because he was away at a crucial time. His two years at the Bury Tech, though, introduced him to a wide range of skills, and prepared him for his first job, as office boy at a paper bag manufacturing company. He went to night school classes to improve his qualifications, and then found a post in the repair shop of a firm of piano sellers in Bury. The Methodist manager made a great impression on him.

Trevor was by now an active youth club member, keen on amateur dramatics, and another Methodist man, a youth drama producer and pacifist, also impressed him. When, therefore, in 1946 Trevor began his National Service in Herefordshire he turned to the Methodist chapel in Kingston and there found a friendly welcome. His conversion experience, which brought

him to a deeper faith, happened in Germany through the friendship of an army scripture reader who visited him in hospital following a swimming pool accident.

After National Service, in 1949 Trevor was employed as lay pastor at a Methodist church in the Hunstanton Circuit, and the following year he became a candidate for the Methodist ministry. He trained for a year at Colchester, then for three years at Richmond Theological College, which trained men for missionary work overseas, gaining a Diploma in Theology. In 1954 he was sent to the Leeward Islands in the Caribbean, where he ministered for fifteen years in several circuits. He married Dorothy (Foster) in 1957 in St Kitts and they had a son, Andrew. These were years of sharing in a growing, expanding, thriving church. Trevor was a district youth organiser for a time and trained youth leaders and Sunday school teachers. Then from the comfort and wealth of the church in the US Virgin Islands Circuit he moved to the other extreme, the great poverty of British Honduras (now Belize), in the hurricane belt, as District Chair—Methodism's equivalent of a bishop. It was he says, 'from riches to rags', and two days after his arrival there his father died.

In 1972 Trevor and Dorothy returned to England and he became minister of Roscoe Methodist Church, whose membership is mainly of West Indian and African descent, with a large proportion from St Kitts Nevis. Trevor oversaw the church's move from its vast Victorian chapel to its present, modern premises. Living in Chapeltown he became aware of Peter Bell's efforts at interfaith dialogue and was present at the first meeting of Jews, Muslims and Christians in Leeds at the YMCA building. He was not officially involved in Concord at that stage but very interested in what Peter was doing. A 10-day visit to Holland and Berlin organised by Coventry Cathedral also inspired him with a new vision of interfaith work.

In 1981 he became Superintendent of the Pudsey & Farsley Circuit, then from 1986 to 1993 he returned to his native Lancashire as Superintendent of the Accrington and Haslingden circuit, living in Oswaldtwistle. During this time Dorothy died of cancer. They had been married for 32 years. Trevor had known Judith, the wife of another Methodist minister, since their days in the Leeward Islands. They married in 1990. Judith had three boys from her first marriage, and they now have three grandchildren, one of whom is Spanish. Judith is a creative textile artist, involved in the Yorkshire Embroiderers' Guild.

In 1993 Trevor and Judith retired to Garforth, where they now live. In his retirement he had more time to become involved in Concord. During his earlier time in Leeds Trevor had his mind blown, he says, by a speech given by Dr Adam Curl, Professor of Peace Studies at Bradford University, and he began to study for a Master's degree in the Bradford School of Peace Studies. Pressure of work prevented him from completing it at that time, but in his retirement he resumed and successfully completed his dissertation 'From the Leeward Islands to Leeds', tracing the story of why they had come to Chapeltown. His growing interest in multiculturalism led him to become more involved in Concord, and in 2008 he succeeded Dr Sewa Singh Khalsi as Chair of Concord.

In terms of his own faith, Trevor is reluctant to call himself a Christian. He prefers to think of himself as 'a disciple of Jesus Christ'. He sees himself as a pilgrim on a journey, a learner. Jesus was a man of his time with a refreshing attitude, who introduced great change in terms of how people should be treated. Jesus saw people's potential and worth, declared God's love for the world as a core value and gave humanity a model of how people's attitudes should be. Jesus' focus on relationships rather than laws and standards is what Trevor tries to emulate.

The contribution that Trevor and Judith make to Concord is greatly appreciated. In 2008 he shared with us his moving experiences and insights arising from a study tour in Israel which was partly sponsored by Concord, and it was his idea that led to the successful series that we have had first on scriptures, then on worship, and now on rites of passage in different faiths. He has been an excellent Chair. Trevor has said he wishes to stand down at the next AGM. We value his leadership, his wisdom, his commitment, and hope he will continue to play an active part in Concord for many years to come.

The Great Spirit sketches out the path of life roughly for all the creatures on earth, shows them where to go, where to arrive at, but leaves them to find their own way to get there. He wants them to act independently according to their nature

*Lame Deer*

### ***Paying Your Sub***

**S**UBSCRIPTIONS to Concord run from April 1st and are now due. If you haven't yet paid your subscription, please do so in one of these ways:

1. Go to the Membership page of the Concord website ([www.concord-leeds.org.uk](http://www.concord-leeds.org.uk)) and **pay by PayPal or by credit or debit card** on a secure server
2. **Make a BACS payment** of the subscription to **Sort Code 40-52-40 A/c No 00013515**, include your name as Reference, and send an email to [treasurer@concord-leeds.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@concord-leeds.org.uk) to alert the Treasurer to the payment.
3. **By cheque made out to Concord** and posted to Stephen Tucker, 3 Sungate, Branch Road, Littleborough OL15 0AB

The subscription rates are unchanged from last year, viz Individual £15; Concession (senior/unwaged) £12; (student) £6



## **Celebrating Interfaith Week 2019 Kirkstall Abbey presents LIGHT FOR LEEDS in the Visitors' Centre on Sunday 17th November 12noon to 4pm**

**T**HIS ANNUAL EVENT provides an opportunity for you to meet members of Leeds Concord and representatives of the different faith communities of Leeds in the delightful setting of Kirkstall Abbey. Free refreshments are provided along with activities for children, a programme of music, a faith quiz, walking meditation and an invitation to write a peace message on a paper candle for the tree of hope. The event closes with a quiet candle-lit walk following the World Peace Flame to the Chapter House.

Interfaith Week is a national event inspired by the Inter Faith Network with three aims:

- Strengthening good inter faith relations at all levels
- Increasing awareness of the different and distinct faith communities in the UK
- Increasing understanding between people of religious and non-religious beliefs

# Remembering the Holocaust: an Exhibition in Huddersfield

**I**T WAS a small group of Concord members who travelled to Huddersfield in August to see the new Holocaust Exhibition and Learning Centre established there in the University. What a memorable visit it was, though—moving and inspirational.

The Museum was founded by a Holocaust Survivors' Friendship Association in conjunction with the University of Huddersfield with the help of a £600k grant from the National Lottery and donations from Jewish families and individuals. The driving force was a determination that the stories of the survivors should not be forgotten. Sixteen survivors in particular are featured and their stories told in interpretation panels, pictures and artefacts and videoed interviews. Display panels tell the story of the growing antisemitism in Europe in the 1930s, the rise of the Nazis, the oppression and incarceration of Jews, the forced labour and life in the concentration camps, and the murder of millions. There is a great deal to see, hear and take in, and its presentation is excellent even though it is necessarily disturbing to be confronted by such inhumanity and suffering.

It was our particular privilege on this occasion to hear the testimony in person



of one of the sixteen survivors, 95-year old Dr Iby Knill BEM, a member of Concord, who held us enthralled as she told her story with humour and eloquence.

Iby was born in Slovakia and brought up in Bratislava, the daughter of a German-speaking Jewish mother and a Hungarian-speaking father. Her command of languages, especially of German, the language of her schooling, saved her life in later days. Because she spoke in cultured German, like an officer, German soldiers would stand to attention when she spoke to them!

Iby told us about the growing restrictions on Jews from 1937 onwards and the anger she felt when her education had to cease at the age of 16. She became a graphic designer. During the winter of 1941-42,



when Jewish girls were being taken away to become prostitutes for the German army, her mother sent her away to Hungary, where she lived secretly as in illegal immigrant with a cousin until he

was called up for army service. For a time she became a member of the resistance movement, guiding escaped parachutists to safety. Captured herself, she was tortured and imprisoned for three months.

After her release she worked as a nanny for a time, but when the Germans invaded in May 1944 she was rounded up with Hungarian Jews and eventually taken to Auschwitz. She was not tattooed, as prisoners usually were, because there was a shortage of ink. Her fluency in Czech gave her some influence with the 'kapos', the prisoners put in charge of other prisoners, whilst her fluency in German was an asset in dealing with the soldiers, and these assisted her survival, albeit she suffered the same deprivations and horrors as other prisoners. She helped to care for prisoners with typhoid. In 1945 she was moved to Lippstadt, where she was put in charge of a medical unit in a factory, but constant air raids and lack of materials led to the closure of the factory, and she was taken on a forced march, struggling with a damaged hip, until they accidentally met advancing American troops on Easter Day 1945.

After a period in hospital, she worked for the Military Government and Control Commission in Germany until September 1946, then returned to Bratislava, where she was reunited with her mother and brother. My father had been killed in Auschwitz in 1944.

She married Herbert Knill, a British Army Officer in 1946 in Bratislava, came to England in March 1947 and lived in various locations, including Bristol, Cornwall, Berkshire and now Leeds.

Everyone in the camps knew their life hung by a thread, and one prisoner who was aware of Dr Mengeles' medical experiments in Auschwitz asked her to promise that if she survived she would tell her story so that the world would know what was done there. It was 60 years before she felt able to fulfil that promise. She says on her website:

'For fifty years I lived the life of an Army Officer's wife. I made his family and its history mine. It was only after his death and after my children had left home and made their own lives that I felt the need – and the duty – to recall my own past and to record my own history. It was actually precipitated by the question of a fellow-student on an MA course in Theology. Only with the help of friends who supported me throughout the trauma of recalling the harrowing details of what happened to me during the Second World War was I able to write the story of the woman without a number.'

Iby has made up for her loss of post-16 education and had several careers. She got a BA in 1973, an MA in 2002 (aged 79), Honorary Doctorate from Huddersfield University in 2016, Honorary Fellowship from Leeds Trinity University in 2017 and a BEM in the Queen's Honours list in 2017. She is working on her third book of reflections on her experiences, and showing extraordinary energy and acuteness. She works with schools, telling her story, and is deeply committed to challenging antisemitism and Islamophobia and injustice of every kind.

Do take a look at the Holocaust Exhibition's website: <https://holocaustlearning.org.uk/> and Iby's website: <http://ibyknill.co.uk/index/>

*John Summerwill*



# ‘Ecological Wisdom and the Everyday Sacred

**W**E NEED TO TUNE into the innate wisdom that connects us with the natural world to bring sacredness to each moment. This was the gist of the session in July led by Dr Joanna Kitto, who coordinates Brahma Kumaris activities in the Isle of Man and is secretary of the local interfaith group there. Now retired, Joanna formerly worked as a psychology lecturer in Hong Kong and the Isle of Man.

Brahma Kumaris have been engaged recently in a number of environment-focused initiatives, exploring ways of enhancing spiritual connections with nature. Joanna had been impressed at a recent conference by the testimony of an Amazonian tribal leader, 90% of whose people had been wiped out by diseases contracted during their first encounters with outsiders. He, now a graduate, had the challenge of trying to rebuild his community, find work for his people and seek grants for the reforestation of areas destroyed. He had spoken of the forest as having a life of its own, a spirit which speaks to people and gives them medicines as well as posing dangers. It had brought home to Joanna the way in which in the west we distance ourselves from nature, seeing it as a thing apart, a resource to be used, rather than part of our community and we ourselves part of nature. If we could realize better our own spirituality and give to nature, not just take from it, this could be the starting point of ecowisdom. She quoted some words of Gandhi: “What we are doing to the forests of the world is but a mirror reflection of what we are doing to ourselves and to one another.”



In groups we then discussed various quotations to enable us to reflect more fully upon the concept of ecological wisdom and how it is related to spirituality, drawing upon the teachings of our own faiths. The various ideas that emerged were fed back and drawn together. Joanna referred to the definition of ecological wisdom

underlying the writings of Mark Hathaway, who says that our current crisis is ecological in the sense that it is fundamentally a crisis of relationships: the relationship between humans and the greater community of life on our planet (and the wider cosmos itself); the relationship of humans with each other; and the way our world views and modes of consciousness affect these relationships in all their aspects. We

need to live in harmony with each other and with our environment, and to pursue justice and equality. She introduced a leaflet and poster which BKs have produced which summarises ten ways to change the world:

1. live simply
2. be unlimited
3. open the heart
4. respect life
5. be positive
6. walk the talk
7. empower yourself
8. eat well
9. follow your dream
10. feed the soul.

It was an unusual session for Concord, refreshingly different in its focus, character and atmosphere from our normal meetings. It was good to share in the gentle, calm, peaceful ethos of Brahma Kumaris reflection. JSS

# Youth Perspective

## God and Goodness

by Belal Ahmed

THE QUESTION OF GOD and morality has been a point of curiosity for me for the last three years: not mere curiosity though—an intense existential burden I should say. I could not understand why God would not reveal himself to us so evidently and clearly if he did exist. I could not understand why he would create a universe that would provide a habitat for humans and then leave them to their own devices, suffering at the hands of one another, drowning in existential angst and terror. I could not understand why there were so many different religions, many claiming to have a monopoly on the truth and of God. I could not understand how these religions talked about heaven and hell, good and evil, truth and falsehood, yet it seemed like these religions were more evil and full of corruption than the secular groups they opposed. The scientific understanding of the world did not allow room for the belief in a loving god, nor did it allow any room for miracles or prophets.

But I began questioning the limits of science and the philosophy of science. I came to realise that science cannot say anything about what we ought to do, nor could it explain the hard problem of consciousness. The materialist and scientific paradigm cannot understand first-person experience, nor can it understand human suffering. But it is this suffering that pushes a person to the conclusion that the suffering of life is enough, and that there is no need to inflict suffering on others. It is the realisation that there is no justice in this temporary world that leads one to take justice in his own hands. But also, and more importantly it is the understanding that our world views are so limited and narrow that humbles us to keep an open mind, and show mercy

where mercy can be shown, to love unconditionally because we may never understand the sufferings of other people that leads them to behave the way they do.

So I ask myself again, does God exist, and if so, is he good? And my answer to this is that yes, God exists through us. We are mirrors through which God sees himself. And God is good because all there is to know about life's suffering is the truth in love—unconditional and universal love.

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### Zen Story

A HUGE, rough samurai once went to see a little monk, hoping to acquire the secrets of the universe.

"Monk," he said, in a voice accustomed to instant obedience. "teach me about heaven and hell."

The little monk looked up at the mighty warrior in silence. Then, after a moment, he said to the samurai with utter disdain, "Teach YOU about heaven and hell? I couldn't teach you about anything. You're dirty. You smell. Your blade is rusty. you're a disgrace, an embarrassment to the samurai class. Get out of my sight at once. I can't stand you!"

The samurai was furious. He began to shake all over from the anger that raced through him. A red flush spread over his face; he was speechless with rage. Quickly, menacingly, he pulled out his sword and raised it above his head, preparing to slay the monk.

"That's hell." said the little monk quietly.

The samurai was overwhelmed. Stunned. The compassion and surrender of this little man who had offered his life to give this teaching about hell! He slowly lowered his sword, filled with gratitude, and for reasons he could not explain his heart became suddenly peaceful.

"And that's heaven," said the monk softly.

## Leeds City PeaceLink

**A**BOUT FORTY PEOPLE, including several Concord members, attended the Nagasaki commemoration at 11am on Friday August 9th in Park Square. After the a two-minute silence Cllr James Lewis read the Nagasaki 2019 Peace Declaration and laid a white wreath by the peace plaque to remember those affected by atomic bombings and all innocent civilian victims of warfare. There were other short readings and talks followed by peace songs from the Nagasaki Day Choir.



### Secretary Required

**C**ONCORD needs a voluntary honorary secretary to share the administrative work of running Concord with the chair or co-chairs, the minutes secretary and the editor. The secretary needs to be a member of Concord, and would become an officer of Concord and a trustee. He/she would be expected to attend four 90-minute Executive meetings a year.

There is a very small amount of correspondence to be dealt with, mainly by email these days, including convening Executive meetings.

The person appointed needs to have good English spelling, punctuation and

grammar and the ability to edit other people's writing. He/she should be skilled at using such publishing programmes as Microsoft Word and Publisher to create programmes, posters, AGM papers, etc, and a flair for graphic design would be a great bonus. Access to printing facilities would be an advantage, though not essential.

Willingness to help with the mailing of the newsletter and other papers three times a year would be appreciated.

If you have the skills and experience and can spare a few hours to help, please **contact John Summerwill (ring 0113 269 7895 or email [chair@concord-leeds.org.uk](mailto:chair@concord-leeds.org.uk))** to discuss what is involved.

# Obituary

## Sister Gladys Stringer

1924-2019

**G**LADYS WAS a kind and loving soul who, in spite of the many challenges that life presented to her, was able to navigate her life with honesty, integrity and a deep love and faith in God. She had a dry sense of humour, a nice balance of being entertaining and conscientious.

She loved relating the story of her work as a telephonist in the army during the second world war where she worked ten hours a day a hundred steps down in a top secret underground station near Newhaven. She met and married a Canadian who had been posted to England during the war and just after the war went to live in Canada where all four of her children were born. She returned to England in 1962.

Gladys was a much loved grandmother of eight grandchildren and great grandmother of eleven, most of whom lived in Canada. She was always there for her family and regularly let them know how proud she was of them all.

At the age of 58 and dealing with bouts of depression she started to practise Raja Yoga meditation, which helped tremendously. She played an important part in the Brahma Kumaris and was always available to give time and help in whatever way she could.

Gladys was a member of Concord for many years, attending the AGM

each year and taking an active part in various events such as the Concord Peace Service, and she attended the Peter Bell memorial event for many years. She was also part of the Women's Group which Anne Wragg started many years ago and contributed some of the recipes to the cookery booklet that was produced.

At the age of 91 Gladys needed to have more physical care and went to live in a lovely care home visited by her daughter Susan every day and had regular visits from many of her friends. Her love of music was very strong and she loved to sing. You only had to say a few words and she would find a song and sing it to you.

The last couple of months of her life were spent in hospital, where she was seriously ill with septicaemia and even then, as her voice was failing, she would pick up on a few words that the nurses said and would break into a song, remembering all the words. The nurses would go in a bit bedraggled with

the ward workload and always come out smiling.

She managed her illness, and her increasing physical frailty and dependency on others to care for her, with such graciousness and dignity. As she became physically frail her spiritual side became stronger and wiser. As she lost her physical autonomy she developed a deepening spiritual awareness.

She passed away peacefully in May at the age of 95 years and wherever her next part has taken her, she will be having an amazing time singing and dancing away and sharing her kindness, love and joy with everyone.

*Susan Balmforth*



# Calendar of Festivals Autumn 2019 - Spring 2020

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

## SEPTEMBER 2019

23 Equinox - Mabon Pagan  
30-October 1 Rosh Hashanah Jewish

## OCTOBER 2019

8 Dasara Hindu  
9 Yom Kippur Jewish  
14-20 Sukkot Jewish  
20 Birth of the Báb Bahá'í  
Installation of Scriptures as Guru Granth Sikh  
21 Shemini Atzeret Jewish  
22 Simchat Torah Jewish  
27 Diwali Sikh, Hindu, Jain  
31 All Hallows Eve Christian

## NOVEMBER 2019

1 All Saints Day Christian  
Samhain Pagan  
2 All Souls Day Catholic Christian  
10-17 Interfaith Week Interfaith  
10 Remembrance Sunday National  
10 Mawlid an Nabi Muslim  
12 Birth of Baha'u'llah Bahá'í  
Birthday of Guru Nanak Dev Sikh  
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 2019

1-24 Advent Christian  
8 Bodhi Day (Rohatsu) Buddhism  
Immaculate Conception of Mary Catholic Christian  
21 Solstice - Yule Pagan  
23-30 Hanukkah Jewish  
24 Christmas Eve Christian  
25 Christmas Christian

## 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

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

Reg. Charity No: 516339

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