

Faith in Manchester

The Voice of FN4M: the Faith Network for Manchester

Spring 2008

Issue 002

Youth Show How to



The adoption of Faith Youth Manchester (FYM) as the youth branch of FN4M has been a boon for both groupings. FN4M now has increased potential to reach young people across Manchester. FYM has a firmer foundation on which to develop its work.

FYM brought with them a grant from the Faith Communities Capacity Building Fund, which had enabled them to employ a Convenor and five Peer Youth Workers from different faiths and run interfaith events. The partnership bore fruit quickly as the Peer Youth Workers applied for, and received, further funding for their events from Manchester's Youth Opportunities Fund.

On Sunday the 16th December 2007, Faith Youth Manchester held its first event titled "Co-exist". This was a chance for young people from different religions and cultures to meet and interact in a fun and relaxed atmosphere whilst overcoming the barrier that tends to arise as a result of people's different faiths. The event was planned and organised by the five Peer Youth Workers. They come from Christian, Jewish, Muslim and Buddhist backgrounds and had been working with Jonny Wineberg, Convenor of Faith Youth Manchester, since the end of September.

Following a 'human bingo' ice-breaker, a welcome speech was given by the 5 young representatives who explained the need for the event and the activities that had been scheduled for the day.

There were several workshops available during the afternoon including t-shirt design, banner making, mural workshop, a drama workshop and a discussion session. While people in the banner workshop were busy getting their hands dirty with paint, others engaged in deeper discussions of ethical scenarios, sharing their personal religious perspective on the issues raised. Everyone did a great job in creating a fun, relaxed atmosphere, where communication flowed and new friendships were visibly being made, not to mention the Christmas crackers that everyone seemed to have particular fun with! After

the workshops, people were treated to a freestyle buffet during which they were able to interact with one another.

Presentations were then made by the various workshops. The members of the drama workshop provided a short drama sketch of the need and importance of people co-existing. Participants of the T-shirt design workshop showed different designs that had been made on the T-shirts also depicting the need for co-existing. The banner **continued on page 4**



Above: Peer Youth Workers (from left) Dee Thompson (Christian), Akeem Brown (Buddhist), Sara Warner (Jewish), Toby Carr-Brown (Christian) and Saadia Shafi (Muslim)

Cohens meet the Kumars

On Sunday 24th February more than three dozen Hindus and Jews met together at Jackson's Row Synagogue in central Manchester for an event organised by Louis and Shirley Rapaport, together with Dr Girdhari Bhan.

This was the first event since their name was changed from the Indian Jewish Association to the Hindu Jewish Association. Dr Bhan and Henry Guterman, the respected FN4M and North West interfaith ambassador who died last year, founded the association.

People brought in various objects that were relevant to their religious identity and significant for them. These led to some fascinating discussions around the tables. Whilst the religions clearly have different roots and practices, it was remarkable to see the similarities and empathy exhibited between those from the two faiths.

Artefacts included a wooden statue of Krishna, a Diwali symbol and an 'Awm', all of which complemented the many questions asked about Hinduism by the Jews present. The Hindus were able to see the synagogue and Torah scrolls, a Mezuzah and a wonderful collection of Israeli stamps belonging to David Davies.

There was also an ample selection of Hindu foods and kosher pastries and breads available to eat, which were lapped up by everyone present. It was a stimulating afternoon with plenty of food for body and soul.

Dr Bhan addressed the group regarding the name change, which now better reflected the aims of the Association as an interfaith group. Future visits to each others places of worship will be planned as the Association looks to reach more individuals from both communities.

ChangeMakers Communities Organised for the Common Good of Manchester

ACTION PLANNING MEETING

Wednesday 30th April 2008, 6pm

Venue: Cross Street Chapel, Cross Street, Manchester M2 1NL

Free of Charge

If U want to B active in making Manchester a better place for all of its residents, get involved, find your voice, become a leader and take action with others

Contact Robina: robina@fn4m.org or 0161 236 9321

Faith Network 4 Manchester



Multi-Faith Flavour at JR's 150th Anniversary

FN4M treasurer, Rabbi Warren Elf, joined more than seventy invited guests and over one hundred regular worshippers at Jackson's Row (Manchester Reform) Synagogue's Civic Service to celebrate its 150th anniversary.

In the presence of the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress of Manchester, the Lord Lieutenant and the High Sheriff of Manchester, Sir Howard Bernstein of Manchester City Council, the Bishop of Manchester, and a host of other faith leaders, in addition to stalwarts and leaders of several different faith communities, Rabbi Reuven Silverman led the Sabbath morning service.

The sermon was given by Rabbi Tony Bayfield, the Head of the Movement for Reform Judaism in this country. He spoke of the importance of interfaith work in today's society and how things have changed in the 150 years since Manchester Reform Synagogue was established.

He said, "Today, the agenda is about wresting back our faiths from the fundamentalist reactionaries and deadly fanatics who've hijacked them, substituting golden calves for the invisible God of goodness and justice. It's about how different faiths can recover their humility and make space for the truths of other faiths. It's about self-criticism and identifying what is best about us that we can share and contribute. It's about nailing our colours to the mast and working together for the good of society and the globe."

The synagogue's Rabbi for over 30 years, Rabbi Reuven Silverman, a founder member of the Faith Network for Manchester, fully endorsed the message of Rabbi Bayfield who added that the role of Manchester Reform Synagogue was "working with all faiths to make Manchester a model society in which those of all faiths and none are dedicated to building a diverse yet collaborative community which continues the best traditions of civic society in Manchester and further enriches them with the experiences of faith communities, old and new."

FN4M looks forward to working with this well-established community, along with all other communities and individuals in and around Manchester, in their efforts towards fulfilling this vision.

**For the latest
FN4M news
check out our
website at
www.fn4m.org**

200 Remember Henry

A remarkable gathering of some 200 people from across the religious spectrum came together at the end of November to remember founder member of FN4M, Henry Guterman MBE. Known in some circles as 'Mr Interfaith', Henry had devoted his life to fostering good interfaith relations.

The event was organised by a partnership of 20 organisations that Henry had been involved with, including FN4M, the Jewish Representative Council, Council of Christians and Jews, the Muslim Jewish Forum and the Indian Jewish Association.

The Henry Guterman Memorial Lecture was delivered by Lord Janner of Braunstone QC who, like Henry, has spent a lifetime promoting interfaith dialogue. He shared a platform with Rev Steve Williams, co-chairperson of the Council of Christians and Jews; Afzal Khan, former Lord Mayor of Manchester and co-chairperson of the Muslim Jewish Forum and Dr Girdhari Bhan, co-chairman of the Indian Jewish Association. Jewish Representative Council President, Mrs Barbara Goldstone, chaired the event, paying tribute to Henry, saying, "Mr Interfaith taught us all tolerance and respect."

Lord Janner, former MP for Leicester North West and chairman of the Holocaust Education Trust, said, "Henry fought for the right of individuals, irrespective of religions."

Lord Janner spoke about being an 18 year old war crimes investigator for the British Army in Germany after the Second World War. He recounted his experiences during his two years of service, including the surprise of some officers that someone so young was in his role.

He worked at weekends with Jewish orphans in the Bergen Belsen Displaced Persons camp. "These children had nothing," he said, "no family, no home, absolutely nothing. It taught me that we have to work together. It doesn't matter what religious background one comes from. Henry Guterman understood this and we must all try to do what he tried to do - working tirelessly in engaging with other faiths. Otherwise, the alternative is appalling."

He also had a stark warning for those assembled, "We must not let it happen, but anti-Semitism is starting again." He drew attention to the situation across parts of Europe where there was growing racism against Jews and other minorities. He felt the only way to stop the growth of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia was for religions to work together to combat it. He warned, "We have to live together in peace and understanding or we die together. If we want

peace we have to bring other faiths together."

One way in which Lord Janner is addressing this issue, he proudly explained to the meeting, is with the development of the Co-existence Trust. This initiative, alongside Crown Prince Hassan of Jordan, is working to create further understanding between Jews and Muslims and combat prejudice against the two faiths. "We have to deal with these



Above: Councillor Afzal Khan, Rabbi Brian Fox, Danny Samuels, former England footballer Cyrille Regis and Mark Guterman

issues and not separate ourselves." Lord Janner referred to his book, 'One Hand Alone Cannot Clap', which explained this philosophy and why he worked so hard to bring people of different views together.

The event was organised by Jonny Wineberg, FN4M Committee member and Co-Chairperson of the Muslim Jewish Forum, a role previously held by Henry. He had worked with Henry for 15 years on various groups. He told *Faith in Manchester*, "The memorial lecture showed the positive effect of interfaith work. Henry worked for interfaith harmony and for young people. We should continue to ensure that young people understand their own faith and the faith of others."

Alison Philcock, of Unite Against Fascism, travelled up from London specially for the event. She said, "Henry would always rush down to speak whenever we asked him and it was the least we could do to come to Manchester to remember him."

Henry's children Robert, Mark and Emma hosted the event. In a moving tribute to his father, Robert spoke of their visit to Berlin in 2005 and of learning that the Nazis deported Henry's two-year-old cousin Avigdor to the death camps. Robert said, "Dad believed in the freedom of this country and wanted to put something back. He did not trust the benign talk of the BNP."

In his vote of thanks David Berkeley QC said, "We miss him because he is irreplaceable."

Making a Change

Over fifty people got together on Wednesday 12 March at Cross Street Chapel, writes Robina Shah, for a lively meeting to continue talking about Changemakers Manchester, a new way of bringing people together to work on issues in their communities and across the city.

The meeting was very diverse in terms of ethnicity, culture, and faith background.

We began by asking our colleagues who had just been attending training how they felt, what they felt from the challenges that were put to them. We then spoke to our sister organisation from Wales to talk about their achievements. They were using a similar model adapted from the Gamaniel Foundation.

It became clear that many people have real questions about the direction of our society and the ways in which different groups of people are excluded from the mainstream by poverty, discrimination, crime, and lack of recognition. There was a general agreement that existing channels of influence are not always adequate to tackle these issues.

It felt as if the time was right to work with the newly formed organisation, Changemakers Manchester, in order to

have a vehicle to address some of these issues. We looked at ways forward to make that happen, which included:

- A monthly meeting to develop relationships between us, and to plan
- Further training over a weekend, supported by Greg Galluzzo from the Gamaniel Foundation
- The future - our first assembly when we would like to bring together 1,000 people to launch our new organisation

What we do from April 08 onwards will depend upon how successful we have been in building the membership of the organisation and in raising funds.

So the next steps are up to all of us! We agreed that at the next meeting we needed commitment from people to do the following:

- Work to bring our own group or institution into



Above: Greg Galluzzo leads a discussion at the latest Changemakers meeting

our developing organisation

- Work to bring other groups or institutions into membership
- Consider going on further training
- Help to raise money
- Bring at least one person to the next meeting

That next meeting will be on Tuesday 8th April at Cross Street Chapel, City Centre M2 1NL at 6.30pm with a further planning meeting on Wednesday 30th April at 6.00pm.

From the Chair



Where is interfaith action at in Manchester at the moment? That is a very good question.

With the closure of the long established Interfaith Forum many people have the feeling that interfaith activity is lacking direction and focus in the Greater Manchester area.

What such doom-mongers have not taken into consideration is that behind the scenes, the Faith Network for Manchester is slowly, but certainly, building capacity and strengthening its contacts across the city and across all faiths. As this newsletter shows, the first quarter of this year has been a busy one for interfaith activity across the north-west and indeed across the country. FN4M was represented at the Faith Action conference in Westminster; FN4M members were part of the government consultation, Face to Face, that took place in Liverpool; and here in Manchester FN4M partnered with Church Action on Poverty in delivering the latest training for community organizing that is part of the Changemakers process.

At the public meeting that was part of this training – held at Cross Street Chapel on Wednesday March 12th – there was a tangible hunger for change and for genuine participation in community matters from people of all faiths and none. 2008 will hopefully see the development of Changemakers in Manchester and the continued strengthening of interfaith action across the city.

The need for positive interfaith action has never been greater. The media-induced hype around Rowan Williams' speech about Sharia law shows that the UK remains a deeply Islamophobic society. Our Muslim sisters and brothers continue to need our support as they face a daily tide of misrepresentation and scaremongering. What such misguided propaganda fails to grasp is that all faith communities are united in our commitment to practice our faith in an open and confident manner – confident because we know that most faith communities are contributing a huge amount to society in the areas of education, social welfare and what is often called "community cohesion".

FN4M will continue to build bridges of understanding between the different faith communities of Manchester and will continue to facilitate interfaith activity to take place in this diverse and vibrant city. This is a very important job to be fulfilling at this time and FN4M is well placed to deliver! We have an exciting future!

Interfaith in Altrincham

Altrincham Interfaith Group's recent Shared Supper capacity audience at Altrincham Grammar School heard an address from the Bishop of Manchester, the Rt. Revd. Nigel McCulloch. Optimistically, Bishop McCulloch declared, "Our very presence here tonight is witness to our commitment to debate with, and learn from, one another."

The Mayor of Trafford brought greetings and informed the audience that his two main interests were interfaith and working with young people. A group such as this, he felt, was a catalyst for change in the borough in bringing together so many people in warmth and understanding.

The Supper allowed informal conversation among tables which mixed the faith groups. Prayers of grace were said by young representatives of all faiths present.

The event was chaired by the AIG chairman, Altrincham lawyer, Michael Jackson.



Above: Participants at Altrincham Interfaith Group's Shared Supper at Altrincham Grammar School



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and mural that had been designed were also presented.

The event was a great success seen through evaluation forms that were filled in by participants at the end of the day. Comments included: "Those things that we share in common are greater than our divisions"; "There can be unity between people from different faiths and beliefs"; "Each religion sees love and peace as very important"; "Although we have different religions, we share similar beliefs"; "It is possible to create a common way of life based on the respect and knowledge of differences better"; and from a young Muslim man, strikingly, "Not everyone is afraid of me".

After the event, participants described themselves as feeling: "upbeat", "enlightened", "spiritual", "really happy" and "fulfilled".

Toby Carr-Brown, one of the Christian Peer Youth Workers, said, "Although the turnout was lower than expected, the event was enjoyed by all

provided that opportunity."

Jonny Wineberg said, "I am so proud of the way the Peer Youth Workers, themselves young people from different faiths, worked as a team to plan this event. They have shown what can be achieved when we look to emphasise our similarities rather than differences and I hope that many more young people will now wish to take the opportunity to



Above: An ethical dilemmas discussion at Co-exist

interact with peers from other faiths."

After the success of their first event, the group planned a second Co-exist event in March, subtitled 'The Sports Event'. Held at Trinity Sports Centre, it attracted 40 young people of different faiths and was again a great success.

Starting with a human bingo ice breaker including questions on faith, young people looked at posters about faith in the foyer area.

A large-scale game of dodgeball was then followed by 7-a-side football, table-tennis, basketball and rounders and there was a bouncy castle for all to bounce on.

After a picnic with veggie hot dogs, mini-pizzas, veggie rolls and cakes, the group went into



Above: Celebrations at the end of Co-exist: The Sports Event

and we anticipate higher attendance and even greater success at our next event."

Sara Warner, the Jewish Peer Youth Worker, "It's clear that fundamental ideas within faiths of peace and loving one another are common and to see young people from different faiths sharing this in our discussions was very fulfilling."

Saadia Shafi, the Muslim Peer Youth Worker, said, "Our event aimed to provide an opportunity for young people, like ourselves, to socialise with those from other faith groups, and demonstrate that different faiths can co-exist in harmony. From the positive feedback and the keen responses of everyone I spoke to, I sincerely believe we

the sports hall for a 'mini-sports day'. In 5 teams they competed in old school style races including egg & spoon, sack, 3 legged, Mummy wrap, hopping hat and skipping.

With trophies and medals handed out, along with Easter eggs, to various 'winners' the event ended with those participants who wanted one going away with a co-exist logo-ed T-shirt and all exhausted but happy.

Salam Shalom

Salam Shalom had its official launch on 10th March in the Mayor's Parlour of Bury Town Hall.

The Mayor, Dr Farook Chaudhry, welcomed Salam Shalom members and other guests, saying: "I am truly honoured to have this launch held in my office and during my tenure. I fully support the work you are undertaking."

Other Councillors present gave their support to the group and expressed their appreciation of the work to date. FN4M members Warren Elf and Zahid Hussein attended the launch.

One major project they have initiated is to prepare a powerpoint presentation on Islam and Judaism to take into schools. They have successfully piloted this in two schools so far.

The schools' project aims to raise awareness amongst children that Muslims and Jews have more in common than any other two faiths and can use these similarities to understand each other better. The presentations delivered by a practising Jew and Muslim have a huge symbolic effect because the presenters have built up a friendship, which comes across in the class room.

Hassanat Ahmed said, "It has been a great privilege to work together to promote harmony in the borough of Bury. The group is unique in the work it does and the noble cause it works for."

Co-chair, David Berkley said, "Salam Shalom represents real friendship. All members who have worked together have become firm friends. We have learnt to recognise our differences and work on promoting our similarities and building better understanding."

The photograph below shows Hassanat and David seated, after giving a run-through of their schools' presentation, and behind are Councillors Michelle Wiseman and Peter Redstone, Rabbi Warren Elf, Ghulam Mujtaba, Sheraz Ahmed, Dr Farook Chaudhry (Mayor of Bury), Afzaal Khan, David Arnold, Steven Longden (Christian-Muslim Forum), Monsignor John Devine (Churches North-West), Zahid Hussein and Revd Steve Williams (Manchester CCJ)

If anyone is interested in any further information about Salam Shalom please contact the secretary, Warren Elf, via email at warren@fn4m.org, or by telephone on 07879 454292.



Faith Network 4 Manchester



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