

CIRcular



For Friends involved in local ecumenical and interfaith work

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Building understanding: commemorating September 11th

What should a city do in order to commemorate the fifth anniversary of September 11th 2001? Should it have another civic service that people attend out of a sense of duty? Or should it do something completely different?

These were questions asked in Southampton. The Council of Faiths worked with the City Council to devise an alternative form of commemoration.

The aim was to do something to improve understanding of the different faith communities in the city, with a view to breaking down distrust and fear.

The idea was to produce an information pack about the faiths represented in the city to be sent to all schools, hospitals, the police, the fire brigade, local government departments and other organisations.

In 2005, Meridian TV (the ITV channel that covers Southampton) produced an excellent series of six half hour programmes each focusing on one of the major faiths as practised in Southampton.

The faiths represented were Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, and Sikhism. Meridian kindly agreed to use of a DVD of the six programmes and also donated 1000 copies of an excellent guide to cultural diversity produced by Granada.

The Council of Faiths produced a brightly coloured and lively folder that contained a leaflet about each of the seven faiths in the City (Baha'i being the seventh faith).

These, with the DVD and the book, were then distributed, along with many thousands of summary leaflets called "Faith in Your City".

The distribution of the pack was launched at a reception in the Mayor's Parlour on September 11th and the local paper reported the occasion in a two page spread.

There was considerable additional local publicity and the packs have been warmly welcomed, with interest from other parts of the country.

This was a novel approach to commemoration, but a forward thinking and constructive one. Perhaps a similar idea could be used in other areas?

Hazel Inskip, Southampton PM



The pack produced by Southampton City Council and the City's Council of Faiths to commemorate September 11th

Finding the right words

David Barkla (Exeter PM) found difficulty with the religious language of the questions from the 9th Assembly of the World Council of Churches document "Called to be One Church" (CIRcular 22)

He wants to tell them: "You should have read "To Lima with Love". It's still a brilliant document and it tackles most if not all of these questions.

But as an answer, that's not so brilliant, because many Friends don't know about "To Lima with Love". In other churches, too, most people have very little idea what the philosophical/theological basis of their allegiance is, but that doesn't offer us much reassurance! Far too many people, the whole world over, are a pushover for bizarre ideas, sometimes very nasty ideas.

Editorial

How do we as Quakers respond not only to the questions of WCC but to those posed to us on the doorstep or in the street by those interested in converting us to their own beliefs?

Do you have responses to questions such as : "Are you saved? Are you washed in the Blood of the Lamb? Do you know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour?

Some possible responses might be: "I am being saved" or "That's not the language I would use, but..." or "My experience is different. Let me explain".

Footprints for Peace

Starting in May there will be an interfaith peace walk in Ireland Scotland and England, an 86 day journey covering over 1300 kms.

"This is an open walk; everyone from all spiritual beliefs and practices are welcome and encouraged to join the walk. We will be community based and focused on creating a family-friendly atmosphere. The walk will be a very accessible event for anyone who wants to join for the whole way, a day or two or a few hours as we will have a support vehicle."

Further details at www.footprintsforpeace.net

Perhaps we should be telling WCC that what they need is more profound questions, not more superficial answers- but we might bear in mind that that's what BYM need too."

Editor: "*To Lima with Love*" was London Yearly Meeting's response to the World Council of Churches document "*Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*" published in 1987. This is now out of print, but 2 sequels were published, "*The Challenge of Ecumenism for Friends*" and two volumes of "*From Friends with Love*". The latter reproduces Friends' response to ecumenical documents since 1995. Each booklet is available from the Quaker Bookshop at £2.00 plus £1.00 p+p.

It's easy just to walk away or shut the door, but do we have the confidence to engage in dialogue, and treat other people's views with respect, while seeking to share something of our own belief and experience.

If you have found good ways of dealing with this, other Friends might find it helpful if you were able to share this on these pages.

Linda Pegler, Editor



Sing in the Spirit

On Sunday "6th November we had an ecumenical "sing in the spirit" in the Meeting House to raise funds for our roof.

It was the idea of our Methodist minister who had conducted a family funeral and we gave him a copy of the Quaker Song Book. Once the idea was mooted every church wanted to join in!

We arranged for the Quaker Song Book to be distributed among several singing groups-mostly from the local churches-and they made their choice as to what they wanted to sing. Amazingly there was only one overlap-otherwise all groups chose to sing different songs from the book.

We had Methodist singers, St Nicholas Singers (Anglican); we had a choral group from the Catholic Church; the "outreach singers" (a local Christian group) and individual Quaker singers doing duets etc. There was also one other group of singers whose conductor is a Quaker

We began with a cup of tea at 4pm followed by the concert at 4.30. Each group sang their set of songs and then we clapped at the end of each presentation! In between, we had songs about William Penn and George Fox, Margaret Fell and John Woolman

We ended with a high tea to which everyone was invited. Our wonderful warden put out as many chairs as we had so he estimated we were about 70 people in all! (Our town has a population of only 2000).

It was a huge success and all the choirs and audience said how much they had enjoyed themselves. There were several calls for this to be repeated!

Is this a record? Have other Churches Together sung the Quaker Song Book?

Joolz Saunders, Wells-next -the-Sea PM

"For you shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands."

Isaiah 55:12

Spreading the Word on Civil Liberties

The slow and almost unnoticed erosion of our civil liberties is becoming more and more a matter of concern throughout our Society. We see it as a proper concern for Quakers because much of what is happening is contrary to our Testimonies. But it is also a concern that needs to go far wider than ourselves. What have we to say to other churches and other faiths on this issue?

One starting point is simply the sharing of information. The legislation that restricts us as we try to speak out for moral values is there for all to see, but the sections which make the restrictions are often buried. The Quaker Civil Liberties Network (email forbesbarbarae@yahoo.co.uk) can help here: network members share by email articles and commentaries they have found which make clear what is going on. But we also need to talk to those of other churches and faiths, using our existing common ground as a starting point. If we all believe in the value of each individual, then assaults on equality can be pointed out, and common cause made against them.

So get this onto the agenda of local Churches Together groups, talk to interfaith groups, and raise awareness of this insidious problem. I recently talked to a Peace and Justice group who found a presentation on the ostensible use and actual misuse of some legislation a real eye-opener: and once informed, many groups need little encouragement to join the protests. To be effective, though, the protests need to be led and co-ordinated; is this, too, something we Quakers could offer?

Sarah Richards Northumbria MM

Opinions in articles and letters are those of the writers and do not necessarily represent those of this committee.

Any contributions from Friends are welcome.

Faith and Order Conference

“What is Faith and Order?” a Friend asked. It might be a puzzle to some Friends. But it is quite simple. It is the aspect of interchurch discussions which looks in detail and with great care at the theological questions and the traditions which separate churches from each other, and tries to reduce differences by bringing understandings closer together.

The traditional issues on the Faith and Order agenda are often to do with matters which are essential to other churches but peripheral to Friends. If you have a long memory you might remember that our response to the Lima document, “To Lima with Love” (1987), responded to the World Council of Churches paper on Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry.

Further documents such as the WCC, “The Nature and Mission of the Church” also have considerable sections which are not of first importance to Quakers. As QCCIR has thought about this, it has seemed to us that the time is right for Quakers to start to consider what our own Faith and Order agenda might be. Instead of keeping on saying that we wouldn’t start from here, we should be prepared to answer the question of where we would start. What are the questions we would pose to other churches? What would our agenda be?

The conference to be held at Wodbrooke from 6th to 9th August 2007 will look at these questions. We hope that it will be an international conference since it is timed to precede the FWCC Triennial meeting to be held in Ireland this summer. There is room for British Friends with an interest in Faith and Order and in theology to come, and bookings should be made in the usual way through Woodbrooke.

QCCIR’s first thoughts on the issues to be discussed include, What do we mean by visible unity? How do we recognise the work of the Holy Spirit? The significance of eschatology? And how is the Bible to be interpreted? It is hoped that the outcomes of this conference will feed into another conference to which other British churches will be invited to send representatives in 2008.

Janet Scott (Clerk-QCCIR)

Operation Noah appoints seasoned campaigner

Operation Noah, the Churches’ Campaign to avert catastrophic climate change, has appointed Ann Pettifor, one of the architects of the hugely successful Jubilee 2000 campaign, as its new Campaign Director.

Operation Noah is a project of the Environmental Issues Network of Churches together in Britain and Ireland and Christian ecology Link.

David Pickering, chairperson of Operation Noah said: “We are delighted to announce that Ann Pettifor will bring her extensive experience of campaigning and advocacy to the vital cause of climate change. Ann worked closely with the churches during the Jubilee 2000 campaign, and credits the faith organisations with much of the impact made by Jubilee 2000 both in the UK and also internationally. The threat of climate change means that faith organisations will once again have to mobilise, this time to bring about the changes needed to cut the carbon and stabilise carbon omissions. We look forward to Ann heading up the Operation Noah Campaign to tackle the biggest threat facing humanity in the 21st century.”

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Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations keeps Quakers in Britain informed of movements towards co-operation within the Christian Church and opportunities for interfaith dialogue, and it responds on their behalf to other churches and communities of faith.

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