



**Minutes of the East of England Faiths Council meeting held on
Wednesday 13 March 2013
St John's Innovation Centre, Cambridge**

Chairs: Anne Brown (AB) and Ellis Weinberger (EW)

1 Welcome

EW welcomed everybody to the final EEFC quarterly meeting and introduced Jim Platts (JP) to lead a minute of silence.

2 Minute of silence

JP noted that EW had said that this is the last meeting, but we are moving towards Easter and in the Christian tradition the significance of Easter is that the point at which everything appears to end is when everything actually begins ...

3 Minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 13 December 2012 were accepted as a correct record and are available on the EEFC website.

4 Zoroastrianism, the mother of all religions?

EW introduced Jehangir Sarosh, OBE (JS), who after arriving in the UK from India by car in 1952, served in the Royal Air force followed by a stint in civil aviation. He then decided to make a few return trips to India by car, which led him to start an import-export business. He has been involved in interfaith work at local, national, regional and international levels. His focus has been working with Religions for Peace, for he likes to facilitate different faiths working on common actions. At present he is the Executive Director of the UK Chapter of Religions for Peace and is focusing on moving from the much-needed interfaith dialogue to multifaith co-operation.

JS began by saying that as a Zoroastrian he is used to being alphabetically last, but he was dismayed to hear that his is the last faith presentation to be given to an EEFC meeting. He explained that he was not an academic or a theologian but would try to cover 3000 years of Zoroastrianism in twenty minutes! He introduced the history, theology and philosophy of the faith and mentioned in particular the following features: it is monotheistic, and the creator governs through wisdom; it is dualistic; it teaches a triple ethic of good thoughts, words and deeds; responsibility is exercised through freedom of choice; it is holistic and encourages prosperity, growth, charity, equality, pursuit of happiness. JS ended by referring to its influence on other religions, hence the suggestion that it is 'the mother of all religions'.

The full presentation is available on the EEFC website.

5 Questions and discussion

EW thanked JS for his presentation and regretted that there was no time for questions at this point, but that they could be raised in person later.

6 The history and achievements of EEFC

AB then spoke about the history and achievements of EEFC since Bishop Christopher Herbert suggested its formation back in 1999. Her presentation is attached at Appendix A.

EW gave a personal appreciation of EEFC, explaining his involvement from its inception, and saying that he believed it had had a beneficial impact on all involved, on the region, and more widely.

7 Sources of information, ongoing support and legacy projects

JK began by thanking JS both for his important interfaith work and for his illuminating presentation.

JK introduced Geoff Cook (GC) who described the work being done by the Faith Reference Group with respect to the University of Cambridge's major development in NW Cambridge. This group is trying to ensure that faith needs are not forgotten and he explained that largely due to its work, and interventions from Bishop Stephen Conway and Bishop David Thomson the University has agreed to increase slightly the size of the planned community facility and to ensure that faith groups are included in stakeholder consultation. GC stressed, however, that support from all faith groups is essential in this kind of situation.

JK then introduced Alan Hargrave (AH), who referred to the party last year celebrating ten years of EEFC at which he had met somebody from Luton as a result of which sixty people from Luton had visited Ely Cathedral – an opportunity that arose because people had time to talk to each other. AH is very concerned that this kind of opportunity will be lost and would like to think that there might be further discussion about what we want to achieve together and how this could be done. JK responded that she would follow this up with AH and the Board.

JK then explained that, while the Council would be formally closed in two weeks time, a number of areas of resource and support had been put in place to help keep 'connectedness' for faith activity.

While regional governance ceased a while ago, regional activity is very much alive, and it was important for faith contribution, and inter faith work to thrive at a local level, that there was a 'connectedness' at regional and national. If this does not happen, everyone will work hard, but in isolation, rather than supporting and sharing. There has been political rhetoric about localism, but policy does not endorse that, and it would be a mistake to think we can or should go back to acting alone at local level, without reference to a bigger picture.

She explained that, therefore, EEFC had made the following arrangements.

Web sites and publications

Both the web sites will close in terms of ceasing to be updated, and each will have a home page and links to the EEFC publications. There will also be links to PDFs of the publications from Essex County Council and with the Inter Faith Network for the UK, which is named under the CIC's Asset Lock arrangements. Some publications are active and some are historic, but we plan to have them all bound together and offered to the five national deposit libraries as a record.

The full web sites, in their current state, had been archived by the British Library.

In addition, EEFC has produced a short list of contacts and resources, which may be useful, and this would be available to delegates as they left.

Quarterly meetings

These have been much valued as a way of meeting others, as well as hearing about the most up to date topics, practical issues, and reflections from people who are leaders in their field. JK was therefore very pleased to say that EEFC was in serious discussion with Anglia Ruskin University, and they are likely to take over the arrangements as part of their community engagement work, hosting a faiths and beliefs in society network. If that goes ahead, everyone who has been invited to these meetings will be contacted and offered the chance to continue attending and networking.

Local Inter Faith Groups

Similarly, EEFC was very conscious that the events, information, training and guidance papers produced over the years in response to expressed need by LIFOs, have been well used. The feedback received, and EEFC research, indicates that again, networking and support are valued, in the context of the groups maintaining their autonomy and independence, rather than being too reliant on any public or indeed other bodies. Some of their most important relationships are inevitably with Local Authorities (LA), and both sides want to build on this.

There are three counties where there are a number of different groups: Cambs. Essex and Herts. A LA in each of those three counties, has agreed to provide a free room in which all the local IF groups in that county can meet. The meetings will not be directed by the LA, or to its agenda, but the lead officer on faith may well drop in to part of the meeting so that news and information can be exchanged. In each county, a lead person or group will hold funds for refreshments and will co-ordinate the diary dates.

Additionally, in Cambs. the Ecumenical Officer – Priscilla – will attend and make sure there are links with the Churches Together group.

JK congratulated Richard Leslie of Hertsmere Faith Forum on his award from Mayor of Hertsmere, for his work with the Forum and its benefit to the community.

Local Authorities

EEFC has been a source of contact and partnership for LAs, fulfilling the remit of helping them and faith communities work together productively. Although there is no longer regional governance, these links still exist so EEFC has been in discussion with the East of England Local Government Association, which brings together all the LAs in various ways, and they have agreed with Essex CC that it will be the lead LA on faith. In this role, it will help convene meetings of officers with a faith interest, in the same way as already happens with, for example Children's Services.

Essex CC will also hold the EEFC publications, and other information, on its new Participation Network Forum, and will liaise with Inter Faith Network UK if anything is updated.

Resilience and Emergency Planning

EEFC has been a very active member of the Regional Emergency Forum, and those representing us have done such a good job that they been asked to stay on as co-opted members. They are Ellis Weinberger, Priscilla Barlow and Peter Mortimer. They can be contacted directly if you wish to make an input or get information, and their details are on the resources list. EEFC was very grateful to them for this, and their past good work.

Councillors' Professional Development

JK said that this pilot workshop for Councillors on locating and practical working with faith groups in their wards was held on 11 March in Chelmsford. It was intended this will provide a blueprint for use by LAs in the future, and EEFC would continue to work on this to bring it to fruition over the summer.

Presence of EEFC

JK explained that she and Lesley Turney would stay in the current office until everything was sorted out and the future arrangements in place. This would take a month or two. The CIC's final accounts would be approved in September.

JK would be seeking alternative work, hoping to apply her experience usefully, but would also be undertaking academic research with a Doctorate in Practical Theology.

She concluded by thanking all the organisations who had funded EEFC and shown trust in it. They had built very productive partnerships, making possible the achievements Anne spoke about.

JK thanked all past and current Board members, who had given so freely and generously of time, knowledge and wisdom to create an organisation of which they could be proud. Early members showed innovation and enlightenment in building relations and believing in the future, and current members had taken that forward to build a legacy.

Most importantly, she thanked those who worked with and for the Faiths Council as consultants and colleagues: Lesley, Sarah, Anne, Priscilla and Gwen, and in the past Stephen, Kate, Cheryl, Sierra and Penny, had made everything possible. They are not always seen, but their contribution had been outstanding.

At the end of JK's report AB presented her with flowers and a card, and thanked her for her exemplary commitment, tact, diplomacy and ability to value everybody over the past eleven years.

8 Reflections

AB introduced Harriet Crabtree, OBE, Director of the Inter Faith Network for the UK (IFN), for which she had worked since 1990. IFN links faith community representative bodies and inter faith bodies in the UK and works with them to promote good inter faith relations.

HC began by saying that she was delighted but sad to be speaking at the end of such significant work. She paid tribute to the work of EEFC and to JK and all those who had worked across the region; it had been an important journey, planting seeds along the way, and she hoped the legacy would be more like seeds than foam on the sand. It was good to hear about some continuation but this also gave rise to an uneasy reflection. Since 2000 there had been a burgeoning in inter faith work and although this had often been caused by negative events it was also for positive reasons e.g. greater religious diversity. The more people learnt and engaged, the more people realised how important the work was.

Since the government funded 'Face to Face and Side by Side' there have been positive and negative results. Positive in that faith has been heard in government, but less positive that that work was to some extent centrally driven. This was a dilemma for those who received funding and a lot had to be done by communities who were not fully involved in the way the programmes were put together.

HC paid tribute to the way in which EEFC had coped with this. But there had been huge pressure on regional and local bodies, and the issues about sustainability and the question of future funding of inter faith work were enormously complex. EEFC had helped to create connection and to stimulate a diversity of approach; its contributions had been considerable and there would be a great lack unless this legacy was built upon. The East of England is a remarkable region for its diversity and its achievements. HC ended by saying that she has known few people who have put in the enthusiasm of JK on a path that was hard and difficult to navigate and it was a pleasure to pay tribute to her.

AB thanked HC for her reflections.

Graham Thompson closed the meeting by saying that part of EEFC's success is that it had created many different networks and invited people to join the 'Meet Your Neighbour' session.

He also reminded people that a room was available for silent prayer, and this was used after the meeting closed, with prayer for the future of inter faith being led by Jim Platts.

Priscilla Barlow
March 2013

EAST OF ENGLAND FAITHS COUNCIL
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Attending Delegates

		Organisation	Faith
Gwen	Andrews	EEFC	
Richard	Atkinson	Bishop of Bedford	Christian (Anglican)
Tony	Barker	Church and Community	Christian (Baptist)
Priscilla	Barlow	Churches Together in Cambridgeshire	Christian (RC)
Virginia	Barnes	Cambridgeshire SACRE	Baha'i
Michael	Berkson		Jewish
Anne	Brown	Methodist District, Beds, Essex, Herts	Christian (Methodist)
Cynthia	Capey	SIFRE	Christian (Anglican)
Ed	Cearns	Cearns & Co	Christian (Anglican)
Ila	Chandavarkar	MENTER	
Geoffrey	Cook	Commission for Dialogue & Unity	Christian (RC)
Nigel	Cooper	ARU Chaplaincy/Cambs SACRE	Christian (Anglican)
Murray	Corke	Community of Interbeing	Zen Buddhist
Harriet	Crabtree	Inter Faith Network for the UK	
Bertie	Everard	Welwyn Hatfield Inter Faith Group	Christian (URC)
Paul	Ewans	Cambridge Humanists	Humanist
Sean	Finlay	Wisbech Interfaith Forum	Christian (RC)
Nicky	Guard		
Kevin	Hand	Faith Woodlands Communities	Buddhist
Alan	Hargrave	Ely Diocesan Board for Church in Society	Christian (Anglican)
Stephen	Harmer	Harmer Consulting	Christian
Joella	Hazel	Bedford Borough Council	
Ariadne	Henry	Cambridge City Council Community Department	
Paul	Hills	Eastern Baptist Association	Christian (Baptist)
Cass	Howes	Bedford Council of Faiths	Christian (Methodist)
David	Jonathan	Grassroots and Luton Council of Faiths	Christian
Prudence	Jones	EEFA	Pagan
Jenny	Kartupelis	EEFC	Christian
Darius	Keka	ZTFE (Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe)	Zoroastrian
Amin	Khan	International Muslim Communities	Muslim
Zafar	Khan	Luton Council of Faiths	Muslim
Habib	Khokhar	Ahmadiyya Muslim Association	Muslim
Maire	Lawless	Stort Interfaith Group	Christian (RC)
Richard	Leslie	Hertsmere Forum of Faiths	Christian (Anglican)
Anne	Littlefair	EEFC	Christian (Methodist)
Cheryl	Lowe	St Philip's CE(A) Primary School	Christian
Sue	Lowe	Office for Civil Society, Cabinet Office	
Peter	Maguire	Inter Faith Council Huntingdon & District (ICHHD)	Baha'i
Dina	Mandalia		Hindu
Jafar	Mirza	Faiths & Beliefs in Further Education (FBFE)/EEFC	Muslim
Richard	Morgan	Church of England	Christian
Peter	Mortimer	Diocese of St Edmundsbury & Ipswich	Christian (Anglican)
Thak	Patel	Think India / EEFC	Hindu
Dorothy	Peyton Jones	Chaplaincy to People at Work	Christian

		Organisation	Faith
Jim	Platts	University of Cambridge	Quaker
Reynold	Rosenberg	Welwyn Hatfield Inter Faith Group	Jewish
Jehangir	Sarosh, OBE	European Council for Religious Leaders	Zoroastrian
Janet	Scott	Cambs Ecumenical Council / SACRE	Quaker
Valerie	Skottowe	Welwyn Hatfield Inter Faith Group	Christian (RC)
Paula	Spalding	Cambridge Regional College	Christian (Anglican)
David	Thompson	Eastern Synod United Reformed Church	Christian (URC)
Graham	Thompson	Methodist Church, EA District	Christian (Methodist)
David	Thomson	Bishop of Huntingdon	Christian (Anglican)
Lesley	Turney	EEFC	
Iqbal	Warsi	Anglia Ruskin University	Muslim
Ellis	Weinberger	Jewish Community, Cambridge / EEFC	Jewish
David	Wilman	Cambridge Interfaith Group	Christian
Patricia	Wyman	Cambridge Regional College Chaplaincy	Quaker

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Apologies

		Organisation	Faith
M Manwar	Ali	JIMAS	Muslim
Donald	Allister	Bishop of Peterborough	Christian (Anglican)
Phil	Anderson	Thurrock Council	
Jonathan	Baker	Diocese of Peterborough	Christian (Anglican)
Simon	Banks		Quaker
Shan	Barclay	Norfolk SACRE	Muslim
Paul	Bayes	Bishop of St Albans	Christian (Anglican)
Valerie	Berkson	CECF (Cambridge Ethnic Community Forum)	Jewish
John D	Brown	Discovering Sacred Britain	Christian (Anglican)
Vivien	Chapman	Brightlingsea Town Council	
Andrew	Cogan	COVER	
Geoffrey	Colmer	Central Baptist Association	Christian (Baptist)
Stephen	Conway	Bishop of Ely	Christian (Anglican)
Stephen	Copson	Central Baptist Association	Christian (Baptist)
Alison	Davies	netCUDA Ltd	
Warren	Elf	Southend and District Reform Synagogue	Jewish
Lawrence	Fagbayi	The GP Ministries	
Mike	Frankl	Beth Shalom Synagogue	Jewish
Sarah	Geary	EEFC	
Tarak	Ghosh		
David	Gillett	Norwich Inter Faith Link	Christian (Anglican)
Sadiq	Haq	Hertfordshire SACRE	Muslim
David	Hawkins	Bishop of Barking	Christian (Anglican)
Graham	Hedger	Diocese of St Edmundsbury & Ipswich	Christian (Anglican)
Walter	Herriot OBE	EEFC	
Robert	Hill	Diocese of Peterborough	Christian (Anglican)
Pam	Hinds	Cambridge Interbeing Sangha	Buddhist
John	Holmes	Shared Churches (Ely) Ltd	Christian (Baptist)
Paul	Hughes	Diocese of St Albans	Christian (Anglican)
Richard	Jordan	Chelmsford Diocese	Christian (Anglican)
Tahir	Kamran	Cambridge Muslim Council / EEFC	Muslim
Sushila	Karia	Hindu Cultural & Heritage Centre Ltd	Hindu
Brian	Keegan	Peterborough Interfaith Council	Christian (RC)
Jawaid	Khan	Peterborough City Council	Muslim
Ryad	Khodabocus	Luton Council of Faiths	Muslim
David	Lawson	Dacorum Interfaith Network	Christian
Richard	Lewis	Eastern Baptist Association	Christian (Baptist)
Mary Clare	Mason	Faith and Cohesion Network	Christian (RC)
Samantha	Masters	Taoist Tai Chi Society	Taoist
Deborah	McKinley		Baha'i
Thomas	McMahon	Bishop of Brentwood	Christian (RC)
Peter	Meek	East Midlands Synod	Christian (URC)
Sejad	Mekic	Abu Bakr Jamia Mosque	
Ralph	Meloy	Diocese of Chelmsford	Christian (Anglican)

		Organisation	Faith
Jonathan	Meyrick	Bishop of Lynn	Christian (Anglican)
Cathy	Michell	Cambridgeshire SACRE	Christian (Methodist)
Robin	Millar	Forest Heath District Council	
Kate	Mitchell	Taoist Tai Chi Society	Taoist
Ivor	Moody	Mid Essex Inter Faith Group	Christian (Anglican)
Christopher	Morgan	Bishop of Colchester	Christian (Anglican)
Julia	Murphy	University of Essex	Christian (Anglican)
Ann	Naylor	Essex County Council	
Suresh	Patel		Hindu
Neslyn	Pearson	Faith in Queen's Park	Christian
Amanda	Perry	Thurrock Faith Matters	
Andrew	Prasad	URC Thames North Synod	Christian (URC)
Sue	Rampal	NHS Cambridgeshire	Hindu
Lakhwinder Singh	Sagoo	Cambridge Sikh Society	Sikh
Alan	Smith	Bishop of St Albans	Christian (Anglican)
Dan	Smith	Hunts District Council	
Natu Bhai	Solanki	Hindu Temple/Community Centre, Dunstable	Hindu
Sushil	Soni	Ipswich Hindu Samaj	Hindu
Nigel	Stock	Bishop of St Edmundsbury & Ipswich	Christian (Anglican)
Rana	Walker	Braintree District Inter Faith Forum (B-Diff)	
Irene	Walsh	Peterborough City Council	
Frances	Ward	Diocese of St Edmundsbury & Ipswich	Christian (Anglican)
Malcolm	Weisman		Jewish
Paul	Whittle	URC Eastern Synod	Christian (URC)
Alan	Winton	Bishop of Thetford	Christian (Anglican)
Terry	Wolfe	Stevenage Interfaith Group	

APPENDIX A

Anne Brown's Presentation

History of the East of England Faiths Council

On 1 September 1999, the Rt Revd Christopher Herbert, the then Bishop of St Albans wrote to all Church Leaders in the East of England following the publication of documents by the East of England Development Agency (EEDA) focussing on the regional economic development strategy . He suggested that the Church Leaders needed to respond either as individuals or collectively.

A core group of four people (Bishop Christopher, Richard Wheeler, Graham Hedger and Graham Pearson) met on 1 October 1999 and suggested the setting up of an East of England Church Leaders' Meeting to act as a forum and the establishment of the East of England Churches Network to act as a steering group. They also suggested the appointment of a consultant for 1.5 days per week. Jenny Kartupelis was appointed as the Consultant, as she had written a submission document to EEDA about the role of churches in the economy of the region.

In October 2000, a Business Plan for 2000-2004 was produced by the East of England Churches Network.

It listed the achievements over the course of the first year as being:-

- Establishment of the position of the churches in the Eastern region
- Response to the regional economic development strategy
- Recognition of the Network by all the Church Leaders
- Establishment of the Cambridge Office as the point of contact on behalf of the churches of the East of England
- £36,352 income raised directly from the churches of the East of England
- Appointment of a part time Liaison Officer and secretarial support
- Participation in the Quality of Life debate by organising a seminar in May and jointly with EEDA a major regional one day conference in July
- Secondment of a member of the Executive to the EEDA strategy team to participate in Rural Economy and Social Exclusion Implementation Groups
- Securing funding from EEDA for a research project

The plan was to develop the work

- To liaise with the Government office GO-East and other bodies
- To make contacts with other faith communities

In April 2002 EECN invited other faiths to join its work and in July 2002 the East of England Faiths Leadership Conference (later to be called the East of England Faiths Council) was formed. I have minutes from Faiths Councils from January 2004 to the current day.

The work has been supported financially by the churches in the region, with grants from regional governance bodies until they were dissolved, with funding from central government, and latterly with grants from some Local Authorities.

Achievements of EEFC

Changed thinking about the value of faith contribution to public life through:

- Research into social, economic and spiritual activity eg Faith in the East of England 2005
- Input to key consultations such as Spatial Strategy
- Events exploring the scale and nature of the contribution
- Presentations at academic conferences

Influenced public policy towards recognition of the importance of spiritual life e.g.:

- Putting forward the right arguments to get a faiths seat created on the Regional Assembly
- Securing funding from regional and national government
- Making critical input to national policy
- Working closely in partnership with voluntary sector such as MENTER and COVER
- Regional Inter Faith Week events

Made it easier for faith to work with public sector:

- Research into empowerment, how relationships are conducted, what different groups want from each other
- Seminars helping people to work together on specific issues e.g. planning for new settlements, handling emergencies
- Publications jointly with Local Authorities and others, giving guidance to Councillors, officers and faith groups and optimising relationships and understanding systems
- Run focus groups for Councillors to define their interests in faith engagement
- Fielded a strong team on bodies such the Voluntary Sector Regional Emergency Forum

Helped strong, independent local inter faith groups flourish:

- Created networking opportunities
- Given training on e.g. event management, volunteering, media relations
- Brokered supportive relationships with Local Authorities
- Helped new groups form and become autonomous
- Produced publications on many of the issues groups face
- Helped with practical issues such as finding speakers, making contacts

Acted as an information hub:

- Set up Faiths IT Help Desk with IT specialists iTrust
- Web sites updated near-daily with information on events, funding etc.
- Handling telephone enquiries
- Creating and maintaining FaithsBase, a database of faith groups across the region.

All these achievements form a lasting legacy in our region.