



**Minutes of the East of England Faiths Council meeting held on
Thursday 27 September 2012
St John's Innovation Centre, Cambridge**

Chairs: Jafar Mirza (JM) and Frances Ward (FW)

1 Welcome

Frances Ward welcomed everybody to the meeting.

2 Minute of silence

Jim Platts introduced a moment of silence – ‘we come together holding each other in love knowing that collectively we need guidance but also knowing that if we orient ourselves correctly we will receive it ... silence is when we listen’.

3 Minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 June 2012 were accepted as a correct record. Please note that Minutes of Council meetings are available on the EEFC website.

4 Interreligious Reading Today

FW introduced Professor David Ford (DF), Regius Professor of Divinity at the University of Cambridge, Director of the Cambridge Inter-faith Programme and co-founder of the Society of Scriptural Reasoning (SR). In Scriptural Reasoning (SR) Jews, Christians and Muslims meet to read and discuss passages from their respective sacred texts. Professor Ford's current academic work includes inter-faith engagement within and outside the academy, in settings around the world. In 2008 he was awarded the Sternberg Foundation Gold Medallion for Inter-Faith Relations.

DF circulated a handout: A Muscat Manifesto - Jews, Christians and Muslims Seeking Inter-faith Wisdom.

DF began by mentioning his time in Birmingham and that in spite of the multi faith work going on he felt something was missing. He later became involved with a Jewish Textual Reading group which was re-reading classic texts and engaging critically and constructively with contemporary issues and that this led to engagement with other groups doing the same thing. One description of this is as ‘mutual hospitality around our texts’. It is a practice that allows people to go deeper into their own traditions and texts, deeper into others’ traditions and texts and deeper into the world. Another helpful thing is that it is not primarily about consensus but about improving the quality of our disagreements – but it is important to have an ethic of disagreement. Scriptural Reasoning led to the formation of the Cambridge Inter-faith Programme and is also found in other institutions and in work in schools, hospitals in the West Bank, the 1000 Cities movement, leadership programmes etc. One recent example is involvement with Prison Chaplaincy, which included a Pagan chaplain. Going beyond the Abrahamic scriptures is one of the issues for SR. The Benedictine nuns of Turvey Abbey suggested using SR with lectio divina and this was an extraordinary and remarkable experience. DF also mentioned the bringing together of SR with Comparative Theology, which concentrates on eastern (Buddhist and Hindu) texts, where CT is very much about one person's knowledge of different texts and in SR it is necessary to know one text thoroughly. As a result of a lecture tour in China about ten years ago SR is now found within a Chinese University department. Following a paper given at a symposium hosted by the Archbishop of Canterbury contacts have been made with Comparative Literature in China as well. DF finds

this desire for inter-faith engagement in China very interesting and wondered what today's audience thinks would be of interest to Chinese audiences. DF finished by referring to the Septuagint as his favourite text for SR: this was the first re-interpretation of the Hebrew Scriptures and was later re-interpreted by Christians, so that it both looks back to Hebrew and forward to the Greek New Testament.

5 Questions and discussion

Dina Mandalia asked where the Hindus fit into SR? DF agreed that this is an issue, but thinks that things are possible in smaller groups that are not always possible in larger ones. There is something to be gained from bi- and tri-lateral conversations as well as wider engagement. FW added that to some extent it depends on the context.

Suresh Patel felt that leaders of Hindu communities have to some extent disengaged, and that not many scholars of theology are coming out of universities. In response DF referred to the L'Arche community in Chennai and learning from inter-faith engagement there.

Cynthia Capey thought that if one is looking at Abrahamic traditions one can get to a point of realising that the other's version is holier than one's own and that this could lead to greater understanding and reconciliation. DF felt this is a subjective judgement – there is a real argument about what makes a story holy, but this improves the quality of disagreement – and if one does come to such a conclusion it is not necessarily possible to bring one's own community to the same conclusion.

Reynold Rosenberg commented that the Torah itself is amazingly deep with lots of commentaries and asked whether these are included in the definition of 'scriptural'. DF replied that experiments have been tried with both the bare text and the texts of commentaries, and that it is valuable to come to the table with one's own 'internal library'. *RR* then asked how SR is done. DF said that there is usually a theme, e.g. Moses, or Abraham, and people work with different teaching methods. Most people find it is as much as they can do to practice their own religion reasonably well but it is very important to have people in all communities doing this kind of work (although there is a danger of becoming overly syncretistic) and an occasional engagement with the other is a good thing.

Rafie Mavaddat asked whether, if all religions are conditioned by their culture, if they can go beyond cultural and belief found in all religions by reading scriptures together, could they not come to the same belief? DF thinks it is extremely difficult for anyone to have a sufficient overview – the only way we can really understand the other is to really listen.

Richard Jordan said that the London bombings brought communities together, especially Christians, Muslims and Sikhs, and asked to what extent SR could be co-opted into that process of reconciliation? Does it have to be done for its own sake or could its methodology be used elsewhere? DF felt it should not be done instrumentally but for its own sake but that it can also be used to have practical results. He referred to Jerry White, working in the Bureau of Conflict and Stabilisation Operations in the State Department in Washington, drawing on the wisdom of SR.

FW referred to the deep friendships that can come out of this and thinks DF challenges us to engage with this kind of relationship.

FW then introduced Anne Brown, who gave the Annual Report on behalf of Paul Hills, Chair of the EEFC Board.

6 Report from the AGM on Faiths Council activity in the period October 2011 to September 2012

6.1 Overview

This year the East of England Faiths Council marked its tenth anniversary, and held a celebration attended by more than 130 people.

EEFC was set up to promote inter-faith co-operation, enable faith groups to be represented to public, political and commercial bodies at national, regional and local levels, provide such bodies with a clear point of contact for matters which affect faith groups within the East of England region; and provide regional support to faith and inter-faith groups.

During the last year we have consolidated the changes made in the previous year, necessitated by a reduction to capacity and income. We have continued to focus on fostering good relations between faiths and the public sector, and on supporting the capacity and operation of Local Inter Faith Organisations.

In the financial year ending March 2012, EEFC has received funding of £32,650 from Church Leaders; £24,500 from Local Authorities of Cambridgeshire, Essex and Hertfordshire, Bedford Borough, Luton, Peterborough and Thurrock; £700 from the GMC; it also received a personal donation of £20,620 represented by the Executive Director's voluntary time. The cost of its operation in the year has been £95,343. The shortfall of approx. £16,500 has come from reserves.

EEFC is grateful to all those involved, not only for the monies received but also for their generous commitment of time and experience to EEFC's work. The Board is also grateful to all the EEFC staff, especially Lesley who runs the office and organises these meetings, and Anne and Priscilla who act as our consultants on projects.

6.2 Main areas of 2011/12 work programme

Highlights over the year have included:

- Securing the extension of the national Near Neighbours programme to Luton, resulting in £60,000 being available for local projects over three years
- A full day conference in Stevenage, to foster relationships between faith and public sector
- A half day conference on Faith and Emergency Planning
- Well attended quarterly open meetings
- Acting as key point of contact in the region for national governance and providing informal consultancy and comment to Government Departments
- Ensuring strong faith input to resilience through membership of Regional Resilience Forum
- Providing information, guidance and signposting including consultancy to individual LIFOs on governance (5), media relations (3), events (2), finding Trustees (1), appointing a Development Worker (1)
- A 'Preparation for Inter Faith Week' day conference open to all LIFOs and attended by 25 delegates
- Facilitating new inter faith groups
- Supporting inter faith groups in their engagement with planning and development of new settlements, in particular with securing faith facilities
- A detailed Google Map of all LIFOs in the region, available via EEFC web sites and publicised to all Local Authorities
- A survey of Councillors in the region, leading to a new project on Councillors information and induction
- Continual updating of EEFC web sites to provide an information hub

I must stress that these are just a few of the many areas in which we have been involved.

6.3 Publications

In the course of the year, EEFC has produced the following new publications:

- Advice for faith and inter faith groups on planning an event
- Advice for faith and inter faith groups on working with volunteers
- Calendar of Faith Festivals
- Councillors and faith groups - Faith Groups in your Community
- Google map of LIFOs in the region
- List of Potential Speakers for LIFOs
- Partnerships, People and Places: planning and faith communities
- Survey of Councillors and Faith Groups in the East of England
- Working together: Faith Groups and Government, a brief guide to essential information and resources

All the above publications are or will shortly be available on the FaithNetEast web site as downloadable pdfs. We are very pleased to re-introduce the Calendar of Faith Festivals, which had always been popular. It was ceased due to lack of resource, but has now been produced for EEFC in an improved format by a volunteer, Vimal Patel.

6.4 Funding and sustainability

In early 2012, a business plan for 2012/13 was agreed, focusing on advocacy, consultation, fostering good relations between faith and public sector, and support for local inter faith work. Other bodies have funded specific projects in kind e.g. through hosting and paying for venues. Representatives of minority faiths have put in considerable voluntary time.

EEFC has sufficient unrestricted reserves for it to continue its current level of core activity until March 2013.

NB This report is available in printed form and on the website.

At this point FW handed over to co-chair Jafar Mirza, who introduced himself as having joined the EEFC Board in January 2012. JM has been a Governor (and Chair) of Cambridge Regional College and Anglia Ruskin University; he has also been involved in steering the national body Faiths & Beliefs in Further and Higher Education.

JM thanked DF for a most enlightening talk and said that he found the highlight was the reference to improving the quality of our disagreements. He then invited questions about the Annual Report.

Reynold Rosenberg asked about the future after March 2013; AB replied that funding is very lean and it is unclear what the future holds.

7 Report on Faiths Council projects and matters; dates of next meetings

Jenny Kartupelis (JK), Director of EEFC, welcomed everyone, especially those attending for the first time. She reported as follows:

EEFC's Tenth Anniversary

This was celebrated at a garden party on Monday 25 June in the grounds of the Bishop of Ely's residence, with over 130 guests from all areas of the region as well as further afield. Terry Waite was an excellent guest speaker. Donations from guests raised £450 for two charities: Emmaus UK and the Sycamore Trust. Photos of the event are on the EEFC web site: <http://www.eefaihtscouncil.org.uk/tenthanniversary.php>

Faiths Calendar

JK reported that a new format, extended version of the popular calendar is now also on the web site. She thanked Vimal Patel for all her voluntary work on this, and asked people to advise if they believed any changes were needed.

Survey of Councillors

The guide for councillors to working with faith groups, which it is hoped will form part of their induction, has been published and is on the FaithNetEast web site.

Planning issues

EEFC is aware of a number of large new developments that will come forward over the next five years, and faith groups need to consider how they take action to secure faith facilities in these and, most importantly, to build community in them. In some cases, the local inter faith group will be the first point of contact for LAs and developers. Therefore, EEFC is producing a guidance document for all three parties on how to work together positively: People, Places and Partnerships. This will be published in the next month or so.

Inter Faith Week (IFW) 18 to 27 November

EEFC's preparation day for local inter faith groups in July was well attended. There are publications arising from this on: event planning and management, media relations, and working with volunteers; all are on the web site. There is also an updated and extended list of speakers willing to be approached, and groups should ask the EEFC office for this. Inter faith groups were urged to let EEFC know their plans, for inclusion on the regional and national listings, and also to contact the office if they needed any help.

Events

Another Faith and Emergency Planning seminar co-hosted with Welwyn Hatfield Council and WHIFG will be held on 27 November, and a seminar on Faiths, Fostering and Adoption will be held in Peterborough on 15 January 2013, co-hosted with Peterborough City Council.

JK then introduced two items of interest from the floor:

Jim Platts referred to the NW Cambridge development site, which has now moved into the planning stage; a small group of faith delegates has been meeting for two years trying to put the need for a faith presence into the discussions. Something that emerged from a meeting the day before is that prayer is needed for this, and the possibility of a prayer walk around the site is being explored. DF added that he had written a paper about the possibility of a new college that could be a multi faith and environmental centre. He feels that the question of how to form a community is very important, and perhaps this site could have an imaginative community built in.

Suresh Patel has written a book for schoolchildren to answer questions about Hinduism. The book is to be launched September 2013 and a copy will be given to every Cambridgeshire school. Suresh would be interested in feedback and this can be given to karyakar@msn.com.

Dates of future meetings

All commencing at 5.00pm.

Thursday 13 December 2012

Wednesday 13 March 2013

Thursday 6 June 2013

Thursday 12 September 2013 – also the AGM

Wednesday 11 December 2013

8 Meet your Neighbour

JM introduced this session, which concluded the meeting.

Priscilla Barlow
October 2012

EAST OF ENGLAND FAITHS COUNCIL
St John's Innovation Centre, Cambridge, Thursday 27 September 2012
Attending Delegates

		Organisation	Faith
Jill	Adam	Stevenage Interfaith/Churches Together	
Priscilla	Barlow	Churches Together in Cambs	Christian (RC)
Virginia	Barnes	Cambridgeshire SACRE	Baha'i
Anne	Brown	Methodist District, Beds, Essex, Herts	Christian (Methodist)
David	Capey	SIFRE	Christian (Anglican)
Cynthia	Capey	SIFRE	Christian (Anglican)
Marie-Ange	Comerford-Raillon	BCoF/Faith Woodlands Communities Project	
Stephen	Conway	Diocese of Ely	Christian (Anglican)
Geoffrey	Cook	Commission for Dialogue & Unity	Christian (RC)
Murray	Corke	Cambridge Interbeing Sangha	Buddhist
Bertie	Everard	Welwyn Hatfield Inter Faith Group	Christian (URC)
David	Ford	University of Cambridge, Faculty of Divinity	
Alan	Hargrave	Ely Diocesan Board for Church in Society	Christian (Anglican)
Rachael	Harris	Buddhist Chaplain, Cambridge University	Buddhist
Peter	Hayler	Great St Mary's University Church	Christian (Anglican)
Pam	Hinds	Cambridge Interbeing Sangha	Buddhist
Susan	Iskander	Essex Mind and Spirit (NHS Trust Rep)	Christian
Barbara	Johnson	Beds and Luton Fire and Rescue	Christian
Richard	Jordan	Chelmsford Diocese	Christian (Anglican)
Tahir	Kamran	Cambridge Muslim Council / EEFC	Muslim
Jenny	Kartupelis	EEFC	Christian
Habib	Khokhar	Ahmadiyya Muslim Association	Muslim
Maire	Lawless	Stort Interfaith Group	Christian (RC)
Richard	Leslie	Hertsmere Forum of Faiths	Christian (Anglican)
Anne	Littlefair	EEFC Faith Development Officer	Christian (Methodist)
Dina	Mandalia		Hindu
Nasim and Rafie	Mavaddat	Cambridge Baha'i Community	Baha'i
Ralph	Meloy	Diocese of Chelmsford	Christian (Anglican)
Jafar	Mirza	EEFC/Faiths & Beliefs in Further Education	Muslim
Ivor	Moody	Mid Essex Inter Faith Group	Christian (Anglican)
Richard	Morgan	Church of England	Christian
Suresh	Patel	Independent	Hindu
Dorothy	Peyton Jones	Chaplaincy to People at Work	Christian
Jim	Platts	University of Cambridge	Quaker
Syed	Qamar Abbas	Muslim Shia Asheri Jamaat of Essex	Muslim
Reynold	Rosenberg	Welwyn Hatfield Inter Faith Group	Jewish
Anthea	Salmon	Welwyn Hatfield Inter Faith Group	Christian (Anglican)
Jaspal	Singh	Peterborough Interfaith Council	Sikh
Paula	Spalding	Cambridge Regional College	Christian (Anglican)
Lance	Stone	Emmanuel United Reformed Church	
Elayne	Storeck	Colchester Buddhist Centre	Buddhist
Lesley	Turney	EEFC	
Amin	Ullah Khan	Welwyn Hatfield Inter Faith Group	Muslim
Frances	Ward	Diocese of St Edmundsbury & Ipswich	Christian (Anglican)
David	Wilman	Cambridge Inter-Faith Group	Christian
Patricia	Wyman	Cambridge Regional College	Quaker
Dermot	Yuille	DEFRA	

EAST OF ENGLAND FAITHS COUNCIL

St John's Innovation Centre, Cambridge, Thursday 27 September 2012

Apologies

		Organisation	Faith
Tanvir	Ahmed	HMP Chelmsford	Muslim
Richard	Atkinson	Diocese of St Albans	Christian (Anglican)
Donald	Allister	Diocese of Peterborough	Christian (Anglican)
Gwen	Andrews	EEFC	
Mirza Yousaf	Baig	Pakistan Cultural Association	Muslim
Jonathan	Baker	Diocese of Peterborough	Christian (Anglican)
Simon	Banks		Quaker
Shan	Barclay	Norfolk SACRE	Muslim
Paul	Bayes	Diocese of St Albans	Christian (Anglican)
Hayley	Beckett	Eastern Baptist Association	Christian
Chris	Blomeley	North East Essex Faith Forum (NEEFF)	
John D	Brown	Discovering Sacred Britain	Christian (Anglican)
Vivien	Chapman	Brightlingsea Town Council	
Andrew	Coleby	St Albans Diocese	Christian (Anglican)
Geoffrey	Colmer	Central Baptist Association	Christian (Baptist)
Stephen	Copson	Central Baptist Association	Christian (Baptist)
Nigel	Cooper	ARU Chaplaincy/CambS SACRE	Christian (Anglican)
Stephen	Cottrell	Diocese of Chelmsford	Christian (Anglican)
Barbara	Felson	Luton Council of Faiths	Jewish
Sean	Finlay	Wisbech Interfaith Forum	Christian (RC)
Sarah	Geary	EEFC	
Pritesh	Gohil	Cambridge Ruskin Intl College Ltd	
Sadiq	Haq	Hertfordshire SACRE	Muslim
Maire	Hayes	Grassroots and RC Diocese of Northampton	Christian (RC)
Graham	Hedger	Diocese of St Edmundsbury & Ipswich	Christian (Anglican)
Robert	Hill	Diocese of Peterborough	Christian (Anglican)
Paul	Hills	Eastern Baptist Association	Christian (Baptist)
Maggie	Hindley	URC Thames North Synod	Christian (URC)
John	Holbrook	Diocese of Peterborough	Christian (Anglican)
Cass	Howes	Univ of Bedford / BCoF	Christian (Methodist)
Chris	Jenkin	Cambridge Street Pastors	Christian
David	Jonathan	Grassroots and Luton Council of Faiths	Christian
Prudence	Jones	East of England Faiths Agency	Pagan
Sushila	Karia	Hindu Cultural & Heritage Centre Ltd	Hindu
Brian	Keegan	Peterborough Interfaith Council	Christian (RC)
Zafar	Khan	Luton Council of Faiths	Muslim
Ryad	Khodabocus	Luton Council of Faiths	Muslim
Scilla	Latham	CambS SACRE	
Richard	Lewis	Eastern Baptist Association	Christian (Baptist)
David	Lloyd	Hertfordshire County Council	
Sheila	Martin	Eastern Baptist Association	Christian (Baptist)
Mary Clare	Mason	Faith and Cohesion Network	Christian (RC)
Samantha	Masters	Taoist Tai Chi Society	Taoist
Peter	Meek	East Midlands Synod	Christian (URC)
Jonathan	Meyrick	Diocese of Norwich	Christian (Anglican)

		Organisation	Faith
Kate	Mitchell	Taoist Tai Chi Society	Taoist
Christopher	Morgan	Diocese of Chelmsford	Christian (Anglican)
Peter	Mortimer	Diocese of St Edmundsbury & Ipswich	Christian (Anglican)
Pat	Mungroo	Ethnic Minority Network	
Mary	Myatt	Suffolk SACRE	Christian
Ann	Naylor	Essex County Council	
Sean	Oliver-Dee	Diocese of Peterborough	Christian (Anglican)
Thak	Patel	Think India / EEFC	Hindu
Ramesh	Pattni	Hindu Forum of Britain	Hindu
Neslyn	Pearson	Faith in Queen's Park	Christian
Andrew	Prasad	URC Thames North Synod	Christian (URC)
Sue	Rampal	Cambs & P'boro NHS Foundation Trust	
Shahana	Ravenscroft	Cambridgeshire Constabulary	Muslim
Michael	Roden	North Herts Inter Faith Forum	Christian (Anglican)
Lakhwinder Singh	Sagoo	Cambridge Sikh Society	Sikh
Mohammed	Sarfraz	Peterborough Regional College	Muslim
Jaspal	Singh	Peterborough Interfaith Council	Sikh
Ram	Singh Kalra	Peterborough Anglian Sikh Assoc (PASA)	Sikh
Valerie	Skottowe	Welwyn Hatfield Inter Faith Group	Christian (RC)
Alan	Smith	Diocese of St Albans	Christian (Anglican)
Natu Bhai	Solanki	Hindu Temple/Community Centre, Dunstable	Hindu
Brian	Surtees	Harlow Inter Faith Group	
Graham	Thompson	Methodist Church, EA District	Christian (Methodist)
David	Thomson	Diocese of Ely	Christian (Anglican)
Irene	Walsh	Peterborough City Council	
Iqbal	Warsi	Anglia Ruskin University	Muslim
Ellis	Weinberger	Jewish Community, Cambridge / EEFC	Jewish
Simon	Wilson	Diocese of Norwich	Christian (Anglican)
John	Wraw	Diocese of Chelmsford	Christian (Anglican)
Clive	Young	Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich	Christian (Anglican)