

INTERFAITH NEWS



A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF BRIGHTON AND HOVE INTERFAITH CONTACT GROUP

Winter 2012



Welcome to the first edition of Interfaith News
Inside you will find news of
choirs
camels
compassion
.....and lots more

Dates for your Diary

Karen Armstrong's Charter for Compassion

Harvey Gilman on behalf of Brighton Quaker Meeting along with other faith groups is preparing for an event in June 2012 on 'Spirituality and Compassion'

In preparation for the June event, the IFCG is organising some interfaith reading and discussion groups that will focus on Karen Armstrong's latest book, 'Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life'.

It is envisaged that each group will meet 3 or 4 times to discuss 3 or 4 chapters from the book each time. One group is already arranged to take place at Alison Parker's home in Brighton, at 7.30pm on Thursdays, 2 February, 1 March, 29 March, 26 April. This group is not yet full and could accommodate 1 or 2 more. If you would like to join this group, please contact Alison.

A second group will meet at Charlotte Gravestock's home in West Hove on Tuesdays 31 Jan, 28 Feb, 27 Mar and 24 April, 8 - 9.30pm. If you would like to join this group, please contact Charlotte.

Obviously those taking part will need to get hold of a copy of the book, and read the relevant 3 or 4 chapters before each group meeting. There is a rich source of information on the internet.

Update on Next Meeting

The next planning meeting for the June evening on Compassion is to be 5 January at 7 p.m. at the Quaker Meeting House in Ship Street. It is hoped we can share lots of ideas for the evening on this occasion. Please pass on this invitation with anyone you feel may wish to join in.

For further information contact: Harvey Gillman at zvi@gotadsl.co.uk

Interfaith Choir

Charlotte Gravestock writes:

Juliet and our church premises, it is the hall this time, are free for choir rehearsals on 6 - 7.30pm on Sunday 19 February and Sunday 4 March.

Then we could have a 3rd rehearsal just before the AGM meeting on 11th. Please inform your friends and let's hope we can have an even larger choir than last time and include some men. This time we will have to ask for a small donation from participants (say £2 - £4 per session) to help to cover Juliet's professional costs.

Let me know if you intend to join the choir this time. Our church is Hove Methodist Church, Portland Road, Hove, near the junction with Sackville Road, on the 49 and 2 bus route.

The Spirit of Compassion

“All faiths insist that compassion is the test of true spirituality and that it brings us into relation with the transcendence we call God, Brahman, Nirvana or Dao. Each has formulated its own version of what is sometimes called the Golden Rule: ‘Do not treat others as you would not like them to treat you’...Further, they insist that you cannot confine your benevolence to your own group: you must have concern for everybody – enemies!...it is hard to think of a time when the compassionate voice of religion has been so sorely needed.

Our world is dangerously polarised..... if our religious and ethical traditions fail to address this challenge, they will fail the test of our time.”

Karen Armstrong: Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life

Inspired by Karen Armstrong’s thinking and her Charter for Compassion, a group of concerned members of local religious groups concerned with the relationship between spirituality and compassion invite you to an evening of open exploration of these themes. We have no particular religious agenda.

We simply want to challenge the city into a deeper awareness of the issues involved.

Everyone is welcome

We encourage people if possible to read Karen Armstrong’s book. We also hope to include videos from her Charter of Compassion website

For further information contact:
Harvey Gillman at zvi@gotadsl.co.uk



7.30pm Saturday, June 9

Friends Meeting House Ship Street, Brighton

this poster is available as a pdf download from tonytrees@btinternet.com

From Camel Market to a Jewel in the Desert

The Development of the Ben Gurion University of the Negev



Ben Gurion University campus

Professor Harold Baum of the Board of Governors of the University addressed a multi faith gathering in the AJEX HALL of the Brighton & Hove Reform Synagogue, presented by the Brighton & Hove Friends of Ben Gurion University

Professor Harold Baum, Professor Emeritus of Biochemistry at Ben Gurion University, Israel spoke on how the modern Ben Gurion University of the Negev in Israel interacts with its Bedouin and Arab neighbours, changes communities, and has assisted the local communities in learning to live side-by-side in harmony.



There are 250 female Bedouin students at the university

Rabbi Charles Wallach said "In the few decades of its existence BGU has become perhaps Israel's foremost university. Cited in Beersheba, it has, amongst its many achievements, been part of the "greening of the desert". From a wider perspective its continuous work with the local Bedouin not to mention its technological endeavors makes it a beacon of innovation and cohesion"



Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity involves Christian communities across the world and from almost every denomination over the eight days of 18-25 January,

The materials used in the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity are prepared each year jointly by the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Church's Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.

The Week lasts for 8 days (which is why it was originally called an *Octave of Prayer*), and covers the period from the feast of St Peter to the feast of St Paul.

The theme for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2012 comes to us from the churches in Poland, who have reflected upon their own experience as a nation, and in particular how, as a nation, they have been changed and transformed by the many upheavals of their history, and sustained by their faith.

more information from: Churches Together in Britain and Ireland www.ctbi.org.uk/

Annual General Meeting 2012

and

Ancient Wisdom for a Modern World

Our 2012 Annual General Meeting will be held on Sunday 11 March, 2.30pm at The Friends' Meeting House, Ship Street, Brighton.

We have a lively, guest Hindu speaker, Mr Jay Lakhani, whose talk is entitled Ancient Wisdom for a Modern World Jay has published and edited a number of books on Hinduism and is a regular speaker on Hinduism in the media, including BBC TV and Radio, as well as being involved in the education of young people through the Hindu Council UK, the Hindu Academy and the Religious Education Council of England and Wales.

Although our AGMs necessarily involve a certain amount of IFCG 'business', we aim to deal with this as quickly as possible, so that the afternoon will be primarily a spiritual opportunity. We hope that our newly formed Interfaith Choir will be contributing to the atmosphere of the occasion.

All are most welcome to attend this meeting, whether in formal membership of the IFCG or not, so do come and bring your friends. Refreshments will be served.

Holocaust Memorial Day January 2012

Brighton & Hove Reform Synagogue, Palmeira Avenue, Hove
27 and 28 January.

The Jewish community in general throughout the world observes Yom HaShoah – the Day of Remembrance of the Holocaust on the eve of 18 going into the day of 19th April. However, in recognition of Holocaust Memorial Day our Sabbath services will include special readings dedicated to the Holocaust.

Tel: (01273) 735343 for more information

Brighton and Hove Progressive Synagogue
Friday, 27 January, 8pm.

The Synagogue will be marking National Holocaust Memorial Day during the Erev Shabbat (Sabbath Eve) service. The service will be led by Rabbi Elizabeth Tikvah Sarah. All are welcome.

Please note: the service will not be held at the synagogue.

Please contact: (01273) 737223 (Mon to Fri 9am – 1pm) for more information

Young People's Holocaust Memorial Events at Jubilee Library, Brighton
Sunday, 29 January, 1pm

'Paper Clips' an award winning documentary film about students in the USA who began a school project to create a monument for the Holocaust victims in Nazi Germany, which then evolved into one gaining worldwide attention.

Free, suitable for children accompanied by an adult.

see hmd.org.uk for more information on local and national events for 2012

Interfaith Service for National Interfaith Week

It was 'full house' at The Friends' Meeting House in Ship Street, Brighton, on 20th November 2011, when the Brighton & Hove Interfaith Contact Group organised an Interfaith Service to celebrate National Interfaith Week 2011. The service was attended by the Vice Lord Lieutenant, Mrs Sara Stonor, the Mayor, Cllr. Anne Meadows and representatives of at least 15 different local faith communities. Dr. Caroline Lucas MP also gave reading.

An interfaith choir was formed for the occasion, which has generated such enthusiasm that we hope it will continue as an interfaith activity in its own right.

The service included musical offerings covering a range of sacred traditions and cultures, including an interfaith choir which had been specially formed for the event.

The theme of 'The Gift of Giving' was chosen in reference and respect to the current problems faced by many people today, within local communities and beyond.

Comments received following the service include:

'I felt that there was a great spirit of fellowship, goodwill and shared values. The candles, the choir and the thought and care that went into the preparation were the active ingredient that facilitated the release of all that goodwill.'

'Magical things happen when we all move together.'

'Thank you for a most beautiful service and celebration of the Interfaith Day...loved it! The choir and the piano were most healing.'

'I really enjoyed the afternoon and it was great to be part of it.'

'It was a wonderful service. To encourage over fifteen different worshipping communities to join in a service of prayer and contemplation is remarkable and a tribute to the hard work and encouragement of your group. Thank you so much for an inspiring afternoon.'

Watch this space for news of an Interfaith Service in November 2012.





2012 Interfaith Service

left to right

Dr. Caroline Lucas MP

Mokshini welcomes all on behalf of Brighton & Hove Interfaith Contact Group

Cllr. Anne Meadows. Mayor of Brighton & Hove,

photographs by Fara Mohabati
pictured right lighting a candle of dedication

below:

Some of the 'post its' left on our message board
at the service



What gift does the
world need NOW
.....the gift of PEACE!

There is so much more
that unites us
than divides us

MAY THE WORLD
SHARE THE
WORLD'S GIFTS

UNITY WITHIN
DIVERSITY

BEAUTIFUL
JOYOUS
FULFILLING



Thank you for the
time, talents and
open-heartedness
given here this
afternoon

Creating the Tent

A New Approach to Interfaith Encounter

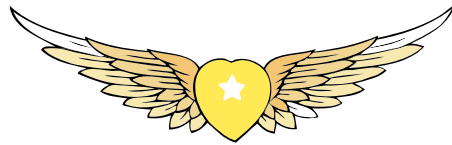


by Rabbi Elizabeth Tikvah Sarah

I have been involved in interfaith encounter since I was a rabbinic student at the Leo Baeck College. Founded in 1956 in London by refugee rabbis from Germany, who wanted to recreate the centre of progressive Jewish learning in Berlin, closed down by the Nazis, from the outset, Leo Baeck College was concerned to nurture a new generation of rabbis for a new Europe. And so, in addition to providing academic and practical training, the five year postgraduate rabbinic programme includes courses led by Christian and Muslim teachers and an eight day Jewish Christian Muslim conference that takes place in Germany each year.

Eight days is a long time for people from different religious traditions to be together. In addition, to study and discussion, the conference culminates in a three-day period in which participants share their special days: the Muslim Friday prayer; Shabbat, the Jewish Sabbath; and Sunday, the weekly holy day for Christians. In addition to gathering for these precious spiritual moments, everyone also shares the special meals that accompany them – and in the case of the Muslim tradition, the Sufi devotional practice, known as *Zikhr* – ‘Remembrance’ – as well.

When I witnessed my first *Zikhr*, I was struck by how unique and special it was, and also by the name: *Zikhr*, Remembrance. Remembrance is a core value in Jewish life and teaching: *Zakhor!* Remember! The Arabic and Hebrew words are connected. Each Shabbat, Jews recall that the Sabbath is a ‘memorial’, both, ‘of the work of Creation’, and ‘of the Exodus from Egypt’ – that is, each Sabbath is a reminder of what it means to be a human being and what it means to be a Jew.



In my experience, interfaith encounter is most fruitful when it does just that: it connects people together in our common humanity, and allows space for the expression of what is unique about each religious tradition. When I encounter people of other faiths and cultures, I find that I learn most from the experience when I can recognise and acknowledge, both, what unites us and the differences between us.

In the spirit of this approach to interfaith encounter, on Human Rights Day, 10th December 2011, the Friends' Meeting House in Brighton hosted a special spiritual gathering that I organised together with Zohra Evlyyn Sharp, from the Sufi tradition. An inclusive, spiritual gathering open to all, with contributions from Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist and Quaker perspectives, we decided to call the event, Creating the Tent. What is a tent? Any tent that is going to accommodate a group of people, takes cooperative human effort to set up. It is also, by definition, temporary and mobile – and expandable. Engaging in interfaith encounter is about working together and investing ourselves in sharing and learning from one another. It is also about recognising what we create together when we meet together cannot be fixed and held too tightly, and ensuring we always remain open and welcoming to others.

In the *Torah*, in the Book of Exodus, the detailed account of the building of the Tabernacle in the wilderness by the newly liberated slaves, following the Exodus from Egypt, begins with a call to each person, 'whose heart is willing', to bring an 'offering' for the construction of the Tabernacle – the 'sacred' tent (Exodus 25:1-7). Each offering is unique and precious, and while each one is as different as the person who brings it, they are all of equal value. Creating the Tent is an approach to interfaith encounter that celebrates and honours all the diverse gifts which we bring when we meet and share and engage with one another.

*Rabbi Elizabeth Tikvah Sarah is Rabbi at the Brighton and Hove
Progressive Synagogue, Lansdowne Road, Hove*

January

5th Birthday of Guru Gobind Sing (Sikh)

Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708) was the tenth and last of the Sikh Gurus. He instituted the Five Ks and established the Order of the Khalsa.

6th Epiphany (Christian)

Celebrates the visit of the wise men (the magi) to the infant Jesus. In the East, where it originated, the Epiphany celebrates the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist in the River Jordan. (Catholics and Episcopalians celebrate this separately: see Baptism of the Lord) Also known as Dia de los Reyes (Three Kings Day).

7th Christmas Day-Orthodox (Christian)

Most Orthodox churches use the Julian rather than the Gregorian version of the Western calendar. As a result, they celebrate Christmas 13 days later than other Christian churches.

14th Makar Sankranti (Hindu)

One of the most important festivals of the Hindu calendar and celebrates the sun's journey into the northern hemisphere, a period which is considered to be highly auspicious.

There is a wide variation in the celebration of Makar Sankranti throughout India, in particular the name.

February

2nd Imbolc (Pagan)

Also called Oimelc and Candlemas, Imbolc comes from an Irish word that was originally thought to mean 'in the belly' although many people translate it as 'ewe's milk' (oi-melc). It celebrates the awakening of the land and the growing power of the Sun.

9th Milad un Nabi (12 Rabi-ul-Awwal) - (Islam)

Birthday of the Prophet Muhammad. Sunni Muslims celebrate this 5 days earlier. Some Muslims do not approve of celebrating the birthday, and regard doing so as a religious innovation.

Those Muslims who celebrate this festival do so joyfully.

It may seem strange to non-Muslims, but many Muslims do not believe in celebrating birthdays or death anniversaries because there is no historical evidence that the Prophet Muhammad ever did this.

15th Parinirvana (Buddhist)

This is a Mahayana Buddhist festival that marks the death of the Buddha. It is also known as Nirvana Day. Buddhists celebrate the death of the Buddha, because they believe that having attained Enlightenment he achieved freedom from physical existence and its sufferings.

Nirvana Day is also known as Parinirvana and is celebrated by some Buddhists on February 8th. Nirvana Day is the celebration of Buddha's death when he reached total Nirvana, at the age of 80.

21st Shrove Tuesday (Christian)

Also called Pancake Day and Mardi Gras. The British name of "Pancake Day" comes from the tradition of making pancakes to use up all the food that could not be eaten during Lent.

March

2nd The Nineteen Day Fast (Bahá'í)

Bahá'u'lláh designated a 19-day period of fasting each year immediately before the Bahá'í New Year. The fasting is seen as a period of spiritual preparation and regeneration for the new year ahead. In the Western calendar, this occurs between 2nd and 21st March (the Bahá'í month of Ala meaning 'loftiness').

Ends 20 March. During this period Baha'is go without food or drink from sunrise to sunset.

8th Purim (Jewish)

Purim commemorates the time when the Jewish people living in Persia were saved from extermination by the courage of a young Jewish woman called Esther. It is one of the most entertaining Jewish holidays.

In some places Purim is celebrated one day later. In this case it is called Shushan Purim.

21st Jamshedi Noruz (Fasli) - (Zoroastrian)

Zoroastrian New Year's Day in the Fasli calendar. Noruz (also known as Jamshedi or Jamshidi Noruz) is the seventh obligatory feast and it is dedicated to fire. It is the Zoroastrian New Year celebration, and occurs on the spring equinox.

Information from BBC Religion Interfaith Calendar at www.bbc.co.uk/religion

The Brighton & Hove Inter-Faith Contact Group (IFCG) exists as a resource for contact and dialogue between the many faith communities & traditions in the Brighton & Hove area. It is our aim to help build and maintain good relations, and greater understanding between us.

IFCG Chair - Mokshini Grant
chair@interfaithcontactgroup.com

IFCG Secretary - Charlotte Gravestock
admin@interfaithcontactgroup.com

Please contact the IFCG Secretary with any requests, offers or ideas for additional inter-faith related meetings.

This Newsletter is edited by Tony Tree and all contributions are welcome..

.....if you have attended anything of an interfaith nature, spiritual thoughts or reflections or you can publicise your own faith community's events if you wish.

Next Newsletter is April 2012 and all contributions before 20 March to:
tonytree@btinternet.com

Have you Considered Membership?

Individual IFCG Membership is currently £10 per year from AGM 2011 to AGM 2012
Members must reside, work and/or attend a faith/tradition in the Brighton & Hove area;

and must agree with the Constitution of the IFCG

Please send your cheque payable to IFCG together with your name, address, phone number, email address and the name & address of your faith/tradition to:

B & H Interfaith Contact Group
c/o Community Base
113 Queens Road
Brighton
BN1 3XG

www.ifcg.co.uk

