

supporting faith in action in the south west

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What's in a Word?

The adjective Islamic is currently being used to preface some of the most abhorrent "isms" known to humanity, such as facism and terrorism. This is unfair and unjust. It has the effect of labelling all Muslims and the noble religion of Islam by the actions of the vanishingly tiny minority engaged in targeting the innocents. In our multi-cultural society we have rightly learned to be careful in the use of words. It is time we applied the same principles when we talk about Islam and Muslims. Removing the word "Islamic" when we describe these heinous acts will help create community cohesion. It will make Muslims feel more strongly a part of the community that should be protected from such acts of murder. The holy Qur'an states: [2:190] 'You may fight in the cause of GOD against those who attack you, but do not aggress.

GOD does not love aggressors.'

The above clearly shows that a violent response is only allowed in Islam in self defence. Moreover in another verse, the Qur'an goes further in showing us the virtue of non-violent reaction under extreme provocation.

[5:28] 'If you extend your hand to kill me, I will not extend my hand to kill you. For I revere GOD, Lord of the universe.'

[5:29] 'I want you not me, to bear my sin and your sin, then you end up with the dwellers of Hell. Such is the recompense for transgressors.'

Blowing up people in Britain is not Islamic; please do not insult all Muslims by labelling it so.

Article supplied by Dr Adnan Al-Daini, Chairman of Devon Racial Equality Council.

Of All Brits, Muslims are the Most Loyal

By Karen Buck, MP; Excerpt from <http://www.regen.net/news/Email/t/653191/Brits-Muslims-loyal/89527867D55698B857CD13900F2B8866/>

Parliament has passed half a dozen major pieces of legislation on asylum and immigration policy in the past decade. The media, and especially the tabloid press, seem to have spoken about little else for years (although generating rather more heat than light on the subject). After the terrible events of 9/11, and again in the wake of the London bombings, asylum, immigration, crime and terrorism all seem to be spoken of in the same breath... [T]he subtext seems to be that Britain's Muslims are, or contain, the "enemy within".

How refreshing to hear last week of a Gallup survey into attitudes among Muslims in Greater London, which goes a long way towards confounding the doom-mongers and those given to glib stereotyping. Rather than demonstrating separateness and alienation, it found that Muslims' attitude towards Britain and citizenship offers an aspirational example to the wider population. It shows that almost twice as many Muslims taking part in the survey have confidence in the Government, the judiciary, elections and the police than the general public. Participants strongly identify with Britain, and equally strongly

accept that, in order to integrate, members of new communities must speak English, get an education and develop skills for work. Loyalty to this country was stronger than among the population as whole, as was tolerance of other faiths, with 82% of Muslims polled supporting the idea of respect for other religions, as against 54% of non-Muslims.

Possibly, the exceptional diversity of the city contributed to more relaxed attitudes. Yet, it does not invalidate the positive, hopeful message underlying the survey. Of course, the fact there may be an exceptionally radicalised, hostile minority remains true. We must also avoid underestimating the continuing impact of discrimination and disadvantage, which impacts disproportionately upon some Muslim communities. But Gallup's findings should give heart to those remaining convinced that a multi-racial, multi-faith society based on respect, mutual tolerance and active citizenship is possible.



Doing Theology in a Public Forum

Bishop Michael became Bishop of Exeter in 2000, just as the Local Government Act gave County Councils the responsibility to develop community strategies and set up partnership working. Bishop Michael was invited, as an independent and enthusiastic newcomer, to convene a group to develop a community plan relevant to the people of Devon. Over



Bishop Michael Langrish

the next two years he led a process, with representatives of public and community sectors including health, environment, business, local and regional bodies, voluntary agencies, the police and other major stakeholders, to form the Devon Strategic Partnership (DSP) with a clear vision and strategic goals. In 2002 he became elected chair for another five years.

Bishop Michael has always seen ministry as a two-way process – ministering **for** the church and on behalf **of** the church in the wider community, which includes supporting Christians whose working life is in the wider world. He cannot separate himself and his faith and always chaired the DSP as ‘the Bishop’. He felt this encouraged others of faith in Devon to engage in the wider community too. The position also allowed him to raise issues about the values underpinning the partnership’s discussions and actions, to ask what assumptions were made about what it means to be human and thus to engage those of different faiths, and none, in an exploration of the deeper values that motivate us and shape our common life.

A challenging period for the DSP came during 2005-6 when the raft of new instructions, realigning funding processes, brought new possibilities but also the danger of the Partnership becoming sidelined into **process** rather than **substance** and the delivery of what really makes a difference.

Bishop Michael had a prominent role in warning US bishops against the consecration of another gay bishop or authorisation of same-sex relations, without regard to the rest of the Anglican Communion. When the Lesbian Bisexual Gay and Transgender (LBGT) sector asked how he could chair fairly with these views, his response was that all bring values and presuppositions to the discussion table; it is a matter of how we then handle difference. He is deeply committed to comprehensiveness, but one where all can be heard and engaged with in an honest way, with equality of value for all at the partnership table, rather than an imposed equality of view as the price for belonging.

Bishop Michael has felt privileged to serve on the DSP. It has given him an entrée into Devon life that he would not have had otherwise. He has met committed people and enjoyed doing theology in a public forum. He advises his successor; “Value

your independence and show it, always listen carefully, showing you can reflect on what you have heard, as this builds up trust. Keep your eye on what really makes a difference to the people of Devon, and have the courage to challenge anything that works against genuinely broad participation, particularly of those whose voice is more difficult to hear.”

*Bishop Michael reflected on his years on the DSP in an interview with Clare Mortimore of **faithnetsouthwest**.*

People on the Move

Many people are unaware of the difficulties asylum seekers and migrant workers face. Churches in the south west need to think more regionally on these issues and organisations like Refugee Action can provide information and resources for those wanting to do more. These were some of the messages at the **SW Churches Regional Forum conference, 27th June 2007**.

Nigel Costley, SW TUC said that the number of asylum seekers in the region is comparatively small and migrant workers fill a skills shortage. John Price, Regional Project Manager (Asylum Seekers) SW Regional Assembly said an unfair presumption of much of current policy is that asylum seekers are not genuine.

Other issues • Even sympathetic solicitors are unwilling to help as remuneration is insufficient to represent people properly • Interpreters are difficult to find • Cutbacks in English as a second language (ESOL) classes have a detrimental effect and give mixed messages about the need for ‘integration’ • The benefit system has many difficulties for refugees.

Claire Stern, Refugee Action said there are Refugee Awareness projects giving information about new communities and on benefits advice. Churches can contact them to support parliamentary amendments going through the House of Commons, and give talks and highlight problems facing refugees/asylum seekers. Refugee Action can support people with materials to do this. They also have lists of trained interpreters and other information on language support.

See www.fairfaithnetsouthwest.org.uk or contact: Claire Stern, Refugee Action, 0117 941 5973, ClaireS@refugee-action.org.uk.

Voice of the Over 50s

In parts of Devon over half the population is over 50. Devon County Council, with the District, Town and Parish Councils and NHS Trusts is working to involve people over 50 as partners in developing a Senior Council for Devon. They aim to develop a 3 year action plan to improve services, and to realize the potential of people over 50 as a creative and active resource.

Peter Fletcher Associates ask existing community groups providing services for people over 50 to publicize the Senior Council’s aim to establish groups in the 28 coastal and market town areas and in Exeter. These will join to become an inclusive Senior Council for Devon, representing people over 50 from the county of all faiths and ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

Peter Fletcher Associates: 0844 800 9283, info@peterfletcherassociates.co.uk



Reacting to Need, Being Involved

Bridport Churches Together (BCT) is a very active group. They work with community projects and seek to make a difference.

BCT supported the appointment in 2006 of Gabi Nonneman as a Youth Worker with local schools. Gabi says 'it's definitely a long-term investment but already I can see how I am able to help and influence in a positive way'. She maintains a presence at Colfax School and helps out with special events like Sports Day and Activity Week, as well as getting involved in summer camps. BCT sponsors 'It's Your Move', a booklet Gabi distributes during her visits to local primary schools which are well received by pupils facing the change to secondary schools.

In May 2007 BCT held a meeting to discuss ways to respond to climate change by establishing Eco-congregations. They pooled ideas to create a list of good practice including where possible • putting in secondary double glazing • installing thermostats on all radiators • changing to energy efficient water heating • using energy efficient light bulbs • insulation of lofts • employing solar panels • becoming Fair Trade churches, using only fairly traded bevarages and organic and local fresh produce (e.g. milk) • using eco-friendly cleaning materials • using china rather than paper cups and dishes • recycling church waste • holding weekly or monthly Traidcraft stalls • maintaining the church grounds as Living Churchyards • holding Rogation Sunday services celebrating the land which sustains us.

BCT is currently investigating the possibility of joining with Bridport Christian Fellowship and the Society of Friends to establish a Food Bank or Storehouse Ministry in response to reports that there are families in need in Bridport, which was listed as one of the most deprived areas in West Dorset.

Details supplied by Jo O'Farrell, contact 01308 427851 or jo@jovian.co.uk

National Award for an 'Unsung Hero'

Chaz Singh from Plymouth has been named England's first 'Modern-Day St George'. The award was made at the inaugural National St George's Day Banquet in April at Banqueting House, Westminster, in front of an audience that included the former Prime Minister, John Major and the Secretary of State for Culture, Media & Sport.



Chaz Singh, Modern Day St George 2007

Chaz will hold the title until St George's Day 2008. He was nominated by Mr P J Pentreath, Royal British Legion (RBL) Devon County Field Officer, for his charitable deeds for the RBL, as sole representative of the Commonwealth Forces in Plymouth, and for overcoming racial prejudice. He said, 'Chaz Singh is a fiercely proud, English-born Sikh. His faith is as important to him as his very Englishness, and he conducts himself proudly in pursuit of both values.' Chaz says, 'after receiving the award, going back to my table people got up to applaud me. It was so great that I will never forget that moment.'

The competition, run by Enjoy England, Celebrate St George's Day, is a search for an ordinary person who should be commended for their extraordinary deeds, an unsung hero, irrespective of age or nationality. Bruno Peek, National Organiser and Chairman, said: 'I am delighted that Chaz has won this competition. It shows that England is full of a lot of good people from various religions and backgrounds... [Chaz Singh] is not only a credit to the Sikh community, but a credit to all the communities of England.'

Cornwall County Faiths Forum

has hosted presentations by Anthony Williams of the Pagan Federation and members of the Baha'i Community on their central beliefs, practices and history. Small group discussions on an Interfaith Centre for Cornwall were held between sessions. A real sense of coming together is developing through these meetings.

They have received much support from the County Equalities Team. At the 2007 Royal Cornwall Show, were included in a display by the county's head of Religious Education. All are welcome to the Open Meeting of the forum on Thursday 11th October at 7pm.

Contact Andrew Yates, Social Responsibility Officer.
sro@truro.anglican.org or tel. 01872 274351.



Best in Show?

Churches Together in Cornwall have been

running a rest and reflection tent at the Royal Cornwall Show for several years. It provides a peaceful place for refreshments, play areas for children, an extensive Fair Trade stall and quiet times for prayer. The tent was used by several hundred people at the show in June this year.



A Very Exceptional Teacher

Ian Jamison from Kingsbridge Community College in Devon has won the Guardian Award for Teacher of the Year in a Secondary School in South West of England.

Anyone who can make pupils feel what the judges called "tangible excitement" as they enter his lessons has to be an exceptional teacher. When the subject is religious education – not normally a student favourite – you know this has to be very exceptional teacher indeed.

Ian brought into school representatives from faiths as far apart as Pagans and the Church Army, he took a group of sixth formers to India to study Buddhism, Hinduism and Sikhism, and led an expedition up a local moorland to enhance study of the concept of pilgrimage. He fundamentally remodelled the curriculum, achieving good results in half the usual time. He has also written a well-regarded A level textbook.



Ian Jamison accepts his 'Plato'

He employs unusual approaches and brings a personal perspective to what he teaches, but what pupils respond to are his challenging lessons, his respect for them as individuals, and the way he makes them all feel they can achieve.

He is sensitive in his approaches to issues. Students point out that he did not mark a recent Year Nine project on the Holocaust, feeling it was inappropriate to give marks for such a subject. Yet he is also tough. His classroom is crammed with posters, artefacts and challenging questions, and pupils have to pay attention. 'You would never not hand work in,' says one student. 'He makes you want to do it for you.'

The Teaching Awards judges believe his innovative and thoughtful approaches to teaching could have an influence far beyond his immediate school. 'He could be fundamental in inspiring, challenging and motivating a whole range of teachers and learners in the future.'

For the full text of the Teaching Awards Judges' comments visit <http://www.teachingawards.com/winners/regions>

Engaging Young People

I was a youth worker in many guises before my appointment as Youth Adviser for Salisbury Diocese, including work with churches, youth centres with local authorities, young people at risk, detached and street work. Over the years my passion for the ministry / career has grown. It is a very privileged position, as unlike teachers, police, social workers and even parents, whose presence in the lives of young people is not a decision in their control, a youth worker enters the life of a child or young person through their free choice. So when we work with the children and young people in our churches we should always remember that they have chosen to be there.

A large part of my role is helping churches come to terms with changes in how young people get involved. Churches shouldn't feel guilty if young people don't appear at 10.30 on a Sunday. There is a shift from the Sunday morning babysitting facility to seeking a real expression of church in the thinking, attitudes and morals now surrounding the young. They live with issues like the disappearing family unit, global war and terrorism. The world is at their finger tips through music, TV and PCs defining their cultures and sub groups. So where do we even begin???

- Young people do not need the loud, stereotypical, flashy hi-tech gadgetry and hip, trendy hoody-wearing youth workers.
- They are relational beings just like us and it is relationships that will hold them to faith and church, nothing else.
- Young people need to belong, to feel that they have a place.
- The young want challenges, to learn, grow and be involved.

God can move through young people's social networks and passions. They are not bound by employment, responsibilities, they are not tired at the end of a day and don't have small social networks. The point is, if God wanted to ignite a revival, going through young people would be faster and much more penetrating.

How do we engage? Very simply: relationship, relationship, relationship. With the biggest youth budget and the flashiest building, but with no relationship you will achieve nothing, as I said, young people chose you and they don't have to.

Give young people their own context for worship and church expression and teach and train them through the relationship on how to do it themselves. This will ensure sustainability. There is potential to solve volunteer issues in the long term, as young people increase in competence. Go back to basics, using the model of Old Testament mentors such as Samuel, Elijah and Eli, and the young troublesome leaders like David, Solomon, Elisha. Be prepared for mess and mistakes but use the relationship to guide and teach.

By Claire Estell, Salisbury Diocese Youth Adviser, claire.estell@salisbury.anglican.org

<p>FILMS OF FAITH by YOUNG FILM MAKERS</p> <p>£1000 prize for films representing what makes people passionate about their religion</p> <p>Top entries will feature at the INSIGHT FESTIVAL in Manchester, November 2007</p> <p>www.insightfestival.co.uk</p>	<p>CHILD'S EYE MEDIA</p> <p>8 award winning films following young British children during the festivals of some of the main religions in the UK</p> <p>www.childseyemedia.com</p> <p>Tel. 0161 374 5509</p>
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Please Miss!

What does it mean to be human?

The Bahá'ís of Swindon have developed Swindon Young People's Empowerment Programme (SYEP), an innovative project for children intended to improve their behaviour and achievement at school. It is endorsed by Dr Stephen Bigger, an external evaluator based at Worcester University.

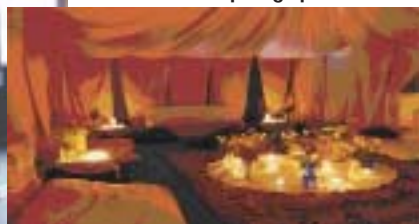
SYEP was set up 6 years ago to motivate disaffected youngsters to engage in positive behaviour and learning. Its success has led Cllr. Roderick Bluh, Leader of Swindon Borough Council to call for SYEP to be introduced across Swindon. He says, 'We cannot ignore the human spirit in dealing with the challenges and problems in our communities today.'

Viv Bartlett, a retired teacher and one of the developers of SYEP: 'The UK is bottom of the league for the wellbeing of children according to UNICEF - we hope what we've discovered in Swindon might move us higher up the list... [We asked] what do young people understand about what it means to be human? We know how to build a healthy body, through a balanced diet and exercise. A healthy mind is developed through education and training. But how do you get a healthy spirit? Once you have a healthy spirit, you have a complete, well-balanced and happy human being and a person that can fulfil his or her full potential... [SYEP is] a gym for the human spirit.'

Fidelma Meehan, Bahá'í Projects Manager in Swindon: 'Our experience shows that the human spirit needs to be nurtured at an early age... Otherwise dispirited young people give up on life, and become disaffected.'



Before - an uninspiring space



After - A Tranquility Zone

SYEP comprises zones of Tranquillity and Discovery. Tranquillity Zone uses stories, music and visualisation, helping children find their self-worth. In a calm, relaxed room, young people contemplate their...potential and capacity to succeed. Discovery Zone encourages them to verbalise thoughts and feelings, participate in inspiring and stimulating activities to discover their higher nature, and to consider how to be of use in the world.

SYEP has been introduced in 7 local schools benefiting over 500 pupils. Dr Bigger spoke on SYEP at a recent national conference, 'Pupils who have been through the project express strong views that it has been personally effective to them and even turned them round from failure to success... giving them a sense of direction, agency and aspiration.'

Provided by Fidelma Meehan, 01793-465715, projects@swindon-bahais.org

A Big Green Day



A member of Somerset Wildlife Trust talks to children in the grounds of the Abbey

Do you think the weather has been acting 'weird' this year? The 115 children visiting Glastonbury Abbey recently definitely thought so. Local schools sent classes to investigate climate change and what scientists think is happening as part of the countrywide Big Green Day scheme,



Big Wheel Theatre Co. perform in the Abbot's Kitchen

which involves having fun while learning.

The Big Wheel Theatre Company were on hand in the Abbot's Kitchen to give an engaging and informative show linking such things as the contents of a child's lunchbox to the shrinking of the polar icecaps and the possibilities of flooding which this brings. Knowing that this might affect the Somerset Levels brought the message right home to the county where the children live.

Somerset Wildlife Trust made good use of the extensive orchards within the Abbey walls to show how wildlife will be affected by possible changes in the weather. Badgers are one example of an indigenous animal that will have to adapt or die. The children played a game where they investigated how animals live now, and then changed the rules to see how animals like badgers would live in changed climate conditions.

A team from Carymoor Environment Centre helped children to make solar powered boats from recycled materials, but the damp and cloudy weather was a reminder to all that many different technologies will be necessary to help us save energy and conserve what we already have.

Provided by Susan Strong, Education Officer, Glastonbury Abbey.

Changing Lives for Good

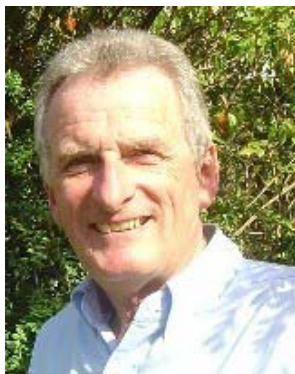
When a group of teenage girls in a Somerset village were suspected of minor acts of vandalism, the Parish Priest knew what to do. She invited them in, giving them an opportunity to become involved in volunteering and change their reputation

This is part of *Changing Lives, Changing Churches for Changing Communities*, developed by the Diocese of Bath and Wells.

The strategy links parishes formally and informally to share new forms of mission and engagement with communities. A DVD outlining the approach is available, supported by a wide range of courses.

To find out more visit www.bathandwells.org.uk

Networks of Support



Ian Cockram

The Peninsular Initiative is a Community Chaplaincy project to improve and develop successful resettlement of those being released from prison and so reduce offending behaviour. Through developing networks with volunteer mentors, faith communities and professionals, the project will serve Exeter, Channings Wood and Dartmoor prisons and communities in Cornwall, Devon and West Somerset. Community Chaplaincy works with people of all faiths and none.

Ian Cockram is Liaison Officer for the Peninsular Initiative. He has over 30 years experience in law, but it was his Christian faith that initially motivated him to volunteer as a Chaplaincy Assistant. Knowing that many prisoners never came to the chapel, and rarely if ever asked to see a chaplain, he reduced his working week to four days so that he could spend a day a week in HMP Dartmoor.

'For many years I just walked around the workshops and the wings and spent time with those who wanted to chat generally or needed a listening ear concerning a specific problem or worry.' Ian kept in touch with some people on their release and came to understand the challenges they face afterwards.

Every month around 150 people return to our communities in the South West from prisons where all meals are provided, no budgeting skills needed and life is routine with few decisions to make. As they leave, many are anxious, others keen and optimistic, everyone vulnerable. Within two years, nearly 70% will be back before the courts. But this need not be the case, Community Chaplaincy projects like the Peninsula Initiative have resulted in reductions in reoffending to 22% and 11% among clients in Swansea and Gloucester respectively.

If you would like to help in anyway with time, prayer or funding support please contact Ian Cockram.

01392 412300 or 07974 727697, ian.cockram@communitychaplaincy.net

A New Definition of 'Religion or Belief'

An important amendment to the Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulation 2003 took effect on 30th April 2007. From this date, the definition of 'religion or belief' is no longer 'any religion, religious belief or similar philosophical belief' but 'any religion, or religious or philosophical belief.'

The amended definition opens the question of whether a political, and indeed many other beliefs will be covered.

Membership Matters, May 2007

Reaching Out - Advice and Skills for Frontline Groups

Reaching Out is an England-wide project providing advice and skilled volunteers to all kinds of black and minority ethnic, refugee and migrant, faith and rural community groups. Organisations can gain new skills, strengthen know-how and progress their aims more effectively.

The project has two key stages. First, organisations complete a short questionnaire to help assess their current situation and identify skill needs. The Reaching Out team use these to provide advice and guidance on volunteer requirements.

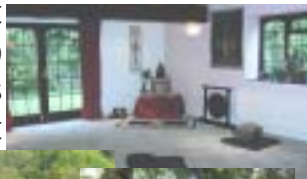
Secondly, REACH volunteers with professional, business and management career skills (e.g. business planning, IT, human resources expertise and governance experience), are matched to organisations' needs. Once they have interviewed the volunteer and are happy with the arrangement, the volunteer can provide tailored advice and practical assistance.

If you are, or know of, a group that would welcome the chance to benefit from advice and skilled volunteers, contact Reaching Out as soon as possible. The project is funded by ChangeUp until March 2008, managed through Capacitybuilders, supported by the Cabinet Office.

For more information contact Gerard Omasta-Milsom, Project Manager, reachingout@reach-online.org.uk, Tel. 020 7840 5663 or visit <http://www.reach-online.org.uk/projects/reachingout.htm>

Golden Age

The Golden Buddha Centre project began in 1998. Its particular aim is to help the growing number of Buddhists who are looking to live a Buddhist way of life in retirement.



Zeal Cottage in Devon rests in about 12 acres of land edged by a flowing stream. It adjoins Dartmoor National Park, and is close to the towns of South Brent and Totnes. The Centre offers various activities, including a retreat, 17-19 August.



Richard St Ruth

Richard St Ruth, chair of the trustees, says the next step is to find property in a nearby town, where Buddhists in retirement can live alongside like-minded people, close to shops, other facilities and the Centre for retreats and personal study. They welcome donations, loans or suggestions on fund-raising to set up the project.

For details of the Centre's activities and plans visit, www.goldenbuddha.org



Future Health Forum

The Commission for Patient and Public Involvement in Health (CPPIH) has set up local Patient and Public Involvement Forums, with legal powers to give people a voice in the future of the NHS in Somerset.

This is an opportunity for people to represent the views of their local community to influence health decisions and to work with the local NHS to find solutions and improve health services. CPPIH would like to hear from people who can spare 10 to 12 hours a month and would like to have a real voice in the future of health care in their area. Anyone, whether retired or unemployed, studying or working is welcome.

Forum membership is voluntary, but CPPIH reimburses travel expenses and care costs, and provides training and development opportunities.

For details contact 0845 1207111, or enquiries@cppih.org or visit www.cppih.org



Healthcare Professionals

Social Enterprise Link

Everyone in the voluntary and community sector is aware that there is increasing pressure to look to trading as part of long term viability for organisations. Increasing competition for existing funds, together with national policy moves towards a more contract-based environment means that many are looking towards social enterprise development as a way forward. This kind of change is easy to talk about, but expert advice and help in making it happen can be hard to find.

Social Enterprise Link is a new service in the South West to give information and advice to people developing social enterprises, including those in voluntary organisations looking to create or expand trading activity. This free service will give information about social enterprises, valuable information about developing business ideas and provide contact with a qualified social enterprise advisor. The advisor will help to develop early ideas about an enterprise, and give guidance using a set of activities designed to enable progression of those plans. Short training courses may also be appropriate and notification of the nearest relevant courses will be given. As the enterprise develops, further bespoke help and advice may also be available.

For a free information pack please send name and postal address to referrals@co-active.org.uk

Launch of Somerset Faith Forum

18.30-20.30, Monday 24th September 2007 at Lutterall Room, County Hall, The Crescent, Taunton

Exhibitions, Displays, Presentations by the different faith groups in Somerset - Refreshments provided

Details & Booking contact:

Revd Bruce Thompson 01823 275765, revbrucet@tiscali.co.uk
faithnetsouthwest 0117 304 2298, info@faithnetsouthwest.org.uk

Rich in Skills and Abilities

Trinity Henleaze United Reformed Church has begun an exciting project to redevelop their present site in the Henleaze area of Bristol with a new church and community facilities. The Minister Revd Tracey Lewis says of the need to replace the present facilities: 'We thought, well this has got to be grasped and it will help us to serve our local community by providing better facilities and it will help us to build community networks and those connections between church and neighbourhood. We are engaging with people locally, and trying to bring the warm sense of community and spiritual community much more into the vibrant heart of the local community'.

The church plans to extend the number of community groups they work with by providing bigger and better facilities and to involve them in the management of the church building. Planned activities include a music room and a drop in facility for the local community, in addition to the many activities already taking place in the church building.

Tracey says that their congregation is very rich in terms of skills and abilities and they were able to gather together eight people who had experience of developing buildings. There are plans to demolish the existing hall and build a new one - improving access and providing better facilities that will become an 'ecological flagship' using solar heating. The new building will have its own entrance and facilities, but with a link to the church giving much more flexibility.

Planning permission from Bristol City Council means they can seek money from trust funds. They hold local fund raising events and people are very enthusiastic about getting involved. Fund raising builds more contacts within the community and they are attracting more people to the church, including young people.

Local people and the congregation have been kept fully informed of developments and there is widespread support for the project. It is planned to do the work in stages, so that as many facilities are kept available as possible throughout. Tracey says, 'we are making a positive contribution both to the church and more widely and to the life of the community and I think everyone will see that this is as something positive to support.'

Tracey Lewis was interviewed for *faithnews* by Alistair Beattie, Development Officer, *faithnetsouthwest*

A Cut Too Far?

South West Forum, the regional voice for the voluntary and community sector, recently released two documents on the funding crisis facing many South West Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations. They included explicit, hard-hitting messages for central and local government, funders and investors.

'A Cut Too Deep?' features the candid responses from members of the Forum to a recent funding survey. 'Investing for Inclusion: an agenda for action' is the culmination of two years extensive research. It concludes that changes are required to funding and investment practice if South West VCS organisations are to continue to tackle the problems of people and communities in the region.

In the South West VCS groups play a very significant and increasing role in the region's economy. As well as meeting the needs of the vulnerable and making an essential contribution to the quality of life, VCS organisations employ thousands of workers. As well as the risk to service users, there is a real prospect of significant job losses. (According to statistics available from the South West Observatory 54,000 paid workers in the South West are employed by VCS groups - see 'State of the South West 2007' available from www.swo.org.uk)

South West Forum's Chief Executive, Stephen Woollett says 'Whilst support for voluntary and community groups has never been higher up the national political agenda the reality of life on the front line is funding cuts, uncertainty and a very real struggle to maintain services and in some cases whole organisations. There is the prospect of funding crisis for South West groups unless action is taken very quickly.'

A senior voluntary sector manager has said, 'Sometimes it feels like the entire voluntary sector is about to collapse on the 31st March 2008 and no-one else seems to know!'

Both reports are available from www.southwestforum.org.uk




Supplied by Sue Harding, Information and Communications Officer, South West Forum, Tel. 01392 823758, Unit 6 Cranmere Court, Lustleigh Close, Matford Business Park, Exeter, EX2 8PW

Centre for the Study of Muslim-Jewish Relations

**E-Learning Courses and On-Site Courses
for the Academic Year 2007-2008**

**Both courses entail 3 modules taught over 3 terms.
Discounts available if you register in all 3 modules.
A bursary scheme is available.**

Please contact CMJR for information
01223 742406, enquiries@cmjr.org.uk
University of Cambridge Institute of
Continuing Education



Contact us...

Director Heather Pencavel (Bristol office)
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Email info@faithnetsouthwest.org.uk

Somerset Churches Together Annual Gathering

Locking Castle LEP, Bransby Way,
Weston Super Mare BS24 7BW

Saturday, 20 October 2007
10.00 am – 3.30 pm

CHURCHES IN COMMUNITY

Worship - displays - presentations - opportunities to share experience - small group discussion

Contact: Robin Dixon
(County Ecumenical Officer)
25 Claverton Road West, Saltford,
Bristol BS31 3AL
sctog@blueyonder.co.uk

Goodbye Clare, and Thankyou

faithnetsouthwest has recently said goodbye to Clare Mortimore, our Development Officer who was based in Newton Abbot. We are grateful for all her work in the southern 'half' of the region since the beginning, and will miss her very much. I'm sure that many of you will join us in wishing her well for the future.



Clare Mortimore

Following Clare's departure, the *faithnetsouthwest* office in Newton Abbot is now CLOSED. E-mails and post will be diverted and handled by the Bristol Office. Tel. 0117 304 2298, e-mail info@faithnetsouthwest.org.uk.

faithnews / e-news

We produce monthly e-bulletins as well as offering *faithnews* by email - Please send your e-mail address to info@faithnetsouthwest.org.uk

Administration & Communications
Nic Percivall (Bristol Office)

A partnership of four organisations: ISR (The Churches Council for Industry & Social Responsibility), the Exeter Diocesan Board for Church & Society; the South West Council of Faiths and the South West Churches' Regional Forum.

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