



Plymouth Centre
for Faiths &
Cultural Diversity

Different beliefs
Different cultures
Shared values



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NEWSLETTER

FOR SEPTEMBER TO DECEMBER 2008

As I write this Ramadan has just begun and Christians are celebrating Harvest festivals. Jews are preparing themselves for their High Holy days followed soon after by Sukkot and later, over the Christmas period, by Hanukah. Baha'is will celebrate two very important birthdays over the next few weeks and Sikhs also mark in November the birth of their first Guru, Guru Nanak. It is time to celebrate all right!

The celebration of festivals is one of the most enjoyable aspects of the religious calendar and way of life. Special occasions and time for community, family and children offer regular reminders of what is important. This is the vital role that religion plays in all the different faith traditions because when deeply understood and practised, religion reminds us of who we really are and what we are supposed to be doing with this great mystery of life.

The cycle and rhythm of the year is important within all faiths. Each festival has its particular flavour and colour. Each has its own stories, teachings and practices; each a part of the coherent and inter-related whole. This is important as we acknowledge over the year the full cycle of human experience. There are times of celebration, yes, but also those times of sombre reflection, fasting and remembrance. To want only the joys of celebration - "I wish it could be Christmas every day" - is to deny the fullness of human experience. For example, in Christianity there is Christmas but also the cross and Easter.

It is as if each religion offers the follower an opportunity through experience, to gradually awaken and grow in their faith. Festivals not only remind us of key events, experiences and teachings, but also of how to live between times. The annual festivals lay down the vital signs and markers for how we should live for the rest of the year. Otherwise it can be rather like some of our approaches to regular worship, meditation or prayer. Meditation, for example, often conjures up images of sitting cross-legged before candles and incense. These times are important but meditation is actually more about how we live, how mindful and aware we are between those formal times of prayer and worship. Religion is not about separating ourselves from ordinary everyday life but engaging fully with life and the world. The Dalai Lama was once asked how long he meditated for each day. Smiling he replied, "I try to practise for at least 24 hours each day."

Jonathan Marshall

CENTRE NEWS

We are going to be busy over the next few months with an exciting programme of events, creating a variety of opportunities to explore faith, the environment and interfaith dialogue. We also hope to resolve our longstanding staffing issue with the appointment of a part-time Centre Administrator, see below for details. Meanwhile Linda continues to hold the fort for us, which she has done so brilliantly over the past year!

As you know all events here provide opportunity for understanding and dialogue and are underpinned by interfaith principles. You will see from THE DIARY below that we have, at the request of a number of people, included two daytime and two evening dates for specific interfaith dialogue meetings. The daytime meeting has grown out of an original group, convened a few years ago, under the auspices of the Commission on Urban Life and Faith (CULF). After a year of CULF meetings the group continues to meet every six weeks or so under an agreed title or theme. It now seems appropriate to make this opportunity more widely available.

The evening group was established more recently, as a response to the Government's initiative – "A Framework for Partnership in our Multifaith Society – Face to Face and Side by Side." This group has met a couple of times and it will again provide opportunities for people to learn from each other and perhaps plan future activities.

All these groups are not separate, so if you wish, you are welcome to attend them all!

VACANCY FOR CENTRE ADMINISTRATOR

Permanent part-time – 25 hours per week. Salary £9120 per annum.

An experienced and approachable person, competent in computer packages such as Word, Excel and Outlook.

Closing date: 22 September 2008. Contact the Centre for Application Pack.

THE DIARY



SEPTEMBER

The influence of Judaism in everyday life – a personal reflection by Peter Lee

Tuesday 23rd September 2.00pm (interfaith dialogue)

The Spirit Level Sunday 28th September 7.00pm

Plymouth's Baha'i community invite you to an evening of reflection and relaxation.

OCTOBER

Navaratri Festival of Nine Nights Sunday 5th October 2.00-10.00pm

Plymouth's Hindu community invite you to join them to celebrate this important festival.

"Is religion more about man than God?" Tuesday 7th October 7.30pm (interfaith dialogue)

"Faiths, the Environment and the World Bank" Wednesday 15th October 7.30pm

Speaker - **Tony Whitten**, Senior Biodiversity Specialist at the World Bank, South East Asia and the Pacific Region; Chair of the Faiths and the Environment Committee at the World Bank. Chaired by Jonathan Marshall. **This event will be held at the Roland Levinsky Building, Drake Circus, Plymouth.** Admission free.

OCTOBER (continued)

Interfaith Week of Prayer for World Peace 19th – 26th October

To mark the week the Centre will be holding three lunchtime talks and reflections from different faith perspectives; Monday 20th, Wednesday 22nd and Thursday 23rd from 12.30 - 2pm

**World Faiths and Climate Change - Wednesdays 7.30 – 9.00pm -
(a series of talks held at Sherwell United Church, North Hill)**

22nd October – **Buddhism: 'The complex and intricate web of relationships'** -

Jonathan Marshall

29th October – **Islam: Muslim Beliefs and Climate Change** - Ms Shahnaz Wahid

See November for three further talks

The Spirit Level Sunday 26th October 7.00pm

Plymouth's Baha'i community invite you to an evening of reflection and relaxation.

RESPECT FESTIVAL at the Guildhall Saturday 25th/Sunday 26th October

As usual the Centre will have a stall - hope to see you there!

NOVEMBER

Diwali Puja- Ankut Darshan Sunday 2nd November 2.00-6.00pm

Plymouth's Hindu community hope you will join them to celebrate this festival.

**World Faiths and Climate Change – Wednesdays 7.30 – 9.00pm
(Sherwell United Church Talks continued)**

12th November – **Judaism and Climate Change** -

Rabbi Ron Berry, Bristol and West Progressive Jewish Synagogue

19th November – **Hinduism, Climatic Change and Nuclear Power** -

Dr Jatindra Saha, formerly Senior Lecturer of Physics, University of Plymouth

26th November – **Christian Beliefs and Climate Change** -

Dr John Spicer, Professor of Biological Sciences, University of Plymouth

Interfaith Dialogue Group Monday 10th November 2.00-4.00pm (theme to be decided)

Islam Awareness Week 17th – 23rd November

This is a national event organised by the Islamic Society of Britain. This year's theme is 'Celebrating the Best of Britain.'

During the week there will be a display and small exhibition about Islam and two talks are planned. Contact the Centre nearer the time for a programme and more information.

The Spirit Level Sunday 30th November 7.00pm

Plymouth's Baha'i community invite you to an evening of relaxation and reflection.

DECEMBER

Interfaith Dialogue Group Wednesday 3rd December 7.30pm (theme to be decided)

Annual Supper Thursday 18th December 7pm

An evening of reflections, readings, music and sharing of food.

The Spirit Level Sunday 28th December 7.00pm

Plymouth's Baha'i community invite you to an evening of relaxation and reflection.

WORLD CELEBRATIONS & EVENTS

SEPTEMBER 2008

- 2nd-1st Oct. **Ramadan** – Month of fasting - Islam
 21st **Autumn Equinox** – Mabon - Pagan
 30th **Navaratri** - Hindu
 30th **Rosh Hashanah** – Jewish
 Sept/Oct. **Harvest Festival** – Christian

OCTOBER 2008

- 2nd **Eid-UI-Fitr** – Muslim
 9th **Yom Kippur** – Jewish
 14th-21st **Sukkot** – Jewish
 19th-26th **Interfaith Week of Prayer for World Peace**
 20th **Guruship of Guru Granth Sahib** – Sikh
 20th **Anniversary of the birth of the Bab** – Baha'i
 22nd **Simchat Torah** – Jewish
 24th **Kathina Day** – Buddhist
 28th **Divali** – Hindu

NOVEMBER 2008

- 1st **All Saints Day** – Christian
 2nd **All Souls Day** – Christian
 9th **Remembrance Sunday**
 12th **Anniversary of the birth of Baha'U'llah** – Baha'i
 12th **Birth of Guru Nanak** – Sikh
 17th-23rd **Islam Awareness Week** - Islam

DECEMBER 2008

- 9th **Eid-UI-Adha** - Muslim
 21st **Yule - Winter Solstice** - Pagan
 22nd - 29th **Hanukah** – Jewish
 25th **Christmas Day** – Christian

Sourced from Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals with thanks.

Thursday Open Afternoons

Join us for Thursday Open Afternoons (during school term time) 12.30-1.30pm is our weekly **Interfaith Reflection and Discussion**. Tea is available from 1.30-3.30pm. This provides a chance to visit, look at resources, talk with volunteers or just sit and read quietly.

See website for further information on events.



Subscriptions to this newsletter are:

Rates:

£7	Waged
£5	Unwaged
£10	Organisations receiving extra copies

Cheques payable to **PCFCD**

All Centre events are occasions for interfaith dialogue and are open to **all**.

A gentle reminder! With increased numbers of groups using the Centre we would like to remind everyone that the Centre remains a non-smoking and alcohol free zone!

The Centre provides Fair Trade tea and coffee to all visitors.

Coloured copies of this newsletter can be downloaded from our website.