

**Archbishop of Canterbury's
Listening Initiative in
Christian-Muslim Relations
2001-2004**

Final Report of the Planning Group
June 2004

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Foreword

The Report we now present is the result of nearly three years' work. It is based on over one hundred visits in five English towns and cities in which there are sizable Muslim communities. We have spoken to over five hundred people (Christians, Muslims and others who have a concern for good community relations) in the course of our travels. For all of us on the listening team it has been an enormous privilege. During each of our visits there have been two or three particularly memorable conversations which have enlarged our understanding and deepened our insights into the hopes, aspirations and pressures with which Muslims and Christians alike are living. Almost everywhere we went people were genuinely enthusiastic that some kind of organisation that would enable Muslims and Christians to work together was not simply a good idea, but necessary, timely and increasingly urgent. They saw it as wholly appropriate that the Archbishop of Canterbury should have taken this initiative. But as the process of listening unfolded what became increasingly clear was just how important it was that the initiative was a partnership between Muslims and Christians. It would have had no credibility at all without the genuine collaboration of a group of Muslims and Christians who have become fast friends through the work they have shared together.

But nor could we have brought our work to any kind of conclusion without the generous commitment of the local Christian inter faith advisers and their Muslim colleagues in the places we visited, who laid on our two day programmes, arranging anything up to eighteen meetings during the course of each of our visits. And of course nor could we have concluded our task without the openness and generosity of those we met, who shared with us some of the pressures and difficulties of living as practising Muslims in Britain today.

Finally this initiative owes a huge debt to two members of our team in particular. Julian Bond was seconded to this initiative from the Inland Revenue and joined the team after our first visit. He has thrown himself into a very different world from that whence he has come with an enthusiasm and energy which have been crucial to the success of the enterprise. He has worked with our local contacts on the details of the visits and recorded our discussions. These have formed the background to our thinking during the reflection days we have needed to interpret and understand what we have seen and heard. He has made a major contribution to the writing of this report. We also owe a debt of gratitude to Michael Ipgrave, whose thinking helped shape the initiative as a whole from the beginning and who, with Julian's help, has written the report. He has shown great patience as we have taken the document through its various drafts.

It is our unanimous recommendation that a Forum of Muslims and Christians be created. We have no doubt that it will be warmly welcomed by many Muslims and Christians in our cities where the two different faith communities live side by side.

The Rt. Revd J M Austin – Chair of the Planning Group

1 Introduction

As Christians and Muslims, we understand ourselves to be communities called by God to serve his purposes of mercy and justice in the world. While our beliefs, practices and values have much in common, there are also striking differences between our two faiths. Both religions speak of the absolute priority of God's truth, but the claims they make about that truth appear at some points irreconcilable. The universality of both mandates them to invite all people to membership, yet this in turn can lead to competition or even conflict between them. Our long history of interaction has too often been marked by confrontation, suspicion and mutual denigration, yet it also includes encouraging examples of peaceful coexistence and cooperation.

Christianity and Islam are the two numerically largest religions in the world today, and relations between their adherents vary greatly from situation to situation. In some places, Muslims and Christians live together in harmony and mutual respect; in others, they are locked into attitudes of suspicion, tension or open hostility. Both Christians and Muslims will often have a particular concern for communities of their own faith who live as minorities in different parts of the world. In our own country also, relations between the two faiths can vary significantly from place to place. Muslims constitute the largest minority religion in England today, but in some predominantly Muslim areas of our towns and cities Christians are conscious that they themselves are locally a minority community. These complex and fluid factors must always be borne in mind in seeking to understand the ways in which Muslims and Christians interact, or fail to interact, with one another.

Our present time constitutes a critical context for Christian-Muslim relations. It is fraught with the dangers of distrust, division and destruction. At the same time, it offers to Christians and Muslims, each building on their faith in God, the possibility of new and creative partnerships nurtured by a growing trust in one another and directed towards the common good. We can no longer ignore one another's presence, and this challenge meets us not only in our social interaction but also as people of faith. The question facing us is not simply: 'How can we live and work together as different communities in our society and our world?', but: 'How do we understand and relate to one another within the purposes of God?' To explore that challenge seriously, in a way that recognises both common ground and difference, requires of us both a serious commitment of time and energy in dialogue with one another.

Many projects of inter faith dialogue, bridge-building and practical co-operation between Muslims and Christians are now developing at every level of engagement. This report sets out to describe one such initiative, undertaken on behalf of the Archbishop of Canterbury to explore the possibility of establishing an organisational structure which would enable the meeting of Muslims and Christians at a national level in England.

In what follows, we

- outline the history of this initiative,
- describe the results of the process of listening it involved,
- identify key themes which Christians and Muslims face together,
- set out a vision for Christian-Muslim relations in our country, and
- propose a structured Forum of Muslims and Christians in England to help fulfil that vision at national level.

We have annexed to our report some detailed suggestions regarding possible structures for the Forum, and also listed the membership of our Planning Group and Reference Group, and the organisations and individuals with whom we consulted.

2 The Archbishop of Canterbury's Initiative

Over the past few years, successive Archbishops of Canterbury have sponsored a joint Christian-Muslim initiative of listening and planning to discern how best to respond to the developing context of Christian-Muslim relations in this country. The history of this initiative can be traced back to a 1997 reception held at Lambeth Palace for the Sheikh of al-Azhar. On that occasion, the Archbishop of Canterbury spoke in general terms of the importance of finding ways to progress a structured dialogue of Christians and Muslims in this country. His remarks were received warmly by British Muslims present; subsequently several community leaders wrote proposing that the Archbishop follow up his suggestion practically by convening a meeting of Christians and Muslims to establish a joint national organisation of some kind.

One model suggested was that of the Council of Christians and Jews (established in 1942), of which the Archbishop is a joint President. In 1998, Dr Manazir Ahsan wrote to the Archbishop underlining the importance of involving the Muslim community from an early stage in consultations. In responding to this correspondence, the Archbishop reaffirmed his commitment to the principle of forging closer relations between Christians and Muslims in this country, but indicated that he did not yet feel that it was apparent what organisational structure would best serve this purpose. In particular, he suggested that it would not be easy to replicate the Council of Christians and Jews model in the very different setting of Christian-Muslim relations. He went on to emphasise the need for careful and extensive consultation before setting up any national framework for Christian-Muslim meeting and dialogue.

In October 2000, the Archbishop drew together at Lambeth an ecumenical group of Christians to discuss an initiative to respond to these possibilities. As a result of that meeting, he asked the Bishop of Aston, The Rt. Revd John Austin, to chair a small working group to plan and oversee a process of consultation with a wide range of people from both faiths. The working group rapidly identified the need to involve Muslim colleagues in the process from an early stage, and to this end a Planning Group was established under the Bishop of Aston's chairmanship in 2001. This group had joint Christian and Muslim membership, giving a crucially important sense of mutuality both to our listening to others and to our discussions and reflections among ourselves. It is our strong opinion that the process of this initiative would have been deeply flawed had there not been such shared participation from the start. Indeed, we feel that our relationships within the Planning Group have been modelling the more permanent ways of working which we propose in the structure of a Forum for Muslims and Christians.

In addition to this Planning Group, a more broadly constituted Reference Group, drawing together a range of senior Muslim and Christian religious and community leaders, was also formed in 2001 to act as an occasional meeting for consultation and advice for the Planning Group. This Reference Group met twice during the process of listening and reflection, and its comments were taken into account by the Planning Group in drafting this final report.

The Planning Group saw it as important that any exploration of a possible framework for Christian-Muslim meeting and dialogue should provide space for a wide and representative range of views to be heard from members of both faith communities at every level. They recognised that it was important to take account of the ethnic,

gender, age, socio-economic, intra-religious and geographical diversities of both faiths in our society. Given these complexities, it was agreed that the first stage in the process would be for the Planning Group to conduct a national programme of local listening exercises, to ascertain the views both of Muslims and of Christians living in areas of significant Muslim presence. The primary purpose of such exercises would be to come to a mind as to whether it would be appropriate to establish any kind of national Christian-Muslim framework for meeting and dialogue, and to formulate proposals for the structure and work of such a body. Since this listening process was an initiative of the Archbishop of Canterbury, it was agreed that the venues selected for these local listening exercises to take place should all be within England.

Accordingly, during 2002 and 2003 the Planning Group conducted five intensive two-day local listening exercises, in the following places: Blackburn (and Nelson); Bradford; Leicester; East London; and North West London. This selection of venues was intended to provide not a comprehensive coverage of the country, or of major areas of Muslim settlement, but rather a representative sampling of a number of different locations to explore the diversity and complexity of the situation. In the fulfilment of this listening programme, we were immensely helped by the secondment to the initiative for two years of a civil servant, Mr Julian Bond, who took responsibility for co-ordinating practical arrangements for the exercises, in partnership with local contacts. He also took the lead role in gathering and collating the findings of the listening exercises.

During the course of the listening exercises, over one hundred separate meetings took place, involving over five hundred people. The majority of our interlocutors were naturally from Muslim and Christian communities, but in different locations members of other faiths were also consulted, as were representatives of local authorities, police, media, and others with an interest in community relations. In each place, the two questions on which the Planning Group focused its listening for answers were these:

- ‘What do you consider to be the most important issues in relations between Muslims and Christians?’; and:
- ‘Could a structured national framework for meeting and dialogue help Muslims and Christians address these issues?’

Between summer 2003 and summer 2004, the Muslims and Christians on the Planning Group met on several occasions to reflect intensively on the outcomes of the listening exercises, and to formulate proposals for a national structure on the basis of what had been heard. In October 2003, they discussed their interim findings with the Archbishop, who expressed his appreciation for the work of the listening initiative. He also affirmed his commitment to the principle of a structured organisation bringing together Muslims and Christians at national level in England, and offered the support of his office to help in the establishment of this.

During early 2004, Julian Bond organised a series of small-scale meetings revisiting the sites of three of the original listening exercises, together with a fresh visit to Oldham, to brief original respondents on the initiative’s progress and to seek their further views on the proposals being formulated by the Planning Group as a result of what they had heard. One of the encouraging outcomes of these return visits was a recognition of the ways in which the earlier visits of the Planning Group had generated interest and stimulated further activity in Christian-Muslim relations in many of the venues concerned.

The Planning Group has taken account of feedback from the return visits, views offered at a meeting of the Reference Group, and comments from several other sources, in submitting to the Archbishop of Canterbury in June 2004 this final report, with detailed proposals for a national Forum of Muslims and Christians in England.

3 Listening to Muslims and Christians

In what follows, we try to reproduce an echo of some of the key voices we heard in the locations we visited for listening exercises, and to record some of the most significant answers that were given to our two questions. Given the number of people we met, we cannot record all the points made to us by our interlocutors. We have sought to present a range of responses and comments that will accurately show the balance and diversity of the responses which our listening elicited. Some of this may not be of direct relevance to the shape of our proposals, but is included here to give a picture of the context within which any new organisation will be working. While our presentation is necessarily anecdotal in form, it is our hope that a sense of narrative immediacy will help by giving a series of snapshots of some of the diverse, complex and stimulating situations we encountered.

The material presented here is grouped according to the venues visited. Schedules of organisations and individuals consulted, and of the membership of the listening teams, are included in the Annexes at the end.

Blackburn, Nelson, and Oldham

11th–12th March 2002 – listening exercise in Blackburn and Nelson

A pattern was set in Blackburn for our visit by focusing on school-age education issues. On our first morning, we visited three different schools and spoke to pupils, parents, staff and governors. We discussed with them questions of identity and the links between religion and culture. Differing outlooks were very apparent between children and young people, on the one hand, and community elders, on the other hand. Another key issue was the degree of contact between Muslims and ‘white Christian’ culture, or the general lack of such contact. One Muslim respondent spoke of his conviction that what segregates people in Blackburn is ‘not Christianity or Islam, but lack of religion and knowledge’.

*What segregates is not
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but lack of religion
and knowledge.*

One particular state school, although largely consisting of Muslim pupils, is in a white area, a situation generating antagonism even where there is physical proximity. Teachers at this school were aware of this situation and saw the need to build bridges between the communities at both educational and neighbourhood levels. They made several practical suggestions, while recognising that the problems faced in the educational realm were only a reflection of the realities of society as a whole. They highlighted issues such as ‘white flight’ (the tendency of the ‘white Christian’ community to move out as Muslims arrive) and tensions over provision and competition between state, Church and Muslim schools, including the potential impact of Muslim schools achieving Voluntary Aided status. They recognised the need to encourage mixing throughout the schools system, but mentioned the specifically Islamophobic phenomenon of the rejection of Muslim children by their peers. They also spoke of the need to raise awareness of spirituality in society, distinguishing this, as the ‘spiritual dimension of life’, from ‘religion’ or ‘faith’, perceived as a divisive force.

Within Blackburn, we were also able to visit a Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) school which is 100% Muslim in its intake. Muslim parents at this school told us how church schools can facilitate the meeting of Muslims of different backgrounds in ways which they thought might be more difficult for either secular or Islamic schools. However, they recognised that white Christian families might feel excluded, or might be self-excluded, by such a completely Muslim presence. The feeling was generally expressed that the inclusion of a significant faith ethos within state schools could be an alternative to faith schools in meeting some parental concerns about educational values. There were some suggestions that the drive for Islamic schools comes mainly from the older generation, although our consultations showed a diversity of views at all ages. The experience of church-based education has led to good relationships between this Muslim community and the local parish church, resulting, for example, in joint fundraising projects for disaster causes in Ramadan.

We also met with imams and members of mosque management committees. The imams shared with us their great concern for community needs, meaning by this not only specifically religious issues, but also ethical and social challenges such as those linked to drugs and to unemployment. They explained that drug abuse had become a serious issue for the community recently, whereas it had been unheard of only ten

Both faiths need to support one another, as religion comes more and more under attack.

years ago. They encouraged the churches to stress how they were based on the teaching of Christ and the Bible, in contrast to secular society and the actions of Government. It was urged on us that both faiths need to support one another, as religion comes more and more under attack. We were told that

Christians would gain more respect from Muslims in this way because Muslims are taught to love and respect Jesus and the Bible. We were also told, as we would be on many other occasions, that Christians need to make the first step in improving relations. There was a general concern expressed about some misapprehensions in wider society of the religious teaching delivered in *madrassas* (the ‘mosque schools’ which children attend after statutory school has finished for the day). We were repeatedly told that the Qur’ān, not terrorism, informed the *madrassas*’ syllabus. One Muslim headteacher reported (with a touch of humour) that a visitor had been surprised not to find a bomb-making class at his school. It was also stressed that there was no state financial support for *madrassa* education. In response to our question, ‘What parts of English culture can be adopted by Muslims?’ we were given the answer that the criterion supplied by the Qur’ān is that of ‘not identifying with anything explicitly polytheistic or idolatrous’. The implication developed from this was that authentic Islam is inherently inclusive, and that this core value goes back to the religion’s very beginnings. We were told by the imams that political issues were not discussed by them in their mosque preaching. However, they added, political tensions between America and ‘the Muslim world’ had strengthened a tendency to polarise and foster support for extremist groups.

In a meeting with local politicians and community leaders, two key issues were discussed. One was that of creating inviting places for Muslims and non-Muslims to meet – places, as one person put it, which would make people want to leave the ‘comfort zones’ of their own like-minded networks to meet with those who were different from them, not out of a sense of duty but because they enjoyed it. The importance of ‘give and take’ in creating a plural society was acknowledged; it should be possible to live together alongside differences of faith. A second key issue was that of overcoming the negative perceptions of Muslims which were prevalent in some parts of English society. We were counselled that in setting up any organisation for Christians and Muslims there would be a need to break down barriers of suspicion, by being clear as to why it was being created and by explaining that it did not involve people in compromising their beliefs and practices. It was suggested that the work of such a forum would be strengthened by making available funding for the further development of existing groups such as the Lancashire Council of Mosques.

A group of Muslim young people expressed concerns about insensitive comments from the media and from politicians. Although this had created anxiety and defensiveness, they said, it had also contributed to their sense of pride in Islam. They also spoke of misunderstandings encountered among those they met on a day to day basis – ‘When you start wearing a scarf, people think you’re thick!’ one young woman observed wryly. These young people made a heartfelt plea: ‘We want understanding from non-Muslim friends, a recognition of the importance of religion’.

When you start wearing a scarf, people think you’re thick!

We met with a representative of Asian (Punjabi) Christians in the area, who belong to mainstream churches but also meet regularly in Asian (Urdu-speaking) fellowship

groups. We were told that, while they generally get along well with their Muslim neighbours, there are tensions between young Asian Muslims and young Asian Christians. They have a strong sense of being a minority among Christians and tend to have reservations about inter faith engagement. They also felt marginalised by the local council policy of identifying Pakistani Muslims, rather than all of Pakistani heritage, as a community group. They felt that, as a result of this, they did not always receive the support they needed.

At the end of our visit we held a lively open meeting with local Muslims. This included discussion about arranged and forced marriages, a topic on which the Home Secretary had recently commented. Some Muslim women wanted to discuss this contentious issue, whereas most of the Muslim men present either denied the existence of a problem or wanted to save it for private discussion within the Muslim community. The exchanges provided us with an instructive example of how the presence of people from outside a local community can either help or hinder in the raising of questions which parts of that community do not need or want to discuss.

As elsewhere in our Blackburn visit, the discussion that evening also turned on attitudes towards Muslim women wearing the veil. One young woman commented as follows on the contrast between the sense of inner freedom which wearing the *hijāb* had brought to her and the negative way in which it was seen by many of those she met: ‘Some people from multi-racial areas are more racist than those from all-white areas. Good religion frees you to leave yourself behind. True religion lies deep down and personal, it can easily be misperceived.’

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Reflecting on our first listening exercise, we were impressed by the readiness of so many to share their time and their thoughts with a group of Christian and Muslim visitors from outside the area. This, we recognised, was in itself an indication of how much effort is being put into developing positive inter faith relations in Blackburn and Nelson – the work of the ‘Building Bridges’ project in the latter town seemed to us a particularly inspiring example. Nobody we met said that they favoured segregation. On the contrary, we heard from all parts of the local communities a sincere longing for better relationships with others. Some of the most fascinating learning experiences were those in which we were privileged to listen in to debates among Muslims about their interaction with non-Muslims. It was also clear that social and moral issues on which both Christians and Muslims could offer the wisdom and insights of faith mattered more than specific faith topics.

29th April 2004 – return visit to Blackburn and Nelson

Muslims at a meeting in Blackburn welcomed the idea of the Forum, and suggested that a priority for its work might be addressing the problem of extremism on university campuses. They were convinced that this was an issue for both faiths, not just the Muslim community, and that student organisations and universities would appreciate appropriate guidance. Another important issue for them, as for many others throughout the listening process, was the media: ‘Would the Forum have active campaigns on media issues?’ they asked.

In discussions with mosque and community leaders in Nelson, the principle of a national Forum of Muslims and Christians was welcomed as ‘a step in the right

direction'. They saw benefit in the Forum being able to give advice to those seeking to establish local Christian-Muslim engagement. Commenting on the fact that it was over two years since our group's earlier visit, one of those present reassured us: 'The process is just as important as the outcome. We should be relaxed if it takes time to establish; we would be concerned if it didn't take time to set up.' Another interesting comment was that a key characteristic of members of the national Forum should be their 'notoriety' – by which was presumably meant the positive sense of a high public profile.

The process is just as important as the outcome. We should be relaxed if it takes time to establish; we would be concerned if it didn't take time to set up.

4th May 2004 – Oldham

In our short visit to Oldham, we were able to learn about the great deal of positive inter faith work being undertaken in the town. In a meeting with several people actively engaged in this work, we were asked about the role of the Archbishop of Canterbury in our suggested structure for a Forum, particularly in relation to the role of leaders of other denominations. We were also asked about the ways in which the national Forum would be able to engage with local activity. We were challenged to develop further our thinking on how the relationship between local and national might work in practice, on how local people could be significantly involved, and on how we envisage the development of specialist themed networks.

Bradford

16th–17th June 2002 – listening exercise

Christian and Muslim women in our listening team met with a local group of Muslim women, who had a number of important points to make. They were concerned that it was perceptions rather than reality that divide Muslims from white people: ‘the media never interviews the articulate Muslims, but the uneducated ones who are not representative’. They also expressed the hope that they could remove the word ‘Asian’ from the name of their organisation, the Asian Women and Girls’ Centre, so that it could be more inclusive of different ethnic groups. Speaking of their community’s rootedness in a religious identity, and of the deep-seated fear of anything which might lead to a loss of this, they drew attention to what they saw as a particular problem among some of their male counterparts: ‘When it comes to religion, young lads focus on what they want. Many take whatever interpretation of Islam they want, perhaps extremism because of their own frustration. When they talk about international issues, they speak loudly. It’s male nature.’ These women were not questioning the importance globally for Muslims of questions such as Palestine or Iraq, but they were suggesting that an insistent and exclusive emphasis on overseas issues could serve as a distraction from challenges facing young Muslim men at home in Bradford.

When it comes to religion, young lads focus on what they want. When they talk about international issues, they speak loudly – it’s male nature.

In a meeting with an ecumenical group of Christian leaders, we were told that in their opinion the church was perceived by many Muslims as ‘an institution supporting Western hegemony.’ They suggested that our task would be to help in presenting the ‘prophetic dimension of the church’. They were excited and encouraged by the level of ecumenical co-operation in Bradford, and were hopeful about tackling future challenges together. This group was prepared to ask searching questions about the usefulness and productivity of much current dialogue between Christians and Muslims, and to insist on the importance of a right motivation in building inter faith relations: ‘It is the responsibility of the Christian community to say, “We are not looking for souls but for friends”’, one insisted. Their strongest message was that there was a role at national level for a joint Christian-Muslim group which took existing local work seriously. They recognised that for a national group to encourage local connectivity would imply serious resourcing questions to be able to keep in touch. These Christian leaders were very positive that, despite all its difficulties, Bradford was a great place to be.

It is the responsibility of the Christian community to say, ‘we are not looking for souls but for friends’.

At a Muslim girls’ school, we met students who told us that they had been encouraged to learn, while on a school interchange programme, that Christians felt the same as them on many things. However, they also reported that on the same programme they had been made fun of because of their faith. We learned that the sixth formers from the two schools were organising a joint bazaar to raise money for the Afghan appeal. These students recognised the idea of a Forum of Muslims and Christians as ‘a good

idea', but were unclear as to what it might lead to: 'Then what? How can it continue into the future?'

At an encounter with young Bangladeshi heritage Muslims, we were presented with a potted and passionate history of Islam by an enthusiastic young man whose faith had been reawakened by the events of 9/11. He described the global attacks being mounted on Islam and linked these to what he perceived as Jewish conspiracies controlling the media. Other members of the group told us that they had attended 'mixed' schools and got on fine with white boys at school, but had no contact with non-Muslims now. They felt that they might have to leave Bradford and the United Kingdom for a Muslim country if Britain continued to move in what they saw as an anti-Islamic direction. In much the same vein was another meeting with three young imams and another young Muslim man. This group was strongly critical of the Archbishop's initiative in seeking to build bridges between the two faiths. They drew pointed attention to the divisions within and between the Christian churches, and dismissed inter faith dialogue as a way to talk down to Muslims. They did not feel that contact with Christians could add anything to their lives as Muslims, since Islam was entirely sufficient.

Our overall impressions of Bradford were focused by the unavoidably sharp issue of tensions between Muslims of South Asian heritage and 'white Christians' – what has been described as a phenomenon of 'parallel living'. This division was mentioned by most of the groups with whom we met. It was felt that media coverage of the riots had contributed to the seriousness of the problem, and that tension had been further fuelled by what was perceived to be unfair sentencing of youths from the two communities following the riots. Some of the Muslims we spoke to complained of injustice and some were involved in a continuing campaign on the issue by Bradford parents. In this complex and fraught situation, some leading businessmen shared with us their insecurity as Muslims in Bradford. They felt marginalised and isolated in every direction.

A different issue, raised especially by women within the Muslim community, was that of the changing patterns of arrangements for marriages, which nevertheless continue to have a strong trans-continental dimension. Many felt that women were adapting to changing circumstances more rapidly than men, and that this could lead to a growth in conflict over gender roles within the family and community: 'Thirty years ago, parents chose and it was all done quickly. Now girls have more say, and are becoming more assertive'.

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11th June 2004 – return visit

There were thoughtful, and critical, responses to our tentative floating of some detailed suggestions of possible structures for the Forum. Among the points raised were: the question of a possible presidential role reserved for the Archbishop; the difficulty of identifying appropriate religious leaders; and the need to avoid institutionalising inequality between Christians and Muslims. It was suggested that inclusivity might require a substantial number of representatives to avoid divisive competition for places in the Forum.

Leicester

15th–18th October 2002 – listening exercise

Our first meeting in Leicester was with a Christian-Muslim dialogue group, which had challenged itself with the question: ‘How far are we free to analyse a religion as sociological or anthropological phenomenon rather than in terms of the claims it makes to truth?’ Such an approach, it was suggested, would enable those who did not accept its truth-claims to appreciate a religion as a valid and beneficial human activity which could make a contribution to improving society. One corollary of the question was: ‘How does the Government see faith communities: as beneficial, or as proselytising and divisive?’ It was felt that a joint Muslim-Christian body could convince Government that faith matters and that faith groups need resourcing for their community work.

Have you spoken to your Christian or Muslim neighbour lately?

One Christian member of the dialogue group spoke about collecting for Amnesty International recently near his home, in a neighbourhood around 85% Muslim in population. He knocked on the door of a Muslim family, who invited him in and were very hospitable. Yet he was told that he was the first European to set foot in the home.

He posed the question: ‘Have you spoken to your Christian, or Muslim, white, or Asian, neighbour lately?’

At a meeting with Christian clergy in an area of the city which is now predominantly Muslim, but which has a longer history of ethnic and cultural diversity, there was discussion of issues related to faith. It was suggested that some African Caribbeans had left the churches and turned to Islam when it was promoted as an alternative to ‘white man's religion’. On the other hand, the parish priest also reported how he had invited a young Muslim girl to come to his church to talk to his congregation about Islam during sermons. It was recognised that, at a local level, contacts between churches and mosques were ‘patchy’; a national body might be able to promote better connections. The development of formal structures, though, must be secondary to the forming of relationships: ‘We need to build trust and friendship first.’

We need to build trust and friendship first.

Educational visits formed a large part of our programme in Leicester. We met with children and young people at all stages of statutory education, from primary school to sixth form college.

Some students inquired whether the imam and the priest were blood brothers.

At a Church of England primary school with a mixed intake, we learned that the children naturally enquire about each other's customs when studying various faiths in Religious Education: dialogue grows naturally out of friendship. At a secondary community college in a largely Muslim environment, the principal described a recent assembly where an imam and a priest were invited together as guest speakers: ‘They read from each other's scripture and reflected on their shared understanding of the same. At the end of the assembly both embraced each other as a sign of brotherhood. Some students inquired whether they were blood brothers.’

A rather different picture emerged at a city centre sixth form college. A group of five Muslims told us of experiencing racism, of the abuse of Asians, of attacks on mosques and of people having wrong views of the Qur'ān, i.e. that it promoted terrorism. The girls spoke of many people's misleading perception that Muslim women were oppressed. They complained of negative media coverage since September 11th 2001, giving as one example the description of a Muslim man in court as 'bearded', which could be taken to imply that he was a 'fundamentalist'. These young Muslims said that they were friends with Christians, who understood Muslims because of their 'black and white' attitudes and the way in which they practise their faith. However, when we spoke to two Christian students (both white) at the same college, they told us that they personally had Hindu and Sikh friends, not Muslims. Asked about their perceptions of Muslims, these Christians said that they did not know much.

Meetings with media personnel were also important in Leicester. The head of local radio religious broadcasting (a Christian) told us how she had encouraged a group of young Muslims to produce a series of programmes on 'Myths about Muslims'. She had asked them also to talk about other things than religion, since what she was seeking to develop was expertise in journalism. She spoke of the need to train young people, which requires talent spotting and being close to the local community. Similarly, the editor of the local paper impressed on us his conviction that the media has a role beyond simply reporting the facts of a situation. A newspaper must accept that it is to make a responsible contribution to creating the kind of society and community that the residents of the area want. To assist in this process, he had drawn together what he called a 'multi-cultural media group', consisting of twenty major stakeholders in the city. It was clear to us that the local media were having a major impact on the identity of Leicester as a whole through the way in which they interpreted the life of the city to its citizens.

At the same time, we heard from many in Leicester that the excellent inter faith relationships built up at leadership level had not really filtered down to street level. We were told that it was time for new faces, for more circulation in inter faith circles, and that there was a particular need for more youth involvement or for a parallel youth structure. In relation to a proposed national Forum, the view was strongly expressed

We don't want the Forum to be just 'pillars of the community'.

that: 'We don't want the Forum to be just "pillars of the community."' Women's involvement was also seen as important – it was suggested by some that women were 'better at understanding and talking to each other'. This point was to some

extent borne out by our visit to a women's Christian-Muslim dialogue group, who described themselves as a gathering of people 'ready to listen to each other without necessarily agreeing with each other, but nevertheless finding that we have many concerns in common, and that we can be friends'.

In a prosperous area of east Leicester, on either side of a large road there stand a large parish church, attractively refurbished after a major fire, and an impressive modern mosque. We met with a group of Christians, mostly retired, at the church, who talked about the changes they had seen in the area, particularly the large numbers of children attending the mosque to learn the Qur'ān. Whereas, in the 1960s, there were five hundred children in Sunday Schools in the area, now there are virtually none. One of the group had been involved in discussions about the first mosque, at a time when there were lots of complaints. We discussed integration and the group felt that Muslims wanted to remain separate, not being willing to forego their tradition. While

they recognised that there is fear on both sides, they stressed that the common perception among many white people was that ‘they are taking over’. Conversely, a leading Muslim in the city told us on a different occasion: ‘I am discontent with containment, with communities dominated by a single faith (in Leicester’s Muslim, Sikh and Hindu ‘quarters’), but this is a good country to live in. Our responsibility is to minimise the potential problems in our situation.’

We held an encouraging meeting with Muslim university students, who had some positive experiences of working together with Christians. The students saw the way ahead as creating more personal relationships. They thought that Christians were scared of visiting mosques and vice versa, and recognised that mosques were not always very ‘approachable.’ They also suggested that joint sporting events would be a good idea – though not arranged as ‘Muslims versus Christians’! They felt that England was a good place to be a Muslim, though one added that ‘George Bush may spoil it all’, and all went on to agree that ‘there are idiots on both sides’.

There are idiots on both sides.

Having heard of some of the issues facing the Muslim community, we were told that it can also be difficult to be an Asian priest in Leicester. An Indian team vicar told us

Why are you here? Which caste do you belong to? Are there Christian priests in India?

that since coming to Leicester he had been asked some very pointed questions in his predominantly Asian parish: ‘Why are you here? Which caste do you belong to? Are there Christian priests in India?’ While trying to encourage more inter faith

engagement he had been asked by a member of his church: ‘If I go to the mosque will God forgive me?’ His comment, that it was important to encourage people to mix, was echoed by an imam, who spoke of the need to establish links between the communities which were genuine and which allowed communication. This would involve the sharing of experiences, feelings, concerns – individually, locally and nationally.

7th May 2004 – return visit

We need to shout!

Proposals for the national Forum were well received by a mixed group of Muslims and Christians on our return visit to Leicester. We were asked how we could convince our fellow Muslims and Christians that it was a good idea, or even safe, to work together. Gaining wide support for the creation of a Forum should be part of our continuing work. It was suggested that people who had made inter faith connections were often ‘too nice’. For the Forum to work we should be more proactive and assertive: ‘We need to shout!’

One of the group commented that imams were not engaging with the media and that the Forum could help people to come forward and talk publicly. Media representatives responded by saying that it is difficult to cover the sensitivities and complexities of faith stories. The national Forum might help in this area, but it would be important that the media should not only hear from this Forum in times of crisis.

We should not only hear from the Forum in times of crisis.

East London

24th – 26th March 2003 – listening exercise

A Christian theologian with a long history of community involvement in the east end of London reminded us of one important feature which our faith communities share: ‘The common ground between church and mosque is that they have a world outside. Both Muslims and Christians have those who remain

The common ground between church and mosque is that they have a world outside.

inside, and those who look outside.’ However, many of both faiths in this area asked if enough was being done. According to a minorities adviser working in the City of London, the challenge was so far being missed: ‘Current inter faith relations have not excited me; everybody has missed a trick’, he lamented. His comments were mainly concerned with what was happening to young people. In the Muslim community they face competing tendencies – to become either radicalised or westernised. He suggested that there had never been a very sophisticated approach to young people and that a forum would be useful if it could resonate with young people: ‘we need to think carefully about how the youth voice is represented, then how to respond to it’, he insisted.

Most groups we spoke to welcomed the idea of a national Forum. At the same time, they urged a note of caution. There was a recurrent sense that it would be a mistake to create a single overarching institution. Rather, what was needed was a forum which could express the diversity of both communities, without controlling. This could be achieved through the coming together of key people to agree on founding principles and to set a few key objectives. A group of Muslim women added to this by suggesting the convening of a separate meeting for women from which representatives could be selected for the main Forum.

We need to move towards living with each other, learning from each other, and enriching each other.

Our first day of visits concluded with a meeting with a Christian and Muslim chaplain working together in one of the London universities. Their experience of working together and growing together into dialogue had encouraged them so much that

they were committed to sharing this with students and wider society. They recognised that their respective communities were at present living in parallel with each other. They now needed to move towards living with each other, learning from each other, and enriching each other.

On the next day, a meeting with evangelical Anglicans brought home their deep concerns for the plight of fellow-believers in Muslim countries where religious freedom is denied or impaired. They mentioned regular reports of persecution, and deep anxieties about the imposition of *shari’a* law. They felt that a forum could help to enlist Muslims in this country in seeking to address such problems alongside Christians. This group was cautiously in favour of a forum which would allow space for difference as well as consensus. They thought that it should have a real openness to overseas issues, while being primarily rooted in the context here.

Any forum should be extremely uncomfortable and ruthlessly honest!

Recognising the complexity of the task that would be set before it, one participant pointed out: ‘Any forum would have to find ways of expressing and exploring deeply held and contradictory convictions in integrity. It should be extremely uncomfortable and ruthlessly honest!’

The outcome of this initiative needs to be radically different so that it catches the imagination.

In another group of Christians and Muslims, the importance of modesty and patience were urged in our planning: ‘Nobody must be impatient, it requires very gradual building up of trust and no attempts to convert’, we were told. It was also claimed that it was the responsibility of the

churches to take a courageous step to build relationships between clergy and imams, and to ensure that all those involved should see themselves as role models. In the current situation, it seemed that good experiences were not trickling down, as the grassroots could not see that contact was taking place at leadership level. Given such a situation, it was suggested that the challenge was not so much to form a forum as to be a catalyst to pull together best practices. We were told: ‘You have got to do it in a different way to anything that has gone before. The outcome of this initiative needs to be radically different so that it catches the imagination.’

We spent much time on this visit exploring the question of what Muslims and Christians were already doing together for the communities in which they found themselves, not concentrating on single-faith interests, and why they were acting in this way. A Christian woman working for a Christian regeneration agency in partnership with a similar Muslim organisation told us how she identified with Islam in her homeland of Nigeria, even though she was a Christian. She used to go to the mosque and did not realise that Christians were ‘other’, or that there was any real divide between the two. Moving to this country had changed that perception of hers. A Muslim respondent in turn told us: ‘The system is scared and suspicious of faith generally, more so for Muslims. When we go together or Christians speak on behalf of both it works much better.’ In engaging with the secular world, we were reminded of the need to translate specifically religious vocabulary so that we can communicate our sense of purpose without using language that alienates.

When we go together or Christians speak on behalf of both it works much better.

25th May 2004 – return visit

There was a good response to our presentation, which shared with a mixed group of Christians and Muslims the vision informing our proposal for a Forum. One person said that we should ‘develop bridges between the two communities, work on solid ground, and move on from there ... or go backwards’. On the question of media, it was suggested that we should build up a momentum of public relations: ‘people will flock to us because they’ve heard a good thing.’ Those present also thought that the Forum could help to bring both faiths together on issues where no joint work is currently being done. One closing comment was, ‘the Forum can clear the way to show that it can be done.’

North West London

8th–10th June 2003 – listening exercise

This visit was characterised by a focus on minority groups within both faiths. At a meeting with Christians of different ethnic backgrounds, a Nigerian offered us the thought that ‘Seeking to achieve inter faith reconciliation is living out the Gospel’. Yet sometimes reconciliation is not the issue, we were also pointed to the need to articulate a theology of inter faith engagement. Issues of human rights were discussed, and Nigeria was recognised as a key location for many Muslims and Christians to work together on an agenda including such issues as the impact of *shari’a* law. It was pointed out that it was in some ways easier to explore these issues in Britain; discussions here could then be fed back into Nigeria, and a forum could play a facilitating role in this process,

There were also concerns from some Christians that the differences between Christians and Muslims were so great that there was a basic incompatibility. We met with a group of black church leaders who saw the difficulty of Christians and Muslims working together in terms of the separation of respective beliefs, specifically those concerning Jesus Christ as the one Mediator. They said that they had not thought about working together because of this definite theological divide. In addition, within their neighbourhood they felt marginalised both by the vigorous presence of people of other religions celebrating their faith and by their local authority.

A group of Christian women expressed surprise to hear that there were only two women on the visiting team, and thought that this might not be a good portent for our work towards creating the Forum. They also expressed sympathy for the vulnerability of those Muslim women who could

Christian and Muslim women need to unite and look after one another.

be easily identified in public by the *hijāb*, and affirmed their solidarity with them: ‘Women need to unite on this and look after one another’. Some time was spent considering possibilities for a local initiative between Christian and Muslim women. This group also posed questions in this area: Would the Forum be interested in local initiatives and local opinions? Would it put resources in to the local level or expect the local level to resource the Forum?

We broke new ground by taking our listening programme to a support group for couples in Muslim-Christian marriages. This offered an interesting example of the intimate ways in which Muslim-Christian relations can directly affect individuals and families. We were told that the resourcing of Christians to understand Islam, and *vice versa*, would be helpful for all involved in this area.

Members of a Muslim family organisation told us that ‘Government has a secular understanding of spirituality; the Forum needs to get its teeth into this’. They reminded us that there are tremendously important insights that Islam has on communities in which human beings can genuinely flourish. As on other occasions, it was the women who were delivering these insights to the community through their practical work. Therefore, they told us, any forum’s structures must be family friendly or women may not be able to take part.

We had the privilege of meeting many people who were involved in education at various levels across north and west London. They had wise, and cautionary, words for us concerning the importance of remembering Hindus and members of other faith communities as we build bilateral relations with Muslims. At a Christian theological college, a group of students (including one convert from Islam) gave us three maxims for guidance: ‘Show unity but don’t compromise’; ‘Have clear objectives and stick to them’; and ‘Gain support by not dodging difficult issues’. Further clarification of structures was suggested by a Shi’a group, who distinguished two forms of representation: on a general level, figures of religious authority; and on a level of specialism, individuals with particular expertise. This distinction became central to the structure of the Forum as subsequently planned.

*Gain support by
not dodging
difficult issues.*

At a meeting at a Muslim school, parents told us how they sent the children there because their needs were not being met in mainstream state education. They felt that in their experiences there were no Muslim role models within state schools, and that Muslim pupils were generally unable to speak to teachers who would understand their situation. We were asked to incorporate the perspectives of young people, and to harness their energy, channelling it positively into inter faith work under the guidance of elders. We were encouraged to see each faith community as a diverse and fertile resource in itself.

12th May 2004 – return visit

On our return visit, we met with a group of Christians and Muslims of mixed ethnic, denominational and career backgrounds to discuss our emerging proposals. They had comments relating to three specific areas: the role of the Archbishop of Canterbury; the relation of a national forum to local activity; and the possibility of devising some way for individuals to affiliate to the Forum to signify their support. The group was firm in its support of the general principle of a national Forum of Muslims and Christians.

4 Key issues in relations between Muslims and Christians

Our listening exercises took place from March 2002 to June 2003, which could be seen as a period of crisis for Christian-Muslim relations internationally. The terrorist attacks of September 11th 2001, followed by the military action in Afghanistan and then the invasion of Iraq, all put considerable strain on relations between Muslims and Christians globally, with inevitable consequences in this country also. At the same time, these difficult circumstances also served to sharpen people's awareness of the need to build bridges of understanding and trust between our communities, and were the catalyst for an expansion and deepening of inter faith activity around the country.

These pressing contemporary issues were certainly reflected in much of what we heard in our listening exercises. Muslims who spoke to us often reported that they felt in some measure mistrusted or suspected, that they were the victims of Islamophobic or xenophobic incidents or attitudes, and that they could feel isolated or fearful away from the support of strong local communities. They also spoke with passion about the situation of fellow Muslims in the Middle East, in South Asia, and in other parts of the world. For their part, many Christians highlighted the difficult situations faced by the churches in some Islamic countries, drawing attention particularly to issues of the freedom of converts to practise their faith. Christians and Muslim alike expressed strong feelings on the continuing conflict in Israel-Palestine, and pointed to the problems it could cause for relations between different communities in this country.

The impact of international events, however, could only be appreciated against the background of the ways in which Muslims and Christians relate to one another in our own society, and here we heard much that was challenging as well as much that was encouraging. It was apparent to us that, despite the admirable work being done by many inter faith groups and other organisations, it is still difficult in many places for Christians and Muslims to meet at a level of friendship and trust. In part, this reflects the geographical separation of communities highlighted in the aftermath of the disturbances in Northern towns in 2001 – a separation which can be inadvertently re-inforced by the effects of locally-based schools systems.

More deeply, the continuing distance between Christians and Muslims is perhaps the result of natural human reluctance to leave the comfort of the known and familiar for encounter with that which is unknown and may be seen as threatening. Such reluctance can only be strengthened when the other community is portrayed – in literature, media, religious teaching, or popular attitudes – in terms that are stereotypical, homogenising, or negative. We heard repeatedly of the need for Christians and Muslims to counter false images of one another, and to commit themselves as a priority to the task of mutual education.

On a more positive note, we heard growing evidence that Christians and Muslims are coming to recognise the contributions which each can make to the challenges of living by faith in a plural and increasingly secular society. Many people, for example, spoke to us of the convergence in ethical values which they sensed between Christianity and Islam – a convergence which could not only be extended to other faith traditions, but also should be developed as the basis for working together for the common good. Even in areas where norms of behaviour seemed rather different – for instance, questions of gender role or the religious education of young children – we sensed among some both a recognition of the complexity of the problems which our two

communities are facing and an appreciation of the wisdom which our respective faith traditions can bring to bear.

Finally, it was apparent that both Muslims and Christians today are having to respond to a constantly changing environment, and this can have a major impact on their understanding of their own identity, particularly for young people. In part, this is a consequence of wider changes in society, in family life, and in the place accorded to religious authority. In part, it reflects the continuing adaptation of minority communities (of both faiths) to the structures of public life in Britain. It also flows from the continuing process of ethnic and cultural diversification affecting both religions through the arrival of new groups of immigrants in our country.

What has been very striking in what we have heard in all the venues we visited has been the degree of confidence which so many Muslims and Christians are bringing to the living out of their faiths in these rapidly changing circumstances. We feel strongly that there is much that our two communities can learn from one another's experiences here, and many ways in which we can support one another in the challenges which we both face. It is this conviction that underlies the vision we now seek to formulate for Christian-Muslim relations at a national level.

5 Developing a vision for Christian-Muslim relations nationally

We heard, from every kind of group we met, at every level, and in every location, a welcome for the principle of Muslims and Christians developing a new vision for understanding and partnership at national level. The fundamental challenge we face is that of living together creatively and harmoniously in our increasingly plural society. The context we are in presents both a timely opportunity and a pressing imperative for Christians and Muslims to rise to such a challenge, and in so doing to make a joint contribution to the benefit of all.

In order to realise such a vision, we propose the following as actions which need to be prioritised by both our communities:

- weave a web of open, honest and committed personal relationships between leading Christians and Muslims in order to create an atmosphere of trust;
- generate significant opportunities for exploration of each other's faith and experience in order to enable better mutual understanding;
- generate a national focus and point of reference in order to give advice and encouragement for those involved in Christian-Muslim relations;
- develop effective channels of communication in order to help Christians and Muslims together respond to events and situations which test our relationship;
- encourage shared reflection on the spiritual, ethical and practical values of the two traditions in order to offer resources for citizenship in our society;
- build a public platform in order to strengthen Christians and Muslims working together for the common good in partnership with others.

In Section Six we suggest the establishment of a consultative forum which could give organisational shape to these tasks at a national level. In our listening process, many rightly pressed us to identify the distinctively new contribution which would be added to existing inter faith work through an initiative like this. Their questions have challenged us to be clearer about two aspects of the vision set out above: its place in the wider inter faith context, and the way in which its national focus relates to local activity.

Bilateral and multilateral

We recognise that there are several groups already bringing together people and communities of different faiths, including not only Muslims and Christians but also Baha'is, Buddhists, Hindus, Jains, Jews, Sikhs, Zoroastrians and others. We have heard from many of the value of these multi-faith structures, and we are convinced of the important part that they can play in developing understanding and co-operation between people of different faiths, and in encouraging their communities together to contribute to society. At a national level, the work of the Inter Faith Network for the UK is particularly significant; at local level, there is a growing number of inter faith groups, councils of faiths, and other organisations. We see the development of a vision for bilateral Muslim-Christian relations as belonging firmly within this wider context, complementing and strengthening such multilateral inter faith initiatives by focusing particularly on issues of particular shared concern to Christians and

Muslims. We believe that an organisational structure addressing this more limited area would be able to sustain bilateral dialogue between Muslims and Christians with a depth and a specificity which currently existing inter faith organisations cannot, and are not designed to, deliver. Such a structure would also work alongside groups such as the Council of Christians and Jews, the Maimonides Foundation and the Hindu-Christian Forum of the UK, respectively fostering bilateral relations between Christians and Jews, Jews and Muslims, and Hindus and Christians, as well as bodies relating to trilateral or other groupings of faith communities.

The distinctive contribution which Muslims and Christians together could make can be seen in a number of different dimensions. Historically, Christianity and Islam have had a long history of interaction, not all of which has been positive, and issues from the past can continue to have consequences which need to be addressed in the present. Internationally, the difficult relations between the two faith communities in some overseas contexts can raise challenges which need to be faced in our bilateral relations in our own country. Most of all, there is a particular and pressing need to build up trust, communication and understanding between Muslims and Christians – the two numerically largest religions both in our world and in our country – as a way of encouraging members of our two communities to work with all people of faith and of good will in seeking the common good. Developing bilateral relations in this way at national level might indeed serve as an encouragement and a model for Muslims and Christians in other parts of the world.

National and local

We have heard repeatedly of the need in Christian-Muslim relations to create foci for practical co-operation, and to pioneer ground-breaking initiatives. There is widespread recognition of the danger of organisations and meetings turning into mere ‘talking shops’, and a feeling that this is particularly likely to happen at a national level. On the other hand, there is a tremendous amount of practically oriented energy invested in inter faith and Muslim–Christian relations by many individuals and organisations at the level of cities, towns and neighbourhoods. We are insistent that any structured meetings of Muslims and Christians at national level should in no way interfere with, devalue, or seek to control this richness of local activity. On the contrary, our hope would be that the vitality of grassroots encounters could feed into and energise national patterns of co-operation between Christians and Muslims.

We can, though, see at least three ways in which the realisation of a structured vision for Christian-Muslim relations at national level could be of help to local engagement. In the first place, it would give encouragement and validation for groups already working to bring together Christians and Muslims in different places. It would also provide a way of sharing good practice between different localities, and perhaps of stimulating encounter in places where this was not already happening. Thirdly, it would offer a way of taking up the wider national implications of specific issues emerging at local level.

We have also faced the question of what we mean by the word ‘national’. Our listening exercises were all conducted in England, not least because we were acting on an initiative of the Archbishop of Canterbury, whose religious jurisdiction is limited to that nation. We therefore do not feel that on the basis of what we have heard we are in a position to make any suggestions relating to the other parts of the United

Kingdom. At the same time, we recognise that relations between Muslims and Christians are an issue of interest to both our faith communities in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland also, and that many Christian and Muslim organisations cover two or more of the four nations of our islands. Recognising the different dynamics which will characterise Christian-Muslim relations in different parts of the United Kingdom, we would welcome any responses to our proposals from beyond England, including any interest there might be in a more broadly constituted structure. The proposals as at present formulated, however, relate to England alone.

6 A Forum of Muslims and Christians

We believe that what we have heard in our listening exercises points strongly to the establishment of a Forum of Muslims and Christians at national level in England, as a way of delivering the vision outlined in Section Five. This suggestion has met general approval from our respondents, though there has been understandable caution from many about the shape which such a forum should take.

The values which would be embodied in a forum to meet our vision include these:

- mutuality in meeting and working between Christians and Muslims;
- credibility in the Muslim and Christian communities;
- internal stability to nurture trust and understanding among participants;
- commitment to represent the diversity and complexity of both communities;
- recognition of the importance of the participation of women;
- recognition of the importance of the participation of young people.

The parameters within which such a forum would work would include these:

- a clear link to the office of the Archbishop of Canterbury;
- a recognised public profile;
- a focus on delivering a limited number of specific and clear objectives;
- developing a capacity to address current issues of concern;
- networking with those involved locally in Christian-Muslim relations;
- co-operating with other inter faith structures.

We thus propose that the Forum would bring together a permanent group of leading figures in the Christian and Muslim communities. It would aim to reflect the religious and ethnic diversity of both Muslim and Christian communities, and to ensure participation of men and women of all ages. Its meetings would be organised, and its work carried out, in a spirit of mutuality.

We recognise that the office of the Archbishop of Canterbury can play a vital role in bringing about and sustaining such a Forum. Built on his distinctively Christian ministry as primate of the Church of England and one of the recognised leaders of the Christian Churches nationally, the Archbishop is also generally seen as sharing a wider concern for the place of faith communities in civic society. We have heard how not only Christians but also Muslims, and people of other faiths, look to his office for affirmation and encouragement in the public dimensions of their community life, and in their engagement with one another. As the encouragement of the Archbishop has been important in developing both multilateral inter faith work and bilateral organisations such as the Council of Christians and Jews, so we have heard, particularly from many Muslims, that the support of his office would be invaluable in the formation of a Forum of Muslims and Christians.

At the same time, it would be very important for such a Forum to span the ecumenical breadth of the Christian churches, as well as the religious diversity of the Muslim communities. With regard to the former, we distinguish between the role of the

Archbishop of Canterbury, which would derive particularly from the constitutional standing of his office, and the place of the Church of England as an ecclesial body. The Church of England would clearly play a very important part in the Forum's life, but we would hope that this would be as an ecumenical partner alongside the Roman Catholic, Free Church and other leading Christian traditions. With regard to Muslim involvement, we think that the Forum should aim to embrace the range of traditional Islamic religious leadership (Sunni and Shi'a) as well as drawing on the strengths of Muslim representative and community organisations.

More broadly, we have heard an insistence that any Forum of Muslims and Christians should seek to embrace the ethnic and social diversity of both communities as they are found in our nation today, and to be inclusive of adults of all ages and both genders. That requires a scope of concern for the Forum's work which takes seriously all who identify as either 'Muslim' or 'Christian', including those who may feel distanced or even alienated from the formal structures of their respective communities. In terms of the Forum's membership, it also requires being serious about finding ways to ensure the participation of women and young people.

The work of the Forum as we are envisaging it would concentrate specifically on areas of particular bilateral concern to Christians and Muslims. We recognise that many of the most pressing issues in our society are of concern to people in all faith communities. We would naturally expect these to be addressed in a multilateral way, and see it as imperative that our two communities continue to support multi-faith organisations and networks which seek to do this. As a corollary of this, if a bilateral Forum of Muslims and Christians were in existence, it would have to find ways of feeding into multilateral organisations any issues with which it might become engaged which were in fact of interest to all faith communities even though addressed initially by Muslims and Christians within the Forum structure.

With all these important points in mind, the potential work of the Forum could still cover a very wide range of concerns which have a special saliency in Christian-Muslim relations. An important part of the Forum's early activity would have to be the identification of clear, focused and achievable priorities of this kind. We suggest now some of the areas within which those priorities might lie, and give some practical examples of the kind of work that might be involved. The establishment of a detailed work programme, however, would be one of the first responsibilities of the newly constituted Forum itself.

Theological foundations

Christianity and Islam both seek to witness to God's purposes of justice and peace for the world and the humanity which he has made as this is disclosed to us in our respective scriptures and traditions, and through the continuing tasks of interpretation which we both face. Underpinning and accompanying all the practical work in Christian-Muslim relations with which the Forum is concerned there needs to be a continuing theological exploration together of these core elements in both our faiths which inform our involvement. Such an exploration would take account of both the resonances and the dissonances in our understanding of how divine guidance is given. This foundational theological work could find a particular practical expression in the building of bridges between the various training institutions in which our clergy and imams receive their formation.

International impacts

In many parts of our world, Christians and Muslims are caught in a nexus of conflictual or confrontational relations, aligned to religious difference even if not solely motivated by religious motivations. When tensions overseas reach crisis point, the impact on Christian-Muslim relations in this country can be immediately and severely deleterious. This points to two important areas of work: to set in place reliable and accessible patterns of communication here which can deal with such crises; and to move beyond simplistic analyses to deepen understanding of the complex and interlocking factors which contribute to conflict situations.

Media representation

Both Muslims and Christians recognise the importance of monitoring how their faiths are presented in public discourse, particularly through the media. In many cases, they may have to address distorting or misrepresenting images of Islam or Christianity, or of Christian-Muslim relations. Much work needs to be undertaken with both the media and the religious communities to develop more adequate patterns of representation and more effective channels of communication, as well as proactively creating and promoting access to the media.

Education

Sharing a passionate concern for truth, Christians and Muslims value education very highly. There are practical issues arising from the school sector, voluntary and maintained, which deeply affect both our communities and their interaction. Within the teaching offered in Christian and Muslim religious settings, conveying a fair and accurate appreciation of Islam and Christianity respectively is a challenge for educators at every level. Building structures of collegiality to tackle this range of educational questions together could be a major step forward.

Community relations and citizenship

The ways in which our communities relate to one another, to other faith groups, and to wider society varies greatly from place to place. For the good of our common life as a whole, we need to strengthen positive patterns of Christian-Muslim partnership, overcome barriers of separation and suspicion, and promote a sense of shared citizenship appropriate to a pluralistic society. This challenge will be met most effectively not by general statements alone, but by detailed work building on particular concrete cases. There is a particularly urgent need for Muslims and Christians to address together the situation of their young people, to look together at changing gender roles and family patterns in their communities, and to explore questions of religious identity.

Annexe A

A possible structure for the Forum

There are a number of models which might be used as a template for establishing a national forum of Muslims and Christians in England. For the Forum to carry the confidence of Christians, Muslims, and others with an interest in Christian-Muslim relations, it would need to meet several organisational challenges. Bearing these in mind, we offer the following tentative suggestions as a starting point for the detailed discussions which will be necessary to establish the Forum's structure.

Presidency

The Archbishop of Canterbury could be asked to convene the initial meetings needed to establish the Forum, and it would be hoped that he could continue to maintain a strong link with its activities, perhaps through some form of presidential role. We recognise that the many commitments of the Archbishop's ministry would preclude him from playing an active part in the day-to-day life of the Forum; nevertheless, we believe that his involvement in its formative stage and his continued encouragement of its work would help in providing a stable anchorage for the new Forum, and in giving it a recognisable profile within the Muslim and Christian communities and more widely. We suggest that the Forum could be legally constituted as a charitable organisation.

While his supportive role would be very important for the new organisation's success, it probably would not be appropriate for the Forum's name to refer explicitly to the Archbishop of Canterbury. Indeed it might well be that there would be times when the Forum's work meant that it would want to maintain a certain public distance from the Archbishop's office. A provisional working name for the organisation could be 'The Forum of Muslims and Christians in England'; in time, a more informal and resonant 'brand name' might also be considered.

Forum meeting

We suggest that the Forum's meeting, as the locus of co-ordination and planning within the organisation, could comprise twenty people, with equal numbers of Christians and Muslims, all of them present at the invitation of the Archbishop of Canterbury. We think that one possibility would be for this membership to be constructed in two stages:

- First, identification of four senior religious leaders from each faith, to represent a diversity of traditions in the Muslim and Christian communities;
- Second, nomination by this group of a further six people from each faith.

To ensure a spread of expertise and background among Forum members, and based on the issues which have surfaced as particularly significant in our listening exercises, we suggest that this second group be people with a specialist involvement in the following six areas: family issues; education; youth; media; community and public affairs; international issues.

These twenty people would then together constitute the Forum, meeting as one body. One person, either Muslim or Christian (or possibly one person of one faith together with an alternate of the other), could be invited by the Archbishop of Canterbury to chair the Forum in his absence. This person might already be a member of the Forum, or might be chosen from beyond the Forum's membership. Although we envisage such a chairing role as voluntary, we recognise that it would require strong and active involvement, with a significant input of time and energy that was not restricted to Forum meetings alone.

It might help to aim for an initial minimum target figure (e.g. 30%) in the participation of women from each faith. We acknowledge that this is a strong target to set, but we believe that to aim for something of this order would be important if the Forum were to avoid tokenism.

We recognise that detailed consideration would have to be given to ensuring that the Forum's membership was sufficiently representative in all dimensions of the diverse and complex realities of both communities. Among the issues of inclusivity which would need addressing, we suggest that the following are particularly important:

- ensuring the involvement of young people;
- securing a geographical spread across the country;
- striking a balance between continuity of membership and openness to new participants.

Secretariat

We think that it would be important for a well-resourced and robust secretariat, with a strong and supportive management structure, to be appointed to see through the setting up of the Forum and to sustain it in its work. We believe that this could be delivered through the appointment of two permanent, full-time staff. Of these, one might be responsible for establishing and maintaining the organisational structure of the Forum, while the other could develop its outreach, profile and local connectivity. The intention should be for one staff member to be a Christian and the other a Muslim.

Staffing at this level would have considerable financial implications, which would need to be addressed by Christians and Muslims working together. Working on the basis of a core staff of two full-time posts, and depending on location, we estimate the annual budget necessary to sustain a vigorous work programme at between £120,000 and £135,000 p.a., together with start-up costs of between £5,000 and £7,000 for the first year. We suggest that commitments towards meeting these costs initially should be sought from both Christians and Muslims, though not in such a way as to endanger their giving to other projects in the inter faith area – it might be more appropriate to see appeals being directed towards individuals and trusts rather than to religious organisations as such. In the longer term, it might be wise to think in terms of establishing an endowment to secure permanent funding for the Forum’s activities.

A possible future phase of the Forum’s life might see the development of a national membership scheme, but we do not see this as an immediate priority. We do, however, recognise the need to network effectively with local Christian–Muslim groups; this could be an important part of the secretariat’s role, and should be borne in mind in deciding whereabouts its work is to be based.

Work programme

We recognise that the identification of a relevant and achievable work programme would be an early priority for the Forum’s members and secretariat, and we do not feel that it would be appropriate for us to make even tentative suggestions about the content of such a programme at this stage. We would envisage that the Forum’s work in all its areas of concern would be underpinned by a shared commitment to theological dialogue and to spiritual values.

Establishing the Forum

We understand that the Archbishop of Canterbury is minded to entrust the further consideration and detailed implementation of this proposal to a group to be chaired by the Bishop of Bolton, the Rt. Revd David Gillett. We wish Bishop David and his Implementation Group well in the major issues they will have to address. We think that these will include:

- winning the support of key Muslims and Christians, and Christian churches and Muslim organisations, for the proposed Forum;
- securing initial funding for the Forum’s work, and identifying sources for its continuing funding;
- communicating to other faith communities and inter faith organisations the distinctive rationale for the Forum, and gaining their good will;
- establishing the legal and organisational basis of the Forum;
- appointing suitable staff for the Forum’s secretariat;
- identifying Forum members;
- formally launching the Forum.

Annexe B

Members of the Planning Group and Reference Group

Planning Group

The Rt Revd John Austin, Bishop of Aston (Chairman)

Dr Fatma Amer

Mr Julian Bond (Assistant Secretary)

Dr Chris Hewer

The Revd Canon Dr Michael Igrave (Secretary)

The Revd Canon Dr David Marshall

Mr Fuad Nahdi

Dr Helen Reid

Dr Ataullah Siddiqui

The Revd Canon Dr Andrew Wingate

Reference Group (includes all members of Planning Group)

Mr Saeed AbdulRahim

Dr Manazir Ahsan, MBE

Mr Yousif Al-Khoei

Sayyed Nadeem Kazmi

Dr Abdul Rahim Khan

Mr Ayub Laher

Canon Dr Philip Lewis

The Most Revd Kevin MacDonald, Archbishop of Southwark (Roman Catholic)

Dr Farhan Nizami

Dr Jaffer Qureshi

Maulana Shahid Raza

The Revd Baroness Kathleen Richardson

Dr Peter Riddell

Imam Dr Abduljalil Sajid

The Revd Peter Sulston

The Revd Dr David Thomas

The Revd Sally Thomas

The Revd John Webber

Consultant: Mr Brian Pearce, OBE

Annexe C

Schedule of visits, organisations and individuals consulted

Blackburn, Nelson and Oldham

Local Organisers:

The Revd Dale Barton, Churches Together in Lancashire

Mr Martin Miller, Diocese of Manchester

Nahila Ahmed, Blackburn College

Zahoor Ahmed, Nelson

Ishtiaq Ali, Brierfield Mosque Committee

Anjum Anwar, Audley Community Centre

Nasrullah Anwar, Lancashire Council of Mosques

Muhammad Aslan, Nelson

Muhammad Arif, Brierfield

Muhammad Naseem Awan, Lancashire Council of Mosques

Sarah Aston, Pendle Borough Council

The Revd Canon Peter Ballard, Diocesan Director of Education

Rauf Bashir, Building Bridges

Kate Cant, St Michael's CE School

Mufti Hilal Deen

Damian Duggan, Building Bridges

Muhammad Farrouq, Muslim Global Relief

The Rt Revd David Gillett, Bishop of Bolton

Iqbal Giri, Lancashire Council of Mosques

Kathleen Greenwood, Parish Church, Nelson

Mr Habib, Nelson

Abdul Haq, Lancashire Council of Mosques

Rusha Hassan, Blackburn College

Imtiaz Hussain, Lancashire Council of Mosques

Ruby Hussain, Beardwood High School

Muhammad Khalaq, Lancashire Council of Mosques

The Rt Revd Michael Lewis, Bishop of Middleton

M Khan, Nelson

Rehana Koser, Blackburn College

Nizam Makda, Al-Islah School

Dr M Ikram Malik, Building Bridges

Ibrahim Malik, Lancashire Council of Mosques

Ibrahim Master, Lancashire Council of Mosques

Imam Muhammad, Nelson

Councillor Salim Mulla, Blackburn

Imtiaz Patel, Drugs Action Team

Nissa Patel, Blackburn College

Andrew Pratt, Drug Action Team, Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council

Abdul Hamid Qureshi, Lancashire Council of Mosques

Fazal Rahim, Oldham Partnership Development

S Samuels, Nelson

Qari M.A. Shakir, Oldham Inter Faith Forum

Hasan Sidat, Lancashire Council of Mosques

The Revd Richard Skinner, Methodist Church Oldham

Douglas Stewart, Society of Friends, Nelson

Fr Phil Sumner, Our Lady & St Patrick's, Oldham

Philip Watson, Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council

Ishmael Valli, Lancashire Council of Mosques

Muhammad Yasim, Nelson

Muhammad Yunus, Lancashire Council of Mosques

Bradford

Local Organisers:

Mrs Awais Dominic, Touchstone
Mr David Jackson, Roman Catholic Diocese of Leeds
The Revd Solomon Joseph, Thornbury Centre
Mr Dominic Moghal, Active Faith Communities
The Revd Sam Randall, Diocese of Bradford

Mansoor Abbasi, Inter Cultural Leadership School
Ishtiaq Ahmed
M Ajeeb
Dr Sifa Alawi
Joynal Ali, Bangladeshi Youth Centre
Mohammed Ali OBE, QED UK
M Askar
Sher Azam
Bruce Berry, Belle Vue Boys' School
The Revd Sue Culver, Bradford Inner Ring Group
Imam Faxal Dadd, Abubakr Mosque
Nasmin Din, Grange Technical College
Farkaandah Faraz
Mohammed Fazal
Judith Fitzpatrick, Feversham College
Joe Froggatt, Columba House
Anne Gardiner, Grange Technical College
Mushtaq Ghani, Grange Technical College
Hilary Greed, St Columba's
Mehmoodah Hadi
Mussadik Hussain, Yorkshire Cottage Bakeries
Nazir Hussain, N H Hardware
Dilshad Khan, Bradford Royal Infirmary
Zahida Khan
Raja Sahibdad Khan
Shamim Khan, Asian Women & Girls' Centre
Amira Khatun, Keighley Asian Women & Children's Centre
Adeeba Malik, QED UK
Nighat Mirza, Belle Vue Boys' School
The Revd George Moffat, Parish of Manningham
Shazia Nazir
John Player, Grange Technical College
M Hanif Qamar
Hussain Qurban
Mohammed Qurban
Nisar Raja, Raja & Co.
The Revd Geoff Reid, Touchstone
Zohra Sabhia
Wahida Shaffi
Mohammed Shammoon
The Rt. Revd David Smith, (former) Bishop of Bradford
Radhia Tarafder, Inter Cultural Leadership School
Jane Tiller
Selina Ullah, Bradford District Care Trust
Rukhsana Yasmin

Leicester

Local organisers:

The Revd Canon Dr Andrew Wingate
Dr Ataullah Siddiqui

Prof. Hassan Abdallah, De Montfort University
Sayyed Faiyazuddin Ahmad, Faith Leaders' Forum
Mohammed Ahmed, Somali Association
Naila Ahmed, Women's Dialogue Group
The Revd Jessie Anand, Parish of the Resurrection
The Revd Anand Asir, Parish of the Resurrection
Daphne Beale, Leicester Diocesan Committee for Relations with People of Other Faiths
Berners Street Mosque
Raana Bokhari, Women's Dialogue Group
Clare Callender, Leicester University
Nick Carter, Leicester Mercury
The Revd David Clark, Leicester Council of Faiths
The Revd Jane Curtis, (former) chaplain De Montfort University
David Dunmore, St John the Baptist CE School
Abdul Karim Gheewala, Indian Muslim Association
Nick Goffin, Gateway College
The Revd Alan Hawker, Parish of the Presentation
Chris Haywood, Leicestershire Police
Sandra Herbert, BBC Radio Leicester
The Revd David Heslop, Castle Donington Parish Church
The Revd Peter Hobson, Church of the Martyrs
Asaf Hussain
Freda Hussain, Moat Community College
Nazir Hussein, Dialogue Group
Dr Julia Ipgrave, Uplands Junior School
Dr Angela Jagger, Leicester Diocesan Committee for Relations with People of Other Faiths
The Revd Diane Johnson, St Philip's Church
Jaffer Kapasi, Federation of Muslim Organisations
Bashir Kassam, Hussein Shi'a Mosque
Nayib Khan
Sue Kyriakou, Diocesan Communications Officer
Ray Liggins
Daoud Matthews
Margaret Matthews, Dialogue Group
The Revd Suresh Menon, Holy Trinity
Manzoor Moghal MBE, Leicestershire Federation of Muslim Organisations
The Revd Canon Margaret Morris, Dialogue Group
Sheikh Ibrahim Mogra
F. Naimuddin
Suleman Nagdi, Leicestershire Federation of Muslim Organisations
The Revd Jonnie Parkin, chaplain De Montfort University
Jennie Parry, St Philip's Church
Charlie Piggins, Leicestershire Police
Rashid Ravat, Dialogue Group
The Revd Canon Irving Richards, St Stephen's Church
The Revd Alison Roche, Church of the Martyrs
Cllr Malik Salim, Leicester Central Mosque
Rashid Siddiqui
Marcus Solanki
Greg Stevens, De Montfort University Christian Union
The Rt Revd. Tim Stevens, Bishop of Leicester
The Revd Canon Peter Taylor, Diocesan Director of Education
Bert Tegg, Birstall and Wanlip PCC
Batool al-Toma, Islamic Foundation

Ruth Upton, Church of the Martyrs
Mary Warrener, St Philip's Church
Edgar Watts, St Philip's Church
Joan Watts, St Philip's Church
Elizabeth Wayne, Leicester Diocesan Committee for Relations with People of Other Faiths
The Revd Ron Whittingham, Parish of the Presentation
The Revd Martin Wilson, Dialogue Group
Paul Winstone, Leicester City Council

London

Local Organisers:

Mr Saeed AbdulRahim
Mr Zafar Ashraf
The Revd Fergus Capie
The Revd John Webber

Maulana Musa Admani, Imam London Metropolitan University
Adlin Adnan, Interpal
Saif Ahmad, Faith Regen
Lord Nazir Ahmed
Maqsood Ahmed, Prison Service and Faith Communities Unit
Solma Ahmed, Women's Relief
Dr Anas Al-Shaikh Ali, Association of Muslim Social Scientists
Nurjahan Ali, Faith in the Future
The Revd David Allen, St Clement's Church
Clare Amos, USPG/NIFCON
Anwar, City Circle
Dr Zaki Badawi, Muslim College
Anthony Bailey, Constantinian Order of St George
Michelle Baldeosingh, Faith Regen
Dr Muhammad Abdul Bari, Muslim Council of Britain
The Revd Chris Beales, Employment Forum UK
Jusna Begum, Assistant female chaplain, Royal London Hospital
Luthfa Begum, Women's Relief
The Revd Alton Bell, Wembley
Lord Amir Bhatia
Sr Simon Catlin, Barnardo's
Rajan Choudhry
The Revd Richard Christopher, Southall
The Revd Jonathan Clark, former Chaplain London Metropolitan University
The Revd Stephen Coles, St Thomas' Church, Finsbury Park
The Revd Peter Cowell, Chaplain Royal London Hospital
Pastor Lloyd Crossfield, Pentecostal Church of God of Prophecy, Southall
The Revd David Curtis, Ichthus
The Revd Dr Andrew Davey, Community & Public Affairs, Church House (CofE)
Dr Anne Davison, Diocese of Chelmsford
Muhsin Dharamsi, Shi'a Community, Stanmore
Imam Yunus Dudwala, Chaplain Newham General Hospital
The Revd Ben Enwuchola, Chaplain Nigerian Community
Ian Fishwick, Church Army
The Revd Jacqueline Fox, St Mary's Church, Ealing
Neil Frater, Faith Communities Unit
Amina Hatia, City Circle
Sirajul Islam Hira, Tower Hamlets Council of Mosques
Berniece Holtom, Brent Refugee Forum
Abdallah Homouda, Eypitian Press Association
Alice Hudson, Twyford School, Kilburn
Eliza Ilyas, City Circle
Fadi Itani, Muslim Welfare House, Finsbury Park
Neal Jameson, Citizen Organising Foundation
Selma Abdul Kalik, parent, Islamia School, Kilburn
Aisha Khan, Brent Refugee Forum
Bashir Ebrahim Khan, Muslim Cultural Heritage Centre, Westbourne Park
Dilwar Khan, East London Mosque
Humera Khan, An-Nisa Society
Khalida Khan, An-Nisa Society
Salman Khan, Amal Trust

Imam Abdul Khayyum, East London Mosque
Asma Khawaja, Faith in the Future
The Revd Graham Kings, St Mary's, Islington
Amin Ladak, Ismaili Centre
Shola Lana, Employment Forum UK
The Revd Clive Lee, Roman Catholic Church
The Revd Rod Leece, Stamford Hill
The Revd Kenneth Leech, St Botolph's, Aldgate
The Revd Edward Lewis, Hospital Chaplaincy Council
The Revd Canon Stephen Lyon, Partnership in World Mission
Amna Mahmoud, Brent Refugee Forum
Abdul Malik
The Revd Stephen Mason, St John's Hyde Park
Stephen Masood, London School of Theology
Amin Mawji, Ismaili Centre
Suzanne Mitchell, Network for Inter Faith Concerns in the Anglican Communion
Othman Moqbel, Federation Of Student Islamic Societies
Kumar Murshid, Greater London Assembly
Faisal Naru, Faith Communities Unit
The Ven. William Noblett, Chaplain General, HM Prison Service
The Revd Steve Nolan, Baptist Church
Deacon Aziz Noor, Assyrian Orthodox Church
Ramzy Noor, Assyrian Orthodox Church
Daoud Rosser-Owen, Association of British Muslims
Isla Rosser-Owen, Association of British Muslims
Hakan Ozgul, Suleiymaniye Mosque, Hackney
David Pain, Christian Aid
Dr Aziz Pasha, Union of Muslim Organisations
Lord Adam Patel
Ken Peters, Seafarers' Mission
Suzanne Radwan, parent, Islamia School, Kilburn
Dr Sunil Raheja
Imam Abdur Raquib, Chaplain Royal London Hospital
Robin Richardson, Islamophobia Commission
Dr Abdullah Robin, Hizb-ut-Tahrir
The Rt. Revd Mano Rumlshah, United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel
Mohammad Sawalha, Muslim Association of Britain
The Revd Peter Sedgwick, Community & Public Affairs, Church House (CofE)
Massoud Shadjareh, Islamic Human Rights Commission
Shahist, Amal Trust
Ahmed Al-Sheikh, Muslim Welfare House
Hashim Sherif, Amal Trust
Asim Siddiqui, City Circle
Dr Ghayasuddin Siddiqui, Muslim Parliament
Phil Simpson, Church Missionary Society
The Revd Earl Sterling, Southall
The Revd Nezlin Sterling, Southall
Beth Stockley, Education Adviser, Brent
Dr Richard Stone, Islamophobia Commission
Ahmad Thomson, Amal Trust
Baroness Pola Uddin
Dr Abdul Wahid, Hizb-ut-Tahrir
The Revd Sigrid Werner, URC
Yaqub Zaki, Muslim Institute

Other Locations and Organisations

Dr Hany el-Banna, Islamic Relief

Prof. Jabal Buaben, Centre for Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations, Birmingham

The Revd Sarah Bullock, St Edmund's, Whalley Range

The Revd Canon John Hall, Diocese of Coventry

The Revd David Randolph-Horn, Leeds Church Institute

Cllr Afzal Khan, MCB Manchester

The Revd Jennifer McKenzie, Chaplain, Manchester College of Art & Technology

Rev Cupriyo Mukerjee, Coventry Council of Faiths

Prof. Joergen Neilsen, Centre for Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations, Birmingham

Peter Richardson, Roman Catholic Diocese of Salford

Sr Margaret Shepperd, Council of Christians and Jews

Mohammed Siddique Seddon, Islamic Foundation