

## Reflections from Kenilworth Church

### **Jenny**

I was really nervous before the 'youth encounter', I'm not really sure why. Maybe I thought they'd notice the defects in my own spiritual commitment but they were so accepting of us. I actually found it easier to be my Christian self around these guys than with many of my non-Christian friends. I didn't realise that I'd actually have more in common with Muslims than many non-Christians and they were so nice! As I'd never met a Muslim before the day I found it fascinating and it was really encouraging to spend time with people for whom religion is a priority and not just a cultural habit.

### **Chenaye du Plessis**

Before we met I tried not to think about the concept of the day too much, not wanting to put up any barriers in communication... but obviously I did. Living in a very white middle class town where my main knowledge of Islam comes from the media I was slightly apprehensive about the people I was about to meet and their prejudices and experiences of white middle class people.

We met, chatted and just acted like a bunch of teenagers. All pretence was broken down and we were able to discuss things ranging from terrorism to homosexuality to our favourite types of cheese.

The day has made taken away any prejudices I have. I'm really glad I went, I made some cool friends and look forward to our next meeting.

### **Buzz**

"Well before I went I was actually quite nervous. I just wasn't sure about anything. Who were they, would they be nice, would we get along? As we arrived at a restaurant in Birmingham we let our leaders (Steve n Sue) lead the way in as we could hide behind them if needs be. When we arrived we were greeted by the organisers, and invited to sit down. Chance would have it both groups were on opposite sides of the circle of chairs, as far away from each other as possible. However once the icebreaker and subsequent discussions started, I found I was not at all nervous and both groups seemed to chat about things with minimal input from the set leaders. The atmosphere was very open. You got the impression you could ask whatever you liked, and that if u accidentally asked or said something that would usually cause offence, there was no worry of retribution, as each group knew that the other was here out of choice and to discuss not argue. I was able to discuss issues of this moment such as, Muslim dress and homosexuality and find out about the views of the people within Christianity and Islam on these issues.

The event finished with an evening meal, which was very nice. Here the groups intermingled and sat where they liked. The conversations about not only our religions but also our schools and chosen A-levels was also very open and friendly, as we had now made friends and were no longer nervous.

I enjoyed the event and am looking forward to meeting that group again in the coming months. I have a huge amount of respect for them and their faith. I also feel that I have a much better understanding of the situations of both Christian and Muslim teenagers in Britain."