

Autumn 2010 newsletter



Federation of RE Centres

www.recentres.org.uk

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Letter from the Chair



Welcome back after the summer, hopefully refreshed for new challenges ahead!

Please note for your diaries the autumn meeting on Wednesday 10 November in Birmingham. The Trustees of Westhill Charity <http://www.westhillendowment.org> have kindly agreed to host the meeting and have offered funding for those travelling a considerable distance who need to stay in Birmingham the night before. Westhill Charity is very supportive of RE Centres generally and has provided funding to Fauzia Ali in Croydon to carry out research on RE Centres nationally. (Visit their site to learn more of the grants that they have provided.) Following consultation

with Fauzia and I, John Walmsley, Clerk to the Trustees, has arranged for Lat Blaylock of RE Today Services to facilitate a session with us on *The future of RE Centres – strengths and weaknesses, threats and opportunities*. I include with this newsletter a questionnaire that you may like to use with some of your regular customers in order to indicate where we as resource centres are fulfilling a need and where possible gaps in our service lie. Please bring your findings and user feedback to the meeting to share. In these times of financial cutbacks, we think that this could be a vitally important way of reviewing and tailoring our services to the needs of our clientele.

In addition, with regards to Children's Ministry, we shall be introduced to the Children's Ministry website that Westhill are setting up and potential free space on that website to publicise our centres. Westhill would also like to take the opportunity to introduce their Grants in Kind Programme – the free loan of educational resources, such as Spirited Arts pictures (from Lat Blaylock's national competitions in RE Today), Gethsemane Garments, created by Peter Privett (the national trainer of Godly Play, amongst other things) and, subject to availability, any of the embroideries from Pamela Pavitt. <http://www.westhillendowment.org/grants.html>. It will be a very useful day which I hope you will be able to attend.

On news from other centres, Heather Collins has informed me that the decision has been made to close Slough RE Centre. After so many years in existence, this is very sad news indeed. Further information, including a request to get in touch regarding the disposal of Slough's collection of resources, is included in this newsletter from Alan Bignell, Chair and Managing Trustee. My personal thanks to Heather for all she has done for this organisation over many years.

Best wishes and looking forward to seeing you in Birmingham in November.

Lydia

November meeting in Birmingham at the Westhill Endowment Trust

The Lodge Westhill, South Drive, Selly Oak, Birmingham B29 6WE

Wednesday 10 November 2010 9.30 am – 4pm

(with the option to stay overnight the previous evening if travelling a considerable distance)

Programme will include:

- Business meeting and networking
- Introduction to the Westhill Charity, meeting trustees, and Children's Ministry website
- Feedback from Fauzia Ali on her research on RE Centres nationally
- Possibly visit to (or from) Gohil's Emporium
- Lunch with Lat Blaylock of RE Today Services, followed by a session on the future of RE Centres – strengths and weaknesses, threats and opportunities – facilitated by Lat

RSVP - Any dietary requirements, enquiries about meeting, including overnight B & B queries, contact Lydia Revett on 01962 863134 or email lydia.revett@hants.gov.uk

Research into the function of RE Centres in the UK

Westhill Endowment made funds available to enable the Croydon Faith Education Resources to conduct a survey into the function and future development of RE Centres in the UK.

The whole **reasoning behind this research** was to try to understand what is happening to Religious Education Centres across the length and breadth of the UK. We are hoping that the outcome of this survey will highlight the main purpose and value of these Centres for raising the profile of RE, both in the education sector & the local community. As the research involves feedback from the RE Centres and their users, the results of the research will be used to inform the most effective ways to:

- look at the financial implications faced by many Centres
- ensuring continuity and share valuable existing services
- review any services which are no longer valid and are ineffective due to recent changes ie new technology
- develop new and innovative ideas to support users, in line with recent educational developments in schools and Local Community Cohesion Programme

The Research consists of responses from RE Centres and their users to questionnaires and a meeting between RE Centres from around the UK supported by Westhill & Lat Blaylock of RE Today, to discuss strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities and what the future may hold.

So far RE Centres questionnaires have been collated from around the UK, which alongside teachers & users contributions will be discussed at The Federation of RE Centres meeting held in Westhill Endowment's offices in November. The results will be reported as soon as the research is complete.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the managers of RE Centres, who have kindly given up their valuable time to respond to the questionnaire and support the Research.

Fauzia Ali (Resources Manager)

Croydon Faith Education Resources

News from other members

Alan Bignell, Chair and Managing Trustee, Slough RE Centre writes:

Slough RE Centre is closing

In 1978 when Slough RE Centre was set up there were never enough specialist teachers for RE, and they managed on meagre resources compared with the favoured subjects — Maths, English, Science etc. At my school the RE Budget was £60 a year, and that included the cost of exercise books. Textbooks were few and old; other resources were rare indeed.

The new RE Centre was a treasure trove of books, posters, filmstrips (remember those?) and religious artefacts. It gave support for the teaching of all faiths, and was very well used. Slough Education Authority recognised the value of what we offered, and took us under the wing of the Teachers' Centre; the Church of England Deanery had an Education Chaplain in post who also developed specialist resources for churches within our Centre.

As we begin the academic year 2010-11, teachers tell us that their world is now focused upon interactive whiteboards and informed by the Internet. It is quicker and easier to compile one's own PowerPoint from online resources than using books lining the shelves of one's own study — let alone making a special journey to a Centre for resources that are available for only a few hours a week. Many schools apparently have their own collections of those artefacts that can add such hands-on excitement to a lesson.

It is with real regret that we report that the work of Slough RE Centre is coming to an end, as our dwindling number of clients cannot justify the running costs. We owe a deep debt of gratitude to Jo Osborne, Heather Collins and their predecessors over the years who have served as 'Wardens' or Resource Officers, and the charitable trusts, churches and religious institutions that have funded the Centre.

By Christmas 2010 Slough RE Centre will be closed. If you think your Centre could look after the best of our resources, and share them with others, we shall be glad to hear from you urgently. Our stock includes books, posters, a large collection of artefacts and a brand-new set of DVDs. We also have shelving and office furniture to give away! Please make any suggestions or requests to the Chair and Managing Trustee, Alan Bignell: abignell@waitrose.com

Tricia Elson, Youth & Children's Administrator, Diocese of Norwich writes:

We have opened a smaller 'satellite' centre at St John's Church, Loddon. It holds similar items to our main resource centre at Horstead but will make it easier for those in the south of Norfolk (and north Suffolk) to access resources. It will be formally opened by Rt Revd Alan Winton, Bishop of Thetford, on September 28th. Whilst the resource centre is part of the work of the Diocese of Norwich, St John's Church itself is a Methodist Church which is also used as a community centre. It is open Monday – Friday. Contact details: tricia.elson@norwich.anglican.org or 01603 266316

Cathy Priestley, Resources Centre Administrator, Ely Diocesan Office writes:

Ros Wright has retired and I am now the Resources Centre Administrator at the Ely Diocesan Office – using the same email address resources.centre@office.ely.anglican.org

Report on July conference

We had a really useful and inspiring two day conference in Croydon in July; our sincere thanks to Fauzia Ali from Croydon Faith Education Resources (CFER) for organising it for us.



We had a really interesting afternoon visiting Down House, the home of Charles Darwin.

From left Fauzia Ali [CREC], Lydia Revett [Hampshire], Pamela Hartog [Leo Baeck], Ken Johnson [Nottingham Bluecoat School], Sue Bloomfield [Bath & Wells], Jan Thompson [Bromley], Heather Collins [Slough].

Staying overnight at the Emmaus Centre in West Wickham, we were joined the following morning by William Cole (fourth from left) who is in the process of establishing the resources from Winchester Diocesan Resource Centre [Ian Knight's centre] at the Winchester Cathedral Education office.



We were fortunate enough to experience a *Journey through a Labyrinth*, thanks to the kindness of Revd Bev Mason of St John the Evangelist Church. We decided that we would very much like to put together a 'virtual' multifaith labyrinth as an organisation.

'Housekeeping' – keeping the website up to date

Could you please take a moment to check your centre contact details are correct on our website <http://www.recentres.org.uk/pages/members.html> ?

If there are any amendments required, please email them to me at lydia.revett@hants.gov.uk

Other news from the world of RE

- The next **RE Council meeting** is on Thursday 4 November 2010. Chris Boxley and Lydia Revett will be representing the Federation (email boxley@talktalk.net or lydia.revett@hants.gov.uk)
- The latest (August 2010) **RE Council newsletter** is available from <http://www.religiouseducationcouncil.org/content/view/full/176/62/>
- **Celebrating RE** (March 2011) is really getting off the ground now – what are your schools, SACREs and faith communities doing as their celebration? Visit their website <http://www.celebratingre.org/> and sign up for regular updates

If you have any comments on or suggestions for the improvement of this newsletter, they would be most welcome by email to lydia.revett@hants.gov.uk