



RE Centres Southern Regional Group

www.recentres.org.uk

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Chair: Lydia Revett
Hampshire County RE Centre
Falcon House, Romsey Road, Winchester
SO23 5PL Tel: 01962 863134
lydia.revett@hants.gov.uk

Newsletter Editor: Ian Knight
Winchester Diocesan Resource Centre
Church House, 9 The Close, Winchester
SO23 9LS Tel: 01962 624760
ian.knight@chsewinchester.clara.net

Letter from the Chair.....

Following Shirley's decision to step down as Chair of the Group, the vacancy arose as an agenda item at our meeting in London last November. On asking whether anyone wished to take on the role, there was a lengthy silence with very little eye-contact - does this situation seem familiar?! Anyway, the long and short of it is that I offered to take on the role in a low profile way - mainly chairing meetings and acting as a sounding board for conferences and other issues. This suggestion was accepted at the meeting and is only made possible through the delegation of all other responsibilities for the Group (in terms of membership, finances and communication) to Ian, Sue and Gill, to whom I express our thanks. I would also like to echo personally our gratitude conveyed in the autumn newsletter to Shirley for all her hard work over a number of years as Chair; she will be a hard act to follow.



The November visit to the Regents Park Mosque, so ably organised by Heather, was fascinating. I must say that visits to different places of worship, arranged through the group, have personally extended my knowledge and understanding in such a positive way, enabling me to do my job better. Although it is difficult to justify time 'away from the ranch' when we are all so busy, our personal and professional development profits from the experience. I hope that you will be able to join us at the summer conference in St Alban's - details opposite. Gill has worked so enthusiastically to put a really interesting programme together for us - we owe you a great deal, Gill - thank you! Access to the conference should suit most people, being near the M25, and the additional benefits of meeting together to network and to share our knowledge and experience are so worthwhile.

You can read about our new website on page 2 of this edition. It is up and running, thanks to a great deal of work by Dave Mohan. Please do visit it, and get your own websites linked to it. More details in Ian's article.

See you in July!
Lydia

22nd Annual Conference Tuesday 5th—Wednesday 6th July All Saints' Pastoral Centre, London Colney and St Alban's £45 per person

- Presentation on using artefacts by Jean Mead, retiring BEd Tutor at the University of Hertfordshire
- Visit to the McCrimmons Bookshop (right) (on-site in All Saints' Pastoral Centre)
- Presentation on artefacts in Indian weddings by Ruth Bodsworth, Articles of Faith
- Visit to St Alban's Cathedral Education Centre and Signs and Symbols Tour of the Cathedral with Annette Cranston, Education Officer
- Ron Upton welcomes us to the brand new St Alban's Diocesan Education Centre (with shop)



Find out more about:

All Saints Pastoral Centre

www.allsaintspc.org.uk

McCrimmons Bookshop www.allsaintspc.org.uk/McCrimmon%27s%20Bookshop.htm

Articles of Faith

www.articlesoffaith.co.uk

St Alban's Cathedral Education Centre

www.stalbanscathedral.org.uk/education-centre

St Alban's Diocesan Education Centre

www.stalbans.anglican.org/parishes.htm

November Meeting Regents Park Mosque



A cold, November morning witnessed the arrival of passengers, by train, bus and taxi, converging upon Regents Park, north-west London. It was the Group's November meeting, beginning at the London Central Mosque and Islamic Cultural Centre.

Although quiet, as this was the month of Ramadan, a time of prayer and fasting for Muslims, we were shown around the Mosque by Mr Abdurraheem Green. We sat on the floor of the Mosque, observing the mid-day prayers, and then continued our tour to view the wealth of books and information in the library. Before leaving we had, of course, to visit the shop where, as usual, Ian purchased more than most for his Islam collection. We look forward to seeing the display on our next visit to Winchester!

We then crossed London to arrive at the London Diocesan Resource Centre, where Mary greeted us with a very welcome lunch before our business meeting.



Some of us went on to spend the rest of our money at the bookshops in the Westminster area. To visit the Mosque contact Mr Abdurraheem Green
The London Central Mosque & Islamic Cultural Centre
146 Park Road
London NW8 7RG
020 7725 2213
visits@iccuk.org
(It is best to make contact by e-mail)
Heather Collins
Slough & District RE Centre

New Website

Click on <http://users.xalt.co.uk/recentresgroup/> (our old website) and what do you get? Not a lot!

Conscious that we needed to sort things out, those of us at last summer's conference in Suffolk had some initial discussions about how to set up a new website and what its aims would be. Dave Mohan, who used to administer the Croydon RE Centre and has remained an honorary member of our Group as Webmaster, recommended that we transfer from the Xalt's free web space to buying a domain named web space with Hostroute. This would mean that we could choose our own website's name and have a much more reliable service, at a cost of approximately £30 per year.

Dave was able to join us at the business meeting on our November day when we chose the name **www.recentres.org.uk** and discussed the content of the site. As you know, this was followed by Sue Bloomfield contacting you to ask for a description of your centre and any updates on the contact details. Dave has now waved his magic wand and set up the new site. It has a homepage introducing the Group, a list of the member centres, current and recent newsletters, a gallery of photos of places we have visited, a links page, contacts and site map.

Do please have a look, add it to your favourites, and then persuade your own webmaster to set up a link from your website to this one, if possible using the RECSR logo. Dave can supply this in different sizes and possibly with different backgrounds to suit the needs of different individual Centre websites. You are asked not to drag the image to size as this will reduce its quality. I get a Brownie point having done this already—see www.winchester.anglican.org/reshome.htm We need as many Centres as possible to set up these links for Dave to be able to get us onto the Google search engine. We hope that in this way people looking for RE resources will find their way to one of our Centres, and that new Centres will join our Group.

If any details of your Centre change, please send these to Sue, our Membership Secretary resourcecentre@bathwells.anglican.org who will then forward them to Dave.



National Christian Resources Exhibition

Sandown Park, Esher
10-13 May 2005
www.creonline.co.uk

Collect enough plastic carrier bags to last you all year!
If you plan to go, e-mail round and see if you can meet up there with any other Group members.

We have a constant need for good photos, both for our newsletters and for the website. It is important that whoever takes the photo agrees to it being published in this way, and that any people in the photo are first asked if they are happy for the photo to appear on the internet. Please do not photograph any children or vulnerable adults unless specific written permission is first obtained.

I admit that I have spectacularly failed to practise what I preach in not having previously asked for Group members' permission in the photograph on www.recentres.org.uk/pages/gallery.html If any of the people in the photo do object to it appearing on our website, please let me know and it will be removed.

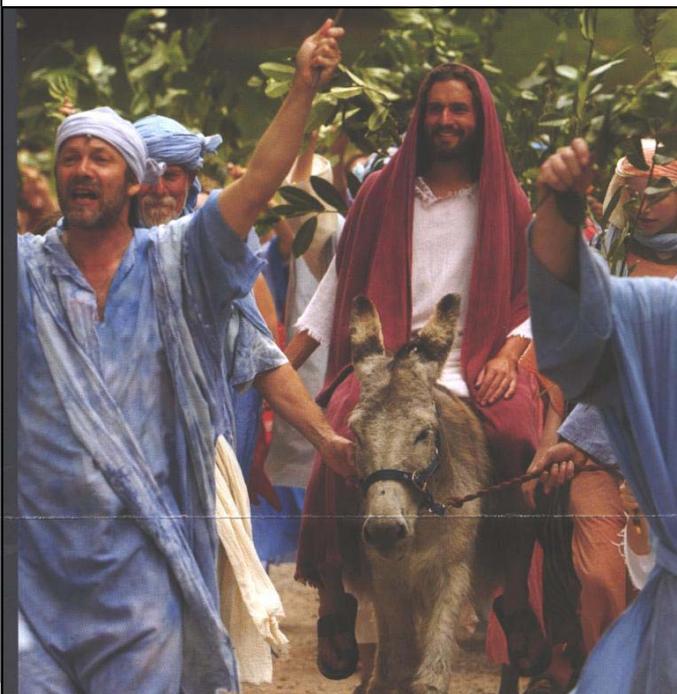
The Group owes an enormous debt of gratitude to Dave for all his expertise and time given to set up and maintain both our old site (even if it did eventually bite the dust) and our new one. Without him we should have a hefty bill indeed to pay for a commercial web designer so we say a really big



Ian Knight, Winchester Diocesan Resource Centre

**Wintershall Life of Christ
Tuesday 28 June—Sunday 3 July**

10.15 am—4.30 pm
Adults £13 Children (under 18) £6.50
Wintershall Estate Office, Bramley, Guildford
GU5 0LR 01483 892167
boxoffice@hutleygroup.com
www.wintershall-estate.com



RE Council

Charles Clarke, then Education Secretary, addressed the November meeting of the RE Council on *Some personal reflections on RE in the National Agenda*. The meeting followed the recent publication on the non-statutory Guidelines for RE, intended mainly for SACREs and LEAs in the formulation of Agreed Syllabuses. Charles Clarke was proud of the new non-statutory National Framework, which he regarded as a major step to take RE forward. He had been impressed by how the faith groups had worked together and by their shared intention to achieve the Framework. He paid tribute to the contributions of the RE Council to this process and thanked us on behalf of the Government. Where do we go now? Some concerns:

- How do we ensure that the National Framework is used and is effectively translated into schools?
- How will it change the role of SACREs? They are potentially a powerful resource for building relationships between faith communities and schools (currently rather patchy). Charles Clarke stated his keenness to develop relationships between school and community across the whole curriculum, seeing SACREs as a working example of this.
- How do we recruit teachers? How do we obtain high quality continuing professional development? Key for RE teachers is the status of the teacher in both school and community. This is reflected not only in their salary, but also in the way RE as a subject is perceived. In addition, high quality materials are needed.
- How do we see Collective Worship evolving? Charles Clarke commented that there is an attempt to deceive OFSTED on the part of some head teachers. He also recognised that although the law was not well formed in 1988, trying to reform law is not easy. He considered that developing a framework of good practice should have priority over proceeding to change the law. Common ground is that law should be upheld. Assemblies are valued, but there is a complicated relationship to RE. An open discussion on Collective Worship is needed: the National Framework gives a platform on which conversation can now take place in due course.
- What is the impact on faith schools? Mr Clarke's own standpoint was that they are valuable because of their ethos, one effect of which is to raise standards. Not everyone agrees about their value, but they need to be discussed openly.

There is a substantial agenda here. There is also a basis for discussing everything on it in a positive way. The meeting was also addressed by Ralph Tabberer, Chief Executive of the Teacher Training Agency. The RE Council is currently applying to become a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee as part of the plans for its future, which includes raising funds to appoint an Executive Officer and provide some secretarial services.

Charles Clarke's address and minutes of the full Council Meetings can be found on the RE Council's web site www.religiouseducationcouncil.org
Chris Boxley
Midhurst and Petworth Religious Studies Centre

Gloucester Diocesan RE Resource Centre

Like many dioceses over the past few years Gloucester has looked at areas to reduce costs. The Resource Centre for a long time appeared to be the chief target with frequent questions asked of usage, viability, need, justification in the future and so on. To make progress a radical revamp was required – to bring premises up to date, to make resources more accessible and to encourage more customers through the doors! It worked: the library of books, artefacts, videos, equipment and more, have all been reclassified and catalogued onto a computerised library system; two years ago the premises were refurbished and at this time a decision made to make the Centre a lending library only (previously it had sold art and craft materials); as part of the Education department steps were taken to increase school usage. But how? Gloucester Diocese has a large number of Church of England primary schools but these are spread throughout the county and despite experimenting by opening one evening a week or on Saturday mornings, teachers were mostly not willing to travel to fetch resources. But our Local Education Authority does run a van service from Shire Hall visiting each school twice a week delivering and collecting mail, musical instruments, equipment, county book service boxes etc. So we liaised with the LEA for the vans to visit the Centre, pick up resource collections and deliver these to schools. The trial period was successful, but not indicative of what was to come.

Eighteen months on we now levy an annual charge for schools to use the Resource Centre (up to £75 per year), which allows unlimited loans. All collections of resources are put together on request and therefore vary according to stock, teachers' preferences, order of delivering the agreed syllabus and so on. After some problems as we discovered gaps and inadequate levels of resources we are now in the second payment year, have 140 schools using the Centre (both Church of England and county schools), send out numerous sacks of resources (particularly at the start of each half term), have tailored multiple artefact packs to match the units of study wherever possible and have built a good rapport with many schools.

Working with the Diocesan RE adviser we have been able to encourage some schools to spend some INSET time at the Centre, have displayed resources at many of the courses she runs and have a valuable ambassador visiting the schools and promoting the Centre. With other advisers from the South West she has recently assembled a pack *Pause for Reflection* which staff at the Centre have assisted in producing, publishing and selling. This gives a series of developed ideas for promoting spirituality in schools.

Progress in the parishes has been slower but initiatives such as sale of books to order (passing on some of our discount), encouraging clergy to forge links with schools and use the van service, introducing new clergy and ordinands to the Centre and flexible opening on request have all helped.

A lot of rethinking was done but it paid off. The Centre is thriving, all talk of closure has been stopped and the Resource Centre is recognised as a key point of outreach from the centre of the Diocese.

Carolyn Wright

Banbury RE Centre

If it's January it has almost certainly got to be the start of a new series of inter-faith discussions, at least that it is how it is beginning to feel. Many of you will by now be familiar with our discussions and I have to say they are super. I get so excited at the prospect of new ideas, new perspectives and new friends coming along to the meetings.



We started our planning for these meetings in September and it was decided we would be braver and try some meatier issues. Our first meeting, *Local and international issues of social responsibility*, came soon after the catastrophic tsunami; our speakers that evening were a Christian and a young Burmese Buddhist monk whose colleague was in the region at the time. We are now preparing for the second evening which focuses on *Justice and the legal system – conscientious decision and action*. This is against the background of the latest political debate on asylum seekers, immigration and human rights. The main contributors to this evening will be a Muslim and a Sikh. The last evening will be led by a Jew discussing *Sex and the family*. Sadly we lack a regular Hindu perspective but on balance I think we do rather well. We have about 30 members of the public turning up each time.

Gillian Hunt

Suffolk Christian Resource Library

The library and shop will be closing on 23 March and then re-open mid-April in the new premises at St Nicholas Centre, 4 Cutler Street, Ipswich IP1 1UQ (no change to phone and e-mail).

Shirley Nicholls

St Alban's Diocesan Education Centre

"It's in here somewhere".

This is the before photo: the after one is on page 1.

