

Spring 2011 newsletter



Federation of RE Centres

www.recentres.org.uk

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Letter from the Chair



As always, changes are afoot with our members, either in location and/or staffing. More in the pages that follow.

We say a fond farewell and thank you to Heather Collins, who has been involved with the Federation (previously *RE Centres Southern Regional Group*) for over 20 years and has been Minutes Secretary for as long as I have been involved. We will miss your company at our meetings and hope we remain in touch.

Heather writes poignantly about the sad death of her colleague Jo Osborne in November.

As requested, our summer conference has been organised in Manchester this year, hopefully appealing to those who run centres further north. Please see next page for further information on this two day event, which looks really interesting. Do sign up!

There is also a short report on our meeting in Birmingham in November – thanks very much to Fauzia Ali for organising this for us, and Westhill Endowment Trust for hosting a very useful day.

My sincere thanks to Ron Upton, our Treasurer, for all his invaluable help over the past year.

Best wishes and looking forward to seeing you in Manchester in June,

Lydia

Invitation to the 28th annual summer conference Tuesday 28 – Wednesday 29 June

Programme includes:

- Lunchtime arrival on 28 June at [Manchester Buddhist Centre](#), tour of MBC, introduction to Clear Vision and the MBC's schools' service, stilling/meditation in shrine room. Formal session on aspects of *Buddhism in RE*.
- Dinner and overnight stay at a city centre hotel – [Britannia Sacha's](#), Piccadilly.
- On 29 June, after breakfast, opportunity of visiting a number of places of worship in Manchester city centre, including the [Cathedral](#).

Cost £75 per person which includes dinner, bed and breakfast.

Any enquiries about the programme, contact Lydia Revett Tel 01962 863134
email: re.centre@hants.gov.uk

To book your place, please send form/payment by **31 May 2011** to Ron Upton, Treasurer, St Albans Diocesan Education Centre, Holywell Lodge, 41, Holywell Hill, St Albans AL1 1HE
Please advise any access or special dietary requirements.

Report on autumn meeting

We had a really useful and inspiring day in November based at the Westhill Endowment Trust in Birmingham, with kind appreciation to John Walmsley and the trustees. We learned more about Fauzia Ali's research into the current state of RE Centres nationally (which has now been completed and distributed by her), the Westhill Trust's support of the Children's Ministry site (<http://westhill.crystalthought.co.uk/>), we spent a few hours concerned with *The Future of RE Centres – Strengths & Weaknesses, Threats & Opportunities*, facilitated by Lat Blaylock of RE Today Services and we had a chance to buy resources from Gohil's Emporium.

Please visit the [Westhill site](#) to see more about the grants they offer and the resources including the *Good Grief* exhibition of sculptures that are available on loan.



News from Carolyn Wright, Diocese of Gloucester Resource Centre

I shall be leaving the Diocese of Gloucester in early May, to revert to being a housewife! Not quite as humdrum as it sounds. My husband starts a 2 year contract in Toronto in May so we're intending to make Canada our base for the duration. As yet it is unclear how the Resources Centre will be organized with respect to the rest of CYPD (Children and Young People's Directorate) and our guess is that everyone will be kept very busy for 2 or 3 months while things settle down again. I think it is unlikely that we will send a representative to the conference, so please accept apologies for 2011.

All the very best, Carolyn, for your future in Canada and beyond.

Jo Osborne, Slough RS Centre

Heather Collins writes:

Jo Osborne was Resources Officer at the Slough RS Centre from when she replaced me in 2005 until her untimely death from cancer in November 2010.

Although she was unable to attend meetings - relying on me to relay information, she had hosted a November Federation meeting, was always interested in the work of the Group and had written articles for the Newsletter, as well as being the Slough contact at the end of the telephone for many of you.

Jo had been involved with the Centre long before she was appointed Resources Officer, having worked as a volunteer and as my Deputy, always a source of inspiration when I was beginning to 'flag'.

She represented the Jewish Faith on the local SACRE, visited local schools and was a member of Slough Faith Partnership. All these interests were represented by the variety of community groups present at her funeral. The service was taken by her local Rabbi, a short address was given by the Chair of our Centre, an Anglican priest, and among the congregation were people from the six faiths represented in the Slough community, as well as those from the Educational world.

Although the Centre has now closed, Jo will be much missed as a friend and colleague in the Slough area.

Farewell from Slough

Heather Collins writes:

It was in the early 1990s that I was first 'sent' to represent the National Society, then based in Kensington, on the Southern Regional Group of RE Centres. I was made very welcome, as a newcomer, and have continued to find friendship and support from the Group over the years, representing, in turn, the National Society, Croydon and, finally, Slough.

The organisation has changed and developed during this time, seeing the closure of the main centres in London, Birmingham and Bangor, but welcoming others that have brought fresh ideas for the annual conferences. These have been held at members' Centres and have included visits to a variety of places of worship, speakers of a very high calibre and even the Wintershall drama, 'Life of Christ', including one of our members.

I believe that the Federation has been inspired over the years by the fact that the main Officers have each been in post for a number of years at a time, and we owe our thanks to these people.

I have always enjoyed our gatherings, having attended most, but as the Slough Centre has now closed, it is time to retire. We managed to disperse of all the resources and furniture to local schools and churches and to the Croydon Centre, and so I know that they will continue to be used in the furtherance of Religious Education.

I shall miss the friendship and interaction of members of the Group and wish the Federation the very best for the years ahead.

News from Norwich Diocese

The Resource Centre supporting work with children and young people in the Diocese of Norwich, which was previously based at The Horstead Centre, Rectory Road, Norwich, has moved to Diocesan House, 109 Dereham Road, Easton, Norwich NR9 5ES. It is hoped that a more central location in this large and very rural diocese will attract even more users. The move also brings the youth and children's office back to the administrative centre of the Diocese, offering improved communication and facilities.

Our latest magazine can be seen at <http://www.norwich.anglican.org/children-young-people/parishes/fresh-magazine>

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RE Council Development Day 8 March

I was fortunate enough to attend the REC Development Day on 8 March to represent the FREC. It was a wonderful day kindly hosted by The Al-Khoei Foundation. In the morning we were shown around both the Al-Zehra & Al-Sadiq Primary & Secondary Schools. We observed some lovely RE lessons where the children were very enthusiastic, responsive and articulate in expressing their understanding and views.

Then an excellent presentation by A Level students from two local secondary schools, Mulberry Girl's and St George's RC on the topic 'Why RE matters to us?' It was clear that they not only had a passion for the subject, but regarded it as an important part of their development as individuals in a multi-faith society. They stated "We need to establish & maintain relationships with people we meet and have a basis of understanding where their religions & beliefs come from and why they matter. This helps to avoid prejudices, preconceived ideas & misconceptions." They made it clear however, that it was by no means an easy subject, in fact very challenging, requiring critical & analytical skills which supported their approach to other academic subjects too.

This was followed by a group discussion between REC members and students about 'What they had learned from this'. This was a great opportunity to hear the student's perspective of how RE is taught in schools. What works well and is beneficial and areas of weaknesses which need developing. The REC will distribute the detailed feedback of issues & questions which were raised. However, some questions which stood out for me were:

- *Could we be given the opportunity to study more religions rather than just two, to get a better understanding of a wider range of people's beliefs?*
- *Is there still some bias teaching of RE in faith schools and by some teachers?*
- *Are minority belief systems like Humanism & Zoroastrian truly integrated into RE teaching and is there a place for atheist to make their views heard?*
- *More discussions & debates as they are so beneficial.*

After lunch the day was rounded up with a presentation from Trevor Cooling, Denise Cush & Sandra Teacher about 'The Purpose of RE'. John Keast summarised the day by stating it confirmed the importance of discussion & questioning and now the REC needed to address issues which were raised and look at how they may be able to influence any significant changes to improve how RE is taught and perceived.

Fauzia Ali
Croydon Faith Education Resources

'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 Lydia Revett at lydia.revett@hants.gov.uk

Other news from the world of RE

- The next **RE Council meeting** is on Wednesday 4 May 2011. Chris Boxley will be representing the Federation (email boxley@talktalk.net)
- The latest (April 2011) [RE Council newsletter](#)
- **NATRE Art in Heaven competition** is open to all pupils 4 - 19; deadline for entries **31 July 2011**. Visit <http://www.natre.org.uk/spiritedarts/> for more information

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