



Diocese of Southwell & Nottingham

Faiths in Action in Hyson Green and Forest Fields: a brief history

FinA emerged from a *local context* in the late 90's and early years of the new millennium. The millennium celebrations in Forest Fields brought together Muslims, Sikhs and Christians under the title, 'A New Community for a New Millennium', but the momentum was sustained because of a growing friendship between Dr. Musharaf Hussain the Imam and Director of the Karimia Institute and Rev Graham Burton now a retired priest living in the Anglican parish of Hyson Green and Forest Fields. He founded and developed the Rainbow Project locally which has sought to encourage the building of local inter faith relationships. Through these two faith leaders the Bobbersmill Community Centre Mosque and The Vine Community Centre with St Stephens Church Hyson Green have been the main centres from which FinA has grown. More recently Gregory Boulevard United Reformed Church under the leadership of Rev Tim Clarke has given significant input. The URC Church Related Community Worker Linda Granville together with a hard working team has also played a major role in developing the work among women

In *early 2003* we were helped by learning from the inter faith experience of *Thornbury in Bradford*. A visit was made to learn from the way they had brought people of different faiths together. This was because of the vision and initiative of *Rev Solomon Joseph* a South Indian priest experienced in facilitating inter faith relations. It was agreed to invite him to come and *on 21st May* approx 40 people gathered in BMCC to listen to him tell the story. In discussion clear agreement emerged to build faith relationships locally with Hyson Green and Forest Fields as the centre of gravity but with important connections from time to time in Radford and New Basford.

Early 2004 *three areas of common action were agreed* – asylum seekers, women and young people. April 22nd 2005 during the General Election campaign we focussed the need for justice in the asylum system in a public meeting. Around 150 people came including five election candidates. In December 2005 a very successful womens' event was held. We have also organised some important seminars looking at issues such as 'Consumerism' and 'Climate Change' from different faith perspectives. In fact these *thrice yearly seminars* have been important in *developing the ethos of FinA* since they have been a context where relations between people of different faiths have grown. Their format has been significant. On arrival participants are encouraged to sit around tables of approx eight to share light refreshments and get to know each other. Speakers are given 10 to 15 minutes each to introduce the issue from their faith perspective. The major part of the evening is given to discussing at each table led by a facilitator

guided by some carefully prepared questions. This is all brought together in a plenary feedback session. The contributions are written up and circulated to participants.

Globally the huge impact of 9/11 and 7/7 have motivated the local Muslim and Christian communities, in the spirit of FinA, to respond at the local level by *sharing significant moments in prayer*. At the very least this happens on the Christian festival of Good Friday when Christians and Muslims will stand and pray together in public outside BMCC for a suffering world.

For the future the committee is in the process of enabling work to develop in *new directions* particularly among *youth* by encouraging activities that bring young people of different faiths together. The issue of *Climate Change*, already discussed in the seminar format is also an agreed focus. How to decrease the carbon footprint of our centres of prayer/worship/community work needs some practical steps to be taken.

FinA is *coming of age*. It now has its constitution, its own bank account and is about to hold its first AGM. It has valued the encouragement it has received from organisations such as New Deal for Communities, Nottingham and Notts Fire and Rescue Service, The Rainbow Project, Sikh Youth and Community Service (and others??) It is hoped that partnership will continue with these and others. We extend the hand of friendship and a warm welcome to all who share our ethos as an organisation and who want to work with us. Dr Musharaf Hussain and Rev Graham Burton would be happy to meet any interested faith leaders in the local community.

Rev. Graham Burton
Faiths in Action Committee Member
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