

# Faith in Manchester

The Voice of FN4M: the Faith Network for Manchester

Winter 2008/9

Issue 003

## My Gang = My Family

170 Strong Conference takes a positive view on the way forward

The "My Gang = My Family" conference on Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> November brought together 170 people working in the community, voluntarily and professionally, to consider positive ways of dealing with concerns around violence and gangs.

Revd. David Gray, FN4M Secretary, opened the evening and invited people to participate in small groups at their tables, initially expressing why they had come and their thoughts on the issues. Then there was an opportunity to hear the key speakers. Shaykh Khalid Yaseen spoke passionately and at length about his involvement in these issues on both sides of the Atlantic.

After the very good food served by Desi Lounge, Angela Lance of Mothers Against Violence spoke about how and why their group had been formed. She emphasised that she saw it as essential that we regarded and treated each other as neighbours and acted accordingly.

Det. Insp. Tony Hughes, the GMP's Firearms Training Officer, gave a presentation on the current position with regard to violent crime in Manchester, with some interesting statistics and a personal take on the issue.

Karina Nyananyo, from 42<sup>nd</sup> Street and formerly with Hideaway, spoke evocatively about how we can make a positive difference and suggested ways of engaging with young people. She left those present feeling inspired about ways we can support further efforts of working with young people.

Erima Bell, from CARISMA, informed the meeting about their work and the way they engage



Above: FN4M Secretary David Gray (front left) listens intently to the insightful discussion.

with young people. She described some of their projects and invited those present to get involved with Peace Week in March.

This left a brief time for groups to discuss which ideas they felt could work and we should engage with, which identified several routes for further developing this initiative.

Damian Carr, from Communities for Change, summed up the evening and was very affirming in stating that FN4M were taking the initiative and bringing people together to make a real difference in our communities and throughout Manchester.

Since the conference there have been two

follow up events. The Community Safety Network had a meeting led by Rabbi Warren Elf, FN4M Treasurer, that looked at ways of taking these ideas forward. The notes from this meeting are available via the CSN website.

Faith Youth Manchester had a very constructive meeting with over twenty activists in early December, identifying several positive ways to develop the ideas from the November conference.

FN4M will be continuing to drive this essential initiative forward. If you want the powerpoint notes from the meeting, or would like to be further involved, please contact us at [mail@fn4m.org](mailto:mail@fn4m.org).

## Diversitour goes on Trial

On Sunday the 23<sup>rd</sup> of July 2008, a trial run of a new equality and diversity training concept in Manchester was held with a minibus tour of four BME voluntary organisations.



Diversitour visits MCCR (courtesy Andy Wynne/TogetherWorks)

Diversitour is supported by FN4M and fronted by Regensis<sup>2</sup>, a BME social enterprise developing innovative community regeneration projects. Eight individuals from as many organisations came together to experience the pilot with the help of funding drawn down from the NW Development Agency by TogetherWorks.

The beneficiaries of the pilot visited Wai Yin Women's Project, Regensis, MCCR

and Manchester Race and Health Forum (part of the Black Health Agency). Each visit provided something unique and gave a flavour of Manchester's rich heritage.

"We learned a great deal from the pilot and we got some terrific feedback," stated Zahid Hussain, director of Regensis<sup>2</sup>. "Now we're set to apply for seed capital to make Diversitour a reality here in Manchester."

We've also had interest from as far afield as London and Cardiff and we believe Diversitour could help build community cohesion and provide much needed economic sustainability to organisations as eventually all the training organisations participating will be paid."

Regensis<sup>2</sup> is seeking partner organisations that would like to form part of Manchester Diversitour. For further information visit [www.r-squared.org.uk](http://www.r-squared.org.uk), call 0161-282 3205 or email Zahid directly at [zahid@r-squared.org.uk](mailto:zahid@r-squared.org.uk).

## Who are FN4M?

**We are a group of leaders and members of faith communities in Manchester who share these principles, which are included in our constitution:**

- a) FN4M recognises that its members have a variety of theological beliefs and religious practices, some of which will overlap, some of which will be mutually exclusive. It is not the function of FN4M to make judgement on the truth or otherwise of religious creeds. Members of FN4M's Steering Group are fully entitled to assert their distinctive claims of their own faith when operating outside of FN4M.
- b) FN4M believes that the adherents of all faiths are entitled to be treated with respect, and will conduct its own business in accordance with that belief.
- c) FN4M will seek to undertake projects for the good of the community of Greater Manchester as a whole, without showing favouritism to individual faiths or bias against any other.
- d) FN4M believes that interfaith work and dialogue is important to help create a cohesive and integral society.

In addition, the objectives of the Faith Network are:

- a) To ensure that faith communities are an effective stakeholder and participant in the Greater Manchester area
- b) That the voice of faith communities is heard at all stages of local decision making and strategic planning
- c) That the ethical and environmental dimensions are always considered at all levels of local decision making and strategic planning
- d) To provide a forum for members of different faith communities to meet together to consider the issues raised in local decision making and strategic planning.
- e) For respect, understanding and co-operation to be realised between people from different faith communities.
- f) To ensure that faith groups are supported in the delivery of community and social activity.

FN4M's activities have included campaigning around regeneration, particularly opposing the ill-fated proposal for a Super-casino in East Manchester and proposing positive alternatives. We have held several inter-faith activities, including two successful Co-exist events for young people through our youth section, *Faith Youth Manchester*, and have been a key player in the formation of *Changemakers*.

# Cheetham Festival

**The 2008 Cheetham Festival drew to a close with a Prayer for the Future led by the dynamic Eritrean Orthodox Choir. Using their traditional long walking sticks and drums to full effect, the choir dazzled the audience at St. John's Church, Cheetham, where the Eritreans share the building with an Anglican congregation.**

Now in its fifth year, the Cheetham Festival aims to celebrate the historic and contemporary diversity of the Cheetham Hill area with a series of ten linked events over the Heritage Open Days weekend.

This year's festival began in Temple Primary School with a colourful celebration of the 23 different nationalities currently on the school roll. They were joined by classes of children from King David Jewish Infant School, St. Chad's Roman Catholic Primary School and Cheetham Community School. Following the theme *Feasting and Fasting*, to link in with the Islamic month of Ramadan, the children educated the audience about the traditions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

Friday evening saw over 200 people at the Irish World Heritage Centre for a celebration of Irish culture. Saturday brought open days at St. Chad's Church, the oldest Roman Catholic church in Manchester, and the Dashmesh Sikh Temple, the home of a more recent group to migrate into Cheetham Hill.

If you would like to find out more about us or participate in any of our activities, please contact us at [mail@fn4m.org](mailto:mail@fn4m.org) or via any of our contact details on our website at [www.fn4m.org](http://www.fn4m.org)



**Above: Faith leaders come together at the Cheetham Festival including (far right) FN4M Chairperson, Revd Daniel Burton  
Below: Cooking for Cheetham at the Dashmesh Sikh Temple**



One of the highlights of this year's Festival was the Iftar event at the Woodlands Road Jamia Mosque on the Saturday night. A mixed faith audience of over 300 people sat down to break fast together following an introductory lecture about the meaning of Ramadan by the Imam Dr. Bashir.

Sunday's journey incorporated open days at the Higher Crumpsall Synagogue and its near neighbour the Ukrainian Catholic Church, as well as at the Manchester Jewish Museum. A large group followed the Jewish Heritage Walk from Victoria Station, ending at the museum with traditional Jewish food and free entry to the exhibition *Hats Off to Cheetham Hill*.

Festival Organiser, the Revd. Daniel Burton, said, "The year's festival has been enormous fun as more and more communities are coming on board to celebrate the remarkable diversity of Cheetham. As well as the fun, there is a very serious message that we want to get across: diversity is a blessing if we will only make the effort to get to know our neighbours."

## Salam Shalom Saviour Supper



**Salam Shalom, the Bury Muslim Jewish Forum, whose secretary is FN4M's Warren Elf, held a dinner at the JS Kosher Restaurant.**

The fifty attendees enjoyed the opportunity to eat together, putting to one side the politics that create tension and misunderstanding and celebrated the many values and interests common to the two great Abrahamic faith communities.

# Hazel at Festival Time

**160 Greater Manchester Christians, Jews and Muslims celebrated a first on Sunday at The Manchester Reform Synagogue in the company of the Secretary of State for Communities & Local Government, Hazel Blears MP.**

December 2008 is one of a few years when major religious festivals from each of the three faiths fall in the same month. These festivals are: Christmas, Eid ul Adhaa and Chanukah. It is a rare occasion they fall in the same month (once every 36 years) due to the changing nature of the Islamic lunar calendar.

FN4M Steering Group Member, Jonny Wineberg, who is also Co-Chairperson of the Muslim Jewish Forum, explained, "It was a chance to work towards more co-operation, and hopefully, in the long term, all people will have a positive view of other faiths. Some aspects of the media can give the impression that faiths are fighting each other all the time. The reality is that there is so much of what we believe which is similar."

Councillor Afzal Khan, Co-Chairperson of the Muslim Jewish Forum, who recently received the CBE for his inter-faith work, said, "It was an historical event and a coming together that was long overdue. We all live in the same wonderful city of Manchester and by working together we can make it even better, whether it is tackling crime, or improving the environment. If there is dialogue between all faiths it can only benefit the city. It was an opportunity to exchange festive greetings, socialise, and learn of each other's faiths."

Talks were given by the Rev Stephen Williams, of the Council of Christians and Jews; Iftikhar Awan, of the Altrincham Muslim Association; and

Rabbi Reuven Silverman of the Manchester Reform Synagogue, on the meaning of each of the festivals.

Communities Minister and Salford MP, Hazel Blears, attended the event and spoke of the value of multi-faith communities. She said, "As a society we are richer by far because of faith. Manchester's history of different faiths is a story of shared roots, shared values and shared spaces; people coming together to make things better."

"This event was a celebration of that - an



**Above (l to r): Iftikhar Awan, Rabbi Reuven Silverman, Irem Choudhary (Christian Muslim Forum), Jonny Wineberg (Muslim Jewish Forum/FN4M), Secretary of State Hazel Blears M.P. and Rev. Stephen Williams (Council of Christians and Jews)**

opportunity to be proud of different traditions and beliefs; but at the same time to understand that, despite our differences, there is far more that unites than divides us."

The event was jointly organised by The Muslim Jewish Forum Greater Manchester, the Manchester Christian Muslim Forum and the Manchester Council of Christians and Jews.

# From the Chair



**I am delighted to be writing another From the Chair for the latest edition of the FN4M newsletter. This edition includes many examples of network members being at the forefront of interfaith activity across our city.**

You will find a report of the Cheetham Festival, held in September, which is increasingly being recognised as a template for a vibrant multi-faith celebration that could be repeated across the city.

You will also find a report of the hugely successful FN4M conference that was held addressing the issue of gangs and gun crime. This certainly touched a public nerve and the conference was packed to capacity. The provocative speakers threw down the challenge to network members to ensure that this conference was not a one off event but that the coherent strategy emerges from it. This is the challenge that the Steering Group are now facing!

In other ways across the city, network members are nurturing good multi-faith practice in the areas of youth activities and diversity tours.

There are two dates coming up early in 2009 that I would draw to your attention. On Wednesday January 28th the next meeting of Changemakers will take place. FN4M members have been instrumental in the moves to get this broad-based community organisation off the ground in Manchester. The process has recently received a timely fillip with the election of Barack Obama in the US. Obama was himself a community organiser trained by the same man who is now in partnership with Manchester Changemakers - Greg Galluzzo of the Gamalial Foundation. If you have not yet been part of the Changemakers process please consider getting involved. Its purpose is to create a vibrant citizens' organisation in Manchester. Please email me on [daniel@fn4m.org](mailto:daniel@fn4m.org) to be added to the mailing list.

The second date is Wednesday February 11th when FN4M will partner with the North West Multi Faith Tourism Association to run a workshop on Faith Tourism to be held at the Manchester Cathedral Visitors' Centre. If you are part of a faith community who owns a building (and most of us are!) then this is a unique opportunity to find out what resources are available to help you make the best of your premises. If you would like to be involved, please email me on [daniel@fn4m.org](mailto:daniel@fn4m.org).

In both large and small ways network members are raising the question that increasingly needs to be asked as people of faith embark on any activity or project: Can I do this with my neighbours of other faiths? Only when we answer yes to this question are we one step nearer to creating the integrated community that we all long to see in this great city of Manchester. Keep asking the questions!



**A friendly Under 14s cricket match was held this summer between the NJCL (Northern Jewish Cricket League) and Farghana Institute with the support of the Muslim Jewish Forum of Greater Manchester. Jonny Wineberg, Co-Chairperson of the Forum and Chair of the NJCL, and Mohammed Zulfikar of the Farghana Institute are pictured with the players of both teams.**

# No Honour in Violence

Manchester conference aims to help end secret killings in the UK

In the knowledge that twelve women are murdered in the UK by their relatives every year, and hundreds more disappear all victims of so-called honour killings, FN4M hosted a No Honour in Violence conference in July for the benefit of care and community professionals working with vulnerable women.

Speakers at the conference included Dr Ahmad Al-Dubayan, Director of Regents Park Mosque and the Islamic Cultural Centre; Councillor Dr Parvin Damani MBE, of the Public Health Service; Diana Nammi, Director of the International Campaign against Honour Killings (IKWRO); and representatives of the Greater Manchester Police. The conference was chaired by BBC journalist Jenny Cuffe.

Manchester's own Councillor Sameem Ali attended the conference and spoke of her experience as a victim of honour-

based violence. She has written a book about her experiences and she whole-heartedly endorsed the work of FN4M in this field.

The conference examined the underlying issues in order to find ways of helping the women concerned and of educating the public. It was a very positive day that attracted television coverage and it is hoped to arrange a follow up in the near future.

Eman Numan, one of the conference organisers said: "We are delighted that Christians, Jews and Muslims, together with members of other faiths and the Police, have come



Anti-violence campaigner Councillor Sameem Ali

together in Manchester to help put an end to these terrible tragedies."

Revd. Daniel Burton, Chair of the Faith Network for Manchester, said: "This is a human rights issue that is too often caricatured as a Muslim problem. In fact this is a cross cultural problem that needs a cross cultural response. I am delighted that FN4M is able to help in this process."

Revd Sally Thomas, who helped organise this conference, is keen to see this work developed. If there are any concerns related to this topic, Sally can be contacted at [sally@fn4m.org](mailto:sally@fn4m.org).

# Faith Youth Manchester

FYM, FN4M's youth section, held a meeting at the beginning of December addressing issues raised at the recent FN4M Conference and the need for positive responses for young people.

The meeting was addressed by Acting Head of Manchester Youth Service, John Thulbeck, who talked about the development of the Integrated Youth Support Service in Manchester, which will hopefully give a more flexible and coherent response to the needs of young people. Whilst Manchester's delivery is behind where it should be, particularly for such a progressive, vibrant city, it is hoped that progress will be made rapidly.

Part of this progress will be the engagement of the voluntary, community and faith sector through new commissioning arrangements. There was a feeling that faith and voluntary groups should be able to bid for work presently undertaken by the Youth Service. However, commissioning of services currently within the statutory sector seems some way off.

Karina Nyananyo of 42nd Street gave her insight into work with young people in Moss Side and the difficulties young people faced in gaining employment as well as dealing with gang culture and violence. She said, "We need to start looking at young people as young people in need," addressing these and other issues that affect them.

A number of themes then emerged from the ensuing workshops, including the need for real investment that follows the passions of workers and young people; the value of mentoring work and the need for it to be sustainable; empowering youth through Youth Forums, leadership training, and Youth Opportunity Funds; thinking 'outside the box' with youth clubs that run 10pm to 1am Friday, Saturday or Sunday, not just weekdays; faith leaders being resourced to support young people and outreach work to reach young people where they are comfortable building a rapport and trust.

Jonny Wineberg, FYM Convenor, disclosed that funding applications were pending to take some of this forward. "As with all groups, we need funding to move forward. However, with such a wide agenda, we will not only need our own funding so that we can employ people to give us the capacity to carry it forward, but we will also need the support of other youth workers from faith groups as well as young people who share our passion."

There will be a further meeting in February 2009 for both young people and those who work with them to develop these themes and look to plan some practical actions with young people at their core. To get involved or for information, please contact Jonny at [jonny@fn4m.org](mailto:jonny@fn4m.org) or call 07930 534422.

**God's World  
and Human Ruin**  
*Faith perspectives on the environment*  
**Talks and Discussion**  
**February 10<sup>th</sup> 2009 8.00 to 9.30pm**  
**Roby United Reformed Church,  
Dickenson Road, Longsight, M13 0NR**  
for further details contact: [bob.day@theroby.org.uk](mailto:bob.day@theroby.org.uk) or [a.sadiq@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:a.sadiq@manchester.ac.uk)  
**Manchester Christian Muslim Forum**

