

Chair's Reflections



Welcome to the first edition of our newsletter. We propose to bring it out quarterly with your support and writings. Yes, we need you to write for the newsletter, ideally between 150 – 200 words on issues that you would like to share on faith and regeneration. Now that the thirty second commercial is over, let me share with you some good news in this festive season.

A delegation from FBRN Steering Group met Yvette Cooper MP, the Minister for Regeneration, in October to brief her on the work that we undertake. I think we probably made a sufficient impression on her for us to receive the ODPM Special Grants award the very next morning!

We now have Doreen Finneron as Development Consultant until March 2004 and we are laying the groundwork for our work beyond. Some of our various activities have been mentioned elsewhere in this newsletter, so I am not going to report them. We have been tremendously empowered by the genuine support extended to our work from all parts of the country. Without your support, FBRN would not have taken off in the way it has done.

Please continue to provide us with your support, encouragement and critical feedback. But kindly bear with us if we are unable to action everything you would like us to do. It is that same perennial excuse (oops!), sorry, issue of resources.

At the moment the FBRN Steering Group, has decided to concentrate on building a solid foundation for the Network. We all want FBRN to be a sustainable organisation reaching out to communities and individuals that others do not. There is no other way to do this than through sheer patience and hard work.

Leaving you all with that thought in mind, I wish you all season's greetings and a very happy and peaceful New Year.

Rumman Ahmed.

Future Events

Regenerating Communities through Faith, a conference in Preston organised by FBRN UK and the Gujarat Hindu Society of Preston; 26th February 2004.

For further details and a booking form please contact the Gujarat Hindu Society on 01772 253912

FBRN UK National Conference, 25th March 2004 in London to launch the FBRN UK Toolkit for practitioners. For further details and a booking form please contact FBRN UK at the address below.

fbrnnews

FBRN UK
9 Lambton Road
Raynes Park
London SW20 OLW

Contact
Dr Doreen Finneron
Tel. 020 8947 6160
Email fbrnuk@aol.com

fbrnnews

FAITH BASED REGENERATION NETWORK UK



The Faith Based Regeneration Network is drawn from nine faith traditions: Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jain, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh and Zoroastrian. It was established in 2002 by and for regeneration practitioners who identify with faith traditions, or who work with or for faith community organisations. It is the first time that practitioners have come together from a range of faith traditions in this way, and is the only organisation of its kind in Britain.

Launch conference

In September 2002 a hundred and thirty delegates attended from all over the country. David Rayner, Head of Community Participation Branch of the Urban Policy Unit in the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister gave the keynote speech. He said that there was a need for a national framework to develop the capacity of the diversity of faith communities in regeneration and, to bridge the gap between policy and practice. The participants endorsed the plans to create a national network, and decided that the main tasks should be:

- to encourage the **active engagement** of faith groups in local regeneration initiatives and partnerships
- to **build the capacity of faith groups** by identifying, demonstrating and promoting good practice
- to identify the **training and skills development** needs of faith based regeneration practitioners
- to demonstrate the benefit of **cross-faith collaboration and co-operation**, while at the same time, promoting the diversity and plurality of faith traditions in creating a common good

- to provide an interface between the various levels of **decision making**, from national strategic policy to grass roots action
- to build a shared and evolving **learning culture**, which facilitates the economic, cultural, social and spiritual sustainability of individuals and communities

Other events

Over ninety participants enjoyed the hospitality of the Guru Nanak Gurdwara at 130 High Street Smethwick, Birmingham in May, for the FBRN regional colloquium, *'Creating Faith Based Networks that Work'*. They engaged in a lively debate with the Regeneration Minister, Tony McNulty who said that the challenge for FBRN is to bring all faith communities into the mainstream of regeneration. They are key partners in bringing about real change in neighbourhoods and in making sure no one gets left behind.

'Building on Faith', a conference in partnership with the Religious Leaders Group in Newcastle in October; a hundred and twenty delegates focused on how faith communities can use their buildings to serve the needs of local people.

'Squaring the Circle' was the intriguing title of an event organised by the Roman Catholic Conference of Religious on October 30th. Harmander Singh of FBRN made a much appreciated contribution to the panel of speakers, generating a good deal of interest in the Network.

The Sikh Faith

The Sikh faith places great importance on the value of a vibrant and cohesive community. Sikh teachings encourage community involvement and daily prayers end with a call for the betterment of all humanity. The centre of Sikh community activity and worship is the Gurdwara, which acts as a community resource open to all other faiths. Activities include: advice on specialist issues from dedicated volunteers, childcare facilities, youth clubs, language, IT training and day-care for the elderly. Additional examples range from setting up charitable institutions to providing food and shelter for the needy. Sikhs can play a significant role in community regeneration in partnership with others.

Harmander Singh.

Jainism

Jainism is an Indian faith followed by several million people in India and by sizeable numbers of migrant Jains in Europe; over 25,000 live in Britain. Jains aspire to be 'spiritual victors' by self-effort and revere twenty-four past 'enlightened ones', known as *tirthankaras*, whose examples guide them to the path of spiritual liberation. The twenty-fourth *tirthankara*, Mahavira (599 to 527 BCE), simplified the Jain teachings and established the fourfold order of Jain society (monks, nuns, laymen and laywomen), the basis of Jain way of life for over 2,500 years. Jain way of life is regulated by 'non-violence' and reverence for all life in action and relative pluralism in thoughts. Jains are vegetarians and are involved in extensive philanthropic activities, including learning, the care of nature, care of the environment, and promotion of peace. Jains are active supporters of the FBRN.

Natubai Shah

Regeneration and the Individual reflections by mem

Christianity

Two central themes in the Christian faith are the incarnation of God in human life, and the necessity of identifying with those who are poor or powerless. Christians therefore, believe that the whole of creation is the arena for our relationship with God, building community is essential, and within this they are called to strive for justice and wholeness for all. This leads them to work towards a vision of the world in which all can develop their true potential and take a full part in society. Christians are called to be partners in the renewal and regeneration of civil society and community.

Fran Beckett.

The Zoroastrian Faith

Zarathushtra taught that all that is created is the creation of the Good God, thus all that is created is good. However, the negative mentality of the mind brings about violence, chaos, injustice and unhappiness. It is the duty of each Zoroastrian to refresh the world to its pristine state by choosing, through free will, that which is good. Where good is described as "only that is good for oneself which is good for any body whatsoever". Here the any body refers to all that is created. This process of refreshing the soul of the mother earth is the regeneration we are all working towards. Thus, regeneration will bring forth the fruits that refresh. To 'refresh' simply put, is our daily duty, and is not reserved for some notion for the 'end of time'.

Jehangir Sarosh

Islam

Islam looks at society from three perspectives: the individual, family and community. Social responsibility is a concept, which is deep-rooted in Islamic practices and traditions and therefore the well being of the community in terms of health, housing, education, employment and training are all embedded in the Islamic norms. Recent experiences in Britain and other parts of the globe indicate a need for greater understanding of faiths and a commitment to finding solutions within a multi-faith society. Regeneration programmes are a positive way of reassuring Muslims that they have a future in the West. Stereotypical images of Muslims as terrorists and members of Al -Qaeda is undermining relations between Muslims and British society. It is also damaging the UK Government's attempts to create an inclusive society. Faith communities are extremely well placed to play a pivotal role in regeneration, social and economic development and promoting participation – particularly within disadvantaged communities

traditions

nine faith traditions of fbrn uk

members of fbrn uk

The Jewish Faith

"Justice, justice shall you pursue" says the Bible (Deuteronomy 16:20) and one of the most important commandments the Jew observes is assistance to the poor, the oppressed and the excluded. We believe that the best way of helping someone, is to enable them to become independent through their own actions, and that support of non-Jews is equally as important as helping Jews. Synagogues and Jewish communal organisations support local homelessness projects and hostels, provide employment and counselling, have set up recycling projects, support isolated elderly people and have recently been developing 'Sure Start' projects. The Jewish Council for Racial Equality has worked closely with refugees, and in the field of community cohesion, the annual Jewish-Muslim youth football programme organised by the Maimonides Foundation and Arsenal FC is a beacon of community harmony.

Steve Miller

Buddhism

The Dalai Lama starts every teaching with the pragmatic statement that "all sentient beings seek to be happy and to avoid suffering". On the deepest level, happiness is achieved through finding inner peace, but on the immediate level it involves practical necessities such as food, adequate housing, education, medicine and community support. Buddhism also puts great stress on the interconnectedness of all living beings and of the environment, and consequently on the need to take loving care of each other. The minority ethnic Buddhist groups in the UK are particularly active in supporting their local neighbourhoods and creating a focus for community identity and activities, whereas the more recently-formed groups of Western Buddhist students are mostly active in renovating buildings for spiritual use and developing specialist skills in areas such as counselling and hospice work.

Alison Murdoch

Bahá'í Faith

The Bahá'í community is rooted in the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, the prophet-founder of the Bahá'í Faith, with values of unity in diversity and justice at their core. Bahá'ís in the UK and across the world run a range of social and economic development projects with a focus on the transformation and regeneration of individuals, families and communities as part of a process of building a global society based on co-operation, reciprocity and genuine concern for others. Key themes in these projects are spiritual and moral education, the advancement of women, and reasonable prosperity for all.

Barnabas Leith.

The Hindu Religion

The act of regeneration is very symbolic of reincarnation. From one life to another we try to increase the level of our spirituality so that we become as close to God as God is to us. Regeneration is part of the work we do to improve our lives here in England and in doing this improve the lives of others (friends, neighbours and strangers) around us. For the Hindu community this is a very important part of life.

Regeneration gives hope to people and creates opportunity for social and cultural activity. Regeneration that brings people together in order to celebrate is equally as important as regeneration work to create employment and improve the physical environment around us.

Deepak Naik.