Welcome to the first Multi-Faith Spaces Newsletter

In this Issue:
• International Conference
• Touring Exhibition
• Case Study: Simultankirchen
• Publications and Outputs

Our Definition
“The MFS are intentionally created spaces, designed to house a variety of religious practices, in addition to addressing more or less clearly defined faith requirements and social purposes. This definition covers single spaces, or complexes of spaces within a particular area.”

Get Involved
We are always eager to hear from individuals or organisations who are interested in our research. If you use or represent a multifaith space that you think would be of interest, please do not hesitate to contact us at mfs@manchester.ac.uk.

Please feel free to forward this newsletter to others who might be interested in our work.

Multi-Faith Spaces: Symptoms and Agents of Religious and Social Change is a three year research project based at the Manchester Architecture Research Centre (MARC).

The project considers multifaith space as both emerging from our multicultural and religiously diverse societies, as well as active in the facilitation of community, dialogue and toleration. These processes are researched from a material perspective, viewing multifaith spaces (MFS) as primarily works of architecture, shaped through the actions of many stakeholders: users, designers, architects, engineers, artists, chaplains, academics, facilities managers, diversity officers, etc.

The project has visited over 200 MFS in the United Kingdom and beyond. It has employed a host of research techniques; site visits, interviews, measured drawings, participant observation, questionnaires, focus groups, and the gathering of visual data. To date the project has amassed over 14,000 tagged photographs.

As we begin to write up our findings, we will keep you informed via a regular newsletter. For further information about the project, please visit our website at www.manchester.ac.uk/mfs.

International Conference

On March 21st and 22nd over 150 delegates – academics, chaplains, architects, policy makers and others stakeholders – arrived at St Peter’s House Chaplaincy, University of Manchester to attend our international conference. The first of its kind, the conference was an opportunity to present our current research findings, and discuss the broad challenges inherent in the design, management and sharing of multifaith space. Sessions included: architecture, design, management, chaplaincy, policy, theory, new research and theology.

Delegates also enjoyed plenary talks from a range of international practitioners, and key UK-based academics, alongside an evening keynote from Professor Kim Knott (Lancaster University).

Over the next few weeks a selection of materials from the conference (videos, podcasts, papers, etc) will be added to our website. Specific contributions will be highlighted within forthcoming newsletters.
In each newsletter we will present a short article or case study that has emerged from our research. Here we consider a very specific historical precedent, the Simultankirche.

On May 10th 2011 Ralf Brand visited the Simultankirche in Schutterzell, Southern Germany and interviewed the local priest. Well over 50 such churches exist in Germany where Protestants and Catholics have historically prayed under one roof. It was decided to look at these types of churches almost as precedents of multi-faith – or at least multi-confessional – spaces. As expected, materiality plays an important role in the Simultankirche; even the sacristy is separated: one row of cupboards for Catholics on the left, an identical one for Protestants on the right. In practice, however, the latter conceded some of their cupboard space to the Catholic community because they acknowledged the latter’s more intensive use of ritual garments. A similar pattern can be observed in the nave where Protestantism demonstrated fewer ‘material requirements’ regarding the performance of religious services than Catholicism; due to divergent tradition and liturgy. For example, the Catholics erected a separate altar for the Virgin Mary and a confessional, alongside a range of other, mostly smaller, artefacts that would not be necessary or required by Protestant users.

Please email us if you would like to contribute an article.

### Publications and Outputs

Members of the project team are in the process of preparing a range of publications; including journal articles, an edited volume and conference presentations. All details and materials will be posted on our website.

#### Book chapter

Ralf Brand contributed a chapter to the recently published book *Religion and Change in Modern Britain*. The book is a comprehensive guide to religion in Britain, since 1945, and presents findings and analysis from the *Religion and Society Programme* (2007-2012).


#### Articles


#### Media Coverage

*Multifaith spaces can offer dialogue opportunities* (Egypt Independent).
*Quiet rooms: Seek out an oasis of calm* (People Management).
*Surging growth in multi-faith space challenges religious decline* (AHRC).
*Rise in UK multi-faith prayer rooms, a Liverpool study reveals* (BBC online).
*BBC radio 4 thought for the day, April 18 2012* (BBC radio 4).
*Chaplains are ‘ill-prepared’ for multi-faith spaces* (Church Times – subscription only).