

# **‘Reconciliation and Forgiveness’ Conference**

**2009 UN Year of Reconciliation**

## **Morning Session**

The day featured two sessions. The first session in the morning in a meeting room in 43 Lancaster Gate was chaired by Rev. Dr. Marcus Braybrook [f](#)rom the morning conference:



Rev. Marcus Braybrook, President of WCF

(Conference Chair)



Bhai Mohinder Sahib Singh

(Chair of British Sikh Consultative Forum)



Left to right, Cllr Faizullah Khan, Andrea Foulkes, Brenda Hodgson and Vanessa Edwards



Sukhbir Singh, Alan Rainer, Mrs Ruth Barnett, Prof Okeem, Prof Marije Zivkovic, Mr Jehangir Sarosh

The morning session was rich with experience and knowledge about the topic of Forgiveness as expressed by the pool of wisdom emanating from distinguished speakers such as depicted

above as well as Dr Ven Sumana Siri, Mr Jehangir Sarosh, Andrea Foulkes and Mr Jack Corley of UPF who gave concluding remarks. The general feeling about the morning conference was well expressed by the chair Dr Braybrooke who felt that during next year we should consider a one day conference with 3 sessions, one which could be a workshop in smaller groups perhaps, given the fact that there was so much to discuss, and such a wealth of experience amongst the speakers.

The second session was held in Friends Meeting House including an Interfaith Water Ceremony and presentations by many faith and community leaders. Photographs from the afternoon conference:



Jehangir Sarosh and Andrea Foulks, together add water to the main container while Bhai Sahib Mohinder Singh and Imam M Bocoum look on ..



Rev Dr Marcus Braybrooke Reporting on the Morning Conference



Lord T King of West Bomwich,  
(UPF Patron)



Dr Natubhai Shah Chair of Jain Network  
(Author of the concept of Forgiveness day)

**Report on the 'Forgiveness and Reconciliation' event by Connie Rennie**

Today I had the opportunity to take part in a ceremony at Friends meeting house where representatives of many different faiths came together to share the teachings, practices and experiences of forgiveness and reconciliation. It was a rare and wonderful sight to see so many different faiths being represented on one stage as each stood to share their viewpoint.

The religious leaders included keynote speakers such as Dr Marcus Braybrooke: President World Congress of Faith, Rev Dr Sumana Siri: Buddhist Cardinal of Europe, Dr N Shah of Jain network, Swami Saranandan, Rabbi Edwin Shuker Imam Bocoum of Muslim College and others.

Differences are often emphasized between faiths and cultures, but by listening to the words of each of the leaders at the event today, one clear message was portrayed; forgiveness is a key aspect of a strong life of faith, which when practiced leads to peace within oneself, naturally allowing you to bring peace to others, as is described in Buddhist psychology, 'He who loves himself will harm not another.' Not only does forgiveness bring us closer to each other, but all faiths expressed that forgiveness brings us closer to God. One of names of God in the Qur'an is, 'The Forgiver.' In practicing forgiveness, do we not become God-like? One of the most important days of faith for Jewish believers, as described by Mr. Edwin Shuker: Sephardic Jewish Association, is 'Yom Kippur' or 'The Day of Atonement' where the relationship between God and humans is reconciled through repentance, and the seeking of forgiveness.

To see the similarities in the teachings on the topic was interesting, but what I felt really created a positive atmosphere of unity in the hall, was the *practice* of forgiveness. Chants of forgiveness from the Muslim, Jewish and Jain traditions were presented, as well as an interactive session where the audience were asked to stand and greet their neighbor as a representative of all things that they need to forgive, and tell them, 'You are forgiven!' We were also led through a meditation chant by Mayura Patel representing Hinduism.

At this point I felt that peace and reconciliation between people of different faiths cannot be achieved simply by an intellectual understanding, but to respect each other as much as to be willing to practice each other's traditions. Everyone in the room was willing to share and participate in the practices of other faiths, and I was so moved!

The highlight of the event was the 'Interfaith Water Ceremony', the meaning, the purpose and the spirit behind it was explained by Rev Dr David Hanna. Representatives of each faith poured pure water into one single bowl, while reflecting on the virtues of water and its importance to Sikhs and Gurus, as described by Bhai Gurdas in his writing, 'Be Compassionate Like Water.' Beautifully read by Angad Kaur.

This ceremony is a symbol of the dissolution of resentments, and the desire to become one interreligious peaceful community. And after taking part in this event and seeing the example of the leaders today I feel inspired, and re-determined to practice forgiveness as one method to bring peace within myself, to those around me, and ultimately to God.

The second half of the afternoon was ably introduced by Sukhbir Singh and Vanessa Edwards, as MCs, both active members of UPF Community Cohesion Working Group (CCWG). It began with a few songs, some forgiveness related poetry, read by young people, Forgiveness dance beautifully performed by Anusha + team, extracts from a book written by Anthony Padgett read by him and Alan Rainer, Dr S Multani and Cllr F Khan, all part of UPF Ambassadors for Peace network. However the most touching part of the afternoon were the testimonies 1- about Hutus and Tutsis reconciliatory efforts explained by Marcianne

Uwimana of Reconciliation Ministries - 2- Sabina Miller about Jewish / German friendship- a comment below by Peter Schroder from the audience.

“Sabine’s testimony was extraordinary. She sacrificed a journey with her husband to Hungary to come to the event on stage at meeting house. I believe, she needed a lot of courage to do so. “My desire was to make a bridge...,” she testifies “...so I wrote a letter...”. And as she continues, choking on tears, “...I couldn’t find the words even ...”. – Her friends were Jewish! And she is German. There was so much pain she felt, historically and personally. All she wanted to say was ‘Sorry’ from the depth of her heart. “Sorry!” this is what she finally said. “Nobody told us that before!” was the response, and, with deep insight, “How can we forgive if nobody said ‘Sorry’ to us?” – Bravo Sabine! I would like to see the whole of my country, Germany, to feel the same pain like you felt, and follow your example. Only then, true Reconciliation and Forgiveness can come about”.

The afternoon came to a grand Finale with an explanation was given by Prof Ian Hall, about the repentance of John Newton regarding slavery and how “Amazing Grace” song was created. Rev A Harriot and his choir together with Francine Lakhan sang Amazing Grace and the entire audience joined in, an Amazing conclusion..



Connie Rennie and Robert Haines’ Scriptural Readings



Miss Elisa Brann:  
Unificationist Youth



Belinda Mbala,  
Perspective Christian Youth



Ms Kulvinder Nagha of Sant Niramkari  
representative gives a youth perspective



## ***“Forgiveness and Reconciliation” Programme:***

***Universal Peace Federation Community Cohesion Working Group***

***2:00 pm 4<sup>th</sup> October 2009 Friends Meeting House, Euston***

**Faith and Community Perspectives:** Emcee Rev. Dr David Hanna:  
Unificationist Pastor Bromley

Rev. Dr. Marcus Braybrooke: President World Congress of Faith,  
Introduction & Christian Perspective

Prof. Natubhai Shah: Chair of Jain Network and Jain Academy, Jain Perspective

Rev Dr Sumana Siri: Buddhist Cardinal of Europe,

Mayura Patel: Hindu Meditative Chant with Translation by Vanessa Edwards

Mr. Edwin Shuker: Sephardic Jewish Association – UK &  
Mrs. Ruth Barnett: Holocaust Educator

Mr. Bhai Mohinder Sahib Singh: Chair of British Sikh Consultative Forum

Mr. Shepetim: Muslim College, Muslim Chant

Imam Imam Mahmadou Bocoum: Lecturer at Muslim College London

Miss Elisa Brann: Unificationist Youth Perspective

Mr Jehangir Sarosh: Zoroastrian Perspective

Mr Andrea Foulkes: UK TV's Expert on Soul Freedom Therapy

Samana Prasana Pragya & Samana Rohit Pragya: Jain Vishva Bharati London

Mr Robert Haines: Christian Reading & Miss Connie Rennie: Unificationist Reading

Mr Jack Corley: Regional Director, Unification Movement

Ms. Kulvinder Nagha: Sant Niramkari Youth Volunteer &  
Swami Saradananda: Hindu Perspective

**Interfaith Water Ceremony:** Rev. Dr. David Hanna: Explanation

Ms. Angad Kaur: Guru Ram Das Project 'Be Compassionate Like Water' by Bhai Gurdas

**Break:** Conclusion of Break – Bernard Chellew: 'Ryhmes and Reasons' by John Denver

'Forgiveness & Reconciliation' Experiences (1) Ms. Marcian Uwimana – Rwanda  
(2) Mrs. Sabina Miller

'Amazing Grace' the origins by Prof. Ian Hall. Rev. Harriott, and Choir and Audience

Mr Glory Mbala, Poetry Reading

Anthony Padgett, A Jewish Artist, Reading from his Book,  
'The Rainbow Swastika Conspiracy'

Dance of Forgiveness narrated by Ms. Anusha Subramanyam of Beeja Dancing Group  
Performed by Dancers Elena, Jecinta and Katrina.

Lord King of West Bromwich: Universal Peace Federation Patron  
Concluding Remarks