

Elmbridge Multi-faith Forum

Autumn 2004 (Newsletter Number 1)



The Elmbridge Multi-Faith Forum (EMF) was inaugurated at an open meeting held in Elmbridge Civic Centre on 10th February 2004. The aims can be summarised as 'providing a focus for interfaith and intercultural activities, dialogue, education, contact and support within the Borough of Elmbridge.'

As we know, from tiny acorns giant oaks grow! Torq Stewart, who was Mayor of Elmbridge in the Millennium Year 2000, sowed the seed of an idea which took form in a multi-faith meeting in the Council Chamber, when all were invited to present a reading, song or ceremony from their faith. Torq's desire was that such an occasion would be repeated.

To continue with the gardening analogy, if it had not been for the tending and nurturing of this precious seed, which seemed to lay dormant for at least two years, the EMF would not be what it is today. We must thank Nabil Mustapha a member of the Baha'i Faith and his colleagues for using their initiative in inviting members from all other faiths to come together for a similar occasion in the Council Chamber in 2003. This was done in collaboration with past Mayor, Councillor Mick Burgess who is a great supporter of the EMF. They hosted a very successful evening when faith leaders from the major religions

were given the opportunity to express their thoughts on world peace. There followed a series of meetings, led by a 'steering group', in which objectives were drawn up for a possible Forum and proposals made as to how these could be implemented in practice. These led to the inaugural meeting in February 2004. From that time onwards the Elmbridge Multi Faith Forum has gone from strength to strength.

An executive committee has been formed. The current members are: Dr Nabil Mustapha (Chairman), Geoff Morris (Secretary), Phyllis Woodhead (Treasurer). The members of the committee represent the Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, and Zoroastrian faiths (A Sikh member has yet to be found, and, if you know of someone, please let us know).

Membership of EMF is open to individuals of all faiths and cultures living within or associated with the Borough of Elmbridge. The fee for the first year ending 31st March 2005 is £10. This fee includes a quarterly newsletter.

This is the first of these newsletters, which will be sent to members giving details of past and forthcoming events. We hope to develop the format over time and

will circulate by email as far as possible in order to save postage.

The EMF's **logo** is currently being designed as part of an art and design competition amongst senior school pupils at Claremont Fan Court School. The entries will be judged by the current committee and a prize will be given to the winner. We are all looking forward to seeing the results.

Our First Major Event

On Friday evening, 17 September we held a very successful **Multi-cultural/Multi-faith Evening** in the Joyce Grenfell Centre at Claremont Fan Court School. The Mayor of Elmbridge, Councillor Martin Schofield, Ian Taylor MBE MP and Phillip Hammond MP attended and spoke warmly of the aims of the Forum. The objective was primarily to draw people of all faiths together in an atmosphere of mutual respect and harmony where they could share ideas and gain a greater understanding of one another.



Ian Taylor MP with Gordon Hunt, Clara Monckton-Rubin (Head Girl) and Alex Thornton (Head Boy)

The programme was certainly diverse and included Indian dancing and singing, (both modern and classical); 'Bollywood' Dancing' (a fusion of Indian and modern European); Thai dancing in full traditional dress; Santoor and keyboard playing, not to mention a contemplative and elegant ballet dance by Emma Thornton, one of Claremont's pupils.

Thai Dancers



Ballet dancer, Emma Thornton

The variety of foods on offer were delicious and beautifully presented. There were Iranian, Thai, Indian and English, all generously supplied by kind supporters.

This buffet of exotic tastes was graciously served in style by those who provided the dishes.



Nabil Mustapha, Chairman of the Elmbridge Multifaith Forum sincerely thanked all at Claremont Fan Court School who made this event possible and made special mention of Louisa Taylor, the Estate and Facilities Manager, and her team who were instrumental in providing all the necessary facilities for the evening in such a generous spirit. Light and sound were provided by pupils of the school, Michael Carvill and Will Clutton. The Head Boy and Head Girl, Alex Thornton and Clara Monckton-Rubin were excellent ambassadors for the School.

Coming Events

Members of EMF are warmly invited to attend:

20th November 2004, 6.30pm:
'All Nations Fair' in the new Kingston College Theatre – Tickets £5 from Lally Mallik (020 8336 0015).

21st November 2004, from 1pm:
General invitation to Buddhapadida Temple, 14 Calonne Road, Wimbledon for festivities following Kathina presentation of new robes. There will be Thai dancing, Floating Flower celebration, Miss Festival contest and 25 Thai cooked food stalls. Just turn up.

25th November 2004 at 7pm:
Universal Celebrations 'United We Stand' Curry Dinner in aid of Kingston Hospital Cancer Unit in the Shiraz Mirza Community Hall (next to Norbiton Station). Cost £10; tickets from Lally Malik (020 8336 0015) or Rev. Bruce Stuart (020 8943 6362). See attached details.

11th December 2004:
EID and Diwali Musical Evening at Tolworth Recreation Centre. Cost £10; ticket from Malti Patel (020 8546 4251). See attached details.

22nd January 2005:
EMF visit to Regent's Park Mosque and Islamic Cultural Centre, 146 Park Road, London NW8 at 3.00p.m. Imam Shahid has kindly agreed to show us round and answer any questions about Islam. Please notify the Secretary, Geoff Morris if you are able to attend.

2005:
We are working on our programme for 2005 including visits to other religious groups, discussions and social events. Details will be sent as soon as they are available.

Planned Activities

We have already begun to work on the following:

- **A database, web-site and network service, including linguistic help.**
- **Membership of the Police Advisory Group.**
- **Fire Service Advisory Group.**
- **Education and Youth Service, speakers and advisory panel.**
- **Direct assistance and advice on faith and cultural issues including linguistic help.**

If you are a member of the Forum and would like to volunteer to help with the above, please contact the Secretary.

Information

The Inter Faith Network for the UK has produced a booklet called '**Connect**' which is intended primarily as a guide for young people aged 16 to 25 years. It includes useful data such as a calendar of Religious Festivals. We have a limited number of hard copies and if you would like one of these please send a stamped addressed C5 envelope (35p) to Geoff Morris at the contact address below. Alternatively the contents of the booklet are available for free download at www.Interfaith.org.uk.

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