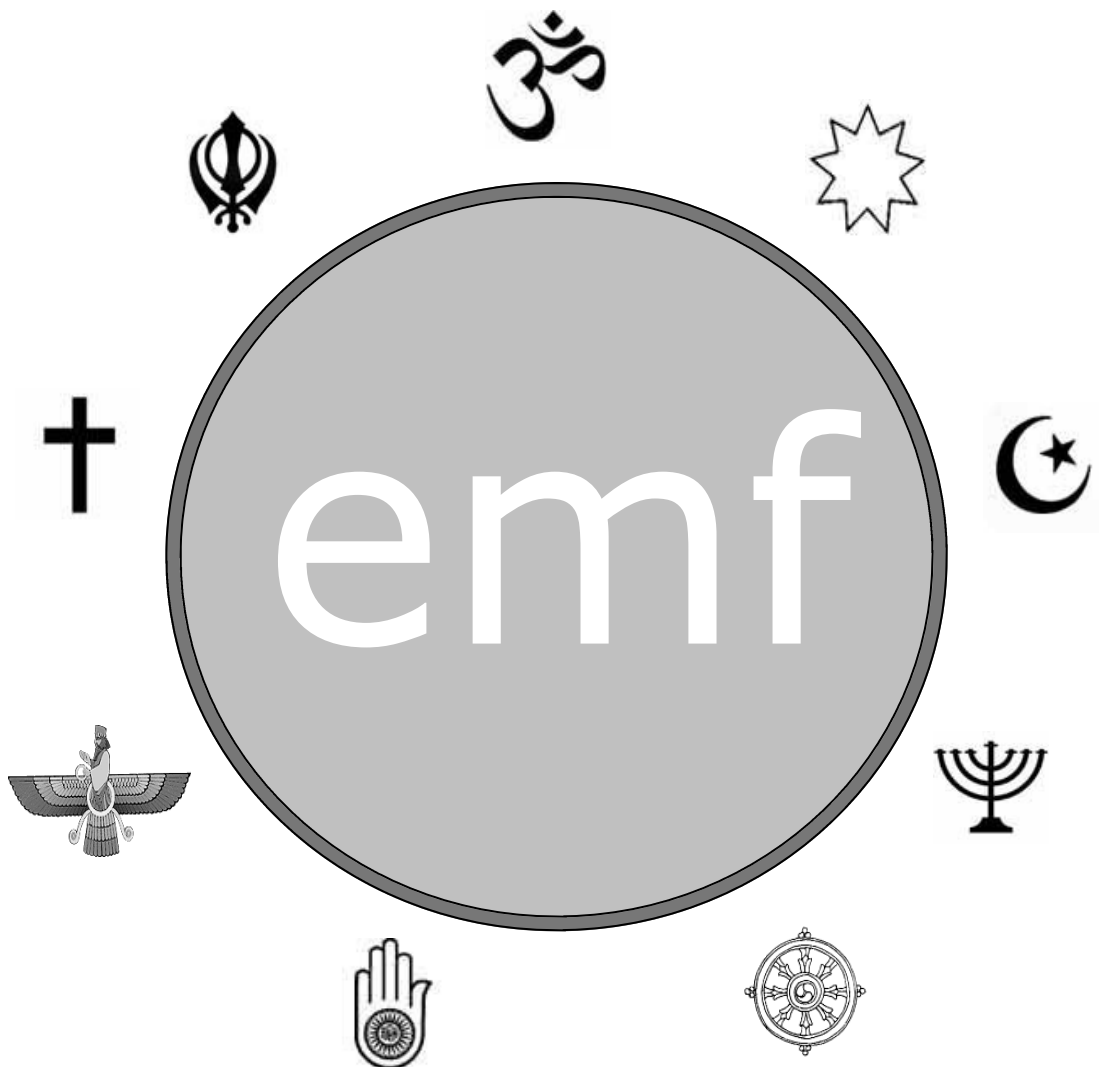


Elmbridge Multi-Faith Forum

Registered Charity No1122962

NEWSLETTER



Apologies for the delay!

It is almost a year since we published our last Newsletter. This was partly because we had a 'grant' holiday until 1st April, after which we were able to start work on a 'relaunch' of EMF, including a new logo and establishing our EMF Centre at Thames Ditton Village Centre, Mercer Close, Thames Ditton, Surrey KT7 0BS. Adapting the logo to the format of the Newsletter proved more difficult than we expected. We ran into the time pressures of the summer season, and the result is this present 'bumper issue'. The bad news is that we have run out of copies of the last issue. The good news is that we hope to print double the number of copies of this issue. The hope is that we shall now revert to our 3 editions per year pattern.



Since our last Newsletter we have:-

- Published and circulated 1,000 printed copies of our Autumn 2009 Newsletter and added it to our website
- Visited the Unitarian Church in Godalming (*16th October*)
- Held our 5th Annual Gala (*14th November*)
- Published our first '*Insights into Faith*' briefing
- Visited the Shah Jahan Mosque in Woking (*27th January*)
- Hosted a discussion on 'Helping Hand/Street Angels' Project (*16th February*)
- Had a talk by Chuyuen Corfield on 'My visit to the Birthplace of Confucius' (*2nd March*)
- Held our annual barbecue at the home of Geoff Morris (*25th July*)
- Enjoyed an illustrated talk by Roger and Gail partridge on their visits to Afghanistan in 2004 and 2008 (*10th August*)
- Visited the Korean Buddhist Temple in Kingston (*1st September*)
- Continued our work with the Elmbridge Community Partnership, the Equality and Diversity Forum, the Police and the South-East England Faith Forum
- Helped the Elmbridge Museum to organise a display on '*Devotion in Elmbridge*'.

Membership

We are always pleased to welcome new individuals as members. The annual subscription is £10, for which you will receive the newsletters and priority booking for events and visits as well as invitations to meetings. The 'subscription year' runs from 1st April to 31st March. We now have over 100 members.

For enquiries about membership, please contact the Membership Secretary:

Phyllis Woodhead 01372 468783

Grants

Our grant of £4000 from the Surrey Community Foundation expired on 30th November 2009. Before it expired we were able to fund the publication of our first 'Insights into Faiths' booklet, based on what we have learnt during our visits to faith centres. More of the booklet later in this Newsletter!

Since 1st April we have been able to use funding from the 'Faiths in Action' programme of the Community Development Foundation. We have been awarded £11, 826, which must be spent before 31st March, 2011 for the following restricted purposes:

- publication and circulation of Newsletters and development of the website
- publication of faith briefings
- the community integration project in St John's Walton
- project with Surrey Police
- developing a Multifaith Centre
- developing our structure
- increasing quality and availability of our interfaith activities
- employing a PR consultant

An unfortunate aspect of the CDF grants is that the money must be spent strictly within the allotted period, and any money not spent by the end date must be returned.

VISIT : The Unitarian Church, Meadow, Godalming 16th October 2009

In fulfilment of a long sought-after wish to visit a Unitarian Church and congregation, the opportunity arose during the large meeting held for Fr Laurence Freeman in Cobham on Sunday 14th June 2009. One of the guests was Mrs Sheena Gabriel, and her invitation to visit their chapel was warmly accepted.

We arrived, as arranged, at 2pm in less number than we had hoped, and apparently the timing and school holidays were main factors. The welcome however, was no less warm or enthusiastic. Sheena kindly introduced Adrienne, Nick and Christine and we all congregated inside the chapel with its simple layout and the Unitarian symbol of the *Flaming Chalice*.



Address by Mrs Sheena Gabriel (adapted):

Mrs Sheena Gabriel is the Lay Leader at Meadow chapel and is studying for the Lay Ministry. The Unitarian Church has trained ministers, but in their absence, laity can take on positions of leadership.

History

Early history of Unitarianism is difficult to pinpoint. The concept of 'Unitarianism' could be as old as the 4th Century CE when Arius (CE 250-336), a Libyan who lived in Alexandria, Egypt, first postulated that Jesus was not of one substance with 'the Father'. For this he was ruled a heretic at the First Council of Nicea of AD 325, later exonerated in 335 at the First Synod of Tyre, but pronounced a heretic again after his death at the First Council of Constantinople of 381CE.

It is said that the Roman Emperors Constantinius II (337-361CE) and Valeus (364-378CE) were Arians or *Semi-Arians* (Arianism is not to be confused with Aryanism, the basis for the Nazi ideology of Adolf Hitler).

However, the matter appears to have been laid to rest until the 16th Century when **Dávid Ferenc** aka **Francis David (1510-1579CE)** became in Transylvania (now Romania) the Bishop of what is now considered the first Unitarian Church, and **King John Sigismund II Zápolya** the first 'Unitarian monarch'. David, nevertheless died in prison and another early Unitarian **Michael Servetus (1511-1553)** of France was also burnt at the stake in Geneva under the orders of John Calvin because of the heretic views in his book *Errors of the Trinity*. Again, an Italian theologian **Faustus Socinus (1539-1604)** became leader of the so-called "Socinian" church in Poland. The church was mob destroyed. There were other "martyrs" to the cause of Unitarianism.

In England a key figure in early Unitarian thought was **John Biddle (1616-1662CE)** who founded the first 'anti Trinitarian' church in Britain and suffered banishment and death in a Scilly island prison.

In 1662, King Charles II passed the **Act of Uniformity** leading to '**the great ejection**' of refusing priests, who formed themselves as a result into a variety of non-conformist denominations such as Presbyterianism or Congregationalism, while others evolved into Unitarianism.

The main figures responsible for establishing Unitarianism as a denomination in England were Joseph Priestley, a dissenting minister (better known as the scientist who discovered oxygen) and Theophilus Lindsey who opened the first church to use the label 'Unitarian' in 1774. In 1813 the "Trinity Act" was passed, making denial of the Trinity no longer illegal. This paved the way for Unitarianism to flourish in the 19th century.

What is Unitarianism

Historically, Unitarians have adhered strictly to 'monotheism' – the belief in one God, hence their name 'Unitarian' as distinct from 'Trinitarian'. They maintain that Jesus was a great man and a 'prophet' of God, but not God Himself. They believe that Jesus did not claim to be God, nor did His teachings hint at the existence of a 'triune God'. Unitarians believe in the moral authority, but not necessarily the 'divinity' of Jesus. Thus Unitarians hold Jesus in high regard:

- as a teacher from the Jewish tradition, whose central message was the call to love
- as a powerful example of integrity, courage and compassionate living
- as fully and unequivocally human
- as divine only in the sense that his life and work revealed - or came to symbolise - the divinity and high potential inherent in everyone.

Unitarians do not regard the Bible as an unquestionable authority, but it is to be valued as:

- the human record of a people's long struggle to understand their origins, their destiny and their God
- a deep fund of wisdom and insight deserving both attention and respect.

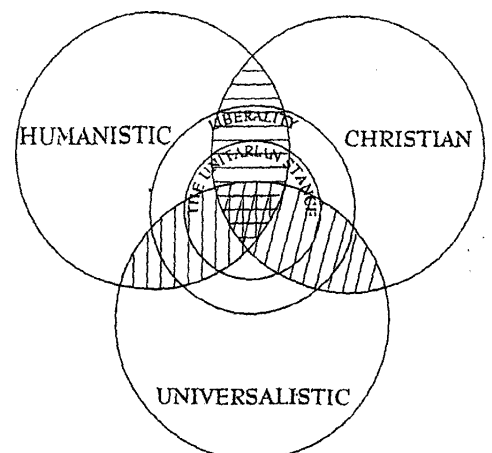
Strands of Unitarianism

Unitarianism encapsulates several strands:

The 'Humanists' focus on Charles Darwin's theory of Evolution.

The 'Universalists' value the insights of all religions.

The 'Christians' take a non-doctrinaire view of the teachings of Jesus



There are 3 main tenets of Unitarianism:

Freedom: The right of every human being to worship and live his or her life according to his or her conscience.

Reason: An open enquiring search for truth embracing scientific as well as 'faith' evidence.

Tolerance: Acceptance of those who differ culturally, politically or religiously.

Theodore Parker, a 19th century Unitarian is quoted as saying: *"Be ours a religion which like sunshine goes everywhere, its temple all space, its shrine the good heart, its creed all truth, its ritual works of love."* Thus: their motto is ***"deeds rather than creeds"***

Unitarians claim many eminent personalities in many walks of life to have been Unitarians, with names like Benjamin Franklin, George Stephenson, Bell, Morse, Wedgewood, Tate, Bartok, Florence Nightingale, Thomas Jefferson, Elisabeth Gaskell and the inventor of www, Tim Burnes Lee.

Structure, rituals, Ministry: Unitarians tend to be small congregations, widely represented worldwide. There are larger numbers in the USA, where Unitarians merged with the 'Universalist' church which taught salvation for all and the love rather than judgement of God.

There are trained ministers but no bishops, and they observe equal rights for men and women.

They do not believe in 'Original Sin' and, therefore, do not undertake baptism but instead have services of celebration called 'Naming' ceremonies.

Funerals and weddings are conducted in whichever manner suits the individual, and same sex blessings are allowed.

Meetings are held in churches, chapels or any convenient venue, and worship includes hymns, prayers and readings drawn from a variety of sources. Unitarians observe Christmas and Easter (although they do not generally accept the Christian doctrines of Atonement or Resurrection). Pentecost and Whitsun are not usually marked. They may also mark other non-Christian occasions, such as *Holocaust Day* and *Human Rights Day*.

A word about Meadow: This is a 1789 Baptist chapel built out of town because of the persecution current at the time for non-conformists. For this reason also it is set back from the road and boasts no spire or tower. There are tall clear windows to let in light, and it is similar to Quaker places of worship in its simplicity. In 1870 a new chapel was built near the road, as it became safe to do so, and the old chapel became used as a schoolroom. The congregation now meets for worship in the original chapel and the newer building is used for the children's activities. The first female minister at Meadow was Rev Mabel Beams, appointed in 1936.

The Flaming Chalice: This symbol was designed by a Czech named Hans Deutsch during the second world war, inspired by the Czech religious reformer, Jan Hus, who was burnt at the stake

for heresy in 1415 because he offered the chalice of communion to laity as well as clergy. It has been adopted as the symbol for Unitarians worldwide, and their services start by lighting the chalice.

End of visit: The group was taken to the “hall” for tea, biscuits and cakes, and healthy, more one to one, discussions took place until it was time to leave because of a children’s music lesson that was scheduled at 4pm.

We were grateful for the welcome, the information, the spiritual atmosphere, and the generosity.

Nabil M Mustapha



5th Annual Gala - Saturday 14th November 2009 at the Grenfell Centre, Clarendon Fan Court School, Esher

This family event was attended by over 150 people who enjoyed a varied programme of multicultural entertainment and a cornucopia of foods of Jewish, Thai, Indian, Arabic and English origin. The food provided by the Clarendon Fan Court kitchen staff was augmented by dishes given by our members.

We were honoured by the presence of the Mayor and Mayoress of the Borough of Elmbridge, Councillor and Mrs James Vickers.

After all attending had filled their plates, the entertainment began.

Jade Simpkin, a pupil at Downsland School, sweetly and appropriately sang ‘From a Distance’ by Bette Midler. This was accompanied by screen projection of the lyrics of the song.

This was followed by colourful dances by the Kingston Chinese Association Junior Dance Group. These young children impressed us by the precision and grace of their movement - a credit to themselves and to their teachers.

Our friends, Mansour Saeednia and his brother , entertained us by music on the Santoor and keyboard.

Finally, a group arranged by our representatives from Staines Orthodox Synagogue travelled from North West London to perform traditional Jewish music which finished with many of us (including the Mayor) dancing at the front of the hall to the sound of a violin and piano accordion.

To conclude the evening, the mayor spoke of faith and the importance of understanding each other's faith. He thanked EMF for the many ways in which it contributed to the life of the Borough of Elmbridge.

We are grateful to all who made our Gala possible, notably the Principal, Headmaster and staff of Claremont Fan Court School, those who provided food and drinks, the organising committee, the performers and the others whom I have doubtless forgotten to mention.

Geoff Morris



Insights into Faiths

In December, 2009 we published our first booklet in this series.

The contents of this briefing were based on information given to us during visits to Faith Centres and presentations to our meetings. Our reports were referred for checking to our sources of information which we listed.

The aim of the 'Insights' is not so much to offer an authoritative or comprehensive description as to provide a basic understanding that we have found helpful. This first booklet covered 'Faiths of Indian and Persian Origin' – Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism and Zoroastrianism.

A booklet on the Abrahamic religions of Judaism, Christianity, Islam & the Baha'i is in process of preparation.

Visit to Shah Jahan Mosque Woking, 27th January 2010

The visit was arranged with Prof M A Nasim (Ajmal Nasim), the Head of Education at the Mosque, and the meeting was from 2-4 pm. The group of approximately 30 people arrived in separate cars, and they included visitors from Guildford who asked if they could join EMF members for this visit.

The Mosque:

Shah Jahan Mosque is the first Mosque to be built in Britain and was established in 1889. In 1884, Dr Gottlieb Wilhelm Leitner, an Orientalist and traveller born in Budapest (Hungary) in 1840, left his post as Principal of Punjab University and came to England. He was a linguist said to have an ability in 50 languages. His ambition was to set up an Islamic University, and this led to the building of this Mosque in 1889, the cost having been met by Her Highness Begum Shah Jahan, the Ruler of Bhopal State.

The Mosque stands in about 1 acre of land, and now has a few buildings annexed to it. It had undergone restoration and general maintenance in 2005-06 at a cost of £250,000 obtained through donations.

The Mosque, though not too large, is well presented in white and light blue. Inside the praying area the floor is covered with a carpet designed with oblong individual praying areas, all pointing towards Mecca (the 'Qiblah'). The dome assists in the acoustics of the prayer hall, when 'Allah'u' Akbar' is called. The name of Allah is inscribed on the ceiling. The Shah Jahan Mosque belongs to the Hanafi sect of Sunni Islam.

Short address of Prof Nassim:

Prof Nassim spoke of the increasing diversity within the British community, saying that this is a source of richness and strength. He said all faiths believe in God, the One Creator. Our duty is to keep this earth clean, and cited the Qur'an's verse mentioning that God made us His 'Viceroys' on earth, and so we have to maintain the earth which is full of beauty.

He said that the House of Allah is the Ka'aba, which was from the time of Adam, and we are all descendants of Adam.

He then said that Muslims should not be terrorists, and that terrorism has no place in religion. Islam means Peace, and Islam teaches that, even at battle we should not kill old people or women or children, or even cut trees.

Prof Nassim then spoke of the five prayers daily in Islam and mentioned how the verses in the Qur'an have indicated the times of these prayers (dawn, noontime, afternoon, sunset and evening). The sixth prayer is the Friday prayer. When asked about the times, say in an arctic area, Prof Nassim said it is customary to follow the nearest country with no more than 18-19 hours fasting. There is greater reward for praying in a mosque, congregationally. Men and women cannot pray in the same place. The Imam gives the sermon standing at the pulpit.

Prof Nassim mentioned that there are two basic 'duties' in Islam: The duty to God, and the duty to Humans. Our worship and duties to Allah are to please Him and He can forgive us if we should fail to perform them. However, our duty to our fellow human beings is so important that failure cannot be forgiven by Allah unless the person whom we have affected by our actions forgives us. Prof Nassim was very interested in stressing the importance of Jesus in the Qur'an and described some of the verses that were revealed regarding Jesus and Mary, and that both are a 'sign of mercy' to the world. In addition, the Qur'an mentions the palm tree under which Mary took refuge and said that the palm tree carries great significance.

Finally Prof Nassim said that all it needs for anyone to become a Muslim is just to acknowledge the 'Shehada', i.e. expressing the belief in Allah and Mohammed as His last and final prophet, in Arabic. After this anyone can ask God's help in any language.

Congregating in an adjacent hall

After a short discussion, the group went to an adjacent hall where Dr Nabil Mustapha mentioned a few anecdotes, essentially that his father had visited London in 1923 and that he would always mention it at family occasions, even when they were children. However, it is only now that Nabil had the chance to visit the mosque that his father was so eager to talk about. In addition, Nabil showed a copy of an article that appeared in the Surrey Advertiser dated January 22nd 1913, talking about the visit of Abdu'l Baha, the Son of Baha'u'llah and His designated interpreter and exemplar, to the Mosque, and the address He gave at the Mosque. The opening sentence in the address was: *"The causes of difference were blind dogmas and imitations . . . now that the century of light had dawned, universal love must be established and all religions must show affection towards each other.."*

End of Visit

At about 4pm the group dispersed. There was a general feeling that the visit was invigorating but that they could have benefitted from a further discussion with Prof Nasim had his time allowed.

EMF would like to thank Prof Nasim and the Mosque staff for the opportunity of this visit.

Helping Hands/Street Angels Meeting 16th February 2010

At the 'Community Action' meeting held by EMF in September 2009 (see Newsletter 13), Sergeant Simon Moxon of Surrey Police had asked for EMF support and sponsorship to set up a group of 'Street Helpers' to work in the centre of Walton during the weekends. The Surrey Community Foundation awarded us a grant of £1,000 for this purpose.

At the request of Simon Moxon, Geoff represented us at a meeting at the Vicarage in Walton. Also present were the Vicar, a Curate, the Minister of Walton Baptists, Julian Lomas of the Guildford Street Angels scheme and Patrick Samuels of the Church Army. Simon had approached the local Walton churches, which were ready to play a full part in a Street Helpers scheme.

On 16th February we held an EMF 'Community Evening' at Church Gate House, Cobham, when Julian Lomas spoke about his work as leader of the Guildford Street Angels Scheme. All costs of this meeting, including Julian's fee of £600 for his work and advice to date, were met by the fund to which we had subscribed our £1,000 grant. Simon Moxon and Jan Moore, the Police Chaplain took part in the ensuing discussion, the conclusions of which were:

- the Walton churches should play a key role in the scheme, and trustees should be sought from them and EMF to set up a structure and plan training
- there are a number of organisations who train volunteers. They are mainly Christian and some will only accept Christians (e.g. Street Pastors)
- Street Angels are a Christian Organisation but should have no objection to participants of other faiths
- we would need to use the term 'Street Angels' rather than 'Helping Hands'

EMF has been awarded a further £1,000 for a police-related project in 2010-2011.

Chuyuen's visit to the birthplace of Confucius

On 2nd March, Chuyuen Corfield, a member of EMF Executive Committee, gave us an evening full of information and enjoyable anecdotes. She described an annual visit that her (extended) family undertakes to the Temple built on the birthplace of Confucius. The family arrangement is that whoever makes the visit or pilgrimage will also remember the other members of the family.

History and teachings of Confucius

K'ung-tzu or Chinese: **孔夫子**, literally meaning **Master Kung** was Latinised into **Confucius** when Confucianism was introduced to Europe. He was born in 551 BCE in the town of *Qufu* and died aged 73.

Confucius' philosophic teachings have deeply influenced Chinese, Korean, Japanese, and Vietnamese thought and life. This philosophy emphasised personal and 'government' morality, correctness of social relationships (most importantly filial piety), justice and sincerity. These teachings may be found in **Analects of Confucius**, the values contained in them having gained prominence in China over other doctrines to this day.

Confucius was from an aristocratic warrior family. His father was a famous warrior who had military exploits in two battles and owned a fiefdom. He lost his father when he was three years old, and he and his mother left the fiefdom and lived in reduced circumstances. As he was the son of a nobleman, he was able to attend a private school for noblemen's children.

Confucius was very diligent in his studies, and was recognised as having special talents when still quite young. He thus gathered many followers. In his time a mark of distinction for anyone was to excel in archery, music, charioting, poetry, calligraphy, and literature. He excelled in all these fields.

One of Confucius' teachings is the superiority of personal exemplification over explicit rules of behaviour. His moral teachings emphasised self-cultivation, emulation of moral exemplars, and the attainment of skilled judgment rather than knowledge of rules. His ethics may be considered a type of virtue ethics.

Confucius believed in 'filial piety' i.e. a respect for elders and departed elders to whom offerings are made. There is an ethic of 'duality' and mutual respect in relationships eg relationship between ruler/subject, wife/husband, brother/sister, employer/employee, friend/friend and so on. The ruler or senior person had to set the example.

Temple and cemetery

Confucius' birthplace, Qufu, is a small town in Shangdong Province about 300 miles south of Beijing. His home was designated and consecrated as a temple after his death. Gao was the first Emperor to make a special visit to the Temple in 206BCE, offering a sacrifice according to the rituals of the time. Emperor after Emperor conferred on his linear descendants posthumous noble titles, farms, villages, gold and silver and helped to enlarge the temple and their residences.

By the time the Chin dynasty (1600-1908 CE) came to an end, 12 different Emperors had made 20 personal visits (pilgrimage) to Qufu, and by then the linear descendents of Confucius were permitted to walk by the side of the Emperor, and even in the Forbidden City, and were given very special privileges. Eventually they owned the largest private rural estates. They were also exempt from 'covee' duties, a system of 20 days a year of civil or community service imposed on all able-bodied men aged 18 to 59. They were thus the aristocracy. The situation obviously changed drastically with the political changes that occurred in the mid 1930's and 1940's.

There is a very large area where all the descendants of Confucius are buried. Members of his lineage actually lived in Qufu until 1937, when the communist takeover led to the family's having to disperse and flee, many to the Island of Formosa, now called Taiwan. The 77th descendent died in 2008 when Chuyuen was in Qufu. His sister is still alive in China. This is the only family in the known world history where every descendent is recorded accurately and punctually.

There are about 100,000 tombs in the cemetery, all with remains of the family, and about 100,000 trees, more than grand 60 halls, as well as many large pavilions. The cemetery is known as 'Kung Lin' (forest and cemetery of Confucius) and the temple is known as 'Kung Miao' (Temple of Confucius). The family residence is made up of the main mansion comprising some 500 rooms and halls, and 152 other residences and buildings. His chariot, books compiled by him, his instrument called Qin, and many of his personal effects are still at the main residence. The family was the only part of society to have a private army and to hold courts of justice, and to pass sentences even up to the penalty of death.

The cemetery excludes adulterers, stepchildren (and their children), ex-spouses of clan members who remarry outside the clan, and the children from these marriages or anyone who committed a crime. Thus purity of the lineage was assured.

The Chinese New Year:

Chuyuen also described Chinese New year and the Chinese calendar which dates back to 2637 BCE.

The first cycle of 60 years was introduced by the then Emperor in the 61st year of his reign. The 77th Cycle started on 05.02.1924 and ended on 01.01.1984. We are now in the 78th Cycle. This cycle commenced 26 years ago and is due to end in 2044. Within each 60 year cycle there are 12 minicycles.

Each of these minicycles is represented by twelve animal signs, namely:

**Rat/Mouse; Ox; Tiger; Rabbit; Dragon; Snake;
Horse; Sheep; Monkey; Rooster; Dog; Pig**

These signs are in turn ruled by one of the five elements:

Metal; Wood; Water; Fire; Earth

The above configuration is further influenced by Yin and Yang

Chinese astrologists work, therefore, on a background of half a million personality charts. The elements work by governing each animal sign through the 60 year cycle. Until the last century, birthdays were only celebrated when a person reaches a full cycle as, for example, if one lives for say five Tiger years.

This year New Year fell on Valentines Day and was the commencement of the year of the Tiger. It will end on 2nd February 2011. The lunar year has 12 months/moons with a 13th month/moon every 12 years.

The Chinese New Year, known as the Spring Festival, is celebrated with regional differences, as China is such a vast country. It is the most joyous and auspicious of the Chinese festivals, and lasts for 15 days.

For most Chinese families, New Year eve is nearly always devoted to family reunions, when sons and daughters, married and unmarried, return home for reunion dinners. Again, because China is such a vast country, most businesses, factories, schools and council offices shut down for 10-14 days except for skeleton staff, so as to enable people to spend time with their families.

Being a lunar/solar calendar, New Year's day always falls on the first day of the new moon, and the fifteenth day always falls on the full moon.

On New Year's day, children are given new sets of clothes and 'red packets' - red envelopes containing money in notes or coins. Grannies and in-laws also receive presents.

Although China adopted the Gregorian Calendar in 1912, and the Communist Government kept it, many businesses and families consult the Chinese calendar/almanac before setting dates for undertakings such as opening a bank, starting a business or setting dates for weddings, moving home and similar activities. 'Fengshui' always plays an important role.

Some years are predicted to be fortunate, and others unfortunate, and so some families would avoid for example pregnancies and may even resort to an abortion in the Year of the Fire Horse ie 1967, as girls born in the year of the Fire Horse could bring bad luck to the family.

To date, 26 countries including France, Australia, Canada, China, Hong Kong, and Singapore issue commemorative Chinese New Year stamps bearing the animal sign of the year.

Chuyuen ended her talk by saying that Chinese can be written vertically, with each line going from top to bottom and the first line starting on the right. It can also be written horizontally as in an exercise book.

In Conclusion:

Chuyuen's talk was followed by a lively discussion, and she had brought with her many displays and pictures. The evening was very well attended and a meal was served.

Nabil Mustapha

Footnote:

'Don't forget me, Cobber'

The battle of Fromelles, France, 19th July 1916

This unusual story is the result of painstaking research by Robin Corfield, husband of our member Chuyuen.

An Australian and renowned Australian military historian, he uncovered the details of the battle that claimed the lives, in one day, of 2436 Allied soldiers and left 4123 wounded, against 501 German dead and 943 wounded. His research also reconstructed the forgotten 'Rolls of Honour', and uncovered mass WWI war graves. To date, some 250 bodies have been exhumed, and several families traced through DNA were re-interred with full military honours in Fromelles on 19th July 2010 in the presence of HRH Prince Charles and HRH the Duke of Kent.

*For those not familiar with the mode of conversation of the Australian soldiers at the time, the best equivalent for 'Cobber' in today's language of camaraderie would be 'Dude'. Hence the title of Robin's book **'Don't forget me Cobber'**.*

Chuyuen said many tears were shed, especially when an 'unknown soldier' was buried at the cemetery during the ceremony with full military honours.

Annual General Meeting and Opening of new EMF Centre Thames Ditton Village Centre, Mercer Close, Thames Ditton, Surrey Tuesday 7th July 2010

The meeting was attended by 102 members and friends of the EMF, who were honoured by the presence of the Mayor of Elmbridge, Councillor Barry Cheyne. Reports were made by the Chairman, Dr Nabil Mustapha, the Secretary, Geoff Morris and the Treasurer, Leonard Beighton. The reports covered our activities, achievements, developments and finances during the year, and thanks were expressed to all those who had made them possible.

Copies of the reports given to the meeting can be obtained from the Secretary.

In particular we were grateful to the Borough for its unfailing support, and to the Surrey Community Foundation for their grant in support of our work. The Examined Accounts were unanimously accepted, and thanks were expressed to the Examiner, Mr. Iqbal Khan, who was re-appointed. Nineteen members of the Executive Committee were re-appointed, representing 12 different faiths.

The Mayor congratulated the Forum on the extent and quality of its activities, and for the many ways it supported the Borough through representation on Committees and social projects.

The formality of the AGM was followed by a brief slide show by Nabil Mustapha on the formation and development of EMF. The new Centre was then officially opened by the Mayor and a beautifully decorated cake was cut. Rushna Master led a discussion on the future of EMF.

Barbecue at the home of Geoff Morris - Sunday 25 July, 2010

The weather was perfect, and about 20 members of EMF came to the party. As well as the normal gas and coke BBQ's, there was a 'throw-away' to ensure that all food laws were respected. Guests brought their own meat, and many contributed to the pool of salads and desserts.

The event gave members an informal opportunity to eat, talk and get to know each other. Talk we certainly did! In every way this was a joint event, in which Nabil, Geoff and Michael Carpenter somehow found themselves busy on the barbecues. We are particularly indebted to Phyllis and Stan Conway for co-ordinating the food, and to Rushna Master for providing delicious samosas and onion bajejs.

Geoff Morris

Tours of Afghanistan

Talk by Gail and Roger Partridge

Churchgate House, Cobham, Tuesday 10 August 2010

This was a highly anticipated talk, particularly because Gail and Roger had previously given us an excellent presentation about Iraq and the wonderful historical and religious sites in that country.

We were not disappointed. The talk on Afghanistan was even more riveting and informative.

While the main speaker was Roger, Gail's contribution was very significant as it threw some light on aspects related to the female side of society in that country.

The tours described covered Afghanistan east, west and north, including the Khyber Pass, crossings of the Hindu Kush, the (dynamited) Buddhas of Bamiyan, the fabulous Minaret of Djam, the ancient Lapis Lazuli mines and cities such as Kabul, Herat and Mazar-i-Sharif. The maps shown and the line showing the tour gave us such a good picture of Afghanistan as a country, as distinct from the way we are seeing it a present as a war zone.

Even though it was fortunate that the time of their visit was not close to any major war period, it was obvious to us that their tour was no picnic. Indeed, we felt that Gail and Robert were really quite adventurous, as the terrain itself is quite treacherous in places. This was highlighted when the dilapidated truck they had hired broke down, to an extent that would have written the vehicle off in this country, if it had not been already deemed unroadworthy. How they found the replacement parts and wheels I do not know, and even more so how the vehicle did actually take them to their intended destination. From my personal experience in similar circumstances in my younger years, I can definitely vouch for any claim they may wish to present about their courage and spirit of adventure. This is especially so on an occasion when they did find themselves once in the middle of a minor battle between two warlords!

We were informed of the religion of Afghanistan which is now uniformly Muslim, but we were shown the ancient Buddhist and Zoroastrian remains and the still fine Christian (British) cemetery in Kabul, remarkably kept by an old person who dedicated his life to it.

We were shown crude stones of lapis lazuli and Afghan turquoise, which are some of the finest in the world. We were saddened to see the site where the historic Buddhist carvings in the mountain in Bamiyan were. Their destruction was nothing but an act of travesty and ignorance.

There were many questions, and the attendance was almost to full capacity. The refreshments, very kindly prepared by the ladies of the Church congregation, were so well presented and appreciated.

We thank Gail and Roger very much for this excellent and informative presentation.

Nabil M Mustapha

Visit to the YounHwaSa Korean Buddhist Temple New Malden - Wednesday 1st September 2010

The temple is a converted property on a side road in New Malden, an area of Kingston upon Thames popular with the Korean community of the UK. A few Korean scripts on the outside belie the serene and ornate praying and meditating area in the hall inside, with three statues of Buddha and two Bodhisattvas (a being that compassionately refrains from entering nirvana in order to save others and is worshipped as a deity in Mahayana Buddhism, one of the two main branches of Buddhism) in golden colour in the inner sanctuary. The hall's ceiling is covered with pink paper lanterns of lotus flower and tags dangling from in between. We were all sat on cushions on the floor, and as our number was between thirty-five and forty we managed to use every cushion available.



Address by Ven Jisu Sunim, the monk in charge of the Temple

An amiable genteel man in a flowing grey robe welcomed us and addressed us in measured well chosen words, thanking us for including the visit with the many other engagements that we all must have. He said that we represent so many different faces, features and ways of life, and so he will try to make our time with him “as sunny as it is on the outside” (it was a glorious sunny 2pm). He appreciates the diversity of the people, whether they are religious, agnostics, Quakers or any other denominations.

As a Buddhist monk, he tries to utilise his energy for generating harmony and peace not only between fellow human beings, but also with all other elements around us so that we could fundamentally resolve ever escalating conflicts between all forms of deluded notions of ‘allies’ and ‘enemies’. One should calmly and deeply investigate the fact that everything in this world is, without single exception, tightly and closely inter-related with each other, so that we genuinely endeavour to make one’s life happy by co-operating with others regardless of all

differences in isms, beliefs, species etc. When we successfully go beyond our own self serving petty mediocre 'I, me, mine first' bigotry with Big Mind of 'all outside world is nothing more than one's own extended body parts' then surely we could readily engage in our own business of happy living with all other people's happiness in mind as well. Thus our living style could be steadily transformed from self-imprisoning egotistic greedy acquisition into 'all the universe is one big flower' sharing. By contemplating the ever changing and beautiful diversity in unity of all things visible and invisible, we can cultivate the way we speak, the way we move and the way we think. We try diligently not to be violent, coarse and careless but gentle, generous and mindful to both ourselves and others.

There then followed a period of questions and answers.

Question: *Why should there be a statue for Buddha?*

Answer: There was no statue of the Buddha in human form for the first 500 years or so after Buddha's passing away. Only a symbol like His footprint was made. Anthropomorphic statues have been a reflection of the effect of the ancient Greek culture by Alexander the Great and their tendency to create statues in human forms. This metal statue is a symbol. We do not believe in idol worship. The statue is just a reminder of a Noble Being, the Buddha who has perfected his all embracing universal compassion in its fullness.

Question: *What does the lotus flower symbolise?*

Answer: It symbolises our skilful means of taking all social life of turmoil and difficulties as opportunities to learn and grow rather than getting hurt and disappointed, like a lotus flower in murky water producing beautiful and fragrant flowers by taking and digesting every element in it. We commemorate the Buddha's birthday parading on the street with all participants holding lotus flower lanterns with candle lights inside and contemplate skilful ways of living.

Question: *What is the key feature of the Temple?*

Answer: The Temple is originally established to accommodate the Korean community, providing them with a space for cultivating a beautiful mind of mutual understanding and social gathering in sharing common Korean traditional culture. In general we try to help people from different cultural backgrounds to assimilate into the British society through Buddhist way of moral beauty, mental calmness and illuminating wisdom. We have a programme of meditation between 7 & 9 pm on Thursdays for local people. They chant for 20 minutes, sit for meditation for 40 minutes and may have a tea afterwards.

Question: *What is different in Korean Buddhism?*

Answer: Korean Buddhism was mainly introduced from China in the form of later developed Mahayana Buddhism. So it stresses the importance of helping all other

sentient beings rather than being only concerned about one's own well being and enlightenment. But the essence of Buddhism is the same among all Buddhist countries. There is Unity in ever colourful cultural Diversity among Buddhist countries.

Question: *What are these tags showing from the ceiling?*

Answer: Each has the name and birth sign of a person, e.g. "white tiger or snake".

Question: *How many members belong to this congregation?*

Answer: About 150 families. There are approximately 30-40 regular attendants on Sundays, and 5-6 on Thursdays.

Question: *Are there any methods to overcome anger or negative emotions?*

Answer: Yes. There are several different types of meditation methods. One of them is mindful breathing in and out. While watching one's own ongoing inhalation and exhalation process one may slowly recognise all phenomena are ever-changing and impermanent and hot blood of anger become pacified. One may also realise the fact that anger and negative emotions are caused by one's own deluded mind-set and self destructive rather than alleviating the situation.

Question: *What is the future of Buddhism?*

Answer: Buddhism as a living organism is evolving, and continuously opening up to further "enlightenment" which is "Buddhism". Knowledge and intelligence are no one's monopoly but open to everyone and everything. Buddhism encourages people to cultivate human intelligence so as to investigate the cause of ills and discover the way of deliverance. Each one of us sees the world through our own narrow view like looking at a sample through a microscope. But if we use a telescope we see the wider aspects of the world, so we may open our heart to appreciate other faiths and cultures. Human evolution may in the long run go finally beyond all religions, ethnicity and nationalities. In this context, Buddhism as an intelligence oriented religion, has something to offer to enhance the well being of both our humankind and all other living beings in general.

Question: *Are you the teacher or leader or one of the flock?*

Answer: I am technically a teacher, but I consider myself as one of the flock.

Question: *Having visited many Buddhist monasteries, I was fascinated with children (students) sitting in the lotus posture and reciting. Is it the same here?*

Answer: Quite the same. The emphasis is on meditation and simple manual works, not just accumulating knowledge by reading. Particularly candidates for monastic vocations first learn to be silent and to look inside rather than being continuously driven by outside distraction. After six months, they will be assessed for suitability to be admitted to the monastic community. After entry to a monastery they study Buddhist scriptures, other religions and may also widen their knowledge in other subjects. But the culmination of monastic life is in

meditation during which one's all intellectual sum total is synthesised and transformed into all-inclusive wisdom, a clean mirror seeing things as they truly are, without any distortion of prejudices, strong views and preconceived ideas.

Question: *Do you have pilgrimage to "Lumbini" (The Buddha's birthplace in India)?*

Answer: We may go to Lumbini and also to places where He (*The Buddha*) was awakened and "enlightened". The purpose of pilgrimage is to contemplate on what life is about and get some inspiration from the footprints of the Noble being.

Question: *What will happen at the end of our life, and with incarnation?*

Answer: There are two different ways of understanding the doctrine of incarnation. First, if you want to know your next life, look at yourself here and now. If you want to know your previous life, also look at yourself here and now. This is your future life and also your present life, and your past life still. Every one of us here and now is the sum total result of our own doings in the previous time through body, speech and mind, and likewise our oncoming future life is also the sum total effect of our own doings here and now through body, speech and mind. When you put this question of 'the end of life', you are unconsciously positing 'time and space' as something linear. But one may fathom these mysterious qualities of what we call *Time* and *Space* as neither linear nor separate entity, but rather something chaotic-ever-flowing one thing in complete unison. We may also take the shape of infinity for these bizarre qualities.

The other understanding is that sentient beings are endlessly reincarnating into one of six different forms of living beings according to one's own actions, namely:

1. Hell (if one does horrible things in life)
2. Hungry Ghost (if one is a greedy/insatiable being with a narrow needle-thin throat but mountain size belly)
3. Animal (if one does stupid things)
4. Fighting Demon (if one always engages in fighting or finding fault with others)
5. Angel
6. Human

Social end of the visit and refreshments

We were greeted with loving kindness from a number of young ladies offering us "mulberry tea" and biscuits as well as bead bracelets for prayers, similar to rosaries. We thanked the Ven Jisu and the ladies and wish them and their congregation every happiness and prosperity.

Nabil M Mustapha

FOR YOUR DIARY . . .

EMF GALA

Saturday 22nd January

7 pm for 7.30 pm in the Grenfell Centre at Claremont Fan Court School, Esher

THE BAHÁ'Í

Tuesday 25th January

7pm at EMF Centre

Talk and Discussion led by Nabil Mustapha

PASSOVER SUPPER

Tuesday 5th April

7pm at the EMF Centre, Thames Ditton, conducted by Rabbi Alan Plancey

THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS

Tuesday 12th July

7pm at EMF Centre - Talk and Slide Presentation by Robert Feather

PRINCIPLES OF HUMANISM

Date to be announced

Barbara Bowen (Hon. Sec. Guildford Humanist Group) has kindly agreed to come along and talk to us.

NB

Please let Geoff Morris (01932 868454) know if you are attending any event so that we can get the numbers right for catering. Unless otherwise stated there will be no charge for events, but donations will be gratefully received and can now, of course, be gift-aided.

Contacts

Nabil Mustapha (*Chairman*)

07956 545811

e-mail: nabil.mustapha@elmbridgemultifaith.org.uk

Geoff Morris (*Secretary and Newsletter*)

01932 868454

Leonard Beighton (*Treasurer*)

01932 863516

Phyllis Woodhead (*Membership*)

01372 468783

e-mail: phyllis.woodhead@elmbridgemultifaith.org.uk

Linda Alanko (*Newsletter*)

01372 465738

email: alanko@saqnet.co.uk

or elmbridgemultifaith@mas-bc.co.uk

David Robinson (*Website*)

david.robinson@elmbridgemultifaith.org.uk

All correspondence should be addressed to:

The Secretary

Elmbridge Multifaith Forum

32 Milner Drive

Cobham, Surrey KT11 2EZ

e-mail: elmbridgemultifaith@emas-bc.co.uk

website: www.elmbridgemultifaith.org.uk

The site contains back copies of our Newsletter with articles summarising the tenets of the major faiths of the world.

