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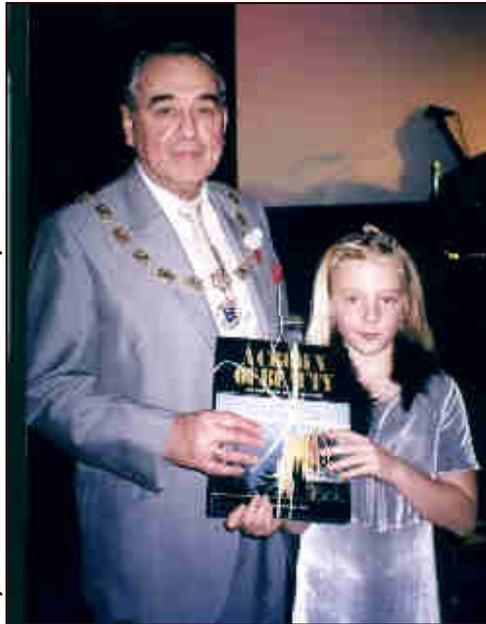
UK Community News

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Kingston Upon Thames Celebration for the Birth of Bahá'u'lláh

THE KINGSTON UPON THAMES Bahá'í community held their annual Birth of Bahá'u'lláh celebration in Surbiton Library Hall on December 10. It was very well attended by both Bahá'ís and their friends. There was an exceptional variety of entertainment: "Fly to the Valley" children's dance group, Massoud Seednia enchanted everyone with his beautiful santoor playing, The Kiskadee Steel Band Duo, and Christine Deihim, who travelled from York to sing in both English and Persian.

The food was even better than last year. The former mayor, Councillor Shiraz Mirza, the deputy mayor, C. Steve Mama and John Azah, from Kingston Racial Equality Council have all asked to be invited again. Other guests included members of SACRE, UNA, Amnesty and representatives from local schools and faith groups, all of whom had a most enjoyable evening.



*A young local Baha'i presenting a book to
Councillor Steven Mama*

Festival of Faiths in Kingston

ON SUNDAY, December 9, a Festival of the faiths was held at the North Kingston centre. Many dignitaries and VIPs attended including Baroness Sarah Ludford MEP, Dr Jenny Tong MP, John Azah, Director of Kingston Racial Equality Council and religious leaders from churches, synagogues mosques and temples, including Bahá'ís.

I was able to give a talk at the end of the other religious talks (I had requested to be last) and spoke of unity, world peace and the oneness of God, religion and all humanity. I also said the prayer for humankind.

Afterwards Amir Choudhry the presenter from Positive Consensus and ex-Mayor Shiraz Mirza, along with several others came to ask where such a prayer had come from. Both are Muslims. They each asked for a copy of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's prayer and this has led to me being asked to join their group and speak again in the future. I had been so nervous previously but needn't have been because Bahá'u'lláh put the word into my brain which flowed not from me but from His writings.

Interfaith Devotional Meeting

ON, Sunday, 30 December at All Saints Church in Kingston Upon Thames, the reverend Bill Bates held an Interfaith Devotional where each religion was asked to speak about events relating to the September 11th bombing in the United States of America.

The church was full with its normal congregation besides a number of guests from the various faiths. We were each asked to light a candle and place it as a symbol of light and peace in the world. Among the guests were the Bishop of Kingston in his purple robes the

Reverend Bates, Rabbi Danny Rich, Sikhs, Muslims and humanists, and I represented the Bahá'í Faith.

Each spoke in turn about their thoughts on September 11th. When it came to my turn I began with the Prayer for Mankind then used the writings of Bahá'u'lláh to show our Unity and teachings of oneness of religion and God and humanity. I finished with a statement on religious tolerance which I requested each representative to sign. Most did except the humanist. Most of my community were away for the Christmas holidays which is why I accepted to do this.

It was a very rewarding experience as at first I had been nervous about speaking in such imposing surroundings and illustrious company. But I need not have worried as the Concourse on High came to my rescue and showed me what to say after the prayer and requests for help.

To anyone else who is nervous about speaking in public I would say: don't worry, just pray beforehand and go out there and do it.

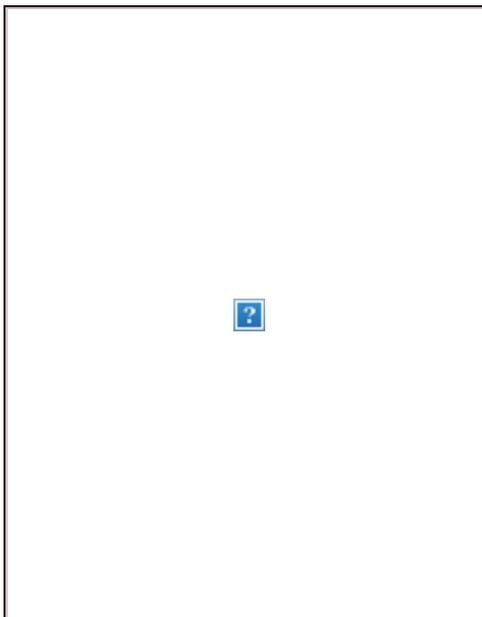
Loving greetings,

Dianne Andrea Mahboubi, Secretary, Kingston Community.

An active time in Jersey

SINCE WE reported the wonderful media coverage we had in the local paper and on Channel Television of Marlene and Mary's visit to Haifa for the dedication of the Terraces, we had expected to settle for a less glorious autumn. We shouldn't have! After a well-attended follow-up fireside, we hoped to strengthen the links we had with the friends who attended, and offered a supper evening at Mary's which was well-attended and enjoyable.

Marlene Morris once again attended Summer School with Catherine, and her husband managed to go for part of the time. On her return, Marlene sent a report to the Faith Page of the Jersey Evening Post, together with a photo of Catherine and her Heart Start Certificate. This was the landmark for September. It was published, complete with photograph.



Catherine Morris and the Unity Tree

October brought One World Week. Mary, who serves on the committee, gave her annual "Morning Thought" on Radio Jersey which was very well received. A copy of the script was sent to the Jersey Evening Post and was published with a by-line. This was the first time a selection from several scriptures has been printed in the paper. The vicar of Gouray Church, who also serves on the committee, asked Mary to give the address at Mass on the last Sunday of the month. He asked her to explain the connection between the Bahá'í Faith and the aims of One World Week and to share the "Morning Thought". There was a wonderfully receptive congregation of around forty people, many of whom came to offer congratulations and ask her to talk again.

On October 27 a small group gathered at our Unity Tree, planted during the Centenary Year, to take part in a short programme of prayer and meditation. Our tiny, fragile sapling has grown into a fine oak tree. Catherine was a baby when it was planted and we couldn't resist taking of photograph of her, ten years old, standing beneath it having gathered some of its mature acorns.

In November, for the second year running, we had a stall at the Natural Health Exhibition. Our stall was popular and 225 pieces of literature were taken by visitors. The display included three posters of the Terraces, literature and offerings of fruit, nuts and pieces of bread interspersed with quotations about health, serenity and our responsibility for the environment. For Bahá'u'lláh's Birthday we had a small fireside and showed the video "The Prisoner of 'Akká". One lady asked to borrow the tape for a Christian study group.

We have planned a World Religion Day multi-faith meeting for January and the Vicar of Gourlay has kindly offered the use of a comfortable area in the church. He has also asked Mary to give a talk on World Religion Day at the Mass on Sunday, January 20.

International One World Week in York

ON SATURDAY, October 27, the annual International One World Week was held in York, jointly arranged by York Bahá'ís and four other groups who form the International Meal Committee. It was felt to be one of the best ever held with about 115 people from 14 different countries attending.

As in recent years, the meal was again a “Bring and Share” event, with many wonderful dishes being provided by those attending. However many people come, there is always enough to eat. Entertainment before the meal was provided this year by three groups of young people from York’s Performing Arts Centre. Two of the groups were dancers and the third was drummers who were outstanding. Following the meal there was Circle Dancing. Everyone enjoyed the evening so much that they were loath to leave, staying on much later than in previous years. We hope to be able to make the event even better next year thanks to generous grants from two Trusts in York.

York community now has a Study Circle up and running, which has called itself The Blossoming Souls. Led by Daryoush Mazloum, the Circle has nine other members, one of whom is a non-Bahá'í. The Circle will be hosting the celebration of the Birth of Bahá'u'lláh and providing food from the five different countries represented in the group.

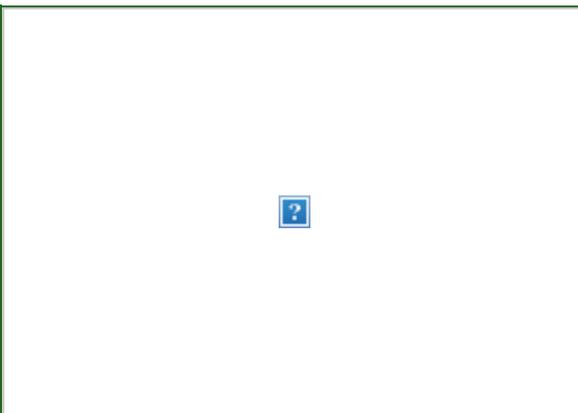


Sutton community grows in numbers to celebrate the Birthday of Bahá'u'lláh

THE BAHÁ'ÍS of Sutton organised a celebration dinner at a local hall, inviting our neighbouring communities and their guests to commemorate the birthday of Bahá'u'lláh.

Sutton’s Mayor, councillor John Leach and his wife, were our guests of honour and we had some first class entertainment from Mr Masoud Saeednia, Mr Jahanpoor, Mrs Jennifer Chappa and last, but not least, a special guest appearance from Mr

Omid Djalili. Some of our children also took centre stage and read beautiful prayers.



Councillor John Leach, Mayor of Sutton, and Mrs Leach, with officers of the Local Assembly at the Birthday of Bahá'u'lláh celebration

Our message of peace, love and friendship came across beautifully in a well-organised event that had good food, good company, pleasant surroundings and lots of happy faces. We hope to see more friends support such local activities in their unit or neighbouring areas as a bigger group can be a more powerful attraction to those souls who are ready to hear Bahá'u'lláh’s message.

Meanwhile somewhere in the Midlands

LAST MONDAY a friend asked me, “How many nationalities are you dealing with then?” I started counting and surprised myself; the answer is seventeen! I am not on a Martha Root round-the-world pioneering trip, I am just racing around my local area doing NGO family support on the council estate where I live. How is this possible? Well, the answer is simple,

Shoghi Effendi was right when he talked about people displacement in the future. This is the future and the world has come to us in the form of asylum seekers, refugees and displaced people from all over the world. Now they are being dispersed around the UK by the Home Office and are being housed, in part, on rundown outer city council estates.

In spite of all the problems, our favourite group expression seems to be “God willing”. We seem to laugh every day which keeps us all sane while battling through a minefield of bureaucratic problems. This week lots of us are busy preparing for the end of Ramadan celebration party. All the kids are getting ready for this mysterious Christmas thing and are going to the pantomime with the local play scheme. The adults are cheerful given their uncertain circumstances.

Twenty-eight languages are now spoken at the local school and once a month everyone who is able meets at the school for a large consultation. Since April we’ve all got quite good at consulting from the grass roots up solving peoples’ problem and implementing good ideas.

We think we’re all a good working twenty first century version of unity in diversity and sometimes I think the members of the Concourse on High must be having a good laugh at our antics as we zoom around the world in eighty minutes, laughing and crying and helping each other become World Citizens here in the heart of England.

Celia Cox

Grimsby Bahá’í Reunion:
2–5 pm, Saturday, July 6
Aylesby Gardens, Great Grimsby
Phone: Melfyn Dean for more details

