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Multi-faith Walk of Peace

Sunday 19th October 2014, 12 noon to 4.00 pm

Redbridge Faith Forum's sixth annual Interfaith Walk of Peace, people of different faiths and none. Visit a number of Places of Worship and heard how peace is a central message of each faith. You are welcome to join in the whole walk or join/leave at any point.



Walkers gathered at **12 noon on the forecourt of the Seventh Day Adventist Church** ~ 14-16 Coventry Road Ilford IG1 4QR where **Rabbi Becker** set walkers of with a **message of peace from the Jewish Community.**



Walkers **entered the Church** where the **Elders of the Seventh Day Adventist Community** continued the **message of peace from the Christian Community**



Walkers set of to the **Buddhist Vihara**, to hear the **teachings on peace from the Buddhist Community**

walkers progressed **to the Hindu Temple** and continued with a **message of peace with the Hindu Community**. *Shoes to be removed*



Walkers moved on to the **Mosque** 52-58 Albert Road IG1 1HW to join the **Muslim Community for the Islamic message of peace**. *Shoes to be removed and heads covered*

final walk to the **Sikh Gurdwara** for the **Sikh message of Peace**



INTERFAITH WALK OF PEACE AND HOPE ~ SUNDAY 19th OCTOBER 2014

Redbridge Faith Forum (RFF) marked the start of One World Week with the sixth multi faith walk of peace. More than 100 people from all faiths joined together for this sixth Redbridge Faith Forum Annual Multi Faith Walk of peace. The weather was a bonus! Having had many days of rain the sun shone us for the day. *"I thought the Faith Walk went really well. We were very lucky with the weather and the number of people who came along."*

Many managed the whole walk but at no time were there less than 70. Time constraints or some physical ailment prevented some from being present all the way: *"It was a fantastic day yesterday and I am so glad I was able to make it to the Peace Walk and sad I wasn't able to stay till the end. (My knee was a bit sore by yesterday eve but no ill effects today thankfully!) It is amazing how many people turned up ... old friends and new people, and the spirit was definitely one of harmony."*

It was particularly pleasing to see people who had joined these walks in the past, feeling that this was something of real worth. *"Wonderful! Hope it continues every year."* Many brought new walkers with them; it was a pleasure to welcome them. It was a particular pleasure to be joined by a group of students from the University of East London many training to be teachers. They were most appreciative of the welcome they received: *"Really interesting. I am humbled to be so graciously received in each place. Truly we are one."*

All walkers were given a brochure outlining some of the basic teachings of different faith communities and something about each venue that we visited. Many thanks to Harmander Singh and the RFF management committee for producing it. This was a development from previous years when we had just the prayers of peace from the different faith traditions. Our thanks go to 'Interfaith Matters' for sharing this good practice which they developed for a longer walk of peace in another part of London. Walkers were invited to join in with the prayers at the various venues but not constrained to do so.



The walk started in a familiar location but with a change of faith community. This had in the past been a synagogue but was now church. To mark the history of the venue we assembled on the forecourt where Rabbi Larry Becker started the proceedings with a message of peace. He drew our attention to the fact that peace is not just about absence from war but included absence from poverty and disease. We recited a prayer of peace from the Jewish

tradition.



Pastor Mburani, the elders and members of the Seventh Day Adventist Church welcomed us into the church. Pastor Mburani spoke powerfully from the Christian traditional teachings and the key message of peace. He prayed for peace and we joined in the well known prayer of St Francis 'Make me a channel of your peace'.

We arrived a little ahead of time at our next venue and Carol Khorsandyon was invited to use this time to tell us about the Baha'i faith. There are no discrete Baha'i places of worship in Redbridge; the Baha'i community meet and pray together in each other's homes. There is however a Baha'i temple on every continent where people of all faiths are welcome to visit and pray.



Reverend Hemaratana then welcomed walkers to the Buddhist Vihara. We witnessed with great respect the monks reciting a traditional Buddhist chant. One of the younger members of the community then spoke clearly about the Buddhist teachings and life principles. We were reminded



Buddhists are committed to peaceful co-existence with another and with all living beings and that "Hatred never defeated hatred. Only love can defeat hatred, this an eternal truth". (*Dhammapada*)



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The Sikhs in the City running club donated bags and bottles of water for the walkers; the Buddhist community supplemented the refreshments with a variety of sandwiches, cakes, biscuits and fruit juice. We were all immensely grateful for this joint generosity and thoughtfulness. Reverend Hemaratana invited everyone to the Katina ceremony which would take place the following Saturday.

The next stop was the Hindu Mandir where Vinaya Sharma welcomed us all. She gave a comprehensive explanation of the Hindu belief in one God and the 'deities' - personifications of the different attributes of God. She also explained how peace is an underlying principle of the faith. The younger walkers (children) were much in awe of the dressed 'deities' and asked many pertinent and thoughtful questions. The Hindu community prayed a prayer of peace in Sanskrit and we all read the prayer for peace from the Hindu tradition. Those joining the walk at the Mandir received their refreshment bag 'topped-up' by the Hindu community. Once again we were grateful for the generosity and thoughtfulness.



The next point of call was the Ilford

Islamic Centre mosque. Immam Mohammed Sharif Ali Dowlut began our visit reciting a prayer from the Koran and then translating it for all to appreciate the meaning. He explained how Islam derives its name from the Arabic word for Peace. He completely disowned the actions of those who, in the name of Islam, present a false and distorted viewpoint; this was particularly in response to some of the atrocities recently reported in the media. His words were much appreciated by people of all faiths and none. There were many questions and answers relating to the clocks that indicated the times of prayer. We recited together an Islamic prayer for peace.



To sustain us on the last part of the walk we were invited to the Ilford Islamic Centre for a welcome cup of tea and more cake

and biscuits; it certainly helped in continuing the walk to the last place of worship to be visited ~ the last leg of the journey was the longest.

At the Sikh Gurdwara Mr Harbans Singh Seera and fellow members of the community made us feel most welcome. The Gurdwara is another of the faith venues where removal of shoes and covering of heads is required. Walkers showed respect for this and for sitting facing the Guru Granth Sahib. This is the book containing the writings and teachings of the Sikh Gurus.

Mr Seera gave a most informative talk on Sikhism and the faith commitment for all to live in harmony. The Sikh community said a prayer in and all joined in a prayer of peace from the Sikh tradition.

Jacque Grieve of the Redbridge Faith Forum thanked everyone for taking part in the walk and thanking all the faith communities for welcoming us all so generously. She reminded us that the walk demonstrated how well people of different faiths and none respect differences as well as appreciating common beliefs. The example of this harmony in the community can hopefully be repeated in all communities. Some students felt it would help them in their own teaching careers: *"This walk has shown me a true sense of community spirit. It inspires those of all faiths and none to be accepting and I hope I can teach this to my students."* We finished with a prayer to end violence; a prayer developed at the Ethelberger Peace Centre. It reminds us that we can break the 'cycle of violence by realising that peace begins with me'. We all have that responsibility.

Before we left the Gurdwara, walkers were given the traditional Sikh invitation to visit the langar for a delicious and sustaining vegetarian meal. This was a superb ending to a very special event where resounding praise for the welcome at all faith venues was voiced. One particular comment *'inspiring to walk with others respecting others'* sums up so many of the views expressed for the walk.



This event truly demonstrated how people of all faiths and none in Redbridge (and neighbouring boroughs) continue to work together for a more peaceful and harmonious community. A number of children joined the walk and asked thoughtful and pertinent questions at each of the places of worship visited. The Metropolitan Police Borough Commander Sue Williams joined the walk with her daughters. She said of the walk it was *"Very insightful. Very hospitable. I loved it."* It was good to have six of our local councillors supporting this Walk of Peace demonstrating their commitment to harmony in the community. We finish this report two more comments from walkers that demonstrate this community harmony

The purposes of the walk were to:

- ❖ Enable people of different faiths (and none) to walk together visiting different places of worship and discovering / rediscovering the underpinning teaching of peace, common across the faith groups.
- ❖ Learn of similarities between faith communities while respecting differences.
- ❖ Walk as 'neighbours' affirming support for good community and faith community relations in Redbridge.
- ❖ Highlight that we are all part of 'One World'; learning from one another leading to understanding and respect within and between all people of faith and those of none.

SUMMARY:

The aims of the walk were fully met particularly in increasing understanding and respect for each other and each other's beliefs. Much progress was made in neighbourliness and harmony in the community. Following the walk and meeting with walkers in the days after, there were many comments about the joy of, and learning from, the event.

" The Inter faith walk was great event."

"Very inspiring to walk with others - respecting each other."

"Good to get beyond words - just to be with other faiths."

"Thank you for all the organising of it."

"This walk has shown me a true sense of community spirit. It inspires those of all faiths and none to be accepting and I hope I can teach this to my students." (Student from UEL)