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RFF was shortlisted for the National Compact Advancing Equality Award in 2015 and was a previous winner in 2012.

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INTERFAITH WALK ~ SUNDAY 18th OCTOBER 2015

Introduction

Redbridge Faith Forum (RFF) marked the start of One World Week with the seventh annual multi-faith walk through Central Ilford. It was a tremendous day with 200 people from all faiths (and none) walking together for all or part of the walk. It was wonderful to see again so many people who had joined these walks in the past, and very pleasing to welcome new walkers.

There was a change of theme for this year's walk. Walkers were encouraged to consider that 'It's not too late' for caring for the environment and influencing climate change. They were helped to consider how communities could do more to make a positive impact on the environment. Although the focus was not specifically 'peace' as for previous years' walks, one walker commented "*Faith is a powerful witness to the world and walking together as multi-faith people can only encourage peace and unity among all mankind.*"

Our heartfelt thanks go to Ruth and Peter Musgrave two volunteers who worked so hard in involving faith communities, particularly the younger members, in workshops on the environment and climate change, prior to the walk. Their time and commitment made an enormous impact on this tremendous event. It was encouraging and inspiring to hear from the young people who spoke so well on the topic. Our thanks go also to the young people who gave their own time to prepare well thought out presentations and speaking so well. They were all a credit to their communities. A full list for thanks and acknowledgements can be found at end of report

Throughout the preparations Habiba Ahmed from LBR Recycling Team / Amey worked with Ruth, Peter and many of the faith communities. She supplied many artefacts and prompts for the workshops and helped set up some of the exhibitions. In particular she worked with the Sikh community in setting up an extensive and informative exhibition at the Gurdwara. It was the last port of call for the walk so all were able to spend time in digesting some of the information. We are indebted to Camilla Quarley for her time, effort and support particularly in organising the quiz for the young people (and others). It helped focus on what was said, heard and seen at the many venues. Many completed the quiz and received a prize at the end, graciously donated by Habiba.

Booklets produced by RFF on the environment (*Faith Perspectives on Climate Change – RFF 2006, Faith and Waste and Recycling, RFF 2008*) were provided for walkers. They gave a perspective on the teachings about the care for the environment and creation from each faith community. They served as a useful 'souvenir' and an 'aide memoire'

A prayer sheet had also been prepared for all walkers; these included a prayer on the importance of the care for the environment from each faith community. Walkers were all

invited to join in with a prayer from the faith community at respective places of worship ([click here](#) for copies of prayers)

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 caring for the environment and the need to acknowledge and address climate change.
- ❖ Learn of similarities between faith communities with respect to the environment.
- ❖ 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.

(Click [here](#) to view the Ilford Recorder Article)

1. Beginning of Walk at Buddhist Vihara, Balfour Rd

The walk started at the Buddhist Vihara in Balfour Road where Jacquie Grieve ~ Chair of RFF Trustees welcomed all starting the walk. She said the Vihara was a relatively small venue (it was bursting at the seams with walkers!) but as always gave such a big and generous welcome. This welcome included some wonderful refreshments to sustain us on our way. Before handing over to the Buddhist Community she commended people to consider how our faiths can inspire and encourage us to do all we can to protect it from the damaging effects of human activities which are leading to changes in the climate. Climate change is already impacting many countries, including those of the Indian Sub Continent, and in December all the countries of the world will come together to try to agree how we are going to take action.



Isuru Perera a member of the Buddhist community spoke about the faith's teaching on the caring for the environment. Isuru explained about what Buddhists are doing practically to take responsibility for their relationship with nature. He handed over to the young people who talked about what they had considered in their work shop with Peter and Ruth. They spoke about how they can care for nature and slow down climate change. They started with what they loved about the earth and what could happen if they do nothing about climate change and how their Buddhist teachings inspire them to care for the earth They spoke about the importance of the Bodhi tree to Buddhists and that every Vihara has a Bodhi tree nearby if they can. There was one available for all to see. They finished by saying how they had thought of the different ways changes could be made by themselves, families, schools, the Vihara and Governments. It was inspiring to hear of their common purpose and suggestions for action. Before we left the Vihara, Reverend Hemaratana with some of the young people planted a tree in the garden, while reciting one of the Buddhist chants. We had to leave promptly to ensure we visited all the planned venues at the planned times. (For more information about the young people's views and the Buddhist teaching on the care of the environment [click here](#))





Stop 2: Salvation Army, Clements Road

We were grateful to be accompanied by some of our community police in walking to the next stop ~ the Salvation Army in Clements Road (and further) as there were some tricky roads to cross! The Salvation Army has always been a movement stressing the importance of practical actions. Their belief is that love for God is shown by serving others. It is not surprising that here in Ilford the Salvation Army has done something practical to care for the earth by starting a bicycle recycling project. Lieutenant John Clifton, the Officer in charge talked about the range of activities that are organised at the church. Walkers then watched

a practical demonstration of bike repair (thanks to Keith Young) and heard how these were transformed for affordable sale.

For more about Ilford Recycles click [here](#). For more information about the Salvation Army in Ilford click [here](#)

Stop 3: Hindu Temple, Cleveland Road

The next stop was the Hindu Temple in Cleveland Road. Vinaya Sharma from the Hindu Community gave us a very warm welcome. We were particularly grateful, since the Community was celebrating Navratri ~ one of its festivals ~ and about 2000 Hindu members were to be visiting during festival period. The young people here also talked about caring for the earth, peace and how it is integral to Hindu teachings. They read a 'very ancient prayer' in Sanskrit, which Hindus can say when they get up in the morning. It asks forgiveness of the earth that our feet will touch her, reminding us to tread gently on the earth.



Translated into English it reads:

'O mother earth, Who has the oceans as clothes and mountains and forests as her body, Which is the wife of Lord Vishnu, I bow to you. Please forgive me for touching you with my feet.' They invited walkers to take a look at the exhibition they had created on 'loving food and hating waste'. (For more information on the Hindu teachings on the care of the environment click [here](#)).

Stop 4: Islamic Community Centre, Albert Rd

The Islamic Community Centre, which was our next port of call, is round the corner from the temple. It is also across the road from the mosque. Jacquie explained the reason for meeting at the Centre rather than the mosque. The Jewish faith community, who had been based at the Coventry Road synagogue, had moved to another one - too far away to include on this walk. The Muslim Community had agreed to make their presentation in the community centre rather than from the mosque and to share the 'stage' with the Jewish Community to enable them to make their presentation in a suitable setting. This demonstrated wonderful generosity and openness from both communities. Some of the students from the Madrassah introduced their presentation by telling us *that "God has gifted us with life and a place to live. To abuse the earth is unbecoming of a Muslim. We treat the Quran with respect and the Quran tells us to treat the earth with respect."*

They expanded the theme as did the other young presenters. They also said that at their workshop they had re-cycled juice and milk bottles and planted seeds in them. They invited all to plant seeds in cups after the refreshment break with promise to care for them if walkers could not take them away with them. *(For more information on the Muslim teaching on the care of the environment click [here](#))*



Rabbi Jeffrey Newman travelled from Finchley to join the walk and to make a presentation. As for so many of our faith communities the Jewish teaching relates to the wonderful gift of



creation. He complimented the young people on their presentations, remarking how important it was that the young were so involved. He spoke of the Jewish teaching on the duty of care for the environment and warned of the imminent danger of climate change. It was immensely moving moment when he and Imam Ihsan read a reflection on 'oneness' together, surrounded by the children taking part in the walk. After the event he wrote *"I want publicly to thank the Imam, leaders of the Mosque and whole community there for providing such an opportunity for a Rabbi to speak, at a time of such horrific bloodshed, pain and suffering in Israel/Palestine and in the Middle East. Our hearts were made stronger by all the blessings which God showered upon us yesterday in so many ways."*

Mitzi Kalinsky a cantor from Sukkot Shalom Synagogue sang a beautiful prayer on the beauty of the natural environment drawing to a close the very special time when two great faiths came together in the presence of other people of faith, and those of none. *(For more information on the Jewish teaching on the care of the environment click [here](#))*



To sustain us on the last part of the walk the Muslim community provided a welcome cup of tea and more cake and biscuits; it certainly helped in continuing the walk to the last places of worship to be visited ~ the last leg of the journey was the longest. Many took the opportunity to plant a seed when they had finished their tea!

Stop 5: SS Peter's & Paul's Church, Ilford High Road



SS Peter's & Paul's Church in the High Road was the next stop on the walk. Jacquie Grieve welcomed the Redbridge Deputy Mayor Cllr Thavathuray Jeyaranjan, who was able to join the walkers here. When Paul Samuels, a member of the Church Parish Council, outlined the Christian faith commitment to caring for the environment, it rang a chord with all other groups present. He encouraged all present to talk to those

sitting alongside them about the messages they had heard during the walk so far to have this short reflective time to review. There was a good buzz while walkers shared their views. All joined in with the prayer before leaving for our last faith community venue. The parish community had prepared a large display at the entrance of the church from CAFOD (Catholic Association for Overseas Development), everyone was invited to look at the information on display. *(For more information on the Christian teaching on the care of the environment click [here](#))*

Stop 6: Sikh Karamasar Gurdwara, Ilford High Road

It took us little time to walk to the Sikh Karamasar Gurdwara ~ just along the road from the Church. The Deputy Mayor of Redbridge, Cllr Thavathuray Jeyaranjan accompanied us to this last venue. As for all visitors to this Gurdwara the Deputy Mayor was immensely impressed with the beautiful stone carvings at the entrance. Jacquie Grieve took the opportunity to formally welcome him. His presence and that of several other councillors endorsed the Council's commitment to making Redbridge a cleaner greener borough. He spoke of this in thanking RFF for the walk and the work that the Forum achieves in bringing faith communities together.



The young presenters at the Gurdwara spoke about their faith teaching on the environment. They noted some of the actions that the Sikh community was taking at the Gurdwara to care for the earth. For example: changing lights to LED, which led to a saving on the electricity bill; using stainless steel plates and cups rather than plastic at the Langar which can be washed and re used; installing sensor taps on all sinks and recycling clothes. This was an ambitious range of actions ~ something all can copy. *(For more information on the Sikh teaching on the care of the environment click [here](#))*

Mr. Harbans Singh Seerha and Mr Satwinder Singh Ghatora, members of the Gurdwara Committee, also spoke about the Gurus' teachings highlighting the importance of the care for the environment. They invited all to visit and enjoy a meal in the Langar. (The Langar is an amazing feature of all Sikh Gurdwaras ~ a meal available for anyone in need at anytime during the day). This immense generosity was much appreciated by all. It was a superb ending to a very special event.



SUMMARY:

This was a truly impressive event and most definitely worthwhile, given the shared perspectives on the environment and the recognition of what we are doing to the planet and its climate. Walking together and listening to each other increased understanding and respect for each other and each other's beliefs. Much progress was made in neighbourliness and harmony in the community. The excellent presentations from the young people were inspiring and gave hope for the future.

The Walk proved to be a powerful witness to unity of different faiths to caring for the environment as one quote summarised "The most inspiring experience has been the community spirit displayed between all faiths for each other – welcoming and inclusive regardless of whichever faith it is."

Other comments illustrate the many views and appreciation of those who took part:

- *"Energy, richness, diversity, vitality. Young people. Open-ness, generosity, friendliness. Thoughtfulness. It's not too late"*
- *"The theme of the faith forum walk showed what we all have in common 'The Earth' this helped to connect us and share our faith from this perspective"*
- *"Faith is a powerful witness to the world and walking together as multi-faith people can only encourage peace and unity among all mankind"*
- *"Involvement of the young people just excellent. Our Imam and the Rabbi standing together – very moving"*
- *"It was a very inspiring walk. The children were very aware of the environment, made very confident presentations which makes us very hopeful for the future"*
- *"An amazing event showing that so many people of all cultures uniting as one in their question to save the earth from destruction"*
- *"I found it both a spiritual and practical experience, reflecting on similarities in our holy books and practical things we can do. Enjoyed the afternoon – talked to lots of different people – thank you."*

Thanks and Acknowledgements

<p>All those who came as walkers to make the events such a success</p> <p>Cllr Thavathuray Jeyaranjan Redbridge Deputy Mayor</p> <p>Habiba Ahmed LBR Recycling Team / Amey</p> <p><u>Volunteers & Staff of RFF –</u></p> <p>Jacque Grieve, Saira Yakub, Karen Kent, Ruth Musgrave, Peter Musgrave, Mo Dedat, Angela & Alan Banner, Meenakshi Kana, Temitayo Adisa, Sameer Roy</p> <p>Camilla Quartey</p> <p><u>Buddhist Vihara</u></p> <p>Rev Hemeratana</p> <p>Isuru Meegahage Perera</p> <p>Sundara Suhasini</p> <p>Young People - Thisali Jayaratne, Dilini Jaysoma and their friends</p> <p>Volunteers welcoming the walkers and providing refreshment</p> <p><u>Salvation Army</u></p> <p>Lieutenant John Clifton</p> <p>Keith Young</p> <p><u>Iford Hindu Centre</u></p> <p>Vinaya Sharma</p> <p>Young People - Pavnish Mohan, Radha Patel, Tulsi and friends</p>	<p><u>Iford Islamic Centre</u></p> <p>Mr Ghazanfer Ali</p> <p>Madrassah teachers</p> <p>Muhammad Afzal</p> <p>Abdur Raheem Bin Mikaeel</p> <p>Young people - Ali Ahmed, Jalal Elahi, Hassan Ali</p> <p>Volunteers welcoming the walkers and providing refreshment</p> <p><u>Jewish Community</u></p> <p>Rabbi Jeffrey Newman</p> <p>Mitzi Kalinsky a cantor from Sukkot Shalom Synagogue</p> <p><u>SS Peter's & Paul's Church</u></p> <p>Paul Samuels</p> <p><u>Guru Nanak Satsang Sabha (Karamsar) Gurdwara</u></p> <p>Mr Harbans Singh Seehra</p> <p>Mr Satwinder Singh Ghatora – Karamsar School</p> <p>Young People, including Channi Ghara, Supreet Kaur</p> <p><u>Metropolitan Police</u></p> <p>PC Shahnuaz Meah, Faith & Community Liaison Officer and the local Safer Neighbourhood Teams</p>
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