

“IT’S NOT TOO LATE”

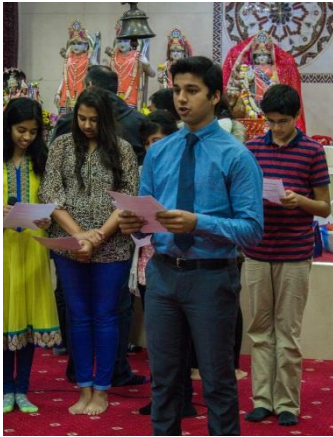
This was the theme of Redbridge Faith Forum’s Multi-faith Walk which took place on Sunday 18th October in Central Ilford. Overall 200 people participated, including faith leaders from all the major faiths in the borough and scouts from the 8th Goodmayes group. Walkers were made welcome at six faith venues where, as well as enjoying hospitality, the opportunity was given to consider what contribution each individual as well as communities can make to caring for our environment to make a real difference. Participants were reminded that “it is not too late” and if each person took practical action each day to be environmentally aware our neighbourhoods could be transformed.

It was encouraging and inspiring to hear from young people at the Buddhist Vihara, Hindu Temple, Islamic Centre and the Karamsar Gurdwara how their faith and teaching had helped make them aware of what they could do practically for the environment as “it is not too late”. They had thought about what they could do in their homes, their schools and their places of worship to care for the environment and it was so refreshing to hear of their common purpose and suggestions for action.

The Walk started from the Buddhist Vihara in Balfour Road, where after the young people’s presentation a tree was planted in the garden. During the tree planting Rev Hemaratana recited a mantra.



The next venue was the Salvation Army in Clements Road where walkers were warmly welcomed by Lieutenant John Clifton who explained how the church works to transform the lives of those in the community. The premises are used every day of the week to provide activities or services for those in need. Walkers were able to watch a practical demonstration of bike recycling as the Salvation Army runs a project which repairs and services bikes and also has affordable bikes for sale.



Walkers continued to the Hindu temple where a group of young people presented their suggestions and thoughts on caring for the earth and explained peace, respect and care of the earth is integral to Hindu teaching and their suggestions for action were on display. The temple was busy preparing for their Navrati festival celebration which several hundred people were expected to attend.

Everyone walked a few minutes around the corner to the Ilford Islamic Centre in Albert Road where they heard from Rabbi Newman of the Jewish perspective on climate change on caring for the environment followed by that of the Muslim perspective from a group of young people. Again it was very encouraging to hear how both the Muslim and Jewish faith inspire its followers to care for creation. Imam Ihsan joined Rabbi Newman on the stage alongside other faith leaders to unite in their desire to “care for the environment” and acknowledge that “it is not too late” to make a difference. Refreshments were provided



and people were encouraged to recycle their drinking cups by planting a seed in them.

Many people took the opportunity to visit the Mosque opposite the Islamic Centre.

Fortified by refreshments walkers then set off for their visit to SS Peter & Paul Church where they were joined by Deputy Mayor Cllr Thavathuray Jeyaranjan. Redbridge Faith Forum Chair Jacquie Grieve welcomed the deputy Mayor whose presence and that of several councillors endorsed the Councils commitment to make Redbridge a cleaner greener borough. A presentation was given by a parishioner about the Christian commitment to care for the environment and everyone was invited to look at the information on display.



The final destination was the Karamsar Gurdwara where everyone was invited to enjoy the hospitality of the langar and look at a large exhibition on recycling after a



presentation from the Sikh Young People and a warm welcome from members of the Management Committee of the Gurdwara

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 made by participants included:-

- *“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.”*

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