



PRESS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Redbridge Faith Forum Women's Workshop 15th November 2016

Twenty three women from different backgrounds and faiths were given a very warm and generous welcome at the Karamsar Centre, Buckingham Road Ilford for a most enlightening and friendly workshop addressing the questions 'Praying: How? Why? When? To Whom?' This was the second of a series of workshops on the topic of prayer and featured presentations from the Sikh and Baha'i faiths. The first workshop in June had featured the Buddhist and Hindu faiths. Further workshops will take place in 2017.

Parminder Kaur Kondral, National Co-ordinator of the UK Sikh Healthcare Chaplaincy Group gave an excellent presentation about Sikhism which is considered the 5th largest faith in the world. Sikhism can be found predominantly in the Punjab region of India but the largest emigrant population is in Canada which is slightly larger than that on the UK – the 2011 census indicated the Redbridge Sikh population to be 17,377. The founder of Sikhism was Guru Nanak Dev Ji born in 1469 and he has been followed by 9 Gurus. The Sikh Holy Scriptures is Guru Granth Sahib and has 1430 pages. It is at the heart of Sikh worship and is installed on an altar at the Gurdwara (the Sikh place of worship) where devotees pay their obeisance to the Guru – it is placed high so that devotees can bow down to it. A baptised Sikh wears the 5 Ks – Kesh (unshorn hair); Kirpan (short curved sword); Kara (iron/steel bangle), Kangha (wooden comb), Kachera (loose undergarment) and is prohibited from cutting their hair, eating meat, smoking, consuming alcohol and sexual immorality. The Mool Mantar encompasses the basic teaching of Sikhism – Ik Onkar (there is only one God), Sat Nam (Eternal truth is His name), Karta Purakh (he is the Creator), Nir Bhau (He is without fear), Nir Vair (He is without hate), Akal Murat (Immortal, without form), Ajuni (Beyond birth and death), Sibhang (He is the enlightener) Gur Prasaad (He can be reached through the mercy and grace of the true Guru), Jip (Repeat).

Prayer – How? Sikhs sit crossed leg (if able to) holding the Gutka but if prayers are known by heart hands will be folded. If praying at the Gurdwara Sikhs will face the altar where the Holy Scriptures are placed – if at home there is no particular direction or object to face.

When? – Sikhs are expected to remain God conscious with every breath so prayer can be at any time of day but there is a prayer that is often recited early in the morning "Waheguru" meaning Wonderful God and there are devotional readings/prayers at specific times of day – Nitnem (morning), Rehras (evening) Kirtan Sohila (bedtime)

Where? Anywhere, everywhere including in the congregation at the Gurdwara – **Prayer of supplication** is called an **Ardas** – Sikh Chaplaincy are praying the Aradas in many hospitals and hospices for the wellbeing of the patients.

To Whom? Sikhs pray to God who resides everywhere in his creation.

Following the presentation there was the opportunity for questions to be asked and the answers discussed before the second presentation which was given by Carol Khorsandyan about the Baha'i faith.

Carol explained that she had become attracted to the Bah'i faith by its teachings on unity and the oneness of man, Religion and God. The religion was founded by Baha'u'llah in Persia (now known as Iran) in 1844 and has over 7 million followers worldwide and 6000 in

the UK. Baha's are working to bring unity in diversity and eliminate all prejudice that causes division. Each individual is responsible for their own spiritual development so there are no clergy but in every city where there are 9 or more adult Baha'is there is a local spiritual assembly elected by secret ballot every year. The elected members have no powers individually and are not given any special deference but when they meet together they have collective authority to organise meetings, be available for consultation etc. There is also a world body called the Universal House of Justice based on Mount Carmel which is elected every 5 years and is responsible for safekeeping and translating of the Holy Writings, overseeing affairs and being available for consultation.

Prayer – How? There are obligatory prayers which require washing of the hands and face and facing towards the Qiblah (Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh,) near Acre in present-day Israel and for two of these obligatory prayers you stand, raise your hands, bow your head and are seated at various points in the prayers showing reverence and humility. For other prayers Bahais will choose a quiet spot with no distractions to focus on spending special time with God.

When? Baha's tend to have a daily routine of prayer in the morning and at night.

Where? Baha'is can pray anywhere and everywhere but try and find somewhere quiet to be able to focus.

To Whom? Baha'is pray to God, the Divine Creator of the Universe although it is impossible for any mortal mind to truly understand the reality of God.

Time was given for the women to discuss the presentations and ask questions which were answered with clarity. All present, felt they had learnt something new and had gained more understanding from the workshop. Many identified some common strands with their own faith teachings and practice. The overall evaluation was that it was an inspirational afternoon with a lovely spirit and a good opportunity to know more about others. Other comments included “interesting and relaxed”, “really good atmosphere and information”, “very harmonious and friendly”.



Redbridge Faith Forum (RFF) is a registered charity (number 1118765) and an independent organisation whose aims are to:-

- bring together representatives of different faith communities in order to gain mutual understanding and promote social cohesion
- give Faith Communities in Redbridge a collective voice by identifying and addressing issues that affect residents.

Next Events

For more information contact RFF on 020 8708 2478, visit website www.redbridgefaithforum.org or email faith.forum@redbridge.gov.uk

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