

# Relations With Other Faiths (RWOF)

Nov 08

This month is a very busy month in the world of Inter-Faith in Scotland, with various events including the beginning of Inter-Faith week taking place. Several of these will be highlighted at the end of this article. I myself find that I am exceptionally busy. You maybe reading this article after I have undertaken a lecture at Glasgow University on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of October to the Islamic Society GUMSA on, 'Charity a Human Responsibility,' The Importance of Charity in the Three Abrahamic Faiths,' with a Rabbi and an Islamic teacher no less. I do often feel a little overawed by the company I keep. I am also looking forward to introducing Rebekah Gronowski (Judaism) Atta Yaqub (Islam) Shantiketu (Buddhism) at the Rural Church (31<sup>st</sup> Oct-1<sup>st</sup> Nov) event allowing ministers in 'Rural Churches' an opportunity to explore ways in which they can begin to dialogue with other faiths. The following week will see me take up an invitation to meet with the Archbishop of Glasgow the Reverend Mario J Conti. I would also have been able to have taken in a meeting with the Archbishop of Canterbury but unfortunately it clashes with my S2 class which I teach on that day. Seems strange but schools wont allow me days off to meet with Church leaders no matter how esteemed. I then head up to the Children's Assembly where I have been asked to describe the main religions of ten countries in 20 minutes. If there is one thing you can't say about my job is that it is dull or boring. The month ends with the two exciting events I am spearheading at Shields Road Church and Woodside Halls. Details of the events are enclosed.

Before I introduce this months main article on the Muslim pilgrimage to Makkah known as Hajj I would like to mention one other exciting opportunity that has arisen taking place next year. The Scout Movement would like me to organize a faith tent from the 1<sup>st</sup> of August to the 8<sup>th</sup> of August next year. In order to achieve two of their badges in 'World Faiths' and 'My Faith' Scouts must have a knowledge and understanding of their own faith and other faiths. The Scouts are taking the position that is important that young people have a faith in God. With that I cannot argue and that young people if they do not have a faith should have an opportunity to reconnect with the faith of their parents. This gives us an opportunity to reach out to lots of young people with over 1200 young people attending from every Scout group throughout the UK. I am planning to organize a rota where different faiths will be present during that week from 9am-12pm, 2pm-4.30pm and some part of the evening. If you would like to be involved in some way then please let me know.



Hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca) is the last of the Five Pillars of Islam. It is the dream of every Muslim to go to Makkah at least once in their life time. It is an obligation that must be carried out by every able-bodied Muslim who can afford to do so. Many save up for years until they can afford it. Often families will join together to pay for one person to go. It is the largest annual pilgrimage in the world held during the twelfth month of the year, with up to 2 million Muslims traveling to the holy city of Mecca. It is a demonstration of the solidarity of the Muslim people, and their submission to Allah.



Left: Muslims at pray during the Hajj

The hajj reminds Muslims that they are all equal in the eyes of God. So, as they near Makkah, the pilgrims change their clothes. Instead of ordinary clothes, a male Muslim wears two sheets of unsewn white cloth. Women wear one special piece of cloth over their usual clothes. This covers their head and reaches to their ankles.

The white sheets are symbolic. They remind Muslims that they must be willing to give up everything for God. It is also a reminder that dead people are wrapped in similar sheets. After death, all fine clothes and wealth have no value.

When they begin the pilgrimage, Muslims promise to live a pure life while they are pilgrims. They are not supposed to swear or quarrel or partake in sexual relations. They are also forbidden to:

- Shave or cut their nails
- Use cologne or scented oils
- Kill or hunt anything
- Fight or argue
- Women must not cover their faces, even if they would do so in their home country
- Men may not wear clothes with stitching.

The hajj lasts five days. In that time, each Muslim is expected to think of God constantly. On the first day, the pilgrimage begins at Makkah. Each Muslim walks seven times around the Ka'bah. Some pilgrims try to kiss it, as a sign of respect or in the hope it might bring them a blessing.



The Ka'bah, which is a cube measuring 15meters long, 10 meters wide and 14 meters high, is regarded by Muslims as God' s house. They believe it was first built by Adam and later rebuilt by the prophet Abraham and his son Ishmeal. It is covered by a black cloth made of cotton and silk, which is beautifully embroidered with the words of the Qur'an. In one corner of the Ka'ba is the Black Stone. This is supposed to have been given to Ibrahim's son, Isma'il by the Angel Gabriel.

After this, the pilgrims go to pray near the Maqam Ibrahim (Ibrahim's place) which is close to the Ka'ba. Then they must walk seven times between two small hills. This remembers how Ibrahim's (better known as Abraham to Christians) wife, Hagar, ran between these two hills looking for water for her son Isma'il. Today the hills are linked by a broad corridor. The spring of water which Isma'il is supposed to have found by diggin his toes in the sand is called the Well of Zamzam. Pilgrims drink from it, and often collect some of the water to bring back home for their friends and family.

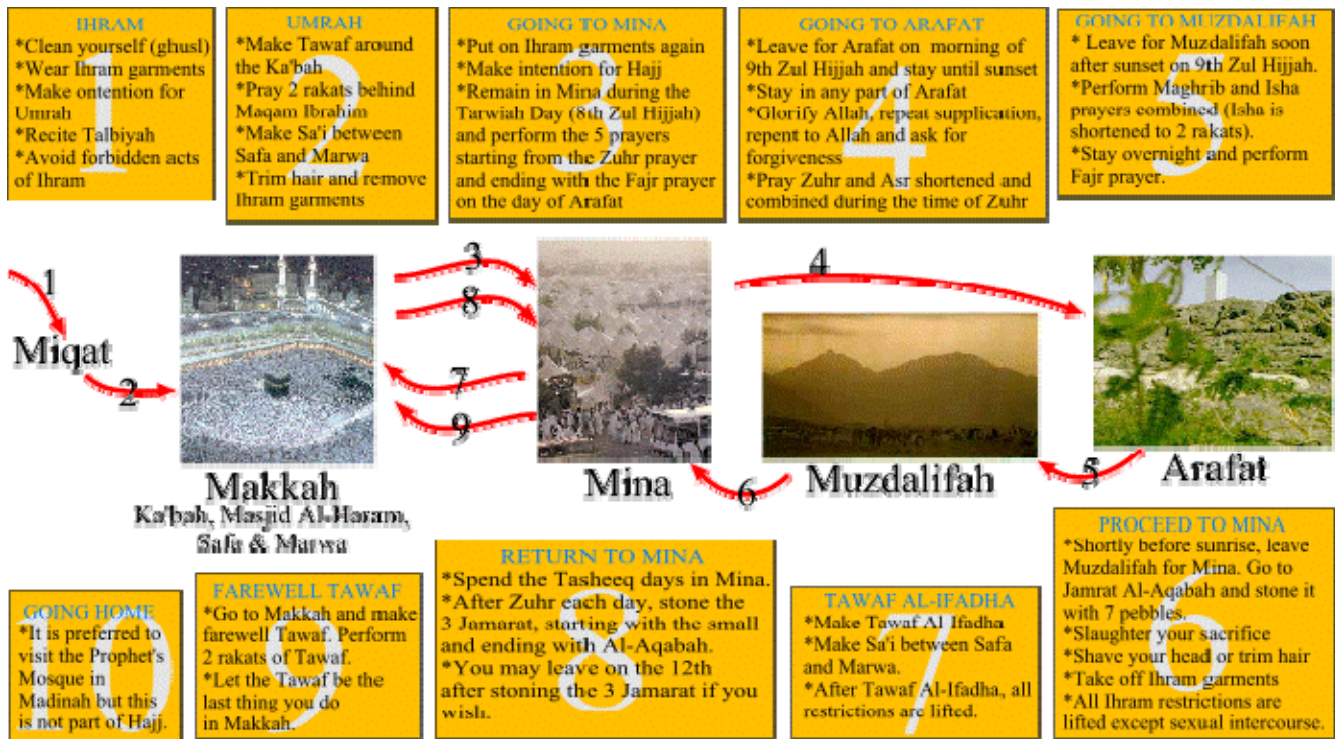
The pilgrims spend the night at Mina. At sunrise on the following day, they go to Arafat. It is about 20 kilometers from Makkah. Thousands of tents are put up specially to protect the pilgrims from the heat. Here they spend the day praying and meditating in the sun. After sunset, they all leave to spend the night at Muzdalifah. Part of the evening is spent hunting for forty-nine small stones for the next part of the hajj.



Returning to Mina on the tenth day, they set off for three stone pillars. These mark the places where the devil tried to get Ishmael to disobey Abraham. Muslims believe that Ishmael drove the devil away by throwing stones at him. So modern Muslims throw their stones at these pillars seven times.



It is a way of showing that they reject evil and wish to follow God. After the first pillar is stoned, an animal is sacrificed. (This is part of the festival of Eid ul Adha held all over the world). This remembers that Abraham had been willing to sacrifice his son on God's command. When God spared Ishmael, Abraham sacrificed a ram instead. So modern pilgrims sacrifice a sheep, goat, cow, or camel. This is a symbol of how they are willing to give up their lives and possessions for God. Pilgrims eat some of the meat; much of it is given to the poor. The pilgrims will also shave their heads or cut their hair. Then they take off their special pilgrim cloth, and put on their normal clothes. In the following days, the other two pillars are stoned in the same way. Afterwards they return to Makkah where they circle the Ka'ba once more. Then their pilgrimage is over. Although most Muslims will stay longer and visit the other important places in the area. Below you can see a list of instructions given to Muslims attending the Hajj which begins with the Hajj in short.



### FIRST DAY: 8 Zul Hajj

1. During the night before Fajr of 8 Zul Hajj, put on ihram, make your niyyah (intention) and recite talbiyah 3 times and pray to Allah Almighty.
2. After Fajr, leave Makkah for Mina. However, people can go to Mina even before Fajr during the night.
3. Today in Mina, offer Zuhr, Asr, Maghrib and Isha prayers.
4. Stay overnight in Mina.

### SECOND DAY: 9 Zul Hajj

1. After Fajr prayer in Mina, go to Arafat.
2. In Masjid-e-Namra, the imam leads Zuhr and Asr prayers, combined and shortened, at Zuhr time. At other places in Arafat, similarly combine these two salats or offer them at their proper times with jama'at.
3. Wuquf-e-Arafat or standing until sunset.
4. At Maghrib time, without offering Maghrib prayer, leave for Muzdalifah.
5. Offer Maghrib and Isha prayers together in Muzdalifah at Isha time.
6. Stay overnight in Muzdalifah.

### THIRD DAY: 10 Zul Hajj

1. In Muzdalifah, after Fajr prayer and Wuquf, proceed to Mina.
2. Throw 7 pebbles at Jamrat-ul-Aqabah.
3. Animal sacrifice.
4. Shave your head or cut some hair from it.
5. Go to Makkah for Tawaf-e-Ziarat.

## 6. Stay overnight in Mina

### FOURTH DAY: 11 Zul Hajj

1. At any time in the afternoon, throw 7 pebbles on each of the 3 pillars starting with the first pillar, then on the middle pillar, and lastly on the pillar of Aqabah.
2. If you could not do Tawaf-e-Ziarat yesterday, do it today.

### 3. Stay overnight in Mina.

### FIFTH DAY: 12 Zul Hajj

1. At any time in the afternoon, throw 7 pebbles on each of the 3 pillars in the same order as was done on 11 Zul Hajj.
2. If you could not do Tawaf-e-Ziarat earlier, it is essential to do it today before Maghrib.
3. You can leave Mina on 12 Zul Hajj before the sun sets. If the sun sets before you are able to depart, remain in Mina for the third night and throw pebbles again the next day.

#### **Note:**

- *In Mina, Arafat and Muzdlifa, all the prayers are shortened and offered at their proper times except noted above.*
- *Whenever you finish Tawaf-e-Ziarat during the night, come back to Mina for stay.*
- *There are 3 obligatory acts (Fard) without which Hajj is invalid:*

\* Ihram

\* Wuquf-e-Arafat

\* Tawaf-e-Ziarat

4. Before returning to your country after completing the rites of Hajj, perform the Farewell Tawaf (Tawaf al-Wida).

**NOTE: for greater detail about performing Hajj or Umrah, please consult a more [comprehensive source](#).**

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## Forthcoming Inter Faith Events

### Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> November, 2-5pm

The first is the **Launch of Scottish Inter Faith Week**, which will take place Clarkston Hall, East Renfrewshire on Sunday **23 November**, from 2 - 5pm. This is in collaboration with East Renfrewshire Faith Forum and a Civic Reception is being hosted by East Renfrewshire Council. This will be an event which a family can enjoy and will include guest speakers Professor Bart McGettrick and Dr Maureen Sier and performances from local schools, as well as a sit down meal for 120 people. Those wishing to attend must contact Farkhanda Chaudhry with names and addresses (including postcodes) so that an invitation card confirming your attendance can be posted to you. Farkhanda's email is [Farkhanda.Chaudhry@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk](mailto:Farkhanda.Chaudhry@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk).

### Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> of November, 2-6pm

The second event is a **Celebration of Scottish Inter Faith Week**, which will take place in St Andrews University Lower Hall on **Sunday 30 November** (St Andrews Day!) from 2 - 6pm. It is being hosted by St Andrews University, Fife Council and the Scottish Inter Faith Council.

This will be similar to the event that was held in Aberdeen University last year, and the keynote speakers are Imam Ashafa and Pastor Wuye from Nigeria, with contributions from Scottish religious leaders. A full programme is planned with input from local schools, as well as a buffet. Between 150 and 200 people are expected to attend this event, which occurs during St Andrews Week. Those wishing to attend must let the SIFC office know, so that the SIFC, caterers, etc. can prepare adequately. Invitations will be emailed to you shortly.

### Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> of November, 7pm-8.30pm

Pollokshields Church Hall, Pollokshields (Adjacent to the Scottish Inter-Faith Council Offices)

#### Answer Time.

A Faiths Forum of Panel Discussion on topical issues. Speakers from various faith traditions.

For more details contact Iain Stewart (Church of Scotland Inter Faith Worker) on 01413526946 or email [istewart@cofscotland.org.uk](mailto:istewart@cofscotland.org.uk)

### Sunday, November 30<sup>th</sup> 2008 6.30pm -10pm, Woodside Halls, Maryhill, Glasgow

#### A Celebration Of Faith Through Music Evening

A coming together of people from different cultures and faith traditions in the spirit of togetherness and friendship to hear songs of praise to God from their respective traditions. People will enjoy the entertainment during the evening over a nice meal. Tickets are more than reasonably priced at £2 for children/oap's and £3 for adults. For tickets or information about taking part. Please contact Iain Stewart (Church of Scotland Inter-Faith Worker) at 59 Elm Bank Street, 01413526946 or email [istewart@cofscotland.org.uk](mailto:istewart@cofscotland.org.uk) A flyer for the event is also enclosed.

### **CAIRS Events** Saturday, November 8, 2008

#### **Visit to the Synagogue of the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation**

Following the well attended visit to the Glasgow Reform Synagogue, CAIRS has arranged for a group to visit the Orthodox Synagogue in Edinburgh. Rabbi David Rose invites us to share in the Shabbat service and meet with members of the Congregation. Download fuller details from [here](#). Please register your interest in attending this event by contacting Andrew on 01259 222 364 or by [email](#) by October 23.

The visit to the **Otago Street Gurudwara**, postponed from June 8, will be rescheduled for sometime in Spring 2009. Further details will be published here once they are available.

*February 28 - March 15, 2009, with pre events, and a Film Festival, in the weeks before.*

#### **The 6th Edinburgh International Festival of Middle Eastern Spirituality and Peace**

Please see the [Festival website](#) for more information if you wish to organise an event between February 18 and 27 as part of the run up to the festival, or contact [Neill Walker](#) by email or call 0131 331 4469. For events held outwith Edinburgh, in Scotland, there is more flexibility about a date for an event.

News Headlines

## **Kirk welcomes Sharia courts into Scotland**

### **Convener says settling disputes within faith communities is not a new premise**

A senior Kirk official today welcomed news about the possibility of introducing Sharia law courts into Scotland.

**Rev Ian Galloway**, convener of the Church and Society Council, felt that Sharia courts had been unfairly portrayed following the Archbishop of Canterbury's comments last February.

**Mr Galloway** commented:

*"The advent of Sharia courts in Scotland should herald a time of reflection and interest not fear and outrage.*

*"What Sharia courts bring to our society is another method of dispute resolution. It is a particular group choosing to avoid the expense and time of using the Court System and instead resolving disputes based on a particular faith based ethical framework.*

*"What is being brought to us is not some kind of parallel jurisdiction that replaces our legal system; rather it is a space, within a given community, for disputes to be resolved."*

He insisted the Church had no problem, so long as Sharia courts met three crucial standards:

*"Its rulings must not preclude recourse to the courts for the parties involved. The decisions must not break the fundamental tenets of the Human Rights Act upon which our legal system is now based. In that regard, the rights of women in particular must be respected.*

*"We would apply these standards to any method of dispute resolution, including to changes in our own laws and legal system and so it is for consistency that we would expect the same of Sharia Courts or any other dispute resolution system."*

He also pointed out that Church members have long been using the Kirk as an arbitrator to settle disagreements, highlighting that this aspect of Sharia law was not a new premise.

**Mr Galloway** cited church buildings as an example:

*"When two congregations are told they are becoming a united charge and one building must be closed, the Kirk must sort any resulting row.*

*"Where arbitration is the chosen method, both parties agree to respect the final decision. This is one way of a faith community settling a dispute without having to resort to the Church's own courts.*

*"Or an arbiter might be chosen by parties to resolve a low-grade neighbourhood dispute, so long as both parties agree to trust his or her judgement on the matter: and the arbiter might conceivably be a religious figure, like a minister or priest.*

*"That, simply, is the sort of thing that is meant by arbitration."*

## **Opportunities**

The Tony Blair Faith Foundation/ Faiths Act Fellowship programme is looking for thirty young leaders aged 18-25 drawn from the the US, UK, and Canada to embark on a 10 month journey of interfaith service. The Tony Blair Faith Foundation has launched this initiative in conjunction with the [Interfaith Youth Core](#), which aims to build relationships among young people from different religious traditions by empowering them to work together to serve others. Interfaith Youth Core is the co-ordinating body for the Fellowship programme.

Training begins with a 2-month intensive initiative that includes fieldwork with primary health care partners fighting deaths from malaria in Africa. Fellows will return to their home countries for 8 months to mobilize young

people of faith to raise awareness and resources to promote the Millennium Development Goals. They will focus particularly focus on fighting deaths from malaria.

### **Purpose of the Fellowship**

Halting and reversing the spread of malaria is one of today's most urgent moral challenges. 500 million people contract the disease each year and one million die, the vast majority under 5 years old and in Africa. Yet, malaria is preventable and treatable. And, progress in the fight against deaths from malaria will speed our achievement of 6 of the 8 Millennium Development Goals.

Young people of faith have a particular role to play in this vision. As change-makers for future generations, they are able to establish new forms of inter-faith collaboration by placing a committed concern for the poorest at the heart of a renewed dialogue of life and action. The Faiths Act Fellows will become ambassadors for inter-religious cooperation in the fight against deaths from malaria and the accomplishment of the Millennium Development Goals.

Once in their home countries, galvanising, motivating and organising across faith communities for the MDGs, we hope that the Fellows will reach 1,000 people each. This would mean over the programme, 30,000 across the world will have been touched by the programme and our objective is to spread the work ever wider.

### **Potential candidates**

Candidates must have the potential to become accomplished leaders, and be able to demonstrate a firm commitment to work for justice in their own faith community. They will need to be able to commit a year of their life to this work as MDG ambassador, ten months of which will be hard work, travel, workshops, speaking engagements, presentations in a well-planned project devised by them in conjunction with the IFYC. They will receive a basic stipend, insurance cover and health care provision.

Candidates selected will work in interfaith pairs in their own faith communities based in host organisations in their countries. Inspired by their different religious traditions, they will motivate and equip young people in congregations, schools and university religious student groups to lead their faith communities in spreading awareness of the MDG challenge, raising life-saving funds for the fight against deaths from malaria and promoting a new inter-religious dialogue of life and action.

### **The programme**

The programme will begin with induction first in London lasting two weeks from August 2009, then an educational exposure trip to a malaria hotspot in Africa. Fellows will learn and work in teams in selected African countries, hosted and guided by an organization that is doing excellent primary health care work. In Africa, they will learn about the realities of malaria and the urgency behind the Millennium Development Goals. Both in London and Africa, Fellows will have opportunities to explore the social and cultural life around them and particularly to interact with local faith communities.

On return they will receive further preparatory training in Chicago to equip them to perform effectively in their chosen projects. The rest of the programme will find them working in their local faith communities as interfaith pairs, mobilizing young people of faith to work together in raising awareness of the MDGs and funds for malaria eradication. They will be hosted by a local organization that does related work and will work as a team.

### **Host organisations**

In their home countries, Fellows will be hosted by a local organization whose mission fits closely with this project. Host organizations in the UK include Muslim Aid, World Vision UK, Tzedek, and the Christian-Muslim Forum. We are now seeking host organizations in the US, and Canada. Interested organizations should submit an application (go to [www.faithsactfellows.org](http://www.faithsactfellows.org)).

In order to be eligible, the organization's work must already prioritize interfaith social action or the engagement of faith communities in international development and have the human, physical and technological resources to host and manage two full-time Fellows from late September, 2009 through to late May, 2010.