

THREE FAITHS FORUM



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An Act of Goodwill in the Muslim, Christian and Jewish Communities

Under the title of "A Time To Reflect ", leaders and members of the Jewish, Christian and Muslim communities came together in Winchester last Sunday afternoon in an act of goodwill to share with each other a message of peace and reconciliation from the Hebrew Scriptures, the Christian Gospel and the Qur'an in a time of quiet, of listening, of mutual respect and of support for one another.

About one hundred people of the three faiths from around the region crowded into the community centre at Badger Farm for a meeting chaired by Rev'd Tim Selwood, co-ordinator of the Hampshire Three Faiths Forum. The Forum, which is a national organisation, has been active in the area for the past four years helping to develop dialogue between members of the Abrahamic Faiths.

The Muslim community was well represented by members of the Winchester Muslim Cultural Association chaired by Mr. Ahmed Moon as well as Dr. Redwan El Khayat from the Southampton Muslim Council. Rabbi Neil Answych of the Reform Synagogue attended with members of the Jewish community. Reverend Ian Johnson of the Southampton City Centre Parish and Wanda Nash, a prominent Christian writer and speaker from Winchester, joined with them, all contributing insights from their differing faith perspectives into that which unites rather than divides our faith communities.

The meeting was called at short notice to express an alternative point of view from the insults and angry demonstrations which have threatened community relations following the publication of provocative anti -Islamic cartoons in some European newspapers. The readings were each followed by a time of silence in which people could reflect upon the message of peace at the heart of their respective faiths.

Messages of support were also received from many who were unable to attend. "There was a really wonderful atmosphere," a spokesman said "After the readings refreshments were laid on and the hall was alive with people sharing with each other across the faiths. Its all about making friendships and learning from each other really. Once you've done that you will naturally be careful not to insult or offend each other."

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