



# into the Melting Pot

*the question is more important than the answer*

Sunday 11 December 2016

## **The Iona Multi-Faith Experience**

*During the 'Listening Year' at Christchurch, Chris & Gary Knamiller had spent a week with the Iona Community where the theme had been 'Multi-Faith'. They wanted to put their experiences into the Melting Pot. A series of questions got us thinking:*

### **What is religion?**

- 1 Why do we feel the need for religion?
- 2 What do religious people believe?
- 3 What do religious people do?

### **Ninian Smart's Seven Dimensions of Religions**

- 1 *Practical and Ritual Dimension:* What the adherents of a religion do as part of that religion
- 2 *Experiential and Emotional:* Subjective, emotional side of religion. What goes on inside the person.
- 3 *Narrative and Mythic Dimension:* Stories that explain and inspire. What we learn from stories is different from what we learn from systematic thought and concepts. Narratives convey their own types of meaning and information.
- 4 *Doctrinal and Philosophical Dimension:* Provides rationale for many of the practices and ideas of a religion. The intellectual components of religions, however simple or complex. Especially developed in literate, scholarly traditions.
- 5 *Ethical and Legal Dimension Social and Institutional Dimension:* Ethics concerns what is good and bad, how one should live. Ideas and laws that shape behaviour.
- 6 *The Social and Institutional Dimension:* How people's interactions are organized as part of their religion.
- 7 *Material Dimension:* Physical forms in which a religion is embodied.

### **Could you say these prayers *and* identify the religion they come from?**

- 1 God judges us according to our deeds, not the coat that we wear. Know that we attaineth God when we loveth and only that victory endures in consequence of which no one is defeated.
- 2 In the name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful. Praise be to God, Lord of the Worlds, The Beneficent, The Merciful. You alone we worship: You alone we ask for help. Show us the straight path.
- 3 Oh Creator of the universe, may we receive thy supreme sin-destroying light. May Thou guide our intellect in the right direction.
- 4 Come let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, that we may walk the paths of the Most High. And we shall beat our swords into ploughshares, and our spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation – neither shall they learn

war any more. And none shall be afraid, for the mouth of the Lord of Hosts has spoken.

### **Which religion do these writings come from?**

- 5 "I will act towards others exactly as I would act towards myself."
- 6 "The only gift is giving to the poor. All else is exchange."
- 7 "Whoever saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of all mankind."
- 8 "What we all have in common is an appreciation of kindness and compassion; all religions have this. We all lean towards love."

### **Some Ideas for Interfaith Activities**

*Respect, even love, does not happen at a distance. It is about meeting together, establishing relationships, developing understanding and trust.*

- 1 Bring together young Muslims and young Christians, eg Sports – football, cricket, badminton, table tennis (perhaps an evening of mini-olympic activities) or environmental project – cleaning up a site, creating a little garden on 'brown' space.
- 2 Supporting Muslims (positive response to vast majority against fundamentalist), eg organise a one day fast for Christians during Ramadan and then break the fast together.
- 3 School Handbook – "What you need to know about fellow students of different faiths." Youth and adults work on this together. Could be a theme for series of combined meetings.
- 4 How is the media portraying different faiths – is it exciting hatred, showing good things happening, what does media leave out? This can be a theme for discussion in interfaith meetings
- 5 Finding out what social service activities different faith groups are doing, both locally and abroad? Sharing this information and searching for ways to work together and/or support each other, eg food banks and soup kitchens, supporting refugees from Muslim countries. (Sikhs in Edinburgh have a programme of blood donation. Other faith groups can participate.)
- 6 Have peace services together, particularly after such terrorist tragedies as the Paris incident and the big truck bomb in Baghdad. Also peace walks together (linked to number 2 above.)
- 7 On Remembrance Day have interfaith services as so many Sikhs among others also fought and fell in the great wars.
- 8 Speed faithing: this is like 'speed dating' where different faith groups get together and share ideas on a one to one basis, moving around to different people on a timed basis.
- 9 An interfaith community meal once a month moving around to different venues.