

Young People's Multi-Faith Meeting held in Solihull



The Global Network of Religion for Children Europe in cooperation with the Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council organized a young people's multi-faith meeting in Solihull on 20 October 2006. The meeting aimed to bring ideas to the youth on how to create a more peaceful school community.

27 young people from three schools in Solihull, namely Tudor Grange School, Park Hall School and Langley School met in Solihull Civic Centre to discuss cooperative ways of bringing peace to their schools.

The meeting was opened by Mr. John Graham Reeve, Mayor of Solihull who invited the participants to prepare themselves for the challenges of the future. He also invited them to promote democracy and to be open minded and critical thinkers.

Rev. John Bradford, member of the GNRC, welcomed participants and said how pleased he was at GNRC's part in sponsoring the meeting. He also thanked the Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council for providing the use of the Civic Centre for the day.



Mrs. Marta Palma, GNRC Europe Coordinator, stressed the importance of mutual understanding and challenged the participants to have a personal encounter with others' religions during the meeting. She thanked the Mayor of Solihull for his support and gave special thanks to Rev. Bradford, Mr. Vinod Hallan and Mr Phil Leivers, who organised the meeting.

Mr. Vinod Hallan, Project Director for the Department of Education and Skills U.K., also a member of the GNRC and of the Committee of the Inter-faith Council on Ethics Education was, together with Rev. Bradford, in charge of coordinating the meeting and made possible the cooperation with Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council. Phil Leivers is the RE adviser to schools in Solihull and organised the workshop activities. During the day participants discussed some materials provided by UNICEF, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its relevance to their school's rules and discussed how to bring about peace in places where violence has taken place. They also drew up plans on how they would share with others at school what they had done during the day. This would include some actions to make Solihull a more peaceful place to live.

Talha Ghannam and Matthew de Jesus, Representatives of the Solihull Youth Parliament, called for mutual understanding among religions and challenged the other young people to make their voices heard. Talha asked the



participants to think why religions are important for society and called for non-discrimination among religions. Both pointed out the need for bringing positive changes to our societies now.

Participants committed themselves to get their points across without edging out others' ideas and to accepting others' beliefs without isolating themselves to one view. They also committed themselves to socialise with more people of different religions, genders and beliefs.



The meeting was finished with an inter-faith prayer lead by Maria Lucia Uribe from the Arigatou Foundation in Geneva, who attended the meeting as an observer to learn from the usage of Children's Rights materials in formal settings.