

**Multifaith Consultative Group (MCG)**

**NOTES AND ACTIONS 20.5.14**

Attendees: Neil Ward, Annie Grant, Deacon Jen Woodfin, Raalib Amode, Bintu Foday, Jim Dickinson, John Charmley, Alokadhara Haworth with Lisa Williams  
Apologies: Helen Murdoch

**1. Minutes of the last meeting 25.3.14 and matters arising**

a) Terms of Reference and membership

Prof Neil Ward indicated that he had given the matter further consideration but would not be expanding the membership for the remainder of this academic year, as he wished to keep the Group a manageable size for discussions.

b) Timing of future meetings: three meetings have been set up for 2014-15, each ahead of the Equality and Diversity Committee into which this Group reports. **ACTION: Helen Murdoch to take Notes and Actions from this Group to Equality and Diversity Committee**

**2. Draft Guidance on Religious activities on Campus**

Received : final version of document prepared by Prof Neil Ward, having taken into consideration the further suggestions received from this Group and the Student Experience Committee. Noted that the document is available online at:

<http://www.uea.ac.uk/committeeoffice/unipolicies>

**3. Report on Multifaith Centre activities from Acting Coordinating Chaplain Deacon Jen Woodfin**

Considered: a verbal report from Deacon Jen Woodfin.

Noted:

- Regular activities continuing where possible, as per attachment. This includes up to 20 acts of worship within a week. For some students the regularity and commitment of prayer is very helpful in grounding them during what can be a stressful time. Hospitality/refreshments are offered through-out the week.
- Always goes a little quieter during exam time: it is an important time pastorally for people to know there is a quiet space within all the hurly burly of revision and exams.

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- There continues to be a very multicultural mix of people – noticeably different than before the name change to Multifaith Centre. It may be that, although more people feel comfortable to come in now there are also others who feel less able to come in.
- The Chaplains recently trialled a “hot potato night”: a debate about being pure in heart, and jacket potatoes. 3 chaplains, Muslim, Jewish and Catholic gave their perspective but no students came.
- New ideas – “we should be outside” – instead of offering lunch inside the Chaplains have been considering a way to offer lunch and spiritual advice/guidance/pastoral support outside of the MFC.
- Darren Thornton is on Sabbatical this term, until congregation week. Andrew Eburne and Jen Woodfin attempt to ensure that one of them is always available during our opening times. However, as both have other ministerial commitments opening hours may need to be reduced for the remainder of this semester.

#### Communications

After discussion it was agreed that it would be helpful to invite student faith societies to cascade information about events and opportunities in the MFC through the Student Union community officer. He/she can be reached via [union.community@uea.ac.uk](mailto:union.community@uea.ac.uk). Also Lisa can place information about events in the student e-bulletin as required.

#### Opening hours

In discussion, it was noted that a part-time administrator or responsible person situated in the MFC would be helpful in keeping the building open for longer.

Jim Dickinson offered to provide a student helper for this purpose. **ACTION: Annie Grant, Jen Woodfin, Jim Dickinson to discuss options further outside the meeting and put recommendation(s) to Neil Ward.**

#### **4. Faith Facilities on Campus – update from the Chair**

The Chair outlined the current situation as regards the Islamic Prayer Centre:

- a) The University is looking carefully at alternative options for Islamic prayer next academic year.
- b) The University has confirmed that alternative facilities for Islamic prayer will be available in the new Academic Year when the current Islamic Prayer Centre closes. Whilst this transition happens the existing Islamic Prayer Centre will be available. There will be no gap in provision for Islamic prayers.
- c) The University chaplains had proposed that space could be found within the Multifaith Centre (MFC) for Islamic individual and congregational worship, if remodelling and refurbishment work was undertaken in the Centre. On closer inspection (and following a visit by Muslim representatives) it seems that the space within the MFC will most likely be insufficient for congregational and possibly also day to day prayers. The remodelling works will most likely still go ahead, to increase capacity within the MFC in any case.
- d) Blackdale main hall is now being considered for Friday prayers only, excluding exam periods.

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- e) Space within the Lecture theatre block ("the Green Room") is being considered for daily regular prayers. Estimates suggest that potentially up to 50 persons could be housed for prayers within this space but this will need to be checked. Student representatives indicated that they would like to visit this space.

**ACTION: Lisa to set up visit**

- f) No decisions have yet been taken, and the consultation process is proceeding in a constructive and helpful way.

## **5. Benefits and Challenges of a Multifaith Campus community and Multifaith Centre**

Dr Grant outlined that it would be helpful to discuss ideas on how to bring different faiths together to discuss topics of mutual interest – eg to develop the hot potato event in the MFC.

Dr Grant indicated that she would send on details to Lisa of a contact to lead a discussion at the October meeting. **ACTION: Annie Grant**

Noted that Jen Woodfin would replace Alokadhara at the October meeting as he would be unable to attend.

The idea of having themed meetings was discussed and welcomed. **ACTION: Jim Dickinson to send suggestions to Lisa**

Bintu Foday outlined that the Union offers an interfaith event annually and she had organised the Feb 2014 event. Further details available here:

<http://ueastudentblog.wordpress.com/2014/02/21/interfaith-day-2014/>

## **6. Guidance on facilities for Ramadan during Congregation**

It was reported that Helen Murdoch was aiming to produce some guidance about facilities available on campus for prayer at that time and would value input from the Multifaith Centre and student Muslim representative. She planned to produce some A5 flyers to let people know where they can pray or get water etc during fasting as the ceremonies are quite long.

Raalib agreed to provide input for Helen on this matter. **ACTION: Helen Murdoch**

## **7. Ramadan – Islamic Prayer Centre extension of opening hours**

Reported that the University has agreed to a request from Raalib Amode to extend the opening hours of the Islamic prayer centre to 11pm from 27 June – 31 July 2014, for the period of Ramadan. *Subsequent to the meeting, Raalib indicated that in previous years the Islamic Centre had been opened 24 hrs during Ramadan and requested that the same arrangement be put in place this year.* **ACTION: Annie Grant to consider request and advise.**

## **Multifaith Consultative Group (MCG)**

### **NOTES AND ACTIONS 12.11.14**

Attendees: Neil Ward, Annie Grant, Jim Dickinson, John Charmley, Alokadhara Haworth, Darren Thornton, Holly Staynor, Helen Murdoch and Lisa Williams

Apologies: Raihan Amode (SU to nominate a replacement student member for next meeting)

#### **1. MINUTES**

Confirmed the Minutes of the meeting held on 20 May 2014

#### **2. REVIEW OF OUTSTANDING ACTION POINTS**

Noted:

- a) Helen Murdoch to take Notes and Actions from the Multi faith Consultative Group to the Equality and Diversity Committee.
- b) Annie Grant, Jen Woodfin and Jim Dickinson to discuss options to for a part-time administrator/responsible person to be situated in the MFC in order for the building to be open for longer and put recommendation to Neil Ward.
- c) Bishop of Bolton David Gillet was suggested as a person to invite to a future meeting on interfaith relations.
- d) Facilities during Ramadan – Helen Murdoch was working with the Muslim student representative to produce guidance.

#### **3. REPORT FROM THE MULTIFAITH CENTRE (MFC)**

Darren Thornton reported that there had been an increase in use at the MFC and the Christian Union are now using the MFC. Hindu worship had increased. The Centre was open some evenings. Noted that the MFC was getting busier but as a place for peace and quiet reflection, the Chaplains did not want to overfill it with activity. Darren Thornton provided a "What's On" guide for regular activities in the MFC during term time and details of prayer requests received.

A MFC Space remodelling request had been submitted and an £85k quote had been received from EST. Annie Grant was pursuing via Registrar and would consider seeking 3 quotes as the £85k quote seemed high.

PVC-ACAD outlined that MFC work, though desirable, was not likely to be a priority for the University's capital plan.

#### **4. CURRENT FAITH ISSUES RAISED BY MEMBERS**

- a) Room bookings for student faith groups were discussed. Noted that all bookings require authorisation by MFC. Jim Dickinson outlined the process of risk assessment by SU for all external speakers.

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- b) SU inviting faith people onto campus for welcome days discussed. There had been some issues with Messianic Jews. Jim Dickinson advised that the MFC should contact him in future if there are any issues.
- c) UEA participation in Remembrance Day events was discussed. Noted that UEA was a secular campus so it would not be appropriate to hold an open-air service but it would be possible to hold a commemoration event in the MFC.
- d) Christian Union were in discussions with SU about becoming a student society (issues of democracy and voting for a president required some constitutional changes to be made by CU). Currently they meet off campus but had been offered a Wednesday slot in MFC which was not suitable as they wanted Tuesday and the MFC was not large enough. Annie Grant had agreed to give CU permission to use another room at UEA on Tuesdays, so it was not clear what the impact would be on their becoming an SU society. Darren Thornton would provide Annie's PA Claire Kreetzer with contact details for UCCF to set up a meeting for Annie, Darren, SU and chair of Christian Union to discuss any issues preventing them becoming an SU society if necessary.

#### 5. UPDATE ON ISLAMIC PRAYER FACILITIES

Lisa Williams updated on the move over the summer to two facilities which had opened at the start of semester: a new Islamic prayer room in the Lecture Theatre block and Blackdale main hall for Friday prayers (used for other purposes during the rest of the week). Adjustments had been made to the Lecture Theatre block and Blackdale to provide appropriate facilities in both areas, working closely with ISOC and EST and the SU. Final tweaks were still being made. The old Islamic prayer centre was being moved off site, in preparation for future building work. Noted that the new arrangements were temporary until a new permanent home for Islamic prayer was found.

#### 6. ECU Questions

Members considered the ECU questions on faith and belief in HEIs provided by Jim Dickinson. Noted that the group could usefully look at these questions at the next meeting. AGREED that the main items would be put in a document and circulated with comments ahead of the next meeting. **ACTION: LW**

#### Date of Next Meeting

Following the cancellation of the February meeting, due to unavailability of the Chair, the date of the next Multifaith Consultative Group meeting is on **22 April 2015, 3.30-5pm in CR2.**