

The Christian Community Movement for Religious Renewal

St. John's weekend conference
23-25 June 2017

Towards the Understanding of Islam With Dr. Chris Hewer

John the Baptist, one of the great prophets of the Old Testament, proclaimed the need to prepare the way for Him who is to come. This necessitates a willingness to change one's thinking, to think things through more thoroughly and to open one's heart for what wishes to emerge. That is not easy especially when strong emotions are attached to certain thoughts. In this weekend conference we intend to come to a deeper understanding and to insights about the task of Islam in the present time with the hope that such searching for the truth can contribute to a more peaceful coexistence on our planet.

Dr. Chris Hewer will lead on content and Dr. Farah Hussain will contribute from a practitioner perspective. Dr. James Dyson, Rev. Siobhán Porter and Rev. Erhard Keller will support the conversations, which will be possible in every slot!

Dr Chris Hewer comes from a background in Christian theology, education, Islamic studies and inter-faith studies and has worked in the field of Muslims in Britain and Christian-Muslim relations since 1986, first at the Centre for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations at Selly Oak in Birmingham and from 1999 to 2005, as the Adviser on Inter-Faith Relations to the Bishop of Birmingham. From 2006-2010, he was the St Ethelburga Fellow in Christian-Muslim Relations in London, with a brief to deliver adult popular education courses, study days and talks around Greater London. His current work is to teach study days and residential courses, to develop written and electronic resources and to be available for consultation. To see some of the work that Dr. Chris Hewer has done look on his webpage: <http://www.chrishewer.org/>

Friday 23rd of June

19:00 Opening session: **“Setting the Scene to Understand Islam”**

- Modalities of approach
- Threefold levels of ‘understanding’
- *islam* as the natural way of life for all created things (*din al-fitra*)
- The human being as *abd* and *khalifa* in need of perennial guidance
- Guidance through scriptures, reason and exemplary role models
- The final revelation and exemplar: Qur’an and Muhammad

Saturday 24th of June (St. John’s Day)

9:00 **The Act of Consecration of Man** with an address

10:15 First session: **“Revelation and Reason: the twin means of divine guidance”**

- The process and psychology of revelation of the Qur’an
- Qur’anic archetype as example of perennial revelations
- Reason as a means of divine guidance
- The application of reason on revelation to produce guidance

11:30 Second session: **“Muhammad: the perfect model of prophecy and humanity”**

- The rôles and nature of a prophet
- The plenitude of prophets from Adam to Muhammad
- Muhammad as Last and Seal; as ‘the perfect human being’ and the locus of the manifestation of the divine attributes, thus as the archetype of humanity

13:00 **St. John’s family festival in the garden with a St. John’s fire, songs and food**

- 14:45 Third session: **“The human being in relation to God and creation”**
- The human being as *abd* and *khalifa*, judgement and the life hereafter
 - Religion as a training ground in God-consciousness (*taqwa*)
 - The vertical and the horizontal: “establish the prayers and pay the *zakat*”
 - Humans and God post-resurrection

16:00 Fourth session: **“Meditative exposure to the Qur’an recited in Arabic”**

- 16:45 Fifth session: **“Living according to the guidance”**
- The shari’a as a way of salvation: sources and methods of development
 - Struggling to live according to the way in contemporary situations

18:15 Vegetarian supper provided

19:00 Sixth session: **Open House, reflection and discussion**

Sunday 25th of June

10:00 **The Act of Consecration of Man** with an address

11:00 Coffee and Tea

11:30 First session: **“Unpacking Sunni and Shi’a perspectives of Islam”**

- “When God and his Messenger have decided upon a matter...”
- The Sunni perspective, style and consequences
- The Shi’a perspective, the Imams, today, the messianic age

13:00 Vegetarian Lunch (provided)

14:00 Second session: **“Unpacking the concept of *jihad*”**

- The various forms of *jihad*
- The *jihad* of legitimate force
- Making sense of the abuse of Islam to promote violence in the world

15:00 Third session: **“The mystical dimensions of Islam”**

- The ascent and purification of the heart
- Various schools, styles, approaches and objections

End 16:00

There might be slight changes to the time frame and the programme depending on the needs of the participants.

This is a very intense weekend conference and we hope that participants can come to most sessions, because what will be studied on Friday and Saturday will help with the content and conversations on Sunday. Everyone irrespective of their background is indeed welcome and we hope for a meeting of many different world views and a healthy dialogue!

Venue:

**The Christian Community in Stourbridge
22 Baylie Street
Stourbridge DY8 1AZ**

The vegetarian meals will be provided by Cecilia, Sajda, Siobhán and Erhard. There will be teas, coffee and biscuits during break times. If you have any dietary requirements please let me know!

Donations will be welcomed!

If you want to support this initiative financially please send a donation to:

The Christian Community

Sort Code: 09 01 54

Account number: 15983908

For more information about The Christian Community please look at the website: <http://www.thechristiancommunity.co.uk>

For further information and booking a place please contact:

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07716229409 or 01384 395836 or by post to the venue.