

# The Greenwich Peninsula Chaplaincy Steering Group's newsletter

July 2005

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## The project's started

It won't be long before there'll be a music and sports arena in the middle of the dome with a theatre, a cinema, an exhibition space and other leisure facilities round it. The building work has started, and so has the chaplaincy.

Since the 7<sup>th</sup> April Derek Clacey, Martyn Coe and Malcolm Torry, having passed their Construction Industry Training Board safety certificates and undertaken chaplaincy training, have been visiting the construction site (on a rota) on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays between 10 a.m. and noon in order to be available to people working there.

## The next step

The next step is the recruitment of further chaplains. By the end of the year numbers of people on the site will have risen and we shall be recruiting during the Autumn in order to have enough chaplains in place by January. Advertisements will be distributed through our mailing list and through Greenwich's Multi-Faith Forum. Selection will be for training, which will include the Construction Industry Training Board safety training and test and the chaplaincy's own training package. Once a candidate has successfully completed the training and a Criminal Records Bureau enhanced certificate has been obtained, there will be a probationary period, after which appointment as a permanent volunteer chaplain will be offered.

## Prayer space

In two or three years' time, when the first homes are built, the Greenwich Pavilion will be relocated and the chaplaincy will be responsible for managing it. It will be used by the faith communities for worship, prayer, study and dialogue, and it will be used for community development.

In the meantime, probably by the end of next year, a temporary space will be made available for meetings, worship, and prayer. When this happens we shall be seeking volunteers to help us to manage the space. Again, recruits will be sought amongst the borough's faith communities.

## Consultation

In September 2003 we held a conference to listen to a wide variety of people's views on how we should

go about providing for the spiritual and other needs of the new community. On September 27<sup>th</sup> last year the four presidents of Churches Together in England visited the peninsula and we took the opportunity to invite thirty people from the borough's faith communities and council to meet them.

On Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> September this year we shall be holding a further conference during which participants will be invited to join groups on particular topics so that we can hear everyone's views and be better able to plan our work during the coming year.

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## The Greenwich Peninsula Chaplaincy Steering Group

The steering group was appointed by a meeting held at the offices of the developer, Meridian Delta Ltd., in March 2003, to which members of Greenwich's Multifaith Forum and the borough deans (representing the Christian Churches) were invited. The steering group has now been established as a trust with the group's members as trustees. A Council of Reference (of faith group leaders) has been appointed to advise the steering group and to ensure good communication with the faith communities. The meeting in March 2003 appointed Malcolm Torry as Site Chaplain. His task is to co-ordinate the group's activities and to facilitate communication between the developer, the borough, and the faith communities.

The trustees are: Mr. Saeed Ahmad, the Rev'd Elaine Cranmer (treasurer), Rabbi Tony Hammond, the Rev'd Jeffrey Heskins, the Rev'd Harry Lanham, the Rev'd Mike Leader (Chair), Ms Samantha Leader (no relation), Cllr Kuheli Mookerjee, Cllr Jagir Sekhon, the Rev'd Jim Teeling.

For further information on the steering group's activities please contact: The Rev'd Malcolm Torry, Site chaplain

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**Please turn over for more news:**

## **Beckham Academy**

As well as building the arena and other facilities in the dome, Anschutz Entertainment Group (AEG) are building a Beckham Academy on what used to be the coach park for the dome. There will be two football pitches and a pavilion. The facilities will be finished by August and available for football training. We are providing a chaplaincy service to the construction site, and will be offering to provide a continuing chaplaincy service once the academy is open.

## **O2**

A sponsorship deal has been agreed between O2 and AEG. A 2-shaped pier is proposed beside the dome which would give O2 a logo which could be seen from space. Special pricing deals are envisaged for O2 customers.

## **Child protection and health and safety**

The trustees have appointed Martyn Coe as their Child Protection Officer. It is his task to ensure that the trustees' child protection policy is adhered to and kept under review and that all trustees and chaplains have Criminal Records Bureau certificates. And the trustees have appointed Derek Clacey as their Health and Safety Officer. It is his task to ensure that chaplains work safely, that the health and safety policies of the companies running the construction sites are adhered to, and that the Trust's own policy is adhered to and kept under review.

## **Quoting from this newsletter**

We have been asked whether we mind people quoting from this newsletter. The answer is that we don't mind as long as the quotation is accompanied by a note to say that the material was first published in the newsletter of the Greenwich Peninsula Chaplaincy Steering Group.

## **The proposed casino**

In order to get the Gambling Act through parliament before the General Election, the Government reduced the number of regional casinos proposed from eight to one. This makes it less likely that a regional casino will be built in the near future inside the dome, but AEG are continuing to reserve space for one as the legislation could change again. When there were eight regional casinos proposed the trustees of the Greenwich Peninsula Steering Group agreed a paper which they hoped would contribute to debate amongst the faith communities and beyond. Whilst

the building of a casino in the dome no longer appears imminent, the trustees have decided to publish the paper as an article in this newsletter so that it can contribute to debate and inform decision-making should a casino be back on the agenda in the future.

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## **The Greenwich Peninsula Chaplaincy Steering Group's paper on the proposed casino**

Anschutz Entertainment Group, one of the members of the Meridian Delta Ltd. consortium, is building a 20,000 seat stadium inside the Millennium Dome, and Kerzner International has been discussing with Anschutz the possibility of opening a casino next to the stadium. If the number of regional casinos permitted by the Gaming Act rises then several large casinos of the type envisaged will be built in various parts of the country, and the Greenwich Peninsula, with its good communications both locally and nationally, is clearly a desirable site. If the Government gave permission for such a casino inside the dome, and Greenwich Borough gave it permission, then it would be built.

The Greenwich Peninsula Chaplaincy Steering Group, and particularly its Council of Reference, represents the current and future involvement of the faith communities on the Peninsula. It must therefore speak for the faith communities on this issue and also make clear its own position.

Our religious traditions lie along a spectrum. They all discourage their adherents from gambling, but some have a more permissive attitude than others. The Qur'an forbids gambling to Muslims: "O you who believe! Strong drink, games of chance, idols, and divining arrows are an infamy of Satan's handiwork. Leave it aside so that you might succeed" (5:90). The Hindu Scriptures forbid gambling to Hindus: "Oh man! Do not gamble. Cultivate your cornfield. Enjoy that gain and deem wealth so acquired as enough" (reg ved 5:85:8); and so does Baha'u'llah, the founder of the Baha'i faith: "Gambling and the use of opium have been forbidden unto you. Eschew them both, O people, and be not of those who transgress" (The Kitab-i-Aqdas, p75, 155). Similarly a code of Sikh conduct and conventions, based on the Sri Guru Granth Sahib's discouragement of gambling, tells Sikhs not to "steal, form dubious associations, or engage in gambling." For Judaism and Christianity gambling, whilst not specifically forbidden, must be seen in the light of such important principles as love for one's neighbour (Leviticus 19:18; Mark 12:31) ( -

for a gambler's gains are someone else's losses) and the responsibility to care for one's family (Ephesians 5:25ff) and for children. Children are a gift (Genesis 33:5) and a blessing (Psalm 127:3), and they need particular care (Matthew 18:1ff).

Whether gambling is forbidden or simply discouraged, this is often for a practical reason: 'that you might succeed': and this is where the agreement lies between the faiths, for they all recognise that gambling can prevent human flourishing and that it should therefore be avoided. So in the Sikh Scriptures, "the gambler's consciousness is focused on gambling" (Sri Guru Granth Sahib, page 1180, line 7); and a Buddhist text, *Digha Nikaya* reads: "There are these six evil consequences in indulging in gambling: the winner begets hate, the loser grieves for lost wealth, wealth is lost, the gambler's word is not relied upon in a court of law, he is despised by his friends and associates, and he is not sought after for matrimony, for people would say he is a gambler and not fit to look after a wife."

The Methodist Church and the Salvation Army commented in detail and at length during the consultation on the Government's Gaming Bill. They have welcomed new regulations designed to remove slot machines from shops where they can easily be accessed by children, but are less happy with the idea of regional casinos able to install hundreds of machines with 'variable stakes and prizes', as they are surely right to believe that an increase in problem gambling will be the result. There is some relief that there won't be slots for credit cards on these machines. The Church of England and other religious bodies have expressed their agreement with the Methodists' and Salvation Army's approach.

We live in a plural society and a secular democracy, and any Government must legislate for what it sees as the common good (which will not necessarily be that envisaged by any particular religious tradition), must preserve individuals' freedoms (sometimes even if someone's exercise of those freedoms might damage themselves and others), and must often choose between a variety of evils. The Government might argue that there are increasing opportunities to gamble in other countries and on the internet, and that it is sensible to try to keep gambling in this country where it can be both regulated and taxed. And Greenwich Borough might argue that if one of a number of large regional casinos isn't built in this borough then one will surely be built somewhere else in London, some other community will reap

any economic benefit which might accrue, and residents of Greenwich will still be likely to gamble there. We might not agree with these arguments, but we recognise that they might be made.

In such a context the faith communities' task is to speak for the vulnerable: for people tempted to gamble, and for their families – for by doing this we love our neighbour. And here speaking for the vulnerable means pressing Kerzner to provide spaces in their casino where there is no gambling, where there are comfortable seats, and where there is someone to listen; it means ourselves providing care for those people who are having difficulties with a gambling obsession; it means services for families suffering from problem gambling – and all of this requires a positive relationship with Kerzner, Anschutz Entertainment Group, and the London Borough of Greenwich. Such a positive, communicative relationship is what we intend.

And in such a context it is also our task to continue to speak the wisdom contained in our Scriptures and the wisdom which has evolved in our respective traditions.

We believe that these two tasks are compatible with each other.