



Faith in Our Communities

Workshop facilitated by Shakirah Ullah and Emma Scott

Belonging to a group:

The workshop started with a discussion of the wide range of groups it is possible to be a part of. Some examples which were given included:

- Church
- Alumni
- Mayor's Charity
- Women/Men
- Working Class
- Football fans
- Library
- Epilepsy Action
- National Trust
- RSPB

It was identified that membership of a group could bring benefits such as support networks, new friends, new interests and time with people. However it could also bring disadvantages such as placing competing demands on your time and forcing you to choose between conflicting interests, restricting initiative or the possibility of discrimination if others feel threatened by or misunderstand the needs of your "group" and what it is about. It was also noted that many groups may be linked to each other and may cross several different boundaries.

Religion – Unifier or Divider?

Discussion points under religion as a divider included:

- Press and the media are a major divider and a lot of fear is fuelled by the media.
- Religions are used as an excuse.
- Can be used to control people's lives and control congregations.
- Religion, politics, power and money often go hand in hand.
- Can be used to target vulnerable people and may also prevent education and broadening of knowledge.
- Do humans naturally seek to divide? Tribalism is another example of this.



Discussion points under religion as a unifier included:

- Religion may be the heart of a community – community networks
- It can help guide people's behaviour
- It is part of what defines us
- It can bring people together
- It is people who divide, not the religion as such

The main points from the discussion were:

- It is people, not the religion who divide – all religions have the same belief basis but the bits that are built on top divide. Christianity was given as an example of where the same belief is split between forms of worship such as Catholic, Methodist, Anglican etc.
- We need to see not just the differences but the similarities that bind us together.
- Religion can be the way we bind together.
- People should be respected for who they are and what they believe.
- Where you grow up can make a difference – the more contact you have with other faiths and ethnic groups, the more open you will be.