

## Gather 2011

Some 130 teachers, catechists, and youth workers from the diocese of Plymouth gathered this January in Torquay for a series of workshops on the theme of “The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light,” Isaiah. One of these workshops was led by myself together with Robin Kanarek and Rosemary Khreishah from, respectively, the Exeter Synagogue and Mosque. We all three are members of the Exeter Interfaith and Belief group, where we have become great friends. It was our intention to share our dialogue of life with others, setting the scene with music from that well known American television programme “Friends,” and a makeshift sofa! David Wells, Director of the Diocesan Department for Formation prompted us with some searching questions. How difficult is it to be a practising Christian, Jew or Muslim in the Britain of today? How do we pass on our faith to our children? In what way are our faiths different? This was followed by questions from the floor. The result was an energetic session which was very positively received. It later led to a great take up of the Bishops’ Conference document “Meeting God in Friend and Stranger” which I made sure was readily available.

Following this success, we have been invited to take part in a “Summer Festival of Theology” at Buckfast Abbey, Devon in July 2012. This event is aimed at enthusiastic Catholics, enabling them to grow in faith and understanding. High profile speakers will include Rev. Christopher Jamison, Father Nicholas King and Delia Smith CBE, who will be joined by people from the local church and of course their friends from other faiths!

I am very grateful to our Department for Formation which provides me with every opportunity to make an inter-religious presence at events which they organise. Other examples include teacher inset days, deanery days, and initiatives shared with Clifton and Portsmouth dioceses. As a lone worker I would be unable to organise such large scale events across a diocese which covers Cornwall, Devon Dorset. Once again collaboration and dialogue win the day.

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