A Meeting of Faiths and Minds in Birmingham

Posted on Wednesday 4th November 2009

The University of Birmingham is hosting a major conference this week to engage with faith leaders across the city. The 'Faiths for the City: making a difference conference' aims to bring together the different communities and religions in the city.

The conference takes place between 4-6 November.

Sir Ian Byatt will give the keynote address on 'Religion and Economics' at the three day conference. Other contributors over the three days include the Archbishop of Westminster, Lord Griffiths of Fforestfach, vice-chair of Goldman Sachs International, the Bishop of Birmingham and Steve Dyson from the Birmingham Mail.

The object of the conference is to enrich civic life, to enhance the contribution of religious communities and to deepen our understanding the role religious communities play in our society.

The conference builds on and takes forward the work of the Faiths for the City initiative. Faiths for the City was set up by the University's Multi Faith Chaplaincy to bring together representatives of the different Faith communities, staff from the University of Birmingham and leaders from the City of Birmingham to look at the increasingly important role religion and faith can play in society.

There will be three specific themes to the conference: Wellbeing and Health, Wellbeing and Wealth, Family and Neighbourliness.

Dr Marius Felderhof from the University's School of Philosophy, Theology and Religion comments: "Birmingham is an incredibly diverse city and that diversity requires that the different faith communities relate to each other and to their city. Religious communities have an important and influential role to play in developing our city.

"Looking at the demographic figures they show a city which is becoming increasingly polarised - divided along ethnic, religious and economic lines and where religion should play a more important role. Religious communities can play an important role in addressing the dangers of segregation, marginalisation and radicalisation, especially among young people. We hope events like 'Faiths for the City' can encourage that dialogue and change."

Media information: Ben Hill 0121 41415134, Kate Chapple 0121 4142772

ENDS

Key events are:

A public lecture by Sir Ian Byatt on 'Religion and Economics' chaired by the Vice-Principal, Professor Michael Sheppard, at the Barber Institute on Wednesday, November 4th at 7:00 p.m.

A dinner hosted by Councillor Alan Rudge will be held on Thursday evening in the Banqueting Suite of the Council House where Lord Griffiths of Fforestfach and the Archbishop of Westminster will speak.

Ends

The aims of the Faiths for the City project are:

- To bring together city institutions, faith communities and academics in order to address specific issues of concern for Birmingham;
- To develop new and existing channels of communication between these groups, focussing on their leadership;
- To produce published material on the contribution of faith communities to the city;
- To achieve a set of formal commitments by the parties involved to continued communication and to working together for the good of the city;
- To establish a paradigm of cooperation that can be offered to other multi faith cities across the country.

For further information please visit the **website (http://www.faithsforthecity.org.uk/)**

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