

Evening with friends from the Rumi Mosque – Dialogue Centre

Last September, arriving as Minister in Edmonton, I visited the Rumi Mosque to introduce myself. They are situated over the road in a refurbished old Victorian building. They have done a beautiful job of the gardens. Arriving I was greeted very warmly with the comments 'we are only sorry we did not come to see you first', 'would you like something to drink', 'I have never met a Vicar', 'what should we call you?'

It was only a few weeks later that Dr Cem Ebril, Director of the centre, and his assistant Abdulla came to the Edmonton Methodist Church for a conversation and a look around. We chatted very warmly in the Vestry and visited the Hall etc. Arriving in the Sanctuary area we spent some time speaking briefly about the cross, the table, Jesus and John Wesley. We left each other committed to work for dialogue and a relationship. I presented them the interfaith leaflets from the Methodist Church and our own Newsletter.

Since my arrival, I have often touched on interfaith matters. I attend the regular interfaith forum held at the Police HQ in Edmonton and quietly, our church family have been supportive of this route. We prayed for the Rumi Mosque family when they opened their refurbished place of worship and highlighted the news in our notices.

Is this a willy-nilly, pink and fluffy action? Clearly my answer is no. John Wesley said, 'may I call you friend?', the World Council of Churches encourages warm dialogue and sets out clear steps to take in the journey. Jesus said 'love your neighbour'.

On the night, Eileen Hargrave one of our members who celebrated her 85 birthday recently, said, 'they are just lovely young people and God is God is God and He is love'. She hugged all the young Muslims as they left. Interestingly, they all came to her to thank her for her Witness and warmth of greeting. One of our YPF young men arriving for his summer holiday from university offered a brief Testimony which all the visitors applauded.

During the evening we let all our visitors handle the Bible, see Bread & Wine, talked of Baptism and Communion and if you 'could wear jeans in church?'. Importantly, following in Wesley's words, we left the evening calling each other friends and all saying we must do this again.

By David Butterworth