## SERVING A MULTI-ETHNIC SOCIETY

A summary of some of the work done by the Grail Society in response to the document from the Bishops' Conference (2000):

'Serving a Multi-Ethnic Society'

© The Grail Society (Waxwell) UK Charity Number: 1104750

## SERVING A MULTI-ETHNIC SOCIETY

The Trustees of the Grail Society (Executive Council) set up a small working group in December 2000 to explore the way forward for the Grail in the light of the document published by the Bishop's Conference 'Serving a Multi-Ethnic Society' (2000) following The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry by Sir William Macpherson in 1999.

Membership of the group was Claire Davidson (Chair), Judith O'Grady (Grail President), Jackie Rolo, Helen Windsor, Jim O'Grady and Mary Leavy - two people representing each of the three branches of the Grail Society.

The meetings were informal and often quite personal concerns were aired, providing opportunities for members to grow in awareness of their own reactions, as well as situations in society.

Various topics were considered, and some led to specific action. For example, we asked:

could the Grail Centre be more actively inviting to people of other ethnicities? How? We
purchased *The Voice* to display among other publications on our magazine rack and took
some time to identify various churches known for racially mixed congregations in several
cities so that we could send them our leaflets about forthcoming events. Appropriate people
were asked to look at Grail leaflets to ensure they reflected the openness asked for by the
Bishops' Conference.

Asking how we could raise awareness among the whole Grail Membership, we invited several speakers of prominence from ethnic minorities to Grail events, including Zia Chaudrey, Frank Anti and Yogi Sutton.

Richard Zipfel attended a meeting of the working group in January 2003 acting as a consultant and, in November 2004 co-facilitated, along with Haynes Baptiste, an excellent 'Racism Awareness Workshop' for the whole Grail Executive Council and some other members.

The East Midlands Grail group considered issues about Islam at some of their meetings and shared this by writing for the two Grail magazines *Grail Exchange* and *In Touch with the Grail.* 

A stand was set up for the Grail Society Day at London Colney in 2003 and the Grail weekend at High Leigh in 2006 featured a workshop presented by Nikki Fashola of CARJ.

The theme of the Society's AGM in July 2007 was *Understanding Difference*. For this the speaker was High Rolo who not only had interesting personal insights from his own life-story but also works for the Development Trust Association in Bradford. His talk was open to members of the public and was late transcribed in part for *In Touch*.

Individual Grail people made a special effort to attend relevant events, such as a meeting of Muslim and non-Muslim women in St Ethelburg's Church in Bishopsgate, and different conferences and workshops on issues to do with Refugees. The Grail Community supports a local organisation working with refugees and asylum seekers.

Helen Windsor set up a voluntary counselling service under the auspices of Harrow Council for Racial Equality and introduced a couple of her trainee counsellor colleagues to it. They gained valuable experience from working with people from broadly different backgrounds and provided a valuable service for local people.

Another off-shoot from the working groups activities was that Claire Davidson enabled the National Conference of Secular Institutes (NCSI) to consider the topic of inter-ethnic openness by inviting Fr Philip Sumner to their meeting in April 2002, and the theme of a later NCSI day was 'Building Bridges in a Multi-cultural and Multi-faith Society'.

In November 2007 the working group reflected on what had been achieved from their meetings over the years and presented a short summary to the Trustees of the Grail Society. It was decided that the group should then cease meeting but that any dilemmas or concerns about multi-ethnic issues should remain as a standing agenda item for future Trustee meetings in order to maintain awareness of the concerns highlighted by the Bishops' Conference.