

## Thinking and living outside the box



IT'S NOT easy to define Initiatives of Change (IoC). One person called it 'a lake in which lambs can wade and elephants can swim'. I doubt

they were trying to be evasive—it's just that trying to fit IoC into a neat box inevitably means narrowing it down. IoC is an international fellowship, a spiritual movement, a network, a body of ideas, a charity. It is, for each generation, each country, each individual, what we make of it.

Essentially, IoC is about how we choose to live. Am I living in a way that is going to make a positive difference to the world? Or am I content to let life pass me by? This often boils down to simple personal choices. In a world where division between religions is a cause of war, am I prepared to reach out the hand of friendship to those who have a different religion from mine? When global warming threatens our climate, do I take conservation and recycling seriously? Corruption is causing hardship in many countries, including the UK, so what about my expense claims? When many children's lives are damaged by their parents' turbulent relationships, am I willing to cherish a life-long partner?

Choices are not always clear-cut. Should I boycott goods from country x which has an oppressive regime, or is the cost to the people who live there too high? Do I support the distribution of condoms in order to fight Aids, or will that merely increase promiscuity?

One person trying to sort out their life is not going to change the world, though the potential impact should not be

underestimated. We begin to glimpse immense possibilities when we test the idea that an unseen divine being can guide and empower us. Most of us are painfully aware of times when our conscience has chided us; and it is not unusual to sense an 'inner voice' pointing us in a certain direction. But these are the Key Stage 1 levels of a skill that needs honing through self-discipline, regular practice and life-long spiritual searching.

Listening for God's guidance is not a substitute for thought. Different people who are equally committed to the practice may reach different conclusions on the moral dilemmas outlined previously. God knows that we are fallible; he made us that way. I suspect that it is our motivation that is most important to him.

'Prayer does not consist in battering the walls of heaven for personal benefit or the success of our plans,' wrote G Ashton Oldham. 'Rather, it is the committing of ourselves to carrying out God's purposes. In prayer we tap reservoirs of spiritual power whereby God can find fuller entrance into [our] hearts.'

If we can align our lives with God's purposes, he will give us what we need to be used by him—and we will become part of an inclusive fellowship of those dedicated to bringing about positive change in the world.

The programmes of Initiatives of Change are just a few of the ways in which these ideas bear fruit.

*Kenneth Noble*

KENNETH NOBLE



Initiatives of Change

Welcome to *Initiatives*—published three times a year by Initiatives of Change UK to catch you up on what IoC is doing in and from the UK. We hope these four pages will give you information and inspiration—and a chance to share your own news of how you are making a difference. Please write to us at *Initiatives*, 24 Greencoat Place, London SW1P 1RD or email [newsletter@uk.iofc.org](mailto:newsletter@uk.iofc.org)

## GOD RENEWS, REFRESHES AND RESTORES

REFLECTING ON my life I can see the many times that God has renewed, refreshed and restored me. Sometimes it has been a gift, sometimes resulting from my obedience.

Whilst working for a shipping company in the City of London, I was asked by my boss to give false figures for our exports to a government department. If I said 'Yes', I was turning my back on God, if I said 'No', I was risking my job. I was 28. I turned to my brother-in-law for advice. He was 12 years older, a friend of my brother's and in shipping himself. Later he was to be knighted. 'Don't you touch it with a barge pole,' he said. So I refused and before long the chairman suggested I look around for something else. I was unemployed for three months, as I tried for another job. It tested my faith and at times I was very low. Yet, once more, God restored me with a well-paid job and a good crowd to work with.

Extract from a New Year reflection given by Stanley Kiaer at Greencoat Place. Full text available on request.

Anab Hassan (end of table) makes a point to Phoebe Gill (right) during a training session



PETER RIDDELL

## Somali initiatives for reconciliation

OVER THE past year, three prominent Somalis living in Britain, Osman Jama Ali, Dr Ahmed Sharif Abbas and Abdi Afrah Gure have built a team to work for reconciliation in the diaspora and in Somalia. Though ethnically, religiously and linguistically homogenous, Somalis have deep divisions among clans which have left the country without a government since 1991.

Following a Somali lofC gathering in Sweden in 1994, Osman Jama Ali made a public apology for the self-interest which had motivated him as a government minister. After resigning as Deputy Prime Minister of the Transitional National Government in 2004, he and his colleagues began meeting weekly with lofC's Agenda for Reconciliation team in London. Last February, they decided to gather 30 senior UK-based Somalis from the main clan groupings. They achieved consensus on the reasons for the failure of the Somali state and of subsequent peace conferences, and on future priorities.

Eleven attended a training programme at an lofC conference in Caux, Switzerland, in addition to a group nominated by the Somali Prime Minister. A prominent figure of one community apologised for its aggression towards another. Members of both communities recounted this breakthrough to the Speaker of the Somali Parliament in October at Greencoat Place.

Over five weekends in November and December, 14 attended training sessions on dialogue facilitation led by Hope in the Cities. Such training parallels the thinking of the UN on Somalia, and both Kofi Annan, the Secretary General, and his special representative to Somalia, François Fall, have received briefings.

The vision is that this process will continue, with reconciliation meetings and more Somalis receiving training to facilitate dialogues between conflicting groups. They also hope to raise the money to produce the film *Freedom* (in Somali) and the booklet *Which Way Somalia?*

## lofC submission to the House of Commons

AT THE suggestion of former MP Sir Jim Lester, lofC has made a submission to the House of Commons Select Committee on International Development on 'Conflict and Development: peace-building and post-conflict reconstruction'. The submission includes an introduction to lofC's approach, and examples

from work being done in Sierra Leone, Lebanon and among Somalis. It draws the Committee's attention to the importance of:

- the potential that a change of heart in individuals can have in creating an atmosphere favourable to reconciliation
- 'Track II diplomacy'—the role that motivated

individuals and local and international NGOs can have in rebuilding relationships between communities and even between nations

- the general acceptance of moral and spiritual values inherent in the main faith traditions in laying foundations for reconstruction.

## IT'S THAT TIME AGAIN...

FOR SOME years now, lofC has reached decisions at the international level through a gathering of 30 or so people from around the world. This year's Global Consultation in Malaysia, 9–15 March, focuses a challenging question: 'What is lofC's role in helping shift the thinking and living of nations and continents?' It will also look at proposals for raising lofC's profile through a more deliberate communications strategy, and select new members for the lofC International Council. En route to Malaysia each participant will visit another Asian country to support local teams. From the UK Chris Evans and Claire Leggat (both members of the International Council) will visit South Korea and Japan respectively; Edward Peters (International Communications Strategy) will visit Vietnam; and Peter Everington will visit Indonesia. We look forward to hearing all about it!

## RADIO FAZA

AFTER THE London bombings last July, Dr Musharraf Hussain asked lofC to make a series of programmes on reconciliation for Radio Faza, which broadcasts to the 12,000 Muslims in the Nottingham area. Elisabeth Tooms, Andrea Cabrera Luna and Mary Lean rose to the challenge, and spent two days in Radio Faza's studios, recording six half-hour programmes. Each featured a story of reconciliation told by Michael Henderson, author of *Forgiveness: breaking the chain of hate*, and an interview with someone about their personal experience of forgiveness. They are to be broadcast this spring—and Dr Hussain has asked for six more.

### THINK TWICE

HOW DO YOU EAT AN ELEPHANT? ONE BITE AT A TIME.

## Visit to Vietnam and Cambodia

LAST SUMMER, I had the idea of inviting young members of the Vietnamese and Cambodian lofC teams to the 60th Anniversary of Caux this summer. After consulting with the President of the International Association for lofC, Cornelio Sommaruga, we settled on the figure of five from each country.

It was with this in mind that Elizabeth Loy and I spent most of December in Vietnam and Cambodia. Our arrival in Vietnam coincided with an evaluation of the latest lofC Cambodian-Vietnamese Dialogue. We enquired whether they felt the meetings were going in the right direction. After a long silence,

the Vietnamese expressed dismay at the Cambodians' inability to leave the past in the past. Visibly upset, the Cambodians suggested that they face the truth of Vietnam's occupation of Cambodia after the Pol Pot regime. We felt the pain of the honest conversation and suggested that each one look into their hearts, not only their heads. Though not alive when these events took place, the Vietnamese decided to open their hearts and try to be more aware of Cambodian grievances. It was a most moving two hours.

Since then both teams have sent out adverts to select delegates for Caux.  
*Dang Thi Hai*

## 7 July 2006

THE BOMBS that exploded in London last summer changed Britain and affected our community relationships. Now it is only a few short months until the anniversary of those events. Some will no doubt plan to use that anniversary to deepen existing divisions. Most of us will simply want it to pass off peacefully. But could we also help to make it a time of bridging divisions and of new beginnings?

Could each of us consider in the coming weeks what simple act or conversation could make that anniversary a positive experience for our community? It might be in the context of a family, a place of worship, pub, school, residential home, neighbourhood—anywhere. It could be a time when people are uniquely ready to extend a hand to another community, to take an interest in their life, their faith, even just their food.

We would be interested in collecting ideas from *Initiatives'* readers—ideas of what each of us will do. Perhaps we could start a wave of simple, heartfelt action right where we are.  
*chris.evans@uk.iofc.org*  
*peter.riddell@uk.iofc.org*

## Young people

IN NOVEMBER, 11 young people from Nottingham took part in a weekend course on Morals, Values and Leadership. They were invited by lofC's F4F programme in association with the Nottingham Asian Arts Council and Bobbersmill Community Centre. The faculty comprised Nick and Cathie-Jean Foster, Angela Starovoytova and Krish Raval. The course provided an opportunity for the building of friendship and understanding between these potential leaders of Muslim and Hindu backgrounds.

Together they explored role models, internal and external life-balance, and motivation. Opportunities for learning came through theory and practical application including orienteering and using film to explore different leadership styles. They were joined by Dr Musharraf Hussain, who shared his insights on 'A guide for personal and moral development'.

'The participants' desire to see positive change and bridge-building in their community was tangible,' writes Cathie-Jean.

## The impact of Gandhi visit



DALE WAN

NOVEMBER'S VISIT to the UK by Rajmohan and Usha Gandhi has led to follow-up occasions in London and Oxford. At Greencoat Place, part of the video of the Edinburgh lecture was shown. This led to brainstorming in response to a question asked by Rajmohan, 'Why doesn't Edinburgh University set up an honest dialogue with Cairo, Islamabad or Lahore University?'

In Oxford, people shared their impressions of the Oxford Union lecture. Some

spoke of personal responses to Rajmohan's challenge to serve God. A young Muslim present was one of those behind a creative project in the city, to counter negative stereotypes by raising awareness about the real meaning of Islam. His contribution elicited some constructive ideas, including bridge-building events in people's homes.

In January, the BBC World Service broadcast a 26-minute interview with Rajmohan, recorded during his visit. It has an audience of 50 million worldwide.

*A DVD or video of the Edinburgh lecture (£9 incl p&p) and a booklet of the Oxford lecture (£1.75 incl p&p) are available from 24 Greencoat Place.*

*Contact David Channer there if you would like to hear the World Service broadcast.*



ELIZABETH LOCKE

## Dynamic duo from Taiwan

FEBRUARY SAW the visit to the UK of two pillars of lofC Taiwan. Grace and Ren-Jou Liu were invited to run three family development courses, one in London and two in Herefordshire, for people involved with lofC UK. At home they have enjoyed great success with these courses which help participants identify childhood experiences affecting adult behaviour.

The workshops have been helpful on Action for Life (a nine month leadership training programme in Asia) and at Asia Pacific Youth Camps. Both programmes were initiated by the Lius, as well as the Clean Election Campaign in Taiwan. They shared where their inspiration comes from at an evening talk at Greencoat Place, after which there was no shortage of questions!

## For your diary

**AT 24 GREENCOAT PLACE, LONDON SW1P 1RD**

**Tuesday 14 March  
6.30pm for 7.15pm**

**Bridging the divides of faith and culture:** Greencoat Forum with the Prime Minister's envoy on inter-faith matters, John Battle MP

**Saturday 25 March, 3.00pm**  
**Tango and friends, a journey in music:** concert with Phuong Nguyen (accordion) and Miho Sano (piano), with the remarkable story of Phuong's journey from Vietnam to Britain via the refugee camps in Hong Kong. Organised by Friends of Westminster Productions.

**Tuesday 4 April  
6.30pm for 7.15pm**

**The British media—a force for good:** Greencoat Forum with Bill Porter, founder of the International Communications Forum; Frances Pinter, international book publisher; and Simon Cohen, director of Global Tolerance

**Tuesday 25 April  
6.30pm for 7.15pm**

**An evening with Tariq Ramadan:** Greencoat Forum with a Muslim academic and commentator described by *The Independent* as 'one of the brightest hopes for achieving reconciliation between Muslims and the rest of society'

**Tuesday 2 May  
6.30pm for 7.15pm**

**An honest dialogue for a clean and just Africa:** Greencoat

Forum with Amina Dikedi-Ajakaiye and Amira Elmissiry, from IofC's Agenda for Reconciliation and Clean Africa Campaign programmes

**Saturday 13 May, 3.00pm**  
**Silver is dead, long live silver!**

Presentation by Dutch master silversmith Jan van Nouhuys, organised by Friends of Westminster Productions

**Wednesday 17 May,  
5.45pm for 6.30pm**

**Oasis evening:** a time for silence, prayer and refreshment

**Wednesday 28 June**

**5.45pm for 6.30pm**  
**Oasis evening:** a time for silence, prayer and refreshment

Further information and RSVP: 020 7798 6000 or [reception@london.iofc.org](mailto:reception@london.iofc.org)

**AT INTERMISSION AT ST SAVIOUR'S, WALTON PLACE, KNIGHTSBRIDGE, LONDON**

**Friday 31 March, 7.30 pm**

**Playreading:** *The Red Sea* by Peter Thomas, adapted from the novel *Vanya* by Myrna Grant and dedicated to the memory of the many who have lived and died for their Christian faith. Directed by Robin Meredith of New Directions Theatre Company.

**Friday 7 April, 7.30pm**

**Playreading:** *A Class of their Own* by Hugh Steadman Williams. Love. Mortality. Passion and devotion in later life. When the truth comes out it can be both shocking and

liberating, even in families that believe they have it all sussed! Directed by Elisabeth Tooms for Westminster Productions.

*These rehearsed readings of new plays are a joint venture of Westminster Productions and New Directions Theatre Company. To reserve seats contact Elisabeth Tooms ([toomsfirth@btinternet.com](mailto:toomsfirth@btinternet.com)). Donation of £5 requested at door.*

**AT ST ANDREW'S, EDENBRIDGE, KENT**

**Monday 27 March**

**10.00am to 4.30pm**  
**Springs of Renewal:** a Quiet Day, with opportunities for prayer, exercise, creativity, silence and regeneration. Places limited. Details from Greencoat Place (see above)

**AT THE IOFC CENTRE IN CAUX, SWITZERLAND**

This summer's conferences at the IofC centre in Caux Switzerland, will run from **6 July to 17 August.**

For more details see 'For a change', visit [www.caux.ch](http://www.caux.ch), email [confsec@caux.ch](mailto:confsec@caux.ch) or write to PO Box 4419, CH-6002 Lausanne, Switzerland.

## NEW BOOKS

**Hope Never Dies: the Grandy story, by Virginia Wigan, Caux Books 2005**

IN 1960, Marcel and Theri Grandy visited Cyprus for three months. They stayed for the next 30 years, supporting people on both sides of the island's divides in their work for justice and reconciliation. This is a fascinating story about two people who could have lived comfortably in Switzerland but found a purpose, through their faith in God, to help shape a better world,' writes former British Ambassador Archie Mackenzie. 'The story focuses on Cyprus but has a much wider relevance.' Available from 24 Greencoat Place, at a special price of £7.50 plus £1 p&p. (Three copies for £20, post free.) Offer ends April 16: after that please pay full price of £10 a copy. Cheques payable to Initiatives of Change.

**A Hand to the Plough, by Pat Evans, Sapey Press, 2006**

THIS IS a book for anyone interested in the future of our planet, feeding everyone and planning for the generations to come. Pat Evans draws his ideas from a lifetime of experience and friendships with farmers in many countries. Order from Pat Evans, Haytons, Whitbourne, Worcester, WR6 5ST. £7.50 plus £1.50 p&p. Cheques payable to 'P Evans'.

## RESPONSE FORM

NAME :

ADDRESS DETAILS:

E-MAIL :

I would like to receive more information about Initiatives of Change.

I would like to receive more information about Greencoat Forums.

I would like to receive more information about a specific activity or programme of Initiatives of Change. Please specify:

Please send me a copy of the Caux programme for 2006.

I would like to make a donation to Initiatives of Change. Please find enclosed a cheque  (payable to Initiatives of Change).

Please post to Enquiries, Initiatives of Change, Greencoat Place, London SW1P 1RD.



Initiatives of Change

Published by Initiatives of Change, 24 Greencoat Place, London SW1P 1RD. Tel: 0207 798 6000. Fax: 0207 798 6001. Initiatives of Change is a registered charity in England and Wales, no 226334. *Initiatives* is edited by the team who produce IofC's international magazine, *For A Change* ([www.forachange.co.uk](http://www.forachange.co.uk)), designed by Hayden Russell and printed by Impress Print Services, London SW18. E-mail: [newsletter@uk.iofc.org](mailto:newsletter@uk.iofc.org)