

Hillingdon Branch's Vice-Chairman Rabbi Dr Andrew Goldstein honoured

Under the inspired leadership of its chairman Sidney Moss, Hillingdon Branch's innovative programmes have drawn newcomers to the CCJ. Many of these events have been hosted by Northwood and Pinner Liberal Synagogue[NPLS], whose Rabbi Dr Andrew Goldstein was due to retire after 43 years as Senior Rabbi. A surprise supper reception was given to honour Rabbi Andrew prior to the branch's AGM, where Rabbi Andrew was the keynote speaker on the continuing importance of dialogue.

Having recently been re-elected to the Executive Board of the International Council of Christians and Jews, Rabbi Andrew will not retire from his dedication to dialogue and encounter both in this country and at international level.

Local Christian, Jewish and Muslim clergy responded with joy to the invitation. Also present were the Mayor and Mayoress of Hillingdon, Mr David Gifford, CCJ Chief Executive, the Executive Director of Liberal Judaism Rabbi Danny Rich, the Principal of Leo Baeck College Rabbi Professor M Saperstein, Rabbi Dr Naphtali Brawer formerly of the Northwood United Synagogue, Rabbi Michael Hilton, Reverend Stephen Dando, Father Timothy Hutton, Imam Mohamed Abani, Imam Amir Ahmed and Sir Sigmund Sternberg, Patron of the ICCJ and co-founder of the UK Three Faiths Forum, along with his wife Lady Hazel. Sir Sigmund presented Rabbi Goldstein with the *Interfaith Gold Medallion - Peace Through Dialogue in* recognition of Andrew's long-standing involvement with interfaith activities. Further certificates of appreciation were presented by the Hillingdon Interfaith Network as well as by the CCJ Hillingdon Branch. Beautifully catered for by the NPLS Bagel Boys and desserts prepared by the local Branch committee. It was an event fostering true friendship as well as proof of the impact that one person and one group can have on their neighbours.

Following the formalities of the AGM, Rabbi Dr Goldstein, recently returned from the ICCJ Jerusalem conference entitled "*The Contribution of the Jewish-Christian-Muslim Dialogue to Peace-Building in the Middle East*", spoke of his long experience in dialogue at international level and recounted many unforgettable moments.

Introduced some 25 years ago to the ICCJ by the late Rev. Bill Simpson (co-founder of the ICCJ and CCJ), Rabbi Andrew made the journey from the international to the local scene. He recognised the need to understand the language of "the other", not only encompassing different national tongues, but also the nuances of culture, history and the personal experiences each group brings to dialogue.

As an ICCJ delegate to a conference of the World Council of Churches in Hong Kong, Rabbi Andrew realised during a meal in a Buddhist monastery that jokes going

down well with the Jewish participants were totally misunderstood by their hosts. As a delegate to the WCC Assembly in Harare, he became aware of the similarity between the language of Orthodox Jews and that of Fundamentalist Christians. Meetings at major ICCJ conferences have given him, a Liberal Jew, unique opportunities for discussion with Orthodox Jews which would have been almost impossible at home.

Rabbi Andrew also spoke of unexpected but deeply moving religious experiences in the course of these encounters. He described an audience with Pope John Paul II during the 1997 ICCJ Rome conference. The frail Pope made time to greet each of the 200 participants in their own languages and with affectionate respect for their different religious traditions.

The future of the Jewish-Christian dialogue was raised. Up to a few years ago there was a distinct feeling that declarations such as the Vatican's *Nostra Aetate* and similar statements by Protestant Churches had really changed attitudes and relations. It seems, however, perhaps due to the situation in Israel and Palestine as well as the Christian Diaspora in some places in the world, that old prejudices have been expressed in new ways. Actions such as an appeal for divestment from companies working with Israel by the Anglican Church and the Presbyterian Church in America, or the present Pope's call for a renewal of the Tridentine Mass which includes the hope for Jewish conversion, have created new and uneasy situations. The recent ICCJ Jerusalem conference, attended by Palestinian Muslims and Israeli Arabs, has shown how much conciliation work is actually being carried out in Israel but how little is reported by the media. While the ICCJ and the British CCJ are supported by more liberal Christians, it has become apparent that the healing of relations is not yet completed.

The ICCJ Theology Committee is at present engaged in a renewal in 21st century terms of the 1947 Appeal to the Churches generally known as The Ten Points of Seelisberg. To fully comprehend the meaning of the Prophet Malachi's words "*Have we not all got one father, has not one God created us all?*", new ways of dialogue, and of joint reaction to the general difficult economic and social conditions prevailing today, are needed. Rabbi Andrew concluded he would continue to contribute to make this a reality.

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