

## Unveiling Islam

During July 2011 Preston Muslim Forum held three workshops under the title of “Unveiling Islam”, 145 people attended the workshops including local councillors, police officers, council staff and community members. The workshops were hosted by two churches and the Harris Library and explored the themes; **“Islam in Britain”**, **“Jesus in Islam”** and **“Building Bridges - Our Shared Heritage”**. All workshops concluded with a lively Q&A, discussing topics such as integration, citizenship, cohesion, shariah law and its compatibility with a liberal democracy, equality, interfaith and the roles of Muslims in Britain .

Reverend Peter Hamborg said “A stimulating evening at Christ Church entitled "Islam in Britain painted a very enlightening picture of Britain 's mixed history with Islam, one that was far more balanced than the largely negative portrayal we so often receive through the media. I have received much positive feedback from the evening.”

Reverend Stephen Johnson commented on the workshop “Jesus in Islam”: “Tonight has been a real opportunity to see the human face of a worldwide religion. Ali's personal view of his faith opened up many areas of common interest between Christian's and our Muslim friends. It showed how a meaningful discussion can be had - without ignoring our obvious differences. In the end communities can only thrive if people talk to people - and resist the temptation to fall back on misleading stereotypes.”

### This is what the participants had to say:

“As a Christian I think I need to understand the importance of beliefs as imperative and live peacefully together.”

“I hope we can have more similar events, to help promote understanding and friendship in the community.”

“It was an excellent meeting. I learnt a lot about the history of Islam in Britain.”

“Very interesting & enlightening – I now appreciate the need to get actively involved in interfaith dialogue. Thank you.”

“Many thanks would appreciate more opportunities like this.”

“It would be of value to continue the good work of similar events in the future”

“Interesting to see that there are so many basic similarities between the key religions. Events such as these are a valuable way of increasing understanding. I think there should be more sessions like this more often.”

Ali Amla, freelance consultant and facilitator said “Unveiling Islam was a great opportunity to demystify Islam by creating a safe space to speak about faith, practice, diversity and an opportunity to answer questions that naturally comes to one’s mind in the modern society.

Ali Amla also delivers educational workshops and assemblies to primary schools, secondary schools and sixth form colleges. He regularly provides training to professionals from different sectors on equality, cohesion, extremism and community engagement. He can be contacted on [mohammed\\_ali\\_79@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:mohammed_ali_79@yahoo.co.uk)

