

The Religious Mapping of Beeston, 2011.

**A Report by students of the University of Leeds Department of
Theology and Religious Studies.**

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The Religious Mapping of Beeston: Introduction

Started over a decade ago as part of the University of Leeds' Community Religions Project, which undertakes 'empirical research on religion and religions...in the cities of Leeds and Bradford and beyond'; the Religious Mapping of Leeds 'seeks to 'map' religion and religions across the city's diverse districts'.¹ Carried out by final year undergraduates of the Theology and Religious Studies department, the project aims to produce a report that provides useful and interesting data both to the academic community, and those religious organisations in the region of study. The report is complemented by a separate Directory of Religions; compiled from the assembled information with the intention of clearly listing the religious institutions and facilities present in the area studied at the time the project is completed. It is hoped that each Mapping project offers valuable information of genuine benefit to the participating community.

In 1994/5, the project compiled a 'religious map' of the Beeston and Cottingley area. This report, compiled in 2011, marks the first return to a previously studied area. As well as mapping the religious facilities, services and institutions currently present in the Beeston area, the existence of a previous report offers the opportunity to develop formerly un-attempted analysis of changes that have occurred within the religious community in Beeston since 1994/5. This information was considered to be of foremost value in helping to inform about and analyse Beeston's religious community. Mapping change in Beeston, and thereby seeking to determine potential trends occurring in the community, were thus considered to be

¹ University of Leeds, Community Religions Project. *Religious Mapping*. Available from: http://www.leeds.ac.uk/arts/info/125010/institute_for_religion_and_public_life/987/centre_research_projects/2 [accessed: 13/05/2011].

the primary aims of this report and the main focus during the gathering of data during fieldwork activity.

The formulation of this report and the choice of subjects focussed upon were established based on dominant issues and areas of interest that were identified during fieldwork, alongside trends prominent in the 1994/5 report, and nationally occurring trends believed to be of relevance in the Beeston area. The report begins with a brief outline of the history of Beeston, outlining occurrences since the previous report considered as significant to the local community and the contents of this study. This is followed by an explanation of the research methods utilised to gain the information needed in producing the report, how these methods were determined, their benefits and their drawbacks.

The main area of the report - the actual mapping and analysis of religion in Beeston, is divided into six key themes, each having been identified as a key feature of the religious community within Beeston. In order of appearance, they are; *Demography, Changes in the Christian Community, Buildings, Intrafaith Activity, Interfaith Dialogue and Education*. Each section provides in-depth observation and analysis of the subject of study, and seeks to identify trends and changes occurring in that area since the 1994/5 report.

Where relevant, theoretical work believed to be relative to the findings observed in this report is explored, and is clearly labelled should the inquirer desire to pursue further reading. Technical terminology is also defined within relevant sections to ensure clarity on the inquirer's behalf. The previous report will be referenced as the 1994/5 report, and is readily available from the Theology and Religious Studies Department of the University of Leeds.²

² University of Leeds. (1994/5). *The Religious Mapping Of Beeston and Cottingley, 1994/5 Report*. Available from: http://www.leeds.ac.uk/arts/info/20049/theology_and_religious_studies/987/centre_research_projects/2 [accessed: 15/05/2011]. Hereon referenced as 1994/5 Report.

For reasons of clarity, the reader should be aware that certain religious institutions' names have been simplified for brevities sake. Discussion relating to Beeston's Gurdwara is always in reference to the Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha Gurdwara, the only Gurdwara located in the district of Beeston. The Jamia Masjid Abu Huraira is located on Hardy Street, and is referred to as the Abu Huraira mosque. The Masjid-e-Umar is the mosque located on Stratford Street, and is responsible for the in progress Woodview Road mosque build. The Church of the Holy Spirit is referred to intermittently as the Holy Spirit Church; St. Peters with St. Cuthbert's Parish Church is referred to as St. Peter's.

It is hoped this report is revealing to both the academic and local community regarding religion and religious provision within Beeston both today, and since 1994/5, and that it proves of genuine practical value in generating positive change throughout the area today and well into the future.

Summary of Previous Report

The 1994/5 report identified twenty-two Christian churches in the area, the majority being Church of England but with a variety of “other” Protestant churches, a congregation of Jehovah’s Witnesses and one Church of the Latter-Day Saints. “Other” Protestant churches comprised a large proportion of the area’s worshippers at 16%, representing over double the national average at the time. Whilst there were only two Roman Catholic churches in the area, a large number of worshippers were identified as Roman Catholic; 37.97% in Beeston compared to a national average of 24.58%. By contrast, the percentage of worshippers belonging to the Church of England was 14.59% compared to a national average of 21.81%.³

The report identified four mosques and one Gurdwara. Mosques were reported to comprise 12% of the total number of religious buildings in the area, well above the national average of 0.74%. None were purpose built.⁴ The Gurdwara building was described as “continually undergoing improvement and extension,” funded and carried out by members of the community. Furthermore, it was found to be somewhat unique in that it attracted a large proportion of worshippers from outside of Beeston, as well as from within.

53.2% of local residents interviewed said they had no religious views and did not regularly attend a place of worship, although many used facilities provided by religious institutions in the area and stated that places of worship were important to community life.⁵ Secularism, individualism and immigration were identified as key factors affecting religious change in the area, although it should be noted religious change specifically was not being investigated. These factors were identified as causes of decline in Christian church membership, and rises in membership of non-Christian places of worship respectively.

³ 1994/5 Report, p. 9.

⁴ Ibid. p. 9.

⁵ Ibid. p. 10.

The report identified a sizable ecumenical activity between Christian churches including; Leeds 11 Clergy Cell, Churches Together in Beeston and Cottingley and ACTION: All Churches Together In Our Neighbourhood. However, it did not identify any significant interfaith activity in the area, referring only to “considerable efforts to co-operate” between religious groups in Beeston, and meetings between Sikhs and Muslims. The only concrete example of interfaith activity recorded was the participation of the Gurdwara in Leeds Inter-Faith Fellowship (Concord).

Methodology

To gain an accurate empirical comparison with the previous study, it makes sense to work with a comparable definition of what constitutes religion. This definition is sociological in nature, whereby religion is defined by its manifestation in human institutions, “with a complex of theoretical, practical, sociological and experiential dimensions...distinguished by characteristic (gods or sacred things), goals (salvation or ultimate good) and function (given an overall meaning to life or providing the identity or cohesion of a social group).”⁶

Replicating the previous study exactly would provide updated information with which to make a comparison, but having reviewed the previous methodology it was clear certain aspects of their data collection were less successful than others. This project does not, therefore, seek to replicate the previous study exactly, but instead endeavours to gain comparable data using an improved, updated methodology.

One particularly impractical and unsuccessful element of the previous methodology was the use of door-to-door interviews. Logistically problematic, they required large amounts of time and still failed to provide useful information for the study. Furthermore, as the focus of this project is on the issue of religious change, and we had no theory or hypothesis to test, it was not necessary to carry out quantitative research to the same degree as the previous group. As Bryman notes, in quantitative research ‘the accent is placed on the testing of theories’⁷ whereas in qualitative research, ‘the emphasis is placed on the generation of theories,’⁸ which makes qualitative research more appropriate for our study. It was therefore decided that a different process focussing on the collection of qualitative data relating to religious provision

⁶ P. Byrne, (1988) ‘*Religion and the Religions*’, in: S. Southerland; P. Clarke (eds.), *The World Religions, The Study of Religions, Traditional and New Religions*, (London: Routledge), p. 7.

⁷ A. Bryman.(2008), *Social Research Methods*, 3rd ed., (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 22.

⁸ Ibid, p. 22.

in Beeston would be utilised, primarily involving semi-structured interviews with relevant religious leaders and key individuals in the area.

By using a definition of religion evolving from faith as it is manifested in human institutions,⁹ it followed that the research begin with the study of institutions already known to exist in the area. Researching both religious change in Beeston and collating data to produce a ‘Directory of Religions’¹⁰ for the area influenced methodology considerably. To gain information required for the directory, a questionnaire was created based on updating information from the 1994/5 report, along with additional material previously left out but which was determined as valuable in this updated version, such as e-mail addresses, mobile telephone details, and any prevalent languages. This questionnaire was sent to respondents via email or incorporated into the interviews.

Semi-structured interviews formed the core of our data collection methods. Their informal approached allowed for applicable information to be collated whilst facilitating scope for material we might otherwise have missed. To expedite the research process, interviews were conducted with the intention of gaining both information relating to the main project of mapping religious change within Beeston, and to acquire information specific to the Directory that might otherwise has been unobtainable. The interview structure insured that important questions were not forgotten, and provided a degree of uniformity across interviews. The structure aimed to allow information and opinion specific to an institution and key to the report to be extracted. This included factors such as the facilities they provide for the community, issues unique to their community, and the changes they have experienced and participated in with the wider Beeston community. Combining the two different methods

⁹ See Byrne, (1998), p. 7.

¹⁰ The Directory is an updated version of a similar document produced during the previous study. This directory aims to record information about each institution ranging from address and contact details to prayer times and activity provision.

of research was therefore logical and manageable. As May comments, “these types of interviews are said to allow people to answer more on their own terms than the standardised interview permits, but still provide a greater structure for comparability over that of the focused interview.”¹¹ Thus, in combining these complementary methods, we were ensuring in-depth, accurate and relevant data would be collected.

There were of course limits to this methodology. By rejecting door-to-door interviews and focussing on religious leaders at religious institutions, we were unable to gain information from a wider sample of the Beeston community, meaning that we only had an account of change from the view of those involved in religious activity, and not from the view of the wider population. This negative aspect of the research was overcome to a degree as interviews were carried out with some people from ‘secular’ organisations, such as the council or Beeston Community Forum. However, this did not provide a random selection of the population to question about their beliefs or views on change in the area. A further issue relating to these interviews was the bias that the interviewees naturally had towards their own institutions, which may have distorted some of the information they provided to the study, however, the effect of this can be mitigated to a degree by the ability of researchers to cross reference broader statements with those made by other interviewees. The internet as a source of information also played an important role in the research process, providing both current and historical information about the area from census data to newspaper articles relating to the area.

A further methodological issue was experienced with some members of the community, especially in relation to the Hamara Centre and the Abu Huraira Mosque. This issue was a general reluctance to be involved in research, which could have come about for one or more

¹¹ T. May, (2001). *Social Research: Issues, methods and process*, 3rd ed., (Philadelphia: Open University Press), p.123.

of several different factors. As suggested by Sanghera and Thapar-Bjorkert, there can be additional methodological issues where the “research site has a controversial and contested political history.”¹² In their research of Bradford, where the ‘Rushdie Affair’ and race riots of 1995 and 2001 led to “considerable media, policy and academic attention”¹³, there was a general feeling that the area “was ‘over- researched’ and that ‘research weariness’ had, or was, setting in, especially within the Pakistani Muslim communities.”¹⁴ The 7/7 London bombings and the ensuing media and academic attention have, it appears, had a similar effect on some parts of the community in Beeston. Negative press and the use of undercover reporters by national newspapers to infiltrate the community have made people weary of outsiders and cautious of speaking about the bombers or their attack on London.¹⁵ The result of this was that there was a general distrust of researchers and a feeling of fatigue at constantly being asked for information relating to the area and not receiving anything in return. As Prideaux comments, “one of the unfortunate consequences [of undercover journalism and negative media coverage] has been that those researchers who are not journalists and do not use covert means are nevertheless associated with these poor experiences, and it is difficult for anybody to conduct research.”¹⁶

Limitations to any such research will always be extensive, especially with the limits to time experienced in this project. However, given these restrictions we felt that our methodology was the most appropriate means of gaining the necessary information for this report and the religious directory of the area. Given more time, it would be interesting to carry out

¹² G. Sanghera and S. Thapar-Björkert. (2008). 'Methodological dilemmas: gatekeepers and positionality in Bradford', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 31:3, 543 — 562, (2007), p. 544.

¹³ Ibid, pp. 544-545.

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 552.

¹⁵ The Sunday Times, ‘British Imam Praises London Tube Bombers’ <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/article730019.ece> [accessed: 25/03/2011].

¹⁶ M. J. Prideaux. (2008). *Faiths Together? Muslim-Christian Co-Working on a Publicly Funded Project in Beeston Hill, South Leeds*, (Leeds), p. 171.

interviews with a random selection of the population, in order to gain a much broader perspective on religious change in the area without relying on the views of religious and community leaders.

Demography

From the Irish Catholic migrants of the 19th century to the South Asian, Polish and African immigrants found there today, Beeston is an area of Leeds with a mixed and changing demographic. The South Asian population form the most numerous minority communities in the area, with 2001 census information putting the South Asian population of Beeston at 8.24% compared to the national percentage of 4.57%.¹⁷ The socio-economic situation in Beeston is below the national standard, resulting in an “inherent hopelessness”¹⁸ and low aspirations being common amongst many in the population.

The Muslim population of Beeston has developed extensively since 1994/5. There is evidence not only that the population has grown, but also that its demographic has changed as well. The construction of two new mosques in the area has come about as a result of previous facilities (at Hardy Street and Stratford Street) no longer being able to accommodate worshippers due to size constraints, or being unable to fulfil all the necessary functions for the community, such as weddings, funerals and so on. The new mosques provide evidence that the Muslim population is more established than it was in 1994/5, and that their socio-economic status has improved, as both of the Mosques are funded either wholly (Masjid-e-Umar) or partially (Abu Huraira) by the local Muslim community. The building of the new mosque on Woodview Road also shows younger, English-born members of the Muslim community influencing the design and direction of the build at Woodview road.¹⁹ The use of English amongst the Muslim community shows an increased level of establishment, with both Imams and teachers in *madrassas* preaching and instructing primarily in English and

¹⁷ Neighbourhood statistics. (2001). *Ethnic Groups LS11*, ‘Office for National Statistics’. Available from: <http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/dissemination/LeadTableView.do?a=7&b=295738&c=LS11+8BD&d=141&e=16&g=382535&i=1001x1003x1004&m=0&r=0&s=1305640182140&enc=1&dsFamilyId=87>, [accessed 10/05/2011]

¹⁸ Interviewee G.

¹⁹ Interviewee I.

other languages playing decreased roles.²⁰ However, it was clear language is still an issue among some women in the South Asian community, especially those who come from the subcontinent to marry males in the community, with one interviewee saying that this language barrier furthered the isolation of some women, because it “does not allow them to participate in events, especially without male representation.”²¹ The issue of language has been identified as a national problem, with the *Cohesion Institute* saying that;

*Lack of English is something that many of you have said is a critical barrier to integration and communication for new arrivals. We are also conscious that lack of language skills in settled communities can also create social distance. We are therefore adamant that not speaking English is a barrier to integration and cohesion.*²²

Similarities exist between the developments occurring within Beeston’s Islamic population and that of the Sikh community, which has seen its socio-economic status increase considerably since the 1994/5 report. A consequence of this social mobility has been for “Sikh community members to move out of Beeston, as they have become more affluent, moving to middle-class areas such as Harrogate Road.”²³ The use of the Gurdwara however has increased, as the overall Sikh population of Leeds grows and members who have moved away continue to travel there out of loyalty to the establishment. The increase in the wealth of the Gurdwara is directly linked to the wealth of the Sikh community, as there is a requirement for Sikh’s using the facility to donate 10% of their personal income to the Gurdwara’s upkeep. The result has been additional facilities added to the Gurdwara and an increase in

²⁰ Interviewee I; Interviewee D.

²¹ Interviewee F.

²² Commission on Integration and Cohesion. (2007). *Our Interim Statement*. Available at: <http://resources.cohesioninstitute.org.uk/Publications/Documents/Document/DownloadDocumentsFile.aspx?recordId=64&file=PDFversion>, [accessed: 10/05/2011].

²³ Interviewee E.

outreach programmes such as feeding the homeless and interfaith activities. “The Sikh community is larger and stronger than it has ever been before, and this trend seems to be continuing.”²⁴

The Christian community of Beeston, especially in Cottingley, is largely represented by the White British population, with most of its congregations coming from the local housing estate. There is high unemployment in the area, with some 86% of the population of the local estate receiving some kind of worklessness benefit (unemployment benefits, incapacity benefit and income support);²⁵ this is one reason for the church remaining popular in this area, “as it gives witness to a God who is on the side of the poor and represents hope for a better future.”²⁶ There has been a noted increase in the last few years of Eastern European Christians, especially Polish Catholics. It has been suggested that they have integrated with the local population much faster than the Islamic community did, with one interviewee suggesting it might be because they are Christian, more willing to “embrace the English culture,” and learn the language.²⁷ A feature of the last few years in Beeston has been a dramatic increase in the number of black African Christian immigrants from countries such as Nigeria, the Congo and Ghana. Some of these individuals have joined existing Christian churches, while others have established their own worship groups to cater for their specific language and cultural needs. For those congregations accommodating these black migrants, there has been an increase in the turnover of worshippers; some churches “noting weekly attendances of around 25, with only 5 or so being regular attendees,”²⁸ possibly as a result of the fact that migrants and asylum seekers are moved on by housing groups and the authorities.

²⁴ Interviewee E.

²⁵ Interviewee C.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Interviewee F.

²⁸ Interviewee B.

The 2001 census also recorded a small number of Hindus, Buddhists and Jews in the area, but no evidence of facilities for these communities were found and very little mention was made of them. There is an interfaith cricket activity organised by the Abu Huraira mosque which involves some Jewish children, but they come from outside the area to be involved in this project. As mentioned above, the demography of the area changes regularly, with the high level of immigrants and asylum seekers contributing considerably to this phenomenon. The 2011 census data will provide accurate information on the ethnic and demographic make-up of the area at the present time, and will hopefully be able to confirm some of the trends of change that we have witnessed in our research, from the increase in the number of black Africans and Eastern Europeans to the improvement in the socio-economic status of certain groups such as the Muslims and Sikhs.

Changes in the Christian Community

The rich history of Christianity in Beeston was outlined in the previous report which explained that the earliest organisations recorded in the area were Christian institutions.²⁹ Our findings noted a revitalisation of the Christian community, which though still demonstrating an overarching declining trend, is benefiting at present from an influx in black African Christian migrants. This section looks at the impact of these black migrants on Beeston's Christian community, as well as the situation of decline noted in the previous report.³⁰

African Christian Migrants

A recurring theme expressed in interviews was a perceived increase in black-led churches. Interviewee C estimated as many as 20 new African congregations currently meeting in Beeston. There are believed to be so many small congregations currently practicing that one interviewee commented on there being 'a different worship group on every corner'.³¹ A number of sources noted difficulty in locating these different groups, a view we can corroborate, and an issue that prevented us confirming any exact number.³² There is no official umbrella organisation or website, and advertisements are usually minimal. However, primarily through word-of-mouth, we managed to locate several new black-led churches whose details are contained in the Directory. One local representative believed that growth in black-led churches was the biggest visible religious change in the area.³³ We found the influx was due to a large growth in African refugees arriving in the area during recent years.

²⁹ 1994/5 Report, p.7

³⁰ Ibid, p. 37.

³¹ Interviewee P.

³² Interviewee B; Interviewee F.

³³ Interviewee F.

It was reported that many of the groups consist of a very small number of people and consequently require only a small space for worship, usually a member's house. Congregations appear to be established primarily on ethnic, cultural and linguistic divides rather than doctrinal, meaning the quantity of small groups reflects the eclectic collective of countries the immigrants have come from rather than any major doctrinal differences. Research by MacRoberts demonstrated that 80% of black-led congregations in the United Kingdom are Pentecostal;³⁴ this may explain why the recent influx of African Christian migrants in Beeston has primarily benefited non-traditional denominations such as Jehovah's Witnesses and Pentecostal groups, whose style of worship and scriptural interpretation holds greater appeal to African forms of Christianity.

Some groups, such as the Apostles Continuation or Assemblies of God, worship in existing church buildings; whereas others meet in secular spaces such as the YMCA or local community centres. At present, black-led churches, even those sharing space with other Christian church groups, appear to be largely isolated from the wider Christian community of Beeston, primarily due to cultural differences and language barriers rather than doctrinal differences or any aversion to English-speaking churches. Interviewee B stated that the evangelical style of worship in black-led churches came as a 'shock' for the Muslim community who had largely come to associate Christianity with inactive, passive forms of worship and religiosity, demonstrating not only a numerical boost to Christian faith, but also the development of a more publically visible style of Christian worship.

Interviewee G explained that "a number of Christian groups, many of which are African congregations, meet in local community centres, which economically benefits the community through the money received from hiring the space out." This is representative of the wider

³⁴ I. MacRobert. In P Badham (1989). *Religion, State and Society in Modern Britain*. (New York, NY: Edwin Mellen) p.120.

economic contribution produced by faith communities in the Yorkshire and Humber area.³⁵

One traditionally white Pentecostal church believed their church to have been ‘saved’ by African migrants, who now make up a majority of the congregation.³⁶

Catholicism

Some interviewees suggested that immigration has also affected the Catholic community; interviewee H claimed ‘Eastern European migration has been influential in generating an influx of Catholic church-goers in recent years’. However, we found that the Roman Catholic Churches had no noticeable increase in attendance over the past 17 years. It is believed this is primarily due to residents worshipping in the Catholic Church of Our Lady of Czestochowa in nearby Chapeltown, which was established to meet the needs of the Polish community. In addition, we discovered that some Polish immigrants were attracted the Holy Spirit Church due to its Catholic appearance and Anglo-Catholic services. Nonetheless Catholic attendance has remained relatively steady since 1994/5, although it should be noted that St Francis of Assisi Church is no longer a fully functioning church, but acts as a Chapel of Ease for members of the community unable to travel to St. Anthony’s who wish to receive mass.

Declining Attendance

Since 1994/5 Beeston has seen the closure of at least six Churches, trends consistent with findings from the earlier report that ‘there are many churches in Beeston experiencing a decline in attendance’.³⁷ Stenhouse and Knowles argue that declining church attendance in the UK since the 1960’s is ‘beyond dispute’ and an inevitable consequence of this is church

³⁵ Yorkshire Humber Faiths Forum. (2009). *Grace and Generosity: The contribution of faith communities to the Yorkshire and Humber community*, p. 9

³⁶ Interviewee O.

³⁷ 1994/5 Report, p. 37.

closures.³⁸ This reflects statistics gathered by Peter Brierley in the UK Christian Handbook Survey which ‘showed an ongoing decline in all aspects of church membership, attendance and ceremonial use’.³⁹ This national trend of decline comes despite 78% of the country labelling themselves Christian in the 2001 Census.⁴⁰ The Jesus Fellowship Church (Jesus Army) still worship in the area but no longer own the two houses they used to meet in; they are now mainly based in Sheffield. Others such as Bridge Street Pentecostal Church have amalgamated with larger congregations in Leeds and some, such as Wesley Street Methodist Church have closed due to insufficient numbers in the congregation and the subsequent loss of funding. A number of Beeston’s churches now have a regular attendance of thirty or less, a decline compared with the previous report. Denominations such as Jehovah’s Witnesses however, claim that their congregation is continuously expanding, with four congregations currently meeting in the Beeston Kingdom Hall, each group containing approximately 50 - 100 worshippers; it should be noted that only a small number of members are local residents however.

³⁸ J. Stenhouse; B. Knowles. (2004). *The Future of Christianity: Historical, Sociological, Political and Theological Perspectives from New Zealand*. (Adelaide: ATF Press) p.60.

³⁹ B, Wilson. In M. Slattery. (2003). *Key Ideas in Sociology*. (Cheltenham: Nelson Thornes) p. 179

⁴⁰ Office for National Statistics. (2004). *Religious Populations*. p.1. Available from: <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=954> [accessed 18/2/2011].

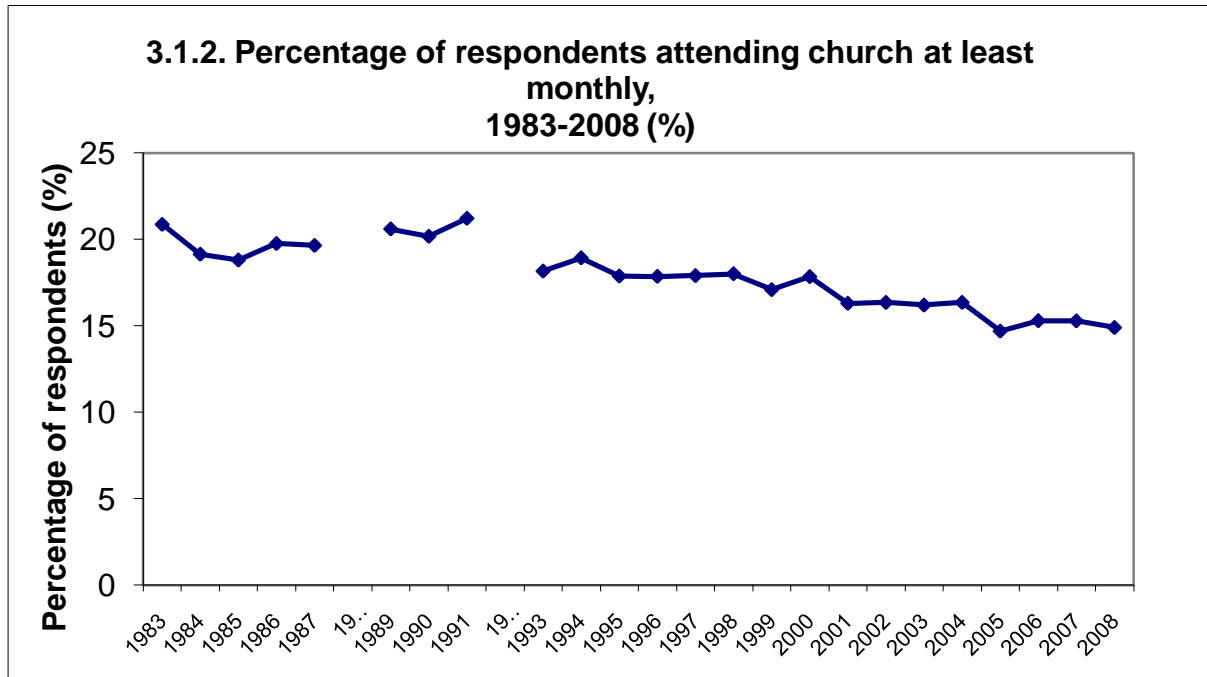


Chart presenting church attendance data from the British Social Attitudes surveys, 1983-2008. (<http://www.brin.ac.uk/figures/#AffiliationAttendance>)

Conclusion

Christianity remains an important component of many residents' lives, with churches providing social provision, a sense of belonging and participating in efforts vital to wider community cohesion. General consensus seemed to suggest there has been an increase in Christianity in Beeston primarily due to the migration of African Christians during the past four-five years, however the transitory nature of the migrant population in Beeston means the length of this restorative period may prove to be fleeting.

Buildings and Space

Religious institutions form a focal point for the people of Beeston. More than just a place of worship they offer s

ocial, educational and health services, catering for families and people of all ages. The religious buildings and the institutions that utilise them in Beeston are varied. There are traditional, purpose built and long-standing Christian establishments such as St. Luke's (est. 1872) and the Holy Spirit (est. 1894), and those that have emerged recently, catering for the religious and social requirements of the diasporic communities that have arrived in Beeston. This section will assess the way in which the decline in traditional church attendance has affected established church buildings in Beeston, how the need to establish religious facilities is met by the now well-established South Asian population, and how religious institutions and secular organisations provide services that reflect local community needs.

Christian Church Closures

The aforementioned decline in church attendance is threatening some buildings with closure, a fact acknowledged by one interviewee who suggested that the Anglican Church needs to shed some buildings in the region, in order to secure other buildings for the future,⁴¹ the result of increasing secularisation in Britain.⁴² This is illustrated by Beeston's now closed Wesley Street Church, whose site is now up for sale. In an effort to keep religious buildings open, religious institutions are having to adapt and find pragmatic solutions in the hope of making their buildings financially viable, thereby sustain *some* security for the future.

⁴¹ Interviewee B

⁴² G, Davie. (1994). Religion in Modern Britain since 1945, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing), p.3.

For institutions struggling to meet costs, the sharing of facilities, allowing the financial burden to be shared either with religious groups or secular organisations, is being investigated.⁴³ Some previously struggling Christian institutions have been able to delay issues of space and buildings through migrants revitalising their congregations, or by subletting facilities. The desire of African migrants to establish their own churches is furthering the possibility for financial stabilisation through rental of space in existing buildings. St. Peter's, which leases a room to the Apostles Continuation and the Victory Church, who shared their facilities with the Ghanaian Assemblies of God church are examples of this. The long established Victory Church could no longer afford to sustain the buildings lease; however, the Ghanaian church was able to take over the lease, enabling the Victory Church to continue at its present site.

Secular organisations have bought former religious space and used it to provide services to the needs of the community. The Hamara centre bought Trinity Methodist Church on Old Lane in 2006 with a £1.2 million pound lottery grant enabling the conversion of the church into its current state.⁴⁴ The Hamara centre works primarily (not exclusively) with the South Asian community.⁴⁵ Today the centre boasts a wide range of activities and services ranging from a gym, to dance and sewing classes, to issues that may relate more specifically to an migrant community such as offering advice on visas, education and health, reflecting the changing needs of the community. Building Blocks provides space and facilities to be used by the local community, including facilitating religious services by local church organisations.

⁴³ Interviewee B.

⁴⁴ Interviewee K.

⁴⁵ Interviewee I.

The South Asian Community

In contrast to the Christian buildings in Beeston, South Asian religious institutions are flourishing.⁴⁶ Migration often strengthens the religious commitment of diasporic communities,⁴⁷ and in Beeston this could be considered a key part of the South Asian faiths successes, both with the Gurdwaras continued success, and the Muslim community's capacity to develop two purpose-built mosques.

The Abu Huraira mosque currently resides in a former Cooperative Society building. Established in 1986 by the Kashmir Muslim Welfare Association, increasing attendance and the inadequacies of a non-purpose building have prompted the need to establish a purpose built mosque, so religious and social need can be more adequately met. At present they are a long way off development but planning permission is secured and building work will commence once the community have secured the £500,000 needed to start building.⁴⁸

A second purpose-build mosque is currently under construction on Woodview Road to cater for the needs of the Muslim community using another building conversion on Stratford Street - the Masjid-e-Umar. Our interviewee suggested that the reasons for moving were not due to outgrowing the old space, but a lack of facilities and safety issues at the previous site. Entirely funded by the Muslim community in Beeston, work started in April 2010 and hopes to be finished by July 2011.

Some concerns about the development of the mosques have been raised, but they are largely welcomed by community leaders we interviewed. The Woodview build sits in an area of

⁴⁶ Interviewee D; Interviewee E; Interviewee I.

⁴⁷ S. Vortevac. (1999). *Three Meanings of 'Diaspora' exemplified amongst South Asian Religions..* Available from: www.transcomm.ox.ac.uk/working%20papers/diaspora.pdf [accessed: 12/03/2011], p.23.

⁴⁸ Interviewee D.

Beeston where regeneration is welcomed, and many of the buildings that look directly onto the mosque site are hoped to be purchased by Muslims attracted to the area by the new build. The new mosques will reflect their cultural heritage. Government bodies have recognised that urban regeneration of this nature has the capacity to “improve the physical living conditions, or local cultural activities, or facilities for particular social groups”, as well generate improved social circumstances for the wider community, actively encouraging such developments in policy.⁴⁹ The new mosques, it is hoped, will act as an impetus for further regeneration of the area.

The Sikh community of Beeston established a Gurdwara in 1986 in the disused Ringtons Tea factory on Lady Pitt lane. The Gurdwara is not purpose built, but the site excellently fulfils the role it is required for through its size, locality, parking facilities and structure. Conversions carried out and maintained by local Sikhs, creating a sense of pride and ownership, mean the Gurdwara is suitably equipped to fulfil the community’s needs. Establishment of an official, permanent place of worship has given Beeston’s Sikh leadership greater influence whilst campaigning to resolve community issues, such as their successful end to a long-standing project of finding a permanent place to scatter the ashes of deceased Sikhs and Hindus.⁵⁰ Gurdwara’s in the UK fulfil a different role to those on the sub-continent, where they are limited to being spiritual places of worship.⁵¹ For the South Asian Sikh - and Muslim - community in the United Kingdom, the religious institutions they establish act as a home away from home, taking on a much broader role than their counterparts on the subcontinent, fulfilling the role of community centre, providing education, social provision and a place where its members can meet socially as a minority and as a show of solidarity.

⁴⁹ A. Tallon. (2009). *Urban Regeneration in the UK*, (Taylor and Francis), p. 8.

⁵⁰ Interviewee E

⁵¹ Interviewee E.

Symbolising Unity

Collectively the religious buildings of Beeston symbolise the need for community cohesion. The buildings of the Holy Spirit, Building Blocks and Hamara centre are in close proximity to one another, creating a rallying point for the Beeston solidarity march and protests post 7/7. Furthermore, with the development of the Abu Huraira Mosque's purpose-build on Stratford Street, buildings of both Christian and Muslim faith will stand side by side, representing a strong impetus for interfaith relations and community cohesion.

Intrafaith Activity

This section of the report includes our findings relating to intrafaith activity in Beeston, with intrafaith activity referring to the way in which independent religious bodies belonging to the same faith interact and work with one another. In Christianity, for example, this is known as ecumenism which is best defined as “that movement within the church which seeks to give visible expression to the unity that all believers have in Jesus Christ”.⁵²

As stated in the Changes in the Christian Community section above, Beeston has followed the national trend, with many churches seeing a decline in attendance, and consequentially resources; therefore the need for churches to work together has been increased. To give one example, the Trinity Methodist Church meets in the Building Blocks centre weekly, and the premises are also used for events by the Holy Spirit Church. In winter time, the expense of heating the Holy Spirit building mean its use is no longer viable. Instead, these two congregations merge together to hold joint Sunday services in the Building Blocks centre.

The Hamara Centre, is used by Beeston’s entire Muslim community and seems to be the primary focus for formal intrafaith activity in the Muslim community,⁵³ and we were unable to discover any evidence of other collaborative activity. However, this does not suggest schism or rivalry within Beeston’s Muslim community. Interviewee D stated that though there are few examples of formal intrafaith activities between mosques, many of the younger generation attend different mosques because of the time of day or geographic proximity, with the key factor simply being in a mosque for prayer. These sentiments were echoed by Interviewee I who made it clear that the Masjid-e-Umar does not have an exclusive beliefs policy and that any Muslim is welcome to join in prayers. On the other hand the older

⁵² Reformed Church in America (1981). *An Ecumenical Mandate for the Reformed Church in America*. (Grand Rapids, MI: RCA Distribution Centre), p.5.

⁵³ Interviewee K.

Muslims would more commonly stick to ‘their’ mosque. According to Interviewee D the main reasons for Muslims attending different mosques are cultural and ethnic rather than on sectarian religious grounds, with Pakistani Muslims attending either Abu Huraira or the Masjid-e-Umar, and Bengalis attending the mosque on Tunstall Road. These are definitive signs of a supportive Muslim community, though intrafaith activity within this community seems to be a more natural occurrence, rather than an organised concern.

Intrafaith activity seems most prevalent amongst Protestant Christian denominations. One minister, for example, is employed by both the United Reform Church and the Methodist church for her work at the Church in Cottingley, and is also employed as a curate at St. Luke’s. There is also ‘Churches Together in LS11’, part of a broader national group, “Churches Together in England”, an organisation demonstrating the desire of various churches to sustain regular, and collective communication. As well as members and leaders of churches based in Beeston, the large city centre church Mosaic also participate, and have voiced a desire to be a part of the wider Christian community in which they live. There is also a prayer group with members from approximately fourteen different churches who meet to pray communally. We were unable to confirm whether or not this prayer group was associated with the ‘Churches Together’ group. In addition to this there are Christian youth cell groups in Beeston run by the ecumenical organisation, Leeds Youth Cell Network, which is supported by various churches from around Leeds.

There is evidence of intrafaith activity within both the Christian and Muslim communities in Beeston, however Christian intrafaith activity seems to be more formal and consciously organised, it was certainly easier to identify. There is a clear history of ecumenism in British Christianity, so maybe it is unfair to compare its interfaith activity with that of Islam, which has been an organised and widely practised religion in the United Kingdom for far less

time.⁵⁴ The 1994/5 Report appears to suggest similar trends at the time of its undertaking; noting on the subject of ecumenism, ‘in Beeston all activity is thriving’ and making no allusion at all to intrafaith activity within the Muslim community.⁵⁵ It seems that with the South Asian population in the United Kingdom now firmly established and rapidly developing, it seems academic study of intrafaith activity must necessarily adapt to incorporate analysis of additional, growing faith groups within these minority communities.

The clearest change with regards to ecumenism comes from the influence of the newly arriving black-led churches. Though quite insular and seemingly hard to locate, they offer clear evidence of Christian intrafaith activity. There are many examples in Beeston of the pre-existing churches giving use of their buildings to these new groups, though on one occasion, a church leader could not recall the name of the black-led church sharing their building. This demonstrates that although there is clear opportunity for greater intrafaith communication with black-led churches, previously noted as being difficult to contact and isolated from the wider Christian community, it is not being actively pursued.

The third major religious community in Beeston is the Sikh community. Although it is only represented by a single site community there is still plenty of intrafaith activity occurring with the wider national and international Sikh community, such as prayer and celebratory gatherings. It is also closely involved with South Asian Arts UK (SAAUK), hosting and participating in musical performance across the nation, with the Gurdwara home to several leading South Asian musicians.

Intrafaith activity is present across all faiths, though remains largely limited in the Muslim community. Interviewee’s suggested a desire to change this, and when finished, the new

⁵⁴ T, Fitzgerald. (2004). *The Ecumenical Movement*, Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, p.59.

⁵⁵ 1994/5 Report, p. 32-34.

mosque buildings, offering unique facilities to the entire Muslim population in the area as well as providing more space for activities, may act as catalysts through which formal intrafaith activity may be able to develop.

Interfaith Dialogue

Interfaith dialogue is defined herewith as “persons of different faiths meeting to have a conversation”.⁵⁶ The purpose of dialogue may vary from a desire to learn from other faiths to change or grow oneself, to tackle shared problems within a community, or to build trust and understanding of a religious ‘other’. Interfaith dialogue in this sense was not specifically referred to in the 1994/5 report, indicating an increased recognition of the importance of dialogue within the past 17 years, particularly since 2001 and 2005.⁵⁷ In Beeston today, interfaith dialogue is valued by all faiths, and has been a significant area of religious change since the 1994/5 Report.

The Practice of Interfaith Activity in Beeston

All three of the prominent religions in Beeston (Christianity, Sikhism and Islam) are involved in formal interfaith dialogue, although this is not true of all existing religious institutions. The Gurdwara, Anglo-Catholic Holy Spirit Church and St Peter’s Church (which share the same minister), and the Abu Huraira mosque were identified as leading participants of interfaith dialogue in Beeston. These organisations have strong links with Concord (Leeds Interfaith Fellowship), which facilitates dialogue between faith groups in Beeston and other areas of Leeds.⁵⁸

A number of other faith groups based in the Beeston area consistently participate in formal and informal interfaith dialogue such as the 2008 Walk of Faith organised by Concord. This

⁵⁶ D.R. Smock, *Interfaith Dialogue and Peace Building* (USA: United States Institute of Peace, 2002), p. 6.

⁵⁷ Home Office, *Community Cohesion: A Report of the Independent Review Team*, Chaired by Ted Cattle, (2001), <http://image.guardian.co.uk/sysfiles/Guardian/documents/2001/12/11/communitycohesionreport.pdf> [accessed 12/05/2011]. See also; M. Prideaux (2008).

⁵⁸ Concord Interfaith Fellowship Leeds. <http://www.concord-leeds.org.uk> [accessed: 14/05/2011].

demonstrates motivation and commitment to interfaith activity across the spectrum of faith based organisations present in Beeston. The Hamara centre was also involved in the Faith Walk and seems to be a facilitator of interfaith dialogue, despite the centre itself holding no official religious affiliation.

Interviewee's also identified small pockets of informal interfaith and multi-faith activity occurring in the area.⁵⁹ Examples of informal interfaith activity we were able to locate included; Building Blocks nursery, ran by Church members and Muslim individuals; English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses hosted in the area utilised by non-English people of diverse backgrounds; and sewing classes at the Gurdwara attended by both Muslims and Sikhs. Informal efforts such as these are important every-day contributions to interfaith relations. Though difficult to locate due to their informal nature, it is likely that there are many more instances of such interfaith activity in Beeston.

The Role and Achievements of Interfaith Activity in Beeston

The 1994 report expressed hopes that;

“Interaction would satisfy curiosities [and] remove ignorance to enable a higher level of toleration and understanding between communities. In addition, interactive activity may serve to illustrate to the community as a whole, that religion is important and valuable, removing opinions that religion has ceased to be significant.”⁶⁰

Here, the previous group refer indirectly to Allport's theory of intergroup contact.⁶¹ This theory suggests that contact between diverse groups - such as that which occurs during interfaith dialogue, has the potential to reduce prejudice, a theory that is recognised in government policy, with 'What Works' in Community Cohesion commenting “that Policies to

⁵⁹ Interviewee M.

⁶⁰ 1994/5 Report, p. 34.

⁶¹ Gordon, Allport, (1954). *The Nature of Prejudice* (Cambridge: Boston).

promote meaningful interaction are often a key part of local cohesion strategies.”⁶² Events such as the 2008 Walk of Faith appear to have successfully reduced prejudice by removing mistrust and misconceptions between members of the social and religious groups within Beeston.⁶³ Removing ignorance and improving toleration is a key motivation for interfaith dialogue in Beeston and positive social change resulting from interfaith action demonstrates the inherent value of religion as a positive force in the wider community.⁶⁴

It is not just faith groups who participate in interfaith activity. Faith Together in Leeds 11, a key interfaith organisation in the area, has non-religious representatives sitting on its board. Likewise, religious representatives sit on the board of Tiger 11, a secular community organisation, and Concord has been invited year-on-year to have a stand at the Hamara Centre’s Annual Community Cohesion Day.⁶⁵ Non-religious residents of Beeston seem to be included in interfaith dialogue, rather than alienated by it, something clearly conducive to community cohesion. Though largely viewed as a positive force, one interviewee was particularly critical of interfaith activity, arguing that religion is divisive and therefore not even interfaith efforts were helpful in achieving community cohesion.⁶⁶

Community cohesion has become increasingly important in Beeston following the events in London on 7/7.⁶⁷ Interfaith dialogue is perceived across all faiths as invaluable for generating cross-cultural community cohesion. One Christian minister raised concerns that the Muslim population are ‘terribly isolated’ and feels the Christian community in Beeston has a

⁶² Government Paper. (2007). *‘What Works’ in Community Cohesion*, available from <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/whatworks.pdf>, [accessed on: 17/05.2011]

⁶³ Interviewee M.

⁶⁴ See: Prideaux, M. (2008), p. 160.

⁶⁵ Interviewee M.

⁶⁶ Interviewee F.

⁶⁷ See: Prideaux, M. (2008), p. 178.

responsibility in helping overcome this isolation.⁶⁸ As a result of efforts made to date, there is a strong belief that “solidarity has been generated in the region, and interfaith efforts have increased.”⁶⁹ Others suggested that fewer cultural divides capable of generating friction now exist between South Asian and White British residences as a consequence of interfaith dialogue.⁷⁰ Developing trust and friendship is one way interfaith activity generate cross-cultural cohesion.⁷¹ A representative of Abu Huraira explained that their aim is to “encourage respect and tolerance of religions through practical activity,”⁷² with the Jewish/Islamic cricket project the mosque organises seen as a way of removing cultural barriers between Muslims in Beeston and Jews from the Leeds area.⁷³

Barriers to Dialogue

Despite the increase in interfaith activity and the success stemming from it, some religious groups remain reluctant to participate. There is a concern that these groups may begin to feel isolated in the community. One Christian interviewee expressed concern that the African-Christian immigrant community in Beeston is reluctant to get involved in dialogue because of prejudices against the Muslim community rooted in religio-ethnic conflicts in their home countries.⁷⁴ However, the minister of one black-led church in the area asserted that there was no specific reason for their lack of involvement in dialogue but rather it was due to a perceived lack of opportunity.⁷⁵ This demonstrates a need to ensure interfaith events are publicised thoroughly and interested parties are made aware of their occurrence. Another Christian minister commented that differences in language and culture are barriers to

⁶⁸ Interviewee B.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Interviewee G

⁷¹ Interviewee M; Interviewee B.

⁷² Interviewee D.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Interviewee B.

⁷⁵ Interviewee A.

interfaith dialogue.⁷⁶ Language was noted as a particular barrier for women by one interviewee, who believes many non-English speaking women in the community lack any real opportunity to learn English.⁷⁷ One non-religious individual suggested that Christian churches belonging to an evangelical denomination in Beeston may be reluctant to participate in interfaith dialogue due to scriptural reasons relating to their more exclusivist approach to other faiths.⁷⁸

Our research also identified potential barriers for continued involvement in interfaith dialogue. One interviewee raised concerns that participants may feel isolated within their own communities having become involved with interfaith activity.⁷⁹ One Muslim representative commented that because of the mosque's involvement in interfaith dialogue, they had received negative press.⁸⁰

Nevertheless, groups have expressed an interest in becoming more involved in interfaith activity in the future and therefore, as efforts grow in the area these issues of alienation may diminish. The Masjid-e-Umar for example explained that the Mosque recognises the need for interfaith dialogue and has a desire to get more involved in dialogue once the new building is finished.⁸¹

Involvement in interfaith dialogue in Beeston seems dependent upon a religious group's priorities, whether it is inward or outward looking both scripturally and practically, and other commitments, a point which the Concord representative confirmed.⁸² One representative of a Christian Church explained that they felt a lot of time could potentially be wasted on

⁷⁶ Interviewee A.

⁷⁷ Interviewee F.

⁷⁸ Interviewee G.

⁷⁹ Interviewee B.

⁸⁰ Interviewee D.

⁸¹ Interviewee I.

⁸² Interviewee M.

interfaith dialogue but that there are “some bits of shared work” that are extremely important.⁸³ Jehovah’s Witnesses seem to be one religious group unlikely to become involved with interfaith dialogue as their priority is proselytization.

Leadership in Interfaith

The personal involvement of specific religious leaders is seen as key to interfaith success. Our findings suggest that interfaith activity in Beeston is led primarily by three individuals based out of the Gurdwara, Abu Huraira mosque and the Holy Spirit Church respectively. The enthusiasm and commitment to interfaith dialogue of one Muslim leader has been credited with vastly increasing the amount of interfaith work the Abu Huraira mosque is involved with,⁸⁴ though of the mosque’s Social / Community Committee takes responsibility for interfaith dialogue, suggesting a collective, sustainable Muslim leadership for interfaith involvement.⁸⁵

The centrality of leadership to interfaith dialogue success is also potentially a cause of negative change in terms of sustaining long-term dialogue. One key individual expressed concern that following his upcoming retirement there may not be anyone in the Christian community with the commitment and time to drive interfaith forward, even though his replacement is ‘theologically open’.⁸⁶ The Sikh figure, whose experience of dialogue in the area is substantial, stated that he does not share these concerns due to the ability and willingness of other leaders of dialogue to co-operate with different types of people; it will certainly be interesting to see how interfaith dialogue changes and evolves following this change of leadership.⁸⁷

⁸³ Interviewee C.

⁸⁴ Interviewee M.

⁸⁵ Interviewee D.

⁸⁶ Interviewee B.

⁸⁷ Interviewee E.

Conclusion

It is evident that in contrast to the 1994/5 report, there is now an abundance of interfaith activity occurring within Beeston, both formally and informally. Dialogue has achieved much in the way of community cohesion, and its benefits are widely acknowledged. There is also a strong sense that it will continue to grow in the coming years. In order to increase the inclusivity of interfaith dialogue in Beeston the perceived and actual barriers to dialogue will need to be broken down.

Education in Beeston

The importance of education was a recurring theme in our interviews, with religious leaders viewing education as central to generating long-term regeneration of the Beeston area.⁸⁸ This section looks at the provisions for learning provided by religious institutions in Beeston.

The religious education of children in the Muslim community has changed considerably since 1994/5, with both the Abu Huraira and Masjid-e- Umar mosques hosting *madrassas*, religious schools where the Islamic message contained in the Qur'an and hadith is taught to Muslim children.⁸⁹ A *madrassa* affiliated with a mosque as opposed to a private Islamic school is the most common form of Islamic education in the UK with 94% of UK mosques estimated as hosting a *madrassa*.⁹⁰ Within the British Muslim community there have been worries expressed that secular education does not fully meet the needs of children from their community.⁹¹ The Muslim community within Beeston emphasised the benefit of the mix of western and Islamic education the children receive.⁹² The Abu Huraira *madrassa* accommodates approximately 350 children every evening, while the Masjid-e-Umar has a *madrassa* that teaches up to 200 children every night.⁹³ Concern was expressed in interviews that attending a *madrassa*, which children attend every weekday evening for several hours,

⁸⁸ Interviewee E.

⁸⁹ C. M. Blanchard, 'Islamic Religious School, Madrassas: Background'. In C. Malbouisson (ed.) (2007). *Focus on Islamic Issues*, (New York, NY: Nova Science, pp. 61-71: p. 62.

⁹⁰ M. Cherti; A. Glennie; L. Bradley. '*Madrassas in the Media*'. Available from: <http://www.ippr.org.uk/publicationsandreports/publication.asp?id=805> [accessed: 15/05/2011].

⁹¹ Julia Ipgrave, 'Including the Religious Viewpoints and Experiences of Muslim Students in an Environment that is Both Plural and Secular', *Journal of International Migration and Intergration Vol:11* (2010), pp. 5-22, p. 6.

⁹² Interviewee I.

⁹³ Interviewee D.

means there is limited free time to integrate with non-Muslim children.⁹⁴ However it was stressed that the *madrassas*' aim to encourage good social relations with all, not just Muslims;⁹⁵ educating children this way being viewed as vital for integration.⁹⁶

The *madrassa* teachers previously brought from abroad are now sourced locally, competent English speakers, the children are taught in both Urdu and English. This use of English shows an increased level of establishment in the Muslim community, discussed in more detail in the demography section. It removes potential language barriers both within the *madrassas* educational role, and in relations with the wider community.

Of those Christian Churches where leading figures were interviewed, only a few hosted Sunday Schools. This trend is common throughout Britain and it has been estimated that less than a tenth of children now regularly attend a Sunday School.⁹⁷ The Seventh Day Adventist Church runs a Sabbath School, but is still suffering from a diminishing attendance.⁹⁸

There is also a large non-denominational Christian schooling institution, 'Satellite Club' in Beeston. Aimed at 4-11 year olds, with 110 children attending regularly, this seemingly contradicts the trend of decline in Christianity. It is run by a national organization, 'Kid's Klub', which provides structured religious education for children, but in a unique format differing from traditional religious education. The organisation is aimed at 'unchurched' children, seeking to remedy the fact that 'a generation or so ago it was the norm for children to attend Sunday School...Kids Klub Leeds hopes to make the difference for a generation of

⁹⁴ Interviewee B.

⁹⁵ Interviewee D.

⁹⁶ Interviewee I.

⁹⁷ C, Brown (2009). *The Death of Christian Britain: Understanding Secularisation, 1800-2000* (Oxon: Routledge) p. 3.

⁹⁸ Seventh Day Adventist Church, 'Northern England' Available from: <http://www.adventistchurches.org.uk/churches.php?Field=NEC> [accessed: 17/05/11].

Kids across Leeds.⁹⁹ As well as the 110 children attending Satellite Club it is claimed 350 children a week are visited in their homes. Kids Klub has only been active in Beeston since 2010 and is a major educational change since the previous report.¹⁰⁰ Aged 11, children at Kids Klub move on to an organisation called Space, but worries were expressed that this unique form of Christian education resulted in problems for the Church, which had to determine whether to remain traditional in format or adapt to the new way of worshiping promoted by these institutions.

Between 1999 and 2005 Victory Church provided a religious alternative to state education through the Accelerated Christian Education syllabus from America. However, it closed down as fees required to sustain it were no longer able to be paid. It had approximately twenty children attending at its peak. Despite its closure the school was a success and saw children attend Oxbridge.¹⁰¹

Religious institutions are not only teaching about their faith, but also providing practical education to both children and adults within the Beeston community. The Sikh Gurdwara runs Punjabi classes, held on a weekly basis and with an estimated attendance of 150 children. As well as teaching the children Punjabi the Gurdwara also has continued to teach Sikh history and to provide groups such as Girl's Club in order to support Sikh children in understanding why their religion may prevent them from doing things that other children growing up in the secular west are permitted to do.

¹⁰⁰Kids Klub, *About Us*. Available from: <http://www.networkleeds.com/Publisher/Article.aspx?ID=89899> [accessed: 15/05/2011].

¹⁰¹ Interviewee P.

The 1994/5 report notes a high level of unemployment in Beeston and at the time of the last census unemployment was still a problem in the area.¹⁰² Within the Beeston-Holbeck area, which has a population of around 15,000, nearly 6,500 people were listed as unemployed.¹⁰³ The Gurdwara, believing overcoming this issue is ‘pivotal for the future’, is just one religious institution placing a huge emphasis on providing practical skills valued by employers to combat this issue. It’s already substantial offerings for training in employable skills has increased considerably 1994/5.¹⁰⁴ These services provided by the Gurdwara are not simply for the Sikh community, anyone is welcome.¹⁰⁵ An example of the open door approach employed by the Sikh community is the sewing lessons, which the week we interviewed them contained 40 women twenty five percent of whom were Muslim.

Practical skills are taught at the Gurdwara through tasks such as helping with maintenance. They also have homework classes and computing facilities, which for the past seven years have been used to run computer classes for all ages. This more practical education of the wider community is not mentioned in the 1994/5 report. The Sikh community has always had a very practical and open door approach to education and so we can derive from this not that the educational facilities provided by the Gurdwara have only recently become available to the wider public, but that the local community have become simply become more aware and more comfortable in using them.

¹⁰² 1994/5 Report, p. 29.

¹⁰³ Office for National Statistics, ‘Beeston and Holbeck: Time Since Last Worked’.

Available from:

<http://neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/dissemination/LeadTableView.do?a=7&b=6174921&c=Beeston+and+Holbeck&d=14&e=16&g=382243&i=1001x1003x1004&m=0&r=1&s=1304959132429&enc=1&dsFamilyId=105> [accessed: 09/05/2011].

¹⁰⁴ Interviewee E.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

Conclusion

This section concludes the report by exploring the transcending changes and trends emerging from the previously discussed themes.

Community Cohesion

The greatest and most important contribution is towards the generation of community cohesion. Though there remains division across the community, especially in relation to newly arrived black African migrants, cohesion has increased greatly since the 1994/5 report, and there is now a conscious effort across the religious community to ensure it is developed further. By far the most significant change in this field has been the massive increase in interfaith dialogue, which was noted as being almost entirely absent in the 1994/5 report. Interfaith dialogue driven by the religious community has helped develop genuinely strong relationships across ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds, and break down the 'strangeness' of the other. Community cohesion is also generated through the services, amenities and opportunities religious institutions provide in the community and through the role religions play in linking disparate community elements together by facilitating contact and communication that would otherwise not be possible, either because of language barriers, negative preconceptions, or simply an unawareness of other parties. Intrafaith is also a valuable contributor to societal cohesion, and is likely to become especially important in incorporating the currently isolated black Christian churches recently established in the region.

In a community home to a transitory and richly diverse demography such as Beeston, community cohesion is absolutely vital in generating positive change and progression.¹⁰⁶ Religion is a universal system, and every faith is capable of bringing together otherwise disparate elements of the community, and entering into positive relations with fellow faith groups present in the area in a way that other systems and institutions cannot easily achieve. This is what is occurring in Beeston today, and is undoubtedly the most significant contribution religious institutions provide to the wider community.

Supporting Education

Education, seen by many interviewees to be of vital importance in regenerating the Beeston area, is a primarily secular, state issue. However, religious institutions provision of computing facilities, homework clubs, language lessons, and educational systems generally supportive of studious and respectful attitudes emphasising the value of learning undoubtedly contribute to the success of children in both their secular education, and their wider learning experience. Such an approach is also valuable in generating individuals capable of offering valuable contributions to the development of the area themselves. Educational services are not limited to children, and in many cases are not limited to religious adherents, but open to the general population. Facilities such as Building Blocks and the Hamara Centre, secular developments that also offer amenities and services to the wider community are closely linked to religious institutions, and religious volunteers play a significant role in ensuring provisions such as the Building Blocks nursery are able to function.

¹⁰⁶ Government Paper. (2008). *Face to Face and Side by Side*. (Communities and Local Government). Available from: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/898668.pdf> [accessed: 12/5/2011].

Provision of Services and Facilities

As well as educational amenities, general facilities and services such as sporting clubs, youth organisations, provision of food and cultural events help generate activities for the community to participate in and ensure time is spent productively, as well as assisting those in need. The Sikh Gurdwara's provision of food to the homeless is just one example. These kinds of provisions greatly enhance the wellbeing of the community and help establish social relations between individuals who might otherwise remain isolated. The South Asian community has continued to expand in number and establish itself socio-economically since 1994/5, and as a consequence both Muslim and Sikh institutions have been able to greatly increase these kinds of provisions, which inevitably require facilities and financial backing to run effectively. Whilst the Christian community has suffered diminishing numbers in line with the national trend of declining attendance figures, its long-established presence in the area means it also continues to offer such opportunities; however, inevitably these have reduced in number.

Dynamic Demography

Beeston's demographic is dynamic and diverse, more so than in 1994/5, with the addition of black African and Eastern European migrants in recent years. The effect of Beeston's migrant population on religiosity and diversity of religion is clearly evidenced in our research. The recent increase in African and Eastern European migrants, which has effectively revitalized a largely struggling Christian community, has seemingly increased the overall religiosity within the area. The dynamic nature of Beeston's demographic, due largely to the high turnover of migrants caused by re-housing and deportation, means that the current rise in Beeston's religiosity being experienced is likely to fluctuate along with the transitory demographic. This is especially true of the recent revival of Christian institutions, dependent

on the current short-term migrant influx which is yet to demonstrate any permanent transformation of the static local population.

Adaptation, Development and Regeneration

Beeston's provision of religious buildings and space is reflective of its demographic. The Christian community, though currently enjoying the benefits of increased congregation numbers, has been forced to make difficult decisions over partnerships, closures and sales of buildings in order to sustain itself. This has demonstrated the value of intrafaith relations in sustaining the Christian community's amenities, with ecumenism playing a large role in enabling many Christian bodies to continue during these difficult times. Effort is being sought to hold on to influential buildings such as the Holy Spirit Church, symbolic of Christian and English heritage in the region, which may have to close as religious spaces if solutions cannot be found.

Conversely, the South Asian community, which has continued to successfully expand since 1994/5 has been able, in the case of the Muslim community, to begin two purpose-build mosques, whilst the Sikh community has continued to develop and improve their single-site Gurdwara. This, along with the increase in children attending *madrassas* and the arrival of black Christian migrants suggests the increasing secularisation reported and advanced by scholars such as Bruce is in fact limited to traditional, largely white British Christian institutions, at least within Beeston.¹⁰⁷ The dynamic nature of Beeston's Christian population makes predicting future trends difficult, as much is dependent on whether newly arrived migrants establish a permanent residency in the area. However, the continued success of the

¹⁰⁷ S. Bruce. (2011). *Secularization: In Defence of an Unfashionable Theory*. (London: Oxford University Press), p.54.

South Asian community over the past 17 years suggests that it is a trend likely to continue, suggesting an increase in South Asian religious institutions and population in future years.

The increasing affluence of the South Asian religious community in particular plays a significant role in regenerating Beeston. The new mosques for example, will provide both new amenities in the area, and new, high quality modern buildings in areas which were previously considered run down and in need of revitalisation. Given the cuts in public spending expected due to the economic downturn, the ability of the religious community to finance projects capable of renovation in the area will be vital in ensuring the area is capable of sustaining continued renewal, a valuable contribution to the wider community, which will benefit from such investment. The possibility was mentioned that the new facilities will draw in both business and new residents, which will also contribute to the economic affluence of the area.

Final Thoughts

Our research has demonstrated that religion and religious institutions in Beeston remain a significant force for positive change and development in the community. Beeston's religious institutions form a vital part of its community, and their contributions – both direct and indirect - to the development of the region are clear. Without their presence many of the area's greatest assets would not function as they do today, and without their contribution to community cohesion through voluntary work, interfaith activity and the connecting of otherwise disparate or isolated aspects of the population, Beeston would represent a far more divided community.

Despite the restrictions of our research methods and time limitations, the information gained during this report is believed to provide detailed and accurate analysis of religious institutions

within Beeston, and the changes that have occurred since the 1994/5 report, as well as some attempt at identifying possible future trends. It is sincerely hoped that the findings included will be of some value to the community of Beeston in identifying areas of opportunity or necessary of development, as well as highlighting achievements in the past 17 years.

Interview Coding

Interviewees have been coded based on; Personal Faith (if applicable), Gender, Ethnicity, Age. Additional Information has been added where appropriate.

Age is coded as follows:

Age Brackets:

24-29 = X

30-59 = Y

60+ = Z

Interviewee A - Christian; Male; White; Z

Interviewee B - Christian; Male; White; Y

Interviewee C - Christian; Female; White; Y

Interviewee D - Muslim; Male; South Asian; Y

Interviewee E - Sikh; Male; South Asian; Z

Interviewee F - Female; White; Y

Interviewee G - Female; White; Y

Interviewee H - Male; White; Y

Interviewee I - Muslim; Male; South Asian; Y

Interviewee J - Female; White; Y

Interviewee K - Male; South Asian; Y

Interviewee L - Religious; Male; White; Y

Interviewee M - Female; White; Interfaith Figure; Z

Interviewee O - Christian; Male/Female; White; Y

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