

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education
21st June 2017
Report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Families and
Communities
Religions are not Monoliths

1 Purpose of Report

1.1 To share information about the joint AREIAC NASACRE conference

2 Summary

2.1 AREIAC and NASACRE plan a joint annual one day conference on a specific theme.

3 Recommendation

3.1 That members receive the report and note its contents.

4 Background

4.1 Emma Jardine-Phillips attended the joint AREIAC NASACRE conference entitled 'Religions are not Monoliths' in Birmingham on the 6th March.

4.2 A summary of the event is attached.

5 Equal Opportunities

5.1 This report has been prepared in accordance with the County Council's policies on equal opportunities.

6 Financial implications

6.1 There are no immediate financial implications

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The Religions are not Monoliths conference, held jointly with AREIAC in March, was held at the Ibis Hotel in Birmingham.

Delegates received a warm welcome from Lesley Prior and Jane Brook and thanked Dilwyn Hunt for his work in organising the event.

The first speaker was Dr Abdullah Trevathan. Dr Trevathan discussed 'Islam beyond the Monolith: a more nuanced understanding. To be Monolithic is to be inflexible in viewpoint and Dr Trevathan spoke about the differences between Classical and Modernist Islam and the difficulties that each may present for the believer and society. Dr Trevathan is currently a Senior Lecturer in Education at Roehampton University and has been widely published. He was also Headteacher of the Islamia Primary School, the first state funded VA Muslim School in the UK from 1998 to 2006.

The Revd Dr Robert Paul Reiss spoke next. He spoke about Liberal Christianity: Exploring Credible Belief. He spoke of the challenges to Christianity including the influence of science and the importance and interpretation of biblical texts. Revd Dr Reiss is the author of 'Sceptical Christianity' which considers the main reasons behind people's religious scepticism and posits the question: What can plausibly be believed today?

In the context of the current educational climate (British Values and Prevent) much of what was discussed at the conference was enlightening and also simplified my understanding of what is a huge issue. In terms of RE it made me think about the best approaches to take in the classroom to ensure that religion is more about personable/human experience and not just about ritual buildings, books etc.

Evaluations were excellent and it is hoped that the collaboration between NASACRE and AREIAC will continue and other similar joint events will take place in the future.

Summaries of the presentations by the two keynote speakers, Dr Abdullah Trevathan and Bob Reiss, have been prepared by Dilwyn Hunt.