

Bi-monthly Informative Publication No 2

Bulletin for Inter-religious Cooperation

Publisher: Macedonian Centre for International Cooperation (MCIC); Macedonian Orthodox Church (MOC), Islamic Community in Macedonia (IC), Catholic Church (CC), Jewish Community in Macedonia (JC), Evangelistic-Methodist Church (EMC).

Publishing Council: Aleksandar Krzalovski (MCIC), Goko Gorgevski (MOC), Metin Izeti (IC), Don Mato Jakoivic (CC), Viktor Mizrahi (JC), Milica Poprizova (EMC).

Editor-in-chief: Aleksandar Krzalovski

Macedonian Language Adviser: Daniel Medaroski

Designed by: Koma

Number of copies: 500

Printed by: Boro grafika

Supported by: Norwegian Church Aid and Danish Church Aid.

Reg. No. 02-161/2

The greatest and the happiest people are the people who live long and do good, and the most awful are the people who live long and do evil.

(Mohamed a.s.)

Better understanding of other religions

The Dean of the Faculty of Islamic Studies (FIS) delivered a lecture at the Orthodox Faculty, and the Dean of the Orthodox Faculty (OF) gave a lecture at the FIS. Likewise, exchange visits between the students of the theological education institutions took place.

For the first time, the Dean of FIS, Ismail Bardhi, delivered a lecture at the OF on the topic "Koran Exegesis". On this occasion, the Dean of OF, Jovan Takovski made the following statement: "This is something new, but it is a very good way to get acquainted with other religions. It contributes to the better co-existence in Macedonia. When there is dialogue, there is a space for understanding".

The reciprocal lecture by the Dean of OF, Jovan Takovski, was delivered at FIS on 15 March, 2004 on the topic "Definition, subject and division of the dogmatisms, with short

presentation of the trinity and Christology dogma". The lecture provoked big interest among the students at this Faculty.

"This is a positive step forward for all of us. Even though the time was short, we still managed to pose different questions to the Dean of OF. The interest expressed by us was really great", said Zuhri Veseli, a student at the FIS.

The program foresees exchange visits by students at the faculties and the theological high schools. On the first visit, on 22 March, 2004, 20 students from OF to FIS and the Islamic High School "Isa Beg Medresa" had an opportunity to meet professors, students, as well as to visit the premises of these education institutions.

The Dean of FIS, Ismail Bardhi, delivered a welcoming speech and in which he said: "The Islamic religion does not teach us not to live together with the Christians; on the contrary it recommends living together with them".

The students shared their impressions from the visits: "We have never before visited FIS and Medresa. We had been considering a visit like this in the past, but we lacked suitable contacts. Now, we have a chance to put forward a proposal to our colleagues for more intensive communication like, for example going to movies together, exchanging students' newsletters and texts. We are the ones who believe in this, we are equal here", said Aleksandar Zasov, a student at OF who at the same time holds the post of Secretary to the Students' Society at OF. The visit was returned by the students from FIS to OF and the Orthodox High School on 29 April, 2004.

Prepared by: Daniel Medaroski and Gramoz Sabani

Activities at Theological Faculties

Lecture at the Faculty of Islamic Studies

The Dean of the Orthodox Faculty delivered a lecture at the Faculty of Islamic Studies. Along with the lecture given by the Dean of the Faculty of Islamic Studies at OF, it was marked the start of the exchanging of lectures projects

As part of the program Bridging Religions in Macedonia, on 15 March, 2004, Dr. Jovan Takovski gave a lecture at the Faculty of Islamic Studies on the topic "Definition, subject and division of the dogma with short presentation of the Trinity and Christology dogma". The lecture was attended by students of the 4-th study year.

In his opening statement, the Dean Jovan Takovski expressed his appreciation for the given opportunity to realize this kind of exchange of lectures and the opportunity for better mutual understanding and cooperation between the two Faculties.

At the same time, he pointed out that the inter-religious cooperation represents a new challenge to everybody. In conclusion, he commended the initiative for cooperation.

Furthermore, an elaboration on the definition of the word “dogma”, its subject and the division of the dogma was offered. The word “dogma” is with Greek origin and its meaning is “confirmed truth”. The religious thought is a thought revealed by God.

In the lecture, some significant moments from the lives of the prophets Noah, Jacob, Moses, Jesus were analyzed, as well as the Trinity and Christology dogma.

Once the lecture was concluded, students posed different questions with regard to the subject.

In the students view, exchange of lectures is very important since it lays foundations for mutual trust and respect and gives opportunity for exchange of opinions.

Prepared by: Minur Hasani

The second cycle of lectures

Following the first cycle of lectures delivered by the Deans of the Theological Faculties, professors from both institutions completed the second cycle of lectures

The second cycle of lectures was opened up on 1 April, 2004 at OF, with the lecture by Dr. Metin Izeti on the topic “Islamic dogmatism-definition of the Islamic dogmatism and division”.

Further on 21 April at the premises of FIS, Dr. Petko Zlateski professor from OF gave a lecture on the topic “Parallels between the moral law in the Old Testament and the New Testament”.

The lectures proved to be very interesting for students, primarily because it contribute to broadening the knowledge of students.

The third cycle of reciprocal lectures started on 13 May, with the lecture delivered by Dr. Ahmet Sherif, professor from FIS, on the topic “Islamic culture and civilization”, at OF. As a follow up, on 19 May, Dr. Gjoko Gjorgevski, professor from OF, gave a lecture, at the premises of FIS.

New offices at the Theological Faculties

Equipping the offices at the Orthodox Faculty and the Faculty of Islamic Studies

Two offices that will be used for the implementation of the activities of the program-Bridging the Religions (PRM) have been opened. As part of the program, two project officers responsible for the coordination of the program activities have been employed. The equipping of the offices is part of the project "Technical support to the Theological Faculties". The goal of this project is to organizationally support the faculties and the implementation of program activities.

The newly opened offices are completely furnished with office equipment, computer and internet access. They primarily target the needs of students in terms of their mutual cooperation and participation in the program. Offices will also be made available for the implementation of any other activities planned and conducted by students.

The Conference on Religious Pluralism held in Kotor

A conference under the title "Religious Pluralism" took place in Kotor, from 22-25 March, 2004. It was organized by the History of Religion Department at the Oslo University, with the financial support of the Norwegian Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

The conference was attended by experts in the field from Norway, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia and Montenegro. MCIC's representative also participated at the conference.

The goal of this conference was bring together a group of researchers interested in the role of the religion in the modern society, i.e. the role of the religion in the creation of the national and ethnic identity; education policy; topics related to holy objects; inter-religious cooperation. The goal of the conference was to enable free and comprehensive exchange of knowledge and ideas.

Mr. Jan Brado, a Chief of the Cabinet for religious issues in the Western Balkans within the Norwegian Ministry for Foreign Affairs, opened the conference with an introductory statement. At the conference, participants exchanged experiences about the state of affairs in regard to the religious issues in various countries.

Twenty scientists participated at this scientific gathering, out of which fifteen from different Balkan countries and five from Norway. The Norwegian group was comprised of three junior researchers currently working on projects in Albania, Macedonia, Kosovo and Bosnia and two senior researchers working on projects related to religious pluralism.

Several studies related to the role and the impact of religion in these countries were presented at the conference. In short the religious situation from various countries were elaborated. Once the lectures were concluded, a debate unfolded on the role of the religion in the society.

Different methodologies applied in the preparation of studies were compared in order to figure out the best ways for gaining better quality and more reliable data.

The conference was an opportunity for exchanging information concerning religion from scientific point of view. It allowed for meeting scientists who are working in the area of sociology of religion and their presentations of different aspects of religion in their societies. Thus, the conference was an opportunity for mutual introduction, with the ongoing activities in the participating countries, and creating conditions for mutual cooperation between scientists of Sociology of religion.

A proposal for further cooperation was put forward, in which cooperation between scientists will entail many different ways like: conferences; creating an internet network that would enable the scientists to communicate with each other about religious events and news and to create regional researches; translations of comparative studies in English language. In this context, an interesting suggestion was put forward for exchanging lecturers within these countries.

The following discussion topics for the next meeting were recommended: the role of religion in civic society and politics; dynamics of religious and economic development; laws of religion; religious dialogue and religious symbols.

Prepared by: Dervisa Hadzic

Visit to the Faculty of Islamic Studies

The students at the Orthodox Faculty paid a visit to the FIS and the Islamic High School "Isa Beg Medresa"

On 22 March, 2004, within the scope of program Bridging Religions in Macedonia, a group of students, accompanied by the Vice-Dean Dr. Jovan Belcovski and representatives from the faculty administration headed by the Project Coordinator Dejan Dimitrijevski paid a visit to the Faculty of Islamic Studies and the Islamic High School "Isa Beg Medresa".

The first was to FIS where we received a warm welcome. For all of us this was a wonderful moment filled up with curiosity about something new, a wish for meeting people with same needs and interests like us. The initial impression was that the people who received us

were glowing with positive energy. With the joining of the respected Dean Ismail Bardhi the feeling was complete.

At the very beginning of the meeting, Dean Bardhi gave a short elaboration on the background of FIS and in open discussion with the students expressed his appreciation about the visit and the given opportunity for open discussion and cooperation. In his elaboration he pointed out the positive aspects, as well as the problems they come across in FIS. We and the Vice-dean of the OF, Dr. Jovan Balcevski followed the elaboration with due attention and posed questions in regard to the raised issues and concerns. Subsequently, a discussion unfolded and the main topic of the discussion was, above all, the science, as well as the modern life and religion.

We were most politely shown around the premises of FIS and we found the library most interesting. We were accompanied by students of FIS, who were glad to show us their library and we talked about many different topics. In the very well equipped library, we were surprised by the choice of literature available in many languages and particularly by the old manuscripts.

During the time spent together we got to know each other better, exchange opinions about further cooperation and planned our next visit.

Following the visit to FIS, we continued to the Islamic High School "Isa Beg Medresa". We noted that the life of the pupils, the accommodation in the boarding school and the code of behavior are in many respects similar to those in the Orthodox High School. The willingness for communication and cooperation was noticeable in the high school, as well. Thanks to the programe we have an open opportunity for mutual cooperation in the future. We took our leave in hope for next meeting. Filled with pleasant impressions from the visit, we headed back to our faculty talking about the visit, the new friends and experiences.

Prepared by: Dejan Dimitrijevski

A welcome that deserves every respect

The students of FIS returned the visit to the Orthodox Faculty and the Orthodox High School

On 29 March, 2004 Within the project "Visits to the Theological Schools", students and some of the professors of the Faculty for Islamic Studies paid a visit to the Orthodox Faculty "St. Kliment Ohridski" and the Orthodox High School.

They were received by Jovan Takovski the Dean of OF who delivered a welcoming for guests and pointed out the importance of this visit. In his view, the visit allowed for mutual introduction, therefore it contributed to raising mutual respect and subsequently, leads to better future in our country. Following the speech, guests from FIS had an opportunity to meet some students from OF, who showed them around the premises of the faculty, starting with the classrooms, cabinets, offices and finally, they had a chance to go through books and publications available in the faculty library.

The visit was wrapped up with a cocktail party that gave opportunity to get to know each other.

Once the visit was ended, students visited the Orthodox High School in Drachevo. There was a great enthusiasm and wish for mutual cooperation on the part of pupils and professors at the High School. The students were shown around the premises of the institution.

In the view of students of FIS, these visits allowed for closer contacts and mutual introduction with to students at OF and pupils at the high school. The students expressed their pleasure to the fact that one truth has finally come to light, the truth being that the cooperation between the religious communities is very easily attainable.

Students of FIS wish to extend their thanks to the MCIC personnel who, by the means of this Project, made the cooperation between the religious communities possible and gave a chance to the young people to get acquainted with each other better and exchange experiences.

Prepered by: Minur Hasani

Evangelic-Methodist Church

The World Ecumenical Praying Day of the Women

The World Ecumenical Praying Day of the Women (WEPDW) is an international movement of the religious women, regardless of their religious background.

Each year, a different country, in fact a different religious community (church) recommends a biblical theme for consideration. This year the honor to recommend a theme went to the sisters from Panama. The time of the service is set in each country; namely the first Friday in March, 24 hours without stop the sisters are at prayer, thus demonstrating their faith in the leadership of God of each nation, faith and culture.

The sisters from the Catholic Church, the Orthodox and the Evangelic-Methodist Church equally contributed to the preparation of the service. However, the unselfish contribution

by Miss. Sonja Karandzulovska from MOC to the artistic realization of this service must be emphasized. In order to capture the Panama mentality and customs, sisters made an effort to tailor costumes similar to the Panama traditional clothes. This year the WEPDW was conducted at the premises of the Catholic Church, which is always willing to open the doors for cooperation, socializing and celebrating the Savior and the God Jesus Christ. All the faithful people were invited to the service, regardless of their church affiliation, since God approves all spiritual activities of the faithful.

The faithful sisters from Panama sent out a message: "The women shape the world". How? "Almighty God, filled with love, we celebrate and glorify Thy name. You are the Alfa and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. We are grateful to you for this day, when we, the women from Panama, can celebrate your name in freedom – together with sisters and brothers from all over the world. We appeal to You, pray for Your blessing, Your mercy and Your grace. God, make us one in You. Help us be calm, open our souls for Thy word. Wake our desire to be here just for You".

Since one of the oldest crafts in Panama is pottery making, sisters from Panama made an excellent allegory. As the potter shapes the clay, the Spirit of God shapes our life. In that way, the women, the children, the men become one in the hands of God. Thus, God authorizes us to shape the spirit of the world, namely it makes us vessels worthy to be made of use. Let his name be glorified, now and forever, Amen.

Prepared by: Milica Poprizova

Commemorative Service in Honor of the President Boris Trajkovski

Selection from the commemorative service at the Evangelic-Methodist Church on the occasion of the death of our brother in Christ and President of Republic of Macedonia, Boris Trajkovski

In these hours of sorrow, our Church wishes to offer condolences to the wife, the children, brothers, the father, the parents-in-law as well as to the extended family of Boris Trajkovski. At the same time, we have the families of other victims on our minds; we entrust them in the hands of the Almighty and Benevolent God.

In these difficult times, we entrust the whole nation, as well as the authorities in the hands of God.

On many occasions, he voiced his feeling of God's presence. It is that very feeling that had made him firm and bold against the challenges, however unaware of the looming dangers.

In the First Corinthians' Book, Chapter 13 "On Love", that we have just read, it is said that we are not perfect in the love, unless we have been touched by the Love of God.

"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal". God is Love, God loves men, regardless of the nation, culture and faith affiliation. Boris chose to walk along the path of patience, reconciliation, the path of impartiality, the path of love. Let God make this peace and reconciliation endeavor, favored by our brother Boris, long-lasting.

The Episcopo Haynrih Bolter, at the death-bed of our brother Boris, offered prayer to the Almighty God, saying: "Eternal God, You shared with us the life of the President Boris Trajkovski. Before he became ours, he had been yours. We are grateful for everything Boris did for his family, for the Church and for the nation. At this moment, when we return Boris Trajkovski in your bosoms, comfort us in our solitude and give us strength to face the future without fear. We pray for the family, for all the friends near and far, we pray for the country and for the Macedonian people, in the name of Jesus Christ, our God." Amen.

Reverend Mihael Cekov

Governing Board and the Publishing Council of the PRM

The meeting of the Governing Board of the Program PRM

The Governing Board of the Program – Bridging Religions in Macedonia (PRM) held the second meeting

On 17 March, 2004 the second meeting of the Governing Board of the program PRM took place in MCIC. The meeting was attended by Ratomir Grozdanovski – Macedonia Orthodox Church (MOC); Jovan Takovski, the Dean of the Orthodox Faculty "St. Climent Ohridski"; Jakup Selimovski – the Islamic Community in Republic of Macedonia (IC); Ismail Bradhi, the Dean of the Faculty of Islamic Studies – Skopje (FIS); Spaso Ristov – the Catholic Church in Republic of Macedonia (CCM); Victor Mizrahi – the Jewish Community in Republic of Macedonia (JC); Mihail Cekov – Evangelic-Methodist Church in Republic of Macedonia (EMC); Fransoa Perez – Norwegian Church Aid (NCA); Aleksandar Krzalovski – Macedonian Centre for International Cooperation (MCIC). The meeting was opened with looking at the minutes from the first meeting of the Governing Board.

The agenda of the meeting was the following: report on the ongoing activities of the program PRM, changes to the Program; relations with the media; follow up activities.

The third meeting of the Governing Board of the Program – Bridging Religions in Macedonia is scheduled for May. The progress of the Program, as well as follow up activities planned to be carried out within the Program PRM will be on the agenda of the third meeting.

The meeting of the Publishing Board of the Program PRM

The Publishing Board of the Program - Bridging Religions in Macedonia held the second meeting

On 17 March, 2004 The Publishing Board of the program PRM held its second meeting in MCIC,. The meeting was attended by Gjoko Gjorgjevski – Macedonian Orthodox Church (MOC); Metin Izeti – Islamic Community in RM (IC); Marjan Ristov – Catholic Church in Macedonia (CCM); Victor Mizrahi – Jewish Community in RM (JCRM); Milica Poprizova – Evangelic-Methodist Church (EMC); Aleksandar Krzalovski – MCIC; Dejan Dimitrijević Project Officer at the Orthodox Faculty; Irsal Jakupi – Project Officer at the Faculty of Islamic Studies; Miodrag Kolic – MCIC; Dervisha Hadzic – MCIC.

The minutes from the first meeting of the Publishing Board were examined and the agenda containing following items was proposed: report on the ongoing activities of the Program PRM; changes to the program; operations of the Info-office; follow up activities.

Planned activities

The implementation of new projects within the Program Bridging Religions in Macedonia is set to begin in May

Within the project - Seminars and workshops, No. 04-10 PRM 202, the workshop on the topic “Reform of the religious education within the Islamic Religious Community” is planned to take place in May.

The Days of the Religious Communities are to be organized in the same month. The project foresees introduction of churches and religious communities, as well as their humanitarian and charity organizations to the general public. The Fair is planned to be comprised of Forum part and Exhibition part. The Fair will be located at the premises of the ARM Hall.

Within the project – Project Cycle Management (PCM), No. 04-10 MPC 201, a training on PCM designed for the religious communities will be organized in Krushevo, at the end of May and the beginning of June. The goal of the project is to strengthen the knowledge and the skills for management of the projects, starting with the initial planning, the implementation and the final assessment of the impact of the project. The training is

intended for religious communities and religious groups, as well as for incorporated humanitarian organizations and associations.

Evangelic Church in Macedonia

The role of religion manifested through the care for the people

The human spiritual life is complex and diverse in its nature. It is shaped under the influence of religion, moral code, science, philosophy, art etc. All the manifestations are similar, yet there are some differences. It is interesting to note that each of these manifestations, more or less, is similar to religion. There was a tendency in the course of the history by people, especially some scientists, not only to identify but also to replace religion with some of abovementioned activities. For instance, the attempt to replace faith of the people with dialectical materialism (this philosophy was put on the same pedestal as religion). Another example is the attempt by the rationalists in the 18 and 19 century to replace religion with moral code or art in the 18 and with the science in the 19 century.

The Evangelic Church is one of the Evangelic-Protestant churches in the world. The Evangelic Church in Macedonia (ECRM) is relatively new movement and as such it has been active in the recent few years in Macedonia. However, on a world level it is not so new movement. This movement is part of the International Association of the World and European Evangelic Churches. Number of its members is up to 350-400 million and it is one of the fastest growing church movements. Together with the other protestant churches in the world, this number raises up to one billion followers.

Most of the religious groups have put charity work on their agenda as a result of the existing poverty in each society. We acknowledge the fact that this problem should primarily be tackled by governments. Nevertheless, the demand being huge and sometimes urgent, religious associations can not stay blind and deaf to the reality surrounding them. Although each individual, a member of a religious community is supposed to help any person in need, we believe that the organized manner in providing help and assistance to the needy yields better results.

The care for the poor and the disadvantaged pervades the Bible and it is one of the main responsibilities of the Evangelic Church. In that spirit, the humanitarian campaign "Agape" has been established and accounts for the most of the humanitarian activities in the last few years. The huge assistance in food, clothes, medicines and other basic products distributed to the refugees during the refugee crisis is worth to be noted. Thousands of families accepted the assistance and some of them were accommodated as well.

Furthermore, in the course of the internal conflicts in Macedonia, the displaced people were equally provided with help regardless of their religious or ethnic background. Moreover, assistance is delivered to large number of socially deprived families, on a daily basis. The public dining room, has been functioning for several years, is providing one hot meal a day for poor, mostly Roma children. And this is not all. It is our policy to take care first and foremost of our closest. Namely, we have accepted the responsibility to offer help to those members in our community who would find it hard to get through without it.

The church must recognize the fact that apart from the spiritual need, the people have physical needs as well. Activities directed towards meeting the needs, both spiritual and physical, should be balanced. Namely, the church must not turn into inaccessible spiritual mystic community nor into social club.

The premises of the ECRM can be found at St. Franklin Roosevelt No. 16, 1000 Skopje. For any information, contact ECRM on the following telephone number (02) 3111-457, from 09:00 to 16:00h, every working day.

Prepared by: Mirco Andreev
President of the ECRM

New-Apostolic Church

The New-Apostolic Church is an international church that was first founded in 1832 in England. The New-Apostolic Church in Macedonia is a component of the New-Apostolic Church – International. It has been present in Macedonia since 1993; the establishment of this church was fostered by some officials from Republic of Germany who were working in Macedonia. As part of activities of the church, the publication “Our family” is released on a bi-monthly basis.

With regard to the humanitarian help, the New-Apostolic Church in Macedonia provides help mainly for the children and the elderly people. It has realized many humanitarian actions so far, like for example, help and assistance for the Children Clinic in Skopje, the Institution for elderly and weak people in Skopje, the Institution for elderly people in Prilep etc. The New-Apostolic Church is situated at St. Njegosheva No. 24, 1000 Skopje. For any information, you can call (02) 3082-997, on working days.

Prepered by: Stojan Manevski

The MCIC's Governing Board, at the third meeting on 6 April, 2004, approved the changes to the project - Inter-religious Calendars, No. 03-10 PRM 302. Also, at the fourth meeting, the Governing Board approved eight projects as part of the Program - Bridging Religions in Macedonia (PRM): Visits to religious objects and services, No. 04-10 PRM 102; Days of the religious communities, No. 04-10 PRM 103; Summer camps, No. 04-10 PRM 104; Training on the Project Cycle management. No. 04-10 PRM 201; Workshops, meetings and seminars, No. 04-10 PRM 202; Seminar on the topic Inter-religious dialogue, No. 04-10 PRM 203; Address Book of the religious communities, No.04-10 PRM 301; Comparative studies and translations, No. 04-10 PRM 302.

Registered religious communities and religious groups in Macedonia

- 1. Macedonian Orthodox Church**
Boul. Partizanski Odredi 12, Skopje
- 2. Islamic Religious Community**
St. Chairska 52, Skopje
- 3. Catholic Church**
St. Risto Shishkov 31, Skopje
- 4. Jewish Community in RM**
St. Borka Taleski 31, Skopje
- 5. Evangelistic-Methodist Church in RM**
St. Debarca 9, Skopje
- 6. Christian Adventist Church**
- 7. Baptist Church**
- 8. Jehovah Witnesses**
- 9. Islamic Erenleric Tarikan Religious Community in RM**
- 10. Satia Sai Centre**
- 11. Vaishnav Religious Community**
- 12. Pre-Christian Community – “Universal Life”**
- 13. Bektashi Community in RM**
- 14. Evangelic Church in RM**
- 15. Christian Church - “The Word of Hope”**
- 16. The Church of God in RM**
- 17. Christian Religious Group - “New Hope”**
- 18. Religious Group Christian Church – “The Voice of God”**
- 19. International Church of Christ”, Skopje**
- 20. Autonomous Church of Christ**
- 21. New-Apostles Church in Macedonia**
- 22. Evangelic-Congress Church**
- 23. Christian Pentecostal Church**