

Report on the third
Oxford Muslim-Christian Summer School

16th – 23rd August, 2017



The event

The 2017 Oxford Muslim-Christian Summer School was the third such event organised by the [Centre for Muslim-Christian Studies](#), Oxford, in association with [Ebrahim College](#) and the [Islamic College for Advanced Studies](#), London. **8 Christians** and **9 Muslims** from various traditions shared in 7 days of intensive study exploring sacred texts, shared history and contemporary issues. The residential programme at St Stephen's House, Oxford, offered the participants, who are all UK-based theological students or early career faith leaders, a unique opportunity to get to know one another over meals, on excursions (including punting on the river during which the school director fell in!) and during free time. The more serious side included lectures and tutorials led by Christian and Muslim academics along with workshops facilitated by [A Rocha](#), [TearFund](#) and [Islamic Relief](#), and visits to a local mosque and churches. There was also a reunion day when 9 of our alumni from 2015 and 2016 joined us to share their memories and subsequent experiences. This year's cohort is now keen to meet next year's – a pattern which is becoming an established part of the programme. The school, which costs over £20,000 to run, was generously funded by various trusts and by student contributions of £200 each. The testimonials in this report bear witness to the students' gratitude to the donors.

The aim

The aim of the summer school is for Muslims and Christians to learn about each other together; not avoiding or denying **differences** and **difficult topics** but addressing them with gentleness and respect; seeking to understand before seeking to be understood; speaking positively of our own faith rather than speaking critically of the other; so **equipping these emerging faith leaders to live together well**. However, the summer school itself is just the beginning. The purpose of the programme is that these emerging faith leaders will keep in touch with one another as they move into various careers within their **faith communities** and will start a **network** that participants of future Summer Schools can join.

Student testimonials

The Oxford Muslim-Christian summer school has forever changed how I view my own faith, and that of my Muslim friends and family. It has genuinely been one of the best experiences of my academic career—I can never thank you enough for making this experience possible for me.
(Christian)

Thank you for the best week I have spent in education! I hope the relationships we have built will last long into the future and we can support one another in our respective fields. I have learnt so much about myself through the summer school and have found confidence to speak about my own faith in a positive way. (Muslim)

Inter-faith dialogue is all a bit wishy-washy, isn't it? I used to think so. It seemed a futile attempt at squaring the circle. This summer school has helped me see otherwise. I've appreciated teachers stating clearly and honestly beliefs they hold about my faith which I find offensive. Without compromising our own faiths, we've been able to listen and learn from one another.
(Christian)

I thank all of the trusts that contributed towards this amazing initiative. Without your generous contribution none of this would have been possible. (Muslim)

The opportunity to learn from and learn about Islam is one that I would never otherwise have had. This week has been so valuable in my journey of Christian faith and has given me vision for the future, to work within interfaith mission. I wish that everyone who was training in their faith community had a similar opportunity.
(Christian)

The reunion



As in previous years a **reunion weekend** will be held in Oxford 8th – 10th December. The students will give presentations of projects which they are working on in pairs following the summer school. It will also give an important opportunity to cement their friendships and discuss how they can continue to cooperate together in the future. The reunion is a vital part of the process of building an alumni community.

Future plans



It is now hoped that funding will be found to continue running the Oxford summer school annually. As many theological students do not have the resources to be able to pay the full cost of such a programme, the support of charitable trusts remains essential. It would be

particularly helpful to secure funding for a three to five year period to ensure the longevity of the programme. At the same time CMCS would like to encourage other Christian and Muslim institutions to partner together to run similar schools in other parts of the country drawing on the experience and curriculum developed in Oxford.



Thank you

The Oxford Muslim-Christian Summer School is a real opportunity to contribute towards improving relationship and understanding between the Muslim and Christian communities in Great Britain. We are extremely grateful for all the funding received which made this programme possible and look forward to developing it further in partnership with our sponsors.



<http://cmcsxford.org.uk/studying/summer-courses/>

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Photographs by [John Cairns](#)