



isay:usay:wesay

talking pictures : young Christians and Muslims express their beliefs through art



Diocese of Bristol



The logo for 'isay:' features the word 'isay' in a bold, lowercase sans-serif font. The letter 'i' is colored bright pink, while 's', 'a', and 'y' are black. A pink colon follows the 'y'.

The Christian and Muslim young people
who took part in this project worked
separately with an artist of their faith.

Muslims:

In most Islamic art humans cannot be depicted; idol worship is forbidden. One interpretation is that this is due to a belief that only Allah can create, so to copy the act of creation of the human form is to try to be Allah which is not allowed (haram).

Some images of humans may be allowed but this is not widespread, and often the facial features will be omitted out of respect to Allah.

Muslims:

This restriction has resulted in the heightened expertise of other aspects of artistic expression. Islamic art is therefore rich in the use of calligraphy, geometric designs called arabesques, depictions of nature and images of gardens of paradise.

Young Muslims involved in this project have abided by these rules to depict their faith. They have worked in acrylic paint on canvas to depict aspects of their faith that they felt most important. They have chosen images rich in symbolic meaning with an emphasis on the use of expressive colour to enhance this.





Rahma

My painting was inspired by how Islam grows rapidly like a tree; the branches on my tree express the different paths to reach in your life. Each branch leads to a different destination depending on how much you please Allah (*swat*) in this life.

In my painting I have used one of Allah's beautiful names. This name is painted in a bright yellow and reflects how bright and generous Allah (*swat*) is.

Islam is like a tree. Everybody starts as a bud and they gradually grow bigger. The more you please Allah, the bigger and the better you get. If you fall off the tree branch you start to shrink and rot - it's like falling onto the wrong path instead of the right one.



Sumaya

My picture represents the Bismillah that I say everyday. It means:

"In the name of God, most Gracious, most Compassionate"

I have painted it white to stand out in the darkness of the blue. This shows those words are the most important.

It reminds me that whatever I do is done for and because of Allah, the One who has created me.



Hanna

I think my painting is a good way of representing Islam because I tried my best not to use dark colours and instead went for light, bright colours. I did this because I want to show other religions that Islam is peaceful.

My art work is a mosque with a sunset behind. This inspired me because mosques are the place where we Muslims go to worship our God (Allah), and the sunset behind it is supposed to send the message that Islam is all about peace.

Christians:

In Christianity there are varying artistic traditions...

Some Protestant churches emphasise the simple and plain, and insist on a lack of visual imagery in keeping with their view that God is beyond human understanding. However, since Christians believe that God came to earth in the human form of Jesus, his image remains a focus for worship and artistic expression of belief in Christianity.

Christian artists have used the human form to express their understanding of theological truth since the 1st Century AD.

Christians:

The young Christians involved in this project were asked to remain within this tradition. They explored their own humanity, their relationship to God, and the extent to which God dwells within or outside them. They depicted their beliefs located within an image of themselves.

They drew around each other on large rolls of paper, superimposing electrical tape on their drawings to represent the boundaries between themselves and the world. To this they added symbols and colours resonant with their lives and their faith.





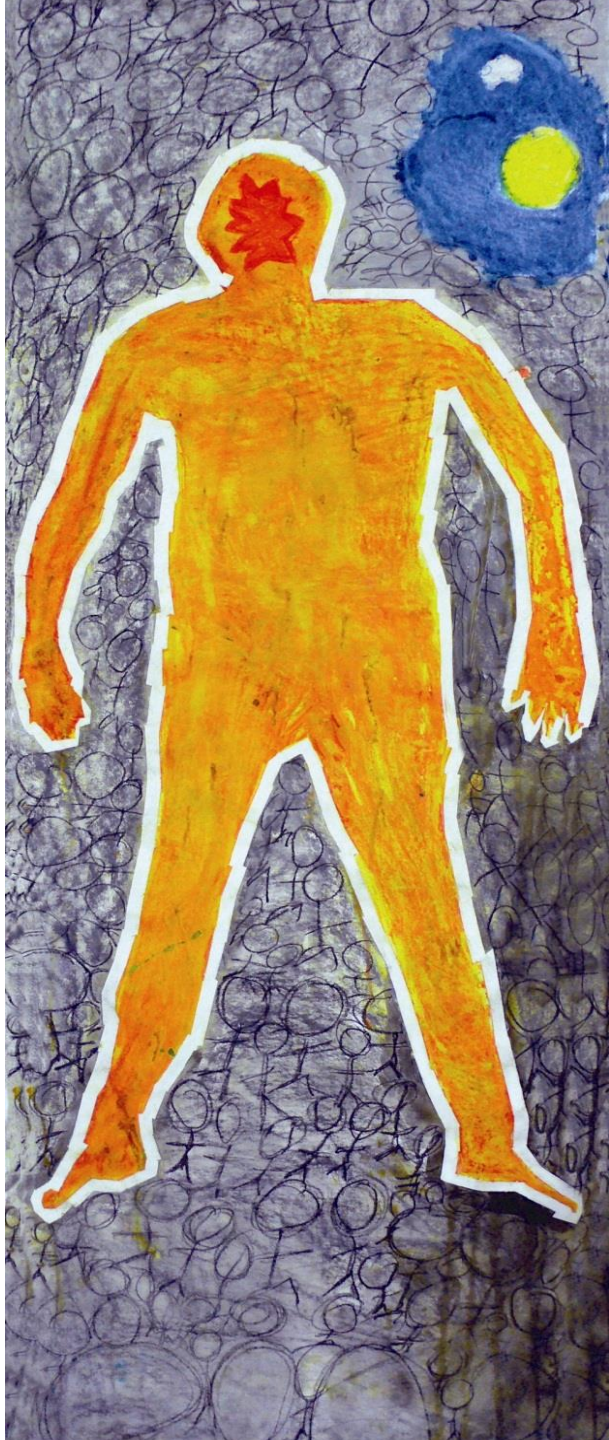
Miriam

St Werburgh's Methodist Church

My art shows that God's love and presence flows into me but there are tiny parts of me which reject this and won't let him in.

I have made it like this because this is my relationship with God - I let him in but I lock unwanted things away. I have used blue to show God's love, peace and presence and the red shows anger and things which show my rejection of Him.

I have painted a face at the bottom turning upwards towards God taking him in and another person turning away and rejecting God's love.



Reuben

St. Agnes Church

My art shows me as bright and yellow, feeling like I stand out from everyone else and the little bit of perfectness in the sky is created by God.

The dull greys show that I'm not fitting into the rest of the world. I feel I stand out too much. The little people show the rest of humanity and the patch of blue sunshine represents my occasional glimpse of paradise.

God is in my head helping me get by - the reason I have made it like this is because it is the way I feel.



Mitchell

St Luke's Church, Barton Hill

I feel the love of Jesus which is why I have shown a cross in the centre of my body. My art shows the Holy Spirit flowing through me and the green shows God's creation. I used the warm colours to show Jesus' love.

The love of God makes me feel safe from the problems of the world that I have shown with stripes and in darker colours.



Christians and Muslims

The two groups of young people met. They shared their initial works and explained why they had depicted their faith in that way. Together they made shared works of art. They worked together on the same canvas, taking turns to lead and direct.





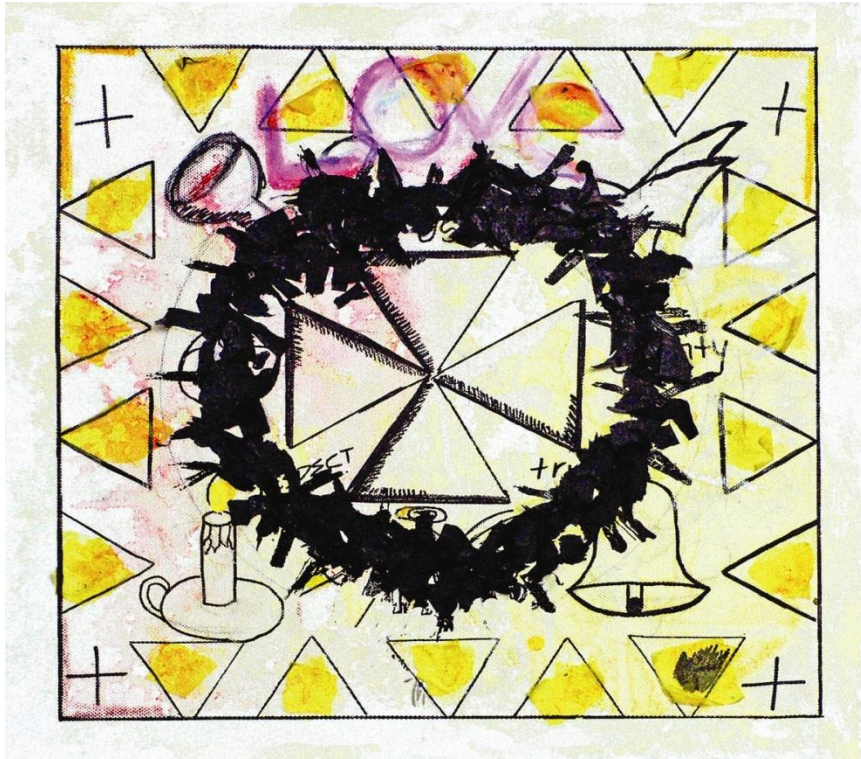
The Muslims led, explaining which of the external symbols associated with their faith they found most significant.

These were depicted by both groups in black pen on a series of five canvases, with further water resistant materials and colours added in layers to highlight the impact of the symbolic, and adding to the multi-layered experience of belief.





The Christians then led on a separate series of canvasses with the Muslims helping to depict the Christian faith and using the same working methods.





The process raised some interesting minor points of difference. This Christian panel shows an angel (the belief in angels is common to both faiths).

The Muslim young woman who drew this figure said she was unable to draw facial features.

Within the Christian tradition angels are shown with faces; out of respect to the artist who drew this angel, its face remains blank.



The process of creating shared works facilitated a depth of discussion: the canvasses record an increasing understanding of one another's faith via dialogue and the sharing of physical space.

wesay:

Christians and Muslims

The final phase was done in two large mixed groups.

During the usay: phase of the project the young people had begun to distil what they felt to be the essence of what was shared between the two faiths.

Their discussions focussed on the facts that:

- both Muslims and Christians believe in Allah or God
- both are people of prayer
- both believe the world was created and is sustained by God or Allah.

The young people decided to focus on the central text for prayer of each faith:

- the Al-Fathiya and the Lord's Prayer.

Both prayers have been written with a stick dipped in ink overlaid with wax resist and washes of transparent colour. The colours are descriptive and symbolic in turn. Cool and hot colours have been used - tones from the natural created world as given by God/Allah.

The Al-Fathiya is overlaid with a grid formation hinting at the patterning associated with Islamic art, its colours reminiscent of a tranquil garden. The Lord's Prayer is embedded in blazing colour, reminiscent of the tongues of flame associated with Pentecost.

For both scrolls it was decided to follow the Islamic traditions concerning no human depiction as the focus was on that which is shared: what do **we** say.



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ مَا كَانَ يَوْمَ الدِّينِ

لَهُ إِلَّا أَعْيُنُهُمْ تَتَوَلَّوْنَ الْكَافِرِينَ

أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ

وَرَسُولِهِ هُمُ الْمَكِيدُونَ

عَلَيْهِمْ وَعَلَى الْفَالِاقِينَ

In the name of Allah

the Beneficent, the Merciful

Praise be to Allah, the Creator and Sustainer of the Worlds

Most Gracious, Most Merciful

Master of the Day of Judgement

Thee do we worship and Thine aid we seek

Show us the straight way

The way of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy Grace

Those whose (portion) is not wrath and whose is not estrangement

Amen

Our Father
which art in heaven
hallowed be thy name
thy Kingdom come
thy will be done
in earth as it is in heaven
give us this day our daily bread
and forgive our trespasses
as we forgive those
who trespass against us
and lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil
for thine is the Kingdom
the power and the glory
forever and ever
amen

Staph

Staph

theysay:

Experiences

Whilst working together the young people discussed what it is like to be a person of faith in today's modern world.

All involved discovered that they shared some experiences of prejudice and bullying, both groups falling victim to name-calling because of their faith.

they:say:they:say

isay:usay:wesay:isay:
they:say:they:say:the
u:say:isay:usay:wesay
y:say:they:say:they:sa
terrorist
y:they:say:they:say:th
bible basher
ey:say:they:say:they:s
wesay:isay:usay:wesay
ay:they:say:they:say:t
hey:say:they:say:they
y:usay:wesay:isay:usa
:say:they:say:they:say
women hater
y:wesay:isay:usay:wesay
:they:say:they:say:the
ay:god squad
y:say:they:say:they:say
ay:usay:isay:usay:usa
y:they:say:they:say:th
ay:wesay:isay:usay:wesay
ey:say:they:say:they:s
jesus creep
esay:isay:usay:wesay:
ay:they:say:they:say:t
isay:usay:wesay:isay:
hey:say:they:say:they
usay:wesay:isay:usay:
:say:they:say:they:say
bomber
wesay:isay:usay:wesay
:they:say:they:say:the
y:isay:usay:wesay:isa
y:say:they:say:they:say
y:usay:wesay:isay:usa

they:say:they:say

if I talk to them they'll put a
fatwah on me ...

they wear headscarves to
cover up the bruises ...

they call me a terrorist ...

people are too careful of us -
they tiptoe around us ...

I've been spat at ...

I get called Jesus creeper,
bible basher & god squad ...

some people think I'm odd
because I won't fight ...

people use Jesus as a swear
word ...

I find it lonely being a Christian

people think my opinions are
wierd ...

nobody calls me names - I go
to a Christian/Muslim school
...

