

## SACRED SPACE

Now that the football season has started up again, for fans like myself, the banter and old rivalries have resumed too. Sport is all about competition. Being a fan means making a choice – choosing a side. And supporting one team means *not* supporting another.

I imagine many believe the same to be true of religious faith. If you belong to one tradition other faiths have to be seen as rivals. Many religious groups believe they need to keep themselves separate.

At this busy festival season in Edinburgh, an event was held earlier this week as part of the Just Festival, exploring an experiment that has been taking place in Aberdeen. There, a group of Muslims have been given a place to meet and worship under the roof of an Episcopal Church.

From the point of view of the Christians and Muslims who are sharing the church building this arrangement is working well, despite outside criticism.

Part of the conversation was centred around the idea of sharing sacred space, and whether one religious group could really worship in another's building.

But, isn't the truth that all space is sacred!

This world is the sacred space that we all inhabit and it's our task as human beings to build societies that are just, fair and welcoming.

To do that, we need to spend time together - acknowledging the insights of people of other faiths and none.

When Jesus told the story of the Good Samaritan he was speaking to a group of devout Jews. By making the hero of the story a person who would have been looked down on by that group, he was challenging them to see that there is much we can learn from our neighbours – even when our neighbour belongs to a different nationality or religious tradition. No one group of people have a monopoly on truth or wisdom.

As a Christian, my faith is a way for me to develop my spiritual life. It acts as a pathway and it's one that I am committed to. But that does not mean that I know everything about God or that I can't learn from other traditions.

Whatever it is we believe, sharing space, conversation, and friendship can be an enriching experience.

As a St Mirren man, I've even learned a thing or two from friends who follow Morton! We won't agree on everything, but the insights of our neighbours can bring a deeper understanding to our experience of life.

David McLachlan

August 22 2013