

# MATA

Mediation and Training Alternatives

## BUILDING GOOD FAITH

### General Information

#### Background

A problem has arisen in a city suburb in the Home Counties. A Moslem group based in the area have submitted plans to convert a redundant Christian church into a mosque. The group has been established in the area for many years and have worshipped in a house with no complaints from the local community. However, this application has created several comments of protest, particularly from:

- a local Christian house-group, mainly because they believe a previously Christian centre of worship (now de-consecrated) will be 'desecrated' by another faith
- a local residents group, mainly because of the increase in traffic
- a local charity who had hoped to raise funds to purchase the church and turn it into much needed hostel accommodation for the homeless.

The local council are particularly concerned that they should be seen to be fair, open-minded and unprejudiced in their handling of the matter and they have approached two suitable mediators who are neutral, and who have no allegiance to any of the groups, to:

- propose a process that will enable all interested parties to feel heard (and therefore not be difficult when the council makes its decision), and
- mediate a solution that the council can then ratify without being criticised.

**The exercise will be in two parts. The first to devise the process, the second to hold consultations with interested groups to obtain consensus on the route to a solution.**

**Part 1: The whole group will work with the mediators. The group will anticipate the challenges and cultural issues and devise a process to accommodate them.**

**Part 2: The group will have individual roles and instructions and two new mediators will run the consultation stage.**

**Note: Throughout the two stages there should be no suggestion that any party is racist. All are nervous but none are driven by racist motives.**