

## Christians told to unite with Moderate Muslims against Mega-Mosque

Christians at this year's Keswick Convention urged to unite with moderate Muslims in opposition to East London mega-mosque plans.

by Maria Mackay

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Christians gathered for this year's Keswick Convention have been urged to unite with the "fair-minded" Muslim community of East London in opposing plans to build a mega-mosque there.

This was the call of Steve Bell of Urban Vision, one of the main speakers at the three-week event that got underway in the Lake District last Saturday.

"I would stand with the Muslim community in the East End who have protested," he said. "Three thousand Muslims, at the last count, have actually signed a petition against the mosque. The sentiment seems to be, 'If we have such a huge mosque in our locality, we want it to be for the whole of our community.'"

The proposed mosque has been linked to the fundamentalist Tablighi Jamaat movement, which Bell said "are struggling to prove they are not directly linked to terrorism", as the FBI and MI5 continue to monitor its members and activities.

The group's theology, meanwhile, is rooted in a branch of Saudi Arabian Islam known as Wahhabism not widely supported in the Muslim communities of the UK.

A petition to oppose the mega-mosque on the Downing Street website has accumulated more than 45,000 signatures.

An email campaign encouraging people to vote against the mega-mosque in an online poll by the Evening Standard, meanwhile, sparked controversy recently for citing what London Mayor Ken Livingstone called "false claims". These included the claim that the Mayor's office would spend £100m of public money on the mega-mosque, something he has refuted.

Partly in response to the email campaign, Bell challenged his audience to relate to the Muslims in their communities with grace.

"Grace is responding to others the way God responds to me; with patience, kindness and without rudeness ... Jesus touched our lives by his grace – we must extend the same courtesy to Muslims," he said.

"Some prominent Christians are sounding more like the BNP. I believe it is possible to respond to Muslims in a Christ-like way without being politically naïve or theologically liberal, and I haven't found a better way than the way of grace."

The Keswick Convention runs until 3 August and is expected to attract around 12,000 people of all ages over its three weeks.

World renowned evangelist the Rev John Stott will make what is expected to be his final public address at the Keswick Convention tonight.

Article from Christian Today:

<http://www.christiantoday.com/article/christians.told.to.unite.with.moderate.muslims.against.megamosque/11622.htm>

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