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Mothers learn of Muslim lifestyle

A RECENT talk on Islam and the Muslim way of life, given by Leila ElDrubi and Samina Hassan (both Swiss born) to the Swiss Mothers Group, met with great interest.

Leila is married to an Iraqi and Samina to a Pakistani. Both have been active in the Muslim's Women Association.

Leila explained the importance of the Koran as the code of Muslim life. The study of the Koran, which goes on for the whole lifetime, offers guidance for every situation of Muslim life.

Samina had lived for four years in Pakistan and gave a fascinating account of everyday life there. Living within a Pakistani family hierarchy required a great deal of adjusting indeed.

Samina had decided to



become a Muslim before her marriage and subsequently also learned her husband's language which made things a lot easier for her in Pakistan.

Whereas mixed marriages may work while the couple live in the west, most of them fail if they return to the husband's native environment and the wife finds herself completely isolated.

The Muslim life tends to have a firmer structure through observing the rules of the Koran

in praying and fasting than the more materialistic and individualistic western life. The Muslim's obedience to the rules of the Koran is rewarded by a sense of belonging to a vast family.

The Mothers Group was founded more than 12 years ago by the Rev. M. Dietler and his wife.

At first, on every third Wednesday each month, mothers and their children gathered in the Swiss Church in Endell Street for prayer and a meal.

From these humble first meetings of probably half a dozen women at a time, the Mothers Group has grown and developed into a very lively and active branch of the Swiss Societies in Great Britain.

Today the group has 110 members. Membership is established by appearing for meetings.

As well as on the third Wednesday of each month (from 11am) the members also meet on the last Friday of each month (from 7.30pm, without children) for a multitude of activities: lectures, discussions, craft and cookery sessions,

fondue evenings and theatre excursions.

The one week visit to a holiday camp at Hothorpe Hall for mothers and children has become an established feature and is always very successful.

The Mothers Group has become a kind of "workday church" (oecumenical) and a firm point in the life of many young women who might otherwise feel very lonely without family support and friends in a new country.

Through getting to know each other pretty well members also become aware of existing problems and help, may it be material, moral or spiritual, can be given.

If you would like to join the Mothers Group contact Gret Schwab (tel: 01-937 9401), Maja Harhalakis (tel: 01-946 4896) or Lisa Hall (tel: Colnbrook 3804) or see programme details in the "Stimme" (publication of the Protestant and Catholic Swiss Churches in London).

□ I would like to apologise for an error in reporting on the Swiss Churches Bazaar in the December issue of the Swiss Observer. The articles on the craft stall were not made by the youth club and VEGSIL, but by the Mothers Group.

MHM



Last-ditch appeal to save a castle

THE battle being waged by Swiss native Mrs Edith Grout to save a medieval castle in her old home canton of Vaud has reached a critical stage.

It is teetering on the brink of success. But unless more support is forthcoming the troops could fail.

Mrs Grout, readers may recall, is at the forefront of the Save Grandson Castle Appeal.

Originally she and her fellow fund raisers were given until

last September to raise £2.5 million to purchase the castle. If they failed the castle was to be sold to an Arab sheik.

This, Mrs Grout told us at the time, was unthinkable.

"Grandson is part of the Swiss heritage. If it were sold to this sheik its doors would be closed to the public probably for ever," she said.

However the deadline was extended and the fund raisers now have until the end of

February to raise the money.

So far they have raised just over half the amount needed.

If you would like to support the campaign please send your donations to Eugene Heer, Curator, Château de Grandson, Grandson, Vaud. Cheques should be made payable to the Fondation Château de Grandson.

Further details of the appeal can be obtained from Mrs Grout on (040 481) 2396.

LONELY, aged, but mentally alert Swiss lady living in old people's home near Nuneaton desperately needs someone to visit her. Can you help? If so, please contact the daughter, Mrs E. Stevens, tel. 0582 872321.