

Working Together for
Inter faith Cooperation
and Understanding:
The changing face of
inter faith engagement

*The
Inter Faith
Network
for the
United Kingdom*



Report on the
2012 National
Meeting

Working Together for Inter Faith Cooperation and Understanding: The Changing Face of Inter Faith Engagement

Report on the 2012 National Meeting of
the Inter Faith Network for the UK in its
25th Anniversary year

held on 12 July
at Hallam Conference Centre, London

The Inter Faith Network for the UK closed in 2024, with outward facing operations ceasing in April.

In order to ensure that the material in IFN's publications remained available to the public, to inter faith practitioners, and to scholars after IFN's closure, the copyright status of publications has been changed.

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Contents

Opening words	3
Dr Manazir Ahsan MBE and the Rt Revd Dr Alastair Redfern, Co-Chairs, Inter Faith Network for the UK	
Celebrating 25 years: A visual journey	5
Paresh Solanki, Assistant Director (Media and Communications), Inter Faith Network for the UK	
The Inter Faith Network for the UK: 25 years of working to build good inter faith relations	12
Rosalind Preston OBE, past Officer, Inter Faith Network for the UK and President, Jewish Volunteering Network	
Some reflections on the current landscape and road(s) ahead	16
Dr Harriet Crabtree OBE, Director, Inter Faith Network for the UK	
Dialogue on the spot	19
Perspectives on working for inter faith understanding and cooperation	19
Mark Graham, Chair, Loughborough Council of Faiths Venerable Bogoda Seelawimala, Chief Sangha Nayake of Great Britain, Sri Lankan Sangha Sabha The Revd Peter Colwell, Director of Programmes, Churches Together in Britain and Ireland Dr Maureen Sier, Senior Project Officer, Scottish Inter Faith Council and Baha'i Community of the UK	

25th Anniversary	27
IFN Co-Chairs and from Vice-Chairs, Dr Girdari Lal Bhan, Dr Natubhai Shah MBE and Lord Singh of Wimbledon and IFN's first Director, Brian Pearce OBE	
Feedback from workshops	30
Some reflections on the day	33
Professor Paul Weller, Professor of Inter-Religious Relations and senior Research Fellow, University of Derby Nitin Palan, National Interfaith Coordinator, BAPS Swaminaryan Sanstha and Hindu Christian Forum	
Notes from workshops	37
Workshop 1 – Inter faith engagement in a changing world Workshop 2 – Resources for inter faith understanding and cooperation Workshop 3 – Tackling suspicion, prejudice, harassment Workshop 4 – ‘Networking’ – what is it?!	
Workshop 5 – Educating for inter faith understanding Workshop 6 – ‘Inclusion in inter faith contexts – aspirations and actualities’ Workshop 7 – Religious/non-religious dialogue	
Participant list	63
Member organisations of the Inter Faith Network for the UK 2012-13	69

Opening words

Dr Manazir Ahsan MBE and the Rt Revd Dr Alastair Redfern Co-Chairs, Inter Faith Network for the UK

The Co-Chairs welcomed participants to the meeting and invited them to observe a brief period of silence to remember in thanks the work of all in this country and around the world who contribute to greater inter faith understanding and cooperation.

Dr Manazir Ahsan: This is the 2012 National Meeting of the Inter Faith Network for the UK. People from around the UK and from the different types of IFN's member bodies are present.

2012 is the 25th anniversary of the Inter Faith Network for the UK and the theme of today's meeting is 'Working together for inter faith understanding and co-operation: the changing face of inter faith engagement'. It is an opportunity to take stock of what has been achieved and also to consider some of the challenges and opportunities ahead.

Contributions to today's meeting will help feed into the shaping of questions for the Network's forthcoming strategic review but will also be of wide relevance to Network member bodies.

We are delighted to have an excellent range of plenary speakers and of workshop facilitators and presenters and hope that everyone will very much enjoy the day and have a chance to share ideas and examples of good practice.

Ravinder Kaur Nijjar, who was due to be one of the speakers, is, sadly, unable to be with us because of a close family bereavement and we send her our condolences.

Celebrating 25 years: A visual journey

Paresh Solanki

Assistant Director (Media and Communications),
Inter Faith Network for the UK

Good morning everyone. The sun is shining outside and I hope that you are ready for a trip down memory lane.

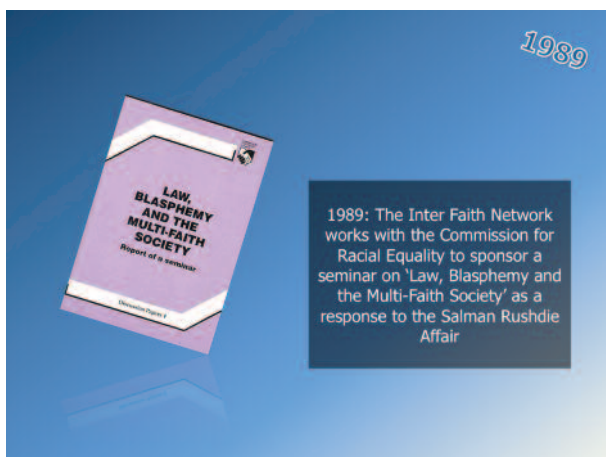
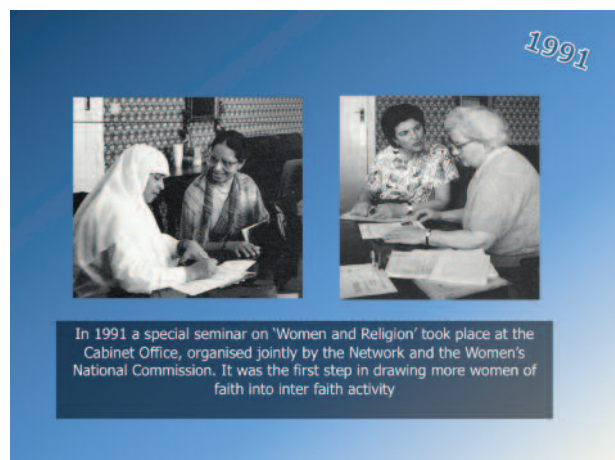
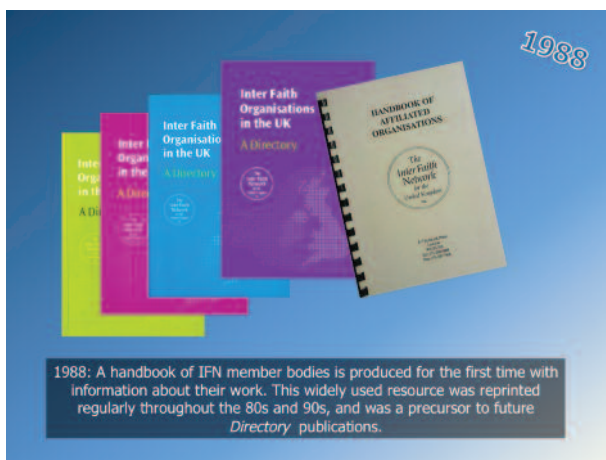
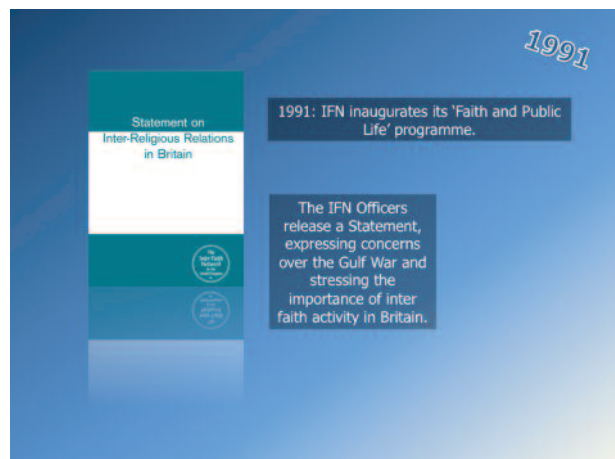
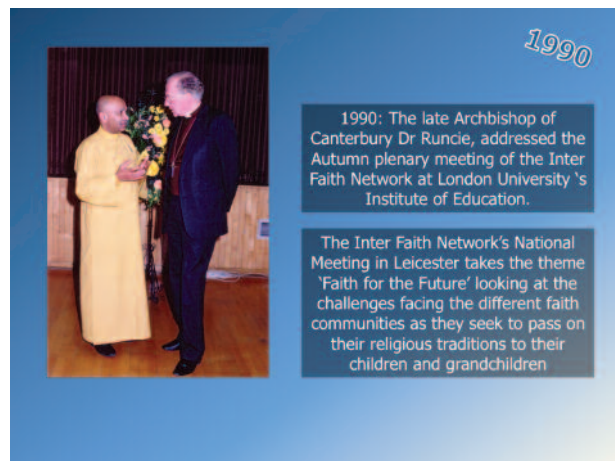
This presentation is a visual journey through some of the key events and milestones of the first 25 years of the work of the Inter Faith Network for the UK.

We relied on photographs and illustrations to create it – there was no video material available. But whatever the material we used, I am sure that in another few years we will be taking a similar journey using 3D!

I would like to thank my colleagues Ashley Beck and Augustine Booth-Clibborn for their help in putting together this presentation.

A lot has happened in 25 years, so please keep in mind that we can only show a small fraction of all the wonderful work being done by faith communities and local and national inter faith organisations. I will not talk through the slides but instead you can listen to the music and, I hope, relax and enjoy!





1993



1993: The first of 10 annual meetings between the Archbishop of Canterbury and representatives of other faiths, organised by IFN at the request of Lambeth Palace

1996

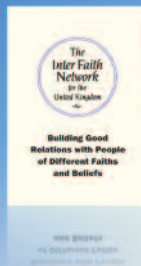


1996: Subcommittee of the Inter Faith Network planning the 10th Anniversary celebrations

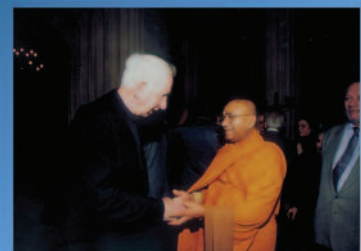
1993



1993: *Mission, Dialogue and Inter Religious Encounter* is published by IFN as a consultative document. Included within this was the well-known IFN 'code of conduct' which has since been reprinted many times, and has been circulated in the tens of thousands.



1997: The Network celebrates its 10th Anniversary at Lincoln's Inn



The late Cardinal Basil Hume and the late Most Venerable Dr Vajiragnana at the celebrations

1997

1994



1994: The Northern Ireland Inter-Faith Forum with the Inter Faith Network



The Inter Faith Network makes a special effort to reach out to members of the media to offer them more contacts and assistance with developing programme concepts which reflect the religious diversity of the population

1997



Mrs Ivy Gutridge speaking at the Tenth Anniversary event



Chief Rabbi Lord Sacks and participants at an IFN seminar entitled *The Quest for Common Values*

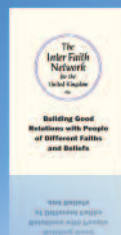
1995



1995 sees the Inter Faith Network begin to focus on young people outside of a schools context for the first time.

IFN arranges a meeting for teenagers to meet the Archbishop of Canterbury to discuss their experiences of tolerance and intolerance.

The IFN 'code' is also circulated widely to university Vice Chancellors, the NUS and students' unions across the UK.



1998



1998 saw a major Network project with the development of a guide to setting up and running local inter faith initiatives. The Local Inter Faith Guide was published in 1999 and again in 2005.

1999

Communities Understanding Faith Good Relations
Faith Co-operation Faith Respect
Co-operation Good Relations Communities Understanding

The Inter Faith Week website is launched for the first time at
www.interfaith.org.uk

2001



2001: The Network and the National Association of Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education hold a joint conference with the support of Shap Working Party on World Religions to look at inter faith issues in the school curriculum

2000




2000: As part of the official Millennium Celebrations, faith community leaders gathered at the House of Lords for a 'Shared Act of Commitment' created with the assistance of IFN and DCMS.

2002



2002: The Inter Faith Network worked with the Golden Jubilee Office of the Department of Culture, Media and Sport in planning for a Buckingham Palace reception for faith communities and for a Golden Jubilee Young People's Faith Forum

2000



An Act of Commitment

An Act of Commitment

Faith community representatives:
In a world scarred by the evils of war, racism, injustice and poverty,
we offer this joint Act of Commitment as we look to our shared future.

All:
We commit ourselves,
as people of many faiths,
to work together
for the common good,
uniting to build a better society,
grounded in values and ideals we share:
community,
personal integrity,
a sense of right and wrong,
learning, wisdom and love of truth,
care and compassion,
justice and peace,
respect for one another,
for the earth and its creatures.

We commit ourselves,
in a spirit of friendship and co-operation,
to work together
alongside all who share our values and ideals,
to help bring about a better world
now and for generations to come.

2002



2002: Golden Jubilee Young Peoples Faith Forum
St James's Palace in the presence of HRH The Prince of Wales

2001





2001: The launch of *Religions in the UK 2001-2003* at the Multi Faith Centre at the University of Derby

2003



2003: The Royal Commonwealth Society holds a young people's faith forum working with the Inter Faith Network. The Network puts particular emphasis on youth and education as it held a meeting of the representatives of educational and academic bodies as well doing the planning for the *Connect* guide

2004

2004: *Connect: Different Faiths Shared Values*, IFN's first publication aimed directly at young people is launched

2006






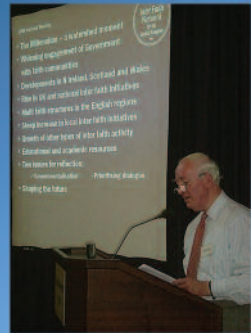
2006: The Inter Faith Network in association with the higher education Equality Challenge Unit (ECU) held a consultation meeting with a range of organisations interested in Building Good Relations on Campus

2005




2005: Participants at the meeting of the Inter Faith Network and national linking inter faith bodies of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales at St Mungo's Glasgow.

2006

2006: The Inter Faith Network's National Meeting explores the developing and complex terrain for inter faith work at national, regional and local level in the UK

2005





2005: Dr Crabtree with Rosemeen Jaffer and other participants at an Interfaith MK women and faith event.


2007




2007: IFN celebrates its 20th Anniversary

2005



2005: Delegates at the Network's National Meeting focusing on young people and inter faith relations


2008




2008: The then Government launches *Face to Face and Side by Side*: a framework for partnership in our multi faith society.

Meeting of Regional Faith Forums.

2009



IFN holds a range of seminars throughout the year, focusing on Bilateral Dialogue; opportunities for local inter faith organisations and SACRES to work together; and a National Meeting entitled 'Good Inter Faith Relations: The Next Generation'.

2009



2009: Faith community leaders launched the Week by signing a statement acknowledging the value of inter faith work, and expressing their commitment to it.

2009




Inter Faith Week is launched for the first time in England and Wales. The Week is jointly led in 2009 by the Inter Faith Network and the Department for Communities and Local Government. Bradford District Faiths Forum's photo was chosen for the poster.

2009

"We believe that good inter faith relations are a vital part of a harmonious, just and respectful society.

We pledge today, to deepen our work to increase understanding about and between our faiths and to strengthen our cooperation on social issues.

We renew our commitment to developing effective and long term ways of dialogue and mutual learning. We shall continue to seek to understand the patterns of engagement of our faith communities – through history and today; to affirm the positive aspects of these patterns; and to heal wounds of misunderstanding where these are found.

While our great religious traditions are distinct in belief and practice, there is much that unites us. We will draw on fundamental values held in common and on the wisdom of our respective faith traditions to continue to work – as individual communities together – for the wellbeing of our society, our wider global community and the planet that is our home.

Alongside all of good will, we will work to tackle with renewed determination the challenges of poverty, ignorance, injustice, crime and violence, and social fragmentation and to help shape a society where all feel at home; all are valued and justly treated; and all have a chance to thrive."



2009




A national launch event took place at the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre in London which invited inter faith practitioners from across England and Wales to come together and share information about their work.




2010



Inter Faith Week grew in 2010, with 24% more events to mark the Week than in 2009, and Northern Ireland marking the Week for the first time.

2009




Inter Faith Week highlighted a diverse range of initiatives, with activities including music, sport, exhibitions and crafts

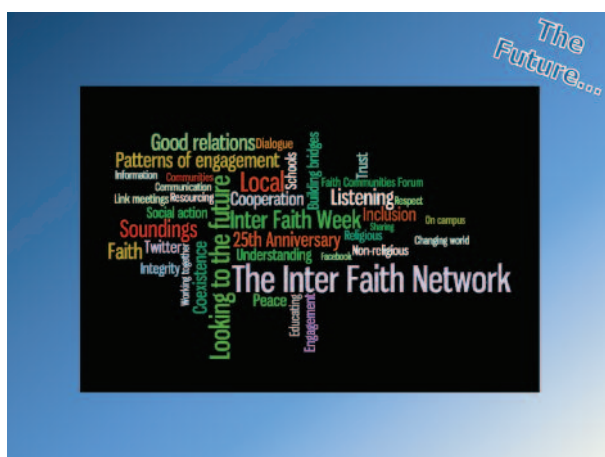



2010



Singers from multi faith band Yalla brought together through the 3FF Urban Dialogues programme

The Chair of Liverpool Community Spirit Youth Council presented at a Government reception for local activists during the Week



The Inter Faith Network for the UK: 25 years of working to build good inter faith relations

Rosalind Preston OBE

Past Officer, Inter Faith Network for the UK
and President, Jewish Volunteering Network

It is my pleasure and honour to have been asked to speak to-day – marking the 25th anniversary of the Inter Faith Network. Fitting I feel that the year coincides with Her Majesty's Diamond Jubilee – when the nation has joined in celebration, marking the achievements of her long reign. Likewise we have much to celebrate.

It is said that a week is a long time in politics; what then have we seen happen since the Network was established a quarter of a century ago?

Paresh Solanki has just given us a lightning Powerpoint picture tour of some of the highlights of those 25 years. It was interesting and evocative to see the images of the earliest days.

Sadly, some of the Network's first Officers, Rabbi Hugo Gryn, who first introduced me to the Network, Om Parkash Sharma and Bishop Jim Thompson, have passed away since 1987 – as has a key Officer of later days, Ivy Gutridge, a Methodist and staunch local inter faith activist in her home town of Wolverhampton. But the legacy of their work lives on.

Sir Sigmund Sternberg, known to his many friends and colleagues as Siggie, seen in the first picture, and one of the strongest supporters of IFN's founding, is now in his 90s and rarely attends meetings. But I wonder if

we might today send him our special greetings, in recognition of the role he played so many years ago in helping IFN begin its work, as well as his constant encouragement over the years.

The pictures we have just seen reflect a mixture of varying times and types of engagement. This is very much in keeping with IFN's strong emphasis since its beginnings on linking different types of bodies from national, regional and local contexts, and also its UK nature, as the images of participants from four nations remind us. This cross linking and sharing of information and good practice has been the bedrock of IFN's work since it began. And its member bodies are at its heart. It is wonderful that so many are represented here today.

So, how has the landscape changed since that day in 1987 when the Network came into being? I would say it is unrecognisable!!

We have witnessed massive changes over that period of time in many aspects of civil society but particularly with regard to inter faith dialogue, attitudes, education and involvement.

It is impossible for me to paint a complete picture in the time available but I would like to share with you some particular personal reflections.

I remember my early days in the inter faith world; when friends and acquaintances were often disturbed to discover that faith and religion were now subjects for public discourse; they were somewhat embarrassed, possibly disturbed and certainly surprised at this turn of events.

But for me, since those early days, it has been an on-going voyage of discovery and I am particularly proud to have been part of the Network for many years. To my mind the key to the building and expanding of the Network's sphere of influence has been achieved by the reaching out to peoples of different faiths through invitation, consultation and co-operation. And always employing sense and sensibility in these relationships.

Countless conferences, study days and report papers have flowed across the 25 years but certain high points stand out in my memory.

Going right back to the early days, I recall the 1991 day conference "What are Women of Faith Saying" – for women to discuss faith issues and to explore the place of women in building up inter faith relations. This, and a subsequent gathering for women of faith, were among the earliest such events in the UK and opened up alternative channels for dialogue and sowed seeds for future projects. As so often, the Network's role was to help open up a new area of engagement.

The role that women play in faith communities and in civil society is still a highly topical and contentious subject for debate. In my own community the question of women in leadership positions is once again high on the agenda and, as we meet, the General Synod of the Church of England has been addressing similar issues.

Next – The Golden Jubilee Young People's Faith Forum – held at St James's palace in June 2002 – also stands out in my memory. 80 young people aged 16 to 24 from across the UK came together to discuss how faith

motivates service to the community. This event was arranged by IFN with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, with the personal support and involvement of the Prince of Wales. An image from that occasion was among those in the slides.

That Forum inspired many similar other events around the country in the following years, with two National Meetings focusing on young people, as well as recent work with the National Union of Students, (including holding meetings for national inter faith bodies which are working with students). This has been part of the Network's vital role in encouraging young people to become involved in inter faith dialogue and activity. So, too, has its work on issues connected with Religious Education, working with bodies such as the Religious Education Council for England and Wales (a founder member of IFN) and the National Association of SACREs. Good religious education is vital for the continuing development of a peaceful and mutually respectful society.

Moving to the present, recent years have seen key seminars on topics such as bilateral dialogue and – notably – the initiation and rapid growth of Inter Faith Week – a project pioneered in 2004 in Scotland. The Week in England and Wales began in 2009 and has now been joined by Northern Ireland. Providing the lead on resourcing and enabling Inter Faith Week has become a huge part of the Network's work and the reports on the first three years make impressive reading – many of you here today have no doubt held events for the Week. When the Network began – and across its first two decades – people kept saying 'How do we get more people involved, at grassroots level, in inter faith activity?' Inter Faith Week has probably made the biggest impact of all IFN's programmes in this respect.

However, above these and very many other individual occasions, I am most impressed by the Network's organisational and strategic successes. In 25 years we have seen it become

a matter of course that national faith communities engage with each other and that leaders of different faiths meet and speak on issues of common concern. It is hard to believe that at the time IFN came into being, national faith communities were linked formally in membership by it for the very first time. We have seen emerge the now well established structure of local, regional and national bodies; a positive and mutually rewarding relationship with Government – also at national and local levels; the establishment of links with other public bodies in education, health and so forth; and active engagement by national faith communities through IFN – as well as, of course, more broadly.

The funding which Government has provided in recent years has been of great importance in helping IFN to develop this work. I well remember those early discussions; should we or should we not accept funding from Government? Would we be able to maintain our independence? Well, it has been proven that IFN has indeed always held to its own integrity of purpose and process.

Across 25 years there has been a burgeoning of inter faith engagement in the UK – for example, where in 1987 there were only around 30 local inter faith bodies, today there are over 250. Many have played a part but I believe that the role of IFN has been paramount: encouraging and supporting development through its publications, meetings and visits, and advocating constantly for the importance of the work.

None of this could have happened without the superb leadership, guidance and massive hard work of the founding Director Brian Pearce and his colleague and successor Harriet Crabtree. I feel all people of faith, whether they know it or not, owe these two outstanding people a huge debt of gratitude.

Much has been achieved but much still remains to be done. Harriet will be going on to talk about the roads ahead but let me offer

some closing reflections on just a few major challenges and opportunities.

- I believe that there is even more to be done in the continuing battle combating racism and religious discrimination. How can faith communities work even more effectively on this front? How can IFN assist?
- There are also complex issues about how IFN engages with the range of faith communities and religious – and non-religious – belief groups and traditions. I know that there will be discussion about this later today and so I will not go further.
- There is an on-going danger of conflicts in distant lands spreading their tentacles to disrupt the co-existence of communities here in the UK. At times in the past when this has happened, IFN's Officers have made statements – but I think that the Network has been very right over the years to use statements sparingly. Making statements frequently is an easy way to accidentally position a body out of kilter with the views of its members.
- I am currently, as you may have noticed from the programme, the President of the Jewish Volunteering Network. As you might expect, I am keenly aware of the importance of the contribution which members of faith communities make to the wellbeing of our society – The Big Society as it is now called. I have been pleased to see, in recent years, a growing interest in encouraging cross-faith social projects. One such is the Diamond Jubilee year programme 'A Year of Service'. Some of you may be involved in this. If not, I encourage you to Google it and find out more. IFN has been involved in this initiative with the role of encouraging involvement of inter faith bodies. I imagine that it will continue with this area of work.

- You may also wish to participate in the Jubilee Hour project – encouraging people to give at least one hour – 60 minutes to mark 60 years of the Queen’s reign – to contribute to the virtual gift which will be presented to Her Majesty at the end of the Jubilee Year.
- Over a number of years the Network has addressed the link between faith and citizenship. Most recently this has been through the conversation among faith leaders which it arranged for Inter Faith Week last year, and through the questions on ‘Living Well Together’, copies of which are available at this meeting. This is another area of work which is ongoing and is of great importance.
- I hope that IFN will continue to stimulate discussion on this and on the values we as people of different faiths may share and which can be a basis for our common citizenship – as well as for our engagement with people who are of non-religious beliefs.
- I know from my days as an IFN Officer, though, that there is always the danger of lists of desirable work which cannot easily be achieved. IFN currently operates at a UK level with just six members of staff and with a budget which is well below most comparable national bodies. It has for many years operated at maximum capacity and it has on its hands currently a major challenge to secure adequate funding to continue. This at a time of severe economic difficulties which do not look to change for some considerable while. We have worked during the last 25 years in a period of comparative affluence and prosperity and even then have had difficulties in securing sufficient funding. Great efforts will now be required to find new and additional sources of income.
- I hope that we will succeed in this – and that in responding well and successfully to the many current opportunities and

challenges the Network will go on to function successfully and importantly for another 25 years.

Some reflections on the current landscape and road(s) ahead

Dr Harriet Crabtree OBE

Director, Inter Faith Network for the UK

Good morning.

As I thought about today's meeting and the heading under which I am offering some brief reflections, I reflected on the metaphors of landscape and journey and about some of the constraints of these metaphors. It is true that when thinking about how organisations respond and change to meet new needs we naturally use the language of scanning the terrain and deciding on best ways forward. It is the language of journey and planning. It is serviceable language and I shall return to it in due course. But I will begin by offering some reflections which begin from a slightly different place.

Landscape and roads are images where people are not explicitly mentioned. People are imagined to be on roads or surveying the scene but they are absent from the images as such. I'd like to bring them – to bring us – into the picture from the start of my words. Inter faith dialogue, engagement and cooperation are all about people. About us. About others. In thinking about the world with which we engage this is very important.

I would also like to highlight another aspect of considering the landscape and planning forward journeys the significance of which can be overlooked. That is the stage of pausing, looking carefully at our landscape, reflecting together on this and on ways ahead and, listening well as part of this process.

The last ten years have seen inter faith

structures and projects develop at an astonishing pace in the UK. There has been the emergence and growth of many organisations which endeavour to foster understanding and co-operation between people and organisations of different faiths. As just noted by Rosalind Preston, the tiny handful of pioneering inter faith groups and associations of the 1970s have now mushroomed to 250 local inter faith bodies and bilateral and trilateral organisations – most of which came into being after 2000. There has been growth too in the number of national and regional inter faith bodies in operation. There are also increasing numbers of other organisations which are not inter faith bodies as such but which now incorporate a significant inter faith dimension into their work – the individual faith communities themselves, of course, but also many types of body of non-religious bodies which have inter faith projects

Many different factors have contributed to this rapid growth of initiatives designed to increase inter faith understanding and cooperation: the simple fact of the growing diversity of the UK and interaction between cultures globally; the growing levels of interest in the issues here and around the world; the recognition of the positive benefits of understanding cooperation between faiths. The speed, however, at which some of the developments have occurred was, I think, linked very much to the disturbances in the Northern Cities in the summer of 2001 and the terrorist attacks in the USA later that year.

These set Government on a policy track which came to be referred to as ‘community cohesion’ and an important aspect of this came to be inter faith dialogue and cooperation. This was reflected in a policy document of the then Government, Face to Face and Side by Side: A Framework for Partnership in our Multi Faith Society. This policy was one key contributor, I think, to the speed with which inter faith initiatives came into being during the period in question.

There is much that is positive which has come about as a result of these and other factors. However, with this burgeoning growth of initiatives and with their excellent work proceeding at speed, there are great pressures which can sometimes make it hard for us to take time to sit and reflect and to make adequate time for listening and also for reflection. It is a good time to pause. To sit together under the tree – to use an image often found in African culture but also more widely – and to reflect, talk, and, as I said above, listen. IFN as an organisation, is itself planning – through the Strategic Review which will be discussed later today – to give extra time across the coming year to listening and considering together the surrounding landscape and the road(s) ahead. Some of your own organisations may be undertaking similar exercises.

Every few years it is wise to revisit our aims and how we are putting them into practice – no matter what our organisation or project may be and to ask again the fundamental questions, Who are we? Why are we doing what we are doing? What has gone well so far? What has not gone so well? Are the ways we are doing it the best or wisest ways? How should we move forward? And at this point, may I thank Rosalind Preston most warmly for her excellent presentation, her kind words and her reflections on years past and to what the future may call IFN.

When we sit down (under the metaphorical tree) and reflect on where we are going as organisations – whether as IFN or as any

organisation – we reflect on the journey thus far and also where we think we should be going. The kind of factors that are relevant are:

- The landscape in which inter faith activity is taking place in Britain and the wide variety of this
- Relevant social, economic and political factors
- The capacity of the organisation
- The integrity of the vision and the principles underlying and informing it
- What others may need of our organisation
- How to take forward the work for maximum benefit and involvement, in light of resources and other relevant factors
- The risks, the challenges and the opportunities

To which list, of course, other factors could be added.

There is an organic aspect to inter faith engagement which sometimes fits ill with tidy road maps. In our surveying of landscape and our charting of roads, I think this is important. Sometimes projects develop in unexpected ways. Sometimes they fail to thrive. Sometimes they succeed beyond all expectation. Sometimes progress is not linear; there can be stops and starts, reverses and restarts and the journey can also be more like a spiral than a straight line. Taking time to reflect on this is important.

My reflections this morning are necessarily brief but I would like to touch on one particular challenge which I think that many organisations working for inter faith cooperation have experienced in recent years – and no doubt will continue to do so. That is resourcing, pacing and sustainability.

Remaining with the language of trees in the landscape, many recently germinated seeds and small plants received, during the early to mid-2000s, what might be visualised as a dose of Miracle-Gro. The watering can of relevant Government grants encouraged rapid growth of local, regional [in England] and some national inter faith projects. Some seedlings grew quickly, some saplings climbed fast skyward. Staff were hired. Projects were set up or expanded. And there was much good in this. But with the speed, manner and short duration of the dosage, the result was sometimes swift growth of leaves and new twigs and even some flowers and fruit but faster than – and even at the expense of – the development of the roots. And when the fertiliser ran out some wilted, some were had to be pruned radically and some simply withered away. This is not to argue against grant programmes – and those in question came at a time when they were needed. But rather to note this challenging aspect of developing inter faith projects at times of opportunity but without time to ensure sustainability.

But let me return to the image of ‘road(s)’. When we think about a way ahead, is it one way or a variety? Is there just one destination? It is important to keep in mind the broad variety of tasks and audiences to some extent the forward direction is multiple. However we see the way or ways ahead, we have to have some agreement about how we move forward together. That, of course, is why we have to discuss and agree ways forward: and inter faith organisations are perhaps particularly complex in this regard: people come into the dialogue with different histories, process and expectations. But where organisations – as opposed to loose agglomerations of individuals – are concerned, there does need to be some commonality of vision and process and ways forward.

I have used road(s) rather than ‘road’ because I think that the idea of one road is inadequate. The destinations we need to reach can, on different occasions, be various.

But perhaps there is one general forward road which is walked by those with a shared conviction of the importance of strengthening and developing a society rooted in values we discern that we share and characterised by respect and cooperation. This road is not a road laid out for us by others. We walk it each with the guidance of our faith traditions in hand and also in dialogue and discussion; pausing from time to time ‘under the tree’ to discuss the way forward. And perhaps we make the road by our walking, beating it out with our feet as we tread.¹

There is a particular characteristic of our road on which I would like to reflect as I close. Where working for inter faith understanding and cooperation is concerned the journey to a high degree is also the destination. How the walker, the journeyers interact along the way brings the destination nearer or leads it to recede. We seek honest, peaceful and respectful interaction. It is the process of the walkers on the road and the end goal.

I thank you for listening to my reflections this morning and look forward to today’s discussions – as we ‘sit under the tree’ and look to future needs and the future journey.

Dialogue on the spot

A short session then followed when delegates spoke with one another about the themes of the day.

Perspectives on working for inter faith understanding and cooperation

Mark Graham

Chair, Loughborough Council of Faiths

The Loughborough Council of Faiths is made up of representatives from the Baha'i, Brahma Kumaris, Christian, Church of Jesus Christ and the Latter Day Saints, Hindu, Muslim, Pagan, Quaker and Sikh faiths. Loughborough's big nine.

There's also a second, honorary, category of membership made up of the "Friends of Loughborough Council of Faiths"

The "Friends" of the Loughborough Council of Faiths are people who have supported our work in some way and who we wish to acknowledge and continue to involve in the life of the Council.

People become involved with the Loughborough Council of Faiths because they want to; not because of their status or position or because being a member involves any prestige. We are a group of people who are enthusiastic about what we do and who take our work seriously, but we don't, thank the Gods, take ourselves too seriously.

So what do we do. Well lots of things. We put on a pantomime each year, bringing together dozens of people from the local faith groups to perform in front of hundreds of people from the Towns diverse religious and ethnic communities, many of whom have never seen a pantomime before. In fact many of the performers had never seen a pantomime when we started rehearsals.

And we don't shy away from difficult issues. We stood together with our Muslim friends when they felt threatened in the aftermath of 9/11. We hold open discussion meetings, sometimes in conjunction with the University Chaplaincy, where we've discussed such controversial subjects as Gay and Forced Marriages and important issues of the day like global warming. These discussions are held in the context of friendship and mutual respect, but we don't seek to avoid disagreement where it exists.

We also seek to educate. Each year we throw a party, the feast of faiths, which includes an alcohol free 'pub' style quiz. Teams, made up

of folk from each of our faith communities, answer faith based questions. And it's a good thing that there isn't beer involved; because the teams are quite competitive enough. I'm usually acting as question master along with whoever the incumbent mayor is, and keeping order's a challenge I can tell you, especially when a couple of heavy weight theologians from the same faith, but on different teams, disagree over the answer to a particular question relating to their tradition.

The Loughborough Council of Faith's member faiths also contribute articles for the "Faith Matters" section of the local paper. Faith Matters replaced the existing section of the paper set aside for Christian Comment some years ago.

We also share our spirituality. Our annual pilgrimage of prayer involves a procession from one place of worship to the next, stopping to share a prayer for world peace at each venue. A journey through the world of faith: the vivid colours of a Hindu temple, reflecting the vibrancy of the Indian landscape; the exoticism of a Mosque; the call to prayer transporting the listener to a land of minarets and vast horizons; the weight of ages and strength of tradition in the stonewalls of an ancient church; the elemental earthy-ness of a Druid gathering held beneath the stars. I'm sure I don't have to explain to anyone here how spiritually nourishing it is to be exposed to such a rich tapestry of religious colour and texture.

The Loughborough Council of Faiths also has a civic role within the life of the Borough. And on three occasions has been called upon to fill the role of the mayoral Chaplaincy. In this context we've taken it in turns to lead prayers (or their equivalent) at the beginning of Council meetings, taken part in Civic services, been involved in the annual mayor making ceremony, laid wreaths at the war memorial in Loughborough as part of the Town's remembrance day service and generally taken an active, and often leading, role in the ceremonial life of the Borough.

This role is acknowledged by the Council in the flying of flags and religious emblems including the Druid flag, outside the Town Hall and Council offices on important festival dates (the Druid Flag is flown on the Summer and Winter solstices).

In Loughborough all those faith groups who are actively seeking to develop understanding and harmonious relationship between people from different religions, backgrounds and communities are accorded equal respect, not just those who are recognised by the Interfaith Network of the United Kingdom. It's not who you are but what you're doing to make the world a better place that matters.

Our Druid communities' experience of active involvement with the local interfaith community has been overwhelmingly positive. I'm sure everyone would agree that our contribution has been valuable. In Loughborough Druidry is considered relatively mainstream, acknowledged and supported by people of other faiths and of no faith. We are regularly asked to contribute to programs on Radio Leicester (recently they covered a pilgrimage I undertook on foot to Stonehenge timed to arrive there for the summer solstice. Through the wonders of the mobile phone I was contacted each day to give an update on my progress and what I'd seen and done on route).

The local Town and County newspapers also regularly publish very positive articles on beliefs, customs and traditions, especially around important festival days. The open rites that we hold for the Solstices and Equinoxes have been attended by several mayors and the County Council Chairman and have been filmed for national television. Ironically the only place I've ever experienced any prejudice is here, the only time I feel like I'm being treated as a second class citizen is when I come to a conference of the IFN UK. So quite understandably I rarely come.

As you get older you realise how comparatively short life is. If you want to try

to make a difference, to leave the world a better place than you found it, to be part of the solution rather than the problem, you go to the place you can have the most impact. You put your energy where it counts.

The Loughborough Council of Faiths is an active, outwards looking organisation which is more interested in outcome than process. We have a constitution that covers about 2 sides of A4 and has served us well. We welcome any faith group, or indeed individual through our “Friends of” category of membership, who wishes to make a positive contribution to the creation of good relations between people of Faith. Faith groups wishing to join the Loughborough Council of Faiths spend a year attending our meetings and events as observers, and if they like what we do, and we all get on, they become full members at the next AGM.

What I would acknowledge is the outstanding contribution that members of those Faiths not accepted for membership by the IFN UK make to the life of the Loughborough Council of Faiths. At one time or another all the offices of the Loughborough Council of Faiths have been held by folk from these faiths. They provide their premises free of charge for meetings, for rehearsal space when we are preparing for our annual pantomime (rehearsals which go on for months) and for public open meetings. They can always be relied upon to turn up at business meetings, which is more than can be said for some of the other faith groups (I’ll name no name, but they know who they are). They are generous with their time and resources and their contribution is always positive and helpful. In fact the other representative of the Loughborough Council of Faiths who’s taken the day off work to travel down here, and who I know was on a coach at 6.30 this morning is Julie from the CJCLS. Without the commitment of the so-called minority of faiths the Loughborough Council of Faiths could not be the active force for positive change that it is.

Is the IFN UK present membership policy discriminatory? Yes, of course it is. Should the IFNUK change its membership policy? Yes, of course they should. Because at the end of the day if the IFN UK is prepared to reach out to all those faith groups who are genuinely trying to make a difference they can only stand to gain energy, commitment, enthusiasm and support and surely that has to be a good thing.

Venerable Bogoda Seelawimala Chief Sangha Nayake of Great Britain, Sri Lankan Sangha Sabha GB

Distinguished guests from all denominations, friends. First of all on behalf of the Buddhist community I would like to convey my sincere greetings on this occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Inter Faith Network for the UK. The objectives of the Inter Faith Network have been accepted by British society. The IFN germinated in the fertile religious ground of the UK and has grown into a huge tree with its branches and foliage spreading across the UK.

During the last 25 years that the Inter Faith Network has been operating, it is true that a great deal has been achieved as a result of the hard work done by many people. It is a remarkable journey. I think that today there is much better awareness of other faiths and there is generally a good atmosphere of tolerance and understanding. However, this is certainly not the time to become complacent and to rest on our laurels. Sadly, there is still too much ignorance and prejudice in some sectors of our society, and we still have plenty of work to do. In particular, I am concerned about the large number of people who profess no particular faith and who are therefore outside the inter faith movement. Unless they have developed ethical values from another source, as some thoughtful people do, these members of society have no

guiding principles in their lives. It is my suggestion we should be channelling a lot of our time and energy into reaching out to people, who have not given consideration to ethical principles*. As long as people have no moral basis for their lives, they may act in ways which are damaging to the harmony of our society. If someone has no guiding principles in his life, then he may experience frustration or disappointment which is expressed in anti-social behaviour. I think this challenge of reaching out to the wider community is one which we all have to face.

I think it is essential that the leaders of the faith communities should set a clear example to their followers. By meeting together with other community leaders in friendship, peace and harmony, they can set an example which will inspire others to follow. We can show that the common ground we share is greater than what separates us, and that true dialogue is an enriching experience for all participants. Furthermore, these meetings should be given the maximum possible publicity so that society as a whole can see how different faith leaders and faith communities can meet together in an atmosphere of tolerance and show by their actions their willingness to co-operate together for the good of the wider population.

In my short talk I should also like to reflect on how inter-religious dialogue and cooperation helps explore cutting-edge issues in today's religiously plural societies and how inter-religious trust and respect can be strengthened through bilateral and multi-lateral dialogues and cross-cultural encounters.

On the subject of dialogue, bilateral discussion is often more productive than multi-lateral because it allows the two parties to explore their relationship in depth. The purpose of such meetings must surely be to discover and emphasise the common ground which both parties share, rather than point out what separates them. It is good that there should be different religions in the world, because what is right for one person may not

be right for another. Although Buddhism is right for me, I cannot expect Buddhism to be right for everyone. So we should have respect for all the world's religions.

Genuine dialogue implies the recognition of and respect for differences. At the same time, it seeks to discover and appreciate common values within other religions. Inter-religious relationships, human dignity and sustainable values lie at the heart of a desire that emphasises those aspects in all religions that promote harmony among communities, helping people to live their individual faith with integrity while living together in mutual respect and mutual acceptance of each other's faiths.

However, where there are genuine differences, they should not be ignored. When they are explored in an atmosphere of trust and tolerance, the results can be very productive. We tend to be suspicious of whatever we do not understand. So the purpose of dialogue is to deepen our understanding so that fear of the other is removed. We Buddhists recently had a most constructive meeting with the Christian community, led by His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury. It was held at the office of the Buddhist Society in Ecclestone Square. I want to express my thanks to him. It was a great privilege to meet him. Although the names we give to certain concepts may be different, the ideas behind the words are the same. For example, we Buddhists often talk about metta or loving-kindness, whereas Christians talk about love or charity. Buddhists talk about meditation, whereas Christians talk about contemplation. Words are just labels. What is important is the meaning and concepts behind the words.

I would like to suggest four ways in which we can pursue our dialogue. The first is on the academic level, where learned scholars can examine both the differences and the similarities between different faiths. Hopefully they will find many points of common ground. The second is for devotees

of different faiths to meet together in an atmosphere of love and goodwill, taking what they can from other faiths to enrich their own. The third way is for shared visits or pilgrimages to sites of religious importance. This can also include visits to other people's places of worship. Last, but not least, are meetings where we can join together to mark a special event, such as the Commonwealth Day observance each year in Westminster Abbey or Holocaust Memorial Day.

I hope we can all continue to work together for the advancement of the inter faith movement.

*Ven Seelawimala went on to clarify that he was not referring to Humanists and others who have a coherent set of teachings about morality, but about people who do not engage with any religious or philosophical tradition and who could be said to have no real coherent moral basis for their actions. It was important that these people be reached – whether by religious or non-religious people – and brought into dialogue about values.

The Revd Peter Colwell Director of Programmes, Churches Together in Britain and Ireland

Professor Paul Fiddes in one of his books tells the story of an occasion when Archbishop William Temple was listening to a lecture when the person sitting next to him whispered 'Do you understand what he's talking about?' Temple replied 'Well, I understand perfectly what he is saying, but I don't understand what he's saying it about.'

I am grateful for this invitation to briefly reflect on the inter faith journey of the Churches from an ecumenical perspective. As I pondered what I wanted say it occurred to me how important it is that we not only are clear about what we are saying but what we are saying it about. In other words, we should

be engaging in inter faith dialogue and activity not because it feels right, or that it is the latest thing, or because it is the means by which we gain some profile, power or influence, but because it arises genuinely out of our faith.

Recently at CTBI, Bob Fyffe the General Secretary and I have been looking at some of the recent history of the organisation, and the journey that the many different Churches have made together. CTBI is primarily an organisation that is concerned about unity between the Christian Churches: it is a Christian ecumenical organisation, not an inter faith organisation. However, what is striking about the history of that journey is just how much inter faith dialogue has been important and is now an integral part of how the churches relate to the world. Many of you – friends and colleagues of other faiths – are as much partners with me in the work of reconciliation as my fellow Christians. We could not have said that a generation ago. We have gone a long way towards building genuine relationships of trust and are enduring. That is a remarkable achievement to note in this 25 anniversary year of the Inter Faith Network, an organisation that has helped us all relate better to one another.

As Bob and I looked over the history of our organisation it has been a pleasure to read about the groundbreaking work of those in the British Council of Churches who took risks in creating opportunities to meet with Jews, Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs more than a generation ago. This was the late 1970's and the time of people such as Bishop David Brown and Kenneth Cracknell. As Dr Elizabeth Harris has noted "They were pioneers and they knew it!"

But why do it? The strong sense of what the Christian faith required is what drove this pioneering work: The belief that Christians are called to love God and our neighbour as ourselves and that God is active in the world and we are called to participate in the actions of God in the world.

As Archbishop Rowan Williams tells us: “Christianity as such imposes no single institutional project or future in its engagement with other traditions, but its concrete future must be conceived in terms of Christ-like humanity, humanity delivered from a slavish submission to an alien divine power and participating in the creative work of God. It engages in dialogue and encounter to discover itself more truthfully, to put to other traditions the question that arises from its own foundational story, and to propose a focus for common human hope and action”.

For most Christians this is what the doctrine of the Trinity is about – the way in which God is active in the world. Now we might want a seminar on that particular theological issue on another occasion and what a lively discussion it would probably be! Nevertheless I want to stress that inter faith is not an add on extra that can easily dropped when fashions change, but arises out of our faith and our belief in what God is doing in the world and what our responsibility is in sharing in that. It is important to note this because we were not waiting around for the Prevent Programme, Near Neighbours, Year of Service or any other Government backed idea before we were able to relate outside our own communities – I am sure that is true for you too!

The next thing to say is that in our communities there is much that is happening that is good, and the different faiths are doing it together. CTBI is in the midst of a research project entitled ‘Good Society’. This is looking at what local churches are doing to serve their local communities and asking what those communities would recognise as a ‘good society’. What we are finding are remarkable stories of what local communities are doing. And we are finding that in a good many areas of the UK, churches are creating opportunities within their communities so that people live together in harmony and the quality life is improved and that everyone is served.

Two things about this – most of it is without Government money, and secondly it invariably is being done in partnership with other faiths too. What can we learn from this? People of different faiths have always had a deep concern for the communities in which they live, long before the Good Society was even coined. But more importantly, that in many localities co-operation between the faiths now comes so naturally that it is unremarkable to so many ordinary people. I realise that this is not always the case, but it is important to note how things are changing in so many places.

So we have much to thank the early pioneers of all of this. But what of today and what of the future? In our discussions within the churches across Britain and Ireland, we are acutely aware of how much our society – our world – is changing. The world of a generation or more ago is so vastly different from the one we find ourselves in today. Today’s is characterised by globalisation, digital and social networking, increased diversity in religious matters, challenge to traditional structures, less hierarchical and more ‘inclusive’, people driven by values not organisations. All of this brings enormous challenges to established structures and ways of working and we are all playing catch up! But it also offers tremendous opportunities to embrace greater flexibility, dynamic communication, and to reach a much wider audience.

Inter faith was always about changing the world and not about institutions or Government initiatives even though these have been helpful along the way. It is not about power and control but about building relationships of trust. All our structures and institutions that have grown up around this vision of a more religiously harmonious society are there to help us who care deeply about this ideals, to move towards achieving them. The challenge for us all is how to carry forward the vision with conviction and integrity.

And so there are questions that we within CTBI wrestle with and I am sure they are your issues too:

- Will it be 'inter faith', 'inter-cultural' or more about dealing with complex identities?
- Have we journeyed together long enough to trust each other when we cannot agree?
- How are we to engage with the newer traditions with honesty and integrity, who also want to join the dialogue of faiths?
- How will we respect the rights of religions to their own self-definition?
- How will we engage with secularism in its varied forms?

These are difficult questions to tackle – they will be not be settled with ease or with speed but these challenges also have a tremendous energy and excitement to them.

Dr Maureen Sier Senior Project Officer, Scottish Inter Faith Council and Baha'i Community of the UK

Note: Dr Sier spoke in place of Mrs Ravinder Kaur Nijjar who was unable to be present due to a bereavement.

On behalf of The Scottish Inter Faith Council and of the Baha'i Community of the United Kingdom may I take this opportunity to congratulate the Inter Faith Network of the United Kingdom on its Anniversary Celebration and on its excellent record in inter faith achievements over the last 25 years?

Anniversaries are a good time to reflect on past achievements and to look to future visions. My own faith tradition, the Baha'i

Community has been going through a process of reflection this year linked to a significant anniversary. 100 years ago 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the son of the founder of our faith, Baha'u'llah, visited the shores of the United Kingdom having been released from an extensive period as a prisoner of conscience in the Middle East. He travelled widely throughout the United Kingdom promoting his Father's vision of how to work together for a better world of harmony and social justice.

Much of our community reflection has been on how to follow the example of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and be of active service to those around us, in our families, our communities, our country and our world, an important aspect of that reflection has been on the inter faith journey our community has engaged in for decades now and on how enriching and rewarding that journey has been. The Inter Faith Network of the United Kingdom has been truly supportive of that journey and on your anniversary celebration we want to take the opportunity to thank you for this.

Inter faith engagement is at the heart of Baha'i Teachings and we are encouraged to 'consort with all religions in amity and concord'. The quote then goes on to say 'that there may be inhaled from you the sweet fragrance of God'. This is a very beautiful concept that consorting with amity and concord is a Godly thing to do. However a good friend and mentor once said that it was equally important to inhale from others the 'sweet fragrance of God' and that the heart of inter faith engagement is to deeply and honestly see the light of God in traditions other than your own. So to me inter faith engagement is more than learning about others, building friendships with others and working together with others – it is about being transformed by these engagements and in that transformation experiencing something of the Divine.

Travelling down to this meeting yesterday I spent time trying to come to terms with my new iPhone and one of the things I decided to

do was listen to a 10 minute TED lecture. This lecture was given by Steven Johnson and focussed on *Where good ideas come from*. In this fascinating lecture he clearly identified that the good idea did not come from the Eureka or light bulb moment taking place in the head of an individual but from a steady process of dialogue and collaboration between groups of diverse individuals. This process of dialogic learning he felt was the most effective means of coming up with great and transformative ideas. This is perhaps why links are often drawn between the enlightenment and the popularity of coffee houses in the 1600s. So we are very lucky working in the field of inter faith engagement as it is in our DNA to engage collaboratively with others to come up with solutions to some of the most pressing challenges and problems of our time.

Thanks to organisations like the Inter Faith Network for the UK, the Scottish Inter Faith Council and the hundreds of local inter faith groups around the country safe spaces are being created that allow unusual collaborations to take place and from these collaborations I feel sure communities will be transformed.

However a word of warning! It is not enough for male religious elders to collaborate together. It is also necessary to hear the voices of our young people of faith; our women of faith; the poor and alienated in our societies; the voice of the non-religious; and the voices of those who govern (among others) – our collaborations have to be a sincere and widespread reaching out. Solving the problems of intolerance, hatred, bigotry and prejudice is going to take a massive collaboration and the skills we are hopefully learning in our inter faith engagement are some of the tools that will be needed in societal transformation.

It is also important that our collaborations take place at the local, national and international level. I was fortunate, thanks to an Interfaith Fulbright Community Action

Programme, to be able to experience inter faith engagement in America for a number of months and from this engagement further international collaborations have developed between inter faith organisations in America, Europe and Scotland. This learning has been invaluable and I would like to share with you a short video clip of some of the young people I had the privilege of working with in America as they explore the issues of religion, culture and identity. I hope you enjoy it and are encouraged by what you hear.

Once again may I take this opportunity to thank the Network for its outstanding support and to wish it well for the future.

25th Anniversary

Bishop Alastair Redfern: Welcome to the afternoon session. We begin with some words about the Inter Faith Network's 25th anniversary ahead of cutting the wonderful cake at the front which has been offered by Hindu colleagues of the BAPS Swaminaryan Sanstha. We thank them most warmly for this. Dr Ahsan and I have both had a chance to speak earlier in the day and so we are going to invite our fellow Officer colleagues who are currently serving as Vice-Chairs to offer very brief personal reflections to help us celebrate this 25th anniversary. We will begin with Lord Singh of Wimbledon who has had a very important involvement with IFN since it first began.

Lord Singh of Wimbledon: Friends, it is a great pleasure to say a few words on this wonderful occasion of the 25th anniversary of the formation of the Inter Faith Network.

I begin by offering credit to those who did so much to start it, especially Brian Pearce, and the late Rabbi Hugo Gryn and late Bishop Jim Thompson and many others. Harriet Crabtree and others are now carrying this work forward. The founding of IFN was a great step and there have been many significant achievements, along these first 25 years. One such was helping ensure a question about religion was incorporated into the 2001 Census. That took a lot of work but we did succeed.

IFN has helped faith communities come to the table to talk to central and local Government about religion and its effects, and the effects of society on religion, which is very much the way round of what is happening at the moment. We have had those wonderful opportunities, and we have helped bring religion back in from the cold.

We now need to ask ourselves, how had it come about that religion was put on the margins of society? Because, at one time,

religion had great influence in the lives of people. Unfortunately, I think it is the religions themselves who are to blame, because they have been too much bent on the pursuit of power and because of greed and of bigotry, rooted in the thought that "Our own religion is the only one", or "Ours is the best one and no others can compete" and so forth. That has caused a lot of harm, as has the notion "Never mind your miserable lot on this earth, you will get your reward in heaven".

People got fed up with such promises. They said "We would rather have something here, now" and they pursued material wealth and pushed religion to the side. Unfortunately that has not worked too well either. It is fine pursuing a much better standard of living, but unfortunately that has also resulted in all sorts of problems- and in the short time I have been in the House of Lords I have learned more about some of these problems – problems of crime, problems of unfair health service distribution, problems of alcoholism, binge drinking and drugs, and a general aggression in society.

How can we deal with such bad behaviour? Laws can only put boundaries around it, they cannot make good behaviour, and so they have limited ability to deal with the problems. These problems are interlinked, and need a holistic approach. This is where religion should come to the fore. What people have tried to do is to say "We don't need any sort of moral guidance, we are good people, we will do what we think is right." But it does not work like that. 'Do it yourself' is not the answer. I will give the example of my own efforts at do-it-yourself. I am very good at it; I can assemble something in no time at all, and even have nuts and bolts and screws left over! I stand back and look at it and I can see that it is about to topple! This is what is happening to society today – the do-it-yourself approach has not worked too well. We have got to try to

do something to put the ethical elements of religion- I put those as 'right', 'wrong' and 'responsibility' – at the centre of discussion and behaviour. We can do that individually, in our different religions, but I think the great advantage of inter faith understanding and cooperation is that we can do it together. We are only just beginning to do this and have much to do to make society more responsible, more caring. This is the challenge to the inter faith movement today. It is a huge challenge but I believe this is the challenge we must meet. Thank you very much.

Dr Girdari Lal Bhan: Good afternoon. It is my privilege to convey to you, on behalf of the Hindu community, congratulations on this auspicious occasion of the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the Inter Faith Network.

In this morning's presentations, many points were put forward and I would just like to echo these, and in particular some of the challenges which were highlighted. I think that inter faith has come a significant way from the time when there used to be hatred and intolerance, persecution and discrimination. Thankfully, most of that is now in the past, at least in many parts of the world, particularly in this country. We have come to the point where I hope that we are now promoting genuine respect and equality, not just tolerance. Tolerance means "You are not as good as I am, but I will sit with you". That is not enough.

I think we are also, today, in the process of celebrating what we call the common good between the faiths. As was mentioned earlier, we have to bear in mind our relationship with those who are outside this perimeter. We need to think about how we come to accept somebody as equal when we feel very deeply rooted in our own faith. I would like here to commend to you a person called Swami Vivekananda who, in 1893, addressing the Parliament of World Religions at the age of thirty, deeply and passionately promoted the concept of inclusivism rather than

exclusivism, the concept of universalism based on the scriptural code *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*: "The whole world is one family, we are all brothers and sisters within that family". He was truly a forerunner of the concept of inter faith, and was embraced very widely in America. He foresaw the problem, the anxiety that a person could have in dialogue "Am I going to lose my individuality, my identity?" and he showed a way forward that this would never be at the cost of who you are. The 150th anniversary of Swami Vivekananda's birth will be celebrated next year in various events around the country. When the Hindu community undertakes those events we would like you to come and join us and celebrate that person who promoted this concept which is one of the fundamental concepts underlying inter faith.

Congratulations once again.

Dr Natubhai Shah: On behalf of the Jain community, may I also echo the good words of so many speakers today. First, congratulations on IFN's silver jubilee. I remember 1986, when Brian Pearce and later on, Rabbi Hugo Gryn, came to Leicester and consulted about the setting up of an inter faith network or council. We Jains were very open to this because we believe in non-violence, reverence for all life, and 'relative pluralism'. What 'relative pluralism' *anekantevada* means is that there are many ways towards spiritual liberation and that we all can reach it, through different paths. So we Jains said "This is work which we want to do" and we joined straight away. IFN has helped increase greatly the awareness of our faith tradition and contributed to this at the highest level, with visits, for example, of Archbishops, a Prime Minister and we have even had a Royal visit to the Jain Centre

Involvement in IFN has also given us a route for contributing to inter faith cooperation.

For the last 25 years, at leadership level, we have walked together and talked together. Many times, though there have been

differences. Still we have acted with a similar mind. This is what we have achieved.

Speaking from a faith community perspective, at the grass roots level, much work remains to be done by us. I dream, for example – I am a dreamer, a little bit – this Silver Jubilee Year is a good time for our faith community leaders to encourage their grass roots membership too. Now we faith communities do a lot of work, and on more than just the spiritual things. We look after people, we do educational work, we do health and wellbeing work, and counselling work, and let us hope in 25 years' time, when we celebrate again, we will have been able to develop as an organisation reflecting this, holistically, which could be on a par with any secular organisation.

May I congratulate once again the Inter Faith Network and wish it well for the coming years.

Bishop Alastair Redfern: And, finally, we are also inviting Brian Pearce, who was IFN's first Director, to offer a few reflections too.

Brian Pearce: Bearing in mind our timetable, I shall be very brief indeed. But as many of you know, over a number of years, a good deal of my time and energy has been spent trying to help develop the Inter Faith Network and its activities. I am certainly very touched to have this opportunity just to say these few words on this celebratory occasion. I am well aware, as we all are, that the Network faces major challenges at present. My hope for the future would be that we can return to processes of mutual engagement and dialogue, respecting one another whether we agree with them or not, and finding ways to work together in taking forward the important work which is on the Network's future agenda. I did detect, I think, a new energy in the hall this morning, and I hope we can apply it wisely. Thank you.

Bishop Alastair Redfern: Thank you very much, Brian. And could I just say that Vivian Wineman, who is a Vice-Chair, is actually

flying back from the US today and so has not been able to be here in person at this stage of the day, but adds his greeting to those you have heard.

So thank you very much for reminding us of the past and challenging us about maintaining the momentum and looking to the future creatively and with dreams.

I now want to invite us to prepare for the workshops. As usual, these will generally open with a short presentation, with the main focus on subsequent discussion and sharing. A note of key points will be taken at each workshop so that we can learn from them and gather wisdom and act on it. The facilitators and participants are being asked to think about drawing out one key point from their workshop which can be fed back, in two minutes, into the plenary so we have a kind of mosaic of the major themes that have been identified or are emerging from the day.

Feedback from workshops

Bishop Alastair Redfern: May I first welcome Vivian Wineman, IFN's Vice Chair from the Jewish Community, who has just arrived from the US.

I am going to ask a representative from each of the workshops to make a very short statement of up to two minutes of the key points their workshop would like to share with us. The major point of the workshops is to benefit the people in them, listening to each other and practising some networking. But there may well be points that have come from each of the workshops that would help us all if they were shared more widely.

For example, they might have some very useful resources in the Midlands whereas we could be struggling in the North East. So we hope that the UK Inter Faith Network can be a conduit for all of us, to make sure that all our resources are shared well, for example through its website. It can help to distribute that information to all of us and help us if we are struggling to know who to contact and who to share those skills and resources with across the country.

Bishop Alastair Redfern: Thank you very much for that very practical understanding of networking. Next, Group 3.

Workshop 1

Mohinder Singh Chana (Network of Sikh Organisations and Bradford Concord Inter Faith Society): Workshop 1 was on 'Inter faith engagement in a changing world'. The key idea agreed at the end of the session is that people of faith need to understand that religion is one voice among many within society. They need to engage well on values in an inter faith context and also with the wider community. They need to be willing to learn from others and to have discussion and dialogue in an atmosphere of mutual respect.

Workshop 2

Vijaya Kotur (North East Regional Faiths Network): Workshop 2 was on 'Resources for inter faith understanding and co-operation'. We talked about how, at this time of austerity, we need resources and understanding and skills – particularly where faith communities have no funds. We were inspired by Dr Maureen Sier's work – unlike our regional inter faith structure, they have still got funding to employ faith workers in Scotland. We wish to stress the richness in all different areas of the UK and of sharing our resources.

Workshop 3

Ann Lovelock (Birmingham Council of Faiths): Workshop 3 was on 'Tackling suspicion, prejudice and harassment'. The Revd David Gifford talked about the experiences of the setting up of the Council of Christians and Jews and what has happened since then. This gave us an example as to how we might proceed. We decided that we need to face the pain, of which there is a lot and which arises from historical events, and find ways of moving on together, by building resilience through joint action. There is a need to look at history through the eyes of scripture which helps us interpret what has happened. It may not always be possible to prevent atrocities from taking place, but by building meaningful relationships, we will be better equipped to overcome them together.

Workshop 4

Alistair Beattie (Faithnetsouthwest):

Workshop 4 was entitled 'Networking, what is it?' That was a short question, but the answer, our group thought, is a complex one. We began by considering some of the words which might imply coming together in a network, whether it is a 'movement', a 'hub', or a 'group'. We agreed that it is important that there should be communication, both upward and downward. The concept of a hub with spokes symbolises the fact that each part is in communication with the others. The key aspect is the purpose and the coming together and the communication about that, and also retaining within that a certain fluidity. The purpose is what drives the group. Our group felt that a network should not be rigid, hierarchical, exclusive and driven by structure. Structure is not irrelevant but it is crucial that structure does not over-determine a network. There should be some fluidity in terms of moving towards the purpose and avoiding rigidity.

Bishop Alastair Redfern: That is an interesting reflection. As IFN will be considering in its strategic review, the world has got more complex over 25 years. Members of the Executive Committee have heard me say on a number of occasions that I think we may need to have a more complex pattern of networks which serve different purposes rather than fewer into which we try to cram all our purposes. Now Workshop 5.

Workshop 5

John Keast (Religious Education Council of England and Wales): Workshop 5 was on

'Education for inter faith understanding'. We discussed many different points, but our discussion focused mainly on the challenges that are facing those people who are engaged in education for inter faith understanding. I will just mention two of them. The first is the challenge that we face of the high risk of the marginalisation of Religious Education in the school curriculum, with a resultant damaging effect on its provision and effectiveness. The second is the relationship between how Religious Education in schools is carried out and the religious education offered by individual faith communities. These can work against each other if they are not done properly and attention paid to the relationship.

Workshop 6

Augustine Booth-Clibborn (Inter Faith Network for the UK): Workshop 6 was on

'Inclusion in an inter faith context, aspirations and actualities'. The group had an interesting and wide ranging discussion. It formulated a statement to feed back into this discussion, namely that the Inter Faith Network should take inclusivity seriously, whether in terms of age or sexuality or of a wide range of traditions, including the Pagan tradition, in a wide range of contexts. Engagement on the inclusivity issue should take place with respect, with the aim of learning from each other, and with the hope of working with each other. This debate should have clearly framed terms and all involved should abide by a respectful code of conduct, allowing us to move forward together.

Workshop 7

Norman Richardson (Northern Ireland Inter-Faith Forum): Workshop 7 was on 'Religious/non-religious dialogue'. We looked at religious/non-religious dialogue, and had contributions from Dr Lois Lee of the Non-religion and Secularity Research Network and some personal reflections from Brian Pearce, followed by discussion. If there was one key issue emerging, it was about the difficulties of language to represent the terms 'religious' or 'religion' and 'non-religious' or 'non-religion'. There was a strong awareness of the great diversity of those who are not religious – just, of course, as we are aware of the religious diversity of those who would define themselves as members of IFN. We wanted to emphasise the spectrum of identities and the fact that there is, in Brian's words, 'no deep ditch' between those who may associate more or less with one or other of these terms and to stress the importance of mutually respectful engagement.

Bishop Alastair Redfern: Friends, that was just a flavour, a mosaic, of some of the wisdom, ideas and aspirations that have been shared in the workshops. Hopefully, those of you who took part in these will take the detail away and pursue it.

Some reflections on the day

Bishop Alastair Redfern: I am now going to ask two colleagues to give their reflections on the day: Professor Paul Weller and Nitin Palan. First, Professor Paul Weller, who many of you will know and who has been involved with the Inter Faith Network for a long time. I have the privilege of being a colleague of his in Derby.

Professor Paul Weller Professor of Inter-Religious Relations and Senior Research Fellow, University of Derby

Thank you for this opportunity. I was, very briefly, an Inter Faith Network staff member in the late 80's and have worked with the Network on a variety of projects such as the Directory of Religions in the UK. I am also a Trustee of a member organisation of the Network – the Multi-Faith Centre at the University of Derby.

I am pleased to have this chance to share with you some reflections on the day. It is quite a difficult task – one day, relating to 25 years and four minutes to talk about it – and I have already used 20 seconds! I should add that part of my own background was as a Christian minister within the Baptist tradition. We used to preach for at least 30 minutes, even to make only three points! But I am going to try and leave four points with you for your reflection.

First of all, the importance of celebration.

The Network survived the dangers of its infancy 25 years ago. It needed at the beginning those who gave tender care to it and were aware of the dangers to its young life. Those colleagues who founded the Network were very aware of its fragility and

how easily it might all have come apart. They had great wisdom in steering the Network in those times. We of course know Brian Pearce and have already heard from him. We have heard mention of Rabbi Hugo Gryn, who, coming from the experience of Nazi death camps and death marches in Europe, brought to the Network a grace, a humility and a humanity. They steered the Network in its early years, sheltered it from potential dangers, structured it in such a way that it could draw on the widest constituencies possible at that time in order to enable (to mix up other metaphors and go back to Harriet's image of plants) its little shoots to grow and develop. And it is right that we note today the importance of celebration around that.

The second point, though, is the challenge of maturity.

Because not everything that is necessary for a child is necessarily needed for an adult who has grown, it is important, as people grow, to know why they may accept some things from their past and may decide to change some things. And I think this is the case for organisations as well as for individuals. Maturity means finding one's own way, or else running the danger of finding no way at all. But unlike adolescents who often do that by casting off everything that they have inherited, the wise way to do this is to try to learn from that which is being celebrated and then to try to find the way forward in full maturity. The Network can take up the challenge of maturity in its strategic review – which is not a minor task, not just one among many bits of work that are being looked at, but a real and proper strategic review. It is a challenge to the maturity of a 25 year old organisation that has arrived where it is now, and which has its present and its future in its own hands.

The third point is the strength of diversity.

The very structure on the basis of which the Network was set up – with different kinds of groupings and organisations – is a massive strength. This is because it contains within it the possibility of mutual correction to the limited perspectives of faith community representative bodies, of local inter faith groups, or national religious organisations, of academic institutions and so on. Mutual perspective correction is very important and it is built into the structure of the Network. If I may be allowed to express a personal hope in this, it is that whatever goes forward will somehow maintain that richness of mutuality, of the different kinds of organisational expression of engagement in inter-faith relations. Diversity is a strength. It is also a challenge and part of what this meeting has touched on, and what you will be looking at in your Annual General Meeting, relates to some of the questions which need now to be faced. It would be an abuse for me, standing here, to give my personal view on those issues. But it would be an abdication of responsibility in terms of reflection not to say anything. So, very briefly, I would say that it is important to recognise the pain of those who feel injustice and exclusion in wider society and may also do so within some of our own structures. It is important, if there are those who have difficulty in engaging with wider and broader religious diversities on points of principle rather than points of procedure, that they should express these as points of principle and not just stand behind points of procedure. But I would also say that I think some of our faith traditions have a wisdom that sometimes, on some issues, there is not just only a ‘yes’ or a ‘no’ option available, but there can sometimes be another way: “another way” which is not an avoidance of an issue or a shelving of it but actually (again to use Harriet’s imagery and the title of her remarks earlier today) is part of a new road forward in which all who are currently engaged and those who are not yet engaged can put some trust as a way forward, rather than being an avoidance of an issue. And if it

is possible for the Network to find that road forward, then I think in that sense it will not be a case of no winners and no losers. All will win and the world will benefit.

Finally, the responsibility of independence.

The Inter Faith Network is not a tool of Government, even though it has worked closely with Government. Nor is it a tool of any one faith community tradition, however big, or however small, however influential. But enabling it to be independent means taking responsibility and, especially in these times of straitened resources, this presents a particular challenge for those faith communities that have significant resources. It is one thing to speak and to celebrate 25 years and the importance of the Inter Faith Network for our religious life together and our wider community life together, but is there a willingness to accept what that responsibility requires in terms of resourcing?

Brian said in his few words earlier today that he sensed an energy in the Network. I find prayer quite difficult, even though I am a believing person, I do not find it easy. But if I have a prayer to offer it is a heartfelt prayer for the Inter Faith Network, that the incredible energy that is in this room and is represented in the organisations in the Network can find new ways forward, with wisdom, in the way that Brian said. Energy with wisdom is the future of the Inter Faith Network. Thank you.

Nitin Palan
National Interfaith
Coordinator, BAPS
Swaminaryan Sanstha and
Hindu Christian Forum

Namaste. Jai Swaminarayan. Good afternoon.

Recounting the journey of the past 25 years has been an amazing experience, as we saw visually portrayed by Paresh. Our efforts in

coming together to share a common vision have yielded great results. The purpose has united us, engaged us in conversations enabling mutual understanding, and, I think, made us much richer individuals. Nevertheless, we still have a long way to go.

As I attempt to share my reflections on today's theme and the many questions we have tried to address, I do so by drawing upon the wisdom of my spiritual teacher, His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj, and our Hindu scriptures.

I think, the main question today is: How do we get closer to understanding each other?

First of all, having had the privilege of working with so many of you and having attended so many wonderful conferences, my first and foremost reflection is that we should not address interfaith activities as 'work'. To all of us in this room today, it is actually a way of life – something that we would wish to see being shared by everyone.

Interfaith is and can only be a natural form of behaviour for the world at large and anything that stands in the way of that happening is what we need to address.

Interfaith, in essence, is education of hearts and minds whereby the heart goes back to its original task of loving and for the mind to be creative in its acceptance and desire to look beyond the borders created by others.

Over the last 25 years of inspiring interfaith activities that we have undertaken, and all the things that we have seen and heard today, my conviction is that it is OUR core values that we all have that will make the difference. If you will allow me, I would like to briefly share with you a few small but relevant examples of what I and many others of my BAPS Swaminarayan tradition are taught to live out in our daily practises and thoughts. For example:

- From my Hindu perspective, I am taught "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" – that the whole world is ONE family, so I must confer reverence and mutual respect to all

my brothers and sisters.

- When I join my hands and greet others by saying 'Namaste', I am to acknowledge each person as a divine soul, beyond gender or race or tradition.
- When I prostrate before the deities, I am to do this at least 6 times – 5 times as an offering to God of my body, mind, sense and spirit; and the 6th time to apologise for any misgiving towards anyone else.
- The Vedas proclaim: 'Let noble thoughts come to us from all sides', so I am to be open to knowledge and positivity from everyone around me.
- And in the Vedas, we are taught that we should live on earth with respect and love for the environment and for all of God's creation. So we should never forget our responsibility to look after his wonderful gift to us all.

I am sure that each one of us, in our own daily practices, behaves in an exemplary way whereby we all inspire in others the ability to see the commonality in all of us – and the desire to love and to reconnect with the supreme being.

Finally, I am therefore suggesting that it is what we are and how we practise our interfaith that will perhaps speak louder than any educational material or conference or debate. And it is our combined spirituality and practices that will give the strength and direction to Interfaith Network and to future generations to come.

As Gandhi said a long time ago: "Be the change you want to see."

Thank you once again for this privilege of being able to share with you a few of my thoughts.

Namaste. Jai Swaminarayan. Have a wonderful day.

Bishop Alastair Redfern Thank you very much indeed for those very profound and challenging reflections. Dr Ahsan and I may offer some reflections of our own in the AGM which follows, but my task now is to draw to a close this National Meeting. I want to say thank you very much to all those who have come to speak, to lead and to facilitate workshops and to take part in the day; to the staff of the Hallam Centre here, who have looked after us so well; and to Harriet and her colleagues in the IFN office who do an enormous job on very slender resources and who have designed and enabled this day to happen.

Workshop Notes

Note: The discussion points listed in each of these workshop notes are not conclusions agreed by the workshop as a whole, but points and suggestions made by individual participants.

Workshop 1

Inter faith engagement in a changing world

What are the factors which are shaping inter faith engagement in the UK – and globally – today and which affect the development of inter faith organisations, programmes and training and support? What might be the future of local, regional and national inter faith activity and what might this mean for the questions to be addressed in IFN's forthcoming Strategic Review?

Facilitator: Mohinder Singh Chana, Network of Sikh Organisations and Bradford Concord Interfaith Society

Presenters: Imam Dr Abduljalil Sajid, Muslim Council of Britain, World Congress of Faiths, Religions for Peace, Brighton and Hove Interfaith Contact Group

Professor Paul Weller, Professor of Inter-Religious Relations and Senior Research Fellow, University of Derby

Mohinder Singh Chana welcomed participants to the workshop.

Imam Abduljalil Sajid offered a presentation with PowerPoint. [His slides are included at the end of this note.] He underlined in particular the importance of inter faith engagement, including inter-community dialogue, and of seeking the common good and working with people of all faiths and none. He noted the importance of faith in our changing world and the contribution which faith communities made to society – both in terms of welfare but also of the joy they bring. He had experienced this first hand in this country in the years since he had come to live here in the early 70s. Very influential in his personal journey had been attending in past years the Jewish-Christian-Muslim dialogues in Bendorf (sponsored by the Standing Conference of Jews, Christians and Muslims in Europe).

He spoke of the Muslim belief that God created humans to learn and understand each other and to live happily in this world on a basis of respect and understanding and of the importance of sincerity, purity of action and God's guidance in this.

It was important for faith communities to be able to engage with the secular world and to do so in a way in which they could cooperate on the basis of their shared values, working

together on common challenges. He underlined particular challenges in the area of education and the media. He noted the importance of all engagement by faith communities being on the basis of being fellow citizens and not with some seen as 'immigrants', and of it being always within the framework of the rule of law.

Responding during the discussion to various questions and points, he added:

- It was vital for religious people to have dialogue with non-religious people. IFN had been making opportunities for this.
- People of faith needed to understand that the religious voice was one among many within society and they needed to engage well on values on an inter faith basis and also with wider society and be willing to learn from each other in an atmosphere of dialogue and discussion.
- Islamic law was important for Muslims but they could observe other legal systems. Rights of minorities must be included and their voices heard. The law must be based on mutual respect.

Professor Weller spoke of the changing world. It was important to be aware of the shifts of consciousness between generations. For example, his son had some years ago

asked what the USSR was. For his children, when they talked with their own children someday, the equivalent that would need explanation was likely to be the rise of China.

China was different from other countries in many ways. It was an ancient civilisation which had never experienced full colonisation. At least some of its religious traditions (Daoism, Confucianism, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam) overlapped in their practice. Many Chinese could be described as having 'composite' religious identities. This had likely been reflected in the answers that some British Chinese had given to the Census questions, where it was possible that quite a number may have ticked 'no religion' because they did not feel able to choose just one.

Reflecting on a point which had been made by Imam Sajid, Professor Weller went on to comment on Muslims, Islam and democracy, noting that Muslims often stressed that a number of regimes under which Muslims had lived had been neither democratic nor Islamic. The Arab Spring had stimulated new forms of debate about democracy and its relationship with Islam. In some cases, this debate was influenced by people having lived in other countries – for example some of the current Tunisian leaders had spent much time in the UK. This was one example that the significance of communication across our world today could not be overestimated.

For many years, religion had been ignored in public discourse, but was it now being paid too much attention? Professor Weller noted a tendency in the media to fixate on particular ritual aspects of religions, as well as a tendency in both the media and in policy thinking to speak as if there were clear and homogenous communal identities. These tendencies were unhelpful. It was clear that religious identity was complex.

Equality law, and human rights law more broadly, had been developed in recent years to respond better to religious identity and the need to offer greater protection to this in

some contexts. However, this could sometimes take the law in directions that campaigners had not foreseen or expected. And it could also result in what some might see as the law allowing faith communities to perpetuate unfairness. Faith communities, he said, must also be accountable for unfairness.

Professor Weller spoke of the importance of Europe and the European Union. There was profound interaction between the UK and the rest of Europe and the European Union. He hoped that aspects of IFN's work could be shared more widely across Europe. He noted that there was comparatively little by way of national inter faith structures in many European countries and so sharing was important.

It was possible for faith communities and inter faith work to get too closely tied to the Government of the day. Particular policy directives could be helpful but could also constrain. And, of course, governments changed.

Professor Weller said that he was glad the workshop title included 'engagement' and that Brian Pearce had used this word during his remarks at the lunchtime cake-cutting. Engagement carried with it the sense of real commitment. Just as in dialogue there needed to be a 'speaking of the truth in love', so in working together there needed to be real commitment to joint engagement. This could sometimes mean sharing across faiths things that were found difficult and wrestled with within our own particular faith family. He gave the example of Christians and homosexuality. Could Christians articulate this difficult discussion and share it with others? Likewise, when Muslims had had to deal with people who advocated violence in the name of Islam could they share/discuss this with people of other faiths?

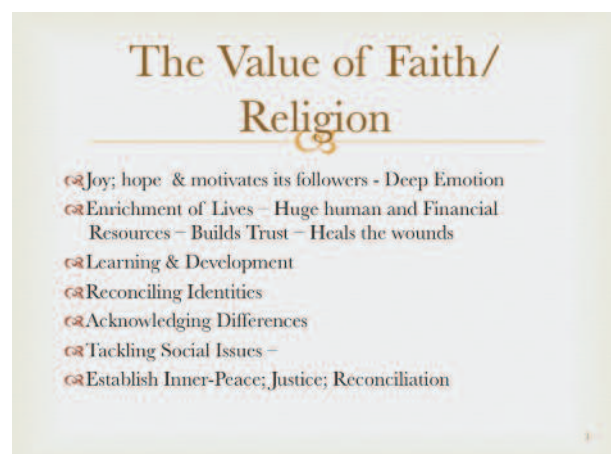
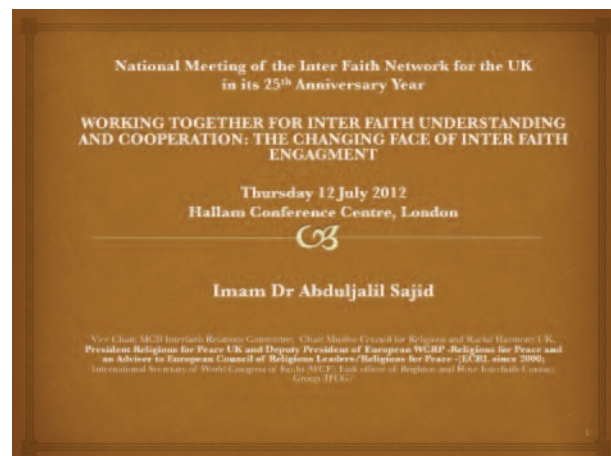
He closed by saying that discrimination on the grounds of religion and belief – a key area of his own research – was one where he felt that there was still much work to tackle.

The following points were offered individually by workshop participants:

- Census figures are showing shifts in patterns of religious affiliation.
- The now defunct Religion and Belief Consultative Group included Humanist and secularist members.
- With religion wanting more space in the 'public square', it is interesting to look at how religion engages with the law.
- Religion is no longer the voice of morality. It is part of the debate.
- Religious morality has trailed behind the morality of society on issues such as women's and gay rights.
- In the field of health care, forms are often left blank in the section about spiritual needs because nurses may not feel confident about discussing spiritual issues with patients and because some patients may be diffident about talking about these except in safe environments.
- Faith bodies are a huge part of the voluntary sector but have a muted voice.
- Inter faith 'engagement' is different from inter faith 'relations.'
- If everything is spiritual and created, we have been given a choice.
- A big moral question today is about wealth and inequality
- Why do bishops live in palaces while others live in poverty?
- Bishops palaces are not generally what their names might imply.
- Some Humanists and Pagans who had recently joined a local inter faith group (to which the speaker belonged) were being

strongly critical of the beliefs of other members, who were finding this challenging.

- It is important to have shared principles on the basis of which groups operate.
- Values based engagement between people of faith and people of 'no faith' is important.
- Mutual respect needs to go beyond just faiths and extend to those of no faith.



Islam

- ☞ "Way of Life"
- ☞ Religious Foundations for Diversity and Pluralism
- ☞ Diversity recognised, appreciated and celebrated
- ☞ Inter-religious Dialogue
- ☞ Co-operation and Partnership
- ☞ Justice and Forgiveness
- ☞ God created human beings **"If your Lord had so desired, all the people on the earth would surely have come to believe, all of them; do you then think, that you could compel people to believe?"** in differences: It is our duty to recognize each other ; learn from each other and behave humanly not violently

Our Common Challenges

- A. Condemn violent Extremism, Fanaticism and Terrorism
- B. Understanding secularism and its connection with Faith Communities
- C. Integrated and Cohesive community : Citizenship and Rule of Law
- D. Hope not hate – Hostility against Islam and hatred against Muslims commonly known as Islamophobia and Anti-Semitism (Hatred against Jews) is nothing but crude Racism and two sides of the same coin.
- E. Golden Rule *"Do not do to others what you do not want done to yourself"*
- F. *Working together in partnership and cooperation*

Christianity, Secularism & the Liberal West

- The Example of Britain – Church of England : An established Church who has right to officiate State ceremonies such as coronations and Royal Weddings – 26 Anglican Bishops are members of Upper House in British Parliament
- ☞ Freedom to practice all faiths or non – Right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion (Art 9a of EU Convention which has been incorporated into domestic Law s Human Rights Act 1998
- ☞ **"alliance of civilisations"** not **"Clash of civilisations"**.

Education and the Media

- ☞ The Purpose of State - elucidates 5 constitutional points
 - That obedience to God and His Apostle must be given priority to every other obedience.
 - That obedience to those who are in authority is subject to the obedience to God and His Apostle
 - That the Head of the State must be from amongst the believers.
 - That it is possible for the people to differ with the government and its rulers.
 - That in case of dispute the final authority to decide between them is the Law of God and His Apostle.

Personal Responsibility

- ☞ Moral & Spiritual Teachings: based on **"promoting good and preventing evil"**
 - o Read and Learn! *Read and learn in the name of God who has created*
 - o Believe and work hard. *Those who believe and work hard deserve God's forgiveness and a great reward*
 - o Be pious and respect your parents. *God Almighty has prescribed that you worship none except Him and that you do good to your parent*
 - o Be honest and fight for your rights. *You ought to be engaged in the effort to the way of God consciously and honestly*
 - o Be aware of tomorrow. *Let every one, male and female, see what he/she is doing for tomorrow*
 - o Be Good and Do good deeds. *And do good. Truly Allah loves the good-doers.;*
 - o Be Peaceful in all aspects of life
 - o Be Merciful and patient

The State I

All citizens of the State, whether Muslims or non Muslims must be guaranteed the following fundamental rights, and it is the bounden duty of the State to safeguard them against all types of encroachment:

- a) Sanctity of life and Security of person
- b) Protection and Security of property
- c) Protection of honour
- d) Right of privacy
- e) The right to protest against injustice
- f) The right to enjoin what is good and forbid what is evil. This includes the right of criticism
- g) Freedom of association, provided it is used for good ends and does not become an instrument for spreading dissensions and creating fundamental differences in the society

Common Shared Values

- ☞ Peace and MUTUAL RESPECT
- ☞ Democracy and RULE OF LAW
- ☞ Tolerance and ACCEPTANCE
- ☞ Freedom and SECURITY and JUSTICE
- ☞ Solidarity and INCLUSIVENESS
- ☞ Equality and FAIRNESS to all
- ☞ The Extension of the HUMAN RIGHTS
- ☞ Inclusive and JUST SOCIETY
- ☞ The DEMOCRATIC participation and citizens' engagements

The State II

- h) Freedom of faith and conscience
- i) Protection against wrongfully hurting one's religious susceptibilities. The Holy Qur'an has clearly laid down in this connection that in matters of religious differences an academic discussion can be held, but it must be conducted in a fair and decent manner
- j) Limiting the responsibility of every person only to his or her own deeds
- k) Security from action being taken against anyone on false reports about his or her crime
- l) The right of the destitute and the needy to be provided with basic necessities of life by the State
- m) Equal treatment of all its subjects by the State without discrimination

Secularism



- ☞ Separation between State and Religion
- ☞ Modern Secular State and Islam

Intolerance Masking as 'Conscientious Secular Liberalism':

"Malicious generalizations about Islam have become the last acceptable form of denigration of foreign culture in the West; what is said about the Muslim mind, or character, or religion, or culture as a whole cannot now be said in mainstream discussion about Africans, Jews, other Orientals, or Asians." Professor Edward Said, *Covering Islam*, xii, 1997

I am reminded the words of Professor Hans Kung: **"No peace among nations without peace among the religions and no peace among the religions without dialogue between the religions"**. I add **"No peace without justice and no justice without forgiveness and compassion"**. Dialogue and agreement must be conscientiously applied and maintained, so to create bonds of love, care, trust and confidence. Its prerequisite is proper education and learning from one another. We must speak and act truthfully with compassion. We must treat others as we wish others to treat us. Every human being must be treated, fairly, humanely and with dignity without any fear or discrimination.

12

Global Ethics and Interfaith Dialogue



- ☞ No new global order without a new global ethic,
- ☞ A fundamental demand: every human being must be treated humanely,
- ☞ Commitment to a culture of non-violence and respect for life,
- ☞ Commitment to a culture of solidarity and a just economic order,
- ☞ Commitment to a culture of equal rights and partnership between men and women, Transformation of consciousness through seeking God Guidance

13

Conclusion



Remember, Remember, Remember. Evil is not in the body. Evil is in the mind, therefore harm nobody. Just change the mind.

"Lord, You said and your word is true! Love is stronger than hate. O God Almighty, You are peace and from You peace comes. Bestow upon all of us your peace and make our final destiny in your eternal abode of peace. Let there be respect for the earth, peace for its people, love in our lives, and delight in the good, forgiveness for our past wrongs and from now on a new start. AMEN"

14

Workshop 2

Resources for inter faith understanding and cooperation

The agenda for inter faith bodies has been growing steadily across the last decade. What kind of resources – people, skills, regional, funding and in kind support – are needed for sustainable and effective inter faith work at local, regional and national level?

Facilitator: Vijaya Kotur, Chair, North East Regional Faiths Network

Presenters: Riaz Ravat, Faith Training Development Manager, St Philip's Centre, Leicester

Dr Maureen Sier, Senior Project Officer, Scottish Inter Faith Council

Vijaya Kotur welcomed participants to the workshop. In her opening remarks she said that because of funding cuts inter faith work was currently very difficult to sustain so it was important to share ideas on how to use resources more effectively.

Riaz Ravat opened by noting that the St Philip's Centre like others was feeling the challenges of the funding cuts and was in need of all of the following resources – people, skills, regional, funding and in kind support. At the same time, there was much more inter faith work now than ever; such as the Near Neighbours Programme and a Year of Service (although that was not a funded initiative.)

He noted that the 'one size fits all' solution was not an option. All inter faith work was different. He discussed a range of resources, identifying issues and potential solutions.

Whilst inter faith work in the East Midlands had been strong, this had been primarily locality driven rather than regional. A challenge in an era of funding restraints was duplication of work and the need for some organisations to explore partnerships for inter faith work.

Skilled staff were needed for inter faith work. The local community was diverse with many potentially good employees and volunteers.

An important issue to work on was the 'next generation' so that inter faith work could be sustained and strengthened. For example,

this year St Philip's had taken on young apprentices in specific areas that needed to be worked on, such as IT and the Centre had run the Catalyst young leadership programme funded by Near Neighbours. Both had been achieved as a result of working with local partners.

Dr Maureen Sier distributed copies of a resource pack created by the Scottish Inter Faith Council (SIFC). She emphasised Mr Ravat's point of nurturing the next generation and directed the group to a DVD resource in the pack created for young people educating them about inter faith work. She also pointed out that the pack included a resource 'Belief in Dialogue' that had been jointly created by people involved in inter faith work and the Scottish Government and stated that it was being widely used in Scotland.

One of the ways in which the SIFC had obtained non-government funds was to undertake training. She noted that a lot of inter faith work could be done through educating people about religion and the positive impact of religious diversity. However, it was vitally important and necessary to have skilled staff undertaking both the inter faith work and the religion and belief training.

Another issue to look at was how to engage with non-religious people. 'How do we engage with the wider world?' 'How do we set boundaries but be inclusive?' The SIFC had nearly finished the process of restructuring its constitution and the dialogue

involved in this had been difficult, especially in distinguishing between what she described as 'governing organisations' and 'associate organisations'. However, the ongoing process was just as important as the outcome to improve inter faith relations.

Another resource being used by SIFC was volunteers, especially younger individuals. It was beneficial for the volunteers because they gained skills from the responsibilities they were given and became ambassadors for inter faith work. In return, it was good for SIFC as it built the capacity to undertake further work.

It was important to get the inter faith message out widely in society and one way of doing this was through social media. However, a problem with social media was knowing how to use it effectively and how to effectively monitor it. It was not a 'free for all' and there needed to be boundaries created for appropriate use.

The following points were made in the subsequent discussion:

- Faith awareness is of great importance. One way in which this can be promoted is through holding conferences and courses in education about different religions. Also, it is important to meet with people of other faiths and share information and experiences.
- Christians Aware Interfaith Programme has recently published a book called 'Meeting Muslims' which provides a collection of Muslim perspectives on their religion as a resource for inter faith understanding and dialogue between Christians and Muslims.
- Networking is important for opening up further resources. For example, getting in touch with the local council has helped Medway Inter Faith Action with their inter faith work.
- The importance of being open to all, whether we agree with them or not.
- It is important to involve the whole community to raise the likelihood of gaining in-kind support.
- An example of a project involving the wider community was provided by The North East Regional Faiths Network. Through work with an oncologist, Prof Edwin Pugh, and local inter faith organisations, a joint project on the theme "Good Death" is on-going. This looks at ways of providing support to people who are dying, either in the hospice or the hospital, with particular focus on their religious and faith-based needs. It is not just the responsibility of the health service providers to address the faith related needs of patients but also of the wider communities we live in. The project has also looked at accessing some solicitors who have agreed to provide free seminars for those wishing to draw up a Last Will and Testament. This project is looking at working with employers to see how flexible working and making room for the differing faith needs might help relatives at times like these.
- It was noted that hospital chaplaincies are always available to help in hospital contexts. However, some perceive the term 'chaplaincy' as denoting Christianity, so other religions may not always turn to them for help.
- Asylum seekers have general difficulties when they arrive in the UK which can be helped by inter faith organisations.
- Older people do not have support.
- The appallingly high rate of child poverty in the UK was noted with dismay, and a desire was expressed to engage in a more holistic approach to tackling this.

- It was noted that some schools attempt to tackle this by offering breakfasts in the morning, to ensure that children get at least two meals a day. However, it is important to ensure that this is offered to all children so that those receiving this do not feel singled out or patronised.
- One solution in Scotland was FISCAF which gives grants of up to £50,000 to fight poverty; this is funded by the churches. It was noted that this model could be replicated in the rest of the UK.
- It was noted that youth panels with speakers of different faiths can provide a good platform for young people to speak about issues affecting them.
- A key way that communities can help is through changing perspectives. An example was noted of an ex-BNP member who wanted to help fight poverty affecting white people in a town in Scotland. A group of Muslim men came and offered a truck full of food. This was a transformative act, and they now work together to fight poverty in their community.
- Young people need to network with each other to educate and learn from each other.
- It is important for young people to be educated about different faiths. An example was given of a project in Scotland where young people were given the opportunity to talk to religious leaders through a virtual video link which could be linked to schools all over Scotland.
- In England, and Wales, SACREs provide 'modcasts' which is a similar resource.
- There are many different levels in inter faith work as not all organisations are the same. We need to look at our own constitution and acknowledge our aims and what needs to be achieved. People alone decide whether to join a network of groups.
- Look to the local council for ideas on how to get any funding.
- Process is an important step in working together.
- There is a need to do more to facilitate the sharing of ideas and resources between inter faith groups. IFN should do more to help achieve this.

It was concluded that good work was being done in all areas through inter faith organisations. Greater sharing of good practice and information about the projects undertaken by member bodies would be desirable. This would increase opportunities to look at joint ventures in the future.

Workshop 3

Tackling suspicion, prejudice, harassment

There have been major steps forward in building good inter faith relations but some problems of suspicion, prejudice and harassment linked to religious identity still persist. What are the roots of this? What role can faith and inter faith bodies play in tackling the issues? What may the implications be for questions to be addressed in IFN's forthcoming Strategic Review?

Facilitator: Malcolm Deboo, President, Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe

Presenter: The Revd David Gifford, Chief Executive Officer, Council of Christians and Jews

Malcolm Deboo welcomed everyone to the workshop.

The Revd David Gifford opened his presentation by talking about the Council of Christians and Jews (CCJ), which he explained was the oldest national inter faith body in Britain. Although its dialogue was bilateral, others could learn from its experience. Giving examples from the CCJ experience, he noted that:

- demographics change: people move and the average age of group members would change over time;
- difference could lead to suspicion;
- ignorance of the faith of others could lead to arrogance;
- a history of persecution and prejudice caused deep scars, creating a climate of fear and mistrust;
- issues of importance changed over time; and
- there needed to be careful teaching and explanation of scriptures.

He then went on to explain how the CCJ was tackling present day issues by:

- influencing opinion-formers locally and nationally and university chaplains;

- getting leaders together to talk and mediating when relationships deteriorate;
- using social media to reach young people (18 – 35 year olds);
- going beyond commonality and embracing difference; and
- not being afraid to engage in difficult issues.

He concluded by saying that courage and wisdom had been needed to start the Council in 1942 and that trust needed to be built up for it to move forward.

The following points were made in discussion:

- All human beings have a tendency to justify their prejudices to themselves, often with reference to historical events which support these feelings. However, it is important that we resist this, and educate ourselves rather than continuing to act out of ignorance.
- There is a need to look at people who stood out against the negative politics of their time.
- At the time of partition in India, righteous people helped each other and gave sanctuary where it was needed.

- There is a need to acknowledge history, and how it defines a person. There can be times when terrible things happen. Those affected have to work through the impact and implications in their own time and on their own terms.
- There is a need to acknowledge history but also to see what is being stored up for the future. People need to be pro-active with young people to help them.
- Relationships need to be developed. We all have many issues similar to those between Jews and Christians.
- Relationships have got to be the basis of dialogue. Social media is good for connecting with the '18 to 35' age group, but it is too superficial. There is a need to talk face to face but people are now reluctant to belong to groups.
- After the 7/7 atrocities religious leaders played a key part in organising positive community responses and working together for peace. They needed to show courage.
- What is happening / has happened is awful, but what does it mean to people as individuals? There is a need to learn how to talk about things.
- At the time of the Northern riots Bolton was not affected. One reason put forward was that there had been public shows of doing things together and chatting – not necessarily dialoguing, but it had built resilience and was a step towards building relationships.

Workshop 4

‘Networking’ – what is it?!

What is a ‘network’? What is ‘networking’? Are all networks membership bodies? How may a membership network be different from a network of individuals? What might new forms of networking look like – both for IFN and more widely? What may the implications be for the questions which will form part of IFN’s forthcoming Strategic Review?

Facilitator: Hon Barney Leith OBE, Baha’i Community of the UK and Chair, Faith Based Regeneration Network

Presenter: Catriona Robertson, Wandsworth Multi-Faith Network and London Borough Faiths Network

Hon Barnabas Leith introduced the workshop session, which looked at the forms a ‘network’ might take. Should it have membership? What other forms could it take? He noted that the views expressed at the workshop session would be fed into IFN’s forthcoming Strategic Review.

Catriona Robertson set out some of the words used to describe a network. If there were no links between people – then there was no ‘net’. There were different ways to bring people together. Some words to describe this were: ‘group’; ‘net’; ‘forum’; ‘organisation’; ‘community projects’; ‘federation’; ‘friends’; ‘ecumenical’; ‘movement’. Some words had taken on a different meaning in the concept of coming together eg ‘Occupy’ now was associated with a recently formed movement of people coming together.

The word ‘network’ described something that was live and ‘movement’ suggested something organic and ‘live/alive’.

There were different levels of accountability and ‘looseness’ of structure. One could, for example, have a hierarchical structure, like the Church of England! A group might come together as a result of a general invitation to join, so in that sense the participants were self-identified. The London Boroughs Faiths Network was a relatively informal network, with no budget and no formal structure.

What drives inter faith co-operation? The Government had in the past, but less so now. There might be some support from philanthropists. There were questions of who was invited and who was excluded. What made it worthwhile to be part of an inter faith network?

In coming together, we had to ask ourselves ‘are we doing what we are meant to do, or are we being led by funders?’

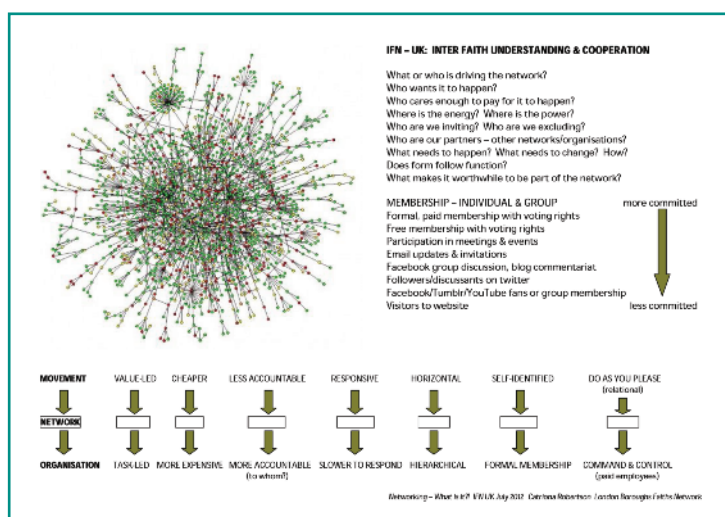
Membership could take many forms, it could be paid for or be free, with participation the only requirement. Social media offered new forms of coming together. For example Facebook, Twitter and others offered opportunities to participate and make a commitment to something which people would like to be involved in. So now there was networking where the various participants do not even ‘see’ each other.

[A copy of Ms Robertson’s handout is at the end of this workshop note.]

The following points were made in discussion:

- A ‘movement’ suggests an unconscious coming together of people prompted by the same motivation. In the case of a network, there is a more deliberate bond between people which draws them together.

- What is the difference between coming together for a discussion and coming together as a network? Where is the power?
- Through the Buddhist concept of Indra's Net everything is ultimately connected. This can be extended to the idea of a 'hub' with spokes going in different directions, but where there is still a connection to all the parts through the hub.
- Faithnetsouthwest has helped to set up and supported many independent faith forums. They are all independent and choose their own criteria for membership, if in fact they have membership at all. Some groups, such as Bristol Multi-Faith Forum, have an open invitation to attend for anyone who wants to participate in faith groups working together. Some groups had periods where little happened, as they concentrated too much on constitutional issues and who should attend and who should not.
- A network should be dynamic with a fluidity of movement. Too many groups have a pyramidal structure, with control coming from the 'top'.
- It should be possible to adjust the direction that networks choose to go in, rather than being limited and directed by their structure. The aims, objectives and intention of those people comprising the network should be the guiding force.
- Each of the 'parts' of the network can also concentrate (and contribute) their own work.
- Coming together in a network can bring together the many ideas and aims of different organisations and 'more candles can be lit'.
- In terms of coming together as a network, there are complexities even within the same faith group. For example, in the Muslim community there are mosques, regional and national groupings and different strands such as Shi'a and Sufi.
- Groups may come together as they share the same commitment. Different concerns can be knots on the same piece of string, which can be formed into a circle but if there are too many knots, then the network may not be viable (or one may need to prioritise the concerns).
- Information must be able to travel up and down the network or structure, ie there should be two-way communication.
- A network can give a voice to a group of people.
- It is important to have trust within a network.



Workshop 5

Educating for inter faith understanding

How important is education about different faiths and about inter faith understanding and cooperation? What are the roles of schools, academic institutions, faith communities and inter faith bodies in this and what are the current challengers? What may be the implications for questions to be asked in IFN's forthcoming strategic review?

Facilitator: John Keast, Chair, Religious Education Council of England and Wales

Presenters: Dr Harshad Sanghrajka, Deputy Director, Institute of Jainology

The Revd Daniel Otieno-Ndale, Minority Christian Ethnic Affairs, Churches Together in England; Chair, Ethnic Minority Baptist Ministers; and member, Hillingdon Inter-Faith Network

John Keast welcomed the participants, and asked those present to introduce themselves.

Dr Harshad Sanghrajka said he would look at the questions listed on the workshop description (shown above) and consider what they might mean for the strategic review of IFN in the context of Religious Education (RE).

He noted that the QCA guidelines, and the non-statutory guidance on RE which was produced by the then Department for Children, Schools and Families was an important step which demonstrated the importance of RE in UK education. Religious Education today was much deeper and included more religions than in the past, and adults needed to 'keep up' with the changing attitudes this had brought with it.

Referring to the recent exclusion of RE as a qualifying subject for the newly instituted 'English Baccalaureate', Dr Sanghrajka noted that it would surely be odd to drop RE provision in a world which was increasingly globalised and where encounter with the 'religious other' was increasingly likely. It would be unthinkable to drop non-UK history or non-UK geography from the curriculum, as it was widely recognised that a global outlook was essential. This should also be the case for awareness of religious traditions which were not the UK majority.

Dr Sanghrajka spoke about the growing interest globally in the ways in which religion and belief communities interacted with the public sector. He said that it was unsurprising that this was a growing area of enquiry because religion played a large part in people's lives and identity formation.

Dr Sanghrajka noted the usefulness of Professor Paul Weller's research into the religion and belief diversity of Higher Education institutions. This reflected and showed the changing faith landscape of the UK, and the increased presence of non-Christian religious communities and traditions in the UK.

Dr Sanghrajka noted the importance of work to promote good inter faith relations. The words "No man is an island" could be applied to religious communities also. He noted that there was much common ground between religious communities, and expressed a desire to unite with others to help contribute further to the building of common ground.

Dr Sanghrajka drew attention to the Jain concept of Anekāntavāda, which he explained as the view that perceptions of reality and truth vary. It conveyed principles of pluralism. It was a fundamental Jain doctrine, and was a key motivation for Jains' involvement in inter faith activity.

Dr Sanghrajka described RE as the ‘cause’ and inter faith activity as the ‘effect’ and said that with greater and more in-depth learning about different religions and beliefs came a greater willingness to engage and to build relationships of understanding. The role of RE in facilitating understanding of ‘the other’ could not be emphasised enough.

The Revd Daniel Otieno-Ndale began his presentation by noting the importance of education, which he described as a ‘transformation process’ in which we learnt new ways of thinking and behaving, becoming aware of ourselves and the consequences of our actions for others. Religion, too, played a role in shaping us and helping us to shape the wider world.

He said that educating about different faiths helped people to turn away from paradigms of dominance, exclusiveness and violence and toward fairness and equality, inclusiveness and peace. Education about religion helped pupils to develop the ability to live and interact peacefully with people who had different backgrounds and views, and to gain tools for dealing with disagreement and conflict.

Education was also an important way to promote and protect cultural rights, and this could be especially so in diaspora contexts. It could enable a diasporic group to maintain its cultural identity in a context where it was a religious minority, and could also enable it to build good relationships with majority and other minority communities, which could be important in this.

Mr Otieno-Ndale went on to say that ignorance fuelled fundamentalism. Complete secularisation – where religion could not be discussed in the public square – was not, in his view, a solution to this, although he was in favour of the separation of church and state. Religion still informed and effected culture and beliefs of people in society, and thus education about faiths – and public engagement with faiths, without privileging them, was vital.

Schools and academic institutions had a number of key roles relevant to the issues under discussion: 1) promoting values of respect and understanding for people from different cultures and beliefs; 2) developing communication skills which enabled participation in respectful dialogue with others; 3) promoting, through educational principles, social inclusion at all levels. Religious Education had two facets: learning about religions and learning from religions.

Mr Otieno-Ndale said that schools were the first places where children began to develop their identity and ideas about whom ‘the others’ were. It was important that they challenged children, and encouraged dialogue rather than conflict. It would be helpful if training on inter faith awareness could be included within continuing professional development for RE teachers.

Faith schools and other faith-based educational institutions had a role to teach their own approach and an ethos reflecting their doctrine. However, no matter how religiously homogenous they might be, many also worked to foster attitudes of respect toward others. This included equipping children with the skills to engage in dialogue and an ability to learn about other belief systems.

Mr Otieno-Ndale went on to say that faith communities played a further role in education which became apparent when one considered the prevalence of youth clubs and similar informal contexts which were organised by faith communities. The more informal spaces provided by these groups – which young people generally attended voluntarily – were an ideal location for discussing issues of faith and difference in an open way.

Inter faith groups also helped to raise inter faith awareness, developing other non-formal settings for encounter and engagement such as debates, joint initiatives, ‘inter faith cafés’ and so on. These kinds of engagement helped to develop critical thinking skills and promote

awareness through genuine interaction, and the less formal environment could help young people to feel more relaxed and willing to take part.

Inter faith bodies should also be willing to engage with the media, both traditional and new media. Young people spent vast amounts of time interacting with the internet and television, and these could be used negatively by some to manipulate their views. However, inter faith groups could utilise these to send positive messages of education about inter faith engagement.

Inter faith education required genuine engagement with people of different beliefs as a *sine qua non* for building bridges.

Mr Otieno-Ndale said that a key challenge to inter faith education was the growing political view that Religious Education was not a core part of school curricula. He saw this as allowing personal ministerial preferences to impact negatively on policy, and possibly as moving towards the French principle of *laïcité*, which he saw as undermining the important place that faith communities continued to have in nation building.

Commenting specifically on the context of RE, he said that it was important that questions of faith were discussed such that it was clear that religions were living cultures and belief systems; it was not a matter of abstract or historical facts with no relevance to society today. Faith communities were very much alive and that was one reason why the learning and application of inter faith dialogue skills was so important.

Other challenges faced included lack of specialist training for some teachers of RE on some faiths and about inter faith skills; how to respond to non-religious belief groups who wished to be included alongside religions in RE contexts; and how to respond to faith groups whose beliefs may be diametrically opposed to the faiths of others, or seek to eliminate other faiths.

Mr Keast thanked **Mr Otieno-Ndale** for his presentation, and invited those present to ask questions and respond to the two presentations to which they had listened.

In discussion, the following points were raised:

- There can be schools in which there is resistance to RE but where religious themes are picked up in other contexts, such as Citizenship, and this might be an avenue for RE in the future if policy support continues to be withdrawn.
- The impact of recent Government policy on RE might be linked with the summer 2011 riots in some English cities. Those involved were not in schools and learning values. How much worse could the situation have become if RE was dropped altogether?
- For some people an education about faith comes from school assemblies, which provide 'spiritual food'.
- Could an atheist be equipped to teach about faith if it involved learning from faith as well as about faith?
- Even where you disagree with a religion, it is possible to teach it with empathy. Can an atheist do this?
- There are wider issues about how religiously informed teachers are in a range of contexts. For example, some environments, such as Sunday schools or madrassas, are geared toward teaching about a particular faith, but it is important that here, too, attitudes of respect to other religions are followed.
- It is important to ensure that these other contexts are consistent with the Religious Education pupils receive at school.

- Many representatives on SACREs want the particularities of their own faiths to be taught in RE, and to focus less on inter faith issues.
- What is taught in faith schools and Sunday school type contexts can sometimes conflict with what is taught in RE in state schools.
- RE teachers need an awareness of inter faith dialogue skills to help resolve conflicts in the classroom.
- The Institute of Jainology now teaches courses on Jainology free of charge. These courses include within them conflict resolution skills. They are taught along the lines of 'Jainism says X, but N says Y...' exposing participants to differing or conflicting worldviews as they go along.
- The presence of people who 'own' the tradition in teaching about it helps to bestow more about a living tradition than simply learning facts about it. This can be achieved by inviting speakers from different faiths to give presentations to RE classes or assemblies.
- 'Risky' education is important – we should not shy away from controversial topics such as the Crusades or the martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev Ji (the 5th Sikh Guru) in Moghul India.
- It is important to note that full inter faith engagement in school contexts may not be feasible as pupils' religious identity is still in formation.
- A proliferation of religious (and non-religious) groups wishing to have their beliefs taught in RE can lead to overload on staff and on pupils. The criteria for selection of religions to be taught is important.
- Should IFN provide schools linking, as this can be important especially for faith schools? IFN could promote 'spirituality' and 'contentment with what we have', themes common to all faiths. It was noted that the Three Faiths Forum and the Schools Linking Network provide schools linking services.
- Teachers need to be professional rather than ambassadors of their own particular faith. Education lies not just with teachers, but also with parents, faith communities, local communities and others. This is why BAPS Swaminarayan Temple opens its doors regularly to school groups, to enable pupils to understand. They see this as part of their duty to the wider community, to foster understanding. Could other faith communities consider opening their doors to school pupils, for example during Inter Faith Week?
- Pupils need to be taught all the major world religions not just those with a local presence. Young people now are very mobile and will move around the UK – and even the world – multiple times during their lives and careers. It is important they learn about all of the major religious groups they may encounter in the world, not just those dominant in the area they grew up in.
- Values and ability to think analytically should be taught in RE.
- Historical facts about religion might be taught as part of history.
- Not all inter faith bodies have the resources to go into schools, particularly where there are many schools in an area. Inter faith education should therefore be included within initial teacher training for RE teachers. Teachers need to be convinced of the value of dialogue if they are to pass this on to their pupils.

- Despite being a statutory requirement, we must not assume that RE is part of a school's curriculum in practice – this is not a given. Thought needs to be given to ways forward, given the emergence of the English Baccalaureate – from which RE is excluded as an eligible subject; the disappearance of the GCSE short course; and new Academies which do not have to follow the Agreed Syllabus and have no formal link with SACREs.
- Children love to show off new knowledge. RE, therefore, can lead to whole families becoming involved in discussion about religious ideas and dialogue.
- There is much more interaction between peoples globally, and so inter faith understanding is imperative.
- Assemblies/ Collective Worship are important for spiritual development.
- On the question of who should teach RE, a key question is whether teachers are viewed as facilitators for learning, or role models for pupils to follow.
- The relationship between what schools-based RE is trying to achieve, and faith community group/ youth group education about religion is trying to achieve can be a very helpful and complementary one if done well.
- In schools, respect for all religions should be enshrined, but in faith community contexts, this may not be the case.
- RE can be religion specific but inter faith education is a different style. How do inter faith groups find the entry point when trying to gain access to schools, particularly ones where their RE provision is specific to one faith?
- There is a need for inter religious contact and interaction within faith schools, and they should link with faith schools of other faiths, and to visit other places of worship. Visiting places of worship is often more meaningful and exciting for pupils than inviting a speaker to the school. A speaker has to be very good in order to enthuse pupils; when visiting, even if the guide is not very exciting, the visit can still be meaningful.
- Faith schools can be among the most responsible about RE provision because they recognise the importance that religions play in society and in identity formation. Where the value of religion itself is questioned, the value of RE is much less likely to be acknowledged.

Workshop 6

‘Inclusion in inter faith contexts – aspirations and actualities’

There is increasing interest in involvement in inter faith activity and multi faith projects and consultations: from religious groupings, organisations linked with particular identity strands such as LGBT groups, student faiths groups and young people more generally, and a wide range of faith related but not explicitly religious bodies such as chaplaincies. What are the kind of considerations in developing patterns of engagement? A chance to reflect on the issues involved and also to consider what their implications may be for the questions to be asked in IFN’s forthcoming strategic review.

Facilitator: Jehangir Sarosh OBE, Executive Director, Religions for Peace (UK Chapter)

Presenters: Kiran Bali MBE, Chief Executive Officer, United Religions Initiative

The Revd Alan Bayes, Chair, Inter-faith Council for Wales

Jehangir Sarosh opened the workshop session and said that he hoped that all present would participate in the discussion. It was an important workshop because it looked at issues of inclusivity. It would be helpful to draw out principles of inclusivity rather than just focussing on the details of specific examples.

Kiran Bali said that she thought the theme of ‘inclusion’ was an important one, especially in the context of current debates around IFN’s work. She would be addressing the issue of inclusion from the perspective of young people and speaking of her own experience of the barriers she had to overcome as a young person working in inter faith relations over the last ten years.

She felt that in many organisations there were people who had been in positions for a long time who were hesitant to step aside. To try and turn this trend around she had started the United Religions Initiative (URI) intergenerational mentorship scheme. The aim was that the older generation, who had greater experience, could come together with younger people to create greater age inclusivity. The programme now arranged for young people to be mentored worldwide. Her colleague Mathew Youde, who was also present at the workshop, had been selected to

be a ‘youth ambassador’ and had been given training and the opportunity to meet a wider range of relevant people.

The ‘spirit of the nation’ inter faith photographic exhibition was currently touring schools, museums and libraries in the UK. It was an opportunity for school children to see these excellent photographs and to participate in the exhibition by creating visual representations of what they felt ‘inter faith’ to be. She felt that it was vital that school age children engage in this way. When she was seven years old she was the only Hindu in her school and was a target of bullying. She felt her work was an opportunity for her to try and change attitudes towards different faiths in schools, so that when they left, young people were better equipped to engage with other faiths.

She concluded by saying that young people did not want special treatment or a quota system, they just wanted to be taken seriously on their merits. She felt her work had been hard, but was also an opportunity to challenge the prevailing norms, in the human rights and equalities age there should be no discrimination.

The Revd Alan Bayes said that over the last twenty-five years the Inter Faith Network had been on a journey, on which there had been significant changes. The upcoming strategic review would be another one of those changes. He wished, given the time remaining, to move onto the discussion as he would be interested to hear what those present thought on this interesting topic.

The following points were made in the context of reflecting on the Strategic Review:

- IFN could engage more with young people by sharing more widely the examples of the work its member bodies did to engage them. This could also be reflected in further resources on IFN's website.
- Should IFN also consider a shadowing programme to train future inter faith leaders in the UK?
- Inter faith issues should not only be learned about at school but also at university. University chaplaincies might also have an important role to play.
- The Peace Mala project in Wales, which has the backing of a number of senior faith leaders, encourages young people to weave a symbolic bracelet to give to each other and has proven to be a good tool for tackling prejudice and bullying. Perhaps schools and other bodies could become accredited to run this scheme.
- The 'faith for fun' project in Birmingham encourages 60 young people a year from 8-16 to get involved with joint inter faith activities and social action. The scheme has involved local youth groups, schools and the local faith communities making it inter-communal, intergenerational and inter-faith.
- Examples could be drawn up by IFN of how faith groups have engaged with the LGBT community, and how LGBT people of faith have engaged with their faith communities.
- A purpose of inter faith dialogue is to model disagreement well. Good work in this area is demonstrated by the inclusive nature of some of IFN's member bodies such as the Inter Faith Alliance.
- Young people are often accused of 'taking over' organisations when they try and make their voices heard, and can become frustrated when they feel they are not listened to. It is more productive to share expertise between generations by making sure young people are listened to and more experienced staff and learned from in organisations.
- Issues of inclusivity have great personal importance to those who feel that they are excluded despite the good work that they might be doing. It is important that people's sincere personal choices in faith are respected.
- There are two kinds of inter faith work; one where people come together for common action and one where people come together and learn from each other. It is important not to neglect the second when considering how to be more inclusive and engaging other groups.
- The maxim "Until I know the other I am not complete myself" has much light to shed on the importance of inter faith dialogue and inclusivity. Dialogue is a transformative process, not where faith is lost or changed, but where a greater personal understanding is gained.

- It may not be possible to be totally inclusive, as organisations need to set limits in order to define themselves and work effectively. There are some organisations that work with a smaller or larger range of people and it is not always a case of the most inclusive being the best.
- It is important to bear in mind the principles encoded in international human rights conventions when considering inclusivity.
- People should not be forced to be more inclusive than they are ready to be at a given time. The Scouts have enshrined this principle by supporting single-faith Scout groups for the communities that want this.
- Before constructive dialogue can be had it is important to agree on the meaning of key terms such as 'faith', 'religion', and 'inclusivity'.
- The Quaker tradition takes the view that it is important to be as inclusive as you can, and that inclusivity is infinite.
- It is important when considering the widening of inclusivity that all those involved agree and sign up to a code of conduct and of shared values.

Workshop 7

Religious/Non-religious dialogue

The importance in today's Britain of promoting a constructive dialogue between those who have a religious faith and those who do not is being increasingly recognised. The workshop will look at aspects of the current religious and belief landscape and consider ways in which this dialogue can best be encouraged.

A chance to reflect on the issues involved and also to consider what their implications may be for the questions to be asked in IFN's forthcoming strategic review.

Facilitator: Norman Richardson MBE, Northern Ireland Inter-Faith Forum and Stranmillis College, Belfast

Presenter: Brian Pearce OBE, Adviser, Faith and Public Life, Inter Faith Network for the UK
Lois Lee, founding Director of the Non-Religion and Secularity Research Network

Norman Richardson welcomed participants to the workshop and everyone introduced themselves.

Lois Lee thanked IFN for inviting her to speak and began with a brief overview of her work. She founded the Nonreligion and Secularity Research Network in 2008. When her research in this area had begun in 2006 the focus had been an academic one on the landscape of non-religion, but it had since progressed to cover the relationship between the 'religious' and 'non-religious', as well. These terms were in themselves contested ones! Back in 2006 there were very few researchers and a very large number of unresearched non-religious people. In approximate terms, about 90% of the UK's population as a whole did not customarily practise a religion, and 35% were atheists or agnostics or were somewhere in between – those who described themselves as 'spiritual' but not 'religious'.

The size of the 'non-religious population' was difficult to measure for a number of reasons:

- Given its size the 'non-religious' population was likely to be very diverse.
- Not all 'non-religious' people were atheists and not all atheists shared the intellectual position of what had been described as 'New Atheism' (as propounded, for

example, by Professor Richard Dawkins). Some atheists could be 'religious' in outlook and some theists could be 'non-religious'.

- 'Non-religion' did not occur in a vacuum. Rather, people were influenced by factors such as family, friends and social background.
- By and large, 'non-religion' was non-institutional. The two obvious exceptions were the British Humanist Association and the National Secular Society, (which were very different in their focus and approach).
- People who described themselves as 'non-religious' could struggle to describe their position in precise terms. They could be 'non-religious' by default because they were not 'religious' rather than have a clearly defined positive identity.

She noted that during the plenary session of the National Meeting, while there had been positive discussion, people without faith were sometimes referred to as 'outsiders' to the inter faith discussion. Perhaps people who described themselves as 'non-religious' felt generally excluded from 'inter faith' activities?

Brian Pearce then gave a presentation, a copy of which is attached at the end of this note.

The following points were made in discussion:

- In a book entitled *The Shack* the Holy Spirit invites the main character into the garden to dig out poisonous roots, of which the garden is exceptionally full. The main character thinks the garden is a mess but the Holy Spirit thinks the garden is beautiful! God made everyone different and arguably each person is partly 'religious' and partly 'non-religious'.
- Putting people into categories can be dangerous. It might be better to use the terms 'observant' and 'non-observant' rather than 'religious' and 'non-religious', otherwise people may be put into the wrong 'box'.
- Language is a very difficult issue. The term 'non-religious' is used as a working term as there is no definitive way to describe religion's 'other'.
- Thirty to forty years ago children grew up with the experience of their parents' religion and of religious assemblies at school. Now there is an increasing number of people who have never been to church. Young people today have more of a cultural affinity than a religious affinity.
- Places of worship are becoming largely irrelevant for today's younger generations. Times are changing and places of worship have not evolved to keep pace. Young people now express their religious or spiritual identity differently. The traditional understanding of active worship is not the same for young people.
- It is very difficult to define 'secular' and there are now an increasing number of books exploring the phenomenon of secularism. The separation between 'religious' and 'non-religious' may not be helpful – for example, one can be a Christian and still struggle with some aspects of Christianity. Brian Mountford has written a book entitled *Christian Atheist* in which he notes that some people who attend church would still describe themselves as atheists.
- The words used can mean different things to different people so they need to be unpacked to get at the meaning being given to them and as a result to enable a deeper dialogue. There is a need to find a shared language in which to have the dialogue rather than using 'their words' and 'our words'.
- Words can separate people unnecessarily. From experience as a psychiatrist, one could say that in a sense everybody is 'religious'.
- Commonality lies in human values which are very important. It is through human values that transcendence arises, which in turn leads to a sense of completeness or wholeness – a 'religious' experience. Human values and morality are in people's genes.
- There is a need to consider what human values are. Some religious pundits assume that they are the guardians of morality. But morality is culturally determined, not just by religion.
- Somerset Faiths and Beliefs Forum includes Humanists and those who describe themselves as 'non-religious'. There is representation from the Pagan community on the Bath Standing Advisory Council for RE. The town of Glastonbury is a good research laboratory because there are people there from many different traditions. Sometimes traditions which are unknown to us can seem frightening or dangerous but with open engagement interesting results can emerge. Sometimes people from the Christian Churches are cautious of engaging with those from other traditions until they meet people

from them and then their relationships and attitudes can be transformed.

- In order to bridge the divide, people need to get into the so-called 'ditch' [between the religious and the non-religious] and get their hands dirty! Working together on a specific project is a good way to do so.
- The Unitarian and Free Christian Churches have been working with many different groups including teaching unions; lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender groups and the British Humanist Association.
- It is very important for groups to work together on an issue rather than just in the abstract.
- Labels are not always helpful. Different terminology will always be used. While people spend time debating, the world moves on.
- There is a need to look at what young people are doing and what might be coming next. Is Facebook becoming a culture or 'religion'? Is Liberalism on the rise?
- A speaker said that he had only once discovered someone who described themselves as 'non-religious' and that was in a Buddhist temple. Everyone is searching for something. People who say that they do not believe in anything often come to monasteries for silence and meditation.
- There is a need to create the right climate for the religious/non-religious dialogue. Some people who do not have a faith might think that religions are the root of all problems. Some young people are concerned because they are not able to offer answers about their own faith to other people.

Mr Richardson then invited Ms Lee and Mr Pearce to offer some closing reflections.

Ms Lee said that sorting out problems of language was an important part of the dialogue. One could not understand atheism or religion from reading a few texts. The accounts of their position given to her in her research had surprised her. For example, she had spoken with a retired GP who lived in the Home Counties, who was a member of the Council of Ex-Muslims of Britain. Professor Dawkin's book *The God Delusion* had helped him to identify his own position and had, in turn, helped him to engage in a better and friendly discussion with his local vicar about religious and non-religious principles and cultures. She suggested that there was less importance in what the language or terms meant and more in how people used them to express their own identity.

It was important for people to engage respectfully with one another. Sometimes people used terms to describe atheism that would never be used to describe religion as they would be viewed as offensive. Not all atheists were elite professors! Disrespectful tones needed to be met with respect rather than returned in kind. She hoped that the dialogue could move forward in constructive ways to take it further.

Mr Pearce shared that hope. He said that a distinction needed to be drawn between secularism (a philosophy) and secularisation (a tool). In today's society there were religious institutions and non-institutional forms of religion and spirituality. He emphasised again the desirability of seeking what common ground there was between religious and non-religious people, recognising that there was more of a spectrum of positions in terms of belief and practice than two homogenous groups divided by a 'deep ditch'. For mutual understanding and respect to grow there had, as in the case of inter faith relations, to be engagement with one another and the dismantling of stereotypes.

Opening Presentation by Brian Pearce

I am most grateful to Lois Lee for her helpful setting of the scene and her reflections on this workshop's theme.

I am going to offer some personal reflections in the light of some work I have been doing on these issues over the last year or so. In no sense am I giving you a statement of IFN policy!

It is, however, perhaps worth noting at the outset that in a 2007 document on *Faith, Citizenship and Shared Life in Britain Today* – a document still well worth reading, I think – placed by the Executive Committee on IFN's website as a discussion document, there was a reference to “the need for a more respectful dialogue between those who have a religious faith and those who do not see themselves as religious” – which “could help to create a firmer foundation for our shared society through the recognition of values which are held in common”.

The question is how can we apply to this wider dialogue what we have learned over the years in our inter faith dialogue?

Inter Faith Week in England and Wales has had from the outset as one of its aims the promotion of better understanding between those who are religious and those who are not. And in the first Inter Faith Week – in 2009 – IFN and the British Humanist Association held a joint event. One of the two keynote speakers was Richard Norman of the BHA and I am delighted that he is present with us today, especially as he has just brought out a second edition of his excellent book on *Humanism* with a new final chapter on the dialogue we are discussing in this workshop.

Richard has been an active member of the BHA Philosophers' Group and was involved in the production of its booklet “The Case for Secularism”, which discusses the political and social framework appropriate for a plural

society like ours is today. Many religious people would find a good deal in it with which they could agree – though, not everything.

But I would like to focus rather more on the dialogue we need about our beliefs and values. Naturally, I only have time for a few quick brushstrokes in offering a picture of what this might involve. We know how much enrichment we can gain from dialogue from people of different faith traditions. I believe there is also much to be gained from the wider dialogue between those who see themselves as religious and those who do not.

In fact, the so-called “New Atheists” such as Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris and the late Christopher Hitchens, have arguably done us a favour, because people from both sides of the fence were rather shocked by the lack of nuance and openness in their dismissive approach to religion and some excellent books have been produced in response. I just referred to “both sides of the fence” but a key point I want to make is that there is no deep ditch separating all religious people on one side of it from everyone else on the other side. As Lois has shown us, there is great diversity among people who are not religious, just as we know that there is a great diversity between and within religious traditions too. We religious people are a very diverse lot.

In our conversations together we can achieve greater mutual understanding – and appreciate one another better – just as we can in our inter faith dialogue. Obviously it will be difficult to make much progress if the other person is a materialist reductionist who apparently thinks that the human person is just a lump of meat – devoid of free will – and dismisses the mystery of the mind and of consciousness as no more than electrical impulses in the brain. But if both parties in dialogue are open to new insights we can all gain a great deal. Perhaps the starting point needs to be some such question as: “What do we think are the characteristics of the universe of which we find ourselves a part?

And what are the implications of this for how we relate to it and to other people? – in other words, for how we behave.”

The human experience on which we can draw includes philosophical reflection, cultural creativity, scientific experiment and technological development. It also includes, in all its great diversity, the religious experience of humankind.

We need to find language in which we can avoid deadlock and find, if we can, common ground. We often hear someone say: “The God you don’t believe in is one I don’t believe in either.” We know from the dialogue between the theistic and the non-theistic traditions like Buddhism and Jainism that we have to dig deeper than ‘God’ or ‘no God’.

The potential agenda is a large one. How do we understand the human person? Is the so-called ‘supernatural’ a totally separate realm or is it to be found within our ‘natural’ world? What are the overlaps between psychiatry and psychotherapy and a religious understanding of human behaviour? Why do people want to say they are ‘spiritual’ but not ‘religious’? From where do we derive our values – are they written into the fabric of the universe? Or have humans invented them? Do we have free will? How far are the findings of science and religious belief incompatible?

All religious traditions warn us against intellectual – or moral – hubris. Often we are dealing with issues and questions involving matters of judgment and commitment – not ones where proof and certainty are possible. Religious people openly confess to operating by faith – a willingness to trust, going beyond knowledge and certainty, but rather based on convictions formed in the light of experience. But non-religious people also put their trust – one might say faith? – in their philosophical and ethical convictions, also grounded in their experience. We may find that we have similar values and attitudes to life even though we may use different words to express our beliefs and have arrived at our convictions

by different routes.

We may even find that we share a sense of what is experienced within our universe and our lives beyond the finite human person – a shared sense of a ‘more than’ – dare I say it, even a sense of ‘transcendence’.

I have not talked about the practicalities of how we can promote the wider dialogue I have been discussing – or what the implications might be for our institutional frameworks, including the need, perhaps for new and complementary ones. But I must stop here and await – with great interest – your own reflections.

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Norwich InterFaith Link

John Woodhouse

Westminster Interfaith

Mathew Youde

United Religions Initiative UK

The Inter Faith Network for the UK

The Inter Faith Network for the UK (IFN) was founded in 1987 to “advance public knowledge and mutual understanding of the teachings, traditions and practices of the different faith communities in Britain, including an awareness both of their distinctive features and of their common ground” and to promote good relations between people of different faiths in this country.

IFN links around 200 member bodies including: national representative bodies of the Baha’i, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jain, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh and Zoroastrian faiths; national, regional, local and other inter faith bodies; and educational and academic bodies with an interest in inter faith relations. It works with its member bodies and other agencies to help make the UK a place marked by mutual understanding and respect between people of different religions where all can practise their faith with integrity. It seeks to increase the opportunities for people of all ages to learn more about the importance of good inter faith relations. IFN:

- runs a helpline and publishes resources to help people working to promote good inter faith relations
- links, shares good practice between, and supports with advice and information the growing pattern of inter faith initiatives in the UK at national, regional and local levels
- provides a trusted neutral, nondenominational framework for people of different faiths to discuss issues of shared concern, reflecting on both the distinctive aspects and the common ground of their individual traditions
- in cooperation with the Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish national inter faith linking bodies and Regional Faith Forums in England, fosters local inter faith cooperation and offers advice on patterns of local inter faith initiatives suitable to a particular local area as well as helpful contacts
- assists member organisations and other agencies, such as local authorities and other public bodies, to help strengthen their inter faith programmes and good practice
- fosters joint working by the faith communities on social issues
- arranges seminars and conferences and carries out research to pursue particular issues in greater depth, such as building good relations on campus, and developing bilateral dialogues

The Inter Faith Network’s way of working is firmly based on the principle that dialogue and cooperation on social action can only prosper if they are rooted in respectful relationships which do not blur or undermine the distinctiveness of different religious traditions. In its work, it proceeds by consensus wherever possible and not making statements on behalf of member bodies except after full consultation.

Further information about the Network can be found on its website:

www.interfaith.org.uk or by writing to its office: 2 Grosvenor Gardens London SW1W 0DH.

Member Organisations of the Inter Faith Network for the UK 2012–13

Faith Community Representative Bodies

Baha'i Community of the UK
 BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha
 Board of Deputies of British Jews
 British Muslim Forum
 Buddhist Society
 Churches' Agency for Inter Faith Relations in Scotland
 Churches Together in Britain and Ireland
 Churches Together in England
 Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales
 Council of African and Afro-Caribbean Churches (UK)
 General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches
 Hindu Council (UK)
 Hindu Forum of Britain
 Islamic Cultural Centre
 Jain Network
 Jain Samaj Europe
 Jamiat-e-Ulama Britain (Association of Muslim Scholars)
 Methodist Church in Britain
 Mosques and Imams National Advisory Board
 Muslim Council of Britain
 National Council of Hindu Temples (UK)
 Network of Buddhist Organisations (UK)
 Network of Sikh Organisations (UK)
 Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations
 Sri Lankan Sangha Sabha of GB
 Vishwa Hindu Parishad (UK)
 World Ahlul-Bayt Islamic League
 World Islamic Mission (UK)
 Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe

Educational and Academic Bodies

Cambridge Inter-Faith Programme
 Centre for Christianity and Interreligious Dialogue, Heythrop College
 Community Religions Project, University of Leeds
 Institute of Jainology
 Islamic Foundation
 National Association of SACREs
 Religious Education Council of England and Wales
 Shap Working Party on World Religions in Education
 Sion Centre for Dialogue and Encounter
 Wales Association of SACREs
 Woolf Institute of Abrahamic Faiths

Inter Faith Organisations

Northern Ireland Inter-Faith Forum
 Scottish Inter Faith Council
 Inter-faith Council for Wales/Cyngor
 Cyd-Ffydd Cymru

East of England Faiths Council
 faithnetsouthwest
 Faiths Forum for the East Midlands
 Faiths Forum for London
 North East Regional Faiths Network
 Northwest Forum of Faiths
 South East England Faith Forum
 West Midlands Faiths Forum
 Children of Abraham (Imams and Rabbis Council of the United Kingdom)
 Christian Muslim Forum
 Christians Aware Interfaith Programme
 Coexist Foundation
 Coexistence Trust
 Council of Christians and Jews
 Council of Dharmic Faiths
 East of England Faiths Agency
 Hindu Christian Forum
 Interfaith Action (INTERACT)
 Interfaith Alliance UK
 International Association for Religious Freedom (British Chapter)
 International Interfaith Centre
 Joseph Interfaith Foundation
 Lokahi Foundation
 London Society of Jews and Christians
 Maimonides Foundation
 Minorities of Europe Inter Faith Action Programme
 Multi-Faith Centre at the University of Derby
 Religions for Peace (UK)
 Scriptural Reasoning
 Society for Dialogue and Action
 St Ethelburga's Centre for Reconciliation and Peace
 St Philip's Centre for Study and Engagement in a Multi Faith Society
 Three Faiths Forum
 Tony Blair Faith Foundation
 United Religions Initiative (UK)
 Westminster Interfaith
 Women's Interfaith Network.
 World Congress of Faiths

Local Inter Faith Groups

Altrincham Inter Faith Group
 Learning Together, Living in Harmony (Aylesbury)
 Barking and Dagenham Faith Forum
 Barnet Multi-Faith Forum
 Bedford Council of Faiths
 Birmingham Council of Faiths
 Blackburn with Darwen Interfaith Forum
 Blackpool Faith Forum
 Bolton Interfaith Council
 Bradford Concord Interfaith Society

Bradford District Faiths Forum	North Kirklees Inter-Faith Council
Brent Interfaith	North Staffordshire Forum of Faiths
Brent Multi-Faith Forum	Northampton Inter Faith Forum
Brighton and Hove Inter-Faith Contact Group	Norwich InterFaith Link
Bristol Inter Faith Group	Nottingham Inter Faith Council
Bristol Multi-Faith Forum	Oldham Inter Faith Forum
Buckinghamshire Forum of Faiths	Oxford Round Table of Religions
Building Bridges in Burnley	Building Bridges Pendle – Interfaith Community Project
Muslim-Christian Forum (Bury)	Peterborough Inter-Faith Council
Calderdale Interfaith Council	Plymouth Centre for Faiths and Cultural Diversity
Cambridge Inter-Faith Group	Portsmouth Inter Faith Forum
Camden Faith Communities Partnership	Preston Faith Forum
Canterbury and District Inter Faith Action	Reading Inter-Faith Group
Cardiff Interfaith Association	Redbridge Faith Forum
Cheltenham Inter Faith	Rochdale Multi Faith Partnership
Cleveland and Tees Valley Inter Faith Group	Rossendale Faith Partnership
Coventry Multi-Faith Forum	Rugby Inter Faith Forum
Crawley Interfaith Network	Sandwell Multi-Faith Network
Faiths Together in Croydon	Sheffield Inter Faith
Cumbria Interfaith Forum	South London Inter Faith Group
Forum of Faiths for Derby	South Shropshire Interfaith Forum
Devon Faith and Belief Forum	Southampton Council of Faiths
Doncaster Interfaith	Southwark Multi Faith Forum
Dudley Borough Interfaith Network	Stafford and District Friends of Faith
Eastbourne Faiths Forum	Suffolk Inter-Faith Resource
Elmbridge Multi-Faith Forum	Faiths United (Tameside)
Exeter Faith and Belief Group	Telford and Wrekin Interfaith Group
Gateshead Inter Faith Forum	Torbay Interfaith Forum
Greenwich Multi-Faith Forum	Tower Hamlets Inter Faith Forum
Hampshire Interfaith Network	Valleys Faith Forum
Harrow Inter Faith Council	Waltham Forest Faith Communities Forum
Hastings and District Interfaith Forum	Wandsworth Multi-Faith Network
Hillingdon Inter Faith Network	Warrington Council of Faiths
Horsham Interfaith Forum	Warwick District Faiths Forum
Hounslow Friends of Faith	Watford Inter Faith Association
Huddersfield Inter Faith Council	Wellingborough Inter Faith Group
Hull and East Riding Interfaith	Welwyn Hatfield Interfaith Group
Inter Faith Isle of Man	Westminster Faith Exchange
Inter-faith North/West (Northern Ireland)	Whalley Range (Manchester) Inter Faith Group
Islington Faiths Forum	Windsor and Maidenhead Community Forum
Keighley Interfaith Group	Wisbech Interfaith Forum
Kingston Inter Faith Forum	Wolverhampton Inter Faith and Regeneration Network
Kirklees Faiths Forum	Worcestershire Inter-Faith Forum
Faiths Together in Lambeth	Wycombe Sharing of Faiths
Lancashire Forum of Faiths	York Interfaith Group
Faith in Lancaster	
Leeds Concord Interfaith Fellowship	
Leeds Faiths Forum	
Leicester Council of Faiths	
Interfaith Forum for Leicestershire	
Liverpool Faith Network	
Loughborough Council of Faiths	
Luton Council of Faiths	
Faith Network for Manchester	
Medway Inter Faith Action Forum	
Merseyside Council of Faiths	
Middlesbrough Council of Faiths	
Interfaith MK (Milton Keynes)	
Milton Keynes Council of Faiths	
Moseley Inter Faith Group	
Newcastle Council of Faiths	
Newham Association of Faiths	
Newham Faith Sector Forum	
North Herts Faith Forum	

NOTE: List of member bodies as at 07/12

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