

THE INTER FAITH NETWORK FOR THE UK

NOTE OF VIRTUAL LINK MEETING FOR LOCAL INTER FAITH GROUPS IN YORKSHIRE AND HUMBER

from 2pm to 4.15pm on Thursday 23 February 2023

by Zoom

Present: Imam Mohammed Abubakar (South Kirklees Inter Faith Initiative); Miss Jay Anderson (Leeds Faiths Forum and Leeds Concord Interfaith Fellowship); Mr Maurice Bartley (Rotherham Interfaith Group); Dr Javed Bashir (Bradford Volunteering Interfaith Partnership); Martin Batstone (Hull and East Riding Interfaith); the Revd Andrew Crowley (Sheffield Interfaith); Dr David Currie (North Kirklees Inter Faith); the Revd Canon Rachel Firth (South Kirklees Inter Faith Initiative); the Revd Nathan Javed (Grace Baptist Mission); Professor Avtar Singh Matharu (York Interfaith Group); Mr Martin Pliener (Hull and East Riding Interfaith); the Revd Jenny Ramsden (Church of England Diocese Leeds); the Revd Andy Williams (Blackley Centre and Calderdale Interfaith Council); and the Revd Canon Mark Umpleby (North Kirklees Inter Faith).

In attendance: Dr Harriet Crabtree; Ms Jeevan Sanghera; and Mr Leo Taylor (Inter Faith Network for the UK).

Apologies: Bradford Concord Interfaith Society; Keighley Interfaith Group; and Wakefield Interfaith Network.

Agenda Item 1: Welcome and Context

1. Dr Harriet Crabtree, in the chair, welcomed participants.
2. Following IFN's usual practice, there would be a note of the meeting and that would be cleared with participants before final circulation and then added to the IFN website. If there was anything that a speaker preferred not be minuted, they should indicate. Screengrabs of the meeting might be used. If anyone did not wish to be in these, they were asked to indicate. (No objections were raised).

Agenda Item 2: Brief Round Table Discussions

3. All present introduced themselves briefly.

Agenda Item 4: Update on IFN news

It was agreed that Agenda Item 4 would be taken before Agenda Item 3.

4. Dr Crabtree said that IFN had continued to hold regular meetings members within its four categories of member body: national faith community representative bodies; national and regional inter faith organisations; local inter faith organisations; and educational and academic bodies with a multi faith interest.

5. A significant portion of IFN time went into helping support the work of local inter faith organisations and sharing good practice between them. As well as member local inter faith bodies, IFN also linked informally many others. This was because local inter faith activity was the lifeblood of day to day inter faith interaction. It was always a privilege to participate in meetings such as the present one.
6. Part of this local inter faith support work was an update of the IFN publication, the *Local Inter Faith Guide* where work was about to begin on the latter stages.
7. Colleagues and she had found themselves talking a lot with people about the possibilities and challenges of engaging in the new post-pandemic world with its mixed economy of online, in person and hybrid meetings. Quite a number of local groups had said they had been struggling with this and with finding the most workable ways forward. IFN had therefore continued to put work to help people use digital communications, but more recently also to discuss what it means for organisations to develop their work in a very new landscape.
8. Inter Faith Week was another area of focus for IFN with the usual work to prepare for, and then report on, that.
9. When events of national significance happened, such as the death of the monarch or a coronation, IFN invested a lot of time into sharing what people were doing. It was involved in plans for the Big Help Out, a day of volunteering to celebrate the King's Coronation in May.
10. The Revd Canon Mark Umpleby commented that he had received a lot of help from IFN when dealing with some challenging local issues and he wanted to recognise the important work that IFN did. Dr Crabtree thanked Canon Umpleby; she was glad to hear that he had found conversations with IFN helpful. People were best placed to engage with and resolve local issues in their own areas. However, sometimes such issues had aspects with a national dimension where helpful contacts etc, could be offered.
11. The Revd Andrew Crowley commented that he sometimes found IFN emails a little too lengthy to engage with. He wondered whether it was possible to have a shorter correspondence with, for example, just the highlights of the newsletter. Dr Crabtree said she would discuss his point with colleagues.

Agenda Item 3: Working together for the common good

Bradford Volunteering Interfaith Partnership (VIP)

12. Dr Crabtree introduced Dr Javed Bashir of the Bradford Volunteering Interfaith Partnership (VIP) programme. This programme had been set up during the pandemic with Strengthening Faith Institutions and AgeUK Bradford. It continued to see faith communities in Bradford working together to respond to a range of local needs. Dr Bashir and The Revd Nathan Javed would be speaking about how and why the programme was set up and some of the benefits of members of local faith communities working together in this way.

13. Dr Javed Bashir said that:

- He belonged to a national organisation called Strengthening Faith Institutions which worked with faith organisations around the country in terms of development and safeguarding. His own role had been working within Bradford and Yorkshire, particularly focusing on developing faith institutions by training them in safeguarding and organisational development.
- During the pandemic, the group had organised communities from the Sikh, Muslim, Christian and Hindu faiths into an informal grouping to support the wider community. The group had teamed up with Age UK to organise the Volunteering Interfaith Partnership (VIP) which aimed to use faith as a vehicle to reach out to particularly isolated and vulnerable people in the local communities who needed help and support.
- VIP had supported these vulnerable people by delivering food parcels, helping people with shopping and by making phone calls to ensure that individuals were coping with isolation.
- The group's efforts continued today as more and more people were asking for their help and support. More recently, they had been getting young people involved, particularly those who were being educated in the madrasas. One of the aspects of madrasas was that students put something back into the community and helped those in need. These individuals had been giving out Ramadan meals, delivering Christmas hampers and they continued to generally help people in the Manningham area.

14. The Revd Nathan Javed said that:

- The pandemic had been a very tough situation and VIP had aimed to spread a positive message about community. It had been a particularly difficult time for the Bradford people as the city already had a high level of poverty, marginalisation and a low education rate.
- The formation of VIP had happened organically; it was just a natural bond of friendship between a group of Christians, Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs that gelled together into an initiative.
- VIP also focused on buying medication for the vulnerable and going to shopping centres to get provisions.
- He worked with the Baptist churches in Yorkshire and this meant that he was able to get involved with a lot of work within the broader community. They were always trying to create positivity about Bradford because people had so many misconceptions about the city.

15. Dr Bashir went on to say to say that:

- One of the great things about the project was that it did not rely on any funding from the local authorities. There were other groups doing similar work, but they were getting money from the council and distributing food during half terms, terms and the school holidays. Instead, all of the funding came from faith institutions. For example, during the pandemic, the Sikh community had worked with VIP and distributed Langar during the weekend as the Gurdwara was not open at during that period.
- Age UK had identified those who needed support and compiled a list of individuals to whom VIP made home delivery of Langar. They had been doing a similar thing for Ramadan for the last three years, by distributing Ramadan

meals to people in the community. As well as helping people, the initiative was about forming bonds between different communities in Bradford.

- During the pandemic there had been a lot of international students at the university who were struggling as their parents couldn't send them money and they were isolated. VIP had made an appeal to community leaders and made a video which had raised over £28,000 to help these students. Linked to this, he had been given an honorary degree from Bradford University.
16. Dr Crabtree thanked both speakers for their contributions and asked them if they had any reflections on principles of effective working together on social action in the inter faith context.
17. Mr Javed responded by saying that:
- No matter what country, background or culture, the pandemic had shown that we are all fragile and need help at times.
 - It was crucial to get more funding and help during such crises to support local communities.
 - Love is an essential component of every religion and should be the basis of people working together. The work in Bradford showed the city's culture of love and communal wellbeing.
18. Dr Bashir said:
- One of the key principles that unites religions is the principle of helping each other. The pandemic had brought people together from different communities and gelled them together. The compassion was already there and the project merely organised this willingness into a community initiative.
 - He was particularly touched by the love shown by young people who took time out of the madrasa to give food to people who were in need and are making efforts to develop bonds with people in the local community.
19. The Revd Canon Rachel Firth noted that there were many charities organising social action and community-driven projects. Was the VIP linking their project with such other efforts? Dr Bashir said that the emphasis of the project was on working together for the community; it was open to everybody. They have worked with other organisations and are planning to continue these partnerships in the future.
20. Mr Crowley said that he saw VIP as building on functions and aspects of religious traditions and fine tuning that to make it more of an inter faith initiative. Dr Bashir said that the initiative had been particularly a response to the isolation of the pandemic. However, some of the resources and willingness were already there; it was about galvanising the goodness.
21. Dr Crabtree asked the Revd Jenny Ramsden if she might like to say something about the inter faith social action work done for Mitzvah Day through the Church of England Diocese Leeds and other bodies.
22. The Revd Jenny Ramsden explained that:
- A couple of years ago, they had hosted a big gathering of people from faith communities to collect goods for refuges for female survivors of domestic

abuse. Then, on Mitzvah Day, they packaged up those goods and delivered them to refuges in Bradford and Leeds. The event aimed to raise awareness of the issue of gender-based violence, which is something that impacts all faith communities.

- Mitzvah Day was an annual day led by the Jewish community, with a strong inter faith element, which encouraged people from different faiths to come together and engage in a project or social action initiative.
- Last year, they had gathered together as a group of people from different faiths at a project called the Emmanuel Project which serves 150 homeless people at either lunch or breakfast in Bradford. The group had volunteered on Mitzvah day by cooking one of those meals, as a way of offering practical help, but also to raise awareness of the impacts of the cost-of-living crisis and homelessness.

23. Dr Crabtree opened the discussion up to ask whether any of the groups present had done work with the homeless, refugees or any been involved in other social action projects such as planting trees.
24. Professor Avtar Singh Matharu said that York Interfaith regularly planted trees, especially during Inter Faith Week. They had planted 500 trees eight years ago but had unfortunately lost half of those due to flooding. Following the pandemic, they had managed to get faith communities together during Inter Faith Week to look after the existing trees and plant more saplings. He went on to say that York was a 'City of Sanctuary' and also had an organisation called Refugee Action York which was very active. York Interfaith gave indirect support to these organisations and helped where needed.
25. Dr David Currie said that in Dewsbury they had organised an initiative similar to the Bradford one. Six groups had come together: a Muslim organisation; two church groups; the local school; and two community groups. They had been given permission by the council to distribute over 8,000 leaflets to the local community, offering support to isolated individuals during the pandemic. The Initiative had now morphed into a food bank which had longer term plans. Unlike the Bradford initiative, the group had received funding from Kirklees Council, crowdfunding and other grant giving bodies and could now spend over £1,000 a month on provisions.
26. The Revd Andy Williams said that Calderdale Interfaith had recently been approached by City of Sanctuary, which had recognised that many inter faith groups had become involved with refugees and asylum seekers. The City of Sanctuary initiative was considering setting up their own inter faith network and he was a little concerned about the potential for duplication of inter faith activity in this respect. He wanted to inform IFN and the participants of this conversation.
27. Dr Crabtree thanked the speakers for their contributions.

Agenda Item 5: Round table updates from local inter faith organisations

28. Dr Crabtree invited each participating local organisation at the meeting to share briefly news about its current programme and how was it was finding operating

in this post-pandemic period. She also noted that there would be a special contribution from the Revd Andy Williams, Director for Inter Faith Relations at the Blackley Centre in Elland, about some recent engagement by it with 'interfaith leaders' in Yorkshire.

Calderdale Interfaith Council (CIFC)

29. Mr Williams said that:

- CIFC had recently hosted a couple of conferences on the climate change emergency and the moral economy. The latter of these included a response from the Peace Studies Department of Bradford University and a good number of students had come to join the conference.
- They had also held a Holocaust Memorial Day event which had been organised in conjunction with Calderdale College and facilitated by the Holocaust Learning Centre which is based at Huddersfield University. This had involved the sharing of testimony from a survivor and had had many students in attendance.
- Calderdale Interfaith had been called into a couple of schools where incidents had recently occurred. The schools had wanted CIFC to offer an opportunity for people of different faiths to discuss their religious beliefs together. This had an element of social cohesion.
- The group had established a steering group, had an away day together, had an active women's group and had elected two new joint co-chairs.

Hull and East Riding Interfaith (HERI)

30. Mr Martin Pliener said that:

- HERI had been relatively inactive during the pandemic, but had played a key role in disseminating reliable information to hard to reach communities through its circulation list.
- The group had become active again and was now focusing on forums through which people could discuss their perspectives on religions.
- Its meetings had been improved dramatically.
- Members were learning how to run hybrid meetings. That was proving to be a big challenge. However, it was hoped that hybrid meetings would make the events more inclusive and facilitate greater engagement.

31. Martin Batstone said that:

- Mr Pliener had done a fantastic job keeping the network afloat during the pandemic; without his help, the group wouldn't have survived.
- HERI had been trying to make the group more organised so that it could improve its communications and reach out to communities that hadn't traditionally been involved with HERI. Members were structuring their meetings with four key forums a year on different themes and inviting speakers to have discussions on that.
- The organisation had been interspersing formal events with informal meetings at cafes and just enjoying each other's company. Many of the group were good friends and it was important to have informal conversation to strengthen relationships.

- On the HERI committee they had an advisor to the local SACRE and they have got involved in schools work. They were regularly asked to provide people for inter faith 'human libraries' where children came to talk to individuals from different faiths.
- The profile of the group was somewhat elderly. However, the school invitations were a great way to get more young people involved in local inter faith activity.

32. Dr Crabtree highlighted the important part that many people at the present meeting had played in keeping inter faith groups going during the pandemic and at other times of difficulty.

Leeds Faith Forum (LFF)

33. Miss Jay Anderson said that:

- LFF had been quiet for the past two years because of the pandemic, but they were now in the process of reinvigorating and rejuvenating the Forum board.
- LFF had just had its AGM and had appointed a new chair and vice chair. It was hoped that this would make the governance of the organisation more streamlined.

Leeds Concord Interfaith Fellowship (LCIFF)

34. Ms Anderson said that:

- Thanks to Zoom, LCIFF had continued to have monthly meetings during and since the pandemic.
- Its focus for talks was four different topics and it was alternating between them. These were; concepts of the divine; attitudes to freedom and enslavement; attitudes to wealth; and holy places.
- The group had decided to produce a full-colour newsletter for the first time as the financial implications of going from black and white to full colour were minimal.

35. Dr Crabtree commented on LCIFF's strong use of traditional newsletters and website and LFF's use of social media. Using digital communications well was an important part of getting get new members involved. Time permitting, the meeting might come back to this topic later.

North Kirklees Inter-faith (NKI)

36. Canon Umpleby said:

- NKI had recently had an afternoon tea for faith leaders and teachers of RE in the area. This had been well attended but they hoped to have greater participation from RE teachers in the future.
- The group had hosted curates and new clergy in this diocese to talk about NIK's inter faith work involving churches and mosques. Tours of some churches, a mosque and madrasas were included.
- In Inter Faith Week NKI had handed out 1,500 white roses in six different towns in an initiative called 'Roses for Peace'. The roses were a great symbol

of people standing together and NKI had received many positive comments from recipients of them.

- They had also begun working on the Faith Covenant with Kirklees Council which had re-surfaced following the inertia of the pandemic.
 - A member of North Kirklees Interfaith belonged to an organisation called Wellspring and she had been running a set of talks with five of the area's local high schools. They also hold an open day where members can go and listen to young people to hear and seek to understand their opinions.
37. Dr Currie said that NKIF had been struggling to grow the group and would love to know how other organisations had succeeded in increasing membership. It was agreed that this point would be picked up later in the discussion.
38. Mr Williams said that Canon Umpleby's comments had reminded him that Calderdale had recently re-signed its Faith Covenant. It was fantastic to hear that NKIF had been doing tours with new curates and clergy in their dioceses. He had a number of conversations about this in Calderdale, but thus far these had not led to similar tours. It was important to introduce clergy and faith leaders right across the spectrum and bring them on board to inter faith initiatives as soon as possible.
39. Ms Anderson said that Leeds had also recently reinvigorated its Faith Covenant following the pandemic. Responding to Dr Currie's point, she said that she had helped bring new people into LFF by being very assiduous in her communications. However, this effort was a long-term process of building personal relationships.
40. Ms Ramsden said that NKI tours were very successful; this had been demonstrated through the feedback from participants who had all said that they were inspired and recognised that inter faith was important to each of them. She thought that the Diocese of Leeds was the only C of E diocese where all clergy and curates had to do training in inter faith presence and engagement. This was very important.
41. Dr Crabtree commented on NKI's production of videos, one or two of which have been used in many schools. It was helpful to have people in videos who were able to really project and explain things positively [in this instance, Canon Umpleby and Imam Soni].

Rotherham Interfaith Group (RIFG)

42. Mr Maurice Bartley said:
- Rotherham Interfaith Group was a small group.
 - They meet in friendship every month and had a special celebration for Inter Faith Week which the mayor always attended.
 - Most recently, the group had gathered for Holocaust Memorial Day and had participated in a variety of events hosted by local religious groups.
 - They generally tried to support local Christian and Muslim groups and had been supporting wider community initiatives such as food banks.

- One of the group's difficulties was that Rotherham didn't have large numbers of different faiths and the group primarily consisted of Christians and Muslims. However, they assiduously supported every venture towards social justice in Rotherham as they want to show that the organisation was all about compassion, care and friendship.
- RIFG had been struggling to get other people interested beyond their immediate circle. It was an ageing organisation and it was particularly keen to increase the numbers of young people who participated.

Sheffield Interfaith

43. Mr Crowley said:

- Sheffield Interfaith was a small and informal organisation.
- It had occasional meetings which it called 'Food and Friendship'.
- The group was at a moment of review, wanting to get a clearer sense of direction.
- Firstly, members wanted to revitalise the committee structure and to adopt new ways of doing things. However, they needed more people to take responsibility for the different areas.
- Secondly, the group wanted to increase the diversity of people who attended the events and who were represented on the committee. They had been making efforts to involve people from a wider range of faith communities in Sheffield.
- Thirdly, they were trying to review what Sheffield needed in terms of inter faith activity. In addition to Sheffield Interfaith, the city currently had: a Faith Leaders' Group; a Women's Inter Faith Network, which met every three months; and Shirley House, which had a series of programmes of meetings.

44. Dr Crabtree commented that Sheffield Interfaith's current activity was a helpful reminder of the importance of groups carrying out periodic reviews of what they are doing and of being aware of what else is being offered locally.

South Kirklees Interfaith (SKIF)

45. Canon Firth said that:

- There had been a much bigger inter faith network in the Kirklees area which had disbanded some years ago. After the pandemic she had been asked by a number of her colleagues whether she was going to re-start the inter faith group.
- Since then, a South Kirklees Inter Faith group had begun meeting. It had a more diverse membership than the previous group as South Kirklees now also had Sikh, Buddhist and Ahmadiyya Muslim communities. The group also has representatives from local Humanists.
- In the last few years, they had also acquired a Council of Mosques in Huddersfield.
- Recently, they had participated in the 'Roses for Peace' Inter Faith Week activity organised by North Kirklees. This had been very well-received in their area.

- The group had also started their own faith trail. There had not been such a trail in the area for over 10 years. The recent trail had been attended by over 40 people. It had involved a large amount of food!
- The group sometimes worked in conjunction with the council. It had also helped faith groups in the area write a letter to the council asking for more help to be given to faith communities during the cost-of-living-crisis.
- It was currently assisting on some work on Islamophobia awareness and was involved with a new Faith Centre that has opened at Huddersfield University.

46. Mr Williams said that it was great to hear about the work of South Kirklees. The valuable new work in South Kirklees was filling a gap that was left from the previous inter faith group in the area.

York Interfaith Group

47. Professor Matharu said:

- York Interfaith was a diverse and dynamic group which had been going for almost 33 years. It had returned to physical monthly meetings and had a regular attendance of around 30-35 people. It also had a social media presence on Twitter and Instagram as well as its website.
- It had recently reduced its membership rate to reflect the current cost-of-living context.
- The group had held its first-ever Sounds and Stories of Faith event as part of a citywide festival which was held in York Minster. It had been very exciting as many members of faith communities in York had never been to the Minster. Nine different faiths presented and each faith had five minutes to recite a story or sound related to its faith. It was hoped that this would become a permanent annual event.
- The group did a lot of work in schools on themes such as sacred books and earth.
- Last year it had held a competition with York SACRE to get year six, seven and eight students school children involved. The task was to design a York Interfaith Group logo. Pupils were told that the design had to have symbols of faith and also reflect the identity of York as a city. Unfortunately, many entries included the infamous Clifford Tower as an iconic image of faith in York, reflecting a lack of awareness about its history. They went back to school teachers to explain the significance of Clifford's Tower.
- YIG had recently started a Thought for the Day session on a local radio station. It had a short slot each day.
- York Interfaith had done a lot of work with the Lord Mayor.
- Finally, it had also done some work with the York Human Rights Network. The latter have an annual indicator report. York Interfaith has been trying to tell the writers of the report about the importance of faith as a human right. It was odd that faith didn't appear in any of their reports, particularly given that York was a 'City of Sanctuary'.

48. Dr Crabtree then invited Leo Taylor and Jeevan Sanghera to talk briefly about *the Local Inter Faith Guide*. They explained that the guide hadn't been revised since 2005 and that many of the examples were outdated. A large part of the

work on this involved sourcing and writing new case studies about the new context of local inter faith engagement. IFN would likely been in contact with some of the groups present in the meeting for inclusion as case studies in the guide.

The Blackley Centre, Elland and a Zoom networking day for inter faith groups in the North

49. Mr Williams said that:

- The Blackley Centre was co-located with the Blackley Baptist Church in Elland.
- Mr Williams and his wife, who was also a Minister at the church, had been seeking to see how the centre might offer a regional resource to raise the profile of inter faith groups in the North of England. They wanted to offer something different to local inter faith groups in the area such as North Kirklees, Calderdale and South Kirklees.
- They had received funding for 12 months to do a programme from the Community Fund For example, they had held a conference in partnership with Calderdale Interfaith.
- They had also held a Zoom networking day last June which individuals from about 10 groups had attended (many of whom were present). It had focused on what the issues and concerns of their groups were, such as: involving younger people and passing on responsibility; involving more faith communities; identifying common purposes of their groups; raising public awareness; and school communities and strategy.

50. He then showed the group a slide of the Blackley Centre with images of the venue. <https://www.blackleycentre.co.uk/> He explained that the centre was a complex of buildings in a rural location and that there was a chapel which could be used as a meeting place for about 80 people. There was also another building which had been converted into a conferencing suite which can seat about 30 people.

51. Dr Crabtree noted that she had visited the Centre. It was a welcoming space in a very beautiful area and groups might want to consider it as an option if they were looking at having away days.

Religions for Peace (UK) Women of Faith Network

52. Although the meeting's focus was local, Dr Crabtree invited Ms Ramsden to share with it some new work on which she had recently embarked.

53. Ms Ramsden said:

- She had started working for the Religions for Peace UK Women of Faith Network alongside her role as an inter faith advisor for Leeds Diocese. The project on which she has been working focuses on challenging gender-based religious violence and ways in which religion is misused to cause women harm.
- The project was touring an exhibition called 'The Dignity of Women: Scriptural Reflections'. The exhibition consisted of quotes from sacred texts from nine

different world religions that uphold the dignity, respect and equality for women. These were offered as a starting point for discussion; to gather people from different faiths together; to talk about what their faith traditions' scriptures teach about women; and to talk about the challenges that face women today, particularly in regard to violence.

- Mr Williams had arranged for the exhibition to be shown at the Blackley Centre. She was very grateful for that. People had dropped in throughout the day and she had been able to have some wonderful conversations, including with two women who came from a network of survivors of abuse. In the evening, the Women's Interfaith Group of Calderdale Interfaith had met at the Centre and this session had been attended by 25 women from different faiths. They had had a discussion about the challenges that women faced today and the ways in which the scriptures had empowered some of the women to face these challenges.
- A few weeks ago, Leeds Faith Forum had run an event in conjunction with Leeds City Council, West Yorkshire Police and the White Ribbon Campaign. The aim of that had been to bring together organisations and faith communities to challenge gender-based violence. This had been significant; the Council and the Police had said that, until that day, they hadn't realised the importance of engaging with faith communities on this issue. The Dignity of Women exhibition had also been used at that event, as a springboard for conversation.
- If any of the participants present would be interested in the exhibition or having RfPUK Women of Faith Network facilitate discussion, she would be very interested in helping.

Closing reflections

54. Dr Crabtree said that a topic mentioned several times in the meeting was how to involve more young people in inter faith activity. This could be challenging because – as had been noted at some past meetings - generally young people don't want to sit through traditional style inter faith meetings on a repeat basis. They will come to things which fit in their timetable, and they are more likely to come to do things related to social action.
55. Ms Sanghera said that looking at the different case studies in the Local Inter Faith Guide, some of the most interesting events were ones that had a creative dimension and which focused on community building aspect of religion and how religion can bring people together. From her own experience, as a young person, she had got involved with events which had a historical dimension as she was Sikh and the local Gurdwara had exhibitions about Sikh history in relation to World War I. There were lots of young people brought into these spaces and there were many activities so young people could engage with very complex ideas and histories.
56. Dr Crabtree said that, on the broader question of growing group membership, there was little substitute for padding around and making personal contacts. This has been harder during the pandemic because it was difficult to build relationships just through Zoom. Digital communication such as through social media could also help increase involvement. For example, the Religions for

Peace Women of Faith Network had pushed out vibrant pictures of what they were doing and lots of advertisement for their events. Getting meetings picked up on local radio was also helpful.

57. Returning to Mr Crowley's point on diversifying and revivifying, it was important to think about whether people felt a group was worthwhile, whether they thought that they were going to gain something useful from it, and whether they were going to be respected in their engagement. If you were promoting a local football club, you'd have a built-in constituency. If you were promoting a baking club, you'd have a built-in constituency. But an interfaith organisation was a bigger ask and a bigger challenge. Once people get involved, they often became very committed. Some people became passionate about it. Key questions were how one engaged people initially and kept themes engaged.
58. Mr Crowley wondered whether people of faith were becoming a growing minority. He thought that there had been a large transition and wondered if traditional ways of doing inter faith activity might be coming to an end.
59. Dr Crabtree agreed that wider societal issues did affect inter faith work, as did local and specific policy changes. That worked, and why, needed to be kept under continued review.
60. She thanked everybody for their contributions and closed with good wishes for the important work of all the inter faith bodies represented at the afternoon's meeting.
61. The meeting ended at 4.15pm.

25 September 2023