

THE INTER FAITH NETWORK FOR THE UK

Note of Link Meeting for Local Inter Faith Organisations in the East of England Region

from 2.30pm to 4.45pm on Monday 30 January 2023

by Zoom

Present: Mr Riaz Ahmed (Council for Christian Muslim Relations in High Wycombe); Mr Michael Berkson (Cambridge Inter-Faith Group); Ms Lauren Bleach (Greater Yarmouth Inter Faith and Belief Network); Mrs Judith Bruni (Watford Inter Faith Association); Dr David Capey (East of England Faiths Agency); Mr Sean Finlay (Wisbech Inter Faith Forum); Mr David Griffith (Norwich Inter Faith Link); Mr Ryad Khodabocus (Luton Council of Faiths); Mrs Erica Leith (Welwyn Hatfield Inter Faith Group); the Revd Richard Leslie (Hertsmere Forum of Faiths and Dacorum Inter Faith Network); the Revd Canon Ivor Moody (Mid Essex Inter Faith Group); Mrs Rose Norgate (Waveney Inter Faith Circle); the Revd Tom O'Brien (North Herts Faith Forum); Mr Bhakshar Patil (Stevenage Inter Faith Forum); Mr Reynold Rosenberg (Herts Inter Faith Forum); and Mrs Valerie Skottowe (Welwyn Hatfield Inter Faith Group)

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

Apologies: Bedford Council of Faiths, Braintree and District Inter Faith Forum, Inter Faith Group for Northwest Essex, and Inter Faith Group for Southwest Suffolk.

Agenda Item 1: Welcome and Context

1. Dr Harriet Crabtree welcomed participants.
2. Following IFN's usual practice, there would be a note of the meeting and that would be cleared in draft 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).
3. This was one of the regional meetings for local inter faith bodies that IFN held periodically, in consultation with regional faith forums where those existed. These were for exchange of news and views and sharing of good practice from the important work that local inter faith organisations were doing.

Agenda Item 2: Brief Round Table Discussions

4. All present introduced themselves briefly.

Agenda Item 3: Update on IFN News

5. Dr Crabtree highlighted some aspects of IFN's work since the last IFN meeting for East of England inter faith groups in 2020 which had taken place during the pandemic. It had continued its usual work of providing information to organisations, bringing people together and connecting groups. It had put much energy into developing its use of social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter since many people found their information online. At the same time, it was mindful that more traditional forms of communications remained important for many.
6. IFN had recently been highlighting the value for faith and inter faith bodies of working in partnership for the common good. That had been the theme of the most recent National Meeting. This usually had a social action dimension and many people were introduced to inter faith activity for the first time through it.
7. IFN had published a report on Inter Faith Week 2021. Many present had held activities for the Week. IFN had held the first Inter Faith Week in 2009, taking inspiration from the Scottish Inter Faith Week. When it had first begun, it had not been clear what its impact would be. However, it had developed in ways which had had a real impact throughout communities and in contexts such as schools, workplaces and hospitals. This was significant because it drew into inter faith engagement many individuals and groups who might not otherwise have become involved.
8. The work of local inter faith groups was crucial to the development of inter faith activity and good inter faith relations. It helped ensure that these were embedded in our everyday lives. Helping support that was a significant part of IFN's work.
9. IFN had continued, this operating year (2022-23), to receive Government funding towards its work. Funding was challenging for all charities: many organisations were going to the same bodies for funding. It was not always easy to convince trusts of the value of supporting inter faith activity. Also, faith communities (another potential source of support) had had real economic challenges. For example, fewer services and other in person events at places of worship had in some cases caused lost funding from donations which they would normally have received at those. Some had needed to bite into their reserves.
10. IFN was seeking to evaluate its activity more fully in order to establish which activities had the greatest impact.

Agenda Item 4: Round table updates from local inter faith organisations

11. Dr Crabtree invited each participating local organisation at the meeting to share key news about its current programme and how it was finding operating in this post-pandemic period. It was agreed to aim for 3 minutes per group plus questions.

Cambridge Inter-Faith Group (CIFG)

12. Mr Michael Berkson said that:

- CIFG had been trying very hard to get together but had been finding it difficult to get the committee to meet in person.
- There had been an increase in inter faith activity in Cambridge. However, this had not been directly through CIFG, but, rather, through community action on social problems.
- This had included the Cambridge community's response to the war in Ukraine. Inter faith services had been hosted at places of worship and from that there burgeoned bilateral and trilateral dialogues between churches, synagogues and mosques. Those were focused on wider community issues rather than on specifically inter faith activity.
- CIFG had not come to a conclusion about whether it should focus on social action or religious literacy. There was a grassroots instinct to concentrate on social action. At the same time, there was quite a strong belief in the group that its primary objective should be religious literacy. This was something that CIFG would have to make a decision on in the future.

13. Mr Reynold Rosenberg asked Mr Berkson and the other participants whether they considered that the function of their organisation was to encourage discussion between faiths – or did they also see an importance to a link to local government? In the latter case did they seem themselves as needing to reflect in their membership many faiths in order to represent local religious communities? Mr Berkson said that all communities in Cambridge had close relationships with Cambridge City Council, which was very supportive of all their attempts at inter faith work. It was not a matter of quotas; rather, that the Council attempted to hear the voices of everyone.

East of England Faith Agency (EEFA)

14. Dr David Capey said that:

- EEFA had been participating in inter faith activity for over 20 years.
- Faith communities whose members had immigrated to Britain in the 1970s had now grown in their confidence and knew how to communicate effectively with the rest of society. This meant that they no longer needed the support for that purpose which had been one of the forms of assistance offered by traditional inter faith bodies.
- There were different ways of doing inter faith activity. The first and loosest of those he would term 'multifaith' activity. That was when, for example, different communities worked alongside each other, often sharing some kind of facility (for example chaplains in a chaplaincy). Their purpose was not dialogue although they did engage with each other through their shared work.
- A second type of inter faith activity was where people were interested in other faiths and wanted to meet people from other faiths.
- A third type of inter faith activity was where, additionally, people of different faiths who came together were also engaged with statutory authorities. This included groups concerned with education and which wanted to help the

statutory bodies in the education of their colleagues and, in the case of schools, of their children.

- The pandemic had disrupted most of EEFA's activities. Its meetings had stopped during the lockdowns.
- It had premises in the centre of Ipswich. It had a library containing 3000 books on theology, inter faith issues and religion. It had decided to renew its licence on the premises so as to maintain the library, However, it faced a dilemma as it might be asked to leave. If so, it would have a huge number of books to store or give away.
- There had been change in the local inter faith structures in the East of England. Suffolk Inter Faith Resource had disappeared and been replaced by the Ipswich Faith and Community Forum.
- He had set up a group called 'Faith and Spirituality Network Suffolk' which now had 240 members. These were people who wanted news about local faith communities, but who did not want to attend events. This seemed a new kind of development in inter faith activity.

15. Mr Ryad Khodabocus thought that the new form of inter faith activity mentioned by Dr Capey was an evolution as it had encouraged a wider group of individuals to take part in his community. While he was very pleased with this approach, he did not think that it had completely replaced traditional inter faith activity.

Watford Inter Faith Association (WIFA)

16. Mrs Judith Bruni said that:
- WIFA had a very proactive chair so members were regularly engaged in activities within schools and the wider community.
 - It had a faith leaders forum. This was an occasional meeting bringing faith leaders together to talk about issues of common interest. It met in locations such as places of worship of the different faiths. In December it had met in the House of Commons and its local MP had taken part. The MP had also given WIFA members a guided tour of Parliament as part of the event.
 - WIFA celebrated Inter Faith Week each year by holding an inter faith pilgrimage walk. That involved visiting six places of worship, with a meal at the beginning and at the end. Such walks provided a great opportunity to chat and learn about other faiths and she recommended that highly to other groups.
17. Mr Ryad Khodabocus asked about the work that WIFA did in schools. Mrs Bruni said that schools asked WIFA to come in and provide talks to students. Primary and secondary schools in the area also occasionally had an 'inter faith day' which helped to fulfil their curriculum through pupils learning about different faiths.
18. Mr Berkson said that this work in schools was very important. He noted that in Cambridge schools engaged with faith organisations and said that inter faith organisations should encourage this as much as possible.

Luton Council of Faiths (LCF)

19. Mr Ryad Khodabocus said that:

- Since 2020 LCF had had a large portion of its events online. It had, however, quickly gone back into the community following 'Freedom Day'.
- There had been a particular focus recently on working on the issue of mental health. This had been done through empowering young people to take the lead in projects, and the organisation had seen a growth in participation from younger people.
- In 2021 LCF had been given the Queen's Voluntary award and this year it was celebrating 27 years of activity
- After COVID it had started the Peace Core initiative. Through this, a tree was being planted in memory of every person in the community who had died during the pandemic. Last Saturday they had planted 151 trees; they had 300 more to plant to fulfil their target of 800.
- LCF had done a great deal of work in schools. It brought multiple faith leaders together to talk on these visits, rather than having just one leader discussing their own faith. This helped illustrate that people could have different beliefs but still have constructive dialogue, engaging in ways that did not lead to conflict.
- Luton was currently struggling with widespread poverty. LCF had started a foodbank two years ago which many people continued to rely upon.
- The town also had an increasingly large refugee population.
- The 2021 Census found that 77% of respondents in Luton identified with a religion.
- Much work with those in need went through faith communities and the local council recognised the importance of support provided by them.

20. Dr Crabtree noted that if other organisations want to get involved with planting trees, free trees are available through the Queen's Green Canopy Initiative.

Herts Inter Faith Forum (HIFF)

21. Mr Rosenberg said that:

- HIFF's main activity recently had been working to establish the Faith Covenant between faith leaders and Herts County Council.
- HIFF helped provide a link between individual faith groups and the councils.
- The councils had often treated inter faith groups in Hertfordshire as being representative of all faith communities. He wanted to discuss with others present the issue of councils taking that approach.
- He had recently created a presentation for Holocaust Memorial Day which had been released on 26 January.

22. Dr Crabtree noted that the 'Faith Covenant' had been developed by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Faith and Society, chaired by Sir Stephen Timms and with the secretariat provided by Faith Action. Faith Covenants involved faith communities and local authorities coming together and agreeing on how they

should work together. In some areas, such as Barnet and Calderdale, inter faith and multi faith groups had played a role alongside individual faith communities.

23. Canon Ivor Moody spoke about the Essex Faith Covenant. This had been the first county-wide example and had been brought about with the support of Faith Action. Essex County Council had supplied an officer to serve as a secretary to the Covenant group and the scheme had been successfully launched. Inter faith activity in Essex had been really helped by the Covenant which was channelling inter faith work on a much broader level.
24. Dr Crabtree said that some faith communities had been hesitant about the Faith Covenant scheme in its earliest form, seeing it was about their being asked to demonstrate that faith bodies would not proselytise with any funding received to deliver services. However, Faith Action had worked to ensure that the concept of the Covenant had been broadened out so that faith communities found it more acceptable and it had now been signed in a number of authorities. That it was seen as positive was evident in the fact that some communities had even re-signed their Covenants.
25. Mr Ashley Beck provided more information about the Covenant initiative in the Chat: <https://www.faithandsociety.org/covenant/>.

Welwyn Hatfield Inter Faith Group (WHIFG)

26. Mrs Valerie Skottowe said:
 - Following on from the pandemic, WHIFG had primarily been active through hosting monthly community meetings which involved talks focusing on issues such as the climate emergency, spiritual care in hospices and feeding the world.
 - WHIFG was planning on returning to evening meetings in person. The first planned meeting was on the Prevent programme.
 - It was also thinking of hosting a summer supper on 8 May, at the end of the day of volunteering for HM King Charles III's Coronation.
 - There had been a big shake up of staff at the local council. One effect of this might be that WHIFG would no longer be provided with a minute taker by the council. The council had been influential in the setting up WHIFG and it would be very disappointing if this relationship were to be diminished. WHIFG would be working tirelessly to ensure that the relationship with the council was sustained.
27. Mrs Erica Leith said:
 - WHIFG had hosted its annual inter faith supper in Inter Faith Week. This had been a great success. They had been able to have it in person for the first time in three years and it had been a very joyful experience.
 - In the summer the group held an inter faith walk, a barbeque and a shared tea in the garden of one of the members. This ensured that there were always some social occasions as well as serious ones.
 - WHIFG's schoolwork had also continued, and they hoped to resurrect their previous idea of having an inter faith panel.

Stevenage Inter Faith Forum (SIFF)

28. Mr Bhakshar Patil said:

- SIFF had representatives from the Hindu, Muslim, Baha'i, Christian and Jewish faiths.
- Pre-pandemic, SIFF had organised activities during Inter Faith Week and also engaged in local community days in Stevenage town centre.
- It had not as yet properly come back since the pandemic. It had recently hosted a couple of meetings and wanted to get back to having regular meetings every six weeks. However, this had been hampered by the fact that a number of members of the organisation had health problems which meant they found it difficult to attend these events.
- SIFF had become involved with another group which was looking to provide food and winter clothing for the growing number of refugees in Stevenage.

Council for Christian Muslim Relations in High Wycombe (CCMRHW)

29. Mr Riaz Ahmed said:

- CCMRHW involved Christians and Muslims but also some Hindus and Sikhs, and non-religious persons.
- It engaged with the Prevent programme and had strong links to local schools which invited imams and priests to visit sixth forms to engage in discussions about their faiths.
- The group had recently met together to decorate the Christmas tree at the main church in the High Wycombe town centre.
- It had also been helping provide relief to any homeless people who needed shelter and sustenance.
- CCMRHW had linked up with the Christian Muslim Relations Group at one of the University of Oxford which offered PHD students to host seminars for CCMRHW members. These students acted like consultants to the group and participated in discussions.
- Any other participants who would like to come to CCMRHW talks or present at one of their meetings would be very welcome.

Hertsmere Forum of Faiths (HFF)

30. Mr Richard Leslie said:

- HFF was going to meet for the first time since COVID, in the local borough offices.
- Members had helped with Camp Unity. In August, forty children had attended from different faith communities and followed up this venture by planting trees in Boreham Wood. HFF did not establish Camp Unity but played an active part in this initiative.
- HFF members had also attended an Inter Faith Week panel debate which the Bushey Inter Faith Forum had hosted. That had focused on how people had survived COVID and the importance of prayer in that period.
- Several members of HFF had attended the Holocaust Memorial event in Radlett. That had had music, videos and presentations of various sorts. The

area had a very large Jewish population and the event had been very well attended.

- HFF had been heavily involved in the Hertfordshire Faith Covenant process. Local officials had created a draft of the document and were planning on having a launch event of the initiative in May. HFF hoped that this would be signed by faith leaders such as representatives from the St Albans Diocese and the local Buddhist monastery and that the effects of this initiative would trickle down to local groups.

Dacorum Inter Faith Network (DIFN)

31. Mr Leslie said:

- DIFN was focused on the Hemel Hempstead area.
- It had been continuing its monthly meetings and in the Autumn members had gone to Hertsmere to visit the Radlett Reform Synagogue to attend the installation of a new Rabbi.
- For the first time there had been an event for Holocaust Memorial Day in the local church. DIFN was waiting to get some feedback on it from participants.
- A particular local issue at this time was that the local Islamic community had bought a former Methodist church building, planning to build a mosque, but then been refused planning permission by the council. DIFN was keen to support the Islamic community which it did not think had been treated well by the Council on this matter.
- St Albans Diocese had appointed inter faith representatives in Luton, Watford and Bedford.

Mid Essex Inter Faith Group (MEIFG)

32. Canon Moody said:

- MEIFG had begun about 20 years ago.
- Up until the pandemic it had been an inter faith dialogue group which visited places of worship and had had discussions about the practices and values of different faiths.
- COVID had had a positive impact on inter faith activity in Essex as the faith groups had stepped up during the pandemic. This had provided a real wake-up call to councils as they had realised that faith groups could deliver on the councils' agendas without proselytism being an issue.
- MEIFG had consequently changed as a group by shifting from its original purpose to become a network which wrapped itself around the causes and concerns of the wider community.
- Members now tended to meet together to support community initiatives rather than meeting as a formal group.
- They were also involved in social prescribing initiatives, looking at how faiths can get involved with GP services and how this can help to provide a holistic sense of care.
- The local police service had just announced its first multifaith co-ordinator and in October various faith groups would be coming together for a conference called 'Faiths and Blue Light'. This would be focusing on emergency services and faith. It was hoped that members of local faith communities would come

together to discuss community support and emergency service issues in the area.

North Herts Faith Forum (NHFF)

33. The Revd Tom O'Brien said:

- NHFF was supporting the Hertfordshire Faith Covenant. He thought that the council wanted to develop a relationship with faiths which focused on working together for a common purpose. Faiths working together to administer the COVID vaccination programme had been an example of that.
- COVID had affected NHFF quite strongly. However, it had continued to have online events and had recently been part of the Holocaust Memorial Day celebrations hosted by North Herts Council (NHC). NHC had been running this service for the past four years and he had been invited to speak at the event.
- NHFF was currently training to go into schools so that it could deliver a message about faiths to children.
- It was strongly connected to HIFF and also to the inter faith group in St Albans
- NHFF had started planting trees. However, it had just been told that 200 saplings which members had recently planted were in danger because of agricultural use of the land.
- Its chair had initiated publicising of different faith celebrations. Each week, members of the group received notifications about different faith celebrations, feasts and events. These were also shared with places of worship in the area.
- Lastly, the Quakers in Hitchin had made a peace garden to which different faiths had made contributions. This was a great monument to good inter faith relations and faiths working together for the benefit of the local community.

Norwich InterFaith Link (NIFL)

34. Mr David Griffith said:

- In 2021 NIFL had organised monthly meetings which had focused on different topics such as the Baha'i faith, funeral care, the Seven Principles of Spiritualism, race, paganism, sexual assault, liberal Judaism, Sikhism, and Quaker weddings and funerals.
- Norwich Castle Museum had partnered with NIFL and young people to create a Norwich inter faith map which was now available.
- One of NIFL's members Shan Barclay had sadly passed away and members of NIFL had attended his funeral.
- In April 2022 NIFL had joined a local protest movement called 'Rights of the River' which challenged the creation of a motorway in North Norfolk.
- He had been invited onto Radio Norfolk to talk about the inter faith work of NIFL.
- During the World Cup the group had held a talk on human rights.
- Getting the balance of the benefits from the accessibility of Zoom and those of in person events was important.

35. Mr Griffith also provided a file of all NIFL had done over the past two years. This is attached at the end of this note.

Waveney Inter Faith Circle (WIFC)

36. Mrs Rose Norgate said:

- WIFC operated in a largely rural and remote area.
- It was an informal collection of individuals rather than a structured organisation.
- There were not many established non-Christian faith groups in the area. The group operated mostly as a social network of friends and provided a support dimension for those without faith communities around them. For example, one of WIFC's members from a smaller group had said that being in WIFC helped enable her to stick with her particular faith.
- Neighbouring Norfolk organisations, such as NIFL and the Greater Yarmouth Inter Faith and Belief Network, invited WIFC to all of their meetings. This was greatly appreciated.
- WIFC always took part in the Christmas tree festival hosted by the local Methodist organisation and ensured that it was an active part of the community.
- During Inter Faith week, members of WIFC posted quotations about faith and spirituality on social media.

Greater Yarmouth Inter Faith and Belief Network (GYIFBN)

37. Ms Lauren Bleach said:

- The organisation had been pushed back a little bit as a result of the pandemic as some people couldn't handle Zoom and because there was very poor internet service throughout the region.
- Last year, members had focused on looking at the various celebrations of different faiths. Each month, a different faith had led a celebration from their tradition. These events had usually involved food and this had encouraged a wide range of people to participate
- GYIFBN were fortunate as the area was very diverse and had a spread of faith and belief traditions.
- Its programme of events had included celebrations for the Queen's Jubilee and also her memorial.
- GYIFBN's chair had sadly become ill. He had had to step down from his role at the Unitarian church. This had meant that the organisation had lost its regular venue space for their meetings. In looking for new venues, it had managed to make connections with new faiths, for example with the Church of the Latter-Day Saints which had offered its space as a meeting space. When GYIFBN had had its inter faith service, the Church of the Latter-Day Saints members had come along; that was the first time its members had participated.
- GYIFBN had now found a council community room which was available to any member of the locality to hire.
- It was now concentrating on hosting discussion events and would be having a talk the following month on whether faith could help eliminate racism. Such discussion events help to develop its partnerships with councils, a local refugee organisation and the police.

- GYIFBN would be involved in the upcoming Portuguese Carnival and the Ukraine festival.

Wisbech Inter Faith Forum (WIFF)

38. Mr Sean Finlay said:

- WIFF had generally been in rest mode for the past couple of years because of the pandemic. However, the iconic Coaching House in Wisbech had become a place for asylum seekers to stay and this had galvanised WIFF members into finding out what was happening there. It wanted to ensure that these people felt welcomed by the community. They discovered that the asylum seekers had little access to recreational activities. They had then helped to ensure that the refugees were given a table tennis table and had access to a basketball court. They had also helped ensure access to prayer groups and had linked them with an organisation which would teach them English for free.
- Two asylum seekers had also been invited by the local 'Shedders' group to use their practical skills.
- This example showed that WIFF had moved from an inter faith discussion group (which they had been historically), to also being an organisation that was more active in the community.

39. Dr Crabtree thanked everybody for their contributions and asked the groups if they had anything more that they would like to share about their experience of coming back from the pandemic and how they were dealing with online and hybrid meetings. Had they found for example that it had been difficult to come back to in person meetings?

40. Mr Rosenberg said that the experience of coming back to in person events would vary from group to group. If a group was small and members lived near each other it was generally quite easy to meet in person; if, like HIFF, its membership was spread across a larger area such as a county, the online option was advantageous.

41. Dr Capey asked Mr Griffith about the growth of participants in NIFL online events and whether NIFL had experienced similar numbers in their in person meetings. Mr Griffith said that NIFL tried to have as many opportunities as possible to meet each other in person. However, but this was sometimes affected by the £40 per hour charge that some spaces charged and difficulties of arranging a universally accepted time for events.

42. Mr Berkson referred to the example of his local synagogue which had stuck to hybrid services because these made it more accessible to those who would not be able to attend because of health reasons. It had done a survey of its members and found the majority were in favour of continuing the hybrid approaches.

43. Mr O'Brien said that he was in favour of hybrid meetings, but that his experience was that when individuals met in person there was a much more attentive, alert atmosphere that helped to foster better dialogue and helped him think more

deeply. He felt that the human aspect of inter faith dialogue needed to continue, although for practical reasons their meetings should remain hybrid.

44. Ms Bleach said that local councils provided community spaces for organisations to meet at around £12 per hour, for example City Hall in Norwich.
45. Dr Crabtree said that the issue of finding appropriate meeting times was one about which IFN heard regularly. The kind of factors mentioned were that: some people worked in the daytime and were not free for meetings; other people did not want to go out at night to in-person meetings; and those who were elderly or had mobility issues could find it difficult to attend in-person meetings. One of the best aspects of Zoom was that it enabled more people to be included. However, some found that it lacked feeling of direct engagement. She added that use of social media could increase participation in local inter faith groups activities. IFN offered 'digital surgeries' for local groups which would like to learn more about how to increase their local presence through digital means.

Agenda Item 5: Working together for the common good.

46. Dr Crabtree invited reflections on faith communities working together for the common good, including on the Faith Covenant.
47. Canon Moody added some more information about social prescribing. MEIFG had worked with a group called 360 in Colchester. This had a well-established social prescribing programme, but had taken MEIFG on board as it had no faith representation at all. It had produced a very good toolkit which was for social prescribers and faith communities and explored what each could offer the other in terms of social support, premises and counselling. It had recently engaged with Tom Watkins, who was one of the leaders of social prescribing in the UK, and was hoping to bring it to a much wider set of organisations.
48. Mr Rosenberg said that Canon Moody's example was one of the reasons why he had earlier asked whether people thought that local inter faith groups were there merely for religious groups to talk with one another or if they should attempt to be representative of all religious groups. That might have a bearing on whether they could go to their council and ask for assistance on projects.
49. Dr Crabtree said that some faith forums had a representative function in their constitution. However, most faith groups usually wished to have direct bilateral discussions with their local councils and to supplement this with multi faith engagement rather than only engaging through the multi faith route. She added that some inter groups sought to be fully 'representative' (ie of all faith communities and strands of those in their areas in a way agreed with them). However, most were broadly 'reflective' rather than representative in a complete way.
50. Dr Capey said that inter faith groups might not feel comfortable representing their wider community. However, local councils did sometimes want to speak to a single group as they did not have the time to speak to every faith community.

51. Mr O'Brien said that it was important to show publicly that faiths were working together for the community. When religious organisations were seen to be working collaboratively this provided a very strong public signal.
52. Mr Griffith said that, when faith communities were shown to be working together, it was a symbol to the wider community that faiths were motivated by a common purpose to better society. From his experience as an educator, there had been an evolution from faiths being considered just as separate entities to seeing them as distinct but working in cooperation. Understanding and appreciating that was part of religious literacy. Even if children grew up without belonging to a faith community it was important that they saw and understood that faith communities could – and should – work to better society.

Agenda Item 6: Closing reflections from the Chair

53. Dr Crabtree thanked everybody for their contributions. Facilitating meetings such as the present one was one of the great privileges of her job. It had been very good to hear about all the work that the different groups were doing. She wished all the groups continued success with that.
54. The meeting closed at 4.45pm.

14 September 2023

Norwich Interfaith Link 2021-2

- New friendships formed,
- Existing bonds strengthened
- Achievements over the year.
- Looking forward to hopes for interfaith connections in 2023.

Following Covid NIFL organised monthly Zoom meetings. Jan 2021 World Religion Day. The

Bahai.

Feb 2021 Funeral and Bereavement. Rosedale **Funeral Homes** Ambassador. Mar 2021 The Seven Principles of **Spiritualism.** Spiritualist Healer.

April 2022 **Race** and Faith. Bishop's adviser for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Affairs.

May 2021 A **Pagan** living and practising in Norwich. Former Chair.

June 2021 A **Muslim** woman working at the Norfolk Sexual Assault Centre. July 2021 **Quaker** weddings and funerals.

Aug 2021 **Norwich City of Sanctuary:** welcoming the Stranger.

Sept 2021 **Liberal Judaism** in Norwich, set up in 1989, by their Chair and founder.

Oct 2021 **Sikhism** by a member of the Norwich Sikh Society.

Nov 2021 Zakat, the duty of **Muslims** to donate 2.5% of their income to alleviate poverty and restore equality. By Shan Barclay, organiser of the annual **Peacecamp** in the Forum.

Castle Museum works with NIFL and 12 young people to research and produce a Past and Present **Interfaith Map of Norwich**

Dec 2021 Peace for the Earth, religions like Christianity have a unique capacity for providing myths, stories and visions to face our future together, combining with the Gaia One World Principle, from a member of the **Norwich Green Party.**

Zoom sessions continued with opportunities for face to face meetings*.

Jan 2022 The daughter of Naomi Blake, the sculptor, spoke of her mother's **Holocaust experience**, how her work was a reflection on protection for refugees, promoting love between different Faiths.

***Muslim Funeral and burial** of Sean Barclay attended by NIFL. Feb 2022 The retiring Dean of Norwich reviewed her time as a woman priest,

eventually responsible for using a Helterskelter and Dippy

- the Dinosaur to make the **Cathedral** a welcoming place for all.
- Mar 2022 **Bahai** members showed film clips to highlight and discuss issues of Virtue and Good Behaviour: choice, motive, belief, and consequences.
- Apr 2022 *Members were invited to meet up while attending a public celebration of the **Rights of the River** at Wensum Park on a Saturday of sunshine. The NIFL were happy to support a venture (a protest for some) as river rights and protecting nature matter to people of faith. Speeches, stalls, drama, costume and ceremony.
- May 2022 *Invitation for an Open Day visit to a **House Mosque** purchased by doctors from Pakistan working in Great Yarmouth.
*Members of NIFL attended the **Planting of an Olive Tree in Chapelfield Gardens** as a Memorial to Sean Barclay, organised by the Peacecamp and attended by Norwich's new Peace Mayor (70 since Hiroshima). Speeches by family, Mayor, Chair of NIFL.
- June 2022. *Invitation for NIFL Chair to process and attend **Norwich City Civic Service in Cathedral** to recognise contributors to the community. **Platinum Jubilee of the Queen**, highlighting her own Christian faith through quotes from her Christmas speeches, and examples of her involvement in Interfaith visits and activities, including an Interfaith section in the Procession past Buckingham Palace.
- July 2022 Chair of NIFL attends **AGM of the national Interfaith Network** on Zoom with representatives from all over the UK. Chair of NIFL attends very well attended day conference, workshops and speakers at the UEA organised for **Norfolk's RE teachers** by the County's Standing Committee responsible for what and how World Religions are taught in all schools.
Success in distributing leaflets and **adding teachers to the NIFL mailing list**. NIFL Hindu member leads workshop.
*Sunday visit by NIFL members and teachers to **Chapelfield Mosque, Spiritualist Church, Orthodox Synagogue, Buddhist Centre, Anglican Cathedral**.
- Sept 2022 *Walk and Talk around Norwich, "**Saints and Symbols**" hosted by Pagan member of NIFL.
- Oct 2022 *Annual Peacecamp in Forum.

- Nov 2022 *Invitation to **celebrate Diwali** on Saturday evening at **Hindu Temple** on the Acle Straight. Dancing, food and fireworks.
Annual Interfaith Week.
- *Bishop of Norwich convenes a first meeting of the **Norfolk and Waveney Faith Coalition for Environmental Issues** to work on climate change and related issues. Invited were Buddhist, Pagan, Anglicans, W. Norfolk and Norwich Muslims, Hindu, Sikh, Quaker, Unitarian, Roman Catholic, Jewish.
- NIFL Zoom meeting with Harfiyah Haleem, a trustee from the **Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences**.
- Service of Remembrance for those with **relatives who died in the Pandemic** at St Peter Mancroft, inclusive of **all faiths**.
- Framingham Earl High School** invites **different faiths** to talk about War and Peace for Y10 and Y11 students.
- Dec 2022 Zoom Meeting on **Human Rights**, highlighted by Qatar World Cup and recent Government speeches. Human Rights are the reaction to WW2, agreed in 1948, based on agreement, universality and accepting the victim's protection as the measure of effectiveness, but difficult to persuade those in power, and to sanction.
- Jan 2023 ***Bahai** all day exhibition stand at the Forum in Norwich emphasising the underlying unity of all the major religions.
- NIFL Zoom Meeting with the **Salvation Army** Ecumenical Officer and Prison Chaplain, based in Mile Cross.
- Annual **Holocaust Memorial Day** Service in St Peter Mancroft.

Website
250 on Mailing list.
Committee members.

David Griffith, Chair.