

Living well
together

*The
Inter Faith
Network
for the
United Kingdom*



Report on the
2015 National
Meeting

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Report of the 2015 National Meeting

held on Wednesday 14 October 2015
at the Bond Company, Birmingham



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Welcome and Co-Chairs' opening reflections

The Rt Revd Richard Atkinson OBE
Co-Chair, Inter Faith Network for the UK

Good morning everybody and a warm welcome to the 2015 National Meeting.

I shall be chairing the morning session of the national meeting and my fellow co-chair Vivian Wineman the afternoon session.

We have a very promising day ahead of us as together we talk, listen and share in our common concern for the wellbeing of the United Kingdom and the contribution that faith communities make to that.

We begin as always with a brief time of silence, remembering in thanks the work of all in this country and across the world that contributes to greater inter faith understanding and cooperation.

[Period of silence]

We have people from across the range of Inter Faith Network member bodies. Today will be a chance to explore a number of different aspects of how we live well together in our increasingly diverse society. There is a rich array of presenters and contributors, along with, of course, our shared wisdom in this room. As always a note will be produced of our meeting in due course.

Before we begin the main proceedings of the day, let me offer one or two broad opening reflections. Looking at the programme and preparing myself for this day, it's clear that in many ways we have a very practical day today. The workshops are not just about how we *talk about* living together; they provide examples also of

how we *do* live together. We have got workshops, for example, on how faiths are serving those in need; on living and acting as neighbours; and how we work together in the workplace.

Last year, those of you who were here will remember, that we focussed on some of those hard questions about which it is 'tough to talk'. We talked about how, when approaching those, we engage and talk and create dialogue that is honest and open and has integrity. This year, the focus is very much on how we act together.

Today reminds us of the significance of looking outwards. It is when we look beyond ourselves and whichever faith tradition we inhabit, that we break out of the safe space into new shared space. That is often where we discover that common purpose and bonds of shared concern develop. For example, one of the churches in Luton worked with their Muslim neighbours to create a peace garden. It was complicated but tremendously fruitful and promises well for the future.

It's when we serve together that we connect with that part of our traditions that is concerned with compassion and generosity and care for those in deepest need and discover that shared commitment to the common good. I remember from my time in Leicester the Muslim / Christian dinner there. It was more than just a meal, it was a shared discovery of shared concern and action.

There is a desperate need, not just in our society, but in our world, for an alternative

narrative – a narrative where people work together, and relate honestly and with integrity. That narrative of the power of shared action in a divided world is shown in the big things and the small things. In my area, a Sikh shopkeeper, each Sunday, delivers milk for the church congregation to put in their coffee. That speaks loudly, profoundly and deeply.

Finally, it is about our shared action, but it is also about vision and values. In framing of our shared actions we need to ensure that we draw deeply on the wells that feed us.

I don't know if anybody else saw the programme on BBC 3 about Britain First. It felt very much like home since it focussed on Luton and Rotherham and I was Vicar of Rotherham in the past and now cover Luton as the Bishop there. If you wanted an example of where there are people working to bring division and hatred it seemed to me that programme, documented plenty of that. There are real issues around that. Today is our opportunity to speak into that kind of situation with hope and with vision.

Living well together: interconnecting in inter faith contexts for the common good

Mustafa Field MBE

Director, Faiths Forum for London

Bishop Richard Atkinson: It is a pleasure to welcome Mustafa Field who is the Director of the Faiths Forum for London and also involved in the work of the Mosques and Imams National Advisory Board.

Mustafa Field: Thank you for this invitation. It's really important that this National Meeting takes place annually, bringing together faith communities to explore how we can strengthen the relationships that we have and look at how we can make sure that our work together improves and increases year by year.

Challenges may change each year, but many of the lessons that we can learn in order to deal with these come from history.

The refugee crisis is of great concern to many of our faith communities at the moment. People are looking for direction about how they can get involved and assist in this humanitarian crisis. We have seen war and persecution leading people to seek refuge. As people of faith we want to see how we can do something to help others.

Times of crisis often require strong leadership. How we respond is very important. We in this country are very lucky. We have a proud tradition of protecting refugees and upholding human rights. The Armenians, the Jewish community, came to this country under persecution and the UK has looked after

them and hosted them. We have also seen recent arrivals, in the last twenty to thirty years. It has not always been easy, but in Britain we try to do the right thing. We should remain proud of that tradition and remember it, even though we are now facing more economic challenges.

The words 'migrants' and 'refugees' are sometimes used interchangeably. That needs addressing. Language is important. Only a few weeks ago we heard the language of "swarming" being used. That is very concerning in a context where we hear stories of the persecution that people have experienced and the struggle they have had to come to this country.

I came to this country as a refugee, as a child. I always aspired to return back home to my country of birth, Iraq. But sometimes I feel very divided because Britain has been so hospitable that it feels like my first home now, although I am very proud of my heritage and culture from Iraq. There is something very important that we are able to build around that.

I think it's very important to acknowledge that there is a feeling that hate crime and intolerance are on the increase. Yesterday we learnt that the Prime Minister had allocated extra resources to combat hate crime, both hate crime targeting faith communities, but also disabled and LGBT communities. We all need to work together

to tackle any form of hatred or intolerance and discrimination.

Yesterday I was on the train, at Hendon Central on the Northern line in London, and I heard someone make a remark to me that made me feel very uncomfortable and even more uncomfortable that it was not challenged. He said to me that he didn't want to be seated next to my type. I didn't know what that meant. I had my own feelings about what that meant. In British society we need to be able to be more confident about addressing intolerance. We might do it in a British way, like bringing people together over cups of tea. But, however we do it, we need to share the experiences of people coming together.

I want to speak about how challenging and changing people's experiences can happen in different ways. As people in organisations of faith we need to take bold action. We've seen it across the UK from some of the key faith leaders, like the Archbishop of Canterbury, who have taken a bold step to speak about refugees. We also need to make the active effort of welcoming refugees and saying that we all have to make a small sacrifice to make space for them, to accommodate them. I think that's very, very important. We've seen how the Pope has had an influence and how the story of Jesus being a refugee has also resonated and people are trying to be more comfortable with the term 'refugee'. It's really important that we understand and empathise. Langar Aid, a project of the Sikh organisation Khalsa Aid, has travelled close to Syria to provide assistance, water, and set up a bakery for refugees. That's exactly the action that we need to be seeing and helping.

Our framework of inter faith engagement needs to shift sometimes from dialogue to action. We've been saying this for a number of years and actually a lot has been improved, but the challenges continue to increase while the scope of resources is limited. It has put pressure on some of the good work that has been done already and so we need to look at how we can make

sure we have collaborative community action taking place.

People working together builds those relationships. In turn, when we have trust, friendships and one to one personal relationships it really helps us deal with some of the more difficult challenges in our society.

I want to share with you some examples of social action. Our humanitarianism is something that drives us forward as people of faith. Service to others is a way that many of us practise our faith and that's something that's emerging more strongly. How can we as inter faith communities help those new communities that are coming into the UK to feel more comfortable? How can we make sure that we as local communities are coming more closely together?

Often, when we carry out service, it's easier for us to do so staying in our comfort zones, for example working within our own faith based institutions. That is important and admirable. But can we raise the bar slightly and put ourselves in a position where we go beyond our comfort zone, maybe, for example, working with others of different communities? We might be a little bit uncomfortable but maybe there would be an increased chance of bringing more transformation in our relationships.

An example of the work that I've seen take place that has struck me as particularly useful has been that of groups that are working with women – for example to promote English language at an inter faith level, bringing local communities together, including at an inter-generational level. That's something that's really highly commendable and something replicable.

We also know that entrepreneurship is very important. We want to give people aspirations. Refugees coming to this country want to contribute. We must remember the contribution of refugees to the United Kingdom in making it a great country. We need to facilitate that. We shouldn't make refugees feel that their time

here is very limited and that they are not able to contribute and sometimes that can be the feeling. Doors are not always open to people who are refugees. I think that's something that really challenges us. Career development is something that's very important. How can we tap into those networks and support career development to help refugees contribute to the wider community? How may faith communities be able to help? We need to be able to explore, to see whether we can go out of our own comfort zones and work with organisations that sometimes may be a bit reserved about working with faith communities – even a bit uncomfortable about working with them. How can we change their experiences? This could be really valuable.

I have organised a couple of leadership and personal development programmes and found them a remarkable experience. I have found that when you get people on a journey, exploring themselves and learning about themselves, in a shared environment with different backgrounds, they start to understand each other better. When you take part you start to recognise that people of different faiths have the same challenges. Learning together sometimes helps people form friendships that can help them tackle some of the really difficult challenges that we have.

We have seen a number of groups now go to Calais and Hungary and Greece and other parts of Europe to help migrants and refugees. I think that's something really admirable. A friend of mine sent me a message a few weeks ago about them going and how they had been able to raise £16,000 in the space of a week, in addition to all the items that they collected. Various faith organisations are reaching out.

The energy that I see at the moment in the UK to help others is something that I have not seen for a few years. I think that something's changed – there's a spark. But it's sad that it had to start through an image of a child dying.

How do we increase our impact by communicating and sharing the stories of the work that we are doing? We know that across the UK there are really powerful experiences, for example where communities host people from other communities to share experiences. I was one of the people involved in the Big Iftar this year and there were churches and synagogues hosting. How do we extend that? For example, how can we get mosques to host other festivals and learn about other people's practices and beliefs? How can we all do that? It's going to take time, but I feel we are at a position where we can make that difference.

Unfortunately we are seeing a rise again of intolerance. Unfortunately the media does play a very negative role of demonising communities, demonising young people.

I sometimes feel a bit uncomfortable that within the current political context, people of conservative faith do not feel able to express their faith openly in their public life. That's I think something that we as a faith community need to work together on to tackle. We can shape and change people's experiences of faith in a positive way. That's why I think we really need to be rethinking how we reach out to work with community safety groups working around tackling hatred and hate crime. Some communities feel quite defensive, and that can be very challenging. Looking at oneself is so much harder than looking at others, but we need to do that. Our faiths give us something really powerful, and enable us to explore these issues and to express ourselves confidently.

I want to emphasise the importance of thinking about how we look at collaborative action. We have been able to develop really good practice and good examples but because of restricted resources some of our organisations have struggled and have pulled back because there are other core services that are required. How do we approach using collaborative work to improve outputs in our local communities? Integration is really key for our communities. We need to give

our future generations shared experiences. What better way to do it than with faith communities that are often able to tap into the experiences of a huge number of volunteers, such as lawyers and teachers?

I think that a lot of our work needs to be aimed at the future generations. We are now in a position as faith communities to make a difference, to share our stories, be on social media, have one to ones in the public spaces – let's step up to that challenge.

Thank you.

Bishop Richard Atkinson: Thank you very much Mustafa. You've reminded us first of all of some of the real issues that are around – this isn't a nice relaxed conversation, we're in a world where there are serious issues. You've also spoken about the issues of intolerance but also some of the practical responses and some of the challenges, not least how we respond with limited resources.

Dialogue on the Spot

Bishop Richard Atkinson: For the next few minutes, can we just talk to our neighbour, both as a chance to get to know our neighbours, but also to draw out some responses to Mustafa and to the general theme of the day. Then there are to be a few minutes for some quick reactions before we move on to our next speaker.

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Bishop Richard Atkinson: Are there any particular questions or comments to Mustafa or any more general things we want to say early on in the day as we explore this theme together?

Pejman Khojasteh (International Association for Religious Freedom (British Chapter)): As important as the common principles and factors are amongst the faith communities, the differences are also very important. For example, what my religion says about your religion. Now as someone

from a Muslim background, same as yourself, we know what the Qur'an, or the Prophet Muhammad in the Sunna has said about other religions and likewise we know what other religions have said about us and so on. How would you tackle the differences, in going forward and working together, in dialogue and, as you've said, in action as well?

Rabbi Maurice Michaels (Inter Faith Network Executive Committee member):

Just a couple of points. A crisis such as we've seen with refugees at the moment tends to have the factor of diversified response. There's one group of people who will come much closer to the view I guess we all have here, which is saying we actually have to do something about this and it's really important and let's work together. However, there is another group of people who will respond in the opposite direction saying actually we don't want anything to do with this and we're worried about this and so on. So I think trying to work with both of those two aspects is important.

With regard to the need that Mustafa mentioned to engage with young people, I am very worried that with the new examination process that the UK government is going to be bringing in, that RE isn't part of the compulsory aspect of that. Because I think that's going to make a big difference to the way in which faith is regarded by young people.

Mustafa Field: Thank you. I know Rabbi Michaels well because he has been very hospitable in terms of engaging our communities through the Big Iftar. Getting people together to learn about each other, to learn a little about the Jewish culture and practices and the scriptures and bringing people together, to enable the conversation, enable the friendships is important. We need to be able to develop these relationships for us to explore deeper areas of understanding of different faiths. We have to change our paradigm, it's about learning about each other. Sometimes we bring some baggage where we reject

difference, but actually we've seen what's great about this society makes us stronger.

We have a very major challenge. The economic challenges that we have in the UK will make many people wonder whether we can actually cope with this challenge of refugees. Yet many of the think tanks and much of the research has concluded, depending on the numbers of people coming in, that there isn't a direct challenge to the economy, the economy won't collapse in this country.

I think that we need to be looking at working and hosting people in this country, but also at our contribution to places like Jordan and Iraq, and the message that we are sending to neighbouring countries that are doing important work in looking after refugees. We need to look at how we can support the economic activity amongst the refugee camps and help make sure the kids have access to water, sanitation, and education. These are very basic requirements. We do need to bring people into this country and we should be welcoming people and I feel very uncomfortable when there is a major reluctance which I feel is built on levels of prejudice. We need to look into that.

In terms of religious literacy, I think if RE is not included, it reduces the space for us to learn about faith. In addition, with the real issue of extremism we need to make sure that there are open and safe spaces to discuss and challenge difficult issues. We need to make sure that discussions are well facilitated, and that young people are able to explore some of the challenges that we have – be it about sexual orientation, be it about the conflict in Jerusalem today, or be it about dangerous ideologies like ISIS. Faith communities have a really important role to work with universities and schools in empowering that. We need to make sure the Government can allocate resources to make sure that those relationships and that understanding is better fostered. Thank you.

Jenny Kartupelis (World Congress of Faiths): Mustafa has said quite rightly that faiths need to work together in the social context to welcome and help refugees. I would like to suggest that the big challenge for us isn't just the working together in the social context, it's the working together in the public sector to address the myths, misunderstandings and prejudices that are going to arise with the welcoming of refugees into this country. I hope that's something that can be addressed as we go along through the day, because I feel that's where our real power could lie. But it's a very big challenge for us.

Bishop Richard Atkinson: We have got some important thoughts there to carry on with. Mustafa, thank you again for getting us off to such a good start.

Living well together – equality and diversity

Dr Karen Jochelson

Director, Economy and Employment programme, Equality and Human Rights Commission, responsible for delivering the EHRC's work on Religion and Belief

Bishop Richard Atkinson: It's a great pleasure to introduce Dr Karen Jochelson. Karen, you came recently to speak at a meeting of IFN's Faith Communities Forum. It was a very stimulating talk and it was good to know that someone was taking the agenda seriously and understanding it. We are delighted you're here for a wider audience.

A copy of Dr Jochelson's PowerPoint slides are at the end of this note.

Dr Karen Jochelson: I work for the Equality and Human Rights Commission and one of my responsibilities is to lead our Religion and Belief work programme. My colleague Dave Perfect is also in the audience. If you want to talk to either of us you've got two opportunities. Just to give you a broader view of the range of work that I'm responsible for: we're currently engaged in another very large programme of work about pregnancy and maternity discrimination and what employers should do to protect the rights of women at work; we've done an investigation into the cleaning sector and we're currently working with employers and trade unions and voluntary sector organisations to help improve the conditions of cleaning workers, many of whom are women and migrants who work in that sector. We also look at the other end of the spectrum: we are running an inquiry into how our top 350 companies appoint people to their Boards and whether they're providing

everyone a fair opportunity to apply for these positions. So you can see that we cover a huge range of very diverse issues. But what I'm going to focus on today is our work on religion and belief and I want to thank you very much for providing me with that opportunity.

I want to start with a bit about feelings. We've heard something about that already today. I want you to think about how it feels when someone says to you or does something to you that's hugely hurtful. It can be done deliberately or maybe it's just completely unthinking, perhaps like the comment the previous speaker had on the train. Some people are going to feel very isolated and lonely, like the picture of the man on the steps [Slide 2], some people are going to hold their hands up in despair and say "If I've told you once, I've told you a hundred times" and other people are going to react very, very angrily. Now I think that's not so far from the public perception of the role of religion and belief in our society. I think some of this is driven by the way the media has reported on a range of court cases that have occurred over the last couple of years. The quotes I've got are ones I picked from a range of websites. [Slide 3] They were headlines related to various legal cases. I think it does us well to remember that the media are after a story and a story is often about conflict. So the best story for the media may be one about intolerance, about people feeling their voices haven't been heard or being treated

poorly, whether that's the employer, employee or colleagues who may have done something incorrectly. The media find the story in that. The courts will assess the facts and legal requirements and make a decision on that basis but the way in which a case may be reported may be very different. The problem in looking for a dramatic story is that it may not be very helpful in allowing all of us to understand our rights and obligations as individuals or the rights and obligations of employers when people make requests relating to their religion and belief and employers have to consider how to respond.

I am now going to tell you a little about the EHRC and our function in case you don't know much about us. I will also tell you a little bit about the law, although I'm not a lawyer. Then I'm going to tell you about the results of two projects that we're working on at the moment.

First of all, the Equality and Human Rights Commission – Who are we and what were we set up to do? We are a statutory body and we were set up under the Equality Act 2006. We're independent of Government and our role is to try to help eliminate discrimination, reduce inequality, protect human rights and ensure everyone has a fair chance to participate in society. Parliament makes laws; our role is not making the laws. We have a very distinct role. We can provide advice and guidance to employers, service providers, and individuals to raise their awareness of the law, the implications it has for how you run a business and we can encourage good practice. We can monitor the effect of laws. We can ask: are laws working in the way Parliament intended? Are they protecting the rights of people that Parliament set out to protect? On occasion, we can also make strategic legal interventions. We don't represent everybody who has a problem – we don't have the resources for that. What we do is pick particular cases that we think will clarify existing law where there is some issue where we don't think there is legal clarity.

In terms of the laws that protect rights around religion or belief, there are two kinds of legal frameworks you have to think of. The first is the Equality Act 2010. What this does is set out a range of provisions that protect nine different groups including religion or belief and lack of religion or belief. Effectively, it's protecting everybody. It explains different kinds of discrimination that may exist. Direct discrimination is where you treat somebody in a less favourable way to someone else because of their protected characteristic. Indirect discrimination occurs where you have a certain policy, for example, that you think is neutral but the way it affects different groups of people may be different and it may result in disadvantage to certain groups.

The second legal framework is the Human Rights Act 1998. *[Slide 4]* Article 9 sets out two things. It says that in Britain we have got the absolute right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. That's a very valuable right. Historically various groups have fought for the right to hold and practise their belief in Britain. It is also a 'qualified' right. That means that in expressing or manifesting your religion or belief there are occasionally some limitations. Those limitations relate to interests of public safety, the protection of public order, health or morals or the protection of the rights or freedoms of others. So in effect what the law is saying is "You do have a right to think or follow your particular creed or belief but you also have to think about when you're practising it what the impact might be on others, whether that's an individual or a much broader community."

Let me now tell you a little bit about the work that the EHRC is doing. *[Slide 5]* About 2 or 3 years ago we ran a series of dialogues where we invited a wide range of religious organisations and individuals to talk to us. What we wanted to find out was the challenges that they faced and who they thought should do what to improve matters. So we asked them what the EHRC should do, what Government should do, what they should do, what businesses

should do. We used that discussion to set up our own strategy where we said we were committing ourselves to do three things: to try and engage in open discussion and try and improve understanding of the law and the way law is practised, or its implications for people; to try and create forums for balanced and reasonable dialogue around our own work; and to assess the effectiveness of the legislation in protecting people with a religion or belief or without. As a result of that strategy we've undertaken quite a large work programme. I am going to talk to you about two aspects of it today.

I am going to talk to you about a Call for Evidence that we ran late last year and published earlier this year, and some guidance that we've developed as a result of that. Then, in order to start our work around the effectiveness of the law, we also commissioned a technical assessment of the law, which we have just published. What we're working on at the moment is our concluding assessment of the law. Does the law work in the way Parliament intended? If not, then how do we think things should improve? Is there anything missing? If so, what is that?

Let me turn now to our Call for Evidence. [Slide 6] Last year, around August, I hope that some of you saw adverts and invitations from us that asked a wide range of religious organisations and belief organisations to send out through their networks a call for the views of men and women about how their religion and belief or that of others had affected their experience at work or when receiving or providing services. We had one of the biggest responses ever to an EHRC consultation. Usually we think we're lucky if we get responses in the 100s. We had 2,500 responses to our consultation including replies from 1,600 employees, 500 service users, 180 organisations, 67 employers and 23 people who provide legal advice of some kind. Most of our responses came from people who professed Christian faith and that probably reflects the fact that Christians are one of the largest groups in the UK. We also had a very sizeable

response from people who defined themselves as atheist and then we had smaller responses from Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh communities. The full details of who responded and numbers are set out in the report that's on our website.

We spent a lot of time looking at the evidence that had been provided for us. One of the most striking conclusions that emerged is that most people don't understand the rights and obligations they already have under existing law that protects people with a religion or belief or without. People had many different views about the effectiveness of the law. Some felt that our existing legal framework was incredibly positive: it created a level platform and treated everybody equally. Other people were negative: they felt that the law prevented people from doing what they wanted and that it had contributed to the decline of the status of religion in Britain today. Then there was a group in the middle who said "Things are OK. We think the law protects people. But it's not been working as well as it could have."

So let's look now at the kind of issues that people raised. [Slide 7] I'm not saying that these people definitely experienced discrimination because only a court could look at the facts and decide, and we only had one person's view. What I'm talking about are people's perceptions and their descriptions of their experience.

- There were a lot of people from a whole range of faiths who said they were often not allowed to wear religious symbols in their workplace or it went against company policy or there simply wasn't that much understanding about why they might want to wear a symbol in the first place.
- There were many people who talked about being refused annual leave under existing annual leave policies when they wanted to take leave for religious purposes. Whether that was to celebrate some kind of annual festival or to go on a pilgrimage, there was often lack of real

understanding about why somebody might want to take leave on a very particular day or days.

- There were examples we were given of people applying for jobs or for promotion who felt they'd been refused the job because the interviewer had very stereotyped assumptions about their religion and how that affected their ability to do the job. One example that has stuck with me was of somebody who said they were Buddhist and had been told they were unsuitable for a managerial job because as a Buddhist they were far too calm. I personally would have thought that having a calm head when you're dealing with lots of crises is probably quite helpful! But this is an example of a decision about a promotion being based on an irrelevant characteristic unrelated to the function and competencies you need for the job.
- Many people talked about being mocked for their beliefs – whether that was mocked for holding religious beliefs or whether assumptions were made that simply because they had a religion they were bigoted in some way. .

There were two other areas that we have received lots of comments about.

- The first was how you express your religious beliefs at work. There were two main views that we were presented with. Some people said “I’m there to do a job and I need to be led by the needs of my service users.” This was often in a hospital or a health care or social care context. They felt they needed to start with the needs of their service user and if somebody was asking for some spiritual guidance or a spiritual conversation you reacted following their needs. Other people approached this in a very different way. They felt that they had a right to express their religious views regardless of the needs of the service user because they were being led by the requirements, they felt, arising from their own personal identity.

- The second issue that also provoked quite a lot of debate, on which we received very different views, was whether employers should allow for opt-outs from work due to religious views. This is often called conscientious objection. The term evolved in the context of refusal of military service for political or religious beliefs. We prefer to use the term ‘opt-out’. Again there were a wide range of views about opt outs. Some people felt that individuals should simply be able to opt out of the work duties they felt they couldn’t support. Others felt that individuals should be able to discriminate against certain individuals or groups because of their religious beliefs. There were others who suggested employers should have flexibility to rearrange work duties if it didn’t affect the service user. And finally there were those who took a strong view that service providers should not discriminate when delivering a public service and that meant there should be no opt outs allowed.

We also received views from people who professed other views, not necessarily religious ones. *[Slide 8]* We had people from Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual backgrounds talking about harassment, the abusive language that they received from people with a religion. We had responses from people who said that they were Humanists and Atheists who felt overburdened at work when requests for leave or changes to work patterns were accepted for people with a religion or belief.

We also had some very, very positive responses from people describing where employers had created some very positive environments.

As a result of that work we are currently developing guidance. *[Slide 9]* One of the main findings was people don’t understand the implications of the law for their role as an employer or their role as an employee. We picked out all the key issues that emerged from the Call for Evidence and we’re developing guidance. We have a very large advisory group; there are about 60 to

80 people who attend the range of meetings that we run. We ask them to comment on the content, to see that we are addressing a range of examples relevant to a range of religion or beliefs.

To conclude, I haven't spoken much about exactly what an employer should do and we're going to cover that in Discussion Group 6 later today. We've got various case studies to talk through. But there are certain guidelines that we have published in the past. [Slide 10] The first is that employers should always take a request seriously. They should be concerned about the sincerity of someone's belief and shouldn't assume that everybody practises a particular religion in exactly the same way or that a request is unimportant if it only affects one person.

An employer also has to think about how to balance the religion or belief needs of an individual employee with the very legitimate needs of the business and the interests of others. In order to do that we've set out a range of 5 or 6 questions that we think an employer should ask in order to reach a considered and balanced conclusion. They need to think about the cost of disruption to their business, the impact on other employees, the impact on customers, whether there are health and safety questions. I think that if you go through that process of asking yourself those questions, it forces individuals to communicate, to understand different perspectives and to come to a conclusion that is mutually agreed and mutually understood.

So let's think back to my first slide of the angry people! What we're trying to do is avoid those kinds of situations. One of the best ways of doing that is thinking about how we can live well together, how we can communicate effectively, have mutual respect and understanding of one another and be tolerant and respectful of all the things that draw us together but some of the things that make us different.

Thank you.

Bishop Richard Atkinson: Karen, thank you for that very clear and comprehensive overview of the work and that emphasis on some key themes about justice, about respect for one another and about communicating and working together. We have time now for some questions.

Jim Robertson (North East Regional Faiths Network): One of the things that we've discovered by working together across the faiths on some of the current issues such as people having access to food education and health, is that, as Bishop Richard said at the beginning, we're searching today for alternative narratives. One of the narratives from the faith groups is that perhaps people have a right to food, have a right to health resources, have a right to suitable housing and a right to education. Now that's a narrative that is likely to challenge how we perceive these benefits and services and it says something about social and faith values, which is very powerful.

Sukhi Kainth (National Union of Students): I'd like to ask how the EHRC picks up the nuances of intra-faith practice and belief and cultural practice when it comes to, for example, management and procedures. Another area that often comes up in the area in which I work is gender segregation. Obviously that's covered under worship, but there is also a question of what it means in terms of cultural practice.

The Revd Alan Bayes (Inter-faith Council for Wales): You talked about the basic guidance. Will this be available just on the website or also in some other form?

Derek McAuley (General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches): I'm on the advisory group that you mentioned and we help the Commission explore the nuances. The point I would like to make is about the interaction with the other protected characteristics. I was an NHS manager and it generally seemed to be taken for granted that single people would work at Christmas because Christmas was seen as a family occasion. There are nuances such as these about the

relationship to other protected characteristics.

Mehri Niknam (Joseph Interfaith Foundation): In respect of the Human Rights Act, regarding the absolute right of freedom of thought, conscience and religion, the Joseph Interfaith Foundation works very closely with university students. There is a huge problem, particularly when we work with Islamic societies, because that right has been limited and continues to become limited more and more at universities with the result that students are frightened to express their views.

Malcolm Deboo (Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe): Listening to your presentation reminded me of a workshop I attended in 1992 just before the World Parliament of Religions in 1993. It was about one's rights compared to one's obligations. I can in a sense sympathise with employers, because constantly we are more and more demanding our rights, at times not looking to see, or not observing, how the other feels about these and about our demanding those rights. At times these rights can be conflicting, such as the examples you mentioned. For instance there is a question of the experience of LGBT community members or atheists when somebody feels "that's my right to convey to the other about what my religion is about". So it's a very fine balancing act. If we are taking our employers to court saying our rights are not being implemented as time goes by we could be running into a quagmire.


Dr Karen Jochelson: I'll start with the easiest one, which is around the guidance. It will be available on our website. We are currently still drafting it and are planning to conclude drafting at the end of this financial year in March 2016. Once have published it we will then be working to publicise it through a range of religion or belief organisations, including the Inter Faith Network.

In terms of the comments around university and difficulties around freedom of expression and segregation, we have actually done guidance around these, so I

would recommend you have a look at that. We've tried to set out what, in our view, the law intends and how universities should take that forward.

On the social values of the public sector I couldn't agree with the speaker more. Obviously the public sector is both an employer and a service provider, and we've tried to reflect that in our guidance. We have talked to people who work within the public sector and have had some sessions about health and health care. We have also gone to talk to Trusts and to NHS employers to gain a greater understanding of the challenges that they face. They have done quite a lot of work themselves on these issues. You have to know where to go and look, but there is a lot of information out there once you start digging. I would be very happy to take up some of these questions in more detail outside the meeting, given the time.

Bishop Richard Atkinson: Karen, thank you so much, and we look forward to the workshop as well.



Living Well Together
Religion or Belief in the workplace

Karen Jochelson
Equality and Human Rights Commission
October 2015

Controversy and misunderstandings



I'll see you in court

Why I will fight to bear my cross: Four devout British Christians take their battle for religious freedom to human rights judges

Pagan police win the right to take time off for festivals

Judges respect for the crucifix is paper thin

We are living in a post-Christian Britain and things will get worse claims Archbishop of Canterbury as Christians admit they are afraid to practice their faith

Hindu grandfather wins 'human right' to be cremated on open air funeral pyre

Christians 'must choose between job or their faith': Government lawyers claim at European Court

Secularists query decision to reinstate registrar who refused to conduct same sex weddings

B & B owners' right to bar gay couple crushed by need to 'fight discrimination'

What an insult to Christians! After crucifixes are allowed at work, human rights quango tells firms: give vegans and pagans special treatment too

BA had bullying lawyers but I had God on my side

Experiences at work: perceived discrimination

- **LGBT:**
 - Subject to unpleasant and abusive language from people with a religion
- **Humanists and Atheists:**
 - Experience unwanted proselytising at work
 - Felt excluded when religious buildings were used for meetings
 - Felt they shouldered an unfair burden of work when colleagues given time off for religious reasons
- **Positive:**
 - Employers create an environment that feels inclusive and supportive
 - Clear rules about how to conduct oneself at work;
 - Multi faith or interfaith networks
 - Religion is private so issue never comes up

How can the EHRC help?

- An independent statutory body established to help eliminate discrimination, reduce inequality and protect human rights and ensure that everyone has a fair chance to participate in society.
- Parliament makes the laws but we can
 - Provide advice and guidance to raise awareness and encourage good practice
 - Monitor the effectiveness of the law
 - Strategic legal interventions
- **Equality Act 2010:**
 - protects 9 groups including religion or belief or lack of religion or belief;
 - direct and indirect discrimination; some exceptions
- **Human Rights Act 1998, Article 9:**
 - absolute right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion;
 - qualified right to manifest religion or belief subject to necessary limitations 'in the interests of public safety, for the protection of public order, health or morals, or the protection of the rights and freedom of others'

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Shared understandings: our RoB work programme

- **Shared Understandings** – a new EHRC strategy to strengthen understanding of religion or belief in public life
 - '...The Commission's vision is for better public understanding of equality and human rights law, achieved through open discussion conducted with mutual respect and tolerance...'
 - Improve understanding and practice
 - Create a more balanced and reasonable dialogue
 - Assess the effectiveness of the legislation
- Call for evidence
- Technical assessment of the law
- Guidance for employers and service providers
- Our concluding assessment of the effectiveness of the law



Guidance

- Religion or belief legal overview
- Managing religion or belief requests in the workplace
- Recruitment
- Time off work
- Dress codes and wearing of religious symbols
- Food and dietary requirements
- A guide for the health and social care sector
- A guide for organisations with a religious ethos
- Commissioning services from organisations with a religious ethos
- Freedom of expression
- Opting out of work duties
- Managing competing equality issues
- A guide for schools
- A guide for further and higher education

Experiences at work: perceived discrimination

- **People with a religion:**
 - Not allowed to wear religious symbols
 - Refused annual leave for religious reasons
 - When applying for jobs or for promotion assumed to have stereotyped characteristics of a religion
 - Mocked for beliefs or assumed to have bigoted beliefs
 - Different views on how to express religious views at work:
 - Believe individuals have a right to express religious views to service users as it is part of their identity
 - Start with service users' needs and if it is appropriate offer prayer
 - Different views on whether employers should allow opt outs from work due to religious views:
 - Individuals should be able to opt out of work duties
 - Individuals should be able to discriminate against individuals or groups
 - Employers should have flexibility to rearrange work duties if not affect service user
 - Service providers must not discriminate when delivering a public service

How should an employer respond to a RoB request?

- Take requests seriously: don't assume people practice the same religion in the same way or it is unimportant if it only affects one person
- Balance the religion or belief needs of an employee with the legitimate needs of the business and the interests of others
- To reach a fully considered, balanced, and reasonable conclusion, an employer should consider:
 - The cost, disruption and wider impact on business or work
 - Health and safety implications
 - Disadvantage to the affected employee if the request is refused
 - Impact on other employees, including on those who have a different religion or belief, or no religion or belief
 - Any impact on customers or service users
 - Are work policies and practices that ensure uniformity and consistency justifiable?
- Find solutions and communicate!



Living well together: reaching out at times of need

Nädine Daniel

Project Manager, Hope+ and member, Merseyside Council of Faiths

Bishop Richard Atkinson: It is a great pleasure to welcome as our third contributor this morning Nädine Daniel, Project Manager of Hope+ and a member of the Merseyside Council of Faiths.

A copy of Ms Daniel's PowerPoint slides are at the end of this note.

Nädine Daniel: Good morning everybody. Very briefly about myself: four years ago I was a lawyer, now I'm not! I work as the Project Manager for Hope+. Also, as a result of the work arising out of Hope+ I am the newly appointed Inter Faith Advisor to the Church of England Diocese of Liverpool and the Anglican representative on the Roman Catholic Archdiocese Justice and Peace Commission. I chair the Asylum and Refugee Subcommittee which has been set up very quickly to respond to Pope Francis's call.

I will talk first about Hope+. The Canon Chancellor of Liverpool Cathedral, Canon Cynthia Dowdle, known to many of you here I suspect, came back from a Church Urban Fund conference in 2012 which was held in Andover. She said to me "They've got a food bank, love, why haven't we got one?" and that's how it started.

I did some research, and we discovered that four of the poorest parishes in the country were within a mile radius of Liverpool's two cathedrals. These cathedrals stand at either end of the same street – Hope Street. Hence the name.

By the time we opened, both cathedrals were involved in the project because in the blessed memory of Archbishop Derek Worlock and Bishop David Sheppard in Liverpool we discovered the hard way that you do actually do things better together. So from the start our vision was to be at least, at the very least, an ecumenical project. Our vision was of a holistic project: not just one where somebody walks through the door and walks out with a bag of food. That solves their immediate need but it is nothing better than a sticking plaster. Likewise, signposting people by saying "Oh, you've got a debt, here's a leaflet for debt counselling", or "Go and talk to this person", doesn't work when somebody is in crisis.

Where the two cathedrals are situated has always been a multicultural area of the city. Liverpool is a major port. It has the oldest Chinese community in Europe; the oldest Somalian/Sudanese communities in England; and has therefore always been multi-faith. However, there are large swathes of the city that are monocultural and monochrome.

We did our research on the changes in the welfare reforms and the expected significant and negative impact on people. We had done, too, our research on housing changes and saw that these were going to have a negative impact on people. What we hadn't bargained on, though, was the massive influx of asylum seekers and how the Home Office policy – in particular the Home Office policy with housing

contractors, SERCO and G4S – was going to impact on Liverpool. Just to give you some idea of that impact, there are currently 672 asylum seekers and their dependents in the whole of the Greater London area¹. In Liverpool we currently have 2,048 asylum seekers and their dependents. All failed asylum seekers have to lodge their final appeals in Liverpool. So they will come and they will stay – with no funding.

We opened our appeal for donations on Epiphany Sunday 2013. Our Dean, the Very Revd Dr Pete Wilcox, said he wanted us to open by the beginning of Lent. Only an evangelical Protestant would have said that, because Lent was particularly early that year! We actually opened our first food bank at St Brides Church on 14 February, which seemed appropriate.

Prophetically, the first person who turned up was a Tajik Muslim from Afghanistan who'd been given refugee status. He was a British Army Interpreter. We went on a learning curve – not so much a sharp one as a vertical rocket curve ascent. The problem was he didn't have a National Insurance number. Without a national insurance number he had nowhere to live, he couldn't open a bank account and he couldn't claim any benefits. Nor could he, indeed, get any work. It took us three months' of supporting him to sort that out.

I should say that we took the decision from the start that we were not going to follow the Trussell Trust model. That's not in any way meant to be disrespectful, or critical of that model. However, as I have said, our approach was intended to be holistic and open to all, with support for as long as they needed it. If somebody is benefit sanctioned for three months, it's going to take at least a month and a half to process the appeal on that. Only allowing them food for nine days doesn't really help them.

It's not just about food. Men and women need to keep themselves clean, so we started collecting toiletries. If you're a woman, I'm sorry if this offends people, you

need sanitary items and they are expensive. If you haven't got any money how do you get them? And people need to clothe themselves so we started a clothes bank. If you look at the images from Calais, the people who get on the trains, unlike the previous refugees who arrived with suitcases, arrived with nothing but what they wore and perhaps a small rucksack. So it's very important that we can provide all the basics for them.

From the start our volunteers were always ecumenical, from all the major Christian denominations in the city of Liverpool, not just from the two cathedrals.

Very quickly we started to see asylum seekers simply because all of the initial assessment hostels are within a one and a half mile radius of our 'pantries' as we call them (we currently operate two and we are about to open a third). Also Liverpool Cathedral has a considerable outreach to the growing Iranian Christian community. Revd Mohammad Eghtedarian was ordained a Deacon in July by the Bishop of Liverpool, and he has oversight of the Sepas community, an Iranian congregation which is currently over a hundred strong. It was one of the members of that Sepas community, who's now our store manager, who came to us and he said, "You need more help. I can speak Farsi, I can speak English, I can lift boxes and I'm getting very, very bored staring at the four walls of my accommodation." Through talking with him we discovered there were a lot of very bored and frustrated asylum seekers. So we went to our partner, The British Red Cross, and said, "What can we do about this?"

Together, Hope + and the British Red Cross established a training scheme whereby we could enable those within the asylum seeker and refugee community in the city that wanted to do so to volunteer. Not just for us, but for the Red Cross, or other partner agencies, for the City Council, or for the two cathedrals. Today is Wednesday, so one of our volunteers will be on the Welcome desk at Liverpool Cathedral. The

¹ Home Office quarterly statistics summarised by Jesuit Refugee Service UK. Figures as at October 2015.

fact that she wears a hijab causes some interesting remarks and some interesting looks, as people walk in. "Are you sure this is a cathedral?" "Yes." The volunteer is a Yemeni. She is one of our most popular volunteers at Liverpool Cathedral now.

Thus far we have responded to people from 77 countries and nationalities. The largest numbers have been from Eritrea. Then there is Iran, Sudan, Iraq and of course Syria.

We currently have people from 15 nationalities volunteering from us. They represent pretty much all the major faiths. We are supported by all the major faiths. At the end of Ramadan I received a huge donation from two of the major mosques in the city and we work with them on a weekly basis. At the moment I am doing the rounds of the synagogues to collect the Sukkot donations. It's getting quite competitive between the Reformed Jewish Hebrew congregation and the Orthodox as to who is going to be giving the greater Sukkot donation! We have received donations from the Nordic Church, from Pentecostal Churches, from the URC, and more. People have been very generous. Because we are independent, we don't get all those big collections from Tesco and Asda so we really are dependent on the independent faith communities for their support.

This is how we use our volunteers. The young man on the left in the picture is Basel Isa. He is a Syrian Kurd, and translates for us in Arabic and Kurdish Kurmanji. He does much of the face to face welcome for newly arrived asylum seekers. The person on the right, Jihad Hannoun, was the principal pharmacist at the Al-Kindi Hospital in Aleppo – which doesn't exist anymore because it was blown up. That's his son. One of the services we provide is legal assistance. When Jihad got his refugee status we did the family reunion visa for free to enable him to bring his wife and his two children here.

These people in the picture are some representatives of the Merseyside Council of Faiths with Archbishop Justin Welby who

kindly came and opened our new food store, which is four times the size of the original one. That's our third food store in two years. We've had a huge amount of support from the Merseyside Council of Faiths. This is crucial. For example, when we get Jewish people from Iran and from Eritrea (because they weren't picked up by the Israeli airlift from Ethiopia some years ago) I can call Jewish Care on speed dial and they come and they help. If we get a Baha'i I can call the Baha'i community and they come and help. We're struggling to find any help for our Yazidis and people from the Druze community so if anybody out there knows how we can help them, we'd be very, very grateful indeed.

This is our store manager. His name is Akbar Ghorbani. He was a millionaire in Tehran until he fell foul of the religious police and was imprisoned and flogged. Now he lives in a two bedroom flat, he's not allowed to work, and he gets £140 a week for his wife and children. He does work – he works six days a week for us on a voluntary basis. Without him we couldn't actually work as a multi-faith, multi-ethnic food bank.

I could say more but I hope this has given you a picture of our work at Hope+.

Thank you.

Bishop Richard Atkinson: Nädine, thank you for that very practical response and giving a sense of its importance and the diversity of everyone involved. We have a few minutes for comments or questions on anything Nädine has raised.

Pejman Khojasteh (international Association of Religious Freedom (British Chapter)): Perhaps there needs to be a root cause analysis to look at why we have all these refugees coming over. You can take it back to a conflict and then ask what is the root cause of the conflict. People need to be proactive in dealing with those issues so we do not have to adopt a reactive approach to the consequences.

Nädine Daniel: I'm a very practical person. You have to be. Much though, as a former chancery barrister, I would love to do analyses we don't have time for academic niceties. The appalling image of Aylan Kurdi shocked people around the world. Sadly we were seeing images like that months earlier. We heard about Daesh 12 months before the media was talking about Daesh/ISIL. We listened to what questions we were being asked in the supermarket and food bank. And we responded very quickly with some very basic information we call the 'mythbusters'. We told people about Sykes-Picot. If you talk about Sykes-Picot to a Syrian they know exactly what you mean. If you had a middle class English dinner party they'd say "What?". They don't know. They don't understand about how all this started way, way back in the middle of the First World War. The seeds for the Arab Spring, which isn't an Arab Spring, were sown then. And so we tell them in very, very simple language, which is on our website if anybody wants them. They're freely available these little leaflets, two sides of an A4 that folds into three, but it seeks to answer the questions we are asked. Why do they come here? Well, do you know what, they don't really. 24,000 asylum seekers in Britain last year. 566,000 in Germany². When I asked the Deacon of Cologne Cathedral in June, "How are you managing with that? That's amazing. he said "After the Second World War we coped with 9 million. You guys have coped with all the East African Asians. You guys have coped with the Vietnamese Boat People. Why are you getting yourselves so exercised now?" Perhaps the message is "Relax people. It's not that much of a problem as you think it is." Unless you happen to be an asylum seeker or a refugee.

Bishop Richard Atkinson: As we come to the end of the session this morning and move on to discussion groups does anybody have anything they want to say at this stage just to reflect on our journey so far?

Nädine Daniel: The gentleman here in the front here has reminded me that one of the

things that is a problem for Liverpool, and I guess is a problem for the other dispersal areas like Cardiff and Manchester and Glasgow, is that some of the faiths in our city have a very small representation. That is a particular problem for the Sikh community in Liverpool. The Gurdwara in Liverpool is small, and its population is aging. They have been overwhelmed. 98% of the Afghans we see are Sikh and they tend to come in as families, unlike the mainly single male individuals that you see coming from the Middle East. The Gurdwara is really in crisis trying to provide the hospitality that their faith demands of them. What we have done is collected food and given it to the Gurdwara and clothes to help them respond. We are all going to be seeing more asylum seekers and refugees, so I would say to you go to your local faith communities and say, "How can we help?" because some faith communities are going to be overwhelmed and if they are not prepared to ask for help, they are going to be in trouble.

Bishop Richard Atkinson: Nädine, thank you again, we are very grateful for your contribution.

At this point the meeting broke out into discussion groups.

² United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) quarterly report. Figures at October 2015.

Living well together: appreciating diversity; negotiating difference

Dr Maureen Sier

Director, Interfaith Scotland

Vivian Wineman: Welcome back. I hope you've all had a pleasant lunch and, before that, enjoyed your discussion groups. For our first item this afternoon we will be addressed by Dr Maureen Sier, Director of Interfaith Scotland. There is currently a big focus on responding to the Syrian refugee crisis. Maureen will be a participant in the relevant discussion group a little later. In this plenary session, however, she will be talking about some of the ways in which dialogue and discussion have been developed in Scotland as part of living well together in a shared society. Scotland pioneered Inter Faith Week and that is an example of their pioneering work. It gives me great pleasure now to call on Maureen to address us.

A copy of Dr Sier's PowerPoint slides are at the end of this note.

Maureen Sier: Thank you for this opportunity to share with you some of the work that has been done in Scotland. There has been inter faith work carried out in Scotland for at least 40 years now, starting with Glasgow Sharing of Faiths in the 1970s. That coincided with the introduction of multi faith education in schools, moving on from Christian confessional educations.

There are now around 20 local inter faith groups in Scotland. Compared to what you have in the rest of the UK it doesn't seem a huge amount but for our population it's great. They can be found from Shetland in the North to Dumfries in the South. They

engage really well on all sorts of issues. There are three funded inter faith organisations in Scotland: Interfaith Scotland, Interfaith Glasgow, and Edinburgh Inter Faith Association. They are all funded by the Scottish Government, which reflects its real commitment to engagement and dialogue. We have an integrated approach to living well together in Scotland – from the support of the Scottish Government to the local inter faith groups, national inter faith organisation and the religious leaders of Scotland who have been meeting together for about 15 years. The leaders now meet twice a year at the Religious Leaders' Forum. I should add that we also have a strong education system with Religious and Moral Education built into this. More and more Religious and Moral Education teachers are looking to engage in dialogue and saying "How do we give our students the tools for dialogue?"

I was asked to talk about a document that was produced in collaboration with people from faith communities, from the Humanist Society and the Scottish Government: *Belief in Dialogue*. People worked together for almost 18 months to produce this document which you can find on the website of Interfaith Scotland. I think it is the first of its kind in that it promotes dialogue, not just between religious people, but between people of faith and people of no faith. This, I think, is going to be a critical area for us to think about in the future. When we look at the most recent Census in Scotland, 44% of the population

said they were non-religious. That does not mean that they necessarily don't have a faith or a belief or even a belief in God. It just means that perhaps they are not affiliated to any religious community. However, there will be quite a number that have no religious belief whatsoever and they will be Humanist or Secularist or Atheist. So, a fair percentage of the population of Scotland isn't religious and we have to really begin to think how we use the tools that we have developed over many years in inter faith dialogue to engage the non-religious because we don't want a new type of division to emerge in society where there are those with a religious voice and those without and that there is some kind of subtle battle going on between us.

It was a great privilege to be on the committee that actually wrote this *Belief in Dialogue* document and to make sure that it was sensitive in all respects to those who had no faith as well as sensitive to those that have faith. The main purpose of the *Belief in Dialogue* document was to ensure that it had practical steps that could be taken to help people engage in dialogue in a very open and inclusive way. So I would recommend it to you. You can download it from our website and use it in your work.

I was asked also to talk about the recent referendum and both the faith communities' response and Scotland's response, but particularly Interfaith Scotland and the faith communities. This could have been quite a divisive thing in Scottish society. What Interfaith Scotland decided would be a critical thing to do, and could involve the religious and the non-religious in dialogue, was to look at what were the vision and values. We decided to look at what was our vision for Scotland and what were the values that we wanted to see as part of Scottish society, whatever the outcome of the referendum. Most of our dialogues for almost a year leading up to the referendum brought people together from faith communities, young people's groupings, women's groups and others, to really begin to talk about what were the visions and values that we felt were important for Scotland.

There were a number of questions that were asked but I've picked just three of them: "What do you value about life in Scotland today?", "What values do you think are important for the future of Scotland?" and "What do faith communities do to make Scotland a better place to live?". They were very simple and straightforward questions. What was very interesting in all the dialogues that we had and in all the groups that were engaging in the dialogues was that not once did anyone ever say 'What we really want is a wealthier Scotland'. That didn't occur once which was quite interesting because some of the propaganda and some of the publicity around the referendum was saying 'Become independent and we'll become a much wealthier nation'. There was a real recognition by the people of Scotland that actually we already are an incredibly wealthy nation if you look at the community of nations around the world. And I think that's also true of the UK, that we are an incredibly wealthy nation despite the recession.

Some of the key responses to those questions – and these are things that would resonate with anyone from any culture, from any society, who was asked what they valued about life – was that people said that what they valued about life in Scotland was that it was peaceful; it was safe; and it was accessible. They valued life in Scotland because of the equality, the diversity and the sense of social inclusion. They valued life in Scotland because of the NHS and the high life expectancy. They valued Scotland because of its rich culture, its community feeling, its excellent educational system, its free education, its freedom of speech, the fact that you're free to be who you are, and that Scotland is open to dialogue. All of those things I think people would recognise and would resonate with many of you.

Funnily enough, when respondents said that's what they valued about Scotland right now, this was prior to the referendum. We were asking, "OK, what about the future? What are the values that you think are important for the future of Scotland? What's it going to look like into the future?"

They were highlighting many of the things that they liked in the *present*: equality, freedom of speech; value in embracing diversity; honesty and transparency in leadership; good citizenship; compassion; valuing sustainable energy; and fair trade.

There were some fantastic dialogue sessions around this because there was a real heightened sense that something important was happening, whatever the outcome of the referendum. Something was shifting, something was moving and the faith communities really wanted to engage in that civic process and in that process of dialogue and engagement.

One of the most memorable events was something called 'The Listening Lugs Bus Tour'. In Scotland your 'lugs' are your ears so this was the 'listening ears' bus tour. The organisers of that had got in touch with me and asked if I could organise a dialogue around their tour. This tour had taken artists, musicians, singers, bagpipe players, poets, leading people in the cultural and artistic field of Scotland around on a bus visiting some of the most remote places of Scotland to engage people in a conversation about what they valued about Scotland and what they valued about Scotland going into the future. They collected thousands of ideas and comments and thoughts. Many linked very much to what I've just shared with you. It's now in a scroll and kept in the historical archives of Stirling University. Again, in all the hundreds of engagements, no one said "We want a wealthier country". They all said "We want a fairer, more just, more inclusive, a more caring, a more compassionate country". And all of that would resonate with us as people of faith. So this was a very exciting process.

One of the other questions that was asked was "What can faith communities do to make Scotland a better place to live?" So this was something directly to engage with when we have our inter faith engagements. At the top of the agenda was always that they should engage in inter faith activities, that all faith communities should be doing this just as a matter of course; that we

should have faith leaders who will speak up on issues of social justice – wisely and rationally; and that we need to work hard to identify common ground with other faith communities. Other responses were that we have to find a way to welcome the stranger; to host events (faith communities have buildings and communities) that celebrate bringing people together; and that faith communities should promote peace, find ways to serve people and have courage to share our respective spiritual wisdom.

There was a real sense that the noisy voices that we hear in the media talking about religion tend to be all about bad stories – all things that are leading towards our young people saying "We want nothing to do with religion – all a bunch of nutters". I think we need to tell another story. We have millennia of spiritual wisdom held within all our different faith traditions. There was a real sense that the faith communities need to have the courage to share their respective spiritual wisdom.

Recently we had a peace conference in Inverness, in the North of Scotland. Most of you are probably aware of the St Ethelburga's Centre. We invited Justine Huxley to come up and lead one of the sessions for us. She made many points about peace but she said one of the things that they have discovered, one of the things that they feel is critical, is that the faith communities need to put the sacred back into society. I think there's a real sense that we have a mission and a goal and something really important about really introducing that which is sacred within our traditions into society.

The Scottish Government is very committed to inter faith relations. Recently our First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, contacted Interfaith Scotland and asked if we would help organise an Interfaith Summit at the First Minister's Residence in the Cabinet Office. That was a huge step. It was quite a challenge, I have to say, to decide in consultation with the Scottish Government and the faith communities, who would be at that table of dialogue,

because we work with hundreds and hundreds of people that are all very articulate and capable of being round that table. Symbolically it was a very powerful gesture that the First Minister's publicity office coverage was used quite extensively in the media and the First Minister blogged about the summit herself. Her opening remarks were about how much she valued the role of faith communities in Scotland, but particularly about the inter faith work that was being done right across the country. This is just an example of what she wrote in her blog: "Inter faith work and the contribution of faith groups is essential in transforming lives and building a stronger, fairer and equal Scotland. The overwhelming support we have seen from across Scotland over the past week [this was the week when the Syrian crisis first hit the news] shows willingness of the people of Scotland to help the most vulnerable arriving in Scotland. By working together with all communities I want to see a safer, stronger and more inclusive society which we are all able to fully contribute to and benefit from."

For us in Interfaith Scotland it was really exciting. It felt like a really exciting moment to hear our First Minister really praise inter faith work and to engage with us over 2.5 to 3 hours. There were questions that had been sent to us that different people from different faith communities were asked to respond to and then there were open questions and dialogue with the First Minister too. One of the commitments she made was to make this an annual meeting. I hope that this happens so that key issues that concern the faith communities and inter faith organisations can be brought to that table of dialogue.

I'm going to just share one story from the peace conference. I think this story really illustrates the work that we're doing and the importance of the work that we're doing and the importance of engagement in transforming perspectives. At this peace conference, after a presentation, we were put into pairs with people we didn't know. We had to look at a conflict in our lives and how we had used either our faith tradition

or an engagement with another faith community or another denomination, another branch of our own faith tradition, to deal with a conflict. I was paired up with a young sheikh from the Shi'a tradition. I said "Have you had a conflict recently that you've used your faith tradition to deal with?". And he looked at me very sincerely and said "Yes, the last three weeks we've had a very difficult conflict to deal with." And I said "What was that?". He said "My brother-in-law was blown up in Pakistan by a Sunni suicide bomber." This is not really what you expect to hear on a Sunday afternoon in Inverness. I was very taken aback and said "Did you use Islam to deal with this conflict?" He said "Not at that moment. I was so full of anger and revenge. My brother-in-law was 28. He's left my 21 year old sister now with a child. I just wanted revenge. I was so angry." I said, "OK, what changed things?" and he said, "For the last 3 weeks, every day, representatives of the Sunni Muslim tradition of Glasgow have come to my home. They've come with food. They've come with prayers. They've come with friendship. And they've come to say how sorry they are about what has happened to my family in Pakistan. It really made me realise that this was one random, crazy guy in Pakistan. This wasn't the Sunni Muslim community. Now my good friends are both Shia and Sunni. This engagement transformed me."

So I think it's really important for us to recognise that our engagement transforms hearts and sometimes transforms hearts really critically.

Thank you.

Vivian Wineman: Thank you very much, Maureen.

Dr Peter Rookes (Birmingham Council of Faiths): There is a danger, isn't there, that we move from being in different faith silos into being a common faith silo separated from the rest of civil society. It's so important, I believe, that we are active within the public space and with the other parts of civil society. So my question to you is that, as a result of the dialogue that you

had with Nicola Sturgeon and your working together within the public space, how are you taking that forward? Is it just about dialogue, or is it dialogue about engaging with the police, with the NHS, with the local authority and so forth?

Sheikh Dr Muhammad Al-Hussaini (Scriptural Reasoning): I love Scotland, I love going up there to play my fiddle. I'm delighted to hear that you say that Scotland is open for dialogue, and valuing equality and embracing diversity. I have always taken the view that it needs to start firstly in the configuration of our own organisations in terms of that inclusion. So could you tell us a bit about where Interfaith Scotland is in following the IFN and opening up its membership policy on equal footing to Pagans and minority religions? I understand there is a two tier membership policy at the moment.

Dr Maureen Sier: There is.

Sheikh Dr Muhammad Al-Hussaini (Scriptural Reasoning): We need to have that equality in house before we can tell other people about being equal.

Dr Maureen Sier: To start first with Peter's question. Yes, it's part of the role of Interfaith Scotland to engage with civic society so we do work with the police, the NHS and others. On our website, you'll see a number of documents that have been published, particularly about health and well-being and in the public sphere, particularly NHS documents. We work with the Equality and Human Rights Commission looking at good practice in the workplace, and generally the faith communities of Scotland are very engaged with civic structures.

We have just recently appointed a Parliamentary Officer, so that we can have a parliamentary magazine and someone who's really focussed on that engagement with the Scottish Parliament and with civic life. This also helps to capacity build some of the faith communities who might not be 100% sure about the processes.

The second question next. It's a very complex issue, I think, the issue of membership. Interfaith Scotland grappled with that when it was the Scottish Interfaith Council. It has rewritten its constitution. There was a sense that there was a need to keep the integrity of the organisation with the founding members. So they had the founding members of the Interfaith Council, as full members of Interfaith Scotland: the Christians, Muslims, Jews, Sikhs, Hindus, Buddhists and Baha'is and any of their affiliates. So for example you could have ten Christian organisations and five Muslim and three Buddhist bodies as members.

There was also was a real honest desire to dialogue with those from outside those traditions. So there is a structure through which any other faith tradition can become associate members of Interfaith Scotland and be invited to the table of dialogue for all our membership dialogue meetings, all our meetings with young people or with women. However these associate members would not be in the governing council of Interfaith Scotland.

At this stage in the development of inter faith work, I think that was a very important decision. Decisions are always in process; the work we are doing is never complete. Inter faith engagement is still at a very early stage if you look at our history, at the history of the development of religious traditions.

There was a need to be taken seriously and there was a worry that if we opened up the actual governance of Interfaith Scotland to absolutely every faith tradition that is out there – hundreds, lots and lots of movements – we could end up with a governance structure of Interfaith Scotland not actually having any Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, Christians, Buddhists or Jews for example.

It was checked with the Equality and Human Right Commission if it was a correct way to proceed, and it was felt that you could have the founding members of Interfaith Scotland as the governing

structure but, in order to be totally inclusive, also invite absolutely everyone, from every other faith tradition, to apply for associate membership. I am delighted to say that Pagans, the Church of Jesus Christ and Latter Day Saints, Brahma Kumaris, Unitarians, and a whole number of other different organisations are associate members of Interfaith Scotland.

Vivian Wineman: Thank you, Maureen, for a presentation which was both informative and also very heartening.

Belief in Dialogue, Belief in Scotland

I believe in a Scotland built on the basic values of mutual trust, respect and understanding. A Scotland where everyone, regardless of background, can live and raise their families in peace and fulfil their potential by contributing what they can to the society that we all share.

- * *The basic building block for a society where everyone is valued is dialogue. Dialogue brings us together, removes the fear of the unknown, helps us to find common ground builds friendships and challenges the stigmatisation which hold back any individuals and communities. Fergus Ewing MSP, Minister for Community Safety*

Visions and Values

Questions:

- * What do you value about life in Scotland today?
- * What values do you think are important for the future of Scotland
- * What can faith communities do to make Scotland a better place to live?



Interfaith Scotland

Living Well Together

Some key responses....

What do you value about life in Scotland?

- * Peaceful, safe, accessible
- * Equality, diversity and inclusion
- * The NHS, high life expectancy
- * Rich culture, community feeling
- * Excellent educational system, free education
- * Freedom of speech, free to be who you are
- * Scotland is open to dialogue

Belief in Dialogue

A good Practice Guide (2011)

- * A document that promotes dialogue between religions and between the religious and the non-religious
- * First of its kind, collectively written by Government, and religious and non-religious representatives
- * Used extensively in Scotland
- * Has practical guidelines to help faith communities, local interfaith groups and other organisations to engage in dialogue

What values do you think are important for the future of Scotland?

- * Equality
- * Freedom of speech
- * Valuing and embracing diversity
- * Honesty and transparency in leadership
- * Good citizenship
- * Compassion
- * Valuing sustainable energy
- * Fair trade

What can faith communities do to make Scotland a better place to live?

- * Engage in interfaith activities
- * Have faith leaders who will speak up on issues of social justice (wisely and rationally)
- * Identify common ground with 'other' faith communities
- * Welcome the stranger
- * Host events to celebrate bringing people together
- * Promote peace
- * Find ways to serve people
- * Have courage to share their respective spiritual wisdom

First Minister's Interfaith Summit



A Quote and a story....

- * *'Interfaith work and the contribution of faith groups is essential in transforming lives and building a stronger, fairer and equal Scotland. The overwhelming support we have seen from across Scotland over the past week shows willingness of the people of Scotland to help the most vulnerable arriving in Scotland.....by working together with all communities I want to see a safer, stronger and more inclusive society which we are all able to fully contribute to and benefit from'* Nicola Sturgeon, First Minister of Scotland
- * *Interfaith Scotland Peace Conference: a story*

Feedback from Discussion Groups

Discussion Group 1 – Living well together: cooperating for community benefit

Canon Bede Gerrard: We decided that grass roots inter faith work is the best: people dealing with people as fellow human beings through service across the generations and building communities based upon mutual trust.

Discussion Group 2 – Living well together as neighbours

Julie Jones: The advice that we would give is to have a clear focus. Each of us as individual faith communities have our own contribution to make and when you put those together, you complete the jigsaw. It is important to communicate this good news. If smaller organisations are going to be able to grow and if small inter faith groups are going to be able to develop and get better, we have to let people know who we are. That means using media positively to show people in our areas and the UK who we are. Social media hits the youth the most and is an important part of that.

[Note: Discussion Group 3 did not take place on the day due to speaker illness.]

Discussion Group 4 – Living well together: faith communities and responding well to refugees and asylum seekers as part of our shared life

Robin Taylor: We felt there is no single approach. We need to provide legal and practical support to refugees and asylum seekers while remembering they are not just needy, they are human beings who have a lot to offer to our wider community and that, in turn, we can learn from them.

Discussion Group 5: Living well together: snapshot from campus

Josh Cass: We recognised in our group the complexity of the stakeholders at play on campuses, from students through academic staff and also local stakeholders, local voluntary organisations and others. We noted the decline in the number of Religious Studies and Theology departments in Higher Education (HE) and thought that had an impact on faith and belief issues on campus. We heard about changes which are afoot in terms of the presence of the National Union of Students in relation to faith and belief on campus and how we as an Inter Faith Network, and as local grassroots organisations, have a part to play in supporting students on campuses across the country in engaging with some of the tough issues that they come into contact with in relation to safeguarding.

We also recognised a gap in provision in relation to young people in Further Education (FE) environments. A great many young people are neither in FE or HE environments and as the Inter Faith Network we need to think about how we can engage with young people beyond those spaces as well.

Discussion Group 6: Living well together within the workplace

Dr Peter Rookes: We discussed in depth two of the three case studies that we were presented with: one on the wearing of religious symbols within the workplace and the other on time off for religious observance of various types. Many of our participants have experience of both these in practice. We saw it as coming down to 'reasonableness' and discussion within the workplace about the issues. We found that

if people were able to discuss the issues reasonably with staff members, with staff representatives, with faith leaders where appropriate, and in the case of schools with parents, then it was nearly always possible to come to a reasonable solution. It's when actions are taken precipitously, that problems occur and they hit the media.

Discussion Group 7: Equipping us to live well together: religious literacy and chaplaincy

Prebendary Michael Metcalf: We felt that the common theme linking religious literacy and chaplaincy was education in the broadest sense. To get the message across, to help people as human beings and meet human needs, one needs a very detailed and / or inclusive and knowledgeable educational programme. Knowledge must be of our own situation as well as that of other people.

Plenary discussion

Vivian Wineman: I'm now going to invite comments from the floor.

David Hopkins (Spiritualists' National Union): Dr Maureen Sier said that one of the items that had come up in the discussions in Scotland was that they should have faith leaders who will "speak up on issues of social justice wisely and rationally". Given those terms, I wondered why my fellow Spiritualists in Scotland are considered 'second class citizens'.

Jim Robertson (North East Regional Faiths Network): Mustafa Field's talk this morning tended to convey that we live in a very fair and equal UK. Maureen Sier seemed to convey similar observations in relation to Scotland. That's not the picture as I experience it. There is divisiveness inside the UK, likewise in Scotland. There remains a substantial amount of inequality and poverty. There is a Poverty Truth Commission, which has been substantially supported by the faith groups in Scotland. Commissions are now being developed in parts of England and again, faith groups are highly involved. The question I would like to

pose is whether we deal with issues and concerns such as poverty and inequality with any serious commitment. Do faith groups offer guidance to their members about living with equity and personal wealth? How do the faith groups educate us to live with equity? Can we afford the rich?

Dr Maureen Sier (Interfaith Scotland): To respond to the question on Scotland and the Spiritualist Church. As far as I am aware they haven't applied for membership of Interfaith Scotland. They would be very welcome to do so. I am sure that there would be no reason why they would not be able to become associate members.

Nädine Daniel (Hope+ and Merseyside Council of Faiths): I would like to follow up on the report back about discussion on campuses (which I did not attend). One of the things we have had in Liverpool is teachers getting in touch with us to come in and talk to the children in their schools. It is really important we do work on campus, but I think we also need to take it back a step and go into schools and work at an inter faith level. From our experience in Merseyside, what children are picking up in the current crisis is not good; it is full of misinformation and lack of information. We are working to put together workbooks and presentations that the schools can take and use themselves. Inter faith and Faith messages need to be brought into schools in a proactive but careful way.

Reynold Rosenberg (Welwyn Hatfield Inter Faith Group): Just to follow on from that, one of the things I wanted to raise in my workshop was the role of Standing Advisory Committees on Religious Education (SACREs). It seems to me that if there are doubts about representation of faith in schools that SACREs should feature somewhere in the discussion.

Reflections on themes of the day

Acharya Krishan Kant Attri MBE

Newcastle Council of Faiths and Hindu Chaplain to the Armed Forces

Vivian Wineman: I am now going to invite some reflections on the themes that have come up so far. Each speaker has five minutes for his or her presentation.

First, it gives me great pleasure to invite Acharya Krishan Kant Attri to address us. He is a Hindu Chaplain to the Armed Forces and a longstanding member of the Newcastle Council of Faiths.

Acharya Krishan Kant Attri: Thank you very much indeed friends. When I left about quarter to five this morning from Newcastle, driving all the way down, I was thinking is it worthwhile? But I think it was worth it!

I'm from the Hindu faith background where we believe Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam "the whole world is my family". Regardless of whatever circumstances around you, respect others, have some tolerance. I am sure you will enjoy your life with your neighbours. Let us take responsibility together.

Last Sunday we had a peace march or peace walk in Newcastle. It started from Newcastle Hindu Temple, went on to a church, then the Mosque, included reflection on the Jewish tradition, in a very special place, and of course then ended in a Sikh Temple. In each place of worship we shared how we live together and what we believe. It was a fantastic experience.

Wonderful presentations have been given earlier. As someone said, these points we are discussing should not be only put in books. Let us put them into practice and share them with others and make an inclusive society. Whatever faith you belong to, share with others, respect others, whether you have refugees around you, or people who just arrived in this country, include them as friends. I am sure we can enjoy our life together

I am very grateful for the Inter Faith Network for the job it is doing. Today many key people are here: let us take something positive from this conference and implement it in our practice.

Vivian Wineman: Thank you very much indeed Krishan for your presentation.

Julie Jones

Inter-faith Council for Wales and Public Affairs
Representative for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Wales

Vivian Wineman: I now have great pleasure in calling on Julie Jones, a member of the Inter-faith Council for Wales. She is also the Public Affairs Representative of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, a tradition whose national body has recently become a member of the Inter Faith Network.

Julie Jones: As I looked at today's programme, the words that stood out to me were "living together well".

As I listened to Mustafa Field this morning, I loved the words he spoke when he said “Faith gives us the power to explore collaborative action”. Faith gives us the power. Inter faith work is imperative for our communities and for teaching younger generations.

Dr Karen Jochelson from the Equality and Human Rights Commission said that the EHRC works together to protect religion and belief in a legal way directly and indirectly. I love that we have that; I don’t love that we need that.

Nädine Daniel said “We discovered the hard way, that you do actually do things better together”. I think it was said that they had fed, so far, in 2015, nearly 20,000 people of different religions. Nädine talked about Sykes Picot³. Isn’t amazing how you can go to a group of people and say, “What’s Sykes Picot?” and you can have a full on conversation and then go to another group of people who say, “What is Sykes Picot?”.

I loved Dr Maureen Sier’s encouragement to go and tell the UK a different story. Let’s do that and put the sacred back into society.

I thought about all those things: living together well, faith, power, and being together. If we in this room don’t have the answers to help people at grassroots level to overcome the ills of society and to help with the overcoming of those in our souls, then who does? Where can they, you and I turn for peace? As faith leaders, you and I should feel that we have those answers, united together, where we can turn for peace and find solace in an increasingly secular world.

In this increasing secular world, facing the attack on religious faith and religious freedom that we see all around us, it is imperative for us as faith communities, as groups together, to understand and to know each other better than what we do.

That is what we’ve done in Wales. We have got together as faith communities and we

have had meetings and group discussions where we have seen the things that we have in common more than the things that we have separately. We have brought those together, worked together and tried to help people know that at grass roots level there is somewhere where we can all go to find a peace in this secular world. That’s what we want to bring.

Let us work together and let us work together well. Let us meet and let us show each other and the world on a grassroots level where peace can be found.

Thank you.

Vivian Wineman: Thank you very much Julie, for those heartening, rousing words that followed your contribution in the discussion group previously.

Dr Norman Richardson MBE Northern Ireland Inter-Faith Forum

Vivian Wineman: We’re going to continue the Celtic theme and I’m going to ask Norman Richardson to address us. He is a member of the Northern Ireland Inter-Faith Forum and is also a longstanding Trustee of the Inter Faith Network for the UK. He is also a well-known educationalist who has written widely about the importance of Religious Education and the development of RE in multi-cultural contexts.

Dr Norman Richardson: It may be stating the obvious, but for me the key word in today’s title is ‘together’. We come to an occasion like this as individuals, with all our personal distinctiveness and uniqueness, but we also come as members of communities and this is central to how we live together. Living well is a shared experience; it is about relationships. We do it in community – we need others in order to be able to do it at all.

³ The Sykes-Picot agreement was reached during World War One. It is referred to in the Hope+ literature described by Nädine Daniel in her presentation.

Two phrases in particular struck me from today's discussions. In his introductory remarks Bishop Richard spoke of "moving from safe space into shared space"; and in one of the smaller discussion groups Prudence Jones referred to "teaching people how to encounter each other".

As someone who works in education I often quote the UNESCO report from 1996⁴ which suggested that education is based on four key purposes. These 'Four Pillars of Education' are:

Learning to Know;

Learning to Do;

Learning to Live Together; and

Learning to Be.

The first two are important, of course, but they mean little unless we can use them to help us to learn to live well together.

So how do we build that *shared* space? And amidst all our differences and diversities how do we develop the skills and capacities that we need in order to *encounter* each other confidently and respectfully? This draws us towards the title of the report from Scotland outlined by Maureen Sier, "Belief in Dialogue". Dialogue is crucial: it is by its very nature a shared activity; we can't do it on our own; it is a relationship, a building block of community. Dialogue is both built on, and builds up, trust. Trust requires honest communication and a good deal of listening.

These are key aspects of how we learn and teach faith – our own faith and that of others. Faith communities necessarily engage in teaching their own faith to their members, but the challenge is to go beyond that and help our own members to learn about, meet and understand the faiths of others. If we can do this it will significantly enrich and transform the relationships

between our faiths and help us to live well together.

Martin Luther King summed this up well: "... I am convinced that [people] hate each other because they fear each other. They fear each other because they don't know each other, and they don't know each other because they don't communicate with each other, and they don't communicate with each other because they are separated from each other."⁵

Vivian Wineman: Thank you very much for that, Norman. It was very informative and also very heartening.

Jatinder Singh Birdi

Chair, Warwick District Faiths Forum

Vivian Wineman: I now have the pleasure in inviting Jatinder Singh Birdi to address us. Jatinder is the chair of Warwick District Faiths Forum and has wide ranging local voluntary involvements, including through such bodies as Age UK.

Jatinder Singh Birdi: Thank you. As the previous speakers have said, inter faith work is extremely important. It is necessary at various different levels. It is necessary for our youngsters to learn about inter faith work; it is also necessary for our older generations to do so. They are very good at saying "When we were young it happened like this". But times have changed. They have been turned upside down and it is important to communicate with our older community members about the changes that have taken place. Our older community members have lots of knowledge and experience. They know what they went through when they came to this country and now we've got situations with more newly arrived communities where there can be benefit from sharing their experiences.

⁴ "Learning: the Treasure Within – Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-First Century". Paris: UNESCO, 1996.

⁵ Sermon at Cornell College, Mount Vernon, Iowa, October 15th 1962.

I can give an example. My father, when he came to England, couldn't get a job. He was a draftsman, an architect. He refused to work in a factory as a labourer. He said "Unless I can get a job in my profession, I'll go back home and work there." He had to cut his hair and he went to work at the Ministry of Defence in their drawing office to get a job. And as soon as he left, he then grew his hair back again.

Those struggles he went through for his children, for his family. He made sacrifices. Throughout time, people have made sacrifices and we need to draw on our experiences and those stories, to enlighten the younger generation, because they find many things coming to them easily and naturally.

We live in a multicultural society. Our neighbours are from different cultures, our children are going to school with people from different faiths, different backgrounds, our work colleagues are from different faiths. Ignorance is not acceptable. We need to know a little bit more about different people's faiths, cultures and beliefs. Issues in society have no boundaries. If we look at drug abuse, alcohol abuse, gang culture, hate crime, domestic abuse, can we say they only affect one community, or one faith? No, they are problems across all society and it is when we come together and talk to people from different communities that we can actually find ways of resolving those issues.

As people of faith we also need to go back to our communities and raise these issues. We can't say these don't happen in our communities; they happen. They happen in all communities, they happen in all society. As people of faith it's our responsibility to bring these issues to the fore and tackle the difficult issues. We can't just say "Oh somebody else will do it", or "It doesn't happen". We are very lucky, very fortunate if we don't experience that, but to those people who are victims of these injustices, their life is a living hell. We should try and treat everybody as fellow human beings and it is our duty to protect them and to stand up for their rights as well.

We in the UK are, I think, quite privileged. Look at the conference today – I look forward every year to coming to the Inter Faith Network National Meeting because it is inspiring to hear so many different people speaking about what is happening and what they are doing. They are making a positive difference.

In other countries, I don't think such conferences take place. It is very easy to criticise. Be critical where it's needed, but we should also be grateful that we have got this opportunity. We must make maximum use of it and take something back to our communities. We can't just say "Yes we've come to a conference" and go home. We must take something back to our communities, we must help the vulnerable, we must help the needy, because we are all human beings. Thank you all very much.

Vivian Wineman: Thank you very much Jatinder for those inspiring words.

Co-Chair's closing reflections

Vivian Wineman

Co-Chair, Inter Faith Network for the UK

I have found today a very heartening experience. There's never a quiet time in inter faith relations, there are always things that are happening; but now is a critical period for inter faith relations in this country and also for social cohesion. Events are happening abroad in many parts of the world which really do pose a greater challenge to us than any we have seen for many years. Against a background of tension abroad we have in this country a comparatively serene and pleasant landscape and that is to a certain extent due to the work of inter faith groups such as those in this room.

One of the points that emerged in the discussion group that I attended, which I thought was extremely informative, was how we are all making a difference. Although there is an awful lot of work to be done, it is not our job necessarily to complete it – but we do have to try and contribute.

It has been great to see contributions coming from right across the faith spectrum, from Dharmic faiths, Abrahamic faiths and others and to hear about all that they are contributing.

At the beginning of the session, Bishop Richard mentioned the importance of shared action, and the effectiveness and importance of this. That is something which is emerging very much as a common theme among religious leaders and groups. It is one which is terribly important and emerged very much today. Thank you to all the people who made those contributions and to everybody here for attending.

Thank you also to the speakers who, without exception, have been interesting and stimulating and upbeat; and the discussion group facilitators, presenters and rapporteurs. If all the discussion groups were as good as the one that I attended, they were a truly worthwhile experience.

I would also like to thank my fellow Officers and other Trustees who do so much work behind the scenes and are much appreciated.

Thank you also to the Bond Company.

Last, but certainly not least, thank you to the IFN staff who are so dedicated and put in an awful lot of work; the vast amount of activity that that is carried out on very slender resources is tremendously impressive. Thank you again for your excellent work.

[The meeting was followed by the AGM.]

Discussion group notes

Note: The discussion points listed in each of these notes are points and suggestions made by individual participants during the sessions rather than not conclusions agreed by the discussion group as a whole.

Discussion Group 1: Living Well Together: Cooperating for community benefit

Facilitator: Mohinder Singh Chana, Vice-Chair, Inter Faith Network for the UK

Presenters: Mgr Daniel McHugh, Executive Director, BIRINUS Birmingham; *Communitas* colleagues – Khalid Mohammed Head of Muslim Educational Consultative Committee, Birmingham; and Mauricio Silva Project Head, English Martyrs Church, Sparkhill, Birmingham

Rapporteur: Canon Bede Gerrard, South East England Faiths Forum

Through the Communitas Wellbeing project of BIRINUS, Catholics and Muslim are working together to help prevent elderly people from having to go into care through enhancing their health and wellbeing. The project received a Together in Service award last year for its innovative work. The presentation opens a discussion about how faith communities can work together at local level in a way which makes a practical difference in their community and also makes stands as a symbol of cooperation between faiths which may encourage and empower others to follow suit.

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Mohinder Singh Chana welcomed participants to the discussion group and invited Mgr McHugh to offer his presentation.

Mgr Daniel McHugh introduced the BIRINUS *Communitas* Wellbeing project, Multi-faith Elderly Care.

The project was born when the *Muslim Educational Consultative Committee* approached BIRINUS to set up a partnership working with the Catholic Church for the elderly in both communities. Encouraged by the possibility of a grant from Birmingham City Council, Adults and Communities Department, the existing work of both faiths was drawn together and developed into the *Communitas Wellbeing Project*. The project was now in its third year and the funding for part-time workers had helped greatly in offering a creative programme with input from local doctors, schools, and health professionals. The beneficiaries were mainly from Pakistan and Ireland. Because of the project they had also learned something of each other's way of life. The social and religious context had helped keep people happy and well.

As those involved saw it, the project taught something about the way local faith communities can work in partnership with Local Authorities and the public sector, to keep elderly people well while continuing to stay at home.

Khalid Mohammed explained that even small kinds of service could make a tremendous difference to a person's life. He told the story of an elderly Irish woman who lived on her own without family or friends. The light bulb on her stairs had blown and she could not see her way around which made it impossible for her to go upstairs. So for six months she had been confined to the ground floor of her home. After she came to the notice of the project, the very simple task of replacing the light bulb enabled her to use her upstairs and sleep in her own bed. Such simple practical things could make such a large difference to a person's life, as well as building up friendship and trust.

Mauricio Silva, a lay missionary from the Catholic English Martyrs Parish in Sparkhill, said that he had been working to improve the quality of life for parishioners for three or four years before becoming involved in the project. He emphasised the following points:

- Of 15–16 volunteers, a third had been refugees awaiting leave to remain and who would not otherwise get work experience. Through their voluntary work they had been able to gain work-experience and to improve their own self-worth as well as giving something back to the community.
- Through increased awareness of each other an elderly Irish lady living alone was helped in daily living by her Muslim neighbours. This brought mutual respect and trust between their communities increased.
- Several joint projects between the Catholic Parish and the Muslim community had increased each other's understanding, making people feel safer in their environment. They had been able to join in sharing community celebrations at Eid, Christmas and Easter.

The presentation opened a discussion about how faith communities could work together at a local level in a way which made a practical difference in their community, and also to be a symbol of cooperation between faiths which might encourage and empower others to follow suit. Questions were asked about the start-up of the project and about training and safeguarding issues.

- The prime impetus had been the offer of a grant from Birmingham City Council (BCC). It had helped that BIRINUS had experience of managing medium to large scale grants.
- Training was given on the job and tailored to individual need.

- Safeguarding was taken seriously, and each community had learned from the other through shared experience. The necessity of DBS checks for *everyone* working with vulnerable adults was stressed.
- Young people had become involved through a project where sixth formers from the Catholic school had given instruction in Information Technology to groups of elderly people.
- The use of computers had given a whole new world to the elderly people from both communities, bringing contact with relatives who had moved away and a new experience of web based entertainment and news.
- The BCC grant had not covered the project's entire budget (approximately £50,000 per year) and help had come from organised events, local businesses and the Church Urban Fund. The project finance was precarious as it relied on annual grants with no certainty of their renewal.
- Expenditure on translators had been kept down through the use of community resources where many of the Indian subcontinent languages were spoken, as well as Arabic and Polish.
- Some progress had been made in introducing other faith communities into the scheme. There was no 'faith test' for recipients of the project's services.

There was also some discussion on the way similar projects could be developed in other localities, and how the faith communities could be encouraged to work together.

Discussion Group 2: Living well together as neighbours

Facilitator: Moulana M Shahid Raza OBE,
Vice-Chair, Inter Faith Network

Presenter: The Revd Mark Poulson,
National Inter Religious Affairs Adviser,
Church of England and Chair, Faith Advisory
Panel of Near Neighbours

Rapporteur: Ashley Beck, Inter Faith
Network

There are many different ways to reach out to our neighbours and build relationships. Near Neighbours is a programme of the Church Urban Fund with the Church of England with funding from the Department for Communities and Local Government. It helps support projects across England through which people of different backgrounds are reaching out to their neighbours to make common cause, working across different faiths and beliefs to improve their local communities and the lives of the people within them. In this workshop there is a chance to hear about this, as well as some wider reflections from Mark Poulson.

The discussion will have a practical slant, including considering the question If you were helping people of different faiths in an area set up a multi faith project for the first time, what advice would you give?

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Maulana M Shahid Raza welcomed those present and invited everyone to introduce themselves. He then invited the Revd Mark Poulson to give a short opening presentation.

Mr Poulson offered the following opening reflections:

- He is Inter Religious Affairs Advisor to the Archbishop of Canterbury.
- He is also very much involved in the work of Near Neighbours.

- Near Neighbours was an ongoing project that had been established five years ago as a joint project of the Church Urban Fund and the Church of England with the support of the Department for Communities and Local Government. It aimed to harness the energy of grassroots inter faith networks and unleash it for the common good.
- Near Neighbours was non-party-political, and was seen by the partner organisations as a way of working together in a practical and pragmatic way on areas of common concern.
- Near Neighbours had two primary aims:
 - i. to spark initial contact between people of different faiths at the grassroots; and
 - ii. to encourage those people of different faiths to work together on socially transformative projects.
- In Phase 1 – across its first three years – Near Neighbours worked in East London, Birmingham, the Black Country and areas around Bradford. In Phase 2 – across the next two years – additional areas had been added: Leicester, Luton and West London.
- Near Neighbours operated a small grants scheme in those areas. Groups of people of different faiths could apply for small grants toward socially transformative projects involving people from more than one faith or belief background working together.
- There was a hub and a co-ordinator within each area and Near Neighbours also utilised the Church of England's Parish structure, which had a presence within every community within England, as a way of unlocking funds as quickly as possible.
- Those planning projects were encouraged to discuss their ideas with the area co-ordinator and the local vicar,

both of whom could assist with the grant application process.

- The small grant system was designed to move very quickly and to be easy to access for groups which had no prior experience of applying for funding. From application to decision, the process took two weeks.
- A good example of a project supported by Near Neighbours was one from North London. A Somali-Bravanese mosque had been burnt down in an arson attack shortly before Ramadan last year. Two local synagogues – Reform and United Synagogues – wanted to help the Muslim community, and had approached Near Neighbours for assistance. The small grant had helped the two synagogues to host the Muslim community for iftars during Ramadan.
- That project was a good example of the transformative nature of activity supported by Near Neighbours. Some of the Somali-Bravanese Muslims had said that they were initially rather cautious, being uncertain why Jewish and Christian organisations wanted to help them. However, for a number, the experience had completely changed their experience of life in the UK, and the relationship between the synagogues and the Muslim community continued to grow and develop.

Mr Poulson asked what advice those present would give to people who planned to start an inter faith project completely from scratch, in a place with no prior history of such engagement. In response to this, and in the wide-ranging general discussion that ensued, the following points were made. They have been grouped by theme.

a) Using clear themes with relevance to both local authorities and faith groups

- It could be a helpful approach to use issues/topics which allow the local authority or other agencies to explain their policies or to consult and on which

faith communities could give their views and perspectives. Examples included environmental issues and domestic abuse. Faith communities had teachings and wisdom to share on these practical issues.

- The idea of service to others was a vital one. As humans, we had a responsibility to our neighbours. There was a saying in Islam, “If my neighbour is starving, my food is not Halal.”

b) Making meetings welcoming

- Interfaith Wolverhampton held monthly bring-and-share lunches open to everybody, including the public at large. This enabled constant opportunities both for deepening of relationships and for new encounters. These meetings were often held in different places of worship, and sometimes discussion topics or themes were set.

c) Encouraging inter-generational engagement

- Working with schools toward cultural arts and performance events was an excellent way to both make links with younger generations, and also – through performances – to bring their parents/families together.
- In Cambridge, one initiative began from parents wanting something for their children to do that was positive. They set up a ‘spiritual film club’ in which young people and parents watched films and discussed afterwards the themes raised and their reactions to them. This was very popular. There was no charge, but those attending were encouraged to bring a donation to the food bank.
- Wolverhampton Interfaith organised trips to places of worship of different faiths for local schools. This played an important part in breaking down barriers and building understanding.

d) Groups often begin in response to a particular situation or need and then develop a wider role

- Inter faith activity in Wolverhampton began in 1968 following Enoch Powell's infamous 'Rivers of blood' speech. Mr Powell was the MP for Wolverhampton, which was then, as now, a very diverse place. The negative impact of the speech was well-known. Faith community leaders in Wolverhampton, however, took immediate practical steps to ensure tensions did not flare up in the wake of the speech. The initiative had been taken by a Methodist leader. The inter faith group continued to run events, and there were strong community relations in Wolverhampton.
- Leicester was a super-diverse city. Many of the communities in Leicester had family and cultural links to India and the Subcontinent. Leicester Council of Faiths was originally established to respond to the challenges posed to local relations by tensions in India. It still had this role of responding, when necessary, to local tensions caused by events elsewhere in the world but as part of a much wider pattern of local work, helping people to respond to local issues. It had excellent relationships with the Police and other community organisations.

e) Increasing the involvement of women

- In one major city, the inter faith group had tended to bring together the same people, most of whom were male faith leaders. Very few of the faith leaders locally were women, even in traditions which do have women in leadership roles elsewhere. Women locally decided to set up a women's group which would focus more on everyday issues (the leader-dominated group tended to focus on doctrinal discussions). The women's group was still in its infancy, but it aimed to build confidence and create relationships which would enable members to take a fuller part in

the city's inter faith interaction and to play a more active role in the wider debate.

- It could be problematic when women's groups were perceived as places for discussing minor issues or 'home' issues while male-dominated groups were perceived as dealing with the 'real' or 'tough' issues. Many faith issues were issues for men and women, and there was a need for both to play a part in inter faith activity. While in theory women's groups could be a stage on the journey to more integrated inter faith activity, often they remained separate.
- Every local community functioned differently, and the way that faith communities within each locality relate would also be different. In South Shropshire, a dynamic had become established where women had come to accept that they had a limited role in the inter faith group. The establishment by them of a very successful women's group had given them the clout to demand a more active role in the initial group.
- One local inter faith group was described as 'stuck' with conversation dominated by a small number of elderly gentlemen. A women's group was effectively used to 'unblock' that group.

f) Tackling ignorance

- Ignorance was frequently the root of problems; we often do not know what others believe until we engage with them. For example, when an act of terrorism was reported, often the soundbite people absorbed was "The person was a Muslim". Most people had little idea what Muslims believed or how they practised. In Wales, members of all faiths – both the leaders and ordinary people of faith – stood together in a situation like that to say "These are not the actions of a Muslim, we know the Muslim community in Wales".

g) Focusing effectively and remembering differing needs

- It was important to be clear about the target audience and aims of any initiative, and it was OK to be narrowly focused in this. Where the aim was to ‘reach everybody’, initiatives could sometimes fall flat as it was hard to know where to begin and difficult to sustain work at multiple levels.
- If only people who were already friends turned up to events supported by grants then that would be a waste of public money.
- There was a need to reach out to a wider audience – although that was not always easy and sometimes marketing techniques did not work despite much effort.

Populations and communities were never static, and there was a constant need to create spaces for ‘positive first encounter’ between faiths. Developing parallel programmes which enable those encounters to go deeper is also critical.

h) Thinking about measuring impact

- There was a desire that communities live together well, but it is not easy to quantify/measure that.
- Sometimes we do not know what the impact of a project may be. For example, the ‘spiritual film club’ (mentioned at (c)) gave young people an enjoyable, positive experience, and one could not know what they would do with that or what impact they might go on to have. Good experiences shaped our view of the world.
- It was not always helpful to focus on outcomes. Sometimes, the focus should be on giving people a positive experience.
- There was always a need to redouble efforts at the grassroots; but we must not deny our successes. Success was not

easy to measure, but we could ask “What would the country be like if we were not here doing this?” The answer might be, “The country would be a lot less civilised.” When there were issues in Britain, usually, communities and people responded in a sane way. Sometimes it could take time to judge impact.

- The Joseph Interfaith Foundation had begun a programme three years ago as part of which it went into schools and ran workshops with sixth formers about the Srebrenica genocide and the Holocaust. These were often in predominantly Muslim or Jewish schools, and the workshops taught about both atrocities and taught about anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. Many of these were pupils who had been brow-beaten into attending by their teachers. However, after two years, three of the schools got in touch to say that pupils were still talking about the workshops, and kept asking the teachers to arrange another one. It was quite possible that other initiatives had similar impact but that the feedback was not passed on.

i) Remembering the importance of communication

- A key question was whether groups used local media well. National media was in a very competitive market, and could rely on sensation to sell copy. Local media was often smaller and had a smaller target audience. It could be more responsive to the community, which gave it an interest in reporting positive stories when they occurred. Inter faith groups needed to learn to tell their positive stories well.
- Marketing was a challenge. Often, even if people heard about an event, they might still think “That’s not for me”. It was important to spell out what was offered, and sometimes who you would like to come along.

- A key question was ‘how do we communicate the good news of what we are doing?’. That included having a clear focus and articulating that well. Everyone was doing a little which contributed to a bigger picture, and so it was also important to keep communicating with others working for inter faith relations, to remember that everyone was part of a bigger movement.

j) Structures and people: both important to united communities

- Formal inter faith structures were an important part of the counter-narrative to those which sought to divide communities. They were a visible witness to a better option.
- Communities did not talk up enough the work they did. It was the graft of people in communities and on committees which made our society a good place to be.
- The Inter Faith Network and other inter faith structures worked wonders, and this needed to be communicated well.

k) Working in good heart despite the size of the challenge!

- All those working in inter faith relations were small operators. There is a saying in Judaism, “It is not your job to complete the work, but you must still do your part in it.” We may not always be able to discern our impact, but that was no excuse to give up.
- There was a story of a wise man walking along the beach and spotting a boy throwing starfish into the water that had been stuck on the sand. The wise man sees that there are hundreds of starfish, and asks the boy why he is bothering – there are too many starfish and he cannot hope to make a difference. The boy picks up a starfish and throws it back into the water. He looks at the wise man and says “That made a difference for that starfish.” Sometimes, many

small actions could make a big difference over time.

Discussion Group 4: Living well together: faith communities and responding well to refugees and asylum seekers as part of our shared life

Facilitator: Dr Harriet Crabtree, Director, Inter Faith Network for the UK

Presenters: The Revd Fleur Houston, Steering Committee, Churches’ Refugee Network and author of *You Shall Love the Stranger as Yourself: The Bible, Refugees and Asylum*; David Walsh, Public and International Affairs Officer, Board of Deputies of British Jews

Rapporteur: Robin Taylor, Pagan Federation

Thinking about how faith communities are helping respond – both singly and together – to the arrival and needs of refugees and asylum seekers, some of whose experience of those of other backgrounds has been one of religious persecution as well as other extreme hardship such as people trafficking.

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Dr Harriet Crabtree welcomed participants to the discussion group and invited the Revd Fleur Houston to offer her presentation.

A copy of the Revd Fleur Houston’s presentation is at the end of this note. In response to a question, she said that four of the project’s team were project co-ordinators in other organisations working with refugees. The team also included some members with advocacy experience and some retired people. Dr Crabtree thanked Ms Houston for her presentation, and invited Mr Walsh to offer his presentation.

A copy of Mr David Walsh’s presentation is at the end of this note. Dr Crabtree thanked Mr Walsh for his talk. As a point of

clarification on terminology, she noted that a 'refugee' was an 'asylum seeker' who had been granted leave to remain; the term migrant was generally used to describe someone who moves to another country for economic reasons.

She invited general reflections and observations. The following is a summary of points made by individual participants in the discussion which followed. They have been grouped by theme.

Challenges faced

- A participant who had sat through proceedings in Wales said that the approach of Home Office lawyers too often appeared to be along the lines of "You are lying". This was stress inducing.
- A real issue was the level of suspicion aimed towards those who were seeking asylum because of conversion to Christianity or because of their sexual orientation.
- The crucial initial application was often made by those who were traumatised and had no access to legal advice. Women who had been raped or sexually assaulted in the past by those wearing uniform found it difficult to respond appropriately to immigration officials asking questions about intimate details of their lives, and might then be accused later of changing their story. Tribunals too often worked on the assumption of guilty until proved innocent, no matter what the law said.
- A participant who had practised as a barrister said that he had from time to time represented asylum seekers, although he had eventually given up because he did not want to give any dignity to a system presided over by such closed minds. One problem was that the narrative of how an asylum seeker entered the UK often had a kind of story like quality that could make it sound like fiction: "I got out of the lorry and found that I was in Kent" and it was easy to slide into seeing this as semi-fictional and therefore to see the whole account as a fabrication. Many of the adjudicators have no conception of the experiences asylum seekers have been through.
- Another participant had withdrawn from immigration cases as a lawyer for similar reasons. In her city they were setting up a law clinic for asylum seekers with lawyers working pro-bono in rotation. It could be very difficult to explain to some adjudicators why going back to Syria was not a realistic option in some cases. The questions asked of those who were seeking asylum because of persecution following their conversion to Christianity frequently appeared to have been drawn up by internet search rather than being based on any familiarity with the religion. In some cases interpreters, because of their own biases, seemed to misinterpret the statements made by asylum seekers who had converted to Christianity.
- It could be very hard to help from a small town in East Anglia which was a long way from the centres where applications for refugee status were processed. It was also very hard to make a commitment to help where you were surrounded by those who feared being "swamped" by immigration.

Examples of work being carried out

- Tzelem, a group of rabbis from across the whole spectrum of British Jews, had delivered a letter to David Cameron with over a hundred signatures, urging a response appropriate to the situation. Several local synagogue congregations had worked with refugees for a long time, offering help with filling in forms, food, and clothing. Many in the Jewish community were now moving to a more political approach.
- The response within the Jewish community had become significantly more positive in recent months.

- Christians Aware was supporting a married couple from Pakistan, one Christian and one Muslim. The couple had been asked to go to Croydon immediately because the Home Office “wanted to help them”. As soon as they arrived they had been placed in detention and then deported to Pakistan. Although Christians Aware could not help in that regard, it had kept in touch with them. Maintaining personal contact can give confidence. In one case it had given a camera to a Muslim who was sent back to Afghanistan, which has enabled him to earn a living as a photographer.
- In Scotland the Government had encouraged welcome and integration, and all 33 local authorities had bought in to this. Local inter faith groups had experience of working with diversity which could be very valuable in some areas of the country which had not previously had this experience.
- One participant said that his house at Eid recently was full of gifts that his daughter had collected for those in need.
- Hindus in Bolton were collecting food for refugees the following week.
- Religions for Peace was encouraging action in Europe to meet the needs of refugees.
- Rather than pathologising refugees and seeing them as needy people to whom we provided assistance, we should move to seeing them as people with whom we can learn, love and grow.
- Some of the reservations expressed within the Jewish community came from a fear of groups which did not integrate. There was a need to act quickly to help refugees assimilate the shared values of our wider community.
- It was helpful to remember that faith groups could engage with public bodies.
- Faith groups needed to educate their own local communities about the difference between refugees and economic migrants, particularly in those parts of the country where there was widespread concern about those migrants from Eastern Europe who are legally here.
- It was important that Muslim communities organised locally, talked to local and national government and engaged in inter faith work.
- We can learn from the time when many Ugandan Asians came to Britain – they were not portrayed as vulnerable, weak, or an invasion.
- The values we wish to share are not just ‘British values’ but human values. The refugees also brought their own good values to share.

Ways forward

- Among the range of forms of support that faith communities could offer to refugees, particular attention should be paid to integration, as isolation led to the lack of cohesion that both the government and the public feared. The Baha’i community had always worked to support integration, particularly where children and young people were involved. It was important to remember that where we were born was a lottery, and environmental disasters could make any of us refugees.
 - There was a need to work to improve discourse about refugees and change the language used. Refugees were helped to integrate by support provided which was in context of awareness of their culture and traditions.
 - We have to work with refugees to build a better future together.
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How is the Churches Refugee Network (CRN) responding to the needs of refugees and asylum seekers?

The Revd Fleur Houston

What is the Churches Refugee Network (CRN)? According to the web-site, the CRN gives “collective and ecumenical voice on issues of asylum and immigration.” It is collective by virtue of its membership of the Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, an umbrella organisation which brings together churches with different traditions and theologies. In this respect it is also ecumenical. And in the broadest sense of the word ecumenical, it seeks to promote the common good, with a particular focus on refugees and those who are seeking asylum.

The theological perspective on which CRN bases its work derives from the Scriptures of the Judaeo-Christian tradition. Our starting-point is the affirmation that all human beings have equal worth and dignity in the eyes of God. It follows that a community before God is a community where human dignity is affirmed and respected. Throughout the writings it is also made plain that God has a special concern for the stranger who is to be treated fairly and with humanity. This is the context in which we respond to the needs of asylum seekers and refugees and evaluate the policies of the state accordingly. Each person seeking asylum is an individual not a number or an economic cipher, and each individual’s circumstances and claims need proper attention.

CRN started life as an informal group of competent people who provided support and advice to local churches who quickly found, as they began to minister to refugees, that they were faced with complex human, legal and political issues which were beyond their experience. But in 2004, faced with draconian legal changes and a severe criticism of government

procedures in asylum welfare, the group was established on a more formal basis and advocacy became an increasingly significant part of its work.

What does that involve? Faced with a rapidly changing succession of government immigration measures, we keep ourselves as informed and up to date as possible. While much of this can be done on the web, it also involves keeping abreast of cases in courts and tribunals, attending APPG sessions in Parliament, and the launching of reports. We organize occasional specialist seminars with experts in the field: most recently, these have been on detention, on torture, and on how UK immigration law relates to EU law. In consequence we are in a position to respond to developments as they arise; government consultations such as the recent consultation on the document ‘Reforming support’ typically allow very little time for response. But the details and underlying presumptions of the documents have frequently to be challenged, as in this case, and we have to be well prepared. I might instance the Immigration Bill 2014 and the further measures which are currently being debated in Parliament; these foster an insidious culture of intolerance and a creeping tide of discrimination. So in addition to responding to Home Office consultations, we write letters to the press, we lobby MPs and Lords, we brief Church leaders.

As advocacy work has become increasingly important we have had to do a careful balancing act with the need to advise and resource local church bodies and individuals. This takes different forms. Firstly, although all members of the steering group are volunteers, we draw on a considerable range and level of expertise. Some are project co-ordinators of significant refugee organizations. The Jesuit Refugee Service which has a particular focus on services for detainees; the International Care Network in Bournemouth which assists in particular those who are destitute; the Migrant and Refugee Communities Forum in London which addresses all aspects of the social

exclusion of refugees with the aim of promoting meaningful integration in the UK; and Restore, a project of Birmingham Churches Together which supports job seeking refugees. Other members of the steering group find themselves addressing appeals for help. These might be from a local minister who typically finds that a valued member of their congregation has been refused leave to remain in the UK because their claim to be Christian lacks credibility; or from a school-teacher, dismayed to find that a popular and able student has been taken to a detention centre with her parents. One member of the group, herself a refugee, is much involved in issues around trafficking, and another works with universities who are prepared to take refugee students under the auspices of the Helena Kennedy Foundation.

Secondly, we arrange an annual conference alternately in the north or south of England, to foster solidarity between refugees, refugee groups and concerned individuals of all faiths and none. The conferences also aim to equip those who attend with legal updates, and advice on various subjects such as how to deal with hate speech, or how to bridge the gap between being given leave to remain and full integration.

And last but by no means least, with the huge outpouring of compassion and concern for refugees on the move from amongst other places, Syria, Eritrea, Afghanistan, and the difficulty in knowing how best to respond, we decided this year to hold a Vigil for Refugee Welcome on 8 December from 10.00–16.30 at St Margaret's Church Westminster. Invitations will be sent to all MPs and Lords and a welcome is extended to people of all faiths to attend.

The Jewish community's response to the Syrian refugee crisis

David Walsh

Background

2015

Context

- The Jewish community has a deep historical experience of exile, being refugees, and genocide – this naturally leads to an empathy towards other refugees.
- The community has always had a grassroots movement supporting refugees. Several synagogues have well-resourced asylum drop in centres, offer legal and moral support.
- More progressive denominations within the community have campaigned on the issue of asylum and refugees for a number of years, also with other faith partners through organisations such as Citizens UK.
- Leading religious leaders and figures have particularly drawn attention to the plight of minorities in the Middle East.

Syria

- The response to the crisis in Syria started at a grassroots level, but took a little bit longer for establishment organisations to take on. This is due in part to the apprehension some in the Jewish community feel towards Syria – it was only very recently that Jews were made refugees of that country themselves, and it has been in conflict with Israel several times.
- There are concerns among some in the community due to the fact that attacks on Jewish targets in Europe, most notably in Paris and Brussels, had been

carried out by Islamists returning from fighting in Syria – although most of them were in fact citizens of European countries.

- The plight of Alan Kurdi shook the conscience of the establishment organisations as it did much of the general populace.

Response

- World Jewish Relief has witnessed one of its most successful campaign launches in history, raising millions specifically for Syrian refugees.
- IsraAID – the Israeli aid agency, has been very proactive in helping refugees particularly in Greece and Turkey alongside the aforementioned WJR and other organisations such as the Joint Distribution Committee.
- Synagogues with refugee drop-in centres have increased capacity in anticipation for Syrian refugees in the UK.
- The community has held several roundtables and events to promote various initiatives, spearheaded by WJR and the Board of Deputies. These include a website, www.supportrefugees.org.uk.
- A number of prominent Jewish leaders have signed letters which have appeared in the national press calling on the government to keep its word.

Discussion Group 5: Living well together: snapshot from campus

Facilitator: Dr Harshad Sanghrajka, Institute of Jainology

Presenter: Sukhi Kainth, Project Manager, Campus Cohesion, Faith and Belief, National Union of Students

Rapporteur: Dr Joyce Miller, Religious Education Council of England and Wales

In recent years, NUS has developed a wide ranging programme of faith and belief work with Students' Unions which is very much about 'living well together': both on campus and in students' future professional lives. Sukhi Kainth talks about this, drawing examples from work in both Higher Education and Further Education institutions and also discusses how local inter faith and faith groups might make links with campus faith and inter faith initiatives.

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Dr Harshad Sanghrajka welcomed participants to the discussion group and invited Ms Sukhi Kainth to offer her presentation.

A copy of the slides from Ms Kainth's PowerPoint presentation, entitled, 'Bringing faith and belief to campus life', are at the end of this note.

Her talk included the following points:

- Policies and activities to create a cohesive campus were very important.
- There was not enough discussion/ dialogue taking place on the role of religion and belief in student life.
- There was a perception that extremism was a major problem on university campuses.
- There was an issue about external speakers, with the potential danger of

extremism being promoted among students.

- A 'No platform policy' had been adopted by many Student Unions.
- There was sometimes manipulation by the media.
- There could be a tension between freedom of speech and tackling extremism.
- Among hate crime statistics the highest figures were in relation to religion and belief.
- Issues such as availability of appropriate foods, timing of examinations and so forth, could all be relevant to people of different religions and beliefs on campus.
- Student Unions were autonomous.
- Global issues could impact on student life.
- There were some issues specific to FE.
- There was evidence of isolation and vulnerability of students linked to religion and belief. Research on that issue had been carried out. There was often a lack of connection between relevant campus organisations. The role of personal tutors in supporting students needed further work.

Examples of success included:

- Training for student officers on relevant issues.
- Addressing of the marginalisation of Muslim women through collaboration with relevant organisations to encourage leadership skills among Muslim women.
- Holistic policies and practice.

- Leeds University's programme during Inter Faith Week.

Ms Kainth also showed a video of Hereford Sixth Form College's art project with students on graffiti.

Dr Sanghrajka thanked Ms Kainth for her presentation and invited general reflections and observations. The following is a summary of points made by individual participants in the discussion which followed.

- Freedom and security – freedom of speech and freedom from harm. The issue was how processes were managed to avoid making people vulnerable.
- Geo-politics – hate crime was often linked to current issues. Students had a right to campaign and right to protest.
- Funding from Government for Sukhi Kainth's post was due to end in December. Materials would be available as part of the legacy of the work that had been done by the project.
- Was there a way that IFN could continue to support the inter faith work of NUS?
- Could students be partners in local inter faith work?
- Faith and belief organisations were among those with the highest number of members among campus societies.
- Institutions of Further Education did not have Student Unions established as strongly as on university campuses.
- Ethical issues should be part of every university course.
- There was insufficient training for university staff to deal with issues and to support students.
- It was important to identify the needs of students so that staff and chaplaincy could provide support.

- Some university departments of religious studies and theology were closing. They should be helping promote inter faith understanding among staff and students.
- Universities had lost their public service model and had been replaced by a business model.
- How could IFN and local faith communities support the NUS to make sure that students were safe on campus?
- There was a need for a whole day conference on this topic because it was important, large and urgent.

Dr Sanghrajka concluded the session with a summation of the important points and thanked Ms Kainth as well as the participants for their contribution.

Bringing Faith and Belief to Campus Life

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nus
national union of students

Aim

To explore how student's union are developing faith and belief policy and student led activities which helps to create cohesive campus.

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History of the Project

Since 2009, with funding from the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (DBIS), NUS has taken a clear leadership role in delivering its responsibilities of supporting students' unions to:

- Understand the risks posed by some external speakers and how to mitigate against these risks
- Understand their responsibilities in relation to legislation
- Respond to tensions between different student faith groups
- Support student faith groups negotiate for improved services and gain acknowledgement from their institutions of their specific needs (particularly in relation to changing equality legislation), and
- Increase interaction, understanding and learning amongst students and staff about the role of religion and belief in students' lives.

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Our Impact

1. **External speakers and the potential risk of hate speech** at university and colleges, through students' union and society events. We have produced a [guidance](#) which over 80% of our membership have utilised to respond to their legal responsibility
2. **Hate Crime, discrimination and harassment** experienced by different student groups (identified through our recent [hate crime research](#), and previous surveys of students and students' unions). Tackling this will improve the experience of students of faith, and other student groups, and reduce isolation and segregation of student groups.

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Our Impact

3. Tensions between groups and the lack of understanding of the needs of students with a religion and/or belief; or how to respond to such tensions amongst staff and officers in institutions and students' unions. We can tackle this issue by increasing knowledge and understanding of the needs of students of faith and belief as well as other student groups (through training and support) and increase inter faith engagement amongst students at university and college.

4. FE and Nations Due to a successful funding bid we have increase the funding for 2014-2015 and are now working more affectively within FE and the Nations do to the recruitment of an additional member of staff. We will deliver training and provide resources to the FE sector and Nations to respond to 'mitigating risk' and manage better campus cohesion. We will provide our members with the confidence and understanding on how to response appropriately to faith and belief issues and in turn better represent our diverse membership.



Case Studies :Leeds University Student's Union

	Mon 18 th	Tues 19 th	Wed 20 th	Thurs 21 st	Fri 22 nd
Afternoon 11-3pm	Religion 101 (Chance for every society to share what they believe)		Is there Life after death (What do different faiths believe)	Talks between three Abrahamic faiths (Similarities/ differences between Judaism, Islam & Christianity)	Q&A session (Clarifying common misconceptions). - Joint Prayer outside the
Location	Democracy Corner	Democracy Corner	Democracy Corner	Democracy Corner	Democracy Corner
Evening		Prayer / Meditation Night	Speed Faithing	Temple Run	JSoC- Friday Night Dinner
Location		Common Room	Common Room	Various Locations	Hill House

The afternoon talks focused on "Discovering Faith," whereas the evening events were focused on "Interfaith".



Our Impact

5. Research and Evaluation

Conducted a comprehensive review of the impact of the of this project on our membership.

Delivered an internal gap analysis auditing policy and procedure on external speakers across the sector.

Produce first ever [report](#) on Isolation and Vulnerability of students of faith and belief



Aerosol Hereford Sixth Form College



Examples of Impact and Success

"I will Lead the way for Muslim Women"

Delivered a very successful Muslim Women's Leadership event in partnership with FOSIS. Seeing over 150 Muslim women attending over the last 3 years

Delivered a comprehensive training programme on issues from external speakers to religious diversity and anti discrimination with 100 % positive feedback

Have funded over 100 campus cohesion and social impact projects through students' unions



Case Studies: Bucks Student's Union

"Have your say pods Jewish, Christian, Muslim collaboration (JCM)

"Interfaith Community Clean Up



Discussion Group 6: Living well together within the workplace

Facilitator: Cllr Manjula Sood MBE, Leicester Council of Faiths and Leicester City Council

Presenters: Dr David Perfect, Manager, Equality and Human Rights Commission; Dr Shuja Shafi, Secretary General, Muslim Council of Britain

Rapporteur: Dr Peter Rookes, Birmingham Council of Faiths

The expressed needs of people, in relation to their religion and belief or other equality strand, in the work place can sometimes be easy to manage; at other times more complex. Negotiating these can be challenging for employers and employees alike as they work to create a workplace where people 'live well together' and, at the same time, fulfil the purposes for which they are employed.

An opportunity to look in greater depth at some of the issues discussed in Dr Jochelson's plenary presentation, as well as to have an interactive discussion focused on three short case studies of negotiating difference and 'reasonable accommodation' in the workplace.

Dr Jochelson will also be present in the workshop.

Dr Shuja Shafi, Secretary General, Muslim Council of Britain, will offer some brief reflections about how faith communities can help employers in engaging with such issues.

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Councillor Manjula Sood welcomed participants to the meeting.

Dr David Perfect distributed copies of 3 hypothetical case studies: one about the wearing of religious symbols, one about a request for time off for religious observance and one about displaying a poster advertising a prayer meeting which

involves discussions which some employees may find offensive. A copy of each of these is at the end of this note. (In the event, only 2 case studies were discussed, though all 3 are included with this note for interest.)

A number of issues were discussed by the group:

Wearing religious symbols

- It would be helpful to involve staff and their representatives in the drawing up of a new organisational dress code.
- There is experience in the Heath Service of incrementalisation, by which the boundaries of correct uniform can be gradually extended to a point, which some may regard as unacceptable.
- One solution might be to allow employees to wear a hijab in the same colour as the company's uniform.
- Any request should be taken seriously and carefully considered by the employer.
- When a woman wears a niqab (rather than a hijab), she may not be able to communicate as effectively as she would otherwise. But an employer would need to demonstrate this, not just assert it.
- Employers should adopt a consistent approach when managing requests from those of different faiths (or none).
- Health and safety issues should be considered.
- Consultation with religious leaders, for example when developing a dress code policy, could be helpful. Security considerations may sometimes be important and lead to certain restrictions on what can be worn.

Time off for religious observance

- Any request should be taken seriously and carefully considered by the employer.
- It might be possible for employers to alter the staff rotas so that a request could be granted.
- In some people's experience, senior staff could sometimes be inflexible.
- Sometimes there were a large number of employees who did not want to work difficult shifts and this made it more difficult for the employer to grant all requests.
- It might be helpful to discuss any requests at the time of interview.
- Employers should treat other requests, for example time off for child care purposes, in a similar way.

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EHRC case studies

Case Study 1

You are Gemma, a senior HR manager in a large department store which is part of a national chain of stores. The company has recently introduced a new policy that all staff who come into direct contact with customers must follow the company dress code which means wearing clothing of a particular style and colour. In addition, staff who come into direct contact with customers are not permitted to wear any jewellery over their clothing.

One member of staff, Bhupinder, states that he wishes to continue wearing the *kara* at work. Another, Sariya, who has previously worn a *hijab* at work, asks if she can continue to do so as an expression of her religious beliefs. A third, Richard, states that he would like to start wearing a crucifix to reflect his beliefs; he adds that it is important to him that this is visible over his clothing.

- How should you deal with each of these three requests? What factors do you need to take into account?
- Would it make any difference to your response if several people made the same requests?
- Would it make any difference to your response if Sariya asks if she can wear the *niqab* rather than the *hijab* and, if so, why? (The *hijab* is a scarf that covers the hair and neck, but leaves the face free. The *niqab* is a veil that covers the head and face with the exception of the eyes).
- In what ways do you think faith communities can help employers and employees have a better understanding of the issues that this case study raises?

Case Study 2

You are Waqar, a manager of a small business which is responsible for managing a car park, where a 24 hour security presence is promised to customers. Your staff work on rotating shifts, but are permitted to make informal arrangements amongst themselves about taking time off, providing that the car park is staffed at all times. One of your staff, Mark, states that every Friday afternoon he would like to leave early for religious reasons. If you were to grant this request, you are concerned that you might not have enough staff to be able to ensure 24 hour cover to customers.

- How should you deal with this request? What factors do you need to take into account?
- Would it make any difference to your response if two of your staff made the same request at the same time?
- Would it make any difference to your response if Mark did not make a request but Emily, another member of your staff, states that she would like to take every Sunday off for religious reasons?
- In what ways do you think faith communities can help employers and

employees have a better understanding of the issues that this case study raises?

Case Study 3

You are Jyoti, a new line manager of a team of people who sit together in an open plan office. One of the men in the team, Jeremy, has started putting up posters on his desk advertising weekly prayer meetings; the poster states that these meetings are open to all Christians. The posters are quite large and attract a lot of comment from other team members – some favourable, some unfavourable.

You are told by Alex, who is also in your team, that other members of staff who are not in your team regularly stop at Jeremy's desk and have discussions about religion with him. Alex also tells you that as someone who is both a humanist and a lesbian, she sometimes find the conversation she overhears uncomfortable. Although Jeremy does not himself talk about sexuality issues, other staff who speak to him sometimes state their opposition to civil partnerships and especially the marriage of same-sex couples; Alex and her partner are themselves considering getting married in the future.

- How should you deal with the situation? What factors do you need to take into account?
- Would it make any difference to your response if it was Jeremy who stated his opposition to civil partnerships and same-sex couples?
- In what ways do you think faith communities can help employers and employees have a better understanding of the issues that this case study raises?

Discussion Group 7: Equipping us to live together well: religious literacy and chaplaincy

Facilitator: Venerable Bogoda Seelawimala, Vice-Chair, Inter Faith Network.

Presenters: Prudence Jones, Chair, East of England Faiths Agency; and The Revd Prebendary Michael Metcalf, National Association of SACREs and Stafford and District Friends of Faith.

Rapporteur: The Revd Cassandra Howes, Bedford Council of Faiths and Methodist Church in Britain.

Encountering people of different faiths and beliefs is part of our day-to-day lives, in our communities, places of work and places of education, and when we make use of services and businesses. How well we live together depends on many factors. In this workshop two are considered:

- *what role do clergy and other religion and belief personnel such as chaplains play in helping support positive interaction?*
- *how can education and media help us become sufficiently religiously literate to engage well?*

.....

The Ven Bogoda Seelawimala welcomed participants to the discussion group and invited Ms Prudence Jones and the Revd Prebendary Michael Metcalf to offer their presentations. A copy of each of their talks is below.

Ms Prudence Jones

This talk will work from the particular to the general, as I know that my colleague will be concentrating on the theoretical aspect. The East of England Faiths Agency (EEFA), which I chair, works not only by supporting and facilitating inter faith and chaplaincy groups, but also by providing training and

teaching in the East of England. Our work takes place at grassroots level, building up good relations with individuals and groups. In that spirit I will give some examples of what we do, leaving it open to the present group to consider how useful these activities are in helping those concerned and those around them to engage well with one another.

Forum of Faiths From our foundation in 2001, we have held many regional conferences at which faith representatives explain and discuss their understanding of their faiths' teaching on a given issue. The environment, gambling, justice, health, chaplaincy and emergency planning are just some of the topics we have covered.

Schools and RE tutors EEFA has a panel of faith community tutors, raised in collaboration with the Counties' Advisory Staff and SACREs, who respond to requests from schools for RE teaching. For example: a primary school in Norfolk requests a Hindu speaker, preferably with the ability to demonstrate Indian dancing. A school in Ipswich arranges through us a day taking its staff to visit a mosque, a synagogue and a cathedral. The schools are charged and our staff paid for their work, which has raised the status of RE in some schools and increased the budget allocated to it! Academy schools in particular are making increasing use of the service.

Further and Higher Education EEFA has recently been approved to teach National Open College Network (Level 3) courses in Religious Education, enabling students to explore questions of life and death, values and traditions, with reference to various religious traditions, so as to enable students to interact more sensitively with members of our diverse, multicultural society. From 2006 we also taught in the Certificate of Higher Education in Supporting Diversity and Equality at the University of Cambridge Institute of Continuing Education. My memory of teaching the first year of that course is of extremely lively discussion, when students from local government, the police and other statutory agencies were able to

explore the difficult questions they felt constrained to avoid in their professional life and to engage more directly with speakers of different faiths than when they were bound by their professional roles.

In-Service Training Not only RE teachers, but police, fire fighters, probation officers and hospital staff have benefited from EEFA's training workshops. One of the experiential tools we use is our Diversity Game, a board game which invites each of its players to assume the identity of someone from a different faith section of society and to experience how that person might feel in daily dealings with fellow members of an ill-informed world.

Beliefs Box For younger learners in particular, we have an "Open the Box" game that allows them to see and handle some typical artefacts of a given religion, given for that purpose by members of that religion. It is an opportunity for pupils to take the lead in exploring what is in the various boxes and to give their reactions, insights and suggestions, before learning the actual use and significance of these artefacts.

All of these training aids work on the principle of personal, often tangible contact in a safe environment, before, and in addition to, the authoritative theoretical instruction which is essential to learning. What is experienced physically and non-rationally is often incorporated far better than unaccompanied theory which can simply be regurgitated and forgotten.

Chaplaincy Some of our teaching work spills over into chaplaincy, including most recently the setting up of a Multi-Faith Chaplaincy Team available for hospitals, schools and prisons in East Anglia (2013), the Pan-Essex Interfaith Network, for mutual support and concerns especially around hate crime (2014), and we collaborated with Essex Mind and Spirit, linking chaplains in mental health hospitals with local faith communities (2015).

How does this help us live well together?
Our experience is that by interpersonal and

intrapersonal experience of diversity, we come to understand and respect at a much deeper level the customs and beliefs of other people. This gives body to the theory that we all have to learn, while the theory crucially shapes and contextualises what would otherwise be subjective reactions which so easily give rise to uninformed violence or sentimentality.

The Revd Prebendary Michael Metcalf

Prebendary Metcalf gave a brief summary of his personal background. His roles had included: Lecturer in Religious Studies, Diocesan Director of Education; SACRE Chair; NASACRE Treasurer; part-time University Chaplain (and FE); and member of advisory inter-faith group (now the Stafford & District Friends of Faith).

He noted that:

- Staffordshire University had an Equality and Diversity Unit, which included Chaplaincy.
- The University had a thorough-going commitment to inclusion and accessibility, reinforced by Human Rights and anti-discrimination legislation.
- Even so, there had been issues around providing adequate/satisfactory prayer facilities at Stafford campus. This might have been due to poor consultation.

(a) Role of chaplains etc?

- It was important not to underestimate the significance of chaplains and other faith personnel in demonstrating the institution's recognition of the existence and importance of faith and faith communities, both at the level of internal politics and in terms of 'presence' in the public space of the university. Chaplains were under some obligation to seek the well-being and harmonious operation of the institution.

- In terms of the inter faith, living well together, dimension, rather than a narrower pastoral ministry just to particular faith group members. Some possible roles for chaplains were as:
 - Advocate – for faith, for faiths, for promoting awareness and sensitivity, and for religious literacy
 - Enabler – taking initiatives to foster engagement, to facilitate communications, and to assist mediation
 - Lightning Conductor – picking up potential issues, conflicts, tensions and seeking to defuse
 - Empathiser – responding to significant events/experiences within and between faith communities
 - 'Prophet' – seeking to discern underlying trends, future needs, possibilities, and opportunities.

He also spoke about the value of a project or other activity bringing people together for a shared purpose.

(b) Role of the media and education

- Use the media constructively if possible.
- There is a need for an institutional culture of religious literacy in both the media and in educational establishments – not just the religious affairs person/RE or RS specialist. How best to achieve this? From the top downwards? From grass-roots activism? There need to be explicit aims, which are negotiated and reviewed. These should be included in job descriptions and staff development.
- There are many sources of resistance to establishing a culture of religious literacy – for example, complacency, arrogance, self-interest, conflicting motivations, ideology (eg militant

atheism). Institutions also may be motivated by self-interest. Media 'campaigns' often demonise, simplify and stereotype.

- There were also surrounding issues, questions such as – “How far should freedom of expression go?”; and the difficulties of extremism, and attitudes to it. ‘Tolerance’ was not enough, for living well together.

He gave an example of a controversial speaker invited to Warwick University. The Student Union had banned him but following a public outcry, the ban had been lifted. There was an article on this, “The Problem with Religious Tolerance” in the (US) Chronicle of Higher Education – <http://chronicle.com/article/The-Problem-With-Religious/233593>.

Ven Seelawimala thanked the speakers for their interesting presentations and invited general reflections and observations. The following is a summary of points made by individual participants in the discussion which followed:

Chaplaincy

- The World Faiths Advisory Group charter at the University of Leicester currently only recognised the Church of England among the Christian denominations, although this was being changed. The university in question was trying to get (paid) support for Muslim chaplains.
- Chaplaincy was there to provide for human needs.
- Universities need to change potentially restrictive charters.
- A chaplain was not an advocate. They must not be parochial or evangelical.
- One was dealing with human needs. One should listen first and then respond to expressed needs. There should be respect for the helper's motivation.

- Chaplaincy started as Christian and then spread to include all faiths.
- People might accept Christianity being the most prominent faith but other faiths might be frightened that they would lose their own culture.
- A culture of openness was extremely important, if only to counter potential distrust of professionals.
- To overcome ‘radicalisation’ on campus the government Prevent strategy required vetting of external speakers. The Home Office had produced lists of problematic speakers. Training had to be given to all staff. National Union of Students objected strongly to the Prevent programme. There had been problems, such as a student being reported to the Prevent authorities because their PhD topic was a study of terrorist literature.
- Should chaplaincy be defined?
- Chaplaincy was somewhat focused. Religious literacy was wider.

Religious Literacy

- There was a feeling that representatives of different faiths lacked literacy about other faiths.
- Writing of introductory leaflets for Leicester council involved checking with faith groups.
- How much knowledge did one need to represent one's own religion?
- How expert were people? Religious literacy might need professional involvement.
- The previous Chief Rabbi, Lord Sacks, advocated professional educators.
- Which religions did we need to understand?

- There was a distinction between facilitating dialogue and engagement.
- Reading groups promoted understanding and empathy.
- What was the best way to involve students, who had so many commitments?
- A problem was a lack of general knowledge, including of one's own faith.
- People must learn their own faith properly.
- How to educate society? There was a need to be open to other faiths.
- Centres should share knowledge.
- Ignorance could polarise society.
- Equality of opportunity between faiths could help avoid unnecessary friction.
- Inter faith activities link up groups, which might be defined by history or geography as well as religion.
- Joined-up knowledge and understanding was critical.
- Teaching about one's own faith must include teaching about inter faith relations.
- There needed to be detailed and inclusive educational programmes.
- In Peterborough, one faith group would work with a school, on a rotating allocation basis.
- Newcastle had used a peace walk.
- Potential barriers were: (a) a lack of grass roots theological and academic knowledge; and (b) a fear of strangers. The latter could be defused by face-to-face contact.
- A common feature of the comments was education. It was important to emphasise the importance in society of religion and of diversity.

Participant list

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Dr Manazir Ahsan MBE
Islamic Foundation

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Mr Daniel Alai
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Mr George Ballentyne
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Dr Joy Barrow
Churches Together in Britain and Ireland

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Inter-faith Council for Wales

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Cllr Ruth Bush
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Mrs Barbara Butler
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Mr Josh Cass
3FF

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Council of Christians and Jews

Mr Jeremy Dable
Preston Faiths Forum

Mrs Nädine Daniel
Merseyside Council of Faiths

Mr Malcolm Minoo Deboo
Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe

Mr Bhajan Singh Devsi
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Mrs Cynthia Dickinson
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Mrs Jenny Farley
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Mr Tom Farley
Rugby Interfaith Forum

Mr Mustafa Field MBE
Faiths Forum for London

Mr Sean Finlay
Wisbech Interfaith Forum

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National Union of Students

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World Congress of Faiths

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World Ahlul-Bayt Islamic League

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Buddhist Society

Mr Tim Lucas
North Staffordshire Forum of Faiths

Mr Derek McAuley
General Assembly of Unitarian and Free
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Mgr Daniel McHugh
BIRINUS Birmingham

Mr Shashikant Merchant
Bolton Interfaith Council

The Revd Preb Michael Metcalf
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Joseph Interfaith Foundation

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Bristol Inter Faith Group

Mr Chan Parmar
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Harrow Interfaith

Mr Neil Pitchford
Druid Network

Venerable Beragama Piyarathana Thero
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Church of England / Near Neighbours

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Hindu Council UK

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Mr David Rennie
Interfaith MK

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South Shropshire Interfaith Forum

Prebendary David Roberts
South Shropshire Interfaith Forum

Mr Jim Robertson
North East Regional Faiths Network

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National Council of Hindu Temples (UK)

Pandit Madhu Shastri
National Council of Hindu Temples (UK)

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Ms Patricia Stevens
Harrow Interfaith

Professor Michael Taylor
St Philip's Centre

Mr Robin Taylor
Pagan Federation

Bishop Festus Tete-Djawu
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Leicester Council of Faiths

The Revd Mike Walling
Canterbury and District Inter Faith Action

Mr David Walsh
Board of Deputies of British Jews

Bessie White
Quaker Committee for Christian and
Interfaith Relations

Mr Vivian Wineman
Co-Chair, Inter Faith Network for the UK

The Inter Faith Network for the UK

Inter faith understanding, respect and cooperation is ever more important in the UK today.

The Inter Faith Network for the UK (IFN) links and works with national faith community representative bodies, inter faith organisations, academic and educational organisations with an interest in inter faith relations, as well as with other organisations including Government and other public agencies, to strengthen inter faith understanding and cooperation in the UK. IFN is unique in its scope and role both within the UK and in Europe. It has been bringing organisations and people together for over 25 years and its work is always evolving to meet fresh needs.

IFN carries out its work of strengthening good inter faith relations through:

- providing advice and support to inter faith organisations around the country to add value to their work
- running a helpline which each year assists hundreds of people with their inter faith projects or issues
- advocating for support of local inter faith groups and national and regional inter faith initiatives
- producing resources, in cooperation with its members, on issues of common concern such as faith based dietary practice
- bringing its member bodies and others together regularly to meet and discuss issues of common concern
- other programmes of work including Faith and Public Life and Inter Faith Week

For more information about IFN, visit www.interfaith.org.uk.

The work of IFN is supported by faith communities, trusts, other donors, and the Department for Communities and Local Government.

Member organisations of the Inter Faith Network for the UK 2015–16

Faith Community Representative Bodies

Baha'i Community of the UK
BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha
Board of Deputies of British Jews
British Muslim Forum
Buddhist Society
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
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)
Druid Network
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)
Pagan Federation
Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations
Spiritualists' National Union
Sri Lankan Sangha Sabha of GB
United Reformed Church in the UK
Vishwa Hindu Parishad (UK)
World Ahlul-Bayt Islamic League
World Islamic Mission (UK)
Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe

National and Regional Inter Faith Organisations

Northern Ireland Inter-Faith Forum
Interfaith Scotland
Inter-faith Council for Wales/Cyngor Cyd-Ffydd Cymru
Faiths Forum for London
North East Regional Faiths Network
South East England Faith Forum
West Midlands Faiths Forum
All Faiths Network for the UK
Children of Abraham (Imams and Rabbis Council of the United Kingdom)
Christian Muslim Forum
Christians Aware Interfaith Programme
Coexist Foundation
Council of Christians and Jews
Council of Dharmic Faiths
East of England Faiths Agency
Hindu Christian Forum
Interfaith Alliance UK
International Association for Religious Freedom (British Chapter)
International Interfaith Centre
Joseph Interfaith Foundation
Lokahi Foundation
London Boroughs Faiths Network
London Inter Faith Centre
London Society of Jews and Christians
Maimonides Interfaith Foundation
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

Educational and Academic Bodies

Cambridge Inter-Faith Programme
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

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
Blackpool Faith Forum
Bolton Interfaith Council
Faith Links (Bournemouth and Poole)
Bradford Concord Interfaith Society
Brent Multi-Faith Forum
Brighton and Hove Inter-Faith Contact
Group
Bristol Inter Faith Group
Bristol Multi-Faith Forum
Building Bridges in Burnley
Muslim-Christian Forum (Bury)
Calderdale Interfaith Council
Cambridge Inter-Faith Group
Canterbury and District Inter Faith Action
Cheltenham Inter Faith
Cherwell Faith Forum
Cleveland and Tees Valley Inter Faith Group
Coventry Multi-Faith Forum
Crawley Interfaith Network
Faiths Together in Croydon
Cumbria Interfaith Forum
Devon Faith and Belief Forum
Doncaster Interfaith
Dudley Borough Interfaith Network
Eastbourne Faiths Forum
Elmbridge Multi-Faith Forum

Exeter Faith and Belief Group
Gateshead Inter Faith Forum
Hampshire Interfaith Network
Harrow Interfaith
Hastings and District Interfaith Forum
Hillingdon Inter Faith Network
Horsham Interfaith Forum
Hounslow Friends of Faith
Huddersfield Inter Faith Council
Inter Faith Isle of Man
Inter-faith North/West (Northern Ireland)
Islington Faiths Forum
Keighley Interfaith Group
Kingston Inter Faith Forum
Kirklees Faiths Forum
Faiths Together in Lambeth
Lancashire Forum of Faiths
Faith in Lancaster
Leeds Concord Interfaith Fellowship
Leeds Faiths Forum
Leicester Council of Faiths
Interfaith Forum for Leicestershire
Loughborough Council of Faiths
Luton Council of Faiths
Faith Network for Manchester
Mansfield Interfaith Group
Medway Inter Faith Action Forum
Merseyside Council of Faiths
Interfaith MK (Milton Keynes)
Milton Keynes Council of Faiths
Newcastle Council of Faiths
Newham Association of Faiths
North Herts Faith Forum
North Kirklees Inter-Faith Council
North Lincolnshire Multi Faith Partnership
North Staffordshire Forum of Faiths
Northampton Inter Faith Forum
Norwich InterFaith Link
Nottingham Inter Faith Council
Oldham Inter Faith Forum
Oxford Round Table of Religions
Building Bridges Pendle – Interfaith
Community Project
Peterborough Inter-Faith Council
Plymouth Centre for Faiths and Cultural
Diversity
Portsmouth Inter Faith Forum
Preston Faith Forum
Redbridge Faith Forum
Rochdale Multi Faith Partnership
Rugby Inter Faith Forum
Sheffield Inter Faith
South London Inter Faith Group
South Shropshire Interfaith Forum

Southampton Council of Faiths
Southwark Multi Faith Forum
Stafford and District Friends of Faith
Stratford-on-Avon Interfaith Forum
Suffolk Inter-Faith Resource
Faiths United (Tameside)
Telford and Wrekin Interfaith Group
Torbay Interfaith Forum
Tower Hamlets Inter Faith Forum
Waltham Forest Faith Communities Forum
Wandsworth Multi-Faith Network
Warwick District Faiths Forum
Watford Inter Faith Association
Wellingborough Inter Faith Group
Welwyn Hatfield Interfaith Group
Westminster Faith Exchange
William Campbell-Taylor (City of London
Interfaith)
Windsor and Maidenhead Community
Forum
Wisbech Interfaith Forum
Wolverhampton Inter Faith and
Regeneration Network
Worcestershire Inter-Faith Forum
Wycombe Sharing of Faiths
York Interfaith Group

List as at the close of the 2015 AGM

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