

Moving forward together

Report of the 30th Anniversary
National Meeting



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Moving forward together

Report of the 30th Anniversary National Meeting

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Welcome

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

The meeting began with a time of silence together to remember all who had lost their lives or been injured in recent terrorist attacks and in the Grenfell Tower fire and their families; and the many people of different faiths and none who had responded with support and by redoubling their efforts to work for understanding, peace and justice.

Welcome to the 2017 National Meeting of the Inter Faith Network for the UK. Nearly 150 people from around the UK and from many of IFN's member bodies are present. A special welcome to those who are attending a National Meeting for the first time.

The Inter Faith Network for the UK was founded, 30 years ago, in 1987. Across the first three decades, the inter faith landscape has changed radically. This year's National Meeting looks forwards and outwards, taking some of the key publications and projects of IFN as a basis for discussion of the future of inter faith relations in the UK and of how we live well together as people of different faiths – as well as with people of non-religious beliefs.

We ask: What are the things that unite us? How do we respect and celebrate difference while building on what we share? In particular, how do we champion the contribution of faith communities to the good of our lives together?

We are delighted to have an excellent array of presenters and facilitators and a great deal of knowledge and experience in the room and we hope it will be an enjoyable and interesting day with much opportunity for shared learning.

We expected to welcome back this afternoon Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth, Parliamentary Under Secretary to the Department for Communities and Local Government, who carries responsibility for faith and cohesion issues. His department has let us know that parliamentary business has prevented this; we are glad to have, however, representation from the Department and acknowledge with gratitude its positive support for the work of IFN.

I look forward to warm, affirming mutually encouraging conversation as we explore together. The theme of today is Moving Forward Together. I was trying to think of an image and two came to mind.

There is that experience of the crowd leaving a football ground (or some other sporting event) where you move forward because you have no choice. You are swept along. You are conscious you are moving in the right direction but not with any active role in this.

The other image that came to mind was of a range of people dancing together, with the dance moving forward, but with space for individuality – for different themes and tunes, some discordant perhaps, but overall a joyful and a vibrant experience.

As we look today at what it means as faith communities to move forward together, it seems to me it is that latter image that we are pursuing. So let's dance well together today.

Past, present, future: linking for understanding and cooperation

Dr Harriet Crabtree OBE

Executive Director, Inter Faith Network for the UK

Bishop Atkinson: We welcome Dr Harriet Crabtree, Executive Director of IFN, as our opening speaker. She has had a long association with IFN and is well placed to offer some opening observations on the past, present and future contribution of IFN and its member bodies.

Dr Crabtree: Good morning everyone. I am going to offer some reflections on IFN's past, present and future, with a particular focus on linking and education as part of the 'Moving forward together' theme of today's anniversary National Anniversary meeting.

Before I go any further I would like to begin by paying tribute to the work of IFN's member bodies, many of which are represented here today. Your work as individual organisations is crucial in the current climate, both singly and together. I would also like to note the important contribution of our Trustees to the development of IFN across the last 30 years. I mention this morning particularly Lord Singh of Wimbledon as he is present this morning but unable to be with us for the formal thanks and presentation this lunchtime. I shall also mention two others present here today: Brian Pearce, IFN's first Director who was foundational in establishing IFN and in taking its work forward so well over many years, and Patricia Stoa of Nottingham InterFaith Council, who chaired the Strategic Review a few years ago that helps underpin our work today.

The beginning of the Inter Faith Network

The Inter Faith Network came into existence in 1987 after two years of extensive consultation with faith communities, inter faith bodies and others. Some of you here today were part of that process. IFN was formed by different faith communities and organisations together. It was a mutual creation of an organisation. That, I think, is very important. There are many visionary and significant organisations that have been created by individuals or have individuals as members. They have their own valid and important place. However, IFN was created as an 'organisation of organisations' because those who created it believed that without embedding this work in the mainstream organisations in the faith communities and the inter faith bodies it wouldn't survive and endure and the message would not continue to run deeply. Thus its bodies have 'moved forward together' from the start.

Why was IFN founded? In 1987 there were already important initiatives such as longstanding bodies like the Council of Christians and Jews, the World Congress of Faiths, International Association for Religious Freedom and a number of local inter faith groups: some of the oldest of which are represented here today. However there were no structures for engagement between the different faith communities at national level and there was no framework to link the different inter faith initiatives or

for linking relevant educational and academic bodies with faith and inter faith structures. In an increasingly diverse society the need for connection was apparent: the question was of what kind and how to create it.

Following a two year consultation, taken forward by Brian Pearce and leading faith community figures, IFN was formally constituted in March 1987 and was then publicly launched at a reception in June of that year sponsored by Sir Sigmund Sternberg.

IFN's charitable aims were, and are, ...*[T]o advance public knowledge and mutual understanding of the teachings, traditions and practices of the different faith communities in Britain including awareness both of their distinctive features and their common ground and to promote good relations between persons of different faiths.*

IFN's founder Officers are pictured on the Board outside: the Co-Chairs were the late Rabbi Hugo Gryn and Bishop Jim Thompson and the Vice-Chairs were Dr Mughram Al-Ghamdi, the late Om Parkash Sharma, and Indarjit Singh, now Lord Singh of Wimbledon. For a brief period in the 90s there was an additional Vice-Chair linked to the local inter faith constituency: the late Ivy Guttridge of the forerunner of the current Wolverhampton Interfaith which was one the UK's earliest inter faith groups.

So IFN was established in 1987 to educate, to connect faith communities and to link and strengthen inter faith initiatives, further understanding about and between traditions and to work for good inter faith relations in this country.

The early years were marked by developing the framework that remains still broadly the same today: the Inter Faith Network was founded as an organisation of organisations – 60 initially – in four categories of membership: national faith community representative bodies; national inter faith organisations; local inter faith bodies; and educational and academic bodies with an inter faith interest. The

pattern of religious traditions with bodies in membership was limited at that time to 9; since 2014 membership has been open to a wider range of traditions.

IFN set out, as it has continued, to raise awareness, link, share good practice, advocate for inter faith understanding and cooperation, produce resources and work with member bodies to advance its aims.

General principles

Moving forward well together calls for some agreement on fundamental principles of engagement.

Some of the earliest discussion within IFN was about the very principles of inter faith engagement and its place in the UK. A *Statement on Inter Religious Relations in Britain* was agreed by member bodies in 1991. Dr Paul Weller, who went on to become Professor at the University of Derby and is here today was involved in its production as IFN's first Resources Officer.

Another key document of the early period was the 1993 document *Building Good Relations with People of Different Faiths and Beliefs* which has gone on to be used not only in the UK but in many other parts of the world as well. That was developed in the context of work by a multi faith IFN working group looking at the relationship between mission and dialogue, and developing *Mission, Dialogue and Inter Religious Encounter*. This was prompted by the declaration of a Decade of Evangelism/ization by the Churches and a concern by other faith communities about whether their members were going to be targeted for conversion. It looked at such questions as does true dialogue inevitably exclude mission? What are the ethics of mission and of dialogue in a multi faith country? These issues remain as complex and challenging as ever with profoundly different perspectives being expressed. Discussion on the topic is made the more challenging because of the interrelationship between mission, conversion and histories of invasion and colonisation.

Linking and sharing good practice – and the nature of ‘linking bodies’

From its earliest years, a key part of the Inter Faith Network’s work has been bringing member bodies together to discuss their work and to share good practice. Local inter faith link meetings, for example, in various forms have happened across the years – from those for just one region to the more recent ones open to groups from anywhere across the UK.

IFN’s national faith community representative body members come together within its Faith Communities Forum which meets about four times a year to enable faith communities to discuss and reflect on issues of common concern. These range widely, from inter faith relations through to such issues as responding to emergencies; tackling hate crime; religion and the media; and integration.

These linking opportunities remain tremendously important – both for sharing news and good practice and also for mutual support and encouragement. Likewise IFN has held meetings over the years for national, and later also regional, inter faith bodies and for educational and academic bodies.

The UK dimension of IFN’s work that has continued across the years is immensely significant, as is the inter faith work within Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland carried out by Interfaith Scotland, the Inter Faith Council for Wales and the Northern Ireland inter Faith Forum – all of which are represented here today. Each year IFN holds a meeting with these bodies for exchange about programmes and issues. It is a mutually strengthening relationship.

Being a linking body means that an organisation has breadth; it means that people work together; it means that the organisation benefits and learns from its members and hopefully they benefit and learn from the organisation. But it also means that organisations sometimes have to move slowly in order to move forwards together. There has to be consensus, or at

very least majority agreement, on challenging issues. How many people are here from local inter faith organisations today? [A number of people raised their hands.] Quite a few. You may have experienced that situation where somebody wants the organisation or its committee to make a statement about an injustice here or abroad about which they feel passionately. There is an intake of breath; many may share a concern about the issue. However, they worry that if they go down that path there may be disagreement and it may actually lead to tension rather than unity. Or they are concerned that it will set a precedent that may be hard to follow. Always a very difficult balance. IFN has tried to move forward with consensus and it’s tried to move forward in such a way that it keeps everyone on board. It has to be acknowledged, however, that sometimes, this make things slow and can sometimes be seen as a pulling back rather than helping people move forward. Nonetheless, it is important to remain together, to remain connected, to remain linked and to work well together and IFN’s bodies have, over the years, judged that this is a price that has to be paid. I think that overall we continue to do that.

I have spoken about IFN linking meetings, linking within IFN. IFN also, of course, across the years has held many meetings and discussions involving a wide range of external bodies and invited guests. For example, returning to the earliest days, 1988 saw the Satanic Verses controversy and so at the outset of its life IFN found itself seeking to help members - and the Government - deal with some challenging issues, including discussion about blasphemy law. IFN worked with the then Commission for Racial Equality to hold a seminar in 1989 on ‘Law, Blasphemy and the Multi Faith Society’ and in the subsequent year a joint seminar on ‘Law, Respect for Religious Identity and the Multi Faith Society’. Another early area of focus was the role of women in faith communities – an issue which remains of great importance today.

Other early seminars and conferences were on topics such as “The Quest for Common Values” held at Gresham College with distinguished speakers from a number of faiths. IFN has gone on, across the years, to work in partnership from time to time on a number of issues to bring people together to discuss these, for example with the Citizenship Foundation on faith, identity and citizenship. A recent example would be the 2014 day, Young Voices, Young Agents for Change which brought together many relevant organisations and young people to explore how to increase the opportunities for youth inter faith engagement.

Today, the fact that specialist bodies work in a number of the relevant areas and the demands arising in other areas of IFN’s work, including Inter Faith Week, have meant IFN has less large scale external projects of this kind. However, if resources permitted there are many issues on which such engagement would be valuable.

There are also multiple other dimensions to IFN’s informal linking – for example the ever growing links that it makes through its Inter Faith Week programme or through its social media engagement through Facebook and Twitter and the readership of its many published resources, such as *Let’s Talk: Practical pointers for inter faith dialogue and Next Steps*.

Education

Moving forward together calls for increasing mutual understanding – both within IFN and within wider society.

Education was very important to IFN from its first days and it remains so. ‘Religious literacy’ is a much used term these days. It’s hard to remember that back in 1987 there was surprisingly little awareness of faith groups and faith communities. There was a low level of religious literacy, less multi faith RE than there is today, and less awareness in the public domain. The *Religions in the UK Directory*, on which Professor Paul Weller worked, was one of the earliest IFN projects with what was then the University of Derby. That was the first

book to really work with faith communities and put across the detail of faith communities in this country.

IFN has worked closely with the RE Council, the National Association of SACREs, the Shap Working Party on World Religions in Education and other RE bodies over the years, viewing RE in schools as another critical dimension of religious literacy. IFN’s advocacy work and raising of awareness extended to work with Government and local authorities. Across the 1990s and the early 2000s IFN did work with its member bodies to increase the level of understanding by Government, other public agencies and other types of organisations about the critical importance of religious identity in the lives of many people in this country.

Other factors also contributed to people taking inter faith relations more seriously: terrorism, overseas events, attacks, negative factors that triggered the community cohesion agenda, which escalated the interest of public agencies and others in religious literacy and in working for good inter faith relations.

Perpetrators of some terrorist events and some promoters of violent extremism have claimed a religious justification for their actions, occasionally the ‘Christian culture of Europe’ (in the case of the far right) and more widely, Islam. Their claim has been strongly contested by members of those traditions but that has not prevented a rise in hate crime attacks that are seen in many cases as being reactions to these terrorist events. These attacks principally affect Muslims, but can also be directed at those of other communities including, for example, where Sikhs or others may be the target because the attacker perceives them as Muslim. A corollary has been what some have seen as an excessive focus by Government on engaging with the Muslim community – both through programmes such as Prevent and through increased encouragement to develop religious literacy in relation to Islam in particular. This brings with it attention that has its own problems. It may also be one factor in the

development of religious literacy work – and dialogue work – focusing predominantly on ‘Abrahamic’ traditions. While that is important, IFN has always seen a need for balance through taking account of Buddhist, Hindu, Sikh and other non-Abrahamic traditions too. We are a diverse United Kingdom and we all matter.

It is also important to remember that Anti-semitism continues to be a major issue alongside more recent developments and that education, dialogue and legal measures also continue to be necessary to combat that.

Some closing reflections

In just over 10 minutes, there has not been time to tell the full history of IFN or to reflect extensively on what the future may look like but I have lifted up some strands that are perhaps especially relevant to today’s theme. You can find out more about all IFN’s work at www.interfaith.org.uk and the publications that are contained there.

I believe that IFN is continuing to carry out the role for which it was established, and with significant public benefit. However, the environment in which it now operates is very different. There are many new and exciting opportunities for learning and cooperation. There are also real challenges when it comes to opportunities for people to mix and engage and the social issues that underlie some of the barriers to engagement. There is evidence of a greater willingness to look at difficult issues through dialogue – although best ways forward on that are not always clear. Another aspect of the environment present strongly since 2001 and particularly in the last 10 years is what some have called an increasing ‘securitisation’ of some aspects of inter religious engagement, with great anxieties around extremism and terrorism. Amid the latter, it is important to be realistic and diligent. However, it is also important to remember the original impulses of openness, understanding, wanting to build relationship. Yes, we must discuss the tough issues, we mustn’t just ignore extremism and other difficult challenges,

nor must we shy away from discussing areas of disagreement. But let us also hold on to the positive impulse to continue to work well together, with integrity, for the common good.

Particularly at this time, in the wake of a number of terrorist attacks and impact of global events, we need to acknowledge and work with the fact that people are often scared and anxious when attacks happen that they may be targeted in their wake. We have to stand up for the people affected by that. We need to stand in solidarity – as *Looking After One Another: The Safety and Security of our Faith Communities* reminds us. But at the same time, we need to remember that life is not all about responding to emergencies. It’s also about growing together, learning together, finding ways forward that enable respectful discussion of areas of disagreement, and making a contribution to our shared life in this country, rooted in values held in common.

It is a privilege to serve in the role of Executive Director of the Inter Faith Network for the UK and to work with the member bodies of IFN as we ‘move forward together’ to the next phase of its vital work.

Thank you.

Bishop Atkinson: Thank you, Harriet, for that really helpful reminder of where we’ve been, some of the context of where we are and reflections on the future. Time now for questions and comments.

Esmond Rosen (Barnet Multi-Faith Forum): Do you have reflections on any political implications and consequences from the early days regarding influences to bring together the Inter Faith Network and also the regional developments?

Dr Crabtree: IFN was developed with the engagement and input of a wide range of organisations and individuals.

IFN worked hard to encourage Government’s engagement with faith communities; and maintains a good

working relationship with it today; and is partly funded by Government. IFN is, however, an independent charity.

Lord Singh of Wimbledon (Network of Sikh Organisations (UK)): I want to take this opportunity to pay tribute to Brian Pearce. It was his vision that led to the formation of the Inter Faith Network. I remember how he used to go from faith community to faith community getting everyone together for something that was really needed and I think we must acknowledge the huge debt we all owe him. Thank you.

Dr Crabtree: Thank you. I mentioned Brian Pearce at the outset of my contribution and there will be a formal tribute to him at lunchtime. Ahead of that it is particularly appropriate that this tribute has come from Lord Singh who worked so closely with Brian Pearce and with other founding members like the late Rabbi Hugo Gryn and others in the early days.

Bishop Atkinson: Thank you Harriet for getting us off to a good start.

[Note: This presentation was cut in delivery due to a slightly late start to the programme. The original material relating to details of some past events and to the final section has been reinstated.]

Extremism, hatred and inter faith relations

Rabbi Warren Elf

Development Officer, Faith Network for Manchester

Bishop Atkinson: We have already referred to recent hate incidents and terrorist attacks, as well as to the horrific Grenfell Tower fire. I know that a number of our member bodies represented here, such as the Islington Faiths Forum, Faiths Forum for London and Faiths Forum for Manchester, have been directly involved in offering support in the wake of these events.

It is particularly good to have with us Rabbi Warren Elf, who is the Development Officer for the Faith Network for Manchester. He will be speaking about the inter faith response to the terrorist attack in Manchester Arena.

Rabbi Elf: As Harriet Crabtree said earlier, one of the important things about our work as inter faith organisations is that it is not just the response to terror. It's about establishing the relationships – relationships that we draw on when we need to respond. That was very important for how we were able to respond to the attack at the Manchester Arena at the end of May.

I noticed that all our steps seemed very close to the ideas in *Looking After One Another: The Safety and Security of Our Faith Communities*. If you haven't seen that, it is in many ways a good template for how to approach things. I actually noticed in one of the voluntary sector meetings looking at responses to the Manchester attack and how to deal with it, the person coordinating the voluntary sector response, was saying that there was no template for the voluntary sector. This is something they

might be trying to put together. It is very good work from the Inter Faith Network, with its partners, to have put the booklet together.

The idea of responding jointly, because an attack on one is an attack on all, is something we were able to emphasise as part of our response. Looking for calm in times of tension, and strengthening the good existing inter faith relations, has been absolutely crucial to what's been going on in Manchester – and I know in London as a result of the attacks as well, and other places around the country.

The initial response to the Manchester attack, as the news came in after the Ariana Grande concert, was very much for the first and the emergency responders; faith leaders who were local; chaplains at the hospitals; and the street pastors. The work that was done by those people was absolutely amazing. By Tuesday morning it was very clear that a response was going to be necessary more generally, and there were messages and calls – I don't think my phone has ever been so busy and I wasn't even an emergency service. There were very clearly faith communities needing to do something together. We issued a statement fairly quickly in our response to the attack. We actually learned from the Westminster Bridge attack when we put out a statement condemning the actions that some of the faith communities weren't happy about just condemning the actions – they wanted to convey their message in a more positive way. So we were able to use feedback from that earlier response from

only a few weeks previously, and we put out a statement that everyone seemed to grasp.

Very clearly there was horror at the atrocity, but at the same time there was a positive and determined response and a recognition that something very special was starting to happen in Manchester. Manchester was coming together, and the faith communities were wanting and needing to reach out to, and with, each other, coming together to issue a response and to stand together.

Of course there was chaos, and people for hours didn't know exactly what was going on. But the response was amazing from community, from individuals, all the emergency staff as I've said. Very quickly it was clear that part of the response was going to be a vigil. There was a main one the night after the attack and there have been a series of vigils since then as well. On Tuesday morning phone calls were going round; the Cathedral and others were going to be instrumental in getting a prayer vigil that lunch time. The only problem was that they couldn't get into the Cathedral because it was inside the exclusion zone after the attack to the arena. So on Deansgate, for those of you that know Manchester, just a block from Marks & Spencers where the IRA bomb was 21 years earlier, ironically, some of us were standing reading prayers and psalms and other statements to express our solidarity and try to get something about our response out. Faith leaders were there and it got lots of media coverage because we were standing as close as we could to the Cathedral. There were a number of interviews – some appeared on TV channels around the world. I appeared on Al Jazeera's English channel, but there were others, lots and lots. That was pretty important.

Then there was the vigil in Albert Square on the Tuesday evening, less than 24 hours afterwards. It was an amazing experience to be there. Andy Burnham, the new Mayor

of Manchester, Bishop David Walker, and the Chief Constable of Greater Manchester Police all spoke, as did Manchester poet Tony Walsh, who read out his poem, 'This is the place', which you probably heard. It really got the right atmosphere, harnessed things, pulled things together. And it was quite an amazing response. There was very clearly an outpouring, of emotion but also an expression of resilience – people wanted to be able to stand up and say, "We're not going to be beaten by this. We're not going to be stopped. This is a city which is able to deal with this and come out better and stronger." They were saying, "We want to be a city united." As an Essex boy and Spurs supporter I'm sure I missed some of the finer points on that! But it's actually quite nice to hear – Manchester, a city united, bearing in mind some of the divisions that those two names cause at various times¹.

Yes, it was very powerful – but not everyone was really involved. Hate crime increased. Islamophobia increased. There were some quite horrendous events within the first few hours, let alone first 24, 48 and 72 hours, in Manchester that needed to be responded to. Also, not every community in Manchester got involved. We arranged a vigil one month after the attack, on 22 June, in Alexandra Park, partly because one of our number felt that the Caribbean community hadn't been brought inside and we hadn't actually tried to reach them. I'm not sure we succeeded – the numbers weren't great – but the number of different faith communities which came together to respond was very heart-warming at the time.

So there are clearly still responses that were needed. One of the key things early on was people turning around and saying, "What are the Muslims going to say about this?" A lot of people whose views I clearly don't agree with and with a fair number of prejudices. But very clearly the Muslims did respond, and they came out and spoke. There was a Muslim scholars' vigil the following night and several of us were

¹ A reference to the football teams Manchester City and Manchester United.

invited to take part in that in St Ann's Square. And lots of other faith and inter faith events were converted into responses to the attack and standing together – at the British Muslim Heritage Centre, for example. Many different things in the first week. There was a procession from the Cathedral to St Ann's Square where several Muslim scholars and Bishop David Walker and orthodox Rabbi Daniel Walker (I don't think they're related!) were walking together. They weren't sure what response they were going to get, but as all the Muslim scholars walked into St Ann's Square, there was a round of applause and cheering. It showed the strength of coming together as a community and responding like that.

There clearly has been a significant change, in some ways for the better and pulling people together. There was a Muslim families' procession on the first Saturday after the attack – that was to St Ann's Square from Cheetham Hill; the Great Get Together weekend harnessed other things; and the Iftar events during Ramadan. The number of interfaith Iftars increased and became fairly major events. It was so important that we were there together at various times. There were still hate crimes; there was still major concern for the increased number of them. But the message that's come out very clearly is: 'Not in our name', and 'We stand together'. Almost everyone seems to know someone who was there on the evening, and a lot of people were wondering when it was announced that the One Love concert was to be arranged – was this too soon? But it wasn't. At Parklife, which happened a couple of weeks after that, again they actually wanted faith people on the platform to respond at the start of the evening part of the concerts.

The voluntary sector response has been quite staggering and it's been realised that actually, because of the trauma, continuing support is needed and an increasing need for faith and interfaith responses. Faith communities have been a part of this and it's been important.

I mentioned the vigil one month on. I'm also aware that one of our members of the Faith Network for Manchester is the biker chaplain, and some of the right-wing bikers wanted to do a ride down through Rusholme, a Muslim area of Manchester, to express their anger. We were able to change that, so a large biker community drove down through Rusholme and delivered flowers to people instead.

Only this weekend, there was a procession with first responders and faith leaders going from the arena to St Ann's Square, paying tributes and offering memorials to them, and releasing 22 doves in memory of the 22 who died.

It's so important that we continue this work, to find the opportunity to bring people together. It's an important message. Existing inter faith relationships have been so important in ensuring that this work is done. Our initial response was important; being there and being part of that journey is important; and it's also important to identify opportunities to continue, to make sure there's resilience and cohesion and that we maintain that spirit. There's probably going to be a march – they're talking about March of the Millions and already coming up with the idea of Manchester Against Terror and the different communities under their badge.

I'm reminded of the book by Rabbi Harold Kushner, "When bad things happen to good people". It's important we come up with a positive response, and we have done, whether it's the Arena attack, Westminster Bridge, London Bridge, Grenfell, all these things. We need to try to find something good from it. As it says in the Sayings of the Fathers, "It's not our duty to finish the work, but we're not free to ignore it and desist from it."

Thank you.

Bishop Atkinson: Thank you very much, Warren. We now have a couple of minutes for other contributions.

Dr Peter Rookes (Birmingham Council of Faiths): I had a meeting yesterday with our cabinet member for equalities who was emphasising the importance of hard action' and 'hard networking', because in his view we've done soft networking for a long time. The case I was making to him was that it was much easier to deal with issues when you've done the soft networking and you've built up relationships. So to what extent do you feel in Manchester that the soft networking you've done in the past helped to remediate the effects of hate action?

Rabbi Elf: I think the existing network and what had already been done was essential. Some of it's been soft and some of it has been hard, and it's enabling us to do more of the hard work and take it from there.

Trupti Patel (Hindu Forum of Britain): Rabbi, the Hindu community and the Sikh community also were at that meeting you mentioned. People coming in from Bradford and Leeds took part in the St Ann's Square event, and also there was a free kitchen – the food was distributed by the Iskcon temple and by the Sikh Gurdwara. I think it shows the point that we are all together and we all help each other. I think we need to make sure we keep doing it in the face of adversity.

Rabbi Elf: Absolutely. It was so noticeable at St Ann's Square that it was the Sikh and the Hindu communities who were feeding the masses. It was a hot evening and plenty of water was being passed around. A couple of my Sikh friends actually threw water at me (not over me!). It was very noticeable – the whole community, all faiths coming together. A month on at our vigil there were Hindu and Sikh communities were also there with everyone else. And the Pagan community too.

Bishop Atkinson: Is there anyone from the Faith Forum from London who might want to comment on the London experience? Or Islington Faiths Forum, in whose area the Finsbury Park Mosque and Muslim Welfare House are?

Elizabeth Chappell (Islington Faiths Forum): I wanted to thank the previous speaker for his extraordinary and heartfelt report. On a smaller scale, we had a similar experience in North London after the Finsbury Park attack. Obviously from a different kind of violent extremism, but I would like to reiterate that the soft networking over many, many years of the Islington Faith Forum that was set up in the early 2000s made a significant difference and it was actually at this point when we were under attack that it came to the fore.

Similar to what Rabbi Warren Elf said, we were also able to reflect that during the sudden media frenzy that occurred after the attack. We've been able, too, to take on board this idea of visible acts of solidarity. We had just done a Great Get Together event at Muslim Welfare House in memory of Jo Cox MP, 36 hours before the attack. At that, faith leaders from all religions had spoken and really provided a platform for other members of the community, non-faith as well as faith, to come together in a Muslim setting. So I think for us in Islington the events of the last few weeks have really demonstrated the power of networks like our Faiths Forum in times of crisis, and I think that for the first time members of our network have been able to really see the value of what we've been trying to do.

Canon Bede Gerrard (South East England Faiths Forum): Just a comment about reactions in Oxford and also across the South East. After Manchester, after Tower Bridge, after Grenfell Tower, we had vigils in the centre of Oxford. The one after Tower Bridge was in the pouring rain. I was standing there leading the minute's silence and a person came up with an umbrella, just to protect me. He was a Hindu. I found that gesture of concern very touching. After Finsbury Park, the committees in the four mosques invited the faith leaders of Oxford to meet in the central mosque to discuss with the Police Inspector in charge of Oxford and each other what we were doing. The comment of Sadat Khan, the President of the Madina Mosque in Oxford, was: "They're trying to force us apart, but what they're doing is welding us together." And that was

shown just last week when we had our 14th annual inter faith friendship walk. From Magdalene Bridge, looking back, people were still crossing Longwall Street, which is about 300 yards of procession. We have a meal at the mosque prepared by the Muslim and Jewish communities – one does the first course, one does the second course – and then a collection. This year we collected twice as much as we've ever collected before. People want to give; people want to know what to do; people want to come together. As Sadat said, it's welding us together, not setting us apart.

Bishop Atkinson: Warren, thank you so much, both for sharing the Manchester experience and for your insights. Our prayers continue to be with everyone in Manchester. Thank you Elizabeth for your contribution as well. In response to Peter Rooke's point about soft relationships, we must never devalue those. As has been said, they provide the base on which we can form the resilience and strength to respond together if crisis comes, as it has come in recent days.

Education and dialogue

Jaskiran Kaur Mehmi

Student at the London School of Economics and Political Science and recent Committee member of Leeds Concord Interfaith Fellowship

Bishop Atkinson: During the next part of this morning, the focus is on education and dialogue. There will be three speakers, and the first of those we are delighted to have with us is Jaskiran Kaur Mehmi. Jaskiran has a longstanding commitment to supporting and engaging the inter faith commitment of younger people. She is currently studying at LSE in London and is involved with faith engagement through its Faith Centre. She is a recent committee member of Leeds Concord Interfaith Fellowship, where she was one of the UK's youngest local inter faith committee members. Jaskiran will be reflecting on the importance of having the chance to develop the skills to play an active role in a multi-faith society, and why IFN's support for local groups and youth inter faith engagement is so important.

Jaskiran Kaur Mehmi: Good morning everyone. As Bishop Richard has said, I'm from Leeds but I'm currently a student at LSE.

I think it's important how we are starting today reflecting on the times that we live in. We have been struck by tragedy a number of times recently in this country, whether it's the Grenfell Tower attacks or the Finsbury Park attacks, or the London Bridge attacks. When tragedy strikes, its nature is to consume us and we often lose hope. However, my hope was somewhat renewed when I saw ordinary people opening up their homes and helping others in their hour of greatest need. This is where I saw true inter faith work happening, where I saw people coming together in

solidarity, where I saw local churches opening their doors, whilst off-duty Muslim officers offered medical assistance and Sikh welfare organisations distributed food and water. For me, this is true inter faith work – people of different faiths and no faiths coming together, with respect for one another for the betterment of the whole community. Inter faith has the power to do this.

One of the biggest challenges we face in today's society in my opinion is ignorance – ignorance of the other, ignorance of people that are different or have different beliefs to ourselves. I truly believe inter faith can overcome this ignorance through education and dialogue. Many local inter faith groups do this very well on a regular basis by holding meetings and discussions to educate and develop understandings of different faiths and different communities.

Local inter faith groups cover a wide range of issues, from discussing religious doctrine to religion in modern-day life. Some inter faith groups such as Leeds Concord have event series on particular themes. For example, its last event series was "Death and Beyond", where the concept of death and afterlife in different faith communities was explored a meeting at a time. This allowed attendees to develop an in-depth understanding of this topic through a variety of different faiths whilst highlighting the nuances between faiths and also within them as well. So this shows that local inter faith groups are effectively educating and developing understanding.

The question of how we get youth involved in inter faith work is a slightly more tricky one. The first improvement from my point of view is publicising and showcasing the work that you do. Local inter faith groups and local communities do some great work and it's about showing and showcasing that within the wider community and having better outreach to younger people. I believe one tool to do that is social media, even just publicising: this is what we've done today, this is what we've celebrated today. It acts as a reminder as well: in two days' time, we're doing this – come along. I think that's very important, just to have that image of, "This is what's happening in your community – get involved."

I think another improvement that could be made is in the school system. Despite young people's desire to learn about other faiths, they're not allowed to have much religious literacy. There has been a big improvement. However, faith is still, from personal experience, not discussed as much as it should be in schools. When I was doing my GCSEs, we learned about two faiths, and we learned the content just to pass the exam. How is that enough religious literacy to have a conversation with somebody else? Religious festivals were not discussed despite it being a very diverse school. If faith itself is not being discussed, then how can we expect young people to engage in inter faith dialogue?

There is hope, however. Inter faith work is done particularly well at universities. I believe my university does this particularly well. We're very lucky to have a Faith Centre which holds a space for inter faith activities to take place. There are two inter faith activities that I participated in. The first was called 'Interfaith Buddies'. It was a group of us who were all brought together – different students from different backgrounds. I was in a group with a French atheist, a German agnostic, a Mexican Catholic, a Somali Muslim, and then me, a British-Indian Sikh. So it was quite a lively discussion. We met once a week over a cup of coffee to discuss topics that related to our faith and beliefs. These included identity, prayer, challenges and strengths, and many others. I found

this experience rewarding because it was informal enough to get an in-depth understanding of how faith is explored in other countries, but also I found it a reflective experience in terms of how I engage my faith on a day-to-day basis. This programme was informal, reflective and engaging, and allowed us to have a true inter faith dialogue.

The second programme I participated in was more formal. It was a ten-week course called 'Faith and Leadership'. The course aimed to improve religious literacy and also leadership skills. It covered religious imagination, leadership skills, and religion in context. What I mean by 'religion in context' is: how do we approach our religion in day-to-day lives? Whether that's religion in the workplace, religion in the family, religion in politics, religion in the public sector – all of these were discussed within the programme. Both these schemes were in my view successful for one main reason: they equipped us with the skills needed to continue our inter faith work and taught us how to have good dialogue and conversation with others. They sound like simple things, but the process really reinforced the importance of being able to have a conversation with somebody. It taught us how to be open-minded, and taught us to engage with people and ideas and beliefs that are not our own.

Another important aspect of inter faith work for me this year was being part of faith societies. For university students, faith societies are the first port of call when it comes to their religion. A lot of us are in a situation where we're away from our families, away from our main congregation, so faith societies become a core port of call in terms of engaging with faith. If anyone says that young people aren't engaged with their faith, I do insist that they come to these faith society events, because of the involvement and engagement in those events. So there are student-led inter faith activities that are going on. For example, I went to a Hindu Society inter faith panel on justice. They had different representatives from different faiths discussing the theme

of justice. It was a very formal event but it was very insightful as well. So this shows that there is student-led inter faith work going on. If there's a possibility to liaise, perhaps, with local inter faith groups, you get youth involvement and they get your knowledge, expertise, resources and networks. If you do tap into that society network, I think you could get more youth involvement there too.

I've also noticed that the most popular inter faith events are the ones that are out there in the community. For example, I went to an event called 'Feeding the Homeless' where a lot of people from different faiths all come together through social action. This event was particularly successful because people felt they were contributing to the community whilst also engaging inter faith work. They were feeling that they were being proactive and making a difference, which I think is very important when it comes to inter faith work in young people.

So to conclude, local inter faith groups need to publicise their events more through social media, and that might be an unknown for you, using social media, but please do try to use it and do try to get outreach to young people through that. The main take-away I'd like you to have is to please not be under the assumption that young people are not interested in inter faith activity. This is a myth. Young people are very interested and engaged with their faith. They don't want to be ignorant; they want to learn about other people and other communities, and inter faith is a great way to do that. Also, in terms of the events you have, events in terms of religion in action, inter faith in context and liaising with current inter faith groups – there's a possibility for successful collaboration there. Thank you very much, and I am happy to take any questions.

Dr Avijit Datta (York Interfaith Group): The top-down approach of reaching out from inter faith groups and networks to youth has met with mixed success in the past. So what you're suggesting is an endogenous, organic approach, harnessing young

people and letting them get on with it. Is that correct?

Jaskiran Kaur Mehmi: I think we need to acknowledge the current inter faith work that students are doing, and possibly form a collaboration with local inter faith groups, and work with what they already have and then form something.

Dr Avijit Datta (York Interfaith Group): Might I just ask a rather awkward question of you? You describe interest of students and young people in their own faiths, and you describe one anecdote of yourself going to another faith society's event but to what extent is there true inter faith as opposed to young people engaging in their own faith?

Jaskiran Kaur Mehmi: I do feel in universities a lot of cross-collaboration work does take place within societies, so there is inter faith work that's happening there between different societies. Yes, there's a tendency for some people to stick within their own faith, but slowly building bridges, having events together, having things on campus together, builds slowly towards working towards greater inter faith. We always have an inter faith tea at the start of the year, which brings people together. On my first week, I turned up and there were about 50 or 60 students there, and even something as simple as that does attract interest.

Rabbi Maurice Michaels (IFN Trustee): An area I've been involved with for many, many years within higher education has been that of chaplaincy. I am chaplain of one of the colleges in London, and we have an annual chaplaincy event with chaplains from each of the different faiths. The turnout from the student body is absolutely amazing, and everybody wants to know about everybody else's faith. It's a college where there are very, very few Jewish students, and yet I seem to get most of the questions. People want to know about other faiths, and I think we need to take whatever opportunities there are, and multi faith events – perhaps organised by the chaplains of the colleges – are very useful.

Dr Maureen Sier (Interfaith Scotland): If we look at the demographic in this room, it's certainly not young people. One of my worries is getting young people really interested in inter faith and linking them to a local inter faith group and then they go along and discover that everyone's in their 50s, 60s and 70s. My suggestion would be that for local inter faith groups, especially if most are of an older demographic, to offer support and encouragement to younger people rather than say, "We really want you to come along to all our events" at this stage. I think there's something that maybe needs to be done to bridge that age gap initially, especially if it's a young person on their own. If it's a group of young people maybe that's different, but not for a young person on their own. I don't know what your thinking would be on that?

Jaskiran Kaur Mehmi: I completely understand where you're coming from. I would say that maybe hold more events that are of interest to younger people, or have more of a focus on religion in modern-day life rather than just focusing on scripture, is a good way. Even hold just one event a year on young people and faith, because we do have very specific challenges that we face which are not addressed in wider circles. So if you do have events that tap into the needs, the challenges and the wants of young people then I don't see that being a problem in the future.

Bishop Atkinson: Thank you Jaskiran, not just for your enthusiasm and engagement but in particular the way in which you outlined the challenges such as religious literacy, recognising young people who want to take their faith seriously and making sure that that is honoured, and the challenge of engaging with younger people.

Education and dialogue

Rudi Elliott Lockhart

Chief Executive, RE Council for England and Wales

Bishop Atkinson: Our next contribution is from Rudolf Elliott Lockhart, Chief Executive of RE Council for England and Wales. There has been a long partnership between the Council and IFN.

Rudi Elliott Lockhart: Good morning. It's a great pleasure to be here today with all of you to help celebrate the first 30 years of the Inter Faith Network and the huge range of important work undertaken in that time. At the RE Council, we deeply value what the Inter Faith Network does. I look at IFN's commitment to improving mutual understanding of different faith and belief communities within our society, and the commitment to dialogue and cooperation between communities, and I see values and an approach that complements and strengthens the work that we do at the RE Council. The emphasis that IFN places on education is of course a great strength. Now part of this is of course the meetings that IFN arranges with the other members working in education which are always so fascinating and helpful, but a bigger point is that IFN recognises the importance of education as a fundamental part of inter faith work.

Now, I want to say a little bit about why I think that really matters. I'm going to give you three reasons why Religious Education (RE) is critical in 21st century Britain. This list isn't definitive, and it's a personal one rather than being any approved statement of REC policy, but I think it's a useful way to think about the value of RE.

So, firstly, RE is essential for preparing people for life in the UK's multi faith society. Ours is a diverse and pluralist society, so this makes education about religion and

belief, about religious and non-religious world views, of critical importance. RE helps people to engage with those of different religions or of different beliefs in a positive way, and learning how to do this is a critical skill. For people to make the most of life in our society, they need to be skilled intercultural navigators, confident not only in their own world view – whatever that may be – but also well versed in the different approaches to religion and belief that their fellow citizens take. It almost seems too obvious to cite examples here, but people in all walks of life need to understand the sensitivities of people of different faith and belief backgrounds, whether it's doctors understanding their patients' concerns, police officers understanding the communities they're serving, teachers understanding the pupils they're educating, or journalists understanding those whose stories they're reporting. But it goes beyond professional life. In multi faith Britain, it's normal to have work colleagues, neighbours, friends, partners, everyone, drawn from religious and non-religious backgrounds, so RE helps to navigate this.

My second reason for why RE matters so much is that it can help people to understand how their own religion or beliefs shape the way that they see and make sense of the world, and therefore why others may see things differently. The world views we inhabit shape the way each of us perceives the world and how we act within it. What's more, the reverse is true. The constraints of the real world within which religions and beliefs operate help to shape the religions and beliefs themselves, and as such they develop over time and in different contexts. Everyone is

fundamentally affected by their world view, whether it's a religious one or a non-religious one, and whether they have a single coherent world view or a collection of overlapping – or even contradictory – ones. And RE is the place where essential work can be done to explore all of this. Now this is really important: what I'm saying is that RE helps you to understand why other people can think differently from you about the same thing. It helps you to encounter difference and be comfortable with it, and to respond to difference with empathy, and perhaps even to learn something from those with whom you disagree.

The final reason I'll give for why high-quality RE is so important is because it helps people to move away from clichéd and simplistic understanding of religion and belief, and instead helps them to understand the complexity and diversity of religions and non-religious world views. This is as much about the diversity of religions and beliefs that there are out there as it is also about diversity within religions and beliefs. Religions are not monolithic entities. They have fuzzy edges; they change over time and space. They're understood, and misunderstood, by their adherents in different ways. And often they're lived by individuals in ways which don't reflect what the textbook or religious authorities might say about that religion. What's more, religions and beliefs are contested. There are different claims to authority, there are different interpretations of texts. Now this isn't just an academic point. I know it's always easy to take any subject and say, "Well it's actually much more complicated than that," but in this case, recognising these complexities is of fundamental importance. Helping people to understand the complex nature of religions and beliefs can stop people from responding to them in simplistic terms. It gives them the knowledge and skills to assess the stereotypical, partial and misleading representations of religion and belief that they will encounter throughout their lives. These misrepresentations come in many forms. The tabloid media, the memes spread online by far-right hate groups, the

interpretations spun by those with extremist ideologies purporting to tell the truth through simplistic readings of religious texts. At best, a lack of good RE leaves a child ignorant, but at worst it leaves them at risk of being led astray.

So there are many reasons why RE matters but I'm going to stop at three because there's something else I want to say. So first, it's preparation for life in multi-faith society. Secondly, it's about understanding the way that world views act like lenses through which we make sense of the world. And thirdly, the knowledge and skills to handle the complexity of religion and belief and to equip people with critical thinking skills to challenge the glib, clichéd and simplistic.

But in what time I have left, I want to cover one other crucial topic. What I want to talk about is the Commission on Religious Education. For all of the merits of RE, it's also a subject in some jeopardy. The Government's programme of academisation is putting the legal structure that underpins RE under even greater strain. While RE's curriculum is meant to be determined locally, as more and more schools become academies, the structure of agreed syllabus conferences is under grave threat. Already there are local authorities where there are no secondary schools that have not already converted to academy status. So this means that in those cases there's still a statutory requirement for the local authority to convene an agreed syllabus conference and to produce a syllabus every five years, but actually no secondary schools to follow it. So the legal settlement is creaking, but the problems run deeper. There is some fabulous RE that takes places in schools, but all too often the provision is patchy. While RE is great in some schools, and in some parts of the country, with some brilliant teachers transforming their pupils' lives through fantastic RE, in too many schools the subject barely features. Despite there being a statutory requirement to offer RE all the way up to 18, more and more schools are simply failing to do this. 28% of schools offer no RE at all in Year 11. The

number is far worse in academies, where 42% fail to offer RE at Key Stage 4. Yet RE ought to be more important than ever, with issues relating to religion and belief featuring more and more heavily in the news and rising up the political agenda.

Last summer, the RE Council established the independent Commission on Religious Education to undertake a comprehensive review of the legal, education and policy frameworks for RE, and to make recommendations for change. It's a high-profile commission, and the Government and senior civil servants are waiting with interest for reports. There are fourteen commissioners: some are insiders to RE and others are outsiders with expertise in related areas such as the law relating to religion and human rights, and religion and the media. They have all been appointed as individual experts, with none of them asked to represent any particular community or interest group or political group, and they're free to report as they see fit. The RE Council has no editorial control over the reports and recommendations that the Commission comes up with. You can see details about all of this on the website, which is www.commissiononre.org.uk. We had a call for evidence with over 2,300 responses, and we've had five public evidence-gathering sessions held in all corners of the country. It's still possible to submit evidence – go to the website and see how you can do that – and there's going to be an interim report released this autumn, and a final report in a year's time.

Now the Commission is a hugely exciting project. It has the opportunity to give a new vision for RE, and to propose changes to a legal settlement which looks back to the 1944 Education Act. For far too long, politicians had avoided RE, seeing it as an issue that will win them no votes yet will antagonise powerful interest groups. It's been seen as too dangerous to tackle. But now, politicians are beginning to recognise that it's too dangerous not to deal with the problems that RE faces, and they're looking to the Commission on RE to show the way. So I have great hopes for the future of RE. It is a crucial subject with much to offer

pupils, and I'm extremely grateful to the Inter Faith Network for all the work that they've done to support good education about religion and belief over the last thirty years, so thank you. And I know that the next thirty years are going to see even more great work. So in advance, thank you for that too. And thank you to all of you for listening.

Dr Vinaya Sharma (Redbridge Faith Forum and Vishwa Hindu Parishad (UK)): Thank you for a most enlightening talk. Will the Commission actually be dealing with things like examinations in the various religions? Because what we have found is that the children are very keen to actually do a GCSE in any of the religions and yet some of the religions have been dropped and they can no longer do a GCSE in, say, Sikhism and Hinduism. A full GCSE is going to be dropped to half a GCSE. Practices like that discourage parents and children from putting in an effort to try and do that. We found getting children together to do a GCSE in any of the subjects, or one or two of the various religions, and doing one in one year and one in another, used to help a lot. Children talked to each other and tried to understand. But now, with the exam boards dropping these exams, I think it's going to be very detrimental.

Dr Norman Richardson MBE (Northern Ireland Inter Faith Forum): Professionally I've been involved for many years in preparing and training teachers to teach RE in schools. It seems to me that one of the biggest difficulties of RE is the perception of many members of the public that its purpose is not to educate but to promote religion. It does seem to me to be really important that a group like this does everything in its power to offset that perception that RE is simply trying to make people religious. That was maybe the perception of the past – it's not the case now, but it is so important and I'd be interested in your reflections on that.

Rudi Elliott Lockhart: Thank you for two great questions. First, the one on exams: I think it's a really critical point. The exam system drives so much of what goes on in

our schools, not just at Key Stage 5 and 4 but also at Key Stage 3 because that prepares for exams. I think one of the problems is that the current Government is invested in the reforms that have just taken place to GCSE for Religious Studies, and depending on who is in Government when the final report of this Commission comes out, if it's still a Conservative Government I think they will be less likely to take to a report that recommends wholesale change again in that area. The point you make is spot-on, and I'm concerned for all the reasons you mention. I'm trying to work out what the best political decision will be for the Commission to make – and it won't be my decision, but I'll advise them on it. Of course if there's a change of Government, that makes other options more palatable politically.

In answer to the question about the perception of the promotion of religion: yes, this is always a real issue. I am very keen that RE should be seen in an entirely separate light, so some people will take great strength from it for their faith and that's wonderful and brilliant, but others won't and it's a personal response to the subject and that's fine. The subject should not be seen as having an agenda either to promote or undermine religious or non-religious world views. It should try to take a step back from that. I realise in reality it's much more complicated than that, because everyone is positioned and we have a school system where lots of our schools are positioned, so it's a really tangled mess and I agree a hundred percent with the point you're trying to make.

Bishop Atkinson: Rudi, thank you for reminding us of the significance of RE – not least for citizens who engage in contemporary society – but also of some of those very real challenges with which the Commission is engaging. So thank you very much and thank you for the strong relationship with REC.

Education and dialogue

Maulana M Shahid Raza OBE

Chair, British Muslim Forum and MINAB and IFN Trustee

Bishop Atkinson: In this part of our meeting, the final contributor is Maulana Shahid Raza, Chair of the British Muslim Forum and MINAB, and an IFN trustee for many years. He is going to reflect on the crucial importance of inter faith dialogue at all levels.

Maulana Raza: B-ismi-llahi r-rahmani r-rahim. In the name of God, the Most Merciful, the Most Kind. My respected sisters and brothers, I would like to begin by extending my congratulations and greetings to everyone celebrating the 30th anniversary of the Inter Faith Network. I can see Brian Pearce, who is seen in the Muslim community as a great hero of the inter faith initiative. In fact, as far as I remember, officially the Inter Faith Network was launched thirty years ago, but indeed there were a couple of years of consultation meetings before that, and Brian Pearce was facing at that time all the questions, concerns and criticisms with his talents single-handedly. I salute him, and I congratulate all of you for being together for this fantastic initiative and networking.

Growing up in India, I lived my early life amongst close Hindu and Sikh friends, I remember after my intermediate studies going to Hindu College, a college that was offering BSc courses in the city. And I remember that almost all my friends in the Hindu College were Hindus or Sikhs. I remember fondly discussing common interests such as our studies, films and sports, and we rarely discussed our faith. I was completely ignorant of my friends' beliefs. It was here, in this country, after joining the Inter Faith Network thirty years ago, that I was provided a platform and opportunity of listening, learning, asking

questions, and reading about other faiths and beliefs of my colleagues in the Inter Faith Network. Today, I hope that I will not be asked questions about other faiths, but I strongly feel that I am an inter faith-orientated individual. I know some basics of other faiths, including Hinduism and Sikhism. So in this way, I believe that the credit goes to the Inter Faith Network. As a result of dialogue, and my meetings with individuals and faith leaders, I am a better informed and educated person.

The Inter Faith Network's recent publication of *Let's Talk* has been produced as a practical guide for those wanting to get involved in inter faith dialogue. It is the fruit of this organisation's experience in engaging across over 200 member bodies. Though it shares short reflections and practical examples, I believe the heart of this publication touches on why dialogue is important.

Upon reading it, you will see that the need for dialogue is broad, from a personal desire to simply understand one's own faith and spirituality to a wider social need to tackle ignorance, prejudice and counter hatred. Similarly, the levels at which this dialogue must take place must also be broad, at local level in schools and community centres to national level across academic and political institutions.

The Inter Faith Network has always encouraged bilateral dialogue and, in my opinion, it has played a major role in the Muslim community's interactions with Christians (the Christian Muslim Forum), Jews and Hindus. It has set a template and a standard through which we engage with all other faith communities. Similarly, the

Inter Faith Network has played a pivotal role in encouraging multi-lateral dialogue. All over the UK we now have local as well as national organisations such as the Three Faiths Forum and the Joseph Interfaith Foundation.

I believe that inter faith dialogue can no longer be a choice amongst faith community leaders. Recent history has shown us that acting unilaterally often produces undesirable outcomes. The present challenges facing humanity are so vast and complex that I believe it is a duty for all faith community leaders to come together, and face them head on through dialogue and mutual understanding.

Jehangir Sarosh OBE (Religions For Peace (UK)): You spoke about how the inter faith movement needs to be broader. How can we ensure that the Afro-Caribbean community is a lot more involved? I think that is something we really need to work at. I don't expect you to give the answer, but I think we all need to look at it because Religions for Peace is also finding this difficult.

Maulana Raza: Thank you for your comments, and I think that we have all got the message.

Dr Shiv Pande MBE (Merseyside Council of Faiths): I have a question to ask you in your role as Chairman of MINAB. We have tried many times to get Muslim community members, especially the imam, to come to our Council, but have not succeeded. We were invited to a recent iftar party, but met the same people. We want the involvement of the wider community and imams. Can you kindly help us out with some ideas?

Maulana Raza: Definitely. We will talk during the day about it and I will try to help in that respect. I'm so sorry to hear that in your area there are no new Muslim faces joining and engaging actively in the inter faith field, but we are trying our best through MINAB. We are trying to train our imams, to educate our imams, the mosque governors and managers, that we can't live in this country without having a dialogue

and inter faith relations. Let us hope that our efforts enable this to materialise.

Bishop Atkinson: This a reminder, of course, that part of today is the opportunity to share stories, offer one another encouragement, and if there's good practice around to talk about it over lunch and during the day. Maulana, thank you for your contribution, not least sharing a part of your personal story. We know you as a great ambassador for inter faith dialogue and you remind us that it needs to happen at every level and be broad in its focus.

Communicating in the digital world

Zoe Amar

One of the charity sector's leading experts in digital communications and marketing, writer for *The Guardian* Voluntary Sector Network and other publications about charities and digital issues and co-author of the Charity Commission guidelines, 'Making Digital Work'

Bishop Atkinson: One of the realities of life today is that we live in a digital world. We are delighted to have Zoe Amar here with us, one of the charity sector's leading experts in digital communications and marketing. She is going to reflect on how digital communication opens up new opportunities and possibilities for engagement, and the importance of using it wisely and effectively.

A copy of the PowerPoint slides used in this presentation is at the end of this note.

Zoe Amar: Thank you for that very kind introduction. I'm very excited to be here today to talk to you about the possibilities for social media in all of your organisations. Before writing this presentation, I had a good look at what some of your organisations are doing on social media, and I think there is a lot of untapped potential, so I'm looking forward to talking to you about that.

There will be three parts to my talk today:

- Firstly, why faith charities need to engage on social media. I think this is a real time of opportunity for faith charities given the terrible events of the last few weeks, the uncertainty, the tragedy that we've all seen. There is a huge amount that your

organisations could be doing to bring people together on social media.

- Secondly, examples of who is doing social media well. Some of you will recognise your own organisations in this and I'll be interested to see who is in the room from the charities I'm going to talk about.
- Thirdly, a summary and some take-away tips as well.

So: why engage on social media? In the next sixty seconds, while we're sitting here, a vast amount of content is going to be posted to social media. There will be 3.3 million Facebook posts. 500 hours of video will be uploaded to YouTube. 29 million WhatsApp messages will be sent. 448,800 Tweets will be sent – perhaps some of you will even be sending some Tweets talking about this event. And 65,972 Instagram posts will be made. That is a huge amount of content. But it isn't just content. It is a really exciting conversation to get involved in, and I think it represents a tremendous range of possibilities.

Part of my job is to talk to charities about where the opportunities lie for them in using digital media. I frequently talk to people who are not convinced that this is the way to go. You can see here [slide 4] how social media is a really important

medium for how we communicate globally. This is from a study that We Are Social, a digital agency, produce every year. It shows how the pace of change, the growth of digital channels, is increasing and increasing now. As you can see, 2.7 billion people across the world are active social media users. A significant chunk of them are using social media on their mobiles as well. This means you need to think very carefully about the kind of content you post and how to engage with people, because, as we all know, people on their mobiles have a lot of different demands on their time or may be using it while doing other things. So the scale, scope and potential of this is absolutely huge.

My question to organisations who are still not convinced about this, having seen all of the data and the evidence, is: Why would you not want to be part of this conversation? As someone who has been a trustee for nine years, and as someone who has been working with the Charity Commission in trying to guide the charity sector on how they can use digital, I really think there are quite significant risks in not doing this, and not engaging with social media – much more so than doing it.

We worked with a well-known organisation recently helping them look at the possibilities for what they could achieve on social media. We showed them where people were talking about their charity on social media, and because they don't have a presence on there they don't have a way to respond. Not having a social media presence on the main platforms can also open you up to some risks around 'cyber-squatting' and it means that it is much harder to drive traffic to your website as well.

So, increasingly, when an organisation comes to us and says, "Should I be doing this and why would I do it?", my question to them is: Why would you not want to do it? Why would you not want to be part of this conversation? For faith charities I think this is particularly resonant because social media sometimes gets a bad rap. It's seen as just being about Facebook and cat

videos and, yes, I think the tech companies do need to be regulated more but that's a story for another day! But social media is where people go to talk to people with shared values. This is where they form their ideas. This is where they often form their beliefs. This is where they go to find meaning. So I think with your organisations this is very, very complementary to what you're trying to do.

So let's look at some organisations who are using social media well – and if anyone from these organisations is in the room, do please make yourselves known.

I really like what Harun Khan, Secretary General of the Muslim Council for Britain, is doing on social media [Slide 7]. He is very visible on Twitter: he talks about what he's doing, who he's meeting, how he's bringing people together. And in this day and age, it is actually not enough to just have a good organisational social media presence. You need to get your people out there as well. People are really curious about leaders, the difference they're making, how transparent they are, the impact that they're delivering for their organisations. So if you've got great people, great leaders, which I'm sure many of your organisations do, you have to get them out there on social media – they are a big asset.

Who else is doing this well? Almost every organisation that we have ever worked with has said, "We want to create a community around our brand." As you know, we mainly work with charities. As faith organisations, you already have communities. That is a brilliant asset and you've got to get out there and use it on social media. So you've got a ready-made group of people who really like what you do; you share values; you share beliefs with them. You've got a community of people who want to help you, so ask them to share their experiences, as the Church of England have done here [Slide 8]. Its social media presence is really good. And that creates this really nice feedback loop where you reinforce the positivity and the commitment of the people that support you. And it also intrigues potential

supporters as well – they look and they think that sounds like a really exciting community to be part of.

I think there are exciting opportunities as a faith charity to bring people together, and I really like what British Quakers did after the attack in Finsbury Park. [Slide 9] There are brilliant opportunities as faith charities to bring people together in times of tragedy, and what I love about the tweet I've chosen to show is that it is a really good clear message. It is a really strong statement of belief, yet it's really relatable to everyone. There is an opportunity here to bring people together and I would urge all of you to take that opportunity.

Video is a really brilliant mechanism to tell people about what you do and to get them to have that shared experience. I really like what the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has done here with a brilliant 'day in the life' video about what it means to be involved with them. [Slide 10] Video is huge on social media now and is going to account for 80% of all consumer internet traffic by 2020. We saw at the start of this presentation what a large amount of video is being uploaded every 60 seconds to YouTube, and it's possible now to upload directly to Facebook too. This is a great tool for storytelling and communicating shared values to people.

Finally, I'd like to offer a few tips. Firstly, be realistic about what resources you have and manage expectations on that. In an ideal world you would be using social media around the clock and talking to people regularly, getting into discussions about belief, about faith; but you may not have the resources to do that. Next, know what a crisis is and be prepared for it. Don't be scared to have those difficult conversations. I remember the morning I woke up after the London Bridge attack, and I was following the main hashtag about the awful events and people were talking about what was going on. But there was some really nasty stuff about Islam and Muslims and belief and immigration which was just awful and so offensive. As faith organisations is there a role for you to

challenge that, to challenge assumptions and belief? I'm seeing a lot of nods around the room. I really think there is and that there is a really exciting opportunity to do that. And, of course, finally, high-quality content is absolutely key to the nature of what you do.

Please do take a look at our website (www.zoeamar.com) where we have a lot of free resources for charities. This includes the guidance which we wrote with the Charity Commission; links to my Guardian articles; and a charity digital and charity social media toolkit. I do hope that you will keep in touch, and thank you very much for listening.

Bishop Atkinson: Zoe, thank you for that overview and for reminding us of the significance and opportunity but also, at the end one, or two of the challenges as well. One of the discussion groups due to take place now will provide a chance for some of us to explore those issues in greater depths.

At this point the meeting broke into discussion groups.

Communicating in the digital world
The Inter Faith Network
5 July 2017

strategy • digital • social media • marketing

What we'll be looking at today

- Why faith charities need to engage on social media
- Who is doing it well
- Takeaway tips

Why engage on social media?

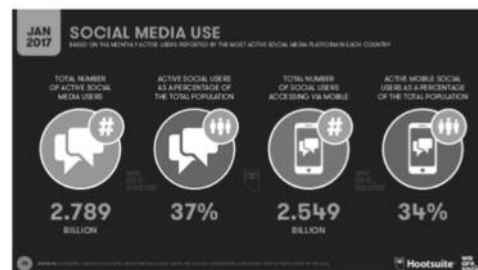
In the next 60 seconds:

- 3.3 million Facebook posts will be made
- 500 hours of video will be uploaded to YouTube
- 29 million WhatsApp messages will be sent
- 448,800 tweets will be sent
- 65,972 Instagram posts will be made

Source: <http://www.smartinsights.com/social-media-marketing/statistics/approximate-60-seconds/>



Still not convinced?



Source: <http://www.statista.com/statistics/414141/social-media-users/>

Why would you not want to be part of this conversation?



Who is using social media well?

Your leaders need to be visible on social media



- Your leaders' digital presences are as important as your organisational one
- Show that your leaders are out there and engaging in key issues
- This also demonstrates transparency

Show people the incredible community you're part of



- A community is a huge asset on social media
- Ask them to share their experiences
- Reinforces positivity
- Intrigues potential supporters

Use social media to bring people together



- Good, clear message
- Powerful statement of belief- yet relatable for many
- Opportunity to bring people together amid tragedy



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Don't forget about video



- Video will account for 80% of all consumer internet traffic by 2020
- 100 million hours of video are watched on Facebook everyday
- Excellent tool for storytelling



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Final tips

- Be realistic about resources
- Know what a crisis is- and how to prepare for it
- Don't be scared to have difficult conversations
- High quality content is vital



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Thanks for listening

Take a look at our [resources](#)

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30th anniversary presentations and celebration

During the lunch hour there was a special celebratory anniversary cake and a number of formal thanks were offered to those who had made particularly significant contributions to IFN across the last 30 years:

- Firstly, to the following participants representing each category of IFN member body:
 - Dr Norman Richardson MBE, Northern Ireland Inter-Faith Forum, on behalf of the inter faith linking bodies of the devolved nations
 - Dr Ankur Barua, Cambridge Inter Faith Programme, on behalf of Educational and Academic Bodies
 - Rabbi Mark Solomon, London Society of Jews and Christians, on behalf of National and Regional Inter Faith Organisations
 - Ms Sabira Lakha, World Ahlul Bayt Islamic League, on behalf of National Faith Community Representative Bodies
 - Ms Phiroza Gan Kotwal, Harrow Interfaith, and Chan Parmar, Bolton Inter Faith Council, on behalf of Local Inter Faith Organisations
- Secondly, to the Most Revd Father Olu Abiola OBE, Mr Nitin Palan MBE and Maulana Shahid Raza OBE on behalf of all past Trustees, including some, such as they, who have served over a number of years.

- Thirdly, to Ms Celia Blackden, visiting from Rome, on behalf of those trustees who are sadly no longer with us, but whose service gave tremendous support to IFN's work, with mention in particular of the long and valuable service of Bishop Charles Henderson, who played such an important role at IFN (and to whom Ms Blackden was an assistant). She spoke about the importance of unity.

- Finally, to Mr Brian Pearce OBE as founding Director and on behalf of all past staff, volunteers and supporters. Lord Singh of Wimbledon, the remaining Founder Officer, was also due to be thanked but, while present for the morning, was not able to be present for the lunch. Thanks to him were therefore given in the Executive Director's presentation at the opening of the day.

Mr Pearce and Lord Singh were also given a framed photograph of the founding Officers, Director and Sir Sigmund Sternberg at the launch of IFN at the Reform Club in June 1987.

Special display boards featuring photographs from across IFN's three decades of work were on display.

There was a celebratory cake to mark the 30th Anniversary.

Welcome back to the afternoon session and Feedback from discussion groups

Jatinder Singh Birdi: Welcome back to the afternoon plenary session.

Walking around and listening to your discussion group conversations I heard some very powerful points being made. Longer reports from the discussion group will form part of the overall National Meeting report. For now, I would like to invite each group to feedback one key item which they would like the rest of the participants to know about.

Discussion Group 1: Engaging faith communities on social issues

Sabira Lakha (World Ahlul-Bayt Islamic League): We would like to thank Patricia Stoat for stepping in at the last minute to facilitate the discussion group. The key message from our discussions was that saving lives is the teaching of all faiths, so it is important that we promote among faith communities the donation of organs. One way of doing that is to speak to individual communities, to demystify the process and address any concerns of faith practitioners.

Discussion Group 2: Youth and inter faith engagement

Naomi Jacobs (Druid Network): We talked about young people's engagement in inter faith work. The Inter Faith Network is updating its resource about young people and inter faith participation. As a result of principles that we were discussing and examples we were looking at, we believe it

should be based on young people's lived experience of faith, and that the project should be directed by young people, with their involvement in it from the beginning. There should also be reflection on how we can further enable their engagement through projects like this.

Discussion Group 3: Opening up difficult dialogues, engaging with tough topics

Malcolm Deboo (Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe): We had a healthy dialogue and the feedback is that in order to enable discussion about difficult issues, more needs to be done. There needs to be determination to engage with those issues and to take other people seriously, including their histories, to ensure that we respect each other's integrity and boundaries set by them whilst they can be transcended in the right context. The assets we have to bear in mind are: the relationships we build; the trust we have to build up; the commitment to honesty and integrity however difficult it may be; the ability to give ourselves and others permission to engage in areas that can be deeply painful; and a commitment to see ourselves the way others see us.

Discussion Group 4: The safety and security of our faith communities

Mustafa Field MBE (Faiths Forum for London): Our group discussed the issue of safety and security for faith communities. There was a consensus amongst the group about finding the right balance around maintaining safety and security. We don't want our institutions, our places of worship, our faith centres, to be fortresses. But we also want to keep our communities safer. It's really important to put together a plan for this. Often communities don't risk-assess for vulnerabilities. It's not just about terrorism. The risks could be fire, theft or vandalism, for example. Assessing risks and planning for these should be part of the core business. Some threats are more probable than others and there may not be funding to address them all. Many of our communities are driven by volunteers, particularly within minority faiths which don't have the same infrastructure as larger faith representative bodies in terms of support. The Jewish community, for example, has the Community Security Trust which provides a really robust process around safety and security. It is important to share good practice and use platforms like the Inter Faith Network to increase awareness.

Discussion Group 5: Developing guidance to reflect and support the vital work of local inter faith organisations

Dr Norman Richardson MBE (Northern Ireland Inter-Faith Forum): Our discussion focused on the need to renew and rewrite The Local Inter Faith Guide that IFN produced over ten years ago. The points that were made from a range of inter faith groups locally around various regions provided many case studies of the kinds of activities that inter faith groups were involved in – quite varied, in fact – but the important point that came across was the importance of building trust. This is much more than being in the same place at the same time as people from other faiths;

there's actually encounter – doing things together in a range of activities. We have examples of social caring activities, visits, events, projects, all of which contributed in various ways to building trust, working together, doing things together. And the other point that came across was the importance always of trying to involve young and younger people.

Discussion Group 6: Social media

Julie Jones (Inter-faith Council for Wales): We spoke about social media and considered questions such as: As an organisation, what are your goals? What do you want everybody to know about you? And how can social media play a part in those goals? It seems as though if you don't use social media, you've been left behind. Social media isn't about just cats and dogs! Social media is about getting a message across that you want everybody to know. If we are not the ones trying to create positive media courage, then who will? If not now, then when? How many people can you reach out to today and let them know what you've experienced today? How many people will know about this AGM? If we all posted on Facebook or posted a Tweet, we would reach hundreds of thousands of people today. How many can you reach out to? That's what social media can do.

Discussion Group 7: Sharing of good practice internationally

Dr Harshad Sanghrajka MBE (Institute of Jainology): Our key point was that, notwithstanding the constraints we are facing in local inter faith groups, we have to be outward-looking and understand the importance of structures and systems, and create informality of relationships, for the sharing of good practices internationally.

Cooperation for the common good

Dr Vinaya Sharma

Secretary General, Vishwa Hindu Parishad UK and
Committee member, Redbridge Faith Forum

Jatinder Singh Birdi: We have two speakers for this section. I would first like to introduce Vinaya Sharma, who is the Secretary General of Vishwa Hindu Parishad UK and also a Committee member of Redbridge Faith Forum. She will be reflecting through her national and local experience on the importance of faith communities working together on social issues including through such programmes as Sewa Day.

A copy of the PowerPoint slides used in this presentation is at the end of this note.

Dr Vinaya Sharma: Thank you.

Dr Sharma began with a prayer recitation which she explained meant ‘May God protect everyone, the teacher the student; may God nourish everyone; and may all of us work together with energy and vigour. May today be enlightening.’

[Slide 2] I was born in Kenya and brought up there for 17 years. I undertook further education in the UK, qualified as a pharmacist and have worked across the whole spectrum from retail, hospital, clinical and industry, to research and teaching. I have worked in various places, including the Middles East, Africa, the United States and Europe. I’ve not worked in Australia or Asia but maybe there is still a chance!

Over the years I have been able to explore values in all these various places and have come to the conclusion that we need to

understand each other and each other’s values, before we can work together for the common good of communities. Just working together without understanding each other’s point of view or the values we each hold dear or respect does not give lasting results.

So what are these values? Growing up in a Hindu home I was encouraged to explore and challenge what we were taught and this included rules of conduct and standards of behaviour, and what we were taught in school. I had to understand what I was being told to do or not to do. I understand that I gave my parents a hard time because I refused to accept anything on ‘trust’ or ‘faith’!

What are the values and lessons which I have explored on my journey till now and that I try to bring in to my work? They are:

- Talk to, and engage with, everyone, regardless of faith. Be inclusive.
- Accept all, don’t just respect all. Respect is a compromise statement.
- *Ekam Sat Vipraha Bahudha Vadanti* – This means “the Truth is One”, given different names by sages who were born at different times of human history, for example, Rama, Krishna, Buddha, Jesus Christ, Hazrat Mohamed, Guru Nanak and many more.
- *Vasudev Kutumbakama* – This means “Treat the whole world as one family”. I

have experienced the hospitality of Bedouins in the desert and tribes in Indian forests.

- *Sarve Bhavantu Sukinah* – This refers to the wellbeing of all living beings; and even elements to nurture the earth, environmental issues.

All the above values helped me accept the plural, open, and secular nature of my own Hindu Dharma, which I challenged in my childhood. So I came round full circle!

[Slide 3] The two organisations that I work with reflect all the above values and they are the Redbridge Faith Forum (RFF) and Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) UK. Very briefly a word about RFF.

RFF:

- was set up in 2003 following a faith conference set up by Redbridge Council which brought faith leaders together to talk about their communities' needs;
- is a charity acting as a collective voice for Redbridge's faith communities;
- holds regular public meetings to discuss social issues affecting faith communities such as education and health, and gives people the opportunity to meet and share with other faiths;
- brings together local members of different faith communities;
- promotes social harmony;
- fosters a community spirit within Redbridge and the local area;
- recognises the important contribution that religion and spirituality makes to the lives of Redbridge residents; and
- lobbies relevant organisations that affect faith communities

[Slide 4] Vishwa Hindu Parishad (UK) (VHP (UK)) was founded on 26 July 1969 at a

conference attended by representatives of about 70 organisations held at the Hindu Centre in London. In September 1972, it was granted charitable status by the Charity Commission UK.

VHP (UK) attaches great importance to family life. Starting and maintaining a family based on spiritual, moral and ethical values is considered a religious/sacred duty. The family has served as the building block of a strong society and the nation. We strengthen individuals and families by promoting healthy, loving, caring and stable relationships. In Hindu Dharma the focus is on the family and society rather than on the individual. Emphasis is on responsibilities and duties rather than on rights. All VHP activities, therefore, involve the whole family.

[Slide 5] This slide shows one of the earliest pictures that I have, in 1989. This was when the VHP (UK) hosted Hindus from all over the world, living out one of the values that it promotes, Vasudev Kutumbakama – “Treat the whole world as one family”. We have to first accept our own family and then move on to accepting everybody else. The gathering was so peaceful and joyful that very, very few police officers were needed.

[Slide 6] More recently we had the 150th Birth Anniversary of Swami Vivekananda, a Hindu monk, a giant who is credited with raising inter faith awareness in his 1893 speech to the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago. VHP (UK) held events to engage all sections of communities all over the UK across the year, with an exhibition being held at 150 venues. In Redbridge we had the exhibition for 3 days including a weekend. Schools visited and people from all communities were made welcome.

[Slide 7] The workshops that RFF has held over the years have covered topics such as:

- family – the role of women, marriage, motherhood, pressures of work, relationships;
- prayers – How? Why? When? To whom?

- environment – conservation of water and climate change; and
- festivals – common themes, seasonal festivals, such as Spring and Summer, religious festivals of fasting, such as Navaratri, Ramadan and Lent.

VHP (UK) has been involved in Diwali in Trafalgar Square, Holi at the Home Office, Eid in Trafalgar Square and Raksha Bandan with the Ministry of Defence.

[Slide 8] As you explore these themes you find a common factor in them all. They all bring about community cohesion. There have also been:

- interactive workshops on women's issues, family issues and the environment;
- themed inter faith walks: walking together from one place of worship to the next, for peace or environmental issues; and
- themed inter faith meals: sharing a meal with all faiths coming together for fundraising.

The significance of the shared fundraising meals is enormous. They are powerful events where communities come together, work together to raise funds for RFF, and then live together in peace and harmony. It is one of the best ways to break barriers and to bring lasting community cohesion.

The future

[Slide 9] The Sewa Day health and wellbeing team identified a big gap in the 'demand and supply' of blood donation within the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities. They carried out a project in 2017/18 to increase blood donations from people within these communities, which has been very successful. Again, this is a project which is across all faiths reflected in BAME communities.

[Slide 10]: In Redbridge, the next Sewa UK project taking place is Cycle4Sewa. This is a fundraising bike ride in September for all age groups. It takes place every year and all are encouraged to participate.

[Slide 11]: Redbridge Faith Forum is launching a new programme of quarterly network meetings. This is an opportunity to meet with members of RFF, trustees and faith leaders and to hear from local organisations who work to support homeless people in Redbridge and to find out what we can do, both as individuals and as faith communities, to assist. Everyone will be warmly welcomed and refreshments will be provided. Further information will be on our website (<http://redbridgefaithforum.org/>) in due course.

Thank you for listening patiently. Om Shanti Shanti Shanti Om

Dr Satya Sharma (Interfaith Wolverhampton): You have had tremendous success with blood donation. Can you do the same for organ donation?

Dr Sharma: We have taken the first step. I would like everyone to join together to take that second step.

Jatinder Singh Birdi: Thank you very much, Vinaya, for your insights into the two organisations with which you are involved.



Faith Communities working together for the common good:

Dr (Mrs) Vinaya Sharma, General Secretary, Vishwa Hindu Parishad UK and Committee member, Redbridge Faith Forum
IFN National Meeting
Wednesday 5th July 2017

VALUES:

Growing up in a Hindu home I was encouraged to explore and challenge values that were "Hindu values" and/or any other values or opinions. I had to understand what was going on and gave my parents a hard time because I refused to accept anything on 'Trust' or 'Faith'! So my journey till now I have explored and understood the following values:

- Talk to, and engage with all regardless of Faith, (Inclusive)
- Accept all, not just respect.
- Ekam Sat Vipraha Bahudha Vadanti- Truth is ONE, given a different name by Sages who were born as/at different times of Human history eg Rama, Krishna, Buddha, Jesus Christ, Hazrat Mohamed, Guru Nanak and many more,
- Vasudev Kutumbakama--Treat the whole world as one family
- Sarve Bhavantu Sukinah... wellbeing of **all** living beings; and even elements to nurture the Earth, environmental issues.
- All the above values Helped me Accept the Plural, open, and Secular nature of my own Hindu Dharma. A full circle!!



WHAT IS REDBRIDGE FAITH FORUM AND WHAT DOES IT DO?
Respect, cooperation, understanding

- RFF was set up in 2003 following a faith conference set up by Redbridge Council, which brought faith leaders together to talk about their communities' needs.
- The Redbridge Faith Forum (RFF) is a charity acting as a collective voice for Redbridge's Faith communities.
- RFF holds regular public meetings to discuss social issues affecting faith communities such as education, health, and give people the opportunity to meet and share with other faiths.
- RFF brings together local members of different faith communities.
- RFF promote social harmony.
- RFF fosters a community spirit within Redbridge and the local area.
- RFF recognises the important contribution that religion and spirituality makes to the lives of Redbridge residents.
- RFF lobby relevant organisations that affect faith communities



VHP (UK) was founded on **26th July 1969** at a conference attended by representatives of about **70 organisations** held at the **Hindu Centre in London**. In **September 1972**, the Parishad was given a charitable status by the Charity Commission UK.

VHP attaches great importance to **family life**. Starting and maintaining a family based on **spiritual, moral and ethical values** is considered a religious duty. The family has served as the building block of a strong society and the nation. We strengthen individuals and families by promoting healthy, loving, caring and stable relationships. In Hindu dharma, the **focus** is on the **family and society** rather than on the **individual**, emphasis is on **responsibilities** and duties rather than on **rights**. All VHP activities, therefore, involve the **whole family**.

Virat Hindu Sammelan 1989 100,000 Hindus from 30 countries



Swami Vivekanand 150th Brith Centenary

Swami Vivekanand 150th birth anniversary celebrated in 2013/14 & the role VHP played an important role in organising seminars, conferences and exhibitions throughout the UK

Common values, Traditions and Issues

- **Family** – role of women – series of workshops, RFF
- **Festivals** – common themes, seasonal Festivals, Spring, Summer, Fasting, Navratris, Ramadhan, Lent
- **Diwali** in Trafalgar Square, Holi in the Home Office, Eid in Trafalgar Square, Raksha Bandan –Ministry of Defence
- **Prayers**- How? Why? When? To Whom? RFF
- **Environment**- Conservation of water and Climate change. RFF

ACTIVITIES: which have brought the Interfaith Cohesion:

- Interactive workshops on Women's issues, family issues, Environment,
- Themed Interfaith Walks: walking together from one place of worship to the next, for Peace or environmental issues.
- Themed Interfaith Meals: e.g.Sharing a meal with all faiths coming together for fundraising. The significance of this is enormous, Powerful event where Community comes together, works together to raise funds for RFF, and then lives together in Peace and Harmony. One of the best ways to break barriers and brings lasting community cohesion.

SEWA projects

Blood donor bonanza: Charity Sewa Day has helped increase the national average of Indian Asian's that give y 37%



SUNDAY 3rd SEPTEMBER 2017
Main Team Event 11.00am to 1.00pm | Community Sports Event 1.15pm to 2.15pm
Mixed Team Event 2.30pm to 3.30pm | Final Trial Event - during intervals

Come and join us for a fun and energetic fundraising cycle at Redbridge Cycling Centre, sponsored by Prime Cash & Carry and Elite Visions. This event is for all ages.

MAIN EVENT - Entry Costs and Hire Information:

- Registration online before 18th August for £10 ONLY.
- Registration on the day for £15.
- Register ONLINE ONLY - www.sewa.uk.org/cycleforsewa
- Registration between 10.00am - 10.45am on the day
- Cycle starts at 11.00am PROMPT
- Bring your own bike and helmet for hire.
- Limited adults and children's bikes are available for hire. Terms and conditions apply.

Notes for Cycling:

- Bicycles must be seen at all times.
- Bicycles must be used for fundraising.
- Wear your safety helmet.
- Please wear your safety helmet and stay on the road.
- Please do not drink and drive.

Location Address:
Redbridge Cycling Centre,

For more details contact:
ADAM EVERETT
Kishan Mehra
07811 6 078 1000

Redbridge Faith Forum is launching a new programme of quarterly network meeting. This is an opportunity to come and meet up with members of Redbridge Faith Forum, trustees and faith leaders from our community and hear from local organisations who work to support homeless people in Redbridge and find out what we can do both as individuals and as faith communities to assist. Everyone will be warmly welcomed and refreshments will be provided. Further information will be on our website in due course. In the meantime if you are concerned about someone sleeping rough Get in touch with StreetLink to connect them to local services – you can do this online by going to www.streetlink.org.uk or telephoning 0300 500 0914

Cooperation for the common good

Andrzej Wdowiak

Assistant Director, Caritas Westminster

Jatinder Singh Birdi: The second speaker is Andrzej Wdowiak, Assistant Director of Caritas Westminster. He will be speaking about how it promotes and supports parish-based social action in the Catholic Diocese of Westminster, including its response alongside other faith communities following the Grenfell Tower fire and its Bakhita House programme which provides women escaping human trafficking with the safety and support to begin the recovery process.

A copy of the PowerPoint slides used in this presentation is at the end of this note.

Andrzej Wdowiak: Many thanks for inviting Caritas Westminster to the National Meeting of the Inter Faith Network. I am delighted to be here to share with you some of the work we do with the local Catholic communities in the Diocese of Westminster.

Caritas Westminster is the social action agency of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Westminster. We cover the Greater London area north of the river Thames and part of Hertfordshire up to Stevenage and Bishop Stortford.

Our work consists of what we call three pillars:

- 1 direct services;
- 2 social action/ community development; and
- 3 social enterprise.

Direct delivery services include:

- Caritas Deaf Service (sign language interpreting for the deaf community);
- Caritas Bakhita House (a safe house for the female victims of human trafficking and modern slavery); and
- Caritas St Joseph's Pastoral Centre (working with adult students with intellectual disabilities).

Social action/community development activities involve actively engaging with 213 parishes that cumulatively run about 800 social action projects. Our role is to encourage and support parish social action that responds to the needs of the local community.

Caritas Social Enterprise is currently being developed. It will promote and enable individuals from socially excluded groups to realise their employment ideas and opportunities that otherwise would not be possible.

In my talk today I will explain briefly the values that underpin our work. I will then use examples from our direct services and community development to illustrate some of the work we do. More specifically, I will speak about Caritas Bakhita House and the local parish response to the Grenfell Tower fire tragedy in the context of faith communities.

Our Values

We seek to bring about a society where everyone lives a life of dignity and worth. We aim to help individuals in the Diocese of Westminster to use their gifts and talents to create inclusive and caring communities.

All our work at Caritas Westminster is underpinned by Catholic Social Teaching, and this is reflected in our values as an organisation. We want to:

- meet basic human need;
- develop human potential; and
- support engagement, social inclusion and belonging.

Catholic Social Teaching has many headings that cover most areas of the society we live in. For the purpose of this meeting I will focus on a few themes that perhaps best capture the essence of this teaching.

Human Dignity

Every human being has an inherent dignity since they were created in the image and likeness of God. Individuals have an immeasurable worth and dignity and each human life is considered sacred. Therefore, everything necessary must be made available to all people to enable them to live a truly human life, such as food, clothing, and shelter; the right to choose a state of life freely; the right of religious freedom; and many other rights.

The Universal Common Good

This is the sum total of social conditions which allow people and/or groups to reach fulfilment more completely and rapidly. For a start, people need to have access to the necessities of life, but the implications of the 'universal destination of goods' go beyond these basics. Humanity exists in a condition of mutual responsibility for one another and interdependence: In such conditions, all must take the rights and aspirations of others into account.

Solidarity

The concepts of development and interdependence have grown to become encapsulated as 'solidarity'. All the people of the world belong to one human family. Jesus teaches that we must each love our neighbors as ourselves and our compassion should extend to all people even though we may be separated by distance, language or culture. Solidarity includes the Scriptural call to welcome the stranger among us—including immigrants seeking work, a safe home and a decent life for families.

Charity to individuals or groups must be accompanied by transforming unjust political, economic and social structures because the world and its goods were created for the use and benefit of all of God's creatures.

Call to Family, Community, and Participation

The person is not only sacred but also social. How we organise our society – in economics and politics, in law and policy – directly affects human dignity and the capacity of individuals to grow in community. The leading concern placed upon families is to establish conditions that allow them to maintain their unity and not be forced to break up. We believe people have a right and a duty to participate in society, seeking together the common good and well-being of all, especially the poor and vulnerable.

Work, as part of God's plan and concern for his creation

The economy must serve all people, not the other way around. Work is more than a way to make a living; it is a form of continuing participation in God's creation. If the dignity of work is to be protected, then the basic rights of workers must be respected including the right to decent and fair wages, to the organisation and joining of unions, to private property, and to economic initiative. And the environment is to be preserved sustainably.

These principles are quite similar to Tzedakah in the Jewish and Zakat and Sadaqah in the Muslim traditions, all referring to charity and justice. As such they highlight the shared values of dignity of the person, and the imperative of reaching out to the stranger through the different levels, namely through individual need, institutional approaches, and macro global politics.

At Caritas Westminster we draw on the Catholic Social Teaching and we work with the Catholic and other communities to realise these principles in the reality of local communities. Our approach is holistic and it is reflected in many local partnerships.

To illustrate our work let me give some examples.

Caritas Bakhita House

In early 2015 Pope Francis described human trafficking as 'a plague on humanity' and encouraged the Catholic Church to 'liberate victims, rehabilitate the excluded and unmask the traffickers'. Pope Francis personally asked Cardinal Vincent Nichols to lead on this issue, and the Diocese of Westminster responded by opening Caritas Bakhita House in June 2015 as an emergency safe house for rescued female victims of human trafficking in the UK.

There are estimated to be more than 14,000 victims of human trafficking and modern day slavery living in the UK today, with 70% passing through or remaining in Greater London. 55% of trafficking and enslaved victims are women.

When the guests first arrive at Bakhita House they are often very traumatised, having been enslaved, abused and kept, often for long periods of time. The transition into a peaceful and welcoming house relieves their anxieties and helps them to relax. There are enough rooms to accommodate up to 12 guests at a time, with one extra room available for victims rescued by the Metropolitan Police in emergencies. All guests of Bakhita house

have no recourse to public funds and can stay at the house for up to three months, which is twice as long as the 45 days provided by Government funded schemes.

At Bakhita House guests receive *pro bono* legal advice and all necessary assistance and pastoral and spiritual care, provided by professional staff, religious sisters and 33 volunteers. The quality of these relationships, and re-engagement with community, has delivered an experience for the guests which optimises their restoration and rehabilitation, and is a foundation for lasting hope in their lives.

Caritas Bakhita House exists as part of the unique working relationship between the Catholic Church, the Metropolitan Police, the UK's Anti-Slavery Commissioner and law enforcement agencies across the UK. The global network of the Catholic Church has allowed the work done at Bakhita House to serve as a model of practice for replication elsewhere throughout the world.

Since Bakhita House's opening in June 2015 61 women, originating from 24 countries, aged between 17 and 66, have been received into it. Without Bakhita House, these women could have easily slipped through the UK's care and law systems, and ended up back in the trafficking situation they had originally escaped from.

Faith plays a significant part in the restoration process and Bakhita House gives an opportunity for their guests to practise their faith. When the house was set up, we created a prayer room. The room is referred to as a 'quiet room'. There guests have the chance to pray and spent time in silence. Although there are many different denominations and faiths represented in the house, guests get together every Monday to pray together. It is an interesting experience to see them engaging in what appears to be a universal need to unite in faith (whatever this faith may be). Bakhita House is about an accompaniment and this means accompaniment in faith too. One of the support workers is a Muslim and takes

some of our guests to a mosque and on numerous occasions the Jewish community has organised meals for the guests.

Grenfell Tower response

When preparing this talk I was asked to talk about our response to the Grenfell Tower tragedy. As I reflected on what the actual response was I realised it was a very human response in the view of the tragedy, which was happening right in front of our eyes. This was the same response as of hundreds of other people and communities that came together to help those fleeing the inferno. The Caritas team has been on the ground from the morning after the night of the fire, helping at the local parish of St Francis of Assisi with the still burning tower in full view.

The parish was overwhelmed with donations of food, clothes and offers of help. People venturing in and out, either seeking sanctuary from the anxieties of the situation or looking for friends or family members that they have not heard from. There was a sense of growing frustration that there was no coordinated response or information from anyone. And then slowly the community started to organise themselves in groups of volunteers sorting out donations, preparing food, setting up social media and connecting with other similar community groups.

In the spontaneous urge to respond, it did not matter of what faith people were. We found ourselves organising transportation with the Muslim community group, speaking to the local Rabbi about storing some of the donations, planning an evening meal with the Sikh community donating the food and making sure that people breaking their fast during the Ramadan would be catered for.

At sunset, some people dropped by the church and asked for a place they could say their evening prayers. The parish priest showed them to his house, the only quiet place in the compound. The next days were very much the continuation of day one. Some clergy were present close to the

tower to support emergency services and console those who could have lost their friends and relatives. One of the priests wrote:

'Returned to the foot of Grenfell Tower, Bishop John and Councillor Bakhtiar stood side by side, the Bishop donning a purple stole and reciting a Psalm and prayers for the dead while the Councillor prayed in the Islamic Tradition. No witnesses, no show, just a quiet moment of faith in the face of that stark monument of death, which another Anglican clergyman had described to me as a physical and emotional scar on our landscape.'

Post Grenfell fire we are now working on the long term support for those affected by the tragedy. As ever we realised that if enabled, the communities can find the necessary resources and energy for the greater common good and will utilise their faith as a vehicle to achieve it.

Dr Peter Rookes (Birmingham Council of Faiths): I wanted to ask you about human trafficking, this dreadful dehumanising crime. You said there are more than 14,000 victims at any one time in the UK, of which only a very small proportion are accommodated for quite a short period of time. How do you avoid the revolving door syndrome? Many of these young women are reluctant to return to their homes because of the shame. They left thinking they were coming to the UK for a good job, and often their families have put money together to enable them to come, and they return to shame and to find their communities and family are unlikely to accept them. So where do they go to when they leave Bakhita House? How do you support them when they leave to ensure they don't go right back to where they started from?

Andrzej Wdowiak: Well, there is a long answer, but, in brief, the purpose of Bakhita House is to provide the initial stage of taking care of the victims. We work closely with the Metropolitan Police Human Trafficking Unit, and normally what happens is when there is a raid the Police

arrest the 'bad guys' and we take care of the victims. We would like the traffickers to be prosecuted, and as such we need to get to the point where victims cooperate with the Police. That usually takes time and there is no pressure. People have a choice: some of them choose to go back to their own countries and others prefer to stay here. We have a legal team working in regard to their immigration status and making sure people can remain here as long as they need to, until they are ready to go back. They will go to a government-run scheme afterwards.

The Revd Dr David Randolph-Horn (Leeds Concord Interfaith Fellowship): I was involved in the Handsworth Riots in the 1980s. I was on the front line and involved when we heard that the bombers of 7/7 had come from Leeds and Yorkshire. We have heard the report from Manchester, and your report just now. Both reflect wonderful relationships and spontaneous responses. Is it time for us to take seriously that there will be other disasters? Is it time for us, from a local level and in partnership with IFN, to begin to have disaster plans so that we, on the ground, can respond with our faith and cultural awareness, our local knowledge, our understanding of local politics? We on the ground can be alongside people when they are in trauma and distress, which our faiths speak to. We can provide the practical support that we can enable to bring relief and to provide advocacy and support for those that are not receiving what they might receive from the authorities.

Andrzej Wdowiak: To answer briefly, yes, we are starting a conversation about creating a group in terms of a Caritas response team. For similar disasters we've created a special fund which will be designated. Maybe more on a local level we are starting conversations now with different communities and faith groups to see how we can jointly approach the long term consequences of what happens, and to see how we can prepare better at the local or maybe more national level to responding to situations like that.

Jatinder Singh Birdi: I'd like to draw this session to a close and thank both our speakers for their valuable contributions. Does anyone have any more general reflections to offer on the overall theme of working together?

Mustafa Field MBE (Faiths Forum for London): I was on the site of Grenfell the morning after the fire. There was a phenomenal response from faith communities, but there is a gap in how public authorities were able to connect and support. The critical work was being done by faith communities. There was a real vacuum – which I think has now been highlighted by the resignation of the leader of Kensington and Chelsea Council – and a real challenge. But what I saw on the ground was people of all faiths and none, wanting to do what they could and charities from different faith traditions coordinating different efforts. There was, though, a lack of coordination. If the state is not going to take that responsibility then we need to find mechanisms to talk to each other and manage that coordination. It was a critical time when pastoral care was being offered but there was, for example, a huge waste in food that was being donated. There are serious questions about how we can mobilise ourselves more effectively. As we're seeing a shrinking public service, in some ways we as faith communities need to be able to be more organised to respond to these tragic events in future.

Julie Jones (Inter-faith Council for Wales): In our discussions on social media earlier today one of the drawbacks mentioned was that some people don't know how to use Twitter and Facebook or other social media and so they can't use it to promote positive stories. We would like to know if anybody is struggling with that and would like to know more about making make positive religious views on social media, so that we can help them in that area.

Jatinder Singh Birdi: Thank you for your comments.



The Inter Faith Network

National Meeting
Wednesday, 5 July 2017



Speaker
Andrzej Wdowiak, Assistant Director

Caritas Three Pillars



Direct Services



Social Enterprise



Community Development

Caritas Direct Services



- **Caritas Deaf Service**
Sign language interpreting for the deaf community
- **Caritas Bakhita House**
Safe house for female victims of human trafficking and modern slavery
- **Caritas St Joseph's**
Pastoral centre for adult students with intellectual disabilities

Caritas Social Action/ Community Development

Encouragement and support for parish social action that responds to the needs of the local community.

- Engaging with 213 parishes and
- 800 social action projects.



Caritas Social Enterprise

Promotion and support for individuals and socially excluded groups to realise their employment ideas and opportunities.

Catholic Social Teaching



- The Human Dignity
- The Universal Common Good
- Solidarity
- Call to Family, Community, and Participation
- Work, as part of God's plan and concern for his creation

Caritas Bakhita House



- Safe accommodation for 12 women
- Highly skilled and professional team of staff and volunteers
- Pastoral and spiritual needs addressed
- Emotional and physical health, and Legal support
- Support with Life Skills, Language and Education
- Training and Employment support
- Help with repatriation to countries of origin where desirable



Caritas Grenfell Tower Response



- Presence on the days of tragedy
- Engagement with the local community and faith groups
- Planning for short and long term support
- Continuous effort to engage with local services

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Reflections on themes of the day

Ven Bogoda Seelawimala Sri Lankan Sangha Sabha GB and Vice-Moderator, IFN Faith Communities Forum

Thank you very much for the opportunity for me to share some thoughts regarding the day. It's been a very useful and thoughtful day for all of us, beginning with the welcome by Bishop Atkinson and the talk by Harriet Crabtree on the work of IFN across 30 years, including offering gratitude to the pioneers of the organisation. I was also impressed by the photos illustrating the 30 year history of IFN.

Then Rabbi Warren Elf reflected on the terrorist attacks in Manchester, which reminded us that, regardless of any differences in culture and background, everyone worked together and supported each other. This showed how we can respond for the common good after such a disaster. This was also the case when thousands of people came together in solidarity after the London terrorist attacks.

Jaskiran Mehmi, a student at LSE, is a very good example of how young people are interested in inter faith activities. She reflected on the importance of getting the chance to develop the skills to play an active role in a multi faith society and highlighted inter faith dialogue as being especially important. We need more young people like Jaskiran to represent the younger generation at IFN.

Our good friend, Maulana Shahid Raza, reflected on the long history of IFN over 30 years on his journey. He paid tribute to the tireless work of Brian Pearce, which we

appreciate very much. He did a great service to inter faith by founding this wonderful national organisation and his pioneering work is appreciated highly. I would also like to pay tribute to the late Venerable Vajiragnana, a good friend of Brian Pearce, involved in IFN in its early days.

Rudi Elliott Lockhart talked to us about the importance of Religious Education. We know some children may be drawn to extremism. Religious Education can help us to work for the common good and against extremism.

Vinaya Sharma shared her great knowledge of Hinduism and how these teachings can be used for the common good.

Finally, Andrzej Wdowiak talked about humanitarian activities – for instance, helping those affected by the Grenfell Tower fire. There have been many multi faith services and vigils and I have attended, and organised, a number of these.

I have been reminded of the concept of challenge and response formulated by Arnold Toynbee, a great historian and anthropologist. He said that when you face a challenge or disaster, you forget all your differences and are united for the common good. That is very true. During the past 30 years IFN has faced many challenges and is continuing to do so. It is my belief that the IFN is responding to these challenges in a skilful way, working together with other bodies to form a united front against the forces which are trying to divide our society.

The Revd James Breslin

United Reformed Church,
Newcastle Council of Faiths
and IFN Trustee

I have been asked to draw out some of the themes of today. One which came out again and again this morning was the concept of 'soft' inter faith cooperation and regret about not being able, in some places, to push beyond that. When the Inter Faith Network was set up thirty years ago, and when local groups were set up, there was the excitement of something new – getting to know people from other faith communities, actually discovering what those people who worshipped and lived that life looked like, as opposed to reading about it in books usually written by people who didn't belong to that community. But most of us have got past that stage, and some of us are finding it difficult to work out where to go next, and that came out today.

But what also came out today was the importance of 'soft' networks – the fact that that kind of personal involvement – where you know the local imam, you know the local rabbi, you know the local priest, you've visited the gurdwara, you've visited the temple, you've visited the church – means that when something like the attacks at Manchester Arena or London Bridge or Finsbury Park or the disaster at Grenfell Tower happens, communities are in a position to work and cooperate together.

So, I've heard a certain amount of regret that the early excitement has passed, but positiveness that out of that strong relationships have developed which allow us to cope with problems.

Mohinder Singh Chana

Bradford Concord Interfaith
Society, Network of Sikh
Organisations (UK) and
Vice-Moderator, IFN Faith
Communities Forum

So much to say, and so little time! I think, firstly, that one cannot escape the fact that it has been thirty years since IFN was born, and I do need to make a point of it. I think it's done a tremendous amount of work in thirty years. As far as I know, and this is very important, there is no comparable organisation in other countries – Europe or other parts of the world.

My first encounter with IFN was when, in conjunction with the Multi Faith Centre at the University of Derby under Professor Paul Weller, it undertook to compile a multi-faith directory of religions in the UK. I got the opportunity to serve on the Sikh consultative panel of that. It was a tremendous amount of work – this was in the '80s, and was the first reference book of its kind. It was a substantial addition to the reference data in this country at that time, and IFN should be congratulated on that, together with the University of Derby.

I would like to reflect on three of the challenges that we face.

Firstly, there is an absence today of younger members. Apart from Jaskiran, and some IFN staff, we are all older. I think this needs to change. This is not something new and has been talked about in various ways, but if we are going to move forward together, how to involve young people is a challenge for us all. At local inter faith level, where I am also involved, we have tremendous difficulty recruiting young people, and I think the same goes for most local inter faith groups. This challenge needs to be considered.

Then, secondly, there are challenges of the current situation relating to terrorism. What's happening in other countries does

impact on relationships between communities in this country. It's not the remit of IFN to change people's ideology but it is within its remit to help people explore ideology. If the ideology is such that it causes friction, if it causes the likes of so-called Islamic State to be born with the brutal atrocities it commits, then that kind of ideology needs to be challenged. Unless this is resolved, the issue of terrorism won't go away – and somebody, somewhere, has to make a start. IFN can provide and facilitate a platform where such open and honest debate can take place.

The third point I want to make is about Religious Education. It's of great concern that a number of schools have narrowed their teaching of various faiths to just one or two. I have previously made great protest, but not succeeding, where a primary school chose only two subjects: Christianity and Islam. I argued that it is not the depth that matters at that time – the breadth of subject matter is important. This is a challenge for RE as well as for IFN to consider.

So these are three particular challenges on which we need to go away and reflect – issues which we need to deal with if we are going to be successful in the next 30 years and beyond.

Dr Maureen Sier

Director, Interfaith Scotland

I'll keep this very brief. It's been an absolute honour to be here on behalf of Interfaith Scotland. There's so much I could have commented on that has emerged from the theme today of moving forward together; but the word that keeps coming to my mind is 'relationships'.

Harriet's opening remarks made it so clear that the very founding of the Inter Faith Network was based on the relationships that Brian Pearce and others were able to build with diverse faith communities.

Rabbi Warren really demonstrated how the relationships that were built over years

between the faith communities helped in a really cohesive response to the Manchester terror attack.

I'm going to share a short story on the Manchester terror attacks which demonstrates the power of these relationships locally, nationally, and internationally. When the bombing of the Manchester Arena took place, I received a phone call from a Jewish friend in North Carolina who said, "I don't know what to do. My daughter is the roadie for Ariana Grande. All I know is she's on a bus on her way to London – can you help?" So I phoned my daughter in London and said, "Can you help? This bus will be arriving at this time; could you meet Gillat off the bus?" And she did, and within an hour – this is the power of social media – they had actually taken a selfie and sent it to myself and my friend saying, "We're safe, we're fine, we're OK." And this was built on inter faith relationships, on the relationship and friendship we'd built over many years.

Relationships are just so central. Again, Jaskiran showed that we need to build relationships with young people; Zoe demonstrated how we can extend our relationships and our impact; the workshop on safety and security highlighted neighbourhood relationships and how it's working with communities where you live that keeps you safe; and the presentations on social action were all about doing things together.

It seems to me that right at the heart of everything that all of you do is building good relationships with each other. I found a little quote from a psychiatrist that said: "If we don't work in relationship with others, our physical, mental and spiritual health suffers – in fact, it's fatal." I think it's the same for communities: if we don't work in partnership with others, our communities will suffer, and they will suffer poor mental health, poor physical wellbeing, and poor spiritual health. So I hope that as we move forward we will continue to build deeper, stronger, and richer relationships.

Closing reflections

**Rt Revd Richard Atkinson OBE
and Jatinder Singh Birdi**

Co-Chairs, Inter Faith Network for the UK

Bishop Atkinson: One of the privileges and delights of being a Church of England bishop is that you get asked to mark anniversaries. This year has included the 900th anniversary of Merton Priory, linked to one small village in Bedfordshire; and among others the 800th anniversary of another village church which coincided with the 240th anniversary of the hanging of their vicar for fraud and embezzlement!

Whenever anniversaries come along, whether 900 years or 30 years in our case, I'm always reminded that in the Christian theology, remembering – not least at the heart of our Communion – is not just a backward-looking event. It's always taking what's happened in the past and going forward into the present and future with it.

We've had a good day today, and there has been a combination of opportunity and challenge. We've certainly had painted the context in which we work along with our

hopes and joys, as well as some of the real challenges. But let us remember, in that deep sense of not just looking backwards but looking forward as well, as we go forward with passion and energy into the next thirty years. To return to the image I used at the outset of the day, we have danced well today; let's dance forward well together in the years to come.

Jatinder Singh Birdi: I share the view of Bishop Richard on today's meeting and the spirit in which everyone has taken part. I would like to thank everyone who has attended today. It's been an honour to have you all here and to hear your valuable contributions. I would also like to thank all those who have contributed today, including the speakers, discussion group presenters, notetakers, rapporteurs, fellow Trustees, the staff at the QE II Conference Centre and the IFN staff. I encourage all of you to stay for the AGM and, if you are not able to do so, do have a safe journey home.

Discussion groups notes

Note: The discussion points listed in each of these notes are points and suggestions made by individual participants during the sessions rather than conclusions agreed by the discussion group as a whole.

Discussion Group 1: Engaging faith communities on social issues

Facilitator: Patricia Stoa, Nottingham InterFaith Council

Presenters: Kirit Mistry, Co-Chair, National Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Transplant Alliance (NBTA) and Angela Ditchfield, Diversity Lead Nurse-Organ Donation and Transplantation, NHS

Over the years, IFN has provided advice and information to assist many different organisations. One issue on which it has helped in this way is organ donation and transplantation.

This discussion group offers the opportunity to hear about a specific aspect of donation and transplantation and for general discussion about how faith communities can help get out the message about this important topic – including through Organ Donation Week, which this year takes place from 4 to 10 September.

.....

Ms Patricia Stoa welcomed everyone to the discussion group and invited Mr Mistry and Ms Ditchfield to make their presentations.

A copy of their presentation slides are at the end of this note.

Mr Mistry also drew attention to a number of documents on faiths and organ transplantation, which he had on display.

General discussion

In discussion the following points were made.


- There were 7,000 people waiting for transplants, but the pool of potential donors was small.
- Although organ failure did not discriminate, people from some ethnic groups were more likely to suffer from some conditions which led to organ failure. Often these same groups were, for cultural reasons, less likely to donate their organs.
- The Faith Organ Donation Summit which took place in 2013 looked at ways in which people of minority ethnic groups could be encouraged to register to be organ donors.
- The work of hospital chaplaincy teams and community ambassadors was important in supporting people who would be eligible to donate and to receive organs.
- Prevention education and reducing inequalities in health was also important.
- As well as Organ Donation Week (4–10 September) Inter Faith Week (12 to 19 November this year) was another opportunity to promote organ transplantation amongst faith groups.

- As there was no correlation of statistics between blood and organ donation, greater cooperation between the two agencies responsible for these could be encouraged.
- Wales and Scotland were among 19 countries which operated an 'opt-out' system, rather than an 'opt-in' system for organ transplantation.
- Whilst faith communities were generally willing to cooperate in promoting organ donation amongst their respective communities, they did not wish to be co-opted, as everyone might not subscribe to a particular point of view.
- All religions believed in saving life and organ donation saved lives.
- Although Muslim fatwas supported organ donation, it was not always culturally acceptable.
- The whole issue of organ donation needed to be demystified.



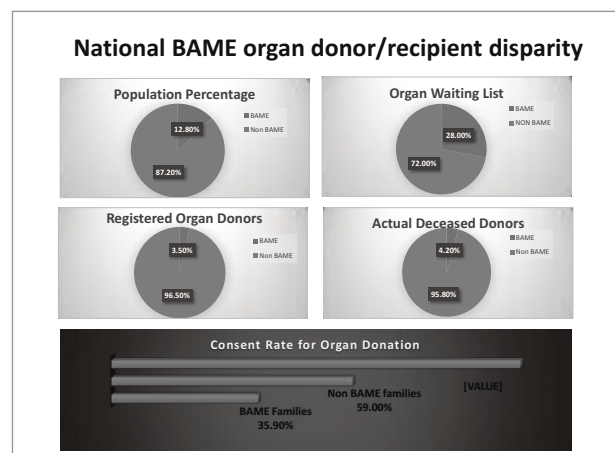

Kirit Mistry-Co-Chair National Black Asian Minority Ethnic Transplant Alliance (NBTA) & Relationship Manager- Upahaar Chair South Asian Health Action Charity

Presentation to Interfaith Network
30th Anniversary Celebration
5th July 2017

Presentation Outline

- 1.Introduction to NBTA
2. National BAME Organ Donor/ recipient Disparity
- 2.Community ambassadors volunteers Project
- 3.Faith campaigns launched in Leicester
- 4.Barriers and Challenges to Organ Donation
- 5.Planning for Organ Donation Interfaith week in November and Future partnership

The coordinating voice for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic transplant donation

- The NBTA brings together people, passion and resources to address the barriers faced by those from a Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic (BAME) genetic heritage needing a whole organ or stem cell transplant.
- Our goal is to save lives. We will raise awareness of inequalities, including campaigning and championing for change in order to promote the importance of transplantation with the aim of increasing the number of BAME people registering as donors and consenting to donation.
- The Alliance is made up of organisations working specifically with BAME communities and representatives from national bodies, the NHS and the voluntary sector.



Community Ambassadors

1. Have real life experiences to share
2. Are able to mobilise friends and families
3. Have the community contacts and links
4. Increase life expectancy and life chances
5. Recruit and Increase sign up to the donation register
6. Help spread the message organ donation is a gift of life



Recipients as Community Ambassadors



What are the barriers or challenges

- Lack of Knowledge
- Lack of Awareness
- Lack of Confidence
- Religious Objections
- Break down Ignorance
- Improve engagement and channels of communication
- Need for more cultural sensitive support

Religious Events



Hindus Embrace Organ Donation Awareness Campaign Launched in 2016

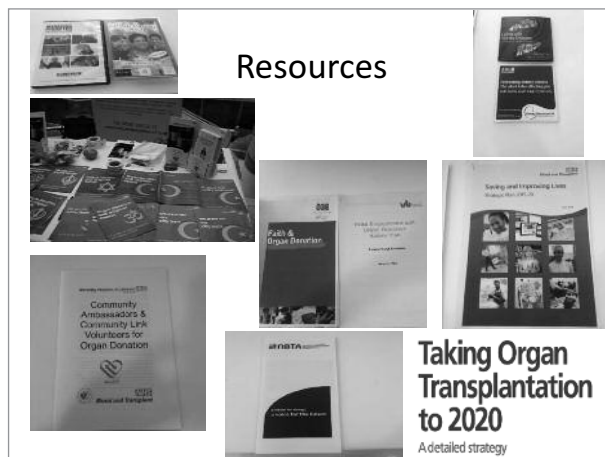


Community Events



Working in Partnership to engage and Raise Awareness in Black African and Caribbean Communities and Young People





Resources



Our Action Plan :

- NBTA Living Kidney Transplant Initiative in London and Leicester
- SAHA Mapping of Local population and targeting appropriately
- SAHA Engagement with Recipients , Donors and Carers
- SAHA developing Local Case Studies of Recipients and Donors from BAME Communities to help further raise awareness.
- SAHA Recruit and train community ambassadors
- SAHA and NBTA developing awareness with London Boroughs of Brent, Ealing and Harrow.



Next Steps:

1. National Organ Donation Week is 4th – 10th September 2017
2. Walk for Organ Donation 2nd and 3rd September 2017 in Snowdonia
3. Develop partnerships with IFN members and plan for Interfaith Week 12th – 19th November 17
4. NBTA Work with the BAME and Faith Media to raise awareness of Organ Donation and Transplantation
5. SAHA & NBTA to work in Partnership with Faith based organisations to develop a Specific Faith Campaigns



Thank you and please feel free to contact me :

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Email: kiritmistry2@gmail.com

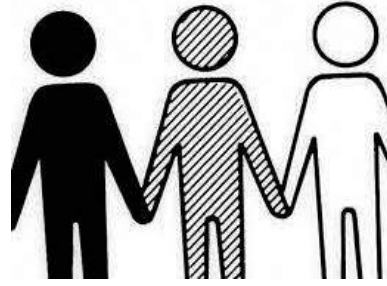
Or

southasianhealthaction@gmail.com

MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER

The Inter Faith Network for the UK's 30th Anniversary National Meeting

Diversity Lead Nurse-ODT
Specialist Nurse Organ Donation
Angela Ditchfield



Past



Present



IF EVERYONE IS MOVING
FORWARD TOGETHER,
THEN SUCCESS TAKES CARE
OF ITSELF. ~ Henry Ford ~



Thank you

Discussion Group 2: Youth and inter faith engagement

Facilitator: Ashley Beck, Inter Faith Network for the UK

Presenters: Sean Turnbull, ParliaMentors at 3FF

In 2004, IFN published Connect: Different Faiths, Shared Values, a youth inter faith action guide. Work will begin this autumn on an updated and expanded version reflecting the wide range of different ways that young people are engaging, and encouraging even more involvement. The discussion group will be facilitated by Ashley Beck who will be leading on revision of the guide with a brief opening presentation from 3FF.

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Mr Ashley Beck welcomed participants to the discussion group. Its focus was youth inter faith engagement and the development of strategies for engaging more young people in inter faith activity.

He invited Mr Sean Turnbull of 3FF to give his presentation, focusing on 3FF's ParliaMentors programme.

A copy of Mr Turnbull's presentation is attached at the end of this note. During his presentation he also showed two YouTube videos relating to the 2016 Interfaith Summit.

In response to questions after his presentation, Mr Turnbull said:

- Most of the funding for the ParliaMentors programme came from two large foundations. Participants and staff were also encouraged to fundraise. This year, 3FF had also experimented with crowdfunding, though the success of this had yet to be fully determined.
- About half of the ParliaMentors projects lasted longer than the initial year. 3FF did

not expect all projects to continue, and some related to a specific time period. 3FF did all that it could to help with fundraising, and this often allowed projects to continue for longer than the initial year. One example was a project called 'Pension Pals', which aimed to combat loneliness among the elderly.

- 3FF's work in schools took a whole school approach. Outreach work was conducted with all years, and schools signed up to a 'package' of 3FF's work.

Mr Beck thanked Mr Turnbull for his informative presentation, noting that the ParliaMentors programme had been recognised by the United Nations.

Mr Beck then offered some information on IFN's forthcoming project:

- IFN was launching a new programme of work in 2017/18 relating to youth inter faith engagement.
- Part of this would be the creation of a new edition of an inter faith action guide for young people *Connect: Different Faiths, Shared Values*, that it had published in 2004. That had been published in association with the National Youth Agency and Respect and was ground breaking at the time. Although the publication was over a decade old, it remained the most downloaded item on IFN's website by quite some distance.
- In 2014 IFN had run a day-long conference titled 'Young Voices, Young Agents for Change'. This event brought together faith-based organisations, secular youth organisations and others to discuss the involvement of young people in inter faith activity. A dedicated microsite had been created out of this event, which could be found at www.youth.interfaith.org.uk and a full list of bodies that took part could be found there. [Note: Information from that microsite has now been incorporated into the main IFN website.]

- IFN's new programme of work with young people would directly involve a panel of young people from a range of faiths and beliefs – this would be hugely important to the development of the project.
- The project would involve schools. *Young Voices, Young Agents for Change* had included a definition of youth that was a little too broad, and had technically been set at 0–25. The new project would seek to work with young people aged 12–25. Visits to schools would be part of the programme.
- Lots of local inter faith groups, such as the Redbridge Faith Forum, already organised faith walks that young people had participated in, and that allowed them to experience a variety of places of worship first hand.

Directory

- Religions for Peace (UK) had established a Youth Inter Faith Network for organisations and not individuals. A directory would be most useful in the context of their current work with young people.

General discussion

In discussion the following points were made. Points are grouped by theme.

Visits and tours

- Inter faith projects in the past had often focused around trips or excursions to places of religious significance, such as the Holy Land. The participant had experienced this sort of trip when he was at school. Could this idea be expanded upon, or could a digital project be launched to allow young people to visit places of religious significance all over the world 'virtually'?
- While participants in 3FF's programme had expressed interested in such excursions, this was not something it was focusing on at the moment.
- Some charities specialised in this, and organised excursions to places such as the Holy Land, but also places of tragedy such as Auschwitz and Srebrenica.
- A project run by the Open University during the previous Inter Faith Week had involved them creating a series of virtual tours of places of worship and promoting them using social media.
- There is was no reason why that project could not be expanded in the future to focus on places of worship internationally.
- One of the challenges of inter faith work was to frame it in a way that was visibly attractive to young people. A digital project such as the one run by the Open University was interesting in this respect.
- Organising projects on behalf of young people was risky. Older people should let things go, and allow young people to drive inter faith encounter themselves.
- The success of 3FF's ParliaMentors programme was partly due to the fact that they had trusted and challenged young people, and that this had allowed them to gain confidence.
- Redbridge Faith Forum was running an initiative where young people would partner up with a committee member in order to be able to contribute to and drive the work of the Forum. There had been a mixed response. Some members of the committee had wanted clearer ground rules. They wanted dialogue not monologues.
- 3FF had used a similar system as well in the past, where young people would 'buddy up' with staff members. There could be communications issues with this approach, and some had to be prompted to form effective relationships. Getting people engaged in the initial stages of a project was half the battle.

- What were the practical aspects of involving young people in the decision making process within inter faith organisations? For example, how much should young people be told about financial matters?
- That would depend on the skills that people had demonstrated, and the effectiveness of the relationships that were formed through such partnering initiatives.
- Many communities were having problems with engaging young people in their work, not just inter faith organisations.
- The Director of 3FF took an approach referred to as 'inter faith through the back door'. Faith did not have to be the primary focus of discussion all of the time. 3FF also used other avenues, such as sport, drama, music or art.
- IFN had recently held a meeting with its member bodies in the National and Regional Inter Faith Organisations category. Here it had been pointed out that even when working with adults it could be effective to begin with other things that people are interested in.
- The participant said that he had experience of working with both the World Congress of Faiths and the National Union of Students. In his experience, safe spaces were required to talk about difference and a collective approach was the most important thing.
- Had anyone present established a youth faith forum? Might residential forums be an effective method of bring young people of different faiths and beliefs together? Some young people had mentioned such trips as a good idea. The Council of Christians and Jews had run visits abroad in the past which had been very valuable.

Examples of youth projects

- Barnet Multi Faith Forum was trying to establish a youth multi faith forum. Although organisations involved with youth inter faith engagement did not want to copy one another, it would be helpful to have a forum or a place where they could get in touch, to pool resources and share good practice.
- The Bolton Interfaith Council's Young Ambassadors was a group of young people (currently all girls) that met weekly to discuss current issues relating to subjects such as identity, community and gender. Their aim was to get young people of different backgrounds engaged. The participant was a Member of the Youth Parliament for Bolton, representing 11-16 year olds nationally. This was an excellent platform for getting people of different backgrounds engaged with one another. This had helped their group and had improved their knowledge of what diversity and dialogue meant for young people in the UK today.
- York interfaith Group had carried out a project in schools using art. Children depicted the Golden Rule, and had also participated in a competition depicting the lives of refugees under the banner 'Different paths, shared future'. The response of both the participating children and members of the public had been excellent.
- Westminster Faith Exchange had also run an art competition about faith festivals supported by the local authority. The project had helped develop community cohesion as a video was made that generated an excellent response from members of the public.
- Leeds Concord Interfaith Fellowship was looking to run an essay competition in schools, but the young people had wanted to do a video competition instead. They had run the competition which had proved to be very successful. This proved that letting young people generate their own ideas was vital.

- A forum through which to share these ideas would be helpful.

Sean Turnbull: Youth and inter faith engagement

Introduction

- Hello my name is Sean and I'm work for 3FF which stands for Three Faiths Forum. Many of you in the room will know then organisation already. But for those of you who don't know 3FF, it was started 20 years ago to create dialogue between Christian, Jewish and Muslim people engaging initially with those in positions of power. Around 10 years ago the focus of the organisation shifted to grassroots work primarily with young people. Coupled with this was shift in focus extending beyond the three faiths of our name to involving people from a range of religious and non-religious backgrounds.
- The three main areas we work in are:
 - Schools from primary to sixth form
 - Universities
 - Community spaces.
- We primarily work with youth audiences because we think building good relations between communities is vital at any age but especially valuable if you can start from an early age.
- All 3FF programmes work on a model of encounter and education. Meaning we both bring people together from different backgrounds but also we provide them with the tools to develop communication and dialogue skills.

Our programmes

ParliaMentors

- The programme I run ParliaMentors has been running for the last 10 years. It's an interfaith and political leadership programme.

- Each year we bring together 45 – 50 emerging leaders from different faith, belief and cultural backgrounds from universities around the UK. We put them in teams of 5 and challenge them to create a social action project while they do this they are also mentored by any MP. Throughout their year on the programme we support them with training around their social action projects but also around inter faith dialogue techniques. Around 400 people have graduated from the programme so far.

Alumni

- In addition, those that have graduated from the programme are also supported through an alumni network and alumni committee who continue the inter faith work they started with 3FF throughout their ParliaMentors year. This included social events with different alumni, informal inter faith events such as 3FF's Interfaith Iftar and the Interfaith Summit. I'll talk more about those activities later on in the presentation.

Workshops

- In our schools work which ranges from work with primary school students to sixth formers. We primarily work in London and Birmingham at the moment with plans to expand.
- Our flagship workshop is something called an EFB (Encountering Faiths and Beliefs), in which speakers from different faith and belief backgrounds are invited to talk about their faith and belief background to an audience of children who then get to ask them questions with the help of a trained facilitator.
- We also run skills based workshops with children call Art of Empathy and Art of Asking designed to develop understanding of how to create sensitive dialogue around faith issues.

Linking

- Continuing the encounter theme of 3FF's work we also link schools with different faith ethos together. Different classes of students from faith schools meet at each other's schools, learn about what they have in common and what they do differently and then meet to take part in different types of activity for instance some involve sport, others involve art or drama.
- With a new partnership with the Linking Network and the Department of Communities and Local Government this year 3FF will roll out to the highest number of schools it's delivered to.

Amplifiers

- A new addition to the 3FF family. This year we've been piloting a sixth form project with Westminster Academy. It involves engaging sixth formers with interfaith issues, difficult conversations and social awareness via artistic approaches and critical thinking. With trained facilitators, the students on the programme co-create a manifesto of what they want to see change in society.

Interfaith Summit

- Finally I come to 3FF's Interfaith Summit. A unique event in the interfaith sector. The Interfaith Summit is the brainchild of 3FF's ParliaMentors Alumni Network. Around 3 years ago they wanted to give back to 3FF and the sector that had helped them through ParliaMentors and they identified a gap in the inter faith sector specifically that there was no overall youth led event for young people to come together and take joint action on the most important issues relevant to their faith or belief.
- With that in mind they decide to create that space. The Interfaith Summit is a one day festival of all things related to inter faith that takes place in Inter Faith Week. In previous years we've had activities such as inter faith drama workshops,

discussion around the refugee crisis, Brexit, women and inter faith, intercultural cooking classes, faith and mental health and music from different faith traditions. The range of activities is broad but the most important thing about the event is that the content is created by the young people themselves with 3FF's support and that different people from all walks of life come to the event. In our pilot year over 300 people attended across the day, last year's Interfaith Summit over 400 people attended. This shows a growing appetite from young people to both engage with inter faith work but also to be willing to create it.

Sharing good practice

- Concerning the Summit our funders were extremely generous this year and therefore we are now in a position where we facilitated other youth led inter faith projects. Over the last 6 months we've established a small, discreet funding pot for attendees of the Interfaith Summit to begin their own one off projects or connect with other young of similar interests. In this way, we are continuing engagement after this one off event.

Conclusion

- The most important thing we can do now is make sure that if these spaces for young people to create inter faith dialogue and activities themselves are funded, established and maintained. Alongside using IFN's Connect guide please come and talk to me or any of us at 3FF about how young people from your communities can get involved in the Summit or if they want to throw out ideas we can support them to think these activities through alongside the alumni of our programmes.

Discussion Group 3: Opening up difficult dialogues, engaging with tough topics

Facilitator: Dr Justine Huxley, Director, St Ethelburga's Centre for Reconciliation and Peace

IFN published, earlier this year, a short booklet: *Let's Talk: Practical Pointers for Inter Faith Dialogue*. This drew on suggestions from members. One of the sections of the booklet focused on dialogue about difficult issues. This is often the hardest area for dialogue to approach.

Among the most challenging topics to deal with are those where religious and/or social and political histories are shared but may be experienced profoundly differently – for example where there are impacts of colonialism or legacies of past strife. Challenging in a different way are other types of topic such as differing perceptions of a group's or individual's religious identity.

The discussion group will begin with a short mapping exercise to identify what issues

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Dr Justine Huxley welcomed participants. She introduced herself and the work of the St Ethelburga's Centre focussing on its work done with faith and non-faith communities around conflict resolution. She explained that some of the techniques used at St Ethelburga's would be modelled during the session.

After introductions, participants were invited to indicate how comfortable they were about discussing difficult issues by raising their hands to the height they felt most comfortable – a fully raised arm indicating 'fully confident' – as an initial exercise. It was noted that this would depend on what was to be discussed and that some issues which were controversial and difficult for some were not for others.

Dr Huxley said that IFN's publication *Let's Talk: Practical Pointers for Inter Faith Dialogue* was a useful starting point.

It was agreed that Chatham House Rules would be used. As usual in IFN National Meeting Discussion Group notes, there would be key points but nothing would be attributed to participants.

The group also agreed a signal to indicate wanting to speak during discussion, which would be an upturned palm of the hand resting on a knee.

The group then undertook a mapping exercise where ten difficult/controversial issues were identified.

Ten initial issues were identified (in no particular order):

- whether there were many gods or one God;
- Israel Palestine conflict;
- Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia within Jewish and Muslim communities;
- exploring divisions within religious traditions when people within those traditions did not want to talk about them;
- conversion;
- the language used in dialogue and how inclusive or exclusive terms can be, such as 'religion' and 'faith';
- the relationship between 'religion' and 'politics' and how they can be easily confused and become a focus for conflict;
- homosexuality;
- face covering; and
- theological Anti-Semitism, rooted in Christian thought.

These were written on pieces of A4 paper and placed on the floor. Participants were then asked to group them together where they believed there were connections. They were asked to explain why they had made those associations.

This exercise enabled the group to see how association of ideas worked and how that could reveal underlying issues that needed to be explored; it helped reveal why the issues were difficult.

There was an exploration about who should be involved in such discussions on difficult issues. This focussed on the tension between theologians and practitioners of faith – where such a distinction could be made. Sometimes a well-informed neutral mediator could be a real asset when such issues were discussed.

A key issue that was identified was how people dealt with competing truth claims. This was true not only between religious traditions but also within them.

Dr Huxley shared a case study with the group that exemplified an approach to a process of sustained dialogue. This focussed on two groups that had been involved in a civil war.

The process involved (in this particular order):

First meeting:

- invitation
- balanced planning group (equally balanced between the ‘sides’)
- bread breaking (a simple meal)
- single identity work (groups working in parallel from each ‘side’)
- personal stories
- impact of conflict

Second meeting

- mapping of issues and interests
- building group culture
- hopes and fears
- action planning (for the event that was to follow)

Event

- cultural event

Third meeting

- learning and trust
- restorative circles

On-going process

- mentoring leaders to take forward the process within the communities affected

Participants were interested in the ‘restorative circle technique’ which Dr Huxley elaborated upon. Restorative circle technique has its roots in the work of Dominic Barter in Brazil in the 1990s as a process for supporting those in conflict. Participants form a circle that investigates the causes of conflict, what a just solution would look like for all parties and the action that needs to be taken. It has developed a number of forms in different contexts.

Dr Huxley then identified what had been seen as the resources and influences within the process as related to the case study (see overleaf).

Q and A

- Time had been identified as a key resource but issues often had to be dealt with ‘in real time’ and there was not an opportunity for a longer process. How could the best elements of what had been described be used in times of crisis?

Creating time was crucial. There was a need to be able to engage with issues before they became crises or, when a crisis had

Resources	Influences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NGO support • Facilitators, skills and tools • mutually agreed space • financial support • level playing field • balanced numbers • willingness to engage • courtesy culture • time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • narrative and story • restorative practice • C Otto Scharmer's 'Theory U' • envisioning • John Paul Lederach • public conversations project

happened, to take time to respond and not simply to react.

- The case study outlined indicated that it occurred either after the formal conflict had ended or was nearing its end. The real difficulty was making this happen during an ongoing conflict.

Dr Huxley noted that this might not have been the best case study to use. What was key though were the moments in a conflict where people started to think that talking was better than killing and those needed to be seized. There was much literature which could support such a processes setting out techniques that had proved to be useful in such scenarios.

Participants were then asked to discuss, in pairs, what they felt their assets and resources were when approaching difficult issues and what they felt their needs were. The following were identified (see below).

Dr Huxley put this final question to the group: If there was one thing you'd change that would make a difference to dealing with difficult issues what would it be?

Participants offered the following ideas for one thing that would make a difference to dealing with difficult issues:

- recognising that there was a fault line between faith and secular society and that secular society needed to understand faith better;

Assets/resources	Needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ability to see ourselves as others see us • our relationships built on trust and honesty 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • determination to dialogue • people to recognise that we need to co-exist with difference • recognise the tensions within our islands as a result of the status of the devolved nations

- recognising that there were two different kinds of conversation – one between those in authority and another between people who lived in communities -which should not be confused;
- having an uncompromising respect for the boundaries that people had agreed and were comfortable with and an uncompromising integrity;
- a mediator;
- having the ability to see and have empathy with others' historical narratives – something often overlooked;
- ensuring time to develop proper structures ahead of a crisis and not just relying on 'being nice';
- recognising that dialogue could enable spiritual enrichment;
- being willing at times to transcend or go beyond usual boundaries in dialogue;
- ensuring there were 'permissions' to speak with honesty and integrity and that these were clear from the beginning of the process; and
- being courageous and taking on issues seriously.

Dr Huxley thanked all those who had taken part in the Discussion Group.

Discussion Group 4: The safety and security of our faith communities

Facilitator: Rabbi David Mason, Board of Deputies of British Jews; Co-Moderator, IFN's Faith Communities Forum

Presenters: Edit Bori, Westminster Abbey and National Counter Terrorism Security Office

This year, IFN published updated and expanded guidance Looking After One Another: The Safety and Security of our Faith Communities. It was published in partnership with the Department for Communities and Local Government, the Home Office, the Crown Prosecution Service, the National Police Chiefs' Council and the National Fire Chiefs' Council. Security of faith community places of worship is an important part of this.

What can we learn from each other about how to make our places of worship more secure?

More generally, how can we work together to tackle hate crime and establish support networks that help us work well together to that end?

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Rabbi David Mason welcomed participants to the Discussion Group. He began by noting that his synagogue had been involved in holding an event to mark The Great Get Together weekend in memory of Jo Cox MP. As part of preparations for this he and his colleagues had knocked on doors in the local streets and opened the gates to the synagogue which were usually closed for security reasons. There were many barriers in society – between faith and between those of faith and those of none. Faith communities needed to be secure but without creating barriers to cohesion.

He invited **Ms Edit Bori** to make her presentation, noting that she had recently won one of the Women in Security Awards.

A copy of Ms Bori's presentation slides is attached at the end of this note. A summary of her points is below.

Ms Bori offered the following points:

- Westminster Abbey was a UNESCO World Heritage Site, but people were the main priority. It had over 1.5 million visitors each year.
- When the attack took place on Westminster Bridge on 22 March, there were some Westminster Abbey security staff on duty outside the Abbey. Two of the staff were ex Police Officers and recognised that it was an attack. On the basis of this the Abbey was evacuated and locked down. Staff, visitors and contractors all had to be secured.
- Such scenarios were practised and so the reactions were instant. Initially the Abbey received more information through news channels than it did from the Police. However, once the Police had evacuated Parliament and needed a space to hold everyone and speak with them, they asked to use the Abbey for this purpose. 12,000 Parliament staff came to wait in the Abbey and refreshments and assistance were provided to them by clergy and staff.
- Westminster Abbey held a Service of Hope in early April at which many faith communities were represented.
- There were a few main concerns to consider in regard to faith buildings: personal safety; burglary/theft; vandalism; terrorism/crowded places; cyber attacks; disasters, such as fire or flood. Some were accidental, others could be motivated by hate. All impacted the community. Some could also damage community reputations.

- How a community behaved after an event and how they approached others said a lot about the community.
- There needed to be a balanced approach to security everywhere, not just for faith communities.
- In order to work out the best approach to security it was worth bearing in mind: threat level, costs of security system and cultural fit of system. It was usually better to involve people in security than just to rely on technology.
- 10 years ago she was the only member of security staff at Westminster Abbey. There were now 40 staff in the Abbey's Security Department.
- Communities should be involved in the security of their places of worship. They should be alert and think about security, but not be alarmed.
- Some buildings were physically very safe; others were small and in rural, isolated areas, but there was a much lower level of threat to them.
- Details for the National Counter Terrorism Security Office; CONTEST – the United Kingdom Counter Terrorism Strategy; the Centre for the Protection of National Infrastructure; and Emergency planning resources were included in her presentation.
- IFN's publication *Looking After One Another* was also an excellent resource.

She recommended the following process:

- Conduct a security review.
- Work out priorities based on risks – it was not possible to do everything for cultural or financial reasons.
- Engage with the local police and emergency services – they were very keen to have local faith contacts.

- Ask for a Counter Terrorism Security Adviser (CTSA) visit via the local police force.
- Work out training needs and train all staff/volunteers (not just security staff!).
- Be prepared for emergencies – and practise the plans.
- Use technology and money wisely (an expensive CCTV system was useless without people to monitor it).
- Explore options for funding – it was understood that the Home Office was planning to offer more funding for security of places of worship.
- Share best practice and engage with like-minded organisations and individuals.
- The Zoroastrian Centre in Rayners Lane had only volunteers working on security as it was a small community. It was difficult to find volunteers who were available during the weekdays so the doors were closed. The local council and the police were good at coming to the aid of the community if there were any incidents.
- The participant worked in two synagogues – a large one in London at the end of a cul-de-sac where people were coming and going all the time and where there were closed gates and professional security; and a small one in the provinces which was in the middle of a main road with open gates, had CCTV and only volunteer security.
- A balance was needed between being welcoming and staying safe. The London synagogue held an ifthar to which 300 people were invited, most of them strangers to the synagogue. It decided to allow security to close the gates as they wished, but had volunteer welcomers outside the gates to ensure a friendly atmosphere.

Rabbi Mason thanked Ms Bori for her presentation and invited comments and reflections. In discussion the following points were made. They are grouped by theme.

Places of worship and balance

- The Scientologists had a building on Queen Victoria Street in London and had a good relationship with policy in the City of London regarding security and hate crime.
- The Sikh community was often exposed because of cases of mistaken identity. Remote *gurdwaras* had been attacked. *Gurdwaras* were traditionally open to everyone, but security issues compromised that.
- What could be done for smaller communities? Did there need to be more conglomerate work?
- Hindu temples were often exposed because they were open from early to late. Security was not always at the forefront of their minds, but plans needed to be made. Often places were reluctant, thinking that it would not happen to them.

Faith community structures

- The Jewish community had an entire organisation, the Community Security Trust, to support its security. Not every faith group had this kind of a centralised structure.
- Tell MAMA was a national project which recorded and measured anti-Muslim incidents in the UK. It was young, but growing.
- The Anglican community was keen to develop something along these lines.

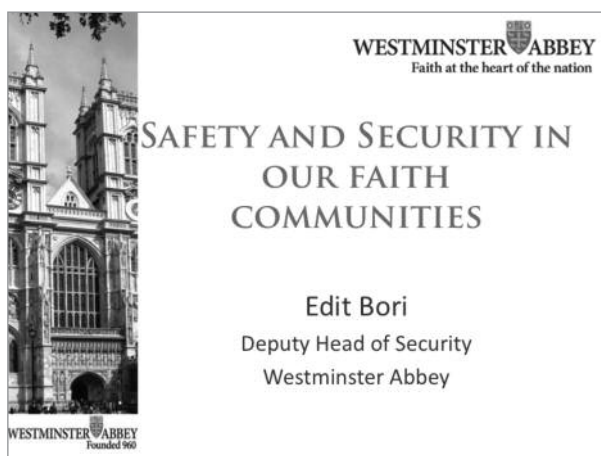
Planning and resources

- It was important to have a prepared plan, not just to react.
- The Police had resources available to offer advice and some free training to communities. The Council could help

with emergency planning before situations arose.

- It was good to engage with local businesses and to have a shared action plan.
- Police Scotland was very supportive of faith communities. Interfaith Scotland was working on a project called the Scotland Abroad Faith Exchange. This included sharing/learning best practice abroad and how to respond to event internationally. No country existed in isolation and working to create a safer world ensured a safer Scotland.
- Places of worship needed resources to develop volunteers and make places of worship welcoming and safe.
- In one area local businesses had said that the regular prayers at the mosque had made the area safer because it was busier.
- Responses were often effective in areas where there were strong local communities with local faith representation.
- Could faith communities link in to local Neighbourhood Watch schemes?
- Planning was key. Legal responsibilities around compliance were sometimes neglected.
- Both preventative and consequential planning were needed.
- It was important to know where different responsibilities lay.
- It was good to share best practice and use free resources that were available.
- Networks of bodies could help one another.
- 'Radical hospitality' was often talked about. That meant going out of your way to invite people in.

Rabbi Mason thanked everyone for their contributions.





22 March 2017



Help...



...and remember



What are the main security/safety concerns in faith buildings?

- Personal safety
- Burglary/theft
- Vandalism/criminal damage
- Terrorism – especially at crowded places
- Cyber attack
- Disasters – fire and flooding
 - Impact on community
 - Reputational damage



A balanced approach



Security resources

NaCTSO: National Counter Terrorism Security Office
www.nactso.gov.uk

CONTEST: United Kingdom Counter Terrorism Strategy
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/counter-terrorism-strategy-contest>

CPNI: Centre for the Protection of National Infrastructure
www.cpni.gov.uk

Emergency planning resources
www.gov.uk/government/policies/emergency-planning
www.gov.uk/topic/public-safety-emergencies/emergencies-preparation-response-recovery

Discussion Group 5: Developing guidance to reflect and support the vital work of local inter faith organisations

Facilitator: The Revd Canon Dr John Hall,
Devon Faith and Belief Forum and IFN
Trustee

Presenter: Sarah Mar, Cheltenham
Interfaith

Followed by general discussion punctuated by five 'minibite' inputs 'If there's one thing that is important it's...' of 3 minutes each from different groups about either something challenging they'd like to see covered and why or one great idea that they are pursuing locally and would like to see shared. Birmingham Council of Faiths, Tarang Shelat; Crawley Interfaith Network, John Marder; Hounslow Friends of Faith, Bessie White; Islington Faiths Forum, Elizabeth Chappell; and Northampton Inter Faith Forum, William Duncan.

This discussion will contribute to the updating and expansion of The Local Inter Faith Guide which IFN published in 2005 with the then Department for Environment, Transport and the Regions work on which will be taking place across the coming months.

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Canon Dr John Hall welcomed participants who then introduced themselves briefly. He explained that there would be a series of short inputs from different local inter faith bodies and also more general discussion.

In her presentation **Ms Sarah Mar** of Cheltenham Inter Faith (CIF) offered the following points:

Current CIF situation

- CIF was in transition. Some things were going well and some things not as well as they might. Its members were having a

rethink – such rethinking was always challenging.

- There had been no change in format since its inception. Some members wanted to stick with what they were doing – not least because no one else was doing it.
- The Committee had representatives from various Christian denominations, and Baha'is, Jews and Muslims. So far, despite efforts to do so, they had not been able to interest members of the Hindu and Sikh communities.
- The group currently attracted mostly older people and was not attracting younger people. However inter faith was becoming more and more relevant and many people were getting interested.
- The pattern of activity continued to be monthly meetings with a speaker.
- There was sufficient money to operate. It was good to be independent financially and not dependent on authority funding.
- CIF had a great Inter Faith Week event each year with the University and Cheltenham Borough Council.

Other inter faith initiatives in Cheltenham

- The University of Gloucestershire had a strong chaplaincy team with a big inter faith component. This was very lively. She was the associate Baha'i chaplain to that. CIF had a good link with the University, as two other CIF committee members were also associate chaplains.
- The local council had established a group called Cheltenham Together which had some inter faith dimensions.

Next steps and resources

- The basics in *The Local Inter Faith Guide* (LIFG) still seemed right. The issues it covered were good. It did, however, need a bit of updating, especially on social media.

- The IFN day events for local inter faith practitioners were very good. At the Bristol event in March there had been a useful checklist provided for local groups to review their work. Something like that would be helpful to include in the revised LIFG.
- Mr Jatinder Singh Birdi, IFN Co-Chair and Chair of Warwick District Faiths Forum, had visited CIF after the event in Bristol and given them useful ideas to make their group a hub, a centre of expertise locally.
- CIF was investigating working more closely with Cheltenham Borough Council and Cheltenham Together.

There were then brief inputs on behalf of 5 local inter faith organisations.

Birmingham Council of Faiths (BCF) – Tarang Shelat

- He had become involved two to three years ago. He was also the President of the Hindu Council of Birmingham.
- BCF had some similar issues – in particular the challenge of attracting younger people.
- They had been trying to engage with and get other faiths to joint them. They now had Mormons and Rastafarians involved. They kept reaching out to other smaller faiths. Ultimately they hoped to celebrate all their festivals. By going to others' places of worship they built up relationships.
- BCF had a problem with resources. It had used to get Council support but now was unable to carry out as many activities as it wished because of a lack of funds. Membership fees were not sufficient. This was unfortunate because it was the major events that drew people in. There was a need to make things attractive to people and to attract new groups.
- BCF was also considering how to tackle some of the difficult issues that exist

which people may be cautious about approach.

Crawley Interfaith Network (CIFN) – John Marder

- CIFN held social events but were also active in social engagement. This included making and serving lunch for homeless people (and others in need) every 8 weeks in a community hall next to a local Catholic Church. Guests were appreciative and helped clean up.
- A nucleus of about 8 people from CIFN did this, including Buddhists, Christians, Hindus, Muslims and sometimes Scientologists.
- The social engagement activities were also important in drawing in young people who came along to help. The food was usually prepared by members from the Hindu Temple.

Hounslow Friends of Faith (HFF) – Bessie White

- HFF had been going 15 or 16 years. It worked well and was recognised locally for its work. It worked with the local authority.
- The question of how to 'reach beyond the usual suspects' was very important.
- A local Muslim group had recently rented, for the first time, a sports field in a white, non-Muslim area, to do a funfair shared Eid event. She had thought that that would be good to let people know about and had publicised it. She was, in her own capacity, a member of the local Residents' Association (RA) and had also sent an email through that route about it. However, she had been told that although the event sounded interesting it could not be publicised through this route because the RA was non-political and non-religious. This was an example of a structural difficulty for making links in a secular western society.

Northampton Inter Faith Forum (NIFF) – William Duncan

- The inter faith walks of NIFF had been very successful. Recently they had had their first fundraising walk – 3km through a park. They had raised over £1,500 and drawn in many families and children. The funds had been for the local hospital and hospice and some for NIFF. People could choose what they donated to. It was worthwhile but had been difficult to promote.
- In 2016 NIFF had launched a hate crime project, called the Crane Project, named after the origami paper cranes that are now an international symbol of peace. The Crane Project, in partnership with Northamptonshire Rights and Equality Council, campaigns against discrimination and provides a straightforward mechanism for the reporting of any hate crime to the Police or anonymously so that there is at least a record of incidents and when and where they occurred. Compassionate support is available for the victims of hate crime.
- Recently a group of Muslim women had hired a stall in the market centre to celebrate Eid and gave out tubs of dates all day. They gave out over 1,000 tubs during the day. This was also linked to the hate crime Crane Project. More about this could be found out on the NIFF website: <http://www.niff.org.uk/hate-crime.html>.

Islington Faiths Forum (IFF) – Elizabeth Chappell

- IFF had felt this year a sense of despair and helplessness around the attacks that had been happening, most recently near the Finsbury Park Mosque and Muslim Welfare House. However, people had worked together with great commitment and that was vital.
- One of the key values of IFF's work was trust which was often lacking generally within society. They had held a Great Get Together (GGT) event in June, which emphasised that the foundation of every

religion was peace. This was a well-attended event with a powerful message and it enabled communities to come together. The GGT event had been held at Muslim Welfare House in Finsbury Park, immediately before the attack, and along with IFF's long-term work of repeatedly putting out joint messages of solidarity to the press, had meant that they were in a strong position to work with the police and their press officer on the day of the attack, 19 June, to put out a joint statement to the community and the media. That, in turn, helped to frame the way official bodies and media debated the community's response discussing the positive impact of local inter faith work in this context.

- She outlined briefly the charitable objects and objectives of IFF and explained that it was presently part funded by the local authority.

In discussion the following points were also made:

- Cumbria Inter Faith Forum (CIFF) had come into being as a group of 30 or 40 people that liked to discuss issues of common interest. Cumbria was too big an area to engage with in total and so they had spun off 5 smaller local groups for which CIFF acts as an umbrella.
- Bolton Council had kindly supported faith groups in the area and provided part support for Bolton Interfaith Council (BIC). BIC's Strategic Officer had been in post for almost 12 years. Over the years BIC had established many good partnerships and relationships which encouraged participation and supported many community events. BIC's project of faith trails with schools in particular had been very successful, as had its Interfaith Ambassadors Project which had involved many wonderful young people like, Meera Solanki, Aamna Alam, Bethany Brooks and Jaya Patel, who was the current youth MP for Bolton. It was important to sustain and build upon the good work for peace, harmony and building trust in the community.

- Some of the key issues coming out of discussion to this point were about building trust, events and projects that contributed to that and the importance of engaging young people. There was a need for case studies.

Dr Hall said that the last point summarised the position very well. The thoughts offered by those present would be drawn on in work to revise *The Local Inter Faith Guide*. He thanked participants for sharing their experiences and for their helpful suggestions.

Discussion Group 6: Social media

Facilitator: Mike Stygal, Vice-President, Pagan Federation and IFN Trustee

Presenter: Zoe Amar, one of the charity sector's leading experts in digital communications and marketing

Zoe Amar builds on her plenary presentation about principles of digital communication and looks at a number aspects of using:

- *Developing a strategy for your organisation – whether you are large or small*
- *How to establish, develop and maintain your reputation on social media*
- *How to handle a crisis situation on social media*
- *Tackling negative views of religion on social media platforms*

with time for Q and A and sharing of members' own experiences.

.....

Ms Zoe Amar welcomed participants to the Discussion Group and began by asking people why they had chosen to attend this Group. The following responses were given:

- There was negative talk about social media and how faith communities did not use it well. What could be done for them to use it more and also to learn how to handle it when things went wrong?
- It would be helpful to have a social media toolkit to help people learn who did not currently have the skills.
- It was challenging to engage with difficult issues, for example when negative comments were made in response to a YouTube post. Could such comments or negative or offensive posts be switched

- off? Such difficulties created a hesitancy to enter the social media world.
- The participant struggled with using technology but had a presence on Facebook. He had posted an article that reached 20,000 people on “faith and religion, looking to the positive”.
 - Social media was very positive, especially for engaging with young people and inviting them to events.
 - More people seemed to be negative towards social media than positive. It could be frightening when negative comments were received. It was often better to allow negative comments and to get friends to support you in ‘piping down nay-sayers’.
 - It would be helpful to have information and resources on how to set up a website.
 - The participant was in charge of social media for her faith community organisation but felt that she was the only person in her organisation interested in this.

A full copy of Ms Amar’s presentation is attached at the end of this note. Below is a summary of some of the key points she covered:

- It was important to consider what the organisation’s goals were and how social media could play a part in those.
- Each organisation should have a general overall strategy, for example to eradicate child poverty.
- A social media strategy was key as it enabled you better to target, for example, MPs and other influential people on social media.
- A marketing strategy would enable you to focus on people who could help you achieve this goal.

- It was important to set clear specific goals for social media.
- Reputation was a source of influence. It was good to keep under review what you wanted your organisation to be known for.
- If you didn’t use social media you’d get left behind. The boat had sailed so you had to find a way to get onto it!



Social media discussion group
The Inter Faith Network
5 July 2017

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What we’ll be looking at today

- How to develop a strategy for your organisation, large or small
- How to establish, develop and maintain your reputation on social media
- How to handle a crisis situation on social media
- Tackling negative views of religion on social media platforms



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Social media strategy: you have one job

Social media must be linked to your organisation’s goals. Where are you going and how are you going to get there?

Many of your goals can be achieved through social media.



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How to link your organisational and social media strategies



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How to link your organisational and social media strategies



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Social media strategy headings

- **Environmental analysis**-i.e. macro factors for similar organisations (SWOT/ PEST etc.) and micro factors specific to your organisation and main challenges for management/ finances
- **Set SMART objectives**-clear and specific goals e.g. to gain 10k tweets connect to 50 leading MPs on social media
- **Key messages**-the key statements you want people to remember about your organisation
- **Priority segments**-who will you prioritise in your audience? This is opportunity to review your stakeholders
- **Positioning**-how do you want to be regarded? How will social media do your brand?
- **Evaluation**-how will you know if your social media strategy has been? What metrics will you use?



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Let's put together your strategy



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Know your audience

How does your audience use social media?

- Which platforms are they on?
- How are they using them?
- How could you best engage with them on there?



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Know your competitors

- How are other organisations using social media?
- Keep an eye on your competitors not just corporates and public sector bodies
- What have you learned that could work for your organisation?



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Establishing, developing and maintaining your reputation

reputation

/ˈreɪpjuːt(ə)ʃ(ə)n/

noun

the beliefs or opinions that are generally held about someone or something. "his reputation was tarnished by allegations of bribery"

• a widespread belief that someone or something has a particular characteristic. "his knowledge of his subject earned him a reputation as an expert"

synonyms: name, good name, character, repute, standing, stature, status, position, rank, station, More

In the digital age, your reputation is also:

- Influence
- Currency
- Your proof points
- Your networks



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Guidance from The Charity Commission about reputation

8. Reputation

Is our charity equipped to manage reputational risk online? For example:

- how will our charity respond if we are criticised on digital channels, eg social media or online forums?
- what role should the board play in the event of a crisis situation online?
- how can our charity rebuild trust via digital channels in the wake of a crisis?
- how can our charity use digital to demonstrate our impact and transparency?
- what is our safeguarding policy and what are the implications for the board, for example if a vulnerable beneficiary tries to contact a trustee online?

These questions should be considered alongside a media crisis strategy or policy, which should be readily available to all staff so they are aware of the process they must follow to implement it when needed.

From Making Digital Work guidance for charity trustees with the Commission



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Key questions

- What do we want to be known for?
- How could we develop this on social media?
- What challenges have we faced in managing our reputation?



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Managing risk



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Social media risks

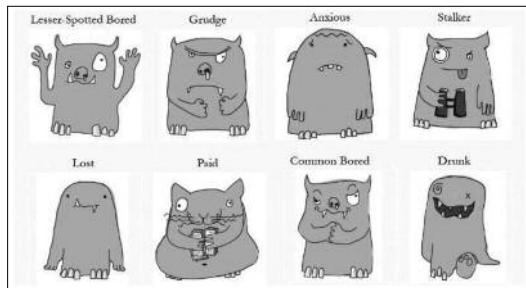
Nature of risk	How to manage
Reputation	Include personal social media use assessments. Awareness of the risk how they can be managed/avoided using social media at senior management and board level help set the tone for teams.
Who should lead in a social media crisis?	Know your social media crisis communications process <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Run an internal simulation • Review and stress test your process
Social media policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep policy simple • Update and train colleagues regularly
People being negative on social media	Monitor, listen and respond



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How to handle trolls



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How to handle trolls

- Take a deep breath before responding
- Understand their intentions
- Who are you dealing with?
- Tailor your response
- Keep it factual and positive
- Know when to take the conversation offline
- Comply with your social media policy



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The role of tone of voice

Purpose why are you on social media?

Voice what does your brand sound like on social media?

Tone how do you want to make your audience feel?

Language what kind of words should you use formal / informal, jargon/laymen's terms



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What is your tone of voice?



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Tackling negative views of religion on social media



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Lead from the front. Be the change



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Reactive statements



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Show that you welcome different perspectives within your own faith



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What is your appetite to tackle offensive views directly?



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Thanks for listening. Keep in touch

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Discussion Group 7: Sharing of good practice internationally

Facilitator: Vijay Krishnarayan, Director,
Commonwealth Foundation

Presenter: Dr Samuel (Sami) Everett, Co-
lead researcher on the Woolf Institute 'Trust
in Crisis' research project

*This project has explored how the experience
of crises affects relations among
communities – particularly those of faith and
other minority groups – and the formation of
trust. Dr Everett will be talking about his
research in Paris and the project more
broadly across Berlin, Paris, London and
Rome and offers reflections on how learning
can be shared between local inter faith
initiatives in different countries, considering
some of the practical challenges as well as
the possibilities.*

*This will be followed by discussion about
ways in which there can be productive
learning between different countries' local –
and national – inter faith initiatives.*

.....

Mr Vijay Krishnarayan welcomed
participants to the Discussion Group.

He began by asking people what their
particular interest was in attending this
Group.

Participants said they had chosen the
Group because of:

- a particular interest in European
connectivity;
- a broad international interest;
- interest in issues facing minority religions
in the European Union and Council of
Europe;
- interest in the relationship between the
local and the global;

- interest in more knowledge of
international initiatives;
- involvements in the European Network
on Religion or Belief (ENORB);
- working in particular on dialogue
between the religious and non-religious
and increasingly developing
international links in this;
- having held events relating to Somalia
and Kenya;
- taking groups to the developing world;
- previous work in Zambia, India and
Bosnia;
- general international interests, but
especially European contexts and the
work of ENORB;
- working with international/European
groups that visit the St Philip's Centre in
Leicester;
- links with international Buddhist
organisations;
- being based, as a local inter faith group,
in Canterbury which was very much "a
European city"; or
- having widespread presence, a Christian
denomination, in all parts of Europe and
having worked with ENORB.

Dr Sami Everett offered his presentation, a
summary of which is below:

- He had a doctorate from SOAS on
Muslim-Jewish relations in post-colonial
Europe.
- He and others had been doing research
for the Woolf Institute in Paris, Berlin,
London and Rome on the theme of "trust
in crisis."
- The report would be available online via
the Woolf Institute website from 7 July
(see "Trust in Crisis: The Emergence of the

Quiet Citizen, at:
<http://www.woolf.cam.ac.uk/news/detail.asp?ItemID=1221>).

- His own focus was on Paris where the research had been conducted during a period that had been profoundly affected by Charlie Hebdo and other terror attacks in France. It was also a period affected by agendas and developments related to austerity, security/insecurity, refugees/Syria, and the whole question of stable political representation via politics and government.
- While disturbing and sometimes threatening, crisis – or at least more immediate post-crisis – could also be an opportunity to deconstruct and reconstruct and open up future potentialities for honest dialogue.
- Within this, one of the differences and sometimes tensions had been between ‘top down’ and ‘bottom up’ developments. While in the UK, these were arguably generally more complementary, in Paris the “bottom up” initiatives had been less structured and more given expression in “moments of time” initiatives.
- It was noted that new and imaginative forms could have a lot to teach the UK with its more established history of inter faith forms of organisation, although in order to be effective in the UK, these would need ‘translation’ in both linguistic and cultural terms.
- The Liberal Jewish movement and the Jewish Museum had, for example, undertaken outreach activities different from those they had carried out before.
- In Paris, many of the positive activities had been more what one might call ‘citizen responses’ that were very related to specific context and this raised the wider question of the relationship between such responses and more universal behaviours and developments.

General Discussion

In discussion the following points were made:

- There were generally good relations between Jews and Hindus, but particularly Jewish-Muslim examples of broadly shared agendas around, for example, the wish for speedy burials and issues around autopsies, religious slaughter, and male circumcision.
- The history of the Bosnian conflict – in particular that of the massacre at Srebrenica – had been used in the ‘radicalisation’ of a number of European Muslims. As a Buddhist, the participant had been in Bosnia to work from the position of an ‘independent’ religion as compared with those traditions that had people more closely associated with the local conflict.
- Events such as Holocaust Memorial Day were of great value in highlighting shared – albeit different and in different countries – acts of genocide and other atrocities.
- Unity in social action was important, but inevitably there were constraints upon voluntary based and resourced activities and initiatives.
- In reflecting on ‘crises’ and their potentially associated opportunities in different locations, different individual faith groups had varying capacities to respond and engage. ‘Below the radar’ and informal groupings and initiatives that were difficult to pin down were important. What did and could enable such?
- If one could manage to navigate the application processes, there were European (especially European Union) resources available to support interchanges between people from different countries.
- Trust was a critically important form of social capital in times of crisis. But this

needed to be earned/nurtured. Long term friendship-building in a way that expanded rather than closed in was very important, given that there could be a danger of a boundaried and closed in inter faith community.

- There was a challenge at the wider European level of marginalisation as a form of discrimination affecting especially groups such as Jehovah's Witnesses and Scientologists.
- Colleagues in wider Europe had seen much good inter faith practice in the UK, but also there was good practice in the wider Europe. The work of ENORB was important. It would be helpful if IFN could connect more in terms of Europe and the international inter faith scene, even given resource constraints.
- IFN was once relatively new and to some extent fragile, similar to ENORB on a European level. ENORB had applied for EU funding to become a partnering body on the EU level for matters of religion and belief similar to the European Network Against Racism (ENAR) in its sphere of work. It would be good if IFN could, in ways consistent with resources, strengthen co-operation with ENORB as a means of strengthening its growing role in Europe, and through that, of sharing UK experience with the wider Europe and wider European experience back into the UK.
- Very often local and international naturally went together when undertaking local level work because of the diverse faith, ethnic, cultural, and national origins of people in many localities. It was important to try to identify 'opportunity moments' and then see how these might connect with capacity building.

Participant list

The Most Revd Father Oluwole Abiola OBE
Council of African and Afro-Caribbean
Churches UK

Mrs Charanjit AjitSingh
International Interfaith Centre

Ms Zoe Amar
Zoe Amar Communications

The Revd Alan Anderson
Interfaith Scotland and Churches Together
in Britain and Ireland

Ms Jay Anderson
Leeds Concord Interfaith Fellowship

Ms Kushnuma Anklesaria
Religions for Peace (UK) and Zoroastrian
Trust Funds of Europe

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

Mr Zain Haider Awan
Faiths Forum for London

Mr George Ballentyne
Christians Aware Faith Awareness

Miss Susan Barton
Rugby Interfaith Forum

Dr Ankur Barua
Cambridge Inter-Faith Programme

Mrs Valerie Berkson
Cambridge Inter-Faith Group

Ervad Yazad Bhadha
Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe

Mr Jatinder Singh Birdi
Inter Faith Network for the UK Co-Chair

Mr Keith Bishop
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Ms Celia Blackden

Miss Edit Bori
Westminster Abbey and National Counter
Terrorism Security Office

The Revd James Breslin
United Reformed Church and Newcastle
Council of Faiths

Mrs Judith Bruni
Watford Inter Faith Association

Minister David Bruton
Spiritualists' National Union

Cllr Ruth Bush
Westminster Faith Exchange

Mr Cameron Butland
Cumbria Interfaith Forum

Barbara Butler
Christians Aware Faith Awareness

Mr John Caruana
Medway Inter Faith Action

Mr Mohinder Singh Chana
Network of Sikh Organisations (UK) and
Bradford Concord Interfaith Society

Dr Nemu Chandaria OBE
Institute of Jainology

Ms Elizabeth Chappell
Islington Faiths Forum

Mr Dilip Chaubal
Harrow Interfaith

Ms Tracey Coleman
All Faiths Network

The Revd Dr David Cornick
Churches Together in England

The Revd Jon Dal Din
Westminster Interfaith

Dr Avijit Datta
York Interfaith Group

Mr Philip Davies
Department for Communities and Local
Government

Mr Malcolm Deboo
Shap Working Party on World Religions in
Education and Zoroastrian Trust Funds of
Europe

Mrs Cynthia Dickinson
Wakefield Interfaith Network

Mrs Angela Ditchfield
Organ Donation and Transplantation, NHS

Acharya Modgala Duguid
Network of Buddhist Organisations UK

Mr William Duncan
Northampton Inter Faith Forum

Rabbi Warren Elf
Faith Network for Manchester

Mr Rudolf Elliott Lockhart
Religious Education Council of England and
Wales

Dr Sami Everett
Woolf Institute

Mr Mustafa Field MBE
Faiths Forum for London

Mr Sean Finlay
Wisbech Interfaith Forum

Mrs Phiroza Gan-Kotwal
Harrow Interfaith

Professor Brian Gates MBE
Religious Education Council of England and
Wales

Canon Bede Gerrard
South East England Faiths Forum

The Revd Canon Dr John Hall
Exeter Inter Faith Group and Devon Faith
and Belief Forum

Dr Stephen Herman
Trustee, Inter Faith Network for the UK

Mrs Bev Heslin
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

The Revd Cass Howes
Bedford Council of Faiths and Methodist
Church in Britain

Dr Justine Huxley
St Ethelburga's Centre for Reconciliation
and Peace

Ms Naomi Jacobs
Druid Network

Ms Julie Jones
Inter-faith Council for Wales

Mrs Jenny Kartupelis
World Congress of Faiths

Mr Rajnish Kashyap
Council of Dharmic Faiths (UK)

Ms Jaskiran Kaur Mehmi

Mr Zafar Khan
Luton Council of Faiths

Mr Pejman Khojasteh
International Association for Religious
Freedom (British Chapter)

Mr Vijay Krishnarayan
Commonwealth Foundation

Ms Sabira Lakha
World Ahlul-Bayt Islamic League

Sr Anne Lee
Sion Centre for Dialogue and Encounter

Mrs Erica Leith
Welwyn Hatfield Inter Faith Group

Mark Lilley
Quaker Committee for Christian and
Interfaith Relations

Mr Yann Lovelock BEM
Buddhist Society

Miss Lina Mar
Baha'i Community of the UK

Ms Sarah Mar
Cheltenham Interfaith

Mr John Marder
Network of Buddhist Organisations UK and
Crawley Interfaith Network

Rabbi David Mason
Board of Deputies of British Jews; Co-
Moderator, IFN's Faith Communities Forum

The Revd Prebendary Michael Metcalf
National Association of SACREs and
Staffordshire and District Friends of Faith

Rabbi Maurice Michaels
Inter Faith Network. for the UK Honorary
Treasurer

Mr Steve Miller
London Boroughs Faiths Network

Mr Satya Prakash Minhas
Hindu Council UK

Mr Kirit Mistry
National Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic
Transplant Alliance

Mr Nasr Moussa Emam
National Association of SACREs

The Revd David Musgrave
Methodist Church in Britain

Ms Mehri Niknam MBE
Joseph Interfaith Foundation

The Revd Canon John O'Toole
Catholic Bishops' Conference of England
and Wales

Miss Smita Oza
BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha

Mr Nitin Palan
BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha

Dr Shiv Pande MBE
Merseyside Council of Faiths

Mr Chan Parmar
Bolton Interfaith Council

Miss Jaya Patel
Bolton Interfaith Council

Mrs Trupti Patel
Hindu Forum of Britain

Mr Brian Pearce OBE

Dr Alan Race
World Congress of Faiths

The Revd Dr David Randolph-Horn
Leeds Concord Interfaith Fellowship

Dr Narayan Rao
Hindu Council UK

Mr Riaz Ravat BEM DL
St Philip's Centre

Maulana M Shahid Raza OBE
British Muslim Forum, Mosques and Imams
National Advisory Board

Mr David Rennie
Interfaith MK (Milton Keynes)

Dr Norman Richardson MBE
Northern Ireland Inter Faith Forum

Miss Ruth Richardson
Multi-Faith Centre at the University of
Derby

Mrs Catriona Robertson
Christian Muslim Forum

Dr Peter Rookes
Birmingham Council of Faiths

Mr Es Rosen Barnet Multi Faith Forum	Mr Martin Spettigue East of England Faiths Agency
Dr Harshadray Sanghrajka MBE Institute of Jainology	Ms Patricia Stoa Nottingham InterFaith Council
Mr Jehangir Sarosh OBE Religions for Peace (UK)	Mr Mike Stygal Pagan Federation
Ven Bogoda Seelawimala Sri Lankan Sangha Sabha GB	Mr Sean Turnbull 3FF
Mr Shashikant Shah Jain Network	Mr Chris Turner Department for Communities and Local Government
Pandit Satish Sharma Children of Abraham, National Council of Hindu Temples (UK) and Scriptural Reasoning	Ms Marie van der Zyl Board of Deputies of British Jews
Mrs Vinaya Sharma Vishwa Hindu Parishad UK and Redbridge Faith Forum	Dr Lakshmi Vyas Hindu Forum of Britain
Dr Satya Sharma MBE DL Interfaith Wolverhampton	Mr Kirit Wadia BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha
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Mr Tarang Shelat Birmingham Council of Faiths	The Revd Mike Walling Canterbury and District Inter Faith Action
Dr Maureen Sier Interfaith Scotland	Mr Daryl Watson Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
Mr Anthony Silkoff Board of Deputies of British Jews	Mr Andrzej Wdowiak CARITAS
Lord Singh of Wimbledon CBE Network of Sikh Organisations (UK)	Mr Martin Weightman All Faiths Network UK
Mrs Valerie Skottowe Welwyn Hatfield Inter Faith Group	Professor Paul Weller Inter Faith Working Group of the Baptist Union of Great Britain
Miss Wendy Smith Waltham Forest Faith Communities Forum	Bessie White Hounslow Friends of Faith
Mr Natu Bhai Solanki Luton Council of Faiths	Karl Wightman Baha'i Community of the UK
Rabbi Mark Solomon London Society of Jews and Christians	

The Inter Faith Network for the UK

The Inter Faith Network for the UK (IFN) works to promote understanding, cooperation and good relations between organisations and persons of different faiths in the UK. It 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 30 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
- 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

A key programme of IFN is Inter Faith Week which takes place in November each year and which

- highlights the good work done by local faith, inter faith and faith-based groups and organisations
- draws new people into inter faith learning and cooperation
- enables greater interaction between people of different backgrounds
- helps develop integrated and neighbourly communities
- celebrates diversity and commonality

For more information about IFN, visit www.interfaith.org.uk. For Inter Faith Week visit www.interfaithweek.org The 2018 Week takes place from 11-18 November.

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

Member organisations of the Inter Faith Network for the UK 2017–18

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
Inter Faith Working Group of the Baptist Union of Great 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

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

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

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
 St Ethelburga's Centre for Reconciliation and Peace
 St Philip's Centre for Study and Engagement in a Multi Faith Society
 Three Faiths Forum
 United Religions Initiative (UK)
 Westminster Interfaith
 Women's Interfaith Network
 World Congress of Faiths

Local Inter Faith Groups

Altrincham Inter Faith Group
 Learning Together, Living in Harmony (Aylesbury)
 Barking and Dagenham Faith Forum
 Barnet Multi-Faith Forum
 Bedford Council of Faiths
 Birmingham Council of Faiths
 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
 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
 Cornwall Faiths Forum
 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
 Hull and East Riding Interfaith
 Inter Faith Isle of Man
 Inter-faith North/West (Northern Ireland)
 Islington Faiths Forum
 Keighley Interfaith Group
 Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames 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
 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
 Salford Interfaith Network
 Sheffield Inter Faith

Solihull Faiths Forum
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
Faiths United (Tameside)
Torbay Interfaith Forum
Tower Hamlets Inter Faith Forum
Wakefield Interfaith Network
Waltham Forest Faith Communities Forum
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
Interfaith Wolverhampton
Worcestershire Inter-Faith Forum
Wycombe Sharing of Faiths
York Interfaith Group

List as at the close of the 2017 AGM.

Front cover photographs

Top left: Participants at IFN's fifth anniversary meeting, House of Commons
Top middle: Rt Rev Richard Atkinson OBE and Jatinder Singh Birdi, Co-Chairs, IFN
Top right: The founding officers of IFN, 1987
Bottom left: National Meeting workshop discussion
Bottom middle: Participants in dialogue at 1993 IFN meeting
Bottom right: National Meeting participants in dialogue

Back cover photographs

Top left: Andrzej Wdowiak, Caritas Westminster
Top middle: Jaya Patel and Chan Parmar, Bolton Interfaith Council
Top right: Dr Harriet Crabtree OBE, Executive Director, IFN
Bottom left: National Meeting workshop discussion
Bottom middle: Jaskiran Kaur Mehmi, Student at LSE and former Committee member, Leeds Concord Interfaith Fellowship
Bottom right: The Most Rev Father Olu Abiola OBE, Council of African and Afro-Caribbean Churches UK

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