

THE INTER FAITH NETWORK FOR THE UK

MINUTES OF VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE FAITH COMMUNITIES FORUM

at 2.15pm on Thursday 25 June 2020

by Zoom

Co-Moderators: The Rt Revd Jonathan Clark; and Mr Malcolm Deboo.

Present: Bishop Dr Joe Aldred (Churches Together in England); Dr Desmond Biddulph CBE (Buddhist Society); the Revd Philip Brooks (The United Reformed Church in the UK); Minister David Bruton (Spiritualists' National Union); Dr Deesha Chadha (Hindu Forum of Britain); Mr Mohinder Singh Chana (Network of Sikh Organisations (UK)); Ms Siriol Davies (Churches Together in Britain and Ireland); Major David Evans (Salvation Army); Ms Prudence Jones (Pagan Federation); Mr Hassan Joudi (Muslim Council of Britain); Mr Rajnish Kashyap (Hindu Council (UK)); Ms Sabira Lakha (World Ahlul-Bayt Islamic League); Mr John Marder (Network of Buddhist Organisations (UK)); Ms Katie McColgan (Inter-faith Council for Wales); Mr Dapo Ogunrinde (Council of African and Afro-Caribbean Churches (UK)); Mr Neil Pitchford (Druid Network); Ms Tracey Prior (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints); Dr David Ryall (Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales); Venerable Bogoda Seelawimala (Sri Lankan Sangha Sabha of GB); Dr Natubhai Shah MBE (Jain Network); Mr Vinay Shah (Institute of Jainology); Dr Vinaya Sharma (Vishwa Hindu Parishad (UK)); Mr Anthony Silkoff (Board of Deputies of British Jews); Mr Narendra Waghela (BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha); Professor Dr Paul Weller (Inter Faith Working Group of the Baptist Union of Great Britain); Mr Karl Wightman (National Spiritual Assembly of Baha'is); and Lynda Williams (Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations).

Apologies: Methodist Church in Britain.

In attendance: Mr Ashley Beck; Mrs Hannah Cassidy; Dr Harriet Crabtree; and Dr David Hampshire (Inter Faith Network for the UK).

FCF ToRs and nature of minutes

A copy of the Terms of Reference of the Faith Communities Forum of IFN (FCF) is at <https://www.interfaith.org.uk/about/governance>.

The minutes of the main sessions of the meeting of the FCF are made available beyond the FCF on the basis agreed by it in May 2017. The minutes follow FCF's agreed style: namely, points made by individuals are noted in the minutes and have the status of views of the individual who is present on behalf of their member organisation; any points agreed by the meeting are clearly identified as such. Comments are unattributed except where from the Chair or where the Executive Director or another staff member has been asked to give input or to provide a point of information, or in particular contexts where the contributor has explicitly asked that their identity be noted. Within FCF meetings there is a chance for all bodies to contribute. Contributors carry responsibility for the accuracy of their contributions. Views expressed by contributors are not endorsed by IFN.

Agenda Item 1: Welcome and apologies

1. Bishop Jonathan Clark, in the chair, welcomed those present.
2. A period of silence was observed, keeping in mind all those affected by the recent terrorist attack in Reading, including the emergency services who responded, and all those seeking to help those particularly in need.
3. Bishop Clark explained that his fellow Co-Moderator, Malcolm Deboo, had asked him to chair the whole meeting on this occasion, as the Co-Moderator more comfortable with the Zoom environment. He looked forward to when meetings would return to normal and the chairing again shared.
4. As explained in the email covering the paper for the meeting, the Government's Faith Minister, Lord Stephen Greenhalgh, was no longer able to give a presentation to the Faith Communities Forum about faith-related aspects of the Government's Response to COVID-19. His office had let IFN know that urgent parliamentary business now prevented this. The Agenda had been revised to take that into account and also to accommodate an input from Bishop Dr Joe Aldred on Faith and BAME communities later in the meeting than originally planned.
5. Bishop Clark explained that screenshots of the meeting might be used by IFN on social media. Anyone wishing not to be included within these, should let the IFN office know. He also reminded members that in keeping with the FCF's decision about the nature of minutes, apart from IFN matters, the minutes would be available to the public (unless the FCF request a closed session). He noted that the Zoom Chat function could be used for posting any links to resources, but requested that any points of substance be made verbally, especially as some people were participating by phone and could not see the Chat.
6. Apologies were noted.

INTER FAITH NETWORK MATTERS SESSION

[Paragraphs 7 to 9]

Agenda Item 3: Hate crime and terrorism

10. Dr Crabtree said that, although they might be less visible and have less media coverage, hate crime problems continued despite the lockdown. As noted previously, the Government's Hate Crime Action Plan was due to end in July. FCF members had offered a wide range of views on the original plan and its subsequent update, including comments from some on over-focus on attacks on members of Abrahamic faith groups and inadequate coverage of examples of hate crimes targeting members of Hindu, Jain and Sikh communities. Ahead of the next meeting of the FCF she planned to re-approach MHCLG about the position on development of a new plan.

Action: Executive Director to seek further information on position on Government's Hate Crime Action Plan.

11. In discussion the following points were made:
- A number of places of worship in the London Borough of Redbridge had contacted the local authority about their places of worship being empty and potentially more vulnerable. Police constables had been making extra rounds and that seemed to have helped. The local authority had been very supportive.
 - In the London Boroughs of Southall and Ealing there were a number of places of worship in close proximity. There did not seem to have been an escalation in issues during lockdown. They had always had good connections with police officers.
 - The Buddhist Society had not had any security issues during the lockdown period.
 - The lockdown had brought one blessing in disguise which was that places of worship in Leicester were working together. They were also being supported by the police and crime commissioner.
 - Relaxing the restrictions on the number of people who could meet outdoors in England had benefitted Pagans (and fine weather had helped) and so they had adapted and survived.
 - Shi'a Muslim groups were always vulnerable to attacks and mosques and therefore often had high security. This had continued through lockdown so the experience had not been much different.
 - Sometimes scrutinising the position could lead to more fear within communities. Fortunately, for Quakers this was unwarranted. Places of worship were not considered sacred to them so security was not as much of an issue.
 - There had been a lot of Islamophobic comments made online after the BBC had begun broadcasting Friday Prayers on local radio stations in April. The United Reformed Church had issued a statement deploring the responses and had in turn received a hateful response. The comments posted on the BBC site were a sad indictment on society. Internet hate crime was a real issue.
12. Bishop Clark said that it was good that no one was reporting any particular increases in tension.
13. The FCF noted the statement issued on behalf of the IFN Board and Moderators of the Faith Communities Forum following the recent terrorist attack in Reading.

Agenda Item 4: COVID-19 and faith communities

a) Re-opening places of worship

14. Bishop Clark said that although Lord Greenhalgh was not able to attend, there was still much to reflect upon, both in terms of how faith communities had responded to the ability to open places of worship for individual prayer and the recent announcements that had been made about the reopening of places of worship for congregational worship.
15. In discussion the following points were made:
- The Amarvati Buddhist Monastery, which had 62 resident monks, had decided not to open until at least the end of July. This was partly due to the age of the monks and also due to concerns over recent media reports of many people congregating on beaches and at parties.
 - The Buddhist Society also had a number of older members and planned to make a decision about reopening at the beginning of September. The speaker

commented that in the future people would only remember those who had died, not whether a place of worship had been closed for just a few months.

- The issuing of guidance had become more frequent and the situation was moving at fast pace. In certain forms of worship there was usually singing and chanting, but these would not be allowed for the foreseeable future. There was a possibility that officiants might be able to sing behind a screen but participants would not be able to join in. Further guidance on this was awaited. There had been some confusion as to whether the recent announcement in England meant that there was a limit of 30 people at general services in places of worship, or just at weddings in places of worship. This had been clarified - it related only to weddings. The number who could attend a general service at a place of worship was dependent on how many could fit in the space while observing social distancing.
- The United Reformed Church would be issuing guidance to its local churches soon. It was up to each individual local church to make its own decision, but the URC national body was recommending a slow approach. A number of its churches were unlikely to open immediately as the demographic of their congregations was that they had a high proportion of members in the higher risk category. The Government guidance had not always been entirely clear, and often came a few days after the initial announcement. There also seemed to be some issues in terms of representation on the UK Government's taskforce. It would be helpful if IFN were represented in consultations to allow broader voices to be heard.
- Quakers were not rushing to open their meeting houses. Online worship via Zoom had suited Quaker meetings and many had grown because more people had been able to join in. Consultations were currently taking place locally to ask meeting houses whether they wished to open soon. The majority were saying they wanted to continue using online worship for the time being, often for safety around COVID-19 reasons.
- The Spiritualists' National Union (SNU) had sent its own guidance to each of its churches before the latest Government guidance had been issued. It was very similar. The SNU would be holding a meeting online the following day for its 300 churches to consider issues arising from the Government guidance. The SNU's view was that every church should make its own decision, based on their own area and their own congregation. Some were keen to re-open, others were not. It might be August or September before more of its churches opened.
- The Jain community traditionally prayed both individually and collectively. Sometimes devotees came to temples to pray for 2 to 3 hours. They hoped to open some temples on 4 July. It would be helpful to have more guidance on how many people were allowed at any one time, what cleaning was required and so forth. *An FCF member who was also a member of the taskforce noted that guidance had been issued. This included guidance that there be a one-way system with a separate entrance and exit, regular cleaning, sanitising hands on arrival and departure, not touching any books or devotional items, not singing and maintaining social distancing throughout. There was no particular advice on how long devotees could stay in a place of worship, only a 'reasonable' time was mentioned. The number of people who could meet depended on the size of the space, as social distancing of 2m should be maintained.*
- In Redbridge the Hindu temple planned to open for limited hours from 29 July. A one-way system for devotees had been put in place, with one entrance and one exit. Perspex screens had been placed in front of the murtis. A lot of time had been spent working out where to put hand sanitiser, hand washing facilities and

so forth. There had been some concern expressed about there being hand sanitiser containing 70% alcohol in the temple but health came first. They had marked 2m distances inside the temple. The local authority had been helpful in providing some of the necessary signage on the pavement outside. Guidance and information had been sent out to devotees in a newsletter. It recommended that devotees aged over 65 continued to follow the worship online rather than attending in person. Many of the devotees were of Indian origin or were of Bengali background. Public Health England had noted that people of Bengali background were 4 times more likely to be at risk from COVID-19. It was very important to be aware of the age and ethnicity of devotees.

- The London Buddhist Vihara had been allowing people to visit since 15 June so long as they had made appointments. 2 people were allowed at one time between 3pm and 5pm. With the help of a broadcasting company they had broadcast two full day programmes on 31 May and 17 June. They would be doing this again in July. Every evening they provided guided meditation through Facebook and online. Around 300 to 400 were taking part. It was not possible unfortunately to attend to those who were ill in hospital.
- Reopening of places of worship was being taken at a slower pace in Wales than in England. The Welsh Government had been very good in liaising with its Faith Communities Forum, including holding regular question and answer sessions. There was not a lot of desire for opening up places of worship in Wales yet.
- The Muslim Council of Britain was trying to support its members as much as possible with reopening. As part of reopening, a lot of places of worship had been getting used to fundraising online. It would be helpful to know if any other communities had knowledge of resources and ways to fundraise effectively online. There had not been much discussion about the change in guidance on the distance needed for social distancing. Many mosques wished to be more conservative, adhering firmly to 2m distancing, but some were content to reduce this to 1m so long as people wore facemasks. In Wales and Scotland the inter faith bodies had been at the core of the Government's consultations around places of worship reopening. It would be helpful if IFN could be consulted by Government.
- In relation to fundraising, BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha had been inviting people to make donations through JustGiving if they took part in their webcasts. People had been very generous. It was helpful to be receiving information from IFN and from individual members of the taskforce about the guidance. They had undertaken a trial run for re-opening the temple, with necessary signage and hand sanitisers. There were some medical professionals on their team which had been helpful. They would not be reopening on 4 July, but would be taking it slowly.
- A lot of the work undertaken by the Salvation Army was outside of their buildings. However, the leadership was concerned that 4 July was too soon for re-opening, especially given the photographs of people congregating on Bournemouth beach. The average church congregation size was 50. Most churches would only be able to accommodate 12 people if they adhered to the 2m rule.
- An FCF member who was also a member of the taskforce said that the Government guidance was still to keep 2m distance where possible. If this was not possible, the distance should be 1m plus and devotees should be encouraged to wear face masks and other precautions would be needed. It was also suggested that, where possible, places of worship ask for some details from those coming in for track and trace purposes only. Health and safety and any necessary risk assessments were the responsibility of the management of each place of worship.

- There would be a OneJain conference in a few days' time at which guidance would be discussed. At present devotees were only allowed into the temple by appointment and were not allowed to touch the idols.
16. Due to pressure of time, at the request of the Chair, Dr Crabtree drew attention to the following three items.
 - b) Funerals and weddings
 17. Dr Crabtree drew attention to the information on funerals and weddings annexed to the Background Note.
 - c) Faith community assistance to those in need during the pandemic
 18. Dr Crabtree said that, as before, IFN was continuing to draw attention to the many positive faith-based initiatives.
 - d) Food boxes for those shielding
 19. Dr Crabtree drew attention to the response that had been received from MHCLG about the religious and cultural appropriateness of content of food boxes provided to those shielding. This was an important issue. There had been coverage in the media recently about concerns over some Muslim families in the Liverpool area having received pork in these boxes. There had also been some concerns raised about food boxes received by Hindu families but there had not been media coverage of that. The scheme was currently due to end in July, with the last date for registration being 17 July. MHCLG had also wanted to make sure that people were referring to official food boxes in this context and not to boxes being put together by volunteers locally and through other routes.

Agenda Item 5: The 3 million campaign and faith communities

20. Bishop Clark welcomed Ms Ilse Mogensen, Head of Advocacy for the 'the3million campaign'. He reminded members that IFN had received a letter from the Chairs of the joint Baptist Inter Faith Working Group and United Reformed Church Interfaith Enabling Group requesting that the FCF give further consideration to the situation of the 3.5 million members of the European Union who lived in the UK. There was an overlap with issues of faith in that, while it was not faith-specific, it affected faith communities. Ms Mogensen would be making a presentation about the campaign and there would then be an opportunity to ask questions and consider how individual faith communities might want to respond.
21. The Revd Philip Brooks, of the United Reformed Church Interfaith Enabling Group, gave a brief introduction. He thanked IFN for the opportunity to continue the conversation on the subject of EU citizens' applications for settled status, particularly at a time when each of the agenda items could easily warrant all of the meeting.
22. At the October 2019 meeting of the FCF there had been a presentation given by the Department for Exiting the EU. Based on inaccurate analysis from Government at the time, this had overstated the success of the progress being made in respect of EU citizens gaining settled status. The Interfaith Groups from the Baptist Union and the United Reformed Church had therefore asked if the FCF could be given the

benefit of hearing from the 3million campaign, which directly worked with the 3 million EU citizens who lived, worked, studied and raised families in the UK, many of whom were part of the UK's faith communities. The churches were involved in this matter and were certain that they were not the only faith to share these concerns.

23. The Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT) pooled the resources of the URC, the Baptists, the Methodists and the Church of Scotland on matters of social justice, recognising people of faith shared a common imperative to care for their neighbours. On the back of concerns about the lack of clarity around settled status as well as the general injustices of the hostile environment, JPIT had devoted research time to settled status for EU citizens. It had also drawn on the excellent work being carried out by the Catholic Bishops' Conference in England and Wales and was speaking to the 3 Million Campaign. JPIT saw that it could play a part in raising awareness in their own communities. It would also be lobbying Government. This would take the form initially of a private letter to the Home Office Minister, Kevin Foster. If any FCF members thought that their community would potentially like to add their support, Mr Brooks could be contacted at philip.brooks@urc.org.uk and would make the necessary link to JPIT. The more people of faith stood in solidarity, the more impact the approach would have.
24. Ms Ilse Mogensen thanked IFN for the invitation to speak to the FCF. She offered the following points:
- the3million was a campaign organisation for EU citizens living in the UK, formed after the 2006 EU Referendum. It took its name from the estimated number of EU citizens who had moved from another EU member state.
 - There was now in place a Withdrawal Agreement between the EU and the UK which included a package of rights for British citizens living in Europe which included indefinite leave to remain, family reunion for existing partners under EU rules and a 5 year return rule for people who had arrived by the end of transition (December 2020). When that ended the UK Government had said there would be a new immigration system with different rules.
 - The way most people were proving their right to remain under this Withdrawal Agreement was by applying for status under the EU Settlement Scheme.
 - The Government had announced some figures for the number of people who had applied but this did not mean that all the problems created by EU exit and the end of freedom of movement had been sorted out.
 - A key concern was about the significant numbers of people at risk of losing their status in the UK because of not applying by the June 2021 deadline. (People became eligible by the end of December 2020 and had to apply to the Settlement Scheme by the end of June 2021.)
 - Those who were at risk of not applying in time were often vulnerable, such as children in care, elderly people, those suffering from dementia, and people who haven't seen the adverts or were hard to reach for other reasons. The campaign had, for example, worked with some young people who had only heard about the Settlement Scheme for the first time when the campaign had told them about it.
 - No similar scheme had ever reached 100% of its target audience. The Digital TV switchover had previously been the most successful scheme, but even if the present scheme were as successful as that, over 100,000 people would still end up losing their legal status. So it was likely that many people in faith communities would be affected.
 - In the context of the Government's 'hostile environment' policy, if people did not have official immigration status in the UK they faced criminalisation on the first

day after the deadline. That would lead to losing their job, rent to rent, access to healthcare, bank accounts and so forth, as had happened to the victims of the Windrush scandal.

- the3million was campaigning to make the Settlement Scheme safer for everyone, mainly by giving people a legal safety net and setting the bar very low for applying for status after the deadline. There was more detail on the website. <https://www.the3million.org.uk/>
- Lots of people might think they did not have to apply because they thought they had status already or they had lived in the country for a long time or simply did not identify as EU citizens. People often did not realise that the scheme would potentially affect those who did not identify as EU citizens. For example, Tower Hamlets in East London had 23,000 EU citizens, a substantial number of whom had dual nationality Italian/Bangladeshi. Parents, children and spouses of EU citizens were also required to apply to the Settlement Scheme.
- As more people were applying to the Scheme and gaining status, it was becoming clear that securing rights was not just about giving people an immigration status, but also about ensuring that they had what they needed to live their life in the UK. For example, people who had been given 'pre-settled status', and would need to re-apply for more permanent status, were finding that they could not access Universal Credit. The benefit system was very complicated but 'pre-settled status' was not accepted as a right to reside for the purposes of Universal Credit; further proof was needed. Many EU citizens had lost their jobs during the COVID-19 crisis and now could not access the help they needed.
- the3million was campaigning to change all this. In the meantime, faith leaders could assist by being aware that some of their members might lose their status, might be vulnerable in some way and need help. People could be signposted by them to reliable information on citizens' rights, links to which could be sent after the meeting. There was also information on the campaign.
- Ms Mogensen was preparing a short document to circulate after the meeting setting out key rights for EU citizens. The campaign would encourage people to sign up to the3million's newsletter, support its campaigning and let it know what issues their communities were facing. The campaign could be contacted through the website. She would also be happy to have individual dialogues with anyone interested.

25. Bishop Clark thanked Ms Mogensen and invited any questions or comments. In discussion the following points were made. Responses from Ms Mogensen are in italics.

- One Hindu temple had a large Bengali community, a lot of whom came from Italy. What would they need to do? *If they had EU passports and were in the UK under freedom of movement, then they would need to apply to the EU Settlement Scheme. Until now having an EU passport had been proof enough to access jobs and services, but from June 2021 that would no longer be the case. They had until June 2021 to apply. If, however, they had dual British and EU citizenship, they did not need to apply, though they might still wish to as there were some advantages to doing so. If they had dual Italian and Indian or Bangladeshi citizenship, they would also have the option to apply for immigration status as the last two. For most people it was preferable to apply to the EU Settlement Scheme.*
- What was the deadline for applying to the Scheme? *Those who were in the UK by the end of December 2020 had the right to apply. The closing date for applications was 30 June 2021.*

- Was it true that if no deal was reached with the EU, the settled status would lapse? *No, that was not the case. Settled status was connected with the rights within the Withdrawal Agreement which was an international treaty that had already been agreed and signed. It was important to distinguish between no deal on a number of rights, including citizen rights, and no deal on future trade arrangements. The first had already been agreed; the second was still being negotiated. Now the emphasis was on implementing the Withdrawal Agreement and making sure that those rights were implemented in practice. There was a group of people not protected by the Withdrawal Agreement on paper but the UK had decided to give them settled status anyway because they had been in the UK for sometime. Those people were now in danger of not being able to prove their rights in particular situations, such as applying for citizenship. There was more information on the website about this. For the most part, once settled status was acquired, it would not be lost.*
 - Should someone who was not an EU citizen, but was the spouse of an EU citizen, apply to the Settlement Scheme? *They could apply to the Scheme. Spouses of EU citizens were protected by the Scheme and their rights as well. She could not comment on individual cases. Individual immigration advice could be found from other places.*
26. Dr Crabtree said that Europeans were of many different faith and belief backgrounds. So this issue was of great importance to all faith communities in the UK and to their members, as well as to wider society. Places of worship were often used as hubs for distributing messages. As these were closed, it was good to find other ways to put out messages, both electronically and through community routes.
27. Bishop Clark said that there might be significant numbers of people legally in the UK via the EU route who did not think of themselves as being, for example, Italian citizens, because they might think of their homeland as being a country in South Asia. It was particularly important for communities to remind their members to think about their legal identity, which might not be the same as their own sense of ethnicity.
28. Mr Brooks reminded FCF members that the JPIT was sending a letter privately to the Home Office, in case any members would like to add their support. He was content for the IFN office to let members have his email address to get in touch with him about this.
29. Bishop Clark thanked Ms Mogensen again for her presentation.

Ms Mogensen left the meeting.

Agenda Item 6: Any Other Business

20. The FCF noted that NHS Blood and Transplant had announced a number of changes to the Organ Donor Register Faith and Belief Statement that went live on 23 June.
21. Dr Crabtree said that Inter Faith Week 2020 would be taking place from Sunday 8 to Sunday 15 November. It was likely to be largely virtual and there were some extremely interesting activities and events being planned. Faith communities might wish to look at how they could encourage their local places of worship to create videos for virtual open door days. Visit My Mosque day, organised by the Muslim Council of Britain, had held a series of live virtual tours as part of the Great Get

Together weekend in June. A number of other places of worship in different parts of the country had also been trying this. IFN would be getting in touch with member National Faith Community Representative Bodies to look at the virtual engagement of national faith communities in the Week. IFN was working hard to engage local inter faith organisations virtually and had held an encouraging webinar for them on this topic the previous week.

22. A representative of MCB who was present said that this was the first time Visit My Mosque had offered virtual tours. There had been good feedback from mosque organisers and participants. It had, however, been arranged a short notice, so it was good that there would be more time to plan for Inter Faith Week.

Action: IFN to be in touch with member National Faith Community Representative Bodies to look at the virtual engagement of national faith communities in Inter Faith Week.

23. It was noted that a day of remembrance for COVID-19 victims was being mooted, possibly for March. It would be important for there to be an inter faith perspective to that and it could perhaps be discussed at a future FCF meeting when there was more information available. Dr Crabtree said that she would pursue that. There were a number of issues, including whether it would be England or UK focused. She would speak with relevant people and come back to the next FCF meeting.

Action: Executive Director to speak with relevant people about possible COVID-19 day of remembrance and come back to the next FCF meeting.

Bishop Dr Joe Aldred joined the meeting.

Agenda Item 7: Date of next meeting

24. Dr Crabtree said that a date for the next meeting would be circulated in due course.

Agenda Item 8: Faith and BAME communities

25. Bishop Clark invited Bishop Dr Joe Aldred, Principal Officer for Pentecostal & Charismatic Relations, Churches Together in England, to offer some opening reflections.
26. Bishop Dr Joe Aldred said that he had just attended the inaugural meeting of a new Windrush Cross-Government Working Group. The Windrush scandal had been ongoing for about two years, but the circumstances that had given rise to it had their roots in legislation as early as 2012, certainly 2014-2016, when legislation had been brought in to create what the Government now called 'a compliant environment', whereby anybody who wanted to look for work, rent a room, sign on to a GP, had to show a right to be here. That, of course, caught out those who could not prove their right to be in country. Amongst those, a significant number, although a relatively small part of African-Caribbean community, had not got papers.
27. The new Windrush Cross-Government Working Group had been set up to try and see if they could do right by the 'Windrush Generation'. It would be looking to see if it could resolve the issues for those who had suffered terribly due to this legislation, having been deported or lost earnings, status and pride. The Working Group was

not holding a new inquiry, it was, rather, an implementation group especially for the recommendations made in the Wendy Williams Windrush Lessons Learned Review (published March 2020).

28. In regard to the COVID-19 situation, those from a Caribbean background were in one of the most vulnerable groups. The Bangladeshi community was the only group that had a higher vulnerability to COVID-19. Faith communities with Caribbean people in their congregations would need to look at how they could best support them spiritually and emotionally as many of them would have been ill or lost loved ones. A number of people within the Black community had been hit very hard indeed by COVID-19. This had been compounded by the George Floyd killing in full view of the world a few weeks ago, which had brought fully to the fore the longstanding issue of racial injustice that was known only too well to many.
29. Dr Aldred appealed to members to think about what they could best do to help ensure that this heightened protest around the world did not fade away, with just a few statues being pulled down, but, rather, led to real change. For that to happen there needed to be greater self-awareness including more understanding about Britain's colonial history and a willingness from those parts of society that had benefited from the slave trade and from colonialism to think about how they could make restitution through some kind of reparatory action. People across all faith communities had a responsibility to link hands and support the weak, whether as a result of the Windrush scandal; or of racism, such as that linked to George Floyd; or, again, linked to racism, of being disproportionately affected by COVID-19.
30. Bishop Clark thanked Bishop Aldred for his very helpful reflections. He had looked at the recommendations from the report on the Windrush scandal. These had recommended structural change across the whole Home Office. Dr Aldred said that the Home Secretary had said that she and the Government were fully committed to that root and branch change in the system. It seemed as though their main aim was to appease the Windrush generation. Bishop Clark said that change could perhaps help others.
 - a) COVID-19 and BAME communities
31. Dr Crabtree said that the second of the Public Health England (PHE) reports had put into the public domain the stakeholder reflections that had been gathered by Professor Kevin Fenton and his team. This was a significant document in the way that it highlighted the different factors that might have contributed to disproportionate infection and death levels in a number of communities. The feedback that Professor Fenton and his team had gathered had underlined the importance of faith organisations both in the response to this point and the spiritual underpinning they had provided to the life of the people; but also there was a very strong steer about the importance of engagement with faith groups in taking forward the work to address this. It would be a significant question for faith groups to consider how they ensured that they were individually part of that ongoing process, and how they worked together.
32. Dr Aldred said that the Church Leaders' Forum had made a submission to the PHE inquiry and was pleased that so much of this had been reflected in the recommendations. What they had said must have resonated with others.

33. Dr Crabtree said that IFN had been involved in helping the PHE team to get in touch with a wide range of groups, as had MHCLG.
34. Dr Aldred noted that in the second PHE report, the general view had been that Black people were 4 or 5 times more likely to die from COVID-19. His report had quantified that non-White people had a 10% to 50% higher risk of death.
35. Dr Crabtree said that it was important to consider the question of who would take the recommendations forward. It would be important to keep in touch with the relevant Government departments, with PHE and with institutions within the devolved nations to find out what was happening about the recommendations. IFN would try to find out a little more and bring that back to a meeting of the FCF at some juncture.

Action: IFN to try and find out more about how the recommendations will be taken forward and bring back to a meeting of FCF.

- b) Recent protests in the UK and calls for racial justice following the killing in the USA of George Floyd - faith community responses
36. In discussion the following points were made:
 - The Board of Deputies of British Jews had been focusing on anti-Black racism in a number of ways. For Windrush Day its President had written an article calling out some of the unhelpful rhetoric from members of all communities, including some from the Jewish community, some of whom were using idiotic phrases such as ‘All Lives Matter’. The Board had made clear that using such phrases was flirting with far right ideology and that Jews and others should not be engaging in such ‘whataboutery’ when it came to the racism faced by Black people. <https://twitter.com/BoardofDeputies/status/1275100919009607683> The Board would be holding a webinar on 30 June, to which all were welcome, on ‘George Floyd and racism against Black people – how should Jews respond?’. <https://www.bod.org.uk/thebodcast/> The Board had also launched a Commission on Racial Inclusivity in the Jewish community. This would be looking at the experiences of Black Jews and others Jews of colour, whether good or bad, and how welcome they felt within the structures of the Jewish community. <https://www.bod.org.uk/board-of-deputies-to-launch-commission-on-racial-inclusivity-in-the-jewish-community/> The Chair of the Commission was Stephen Bush.
 - Dr Aldred said that there had been a very good segment on *The Sunday Programme* on BBC Radio 4 that had dealt with the issue of Black Jews and the new Commission, during which Mr Bush had been interviewed.
 - The toppling of statues should not divert from addressing the real structural problems facing Afro-Caribbean people in the UK. The energy should be directed at those rather than focused on symbolic issues. [*A comment offered from a member who was not from a BAME community*].
 37. Bishop Clark said that some of the Black clergy in his diocese had talked about their experiences, which had made him alternately enraged and pained. This could not be allowed to ebb away. It had to be something with which everyone engaged otherwise there would not be the societal and cultural change that was needed. If it remained the preserve of only those who were affected, society was not likely to change.

38. Dr Aldred said it was a concern that some of the agitation that was happening now was being led by well-to-do Black people, who were middle class agitators, writing in *The Guardian*, on television and so forth. Unless the narrative was turned into concrete actions, that agitation would move away as people found new things to agitate about. He welcomed what was being heard from the Bank of England, Lloyds, the Church of England, and Churches Together in England. That might lead to real action, capturing the moment and enabling it to be one of real change.
39. Bishop Clark thanked everyone for their contributions. It was always energising to hear the different ways in which communities were dealing with the different challenges and opportunities being faced.

14 July 2020

The points below were made on Chat. Not all meeting participants could see the chat feed as some were participating by telephone. Comments of the kind described by the Chair at Paragraph 5 are included here as an annex 'for information'.

Under Agenda Item 4 on COVID-19 and faith communities

- Risk assessments are useful / important as each place of worship is a little different. Strengthening Faith Institutions can help with this.

Under Agenda Item 8 on Faith and BAME communities

- As an inter faith organisation Faiths Forum for London is looking to run a number of webinars on unconscious bias - looking critically inwards as much as outwards.