

Working in partnership for the common good:

Report on IFN's 2022 National Meeting
exploring partnership working by faith groups
and other types of bodies, rooted in shared values



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National Meeting held by Zoom
on 22 March 2022




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Welcome and introduction

The Revd Canon Hilary Barber and Narendra Waghela Co-Chairs, Inter Faith Network for the UK

Narendra Waghela: Good morning. May I welcome you on behalf of both the Co-Chairs and Trustees of IFN to this 2022 IFN National Meeting, which focuses on Working in Partnership for the Common Good. The theme of the meeting is timely for a number of reasons. One of these is that this month marks 35 years since the founding of IFN. IFN has been working across that period for inter faith understanding and cooperation. It has helped countless people work together for the common good. We have an excellent array of presenters, facilitators and they, together with all participants today, bring a good deal of knowledge and experience. We hope it will be a worthwhile and interesting day with much opportunity for sharing and learning. The day will offer an opportunity to reflect on opportunities and challenges and other principles that can underpin effective partnership working. I shall now hand over to my fellow co-chair, Canon Hilary Barber, who will be chairing the morning session, and I will be returning to lead the afternoon session.

The Revd Canon Hilary Barber: Thank you very much, Narendra. We very much hope that the grip of Covid-19 will ease and that by the time of the AGM in July, we shall all again be meeting in person. However, we meet again by Zoom today and so I will briefly run through some of the necessary housekeeping matters before getting into the main business of the day.

We're using the Zoom meeting format. This means that unlike in a webinar, you can all see and engage with one another. In your emails with the link to join the meeting, you will have seen a note about the protocols

for today's meeting and I'll recap the key points from this briefly.

So, may I request that you keep your setting to mute, unless you are called on to speak. This helps to reduce background noise during presentations, which can be distracting and is a particular challenge to anyone who is hard of hearing. When someone is speaking, they will be spotlighted by the meeting host, so that they appear as the main image on the screen.

If you would like to ask a question after a presentation, please use the electronic Raise your Hand function in Zoom. This can be found next to your name on the participants list and/or under Reactions. Given the number of participants, we are not able to look out for physically raised hands or waving. If you have joined us today by dialling in from a phone, please make a note that you can unmute or mute by dialling #6 on your keypad and you can raise lower your hand by dialling 9.

The Chat function has been enabled, including for private messaging, so that you can speak directly with one another. Please only use Chat for this purpose and not for any meeting business. Chat comments cannot be taken into account by the Co-Chairs or workshop facilitators at the meeting and will not be reflected in the note of the day. If you have experience on a topic being discussed that you'd like to share, please type 'Experience share' and add a few lines in any relevant link and the office will aim to collate these after the meeting for separate use.

Screen grab photographs will be taken at some point during the day. These may be used on social media on IFN's websites or publications. If you do not wish to be included in any screen grabs, please let Ashley Beck know by sending a message at the outset of the day via Chat.

The meeting will be recorded and part or all of it may be used on IFN's website in due course. Please do tweet and post during the day if that's something that you are familiar with, using the hashtag 'IFNCommonGood' and tagging @IFNNetwork. If you quote anyone on Twitter or Facebook, please remember to ask their permission. Given the very full programme, Narendra and I will be giving a two minute warning to all speakers. In the same spirit of good timekeeping, I request meeting participants to offer their points concisely.

We hope that WiFi and other technical matters will run smoothly. Mr Beck is overseeing these with the assistance of Mrs Hannah Cassidy. If, for any reason, either Co-Chair loses connection, the other will take over. As ever, we aim that all discussions are carried out in a friendly and constructive spirit, even when, perhaps especially when, there may be points of difference or disagreement. But now let me move to the heart of today's business.

All our faith traditions contain teachings about service to humanity and about what constitutes the common good. Of course, we may not always agree on the exact practical outworking of those teachings, but the call and the desire to serve others and work for the good is fundamental.

There are multiple needs with society, ranging from basic needs such as need for education, housing and food, through to broader needs of inclusion and equality. In every area, the input of faith groups is vital. That calls for working with secular agencies to help develop appropriate and effective responses. It also calls for joint working on different fronts. Sometimes that is through coalitions on issues of importance. For example, we saw close working on many

fronts in the run up to COP26, assisted by Faith for the Climate. We have also seen faith communities working increasingly closely in regard to needs and human rights, of those seeking sanctuary, and in regard to safeguarding, and of the safety of women in the face of domestic violence. The focus of today, however, is particularly how faith groups are working with other types of agencies in pursuit of the common good. We will be hearing about a wide range of examples of working together for the common good in areas as various as health, sport and security, with a particular focus on partnership with agencies of different kinds.

National organisations and faith communities working together for the common good

Catherine Davies

Head of Remembrance, and

Emma Vernalls

Remembrance Officer, Royal British Legion

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

Canon Hilary Barber: Our first session is 'National organisations and faith communities working together for the common good'. We are going to begin with a presentation from the Royal British Legion (RBL) and a short response from BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha. After both presentations have been made, there will be time for one or two questions and possibly some general discussion.

Each year, Inter Faith Week begins on Remembrance Sunday to encourage the remembering together of the service of those of different backgrounds. A few years ago, IFN worked with the Royal British Legion on a roundtable involving national faith communities as part of the RBL's thinking about the pattern of Remembrance. We are delighted to welcome as our first speakers the RBL's Head of Remembrance, Catherine Davies, and her colleague, Remembrance Officer Emma Vernalls.

Catherine Davies: Thank you very much. We are honoured to be here this morning. It was great to hear the introduction and what you are doing today. We hugely value

working with IFN and have done so over the last four or five years. We hope to continue doing so for many years to come. Collaborations and partnerships are at the heart of our planning for how we move forward with Remembrance and develop it over the next three to five years.

As mentioned, we first came into contact with you with the centenary of the end of the First World War in 2018. As a unit, we came into being following a strategic review in 2017. We have acknowledged that historically we have not engaged well with, or acknowledged, the contributions and service of all communities. Part of our review over the last four years and going forward is to have that ambition: to develop that Remembrance engagement, participation and understanding amongst all communities and peoples of the UK; and to ensure that we have Remembrance that is engaging, inclusive, and means something to all of us and that we all are all proud to participate in.

I think it is very important to reiterate what Remembrance is. It is a time to acknowledge the service and sacrifice of our Armed Forces and their families; the contribution of civilian services and support; and the uniformed services which

contribute to national peace and security (of which we have all seen so many examples of over the last two years). We have seen service exemplified in so many different ways, and we honour all of those contributions. But obviously the heart of our remit is the Armed Forces community. The Act of Remembrance helps us to define our individual and collective identity. We task ourselves, as champions of Remembrance, to lead that engagement of Remembrance and to continue to talk about Remembrance: why it is important, how we are all engaged in Remembrance and how there is this need for us to show our thanks to all of those that serve and put themselves beyond on our behalf.

We want to ensure that we really see Remembrance as a living thing. It was born out of the losses and the tragedies of the First World War, and it was steeped into the culture of our country with the losses and experiences of the Second World War. People continue to serve and sacrifice in this country and as we evolve with our traditions and cultural references, we need to keep those traditions of Remembrance, but also find new touch points and ways of exemplifying Remembrance that have a relevance to us as individuals. I am going to hand over now to my colleague Emma to talk about the beginning of our journey.

Emma Vernalls: Good morning, everyone. Thank you for having us. As Catherine said, we were established as a unit in 2017, and the commemoration to mark the centenary of the end of the First World War in 2018, really presented us with opportunities to begin to engage actively with communities which had not had a formal connection or extensive involvement with Remembrance, previously. As I'm sure will be mentioned throughout the day, Covid-19 has been a barrier to engagement work, and face to face events have been impossible for much of the past two years. However, since 2018 we have worked with faith communities directly and through the Inter Faith Network and others to help us to continue to promote an inclusive remembrance. Catherine is now going to give us some

examples on the next slide of what we have done since 2018.

Catherine Davies: We are on a journey and we are still learning as we go. We have had some organisational changes which have been very positive. We now have a new Department called Network Engagement and our Remembrance objectives are tied into its objectives. So we are looking at having more resource to build these community ties and also to ensure that, although we are a big organisation, the experience and the knowledge when people connect with us is consistent.

The roundtable that the Inter Faith Network hosted for us in 2018, was an incredibly useful and insightful event for helping us to have open conversations and to understand some of the barriers and the challenges that we face going forward, and also ways in which we might build programmes to overcome those barriers and ensure greater inclusiveness. It helped us to start to build contacts and a community that we could talk to, and engage with. We cannot thank you enough for that roundtable and for the opportunity it presented to also to have ongoing conversations and to ask, for example, "We're thinking about this, does it make sense?". As we come out of Covid-19, we are starting to develop a three to five year plan, and programme of work, and we really want to make sure that we are getting those insights and inclusivity right at the foundation of building that plan.

In September last year, we were able to formally open the Remembrance Glade at the National Memorial Arboretum and some of you were able to attend. This was a space that we commissioned and planted over the last two years, for people of all faiths and none to reflect and remember, and to get people to think about Remembrance, maybe in a slightly different way. It is a planted space and every plant in the space has a symbolic connection to Remembrance and a particular meaning. It grows, it evolves and it changes through the seasons. But the Glade is also a constant place that people can go and connect with

Remembrance through nature and the symbolic forms, features and plants. It has, for example, the Guelder Rose for memory, the Himalayan Birch for rebirth and Sweetgum, for family and inner strength.

The Glade is also to inspire people to think about Remembrance and how they want to remember. We created learning resources for young people so that they could either design their own Remembrance Glade or plant it in a space that they would have within their school or local community area. My only disappointment was that, unfortunately, getting plants from across the Commonwealth to use in Staffordshire proved too troublesome because it is too far north for them to really establish. But we did think about it.

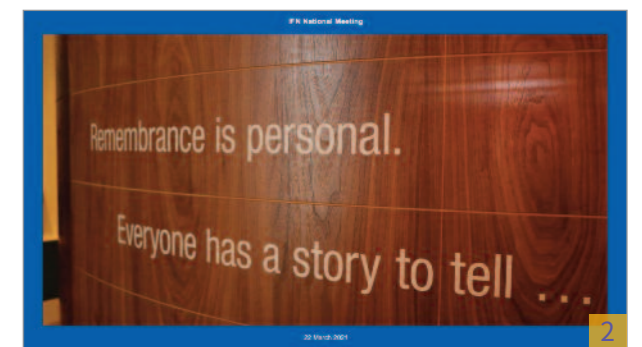
We have been building up attendance at other Remembrance events that are held annually, such as the National Muslim Service of Remembrance, which had its inaugural event in 2018. We worked with the thinktank British Future and delivered Remember Together events in Boston and Leicester, where we invited communities to join us in sharing their stories and reflecting on shared history of service and sacrifice.

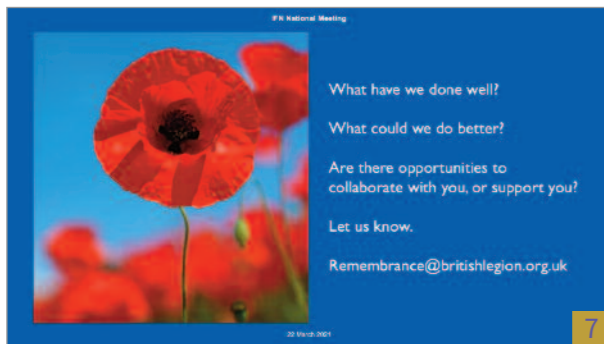
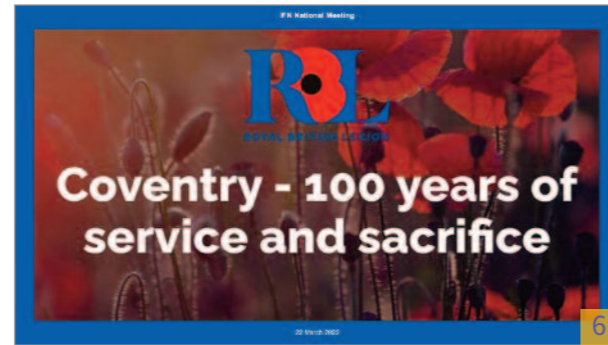
We are still in longer term conversations with them about how we can build on those learnings and create events in communities that can extend across the country.

We were very honoured last year to have the support of Lindsay Hoyle, the Speaker of the House of Commons, in creating a constituency Garden of Remembrance within the Parliamentary estate. All 650 MPs planted a Remembrance stake with a tribute from their constituency, which was really important in terms of engaging more communities and for MPs to think about how they might want to engage their constituencies with Remembrance. We will be back there again this year and we are looking at talking to them about how we can engage and tell that story of the role of Parliament and the role of the Armed Forces and the importance of service.

We also had a list of other events and a film that we wanted to show you, that we are not going to have time for, but we will send links afterwards. Thank you very much for your time.

Canon Hilary Barber: Thank you very much, Catherine and Emma.





Response

Nitin Palan MBE

Interfaith Coordinator, BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha

Canon Hilary Barber: I am now going to invite Nitin Palan MBE, who's going to be speaking in place of Kirit Wadia. He leads on inter faith engagement for BAPS and is a past IFN Trustee. Nitin is going to be speaking for two or three minutes from the perspective of a faith community that has engaged with the Royal British Legion and others in highlighting and remembering the service of those of different faith and beliefs. Over to you, Nitin.

Nitin Palan: Namaste, good morning. Thank you indeed for giving BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha Temple an opportunity to speak about the subject of Remembrance Day, a very important subject, especially in the times that we live today. We present a view on behalf of the Indian diaspora in the UK, particularly keeping in mind our experience in inter faith work and various things that we have done in relation to working with Royal British Legion.

We came in contact with both Catherine and Emma back in 1918, and had some extremely useful meetings. Many good things came from these but two in particular.

One was that 100,000 poppies were made by volunteers in the UK from 'khadi' material that was imported from India. This was particularly done to remember the sacrifice of the Indian soldiers. It was not easy to achieve but I am hoping that it will now be ongoing and perhaps there will be 1.3 million poppies representing one poppy for each soldier that participated.

The other was a Remembrance Day event that took place at Neasden Temple in 2018. We had over 1,000 guests and superb participation from different communities, including Chinese and West Indian and African. The event was very successful and Lord Ahmad, Minister of State for the Commonwealth and the Prime Minister's Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion and Belief, said that the event was "an incredible demonstration of the unity of mankind, unity of remembrance and appreciation of friendship and ties of kinship." This reflected the nature of the event and the nature of the inclusivity of the event. It is not possible to remember such a war without being fully inclusive. Sadhu Yoghivekdas, who is the Head of the BAPS UK and European temples and the community centres, concluded the event with a hope and a prayer that we remember, that we never forget, and that the need for such a sacrifice may never arise again. We hope and we pray.

Another big achievement has been the creation of a website, India1914, where the sacrifice of Indian soldiers is well documented. This site signposts people to various sources of information and material available on this subject. We also continue to work closely with the National Army Museum who remain very committed to improving the presentation of the Museum. They would like to see more people from different faiths within the Museum, and they intend to be more inclusive and accurate in their presentations about different nationalities. In today's multi-cultural UK, the need for understanding the sacrifices that were made and using non-colonial language and presentation is essential.

The necessity of making the school children fully aware of the important fact, that the freedom that so many enjoy today was a direct result of the sacrifice of people of many nations and many backgrounds, and the debt we owe to them should not and cannot be forgotten. We are one planet, one earth, and one race, the human race.

I therefore hope and pray that all the various powers that be, will continue to look at our textbooks and history books and ensure that we fully represent the legacy of World War One, reflecting the real nature of the sacrifice that everybody made. When the bullets came, they did not know where the people came from, they just hit the people.

Thank you very much again for this privilege to be able to present BAPS' involvement in this very worthwhile task. I hope and pray that the hard work that the Royal British Legion is doing will continue. Namaste and have a good morning.

Canon Hilary Barber: Nitin, thank you very much for your presentation. We now have two or three minutes for some questions for Catherine, Emma and Nitin or for reflections that you may have on how your own group or tradition is continuing the pattern of remembrance.

Osman Sheikh (Coventry Multi-Faith Forum): Friends, it is a privilege and an honour to be here at this event. I am very thankful to the Royal British Legion for their contribution to this agenda. It is really important from a faith perspective to acknowledge, to value and to salute those sacrifices made by the Armed Forces as part of the Commonwealth and throughout the world. It is also important to acknowledge, respect and salute the sacrifices of ordinary men and women, particularly men and women of faith, who – in trying to uphold peace, to create dialogue and build bridges between different countries, communities or nations – have lost their lives. I think if we are able to have a similar kind of enthusiasm in acknowledging those sacrifices and contributions to peace and to a better and

more positive understanding of diversity, then at grassroots level, our efforts as part of inter faith relations in the UK would also be supported. It is something that we may want to give some attention to, regardless of the nationality, ethnicity, gender or faith of those individuals that have been lost to human misery.

Ashwin Soni (Crawley Interfaith Network): I have two very short questions. Firstly, how can my local inter faith group, Crawley Interfaith Network, be involved in Remembrance Day? We do not usually get invitations to take part in the ceremony either formally or informally. I have explored locally to see how we may get involved, but it has not been an easy task. Secondly, will there be a Remembrance ceremony for all who have died due to Covid-19, because surely there is a great need not to forget the suffering that we have had during the last two years?

Catherine Davies: In regard to your first question, if you email me afterwards, I would be happy to help you find those local connections and help you to build that relationship. We would be honoured to do so. In regard to your second question, at the Festival of Remembrance last year, we had a big piece reflecting on all those who served in the pandemic to honour that service and sacrifice. I know there are a few plans for Covid-19 specific memorials and woodlands that are in development at the moment, but they are not completed yet. I am happy to come back to you when we know more.

Canon Hilary Barber: Thank you very much again to Emma, Catherine and Nitin.

Faith-based charities working with secular agencies

Fadi Itani OBE

Chief Executive Officer, Muslim Charities Forum

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

Canon Hilary Barber: Our next item is 'Faith-based charities working with secular agencies'. I am delighted to welcome Fadi Itani OBE, who is the Chief Executive Officer of the Muslim Charities Forum (MCF). Fadi will be speaking for 15 minutes about effective partnership working from a faith-based charity perspective, drawing on examples from some of MCF's members. Fadi, a warm welcome, and over to you.

Fadi Itani: Thank you so much. Salaam. It is a pleasure to be here with you. It is unfortunate that we are not able to meet in person. We seem to have spent the last couple of years in Zoom meetings, but this has enabled us to connect with a lot of brothers and sisters across the country and to meet amazing people.

MCF was established in 2007, originally to bring together what we call INGOs (International Non-Governmental Organisations), Muslim charities working out of the UK, delivering international aid in emergencies across the world. Just before Covid-19, MCF had a strategy change and the board decided also to accommodate the social action, Muslim-led organisations in the UK. It was a work in progress until Covid-19 hit, and then it became a job in action, connecting organisations across the country who are delivering amazing work at grassroots level for various communities.

Charity is one of the pillars of Islam. Zakat is an obligatory charity contribution. In

addition to voluntary donations, for those who have the resources and a minimum level of wealth, it is compulsory to give to those in need. The UK Muslim community is known to be among the most generous of the faith communities in charitable giving. The purpose of MCF is to work together with organisations and charities to improve the impact and effectiveness of their work and to improve the coordination of the amazing work they are doing both here in the UK and internationally.

During the pandemic, MCF developed a network of 300 organisations and local groups who were delivering work and we are still trying to support strategically, behind the scenes, their progress and development. During the pandemic we moved more into the 'secular space', if it is correct to call it that. We became more involved in the National Emergencies Trust equity group, the UK Community Foundations equity group, and became part of the charity infrastructure bodies group which brings together CEOs from across the country. We also became a regular contributor to the BAME Steering Group, which was convened by the Minister for Civil Society.

Today, I shall be highlighting three examples of our faith-based work with partners in a more secular setting: the London Community Foundation, the UK Community Foundations and Comic Relief. As faith communities, we are used to responding to emergencies, to the needs of our communities and the needs of our neighbours, without really being asked to

do so, and usually from our own resources and community contributions. However, although the pandemic began as a short-term emergency, it is still continuing. To be involved with secular mainstream organisations, you really need to put in the effort and to move out of your comfort zones. It is unlikely that someone will knock on the door and invite you to get involved, so you have to push to get involved. You have to make sure you are visible, involved and have the data showing that you understand the local community you're serving in order to be their voice with mainstream organisations. The three partnerships took us six to eight months to develop.

The London Community Foundation (LCF) was our first serious partnership with a secular mainstream organisation. LCF was keen to connect with and understand better the needs of local Muslim grassroots organisations and charities in London, because that is their mandate. They were already supporting some organisations, but not enough in terms of the number and the percentage of organisations working in London, so they needed a partner. During our Covid-19 response we came across data showing that only 16% of Muslim charities, especially delivering grassroots support, were able to access mainstream funding, which is quite low. In London it was also a similar percentage. So we knew that there was a gap and so did LCF and they needed someone to bridge that gap. So, we joined forces, with resources from LCF. First, we did a mapping exercise of organisations delivering work across London, for grassroots communities, including finding out about their challenges, their needs and how and why they cannot access funding. After that we put together roundtables and webinars bringing organisations from across London together. Sometimes you need to take the hand of the communities or the organisations you are working with, and help them to connect. MCF is able to do this as it is a network. Some of the organisations attending this IFN meeting may need funding themselves to deliver their work. The concept works both ways. We need to reach out to understand what

funding is available and if we are able to apply. A lot of the work that faith communities deliver is social action work. It is faith-based delivery, but it's not really delivered as a faith-based programme.

After holding the roundtables and webinars, we started to provide organisations with one-to-one support on developing their applications, understanding the needs of LCF and a consortium of various funders in London. (The bodies have come together under one fund that all organisations in London can apply to.) At the same time, we followed up with LCF on any application where clarification or support was required.

With the UK Community Foundation, it was a very similar programme, but was more nationally based and focused on areas such as Birmingham, Coventry and Leicester. We worked with their members across the country and some community foundations were very keen to connect with BAME communities and with faith communities and to really understand them better. We were disappointed to discover that many organisations were not known to the community foundations and many organisations did not know of the existence of the community foundations in their areas, their funding criteria and the resources they can offer. We replicated with the UK Community Foundation the programme which we had done with the London Community Foundation.

Based on our work and the research and the data we managed to collect for nearly 18 months, we were considered by Comic Relief to become a distribution partner for BAME organisations and faith organisations across England. We were given around £200,000 to distribute on the basis of specific criteria. And we received applications totalling just under £2million, so the need is there.

Organisations who need support are unfortunately not always aware of the various funding possibilities, and are sometimes not ready to tap into them. There is now more recognition from secular

bodies. We are probably all aware of the report that was published by Danny Kruger MP in September 2020. There is now more flexibility and accessibility from secular funding bodies. Equality and diversity is being taken more seriously and that, of course, includes faith. There is also more understanding of the complexities and uniqueness of faith organisations. From our side, as faith communities, it is not surprising that we are willing to engage and work with any organisations that can support local communities. We need to start to really understand better the criteria, and the motivation of some of the secular funders.

I will finish with my final thought, which I used as my motto throughout the pandemic: "Always build bridges. They must be, and they are strongest when they are, built from two sides." Sometimes we complain that mainstream secular organisations are not really reaching out to us, but we need to consider whether we are really reaching out to them. We need to meet somewhere halfway and build the bridge from both sides.

Canon Hilary Barber: Fadi, thank you very much indeed for your presentation. We have two or three minutes now for some questions for you and also any general points that anyone wants to raise for discussion on faith-based charities working with secular agencies.

Dr Peter Rookes (Birmingham Council of Faiths): I would like to emphasise the importance for us, as representatives of faith organisations, of being part of our local Voluntary Sector Council networks, to engage with local Clinical Commissioning Groups and Integrated Care Services, with the Police and with all other sorts of organisations. I really like your visual of building the bridge from both sides, because it is all too easy to complain about the local authority not wanting to engage with us, but we have to meet with our local authority halfway. We have to find the opportunity to meet with all these constituencies because they don't know what we do unless we tell them. We are in

an era where we are developing social prescribing and that is a major opportunity for faith organisations to engage. I co-host a local radio programme on Unity FM, in Birmingham, and that is, again, an ideal opportunity for engaging with people of all faiths and no faith, so they are aware of what we do and they are aware of the opportunity of engaging with us. It is, as you rightly said, very much a two-way process.

Fadi Itani: I couldn't agree more. We need to put in the effort because there are a lot of good people out there that don't understand what we do. It is important to reach out to them, even if we don't need funding, so that they know who we are as faith communities and what we can provide, including resources, spaces and volunteers. Faith communities provide a lot of added value when there is need.

Canon Hilary Barber: Peter, thank you very much for your question and comments. And Fadi, thank you again for your presentation this morning.

Multi-faith social action for the well being of refugees

Grace Buckley

Scottish Faith Action Together on Refugees, Secretary for the Archdiocese of Glasgow Justice and Peace Commission, and member of the Scottish Bishops National Justice and Peace Commission

Canon Hilary Barber: We now move on to our next session, which is on 'Multi-faith social action for the wellbeing of refugees'. We are pleased to welcome Grace Buckley to speak to us about this. Grace is from the Scottish Faith Action Together on Refugees and is Secretary for the Archdiocese of Glasgow Justice and Peace Commission and a member of the Scottish Bishops National Justice and Peace Commission. It is with the first of these hats on, that Grace is talking to us today. Scottish Faith Action Together on Refugees is a significant example of faith communities working both together and with external agencies for the common good.

relationships up here in Scotland and most of the refugees we were going to be seeing through the Syrian scheme would almost certainly not be Christian. We thought this was a way to reach out. So the project now involves the Church of Scotland, the Catholic Church, the United Reformed Church, the United Free Churches, the Episcopal Church, the Methodists, the Salvation Army, the Society of Friends, the Muslim Council of Scotland, the Scottish Ahlul-Bayt Society and the Scottish Council of Jewish Communities. We also have representation from Interfaith Scotland, and I see its Director, Dr Maureen Sier, is with us today.

Grace Buckley: Thank you very much. I am from the Justice and Peace Commission of the Catholic Church. We started this project in September 2015. The Church of Scotland had come to us with a proposal for what they called a 'refugee coordination project'. At that time, if you remember, there were many issues with migrants, with refugees, and with media reporting of this. We were at that point also expecting that we would have a lot of Syrian families coming to Scotland through the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme. So we said, "Yes, we definitely want to be involved" because we have a lot of ecumenical work going on in Scotland. The Church of Scotland asked, "What about inter faith, would you be happy with that?" And we said, "Of course, why not?" We have good inter faith

The Church of Scotland set us up by appointing David Bradwell as our first coordinator and it was an inspired choice because David is creative and enthusiastic. He is a great networker and he gets things done. He has actually moved on to another post, but he has been succeeded by his colleague, Sabine Chalmers, who has David's whole-hearted commitment to a team. David wasted no time getting us up and running. He came up with proposals for the project's name, having a website and social media accounts and information on faith communities and also holding a conference. And that was all before we had even met for the first time!

After we had agreed our name, the next step was to agree what our aims would be.

MCF: working with secular agencies

#TogetherWeCan

Fadi Itani, OBE
CEO Muslim Charities Forum

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Muslim Charities Forum
SUPPORT | CONNECT | REPRESENT

1

Muslim Charities Forum

- Established in 2007 of a desire to bring together the good work of British Muslim-led charities.
- Charity is one of the 5 pillars of faith of Islam.
- UK Muslim Community are among the most generous in charitable giving.
- Our purpose is to contribute to a more just and sustainable world by improving the impact, effectiveness, and coordination of the British Muslim charitable sector.
- Network of 300 charities (and growing!) spanning across the UK.
- During the pandemic we got involved the MET Equity Group, UK Community Foundations Equity Group, Charity Infrastructure Bodies Group and BAME Steering Group with the Minister for Civil Society.

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2

At MCF:
Partnership with:

- The London Community Foundation
- UKCF
- Intermediary Partner for Comic Relief

London Community Response Fund
Covid19 Emergency Grants
Winter Covid19 grants
The Global Majority Fund (Comic Relief)

3

What we did: working with secular grant bodies

London Community Foundation (LCF): August 2020 – February 2021.
A series of webinars and roundtables to enable learning on both sides. MCF also produced a grant application guide and offered specialist one-to-one grant application advice for the London Community Response Fund Waves 4 and 5.

UK Community Foundation (UKCF): September 2020 – March 2021.
Specialist webinars with Community Foundations in regions where there is lack of engagement of Muslim charities. Highlighted how to apply and available funds. Allowed CFs to hear from local Muslim-led charities and build relationships for future working.

Comic Relief: Intermediary Partner from February 2021 – March 2022.
MCF were awarded funds to distribute on behalf of Comic Relief, National Emergencies Trust, The Clothworkers Foundation and Esmée Fairbairn Foundation for communities facing racial inequality. MCF developed a funding application round with criteria in accordance with identified needs. Fed back to Comic Relief and in total distributed over £200k across the UK on their behalf.

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4

What we learnt: – identified needs.

Secular bodies:

- Recognition of the size and value of faith-led charity sector (Kruger report Sept 2020)
- Flexibility and accessibility.
- Equality & Diversity includes faith.
- Understanding of the complexities and uniqueness of faith-led charities.
- Understanding of cultural or religious financial needs.

Faith-led groups:

- Willingness and ability to engage
- Understanding of the criteria and motivations of secular funders.

5

Final thoughts:
Bridges are strongest when built from both sides!

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www.muslimcharitiesforum.org.uk
@muslimcharities

6

The first one was going to be telling people in our faith communities what the practical issues, the theological issues and the social issues were relating to refugees and asylum seekers. People wanted to help but they were getting a lot of fake information. So we produced a book of resources and information to get the facts out there, which was very important. We wanted also to arrange and support joint humanitarian and advocacy efforts for the welfare of refugees and asylum seekers and to challenge the rhetoric that we were seeing in politics and media at that time. We wanted to develop projects to assist with integration of refugees and asylum seekers. And as I said, we also wanted to have deeper ecumenical relationships, as a result of our work.

Initially, the project was going to run for a year until October 2016 and then we were going to review it. We did so and we asked, 'Was it valuable?' 'Was it working?' And the answer was 'Yes'. The Church of Scotland produced a proposal for carrying on until at least May 2020, when the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme would end and they looked for funding from other Churches. We all managed to get our Churches to offer some funds to assist. Then we got to December 2019 and we began thinking, "Okay, what do we do post-May?" We thought it was a good idea and we wanted it to continue because there was a lot of value in what we were doing. We were going into lockdown and, like a lot of people, we thought it was going to be finished pretty quickly. Two years later we are just beginning to come out of it. We wanted to start developing the project as support for all refugees, and we wanted to involve refugees themselves. This was something we had thought about before, but had not had time to do. What we are now thinking of doing is probably another rolling four year programme. We have managed to get the major Churches to continue year-on-year funding for this. So that is where we are at the present time.

One of the first things we did was on the language and politics of the media. Many of you will remember Katie Hopkins and

her comments about 'cockroaches'. Even our former Prime Minister, David Cameron talked about 'swarms'. And of course, the Daily Mail cartoon with the dreadful caricature of bearded people, going across the border with guns over their shoulders and accompanied by rats. I must admit I have not seen it but then I won't let the Daily Mail through the door! Our first action was to complain to the Daily Mail and to the Press Commission. It did not get us anywhere, but at least they knew that we were watching them, so perhaps they would start thinking about what they were doing.

Our next action was to meet with Humza Yousaf, who at that time was the Scottish Government Minister responsible for refugees, and to say, "We're here. We want to help. Please get us involved in things." And the point, of course, was being made to the politicians that, as a group, we now represented a significant proportion of the Scottish population. David was already involved in some of the refugee integration work, so he got involved in the Scottish Government's New Scots programme, which is running from 2018 to 2022 and has replaced the programme for refugee integration. As a result of being involved in that, we have become a go-to contact point for politicians and civil servants, as well as a channel of communication, both with the Scottish Government and the UK Government and the local authorities on refugee and faith community issues. We have also been putting our comments in on consultations on asylum and refugee issues. Now that the Syrian one has finished, we are involved in the Scottish Government's Afghanistan Resettlement Community Engagement Group. And of course, there will also be something with Ukraine.

We have also been working on relationships with organisations such as the Scottish Refugee Council, British Red Cross, Refugee Action, Migrant Help and Shelter. We had an anti-lock change walk of protest in Scotland, and many other secular organisations working in the field of migration and refugee or asylum issues

took part. That is, of course, in addition to working with other faith-based organisations such as Christian Aid, JRS and René Cassin. These relationships have fed into our advocacy work. Our latest work has been linking up with organisations on the Nationality and Borders Bill, otherwise better known as the 'anti refugee bill', and joining the Together with Refugees Coalition.

We have been good, I think, at producing resources. We have produced a couple of very good booklets. One is called 'Sanctuary in Scotland', and the other is called 'God With Us, which contains worship resources. You can find all of our resources on our website, which is www.sfar.org.uk. We also have Facebook and Twitter pages which have been good for getting facts out there to people.

We have had several conferences, where members of faith communities have met together with refugees and asylum seekers to talk and to see what was going on. We have managed to develop what is called a 'weekend club' in Edinburgh. This was something which was started by Interfaith Glasgow. They had one in Glasgow. They recognised that refugees often have things during the week to go to, but nothing at weekends. The Weekend Club asks faith communities to host the members of the Weekend Club at some sort of event or take them to a park or something like the zoo. We have now set it up in Edinburgh, and that is working very well.

We also managed to get joint funding bids in with the Scottish Refugee Council. That was through an IMF funding pot from the European Union, for a project called the New Scots Integration Programme. SFAR's part was to deliver awareness raising in parishes and other faith communities, through talks and publications and piloting what we called the New Scots Holiday Programme. That invited faith communities to take some refugees for a weekend or a few days' holiday, somewhere in the country. It was piloted mainly by the Church of Scotland and has worked very well. We are now looking to

see if we can continue that. It gives refugees a chance to be with some of the indigenous population and to see parts of the country they might never otherwise see.

This year we have just started a new programme working with faith communities in Scotland called 'Faithful Welcome'. This reflects the fact – and we make this point to politicians – that the majority of refugees and asylum seekers have a faith connection with some faith community, unlike our very secular world. What we will be doing is talking to refugees and asylum seekers about their experiences of coming to Scotland and the needs that they have. I have sat in on one of these focus groups talking with people. Then we will be talking to faith communities about what support they need to offer a faithful welcome to refugees and asylum seekers. That programme will continue until November 2022.

I think we have been discovering a great deal of joy in working together. We have also discovered a great deal of commonality, including through working with secular organisations. And I think we have produced the goods, if you like to put it that way, in what we have actually done and continue to do. We hope that this networking will continue for many years to come.

Canon Hilary Barber: Grace, thank you very much. There are just a few minutes for questions or if anyone has any general points to raise for discussion on multi-faith social actions for the wellbeing of refugees.

Esmond Rosen (Barnet Multi Faith Forum): Thank you very much indeed, Grace, for that amazing presentation. I just wanted to comment very briefly on a meeting I attended last night in regard to unsung heroes. The meeting included stories of those individuals who had brought across various people from Germany, and refugees on the *kindertransport*. But more than that, the thousands that were brought across from 1936 onwards. They were amazing new stories of individuals. The stories are in a

book sponsored by a charity called Safe Passage, which is working to ensure that young people particularly, are coming across with a safe passage, and challenging government decisions regarding judicial responses to safe passages. Of course, with the situation in Ukraine, this is more and more important.

Dr Maureen Sier (Interfaith Scotland): I just wanted to say thank you so much to Grace. Interfaith Scotland is also part of SFAR and I think that was the best summary I have heard of SFAR's work! I would very much appreciate, and others might too, receiving the notes of Grace's presentation, as it gave a comprehensive picture of just what can be done when faith communities work together to assist asylum seekers and refugees.

David Griffith (Norwich InterFaith Link): I want to raise a point about the organisation Welcome Churches. I am not sure whether they are part of SFAR. My concern was that when they were dealing with Afghan refugees, they were very focused on what Churches could do once Afghan refugees got here. But there was no planning for how to deal with the fact that a lot of them were Muslims. No planning in terms of educating people in England about what the background of a Muslim family might be, or their requirements in terms of religious practice. I did some training with them in terms of welcoming refugees from Hong Kong. I was somewhat concerned then about their depiction of Hong Kong people as very superstitious. And again, the emphasis was much more on what people could do once the refugees got here. So I just wondered whether other people have come across the organisation, which on many levels seems to be very positive, but is a bit concerning when it comes to actually working to understand the backgrounds of refugees. [No responses were made to this question.]

Canon Hilary Barber: Thank you again to Grace for her presentation.

Canon Hilary Barber: We now move on to the workshops. The first of the workshops is Covid 19 related and this may be an appropriate moment to draw your attention to the fact that tomorrow will be again a day of national reflection led by end of life care charity Marie Curie, to remember all who have died during the pandemic. It is supported by many faith communities and by the Inter Faith network for the UK. It will be the second anniversary of the start of the first national Covid-19 lockdown and the day is a chance to remember those bereaved and to take time to reflect on the last two years. There will again be a minute of silence at midday.

We are most grateful to all our workshop presenters, facilitators and rapporteurs. We will be coming back together for some whistlestop feedback from the workshops after the next presentation.

Partnerships at the heart of local civic life – the Coventry experience

Manjit Kaur

Educationalist, member of the Coventry Sacred Space Project and Coventry Multi Faith Forum and of Coventry and Warwickshire SACREs

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

Canon Hilary Barber: We now move on to an item on 'Partnerships at the heart of local civic life – the Coventry experience'. I had ten years living in Coventry and have many happy memories of the city and my time at the cathedral. Our next speaker is Manjit Kaur. She is an educationalist and a member of Coventry Multi Faith Forum, the Coventry Sacred Space Project, and Coventry and Warwickshire SACREs.

Manjit is going to be speaking about how Coventry faith communities have worked with a range of secular partners, including local government and arts and heritage bodies, to develop the Sacred Space Project and also to ensure that Coventry City of Culture 2021 had a strong and vibrant faith dimension. Manjit, welcome, and over to you.

Manjit Kaur: Thank you very much, Hilary. It is lovely to be here. I am very interested personally in all faith and inter faith matters. You will see on this first slide [Slide 1], I have given you a link to the Swanswell Festival Report, which will tell you a lot about what we do. But I am going to go back a step to tell you a little bit about us and then talk about our partnerships.

Who are we? Well, this photograph shows our little group, plus others. [Slide 2] The person on the left is Ros Johnson from our Jewish Liberal community, Mehru Fitter is from the Zoroastrian community, Deepak Naik is from the Hindu community, Jean Prescott is from the Spiritualist Church, Pru Porretta MBE is the city's Lady Godiva, Osman Sheikh is from the Coventry Muslim Forum and Councillor Asha Masih is from the Christian Indian community in Coventry. At the back there is a new arrival to Coventry. His name is Avi Tordjman. He has bought the synagogue in the city and is renovating it. 30 years ago, at school we spent a lot of time there, so I am looking forward to it coming back. This man is Fred Kratz. He used to work for the Bishop's office. He now works for the Police and Crime Commissioner on violence reduction. We actually have a couple more members but I could not find a photograph fast enough! They are Janey Manton who is part of the Pagan group, and Jane Salter, who represents the Humanist community. Warwickshire SACRE and Coventry SACRE are different in that, that they have both of those communities represented and it has been a very fruitful partnership with them as well.

For those who do not know Coventry, Sacred Space is right in the middle, CV1. This is the area where you will find all our places of worship. There is the masjid, the

gurdwara, the mandir, the Polish Church, the Ukrainian Church, and the Spiritualist Church around the corner. We originally called the area the 'Religious Square Mile', and it was a term coined by the BBC when they first started to develop RE resources. Somehow all of that then connected with the Cathedral and Canon Peter Berry, who was a significant person in my life.

When I was younger, we lived in George Street and interacted with a whole range of people because we were multi-faith and multicultural. [Slide 3] None of us spoke the same language, but we got on and none of us had an extended family in this country. So we created one in George Street. For the first ten years of my life, I grew up with multi-faith folk working for the benefit of the children in their area. I know that because I made lots of cups of tea for them, I was the dutiful daughter. We either met in my house or the gurdwara, or the church called the 'Little Church', which was the Methodist Church on Little Church Street. We have now come together again, as 60 year olds, and have been quite concerned about how faith groups are portrayed in the media. It's not our narrative, it's the media's narrative. So one of our underlying aims, if you like, is to prove – not just to the people of Coventry, but to the UK – that although our families come from different parts of the world, and we may be different religions, we have loyalty to Coventry in the first instance because it is our city, it feeds us and it nurtures us, and we do have good relationships between each of us.

Another thing that has happened recently is that suddenly 30-40 year olds have managed to win the elections in our places of worship. Not only are they willing to work with each other, they are willing to work across the faiths. One of the things we started off with doing was creating policies around safeguarding, health and safety risk assessments as the Sikh community of Coventry, with lots of help from the Muslim community of Nuneaton. Because we cross the two authorities, there is a lot of help that we can access. Alongside that, we have managed to link up with various politicians. The Deputy Leader of Coventry Council,

Abdul Khan, was taught by Mehru Fitter when she was a librarian, so that is a helpful connection, and he is very interested. We have an amazing Lord Mayor and his wife, Mr and Mrs McNicholas. It is interesting because they say they are not people of faith, but they are probably the most moral couple I know! Two of our MPs, Taiwo Owatemi and Zarah Sultana, have supported us in every single item that we have done and made it obvious. We have also managed to connect with the West Midlands Combined Authority. Andy Street, the elected Mayor of the West Midlands, came to our faith event. So the optics, when considered from a newspaper point of view, look quite interesting.

Our steering group came together because we had the same interest., It was pre-COVID at the time. [Slide 4] There was a local issue which we affectionately called 'bus gate' where National Express had decided to get rid of a bus stop to the religious square mile. This meant our elders had to walk through a very unpleasant area to get to their place of worship and we were concerned about their safety. We brought it up at what we call the Community Forum. (I believe most people call them the Independent Advisory Group.) Our partners, in the initial sense were the police. We found a couple of more councillors to help us and then invited National Express. It took us three years, but that bus stop is back in use and our elders now can go from A to B safely. And that was what was important. Through doing that, we re-engaged the elders, but the 30 and 40 year olds also saw what was happening and we were then sharing our stories of when we were young, when faith groups more obviously worked together. The only reason we stopped working together, was not because we hated each other, but just because our parents got good jobs, had more money, could buy better housing, and moved out of the area.

The other major event was the attack on the mosque in New Zealand and the shooting of those young children and families. I think we were shocked that it could still happen in this day and age. We

immediately engaged with our Muslim community. We have members of the Bangladeshi community in Coventry who were very worried about their families, we did what we could to help. Importantly, we developed what we call the Safety and Security Group and invited the police to come and talk to us. At the time, the Home Office was providing funding to improve the safety and security of places of worship. What we did, which was probably slightly different,¹⁾ was have everybody in the same room ²⁾ carry out an analysis of our respective places of worship. We felt there were three or four Muslim venues that were more vulnerable than the other places of worship. We agreed that only those three would apply for the funding so that we were not competing with each other for the same amount of money. That, again, led to improved relationships.

We have also done some fun things. [Slide 5] Just before the City of Culture, we paired up with the Godiva Trust in the city and produced a YouTube video. Do go and have a look at it. It's called 'Three Amazing Days in Coventry' and is about where the Sikh community, Black Churches and Hindu community worked together and took their art to the city centre for the first time in my lifetime. We also worked with Dean John Witcombe and Bishop Christopher Cocksworth as part of the Cathedral's work on peace and reconciliation. www.youtube.com/watch?v=OUoNle5oT2M

You will know that for a short while before COVID-19 there was a bit of talk that the *kirpan* was the equivalent of a knife. If you are a Sikh that is very offensive. So we felt we needed to educate. Equally, our Black Churches felt that their sons were being accused of being involved in knife crime. We thought this would be a good time to show solidarity and do the opposite. Our Black Churches had a lovely choir recital. Sikhs did Gatka, which is a Sikh martial art, with the *kirpans* in the city centre. The police were very supportive, taking things to the location and bringing them back, and eventually they introduced us to a group called the Violence Reduction Team. Our work is to educate that the *kirpan* is not

a weapon of destruction (and is not used in that way) but is a tool of honour.

As the pandemic unfolded, we have had to deal with places of worship closing and opening and then the vaccination programme. [Slide 6] We knitted a lot of clothes for premature babies because our hospitals were saying, "Everybody's making PPE and we haven't got enough garments for them." We were really concerned about domestic violence, so we managed to get some funding and make some packs with information, put in a very subtle way. We also opened up health clinics and spoke to our youngsters in our communities to say, "You are qualified doctors and nurses, we need your help. We need you to talk to us about how we deal with ...". Our partners for this were Public Health England and the NHS and then charities like Langar Aid, Islamic Relief and the Salvation Army. We deliberately went for charities that had quite a big profile. We also met with the local authority on a very regular basis.

This slide [Slide 7] is a lovely picture of three important ladies in our city: Taiwo Owatemi, Zarah Sultana and our Lady Mayor. And as part of it now, we are regularly on the radio talking about the positive impact of faith groups and the work they do. I am really pleased, with this development and we will take that further. Thank you very much.

Canon Hilary Barber: Thank you, Manjit. We now have a few minutes for questions or any general points to raise for discussion on partnerships at the heart of local civic life.

Bill Becher (Devon Faith and Belief Forum): Thank you, Manjit. That was delightful. Did you ever happen to work with a woman named Sarah Hudson in Coventry? She is in South Devon now, but she was involved with economical inter faith and Churches Together in Coventry.

Manjit Kaur: I have not but there have been so many people doing good work. 20 years ago, I went to work for Warwickshire County Council and then came back to

work for Coventry again. I am reconnecting with these good people and will locate Sarah Hudson.

Manjit Kaur: I have a question for the young man that was talking earlier from the Muslim community. We have found it quite difficult for faith groups to get funding for things that we feel we would like to do collectively. This is partly because we have only just started and we have not got a track record, but partly because of the government's concerns about proselytising and changing people's religion, which none of us have a history of doing. We tend to look at what our communities need and how we can fulfil it to the best of our ability. COVID-19 particularly was a very challenging time for all of us. And at times we have had to go to other faith group communities and say, "We know this family is in difficulty and they are embarrassed to ask for help. Please, could you do this for us?" There is a lot of that.

Patricia Stoa (Nottingham InterFaith Council): I wanted to ask a little bit about engagement with the arts, because Birmingham and Coventry have quite a strong tradition of music galleries and so forth. Have you been able to engage with them?

Manjit Kaur: Absolutely. It was hard to cover everything in a whistlestop tour! We managed to get in touch with Erica Wyman from the Royal Shakespeare Company and through conversations with her and her team, we had what we call a 'Faith Weekend' at Swanswell Park, which is the park in the area that we first moved to. We will be carrying it on. A bit of history about our communities would be that we have been involved in World War I, World War II, Partition, and then immigration. So for almost 100 years, we have not had a chance to bring our arts back to our communities and particularly to our youngsters, to share these arts with fellow Coventrians. We presented a sacred music session at Warwick Art Centre on the 5 March, which included Gatka, Giddha, Bharatanatyam, singing, and drumming from both Africa and across the faith groups. It ended with a popular song in Hindi called Yeh Dosti. It

means 'my friendship'. Our Ukrainian friends were going to lead on it. Unfortunately, the group had to go to Ukraine to pick up their parents. They are safely back in Coventry now.

Osman Sheikh (Coventry Multi Faith Forum): I just wanted to comment about faith communities and funding. This has been a continuous issue when faith communities or faith inspired organisations apply for funding from statutory bodies as well as other charities. I remember when £18 million was dispersed through the Faith Communities Capacity Building Fund many years back. A lot of faith communities applied. Sadly, some of the smaller faith groups did not apply because of their previous experiences of putting in a lot of effort and not being successful. I think this is an area where we really need to redress the imbalance, particularly with statutory funders and other charitable trusts.

Canon Hilary Barber: Thank you very much again, Manjit, for your presentation.

**Good day friends,
colleagues and associates**

Working together

<https://secureservercodn.net/160.153.137.14/vpa.cfd.myftpupload.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Swanswell-Festival-Report-FINAL.pdf>

1



Working together

- Deputy Lead of the council Abdul Khan
- Lord Mayor and his wife Mr and Mrs McNicholas
- Two MPs Taiwo Owatemi and Zarah Sultana
- WM Combined Authority
- SACRE
- CMFF
- 60 year old children of the sixties re-engage
- 30/40 year olds managing our places of worship and willing to work together
- Steering Group

3

Working together

Beginning with the same interest (pre-Covid)

1. Busgate
2. New Zealand Mosque
3. **Partners** -the police and the National Express

4

Working together

- Fun things
- Bridge with Godiva Trust in City Centre
- 3 amazing days in Coventry
- **Partners** Violence Reduction Team
- Arts

5

Working together

Covid 19	Vaccinations	Opening and closing of places of worship	PPE
Premature Baby clothes	Domestic Violence	Health Clinics	Partners
Public Health England	NHS	Longer: Aid/Relief /charities Army	Local Authority

6

Working together

Faith weekend on 10th September 2022

- Partners
- RSC
- BBC CWR
- BBC Midlands

7

Working together

- Silver Stars
- Key Stage 2

The youngsters commented on the fact that this was the first time they had seen faith groups together and that they appeared to get on!

8

Feedback from morning workshops

Canon Hilary Barber: We now move swiftly on to receive some feedback from the workshops. I am going to invite the Rapporteurs to give us feedback. Each Rapporteur has two minutes to convey two points.

Workshop A: COVID-19, coming together at a time of need and the emergence of new networks and partnerships

Judith Baker (Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations): We had two incredibly interesting presentations about the experiences in Scotland and in Leicester. Firstly, partnerships are vital in helping communities through the pandemic. COVID-19 pushed faiths to work together and with other bodies such as the government, health authorities, local authorities. That push has led to continued networks. 'We are all in this together.' We now have a local, national and international digital space which enables networking for other inter faith action, for example on campaigns for climate justice. Secondly, the COVID-19 experience has demonstrated to the authorities the value of having faith communities involved and this has established relationships which have led to agreed funding and to active engagement around, for example, the vaccination campaign, which has had a huge impact. An example was given of videos being produced locally to encourage vaccination in 'hard-to-reach' communities.

Workshop B: Emergency services and faith communities, developing and deepening community links

Ervad Yazad Bhadha (Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe): We had a wonderful presentation about the Fire Service. Our first point was that it was important to engage more young people and women in the Fire and Rescue Service. Our second point was that faith communities should be more involved and should make themselves known to the Fire and Rescue Service locally.

Workshop C: Employers, staff networks and faith communities – working for religious literacy and good relations

Shenaz Bunglawala (Christian Muslim Forum): We had really insightful and encouraging presentations from Sharon Jandu of the Yorkshire Asian Business Association, Richard Isaac from Northern Rail and Siobhan Anderson from the Faith & Belief Forum (FBF). They all spoke in a different context about the ways in which they have engaged the business community – in particular workplace networks and professional associations – to bring faith and belief and non-belief into engagement strategies for diversity and inclusion. It was interesting to hear from Sharon about the steady and progressive inclusion of faith. It is not where the Business Association started out but it has become increasingly important to their business networking events to bring the

whole self to networking scenarios so people are able to talk about not just their business but also their faith in the workplace. The two points agreed by workshop participants were, first, the practical help that is needed to enable communities and businesses to do this work and the future potential to work in partnership with workplaces and second, the learning opportunities that FBF offer from their workplace programme on how it can be done well.

Workshop D: Faith communities working in partnership with SACREs and schools

Jo Backus (Network of Buddhist Organisations (UK): There was a fascinating discourse from both our speakers. Libby Jones of WASACRE spoke to the implementation of new ideas for Religious Education following a recent Welsh Act, which determined that. She also highlighted the vital role that SACREs play in enabling faith communities in Wales to make a contribution to the lived experience that young people in school come to understand faiths from – whether that be through their members becoming members of the Welsh SACREs (which are due to be changed to be called 'SACs') or through involving them through various means in the contribution to the development and design of the agreed syllabus for RE. Vinay Shah of the Institute of Jainology gave an understanding of his work with exploring with others the nature and identity of Jainism. His engagement with Islington SACRE, enabled him to bring to that an understanding of Jainism as a non-violent pathway of truth, compassion and mindfulness. One important question raised in our group was "How do you get young people who have no faith background to understand what it is to be a youngster from a faith community, a background?" That is a substantive question all of us involved are working on.

Workshop E: Sports initiatives and inter faith engagement – partnerships for learning, empowerment and cohesion

Neil Pitchford (Druid Network): We had two speakers, Marie Cartwright from Sporting Equals and Philip Simon from Breaking Boundaries, who – I believe, in a first for IFN – as a working medical professional gave his talk while on shift from a hospital. Sporting Equals was created in 1998 under the auspices of Sport England and became independent in 2004. One of the points that came up was the concept of using sport to create cohesion between communities, especially from the disadvantaged communities. Sporting Equals used cricket as their initial single sport. The individuals and community leaders from various areas got together and the cricket was used to bring the youngsters in, which then brought in their parents and started to create more cohesion through various faith groups. This then organically, brought more people in. That is our second point, namely that as sports spread and more people come in, this widens and there is the beneficial effect of the sense of community being enhanced. It seems to have worked really well. Sporting Equals said that 900 participants took part last year. And some of the girls who took part through Breaking Boundaries now play at county level. Probably one of the more interesting aspects that we spoke about was how to get people initially involved. One of the best ways that they had found to do that was to do an event where communities could share food – that was found to be quite a good way to initiate community interactions.

Canon Hilary Barber: Thank you very much to all those Rapporteurs who fed back for us this morning.

Remembering an inter faith pioneer

Dr Harriet Crabtree OBE

Executive Director, Inter Faith Network for the UK

Canon Hilary Barber: We are now going to move to our last presentation of the morning. This is an addition to the original plans which has been incorporated following the sad news earlier this month of the death of IFN Trustee Dr Natubhai Shah MBE. Dr. Shah played a leading role within the Jain community and was also a pioneer and strong supporter of inter faith activity, involved in IFN's work since its founding 35 years ago. IFN's executive director Dr Harriet Crabtree will offer a brief remembrance of Dr Shah. Dr Shah represented the Jain network at the IFN meetings and today two representatives of the Jain network are here, one of whom is Dr. Shah's grandson, Mr. Rajiv Shah. His daughter, Ms Lena Shah, is also joining us for this remembrance.



Photo of Dr Natubhai Shah MBE (taken at IFN 2019 National Meeting by Paresh Solanki)

Dr Harriet Crabtree: Thank you. On your screen you will just have seen a lovely picture of Dr Shah. This was taken by former IFN staff member Paresh Solanki at a National Meeting just two or three years ago. It is good to remember Dr Shah with this image. Dr Shah was a leading member of the Jain community, and he will have

been known to quite a number of you. It is particularly appropriate in some ways to remember him today, given the topic of our meeting, working together for the common good.

As the Co-Chairs noted at the outset of today's meeting, it is 35 years ago since IFN was founded. One of the people whose lives was intertwined with the work of IFN almost since it began was Dr Natubhai Shah. It was particularly sad to learn of his death.

Across the three decades that I knew him, Natubhai was always energetically engaged in projects which were designed to increase the wellbeing of the Jain community, but also to strengthen and deepen understanding and collaboration between people of different faiths and beliefs. He was a very remarkable man. The Jain tradition takes its name from a word in Sanskrit that means 'victor', a victor over the passions and the self, and he took this teaching with great seriousness. He approached life with an iron discipline and kept up a schedule of visits of activities that would have exhausted most people half his age! He always seemed focused on a good far wider than the personal, and he worked tirelessly to make that a reality.

I first met him in 1991, over 30 years ago, and IFN's Founder Director, Brian Pearce, knew him before that (and was very sad to hear the news of his death). Across the years I met and worked with Natubhai in many different contexts: Government consultations, the Millennium and Golden and Diamond Jubilee celebration plans

and, of course, IFN meetings – Natubhai served as a Trustee and an officer of IFN at many points between its founding in 1987 and his death this year when at the age of 89, he was again a Trustee.

I had many conversations with him across the years about the Jain tradition. He was a driving force behind the creation of the renowned Jain Centre and Temple in Leicester, which opened in 1998. Despite advancing age and the loss a few years before of his beloved wife, he set about the design and creation of a new Jain Centre in Colindale in London. I understand that indeed, many doubted that this could ever come about. To fundraise for millions to work through planning obstacles and to encourage others to support such a vision seemed an incredible step for a man in his 80s. However, it might be fair to say, I think that Natubhai specialised in the improbable!

On his main retirement as a GP, he undertook academic study in his tradition and published a two volume work, *Jainism The World of Conquerors*. And instead of taking life more easily, he swung into engagement on multiple fronts as an advocate for the Jain tradition community in the UK, and played a significant role as one of its advocates in public life contexts. He helped establish Jain Samaj Europe and then the Jain Network. He, of course worked with others who played an important role too, but his own role appeared key.

He was compassionate and kind and funny, but he was visionary, tenacious – indeed to the point of stubbornness, and many of you will know that. He would argue the case for what he believed again and again, and almost will people into agreeing with him. He was legendarily hard to resist.

But the reason that Natubhai is being remembered here today is not his work just on behalf of the Jain community, important though, that has been. It is because he was one of the pioneers of national and local inter faith engagement.

This was manifested at multiple levels. Back in the 1980s he was instrumental in the appointment of a Christian priest, the Reverend Michael Ipgrave, who is now Bishop of Lichfield, as an administrator at the Jain Centre in Leicester and this reflected his early understanding of the importance of the awareness in society of the Jain tradition and community. The same approach was evident in his vision for the new Jain Centre in Colindale, which is under development. From the start plans incorporated a multi faith space which he explained could be used by bodies such as the local SACRE and inter faith groups and which put inter faith action right at the heart of the planned new centre.

One of Dr Shah's last acts was to give a presentation recently about this space to the Faith Communities Forum of IFN and to explain the roots in the Jain tradition of a positive inter faith engagement the teaching of *anekantavada*, the 'multi-perspectiveness', and teachings of the importance of working for the welfare of the community.

As well as inter faith engagement at the national level Dr Shah always played a role in local inter faith activity being involved in Leicester and then later in London in the Faiths Forum for London and the Barnet Multi Faith Forum.

When the story of the development of inter faith relations in the UK is one day fully told, Dr Shah will I think be remembered as one of the very important early figures, one of the pioneers. In each of our communities we have special figures who have played such a role and continue happily in the case of many to do so today. Let us treasure them and carry forward and develop their legacy of work for inter faith understanding and cooperation in the UK.

Canon Hilary Barber: Thank you, Harriet, very much.

There then followed a break for lunch, with the opportunity to chat in small breakout groups for those who had signed up to do so.

Partnerships at challenging times

Vijay Jassal

Assistant Director, Policy & Strategic Partnerships, and

Thelma Stober

Trustee, National Emergencies Trust

Narendra Waghela: Welcome back to the afternoon session of IFN National Meeting.

We begin with a presentation 'Partnerships at Challenging Times'. We are very pleased to be joined by Vijay Jassal and Thelma Stober of the National Emergencies Trust (NET). Vijay is the Assistant Director, Policy and Strategic Partnership and Thelma is a Trustee. They will be talking to us about the importance of partnership involving faith communities in the context of the work of the NET.

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

Thelma Stober: Thank you, Chair. It is a real privilege and honour to be able to be here today and to speak with you on such an important issue. As you have said, my name is Thelma Stober and I am a Trustee at the National Emergencies Trust. I am also a survivor of the 7 July 2005 London bombing.

Faith communities and faith-based organisations are often amongst the first on the scene in a national emergency, providing support and comfort. You are also often the last to leave long after the blue lights and other organisations have moved on. But the need to recover remains. I can tell you, first hand that seventeen years on we have faith groups attending the memorial service that we

have on 7 July every year at Hyde Park. Thank you all for that support.

It is not unusual to see the church, mosques, or synagogues, or other temples becoming the focal point for relief efforts. We saw countless examples during the pandemic, as well as other recent tragedies such as the Grenfell fire and serious national flooding. I know the work that inter faith groups did with Grenfell. In fact, I co-chair the Memorial Commission and we do work with all the inter faith groups in that area today.

Today, Vijay and I are going to talk to you briefly about who we are and why the National Emergencies Trust exists and the importance of partnership with faith communities and organisations to our work responding to national emergencies.

The National Emergencies Trust was launched as a charity in 2019 with the support of the charity sector, survivors, the resilience community, the Duke of Cambridge and many others. Our story, however, began with the major UK emergencies of 2017. This time almost five years ago, we witnessed major terror attacks in London and Manchester where thirty six people were killed, hundreds of people were physically injured, and countless more in need of psychosocial support. This was followed by the horrific fire at Grenfell Tower, where seventy two innocent people lost their lives and the

community was left devastated and still are. In fact, today, I have just come from a Memorial service to commemorate the fifth anniversary of the Westminster bombing. During these times of emergencies, the charity sector responded valiantly. Charities recruited local volunteers, provided items to support to those affected and raised funds from generous people across the UK who wanted to help. However, these incidents also presented some time for reflection afterwards. Could we, as a sector, do things differently or better? How should we effectively coordinate amongst ourselves during challenging times such as these? How can we best harness the huge outpouring of public goodwill, and help those whose lives have been changed overnight by those devastating events? I know because I was one of them.

To look at one example, in response to the Grenfell fire, we saw a huge outpouring of public generosity. Over ten thousand online giving pages were set up. There were ten different fundraising appeals and twenty different ways people affected could receive charitable financial assistance. The downside to this was that it was wholly uncoordinated. It took some time for many people who were desperately in need to receive support because of the state of confusion. It was confusing for the public to know who to trust and what was legitimate. There were cases of fraud and there were cases of well-intentioned people getting into difficulty. For example, a schoolteacher from the area setting up an online page and raising over £1.5 million and then having no way of getting those funds to people affected. Most importantly, it was confusing for survivors and victims where to get support. Given all these different sources of support, people were having constantly to retell their stories and being retraumatised by doing so.

The Charity Commission therefore brought the sector together to help answer these questions. When it came to the question of the best way to raise and distribute funds during a national emergency, the decision

was taken to set up one National Emergencies Trust. Our mission is to coordinate fundraising during national emergencies by providing one trusted place to give on behalf of the UK. We work closely with online giving platforms, such as JustGiving, the main broadcasters and central government, to communicate with the public and with corporates, trusts, and others. We then ensure that funds reach people on the ground very quickly and fairly covering their needs. We have a board of trustees and an allocation committee which assess the needs using intelligence from our network and then make funding decisions. We work with distribution partners, usually charities on the ground, to get funds out, catering to physical injury, bereavement, mental health support, and hardship.

When do we activate? When do we launch? It is probably important to say that we have four criteria for launching an appeal and our threshold is relatively high. We ask ourselves these questions:

- Is there a national emergency of significance? Is it on the news and on the social media?
- Is there an unmet need? Is there a need for support? All emergencies produce needs, but most can be met by local response.
- Is there likely to be public support for the appeal? Is there a propensity to give?
- Finally, the board will consider whether it feels like the right thing to do. If we launch, will people donate? When we talk about propensity to give, we work with online giving platforms to gather intelligence on immediate number of pages set up. When we ask the final question – Is it the right thing to do? – we have a board of experts who have been involved since the 2017 emergencies that occurred, 7 July terrorist attacks, national flooding – who can provide advice.

Looking back over the last fifty years, we would have activated on average, every 2.5

years, which gives an indication of our threshold.

We put survivors and their loved ones in front and at the centre. Every emergency will be different, so we pride ourselves on being a truly flexible funder. The funds are used to support people in four key ways through grants to charities and gifts to individuals:

- We help people to recover and rehabilitate from physical injuries they may have sustained.
- We ensure that loved ones get access to meaningful bereavement support.
- We support those affected with their mental health. As you can imagine, those affected can experience significant trauma and they require help for many years after. I could testify to that.
- We also help those affected financially, for whatever reason, to build their lives and livelihoods. For example, those impacted by floods or fire.

An early initiative for the NET was to establish a Survivors' Advisory Forum and an Equity Scrutiny Group to put lived experience at the centre of decision making. Over the past two years, we have been working closely with our Survivors' Advisory Forum, which I chair, to understand how we can best meet future survivors' needs, including informing how we release funds and design an application process that limits unnecessary trauma. Members of the Survivors' Advisory Forum volunteer their time and we are extremely grateful for their support. The members of that Forum are from all the emergencies that we have experienced so far. I shall now hand over to Vijay.

Vijay Jassal: Thank you. As Thelma noted, the NET was launched in November 2019. A short while later, in March 2020, the pandemic began across the world. We were in the middle of one of the most challenging times in our recent collective memories. As you all have seen and been

part of, communities across the UK responded and supported each other and were at the forefront of the national assets in responding, including, importantly, faith communities. At NET, we didn't expect the pandemic to be our first appeal, but like everyone else, we had to respond quickly and it quickly became apparent how important the power of partnerships was going to be. We launched a fundraising appeal in March 2020 and some of the stats in this slide show we raised nearly £100 million altogether from the generous British public. Most of this has been distributed via Community Foundation partners. There are 46 Community Foundations across the UK working with local and grassroots organisations. We also worked with national charities like Cruse, Mind and Barnardo's to target funding towards specific needs in communities.

Over 14,500 projects were supported in total with this funding, including specifically those run by faith communities. Faith-based organisations helped us by providing food and other essential items, providing mental health support, information and advice and with social isolation. The average grant size overall was only about £5,000, so it shows that we do not have huge amounts going out to these grassroots charities, but they made an important impact. The largest grant to a faith-based organisation was over £30,000 to Harrow Central Mosque and the Masood Islamic Centre in June 2020. The smallest was £130 to Canon Pyon Church in Herefordshire in May 2020. We are still distributing funds via a Local Action Fund in partnership with Crowdfunder, which aims to help local charities and groups across the UK to address the financial impact of the pandemic. If you know of any organisations that might be relevant, please do help raise awareness and share with your networks. The Local Action Fund is a £1.5million pound pot that gets £10,000 out to local projects making positive difference in their communities. Projects already raising funds as part of the initiative include St Thomas Church in Swansea, which is supporting social outreach programmes, and the Foundry Church in

Widnes, which is providing food parcels in their community. If you would like any further information, please do let me know.

We are now preparing for the next emergency, whenever and whatever that might be, in the UK. As the pandemic has shown, disasters and emergencies do not discriminate and can affect anyone. We are a small team at the NET and our approach is very much partnership driven. One of our key tasks is making friends before we need them, establishing partnerships now, before the next emergency. Ahead of changing times, we need to know who we can pick up the phone to. Communities and charities need to know that we will be there. We need to be ready to assist all communities. So we are building partnerships with organisations that focus, for example, on supporting Black and Minority Ethnic communities, such as the Baobab Foundation or the Muslim Charities Forum, and organisations which focus on young people in trauma, like the UK Trauma Council. We know that our response needs to draw on local communities' own experience and be sensitive to all people and communities impacted. As Thelma said, it is often the mosque, the synagogue, the church, the temple, the gurdwara, that will be the centre of the emergency response. We want to be able to fund local responses via our partnership with the Community Foundation. We saw this with St Clement and St James in response to the Grenfell Tower fire, as well as the Muslim Response Unit and many other Muslim-based organisations. So we know what happens during an emergency and we want to be there to support and work with them.

Finally, no two communities are the same, so we value expert advice from IFN and others about the community that has been impacted and ensuring that we are being faith sensitive during an emergency.

We hope that you now know a little more about who we are and are able to share this with your networks, either now or when something terrible does happen and how we may be able to work together during

future national emergencies, whenever or wherever that may be. Thank you.

Narendra Waghela: Thank you very much Vijay and Thelma. We now have time for a couple of questions.

Dr Maureen Sier (Interfaith Scotland): Does your network reach out also to Scotland? Do you have partners in Scotland?

Vijay Jassal: Yes, we do. We work quite closely with the Scottish Government and Foundation Scotland in Scotland.

Thelma Stober: We also have a member from Scotland on our Board.

Esmond Rosen (Barnet Multi Faith Forum): That was a brilliant presentation. Thank you for bringing the NET to our attention. You mentioned coordination, but how can the NET prevent lots of potentially competitive fundraising initiatives, as it were, straight after an emergency where everybody really wants to assist?

Vijay Jassal: We cannot stop people from if they want to fundraise. They have the legitimacy and authority to do that. Our challenge is raising awareness of who we are to make it as easy as possible for fundraise in partnership with us rather than setting up on their own. That includes, for example, working with the broadcasters when there is an emergency so they know the NET has an appeal set up and they can quickly direct funds towards us, or working with the online giving platforms so that when they are setting up a page, they can, again, direct funds towards us rather than having a situation where they raise so much money, they don't know what to do with it. We need to keep speaking to lots of different forums and organisations to raise awareness when the work does happen. But you are quite right that everything will never be 100% coordinated.

Dr Harriet Crabtree: I would just make one observation, which is about Thelma's very powerful presentation. When people speak

from the experience of their own life, it conveys really the significance of what other people only read about in papers or listen to on the radio. It is often quite hard to get that across. I hope that this presentation today will really have brought home for many of us the significance of this work. Emergency work is not just for times of emergency, it is actually keeping focused

on this. We do have a strong commitment in IFN to keep engaging with this agenda and helping faith communities do so.

Narendra Waghela: Thank you very much again to Vijay and Thelma.

Partnership for the common good

Rt Hon Stephen Timms MP

Chair, All Party Parliamentary Group on Faith and Society

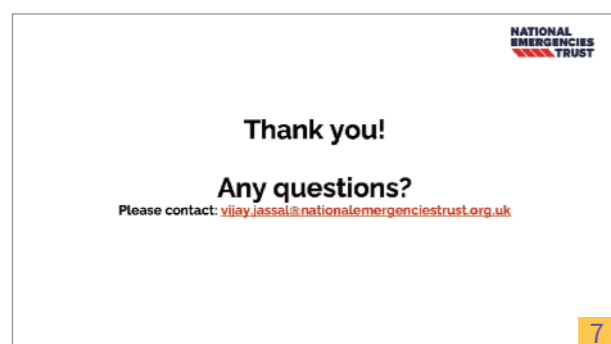
Narendra Waghela: We now move on to the session on 'Partnership for the Common Good'. We are delighted that the Rt Hon Stephen Timms has been able to join us today. Stephen is Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Faith and Society and a long-term advocate of partnership working for the common good. He will be reflecting on the importance of partnership involving faith and the inter faith bodies and public agencies such as local authorities.

Stephen Timms: Thank you very much for inviting me. I would like to refer particularly to the work of the APPG on Faith and Society, which, as you say, I chair, and specifically about the *Keeping the Faith* report, which we published just before the middle of the pandemic. The APPG is a cross party group of MPs who want to celebrate the very positive contributions to communities being made by faith-based organisations. We want to make those contributions better known and, where we can, we want to help remove hurdles which sometimes stop them realising their full potential.

The APPG was set up 10 years ago. This year, we started off with a series of meetings with faith-based groups: one about welfare to work; a second one about health and well being; and one on work with young people, recognising that most youth work in Britain today is carried out by faith groups; and the last in the series with groups working on international aid. It quickly became clear from those

discussions that the groups often had a problem with their local council. There was suspicion in the council that faith groups are only really interested in trying to convert people or that any service they provided would be biased in favour of their own members. In any case, from the perspective of a hard-pressed council officer, faith groups are difficult to deal with. If you work with one, are you going to offend others? After all, these are rather odd people! They all believe in God. Far simpler not to get involved with any of them. But, as a result, communities miss out on really valuable contributions that the groups could be making.

The APPG, or rather my colleague David Lammy, came up with the idea of the Faith Covenant. It sets out ground rules for cooperation between faith groups and local councils to make clear what each should expect of the other, build up confidence and trust on both sides and support them to work together for the common good. It is set out on our APPG website, but different areas are encouraged to develop their own versions if local circumstances warrant it. The first council to draw faith groups in its area together to sign up to the Covenant was the City of Birmingham, at its central library in December 2014. Birmingham is the largest local authority in Europe, so that was a very good start for us. Since then another dozen or so have signed up covering between them, we think, about 10% of the UK population. FaithAction, which is the secretariat to the APPG, is increasingly



drawing those authorities and the faith groups in them together to network and learn from each other.

But the pandemic has really seen things move to a different level. It came home to me on Good Friday morning, two years ago that something unusual was happening. When the first lockdown came, the jobs of many of my constituents in East London came to an end. Many families where a parent was working legally and working very hard have the 'no recourse to public funds' condition attached to their visa status. So when their jobs ended, they could not get any income from that anymore. They could not claim benefit either. All means to obtain an income came to an end. Sitting at home that Good Friday morning, I found two different emails from different constituents saying, "I don't have any money to buy food. What should I do?" We have all become very familiar with referring people to food banks over the past 10 years or so, but I thought that they were all going to be shut over the Easter weekend, so I did not know how to reply. But then, scrolling further through my Inbox, I found another email from the Mayor of Newham, Rokhsana Fiaz. Her email said, "If you come across people without food over the holiday weekend, you should email the Vicar of Ascension Church. If you email him before 10am, a food parcel will be delivered before 6pm that day." I was rather sceptical about that, but I did not have any better ideas, so I decided I would give it a try. Both my constituents got their food parcels before 6pm that day. Now, my local council has never worked with faith groups like that before. In the past, there has been an exchange of pleasantries and meetings at community events, and that was about it. It was clear to me, as I said, two years ago that something unusual was going on in our area. It was also going on across the country, because councils have had to depend on churches, mosques, temples, and synagogues in a way we have never seen before.

Over the summer of 2020, with support from the Sir Halley Stewart Trust, Trussell

Trust, and the Good Faith Partnership, we commissioned Professor Chris Baker and his team at the Faiths and Civil Society unit of Goldsmith's, University of London, to research these council-faith group partnerships. They sent a questionnaire to all 408 local councils in the UK. Nearly half the councils, 48%, completed and returned the questionnaire. The report from that research, *Keeping the Faith*, was published in November 2020. I was very pleased with the job that the researchers did, not just with the questionnaire, but through a series of interviews, particularly with local authority leaders, after the questionnaires had come in. You can find the report on the website of the APPG. (www.faihandsociety.org/news/2020/11/new-report-calls-for-appointment-of-faiths-commissioner-to-strengthen-relationships-between-local-authorities-and-faith-groups/)

The findings strongly backed the anecdotal evidence that faith groups and faith-based organisations were key to the civil society response to the pandemic: opening up their buildings, running food banks, sharing information, befriending, collecting, cooking and delivering food, providing volunteers. It has been a remarkable demonstration of partnerships for the common good. I know quite a few people who – wrongly, in my view – have been uncomfortable about faith group participation in public life, but I do not know anybody who would deny that those partnerships have served the common good, an extraordinarily difficult period and served it with warm-hearted goodwill.

59% of the councils who submitted questionnaires reported that they had been working with church-based food banks, 24% with mosque-based food banks, 11% with food banks based in gurdwaras and 10% with food banks based in Hindu temples. Larger proportions still had been working with faith groups to collect food or financial donations, to cook and deliver meals, recruit volunteers for council programmes, or share information to their members. For example, 23% of the councils said that they had worked with

Jewish groups and 18% had worked with Buddhist groups to share information with their members.

There is a widespread view that religious faith is declining. In fact, over these past two years there has been an absolute dependence on faith groups of a kind we have never seen before in communities all over the country. I think there are very important lessons in that experience about where in Britain in the 2020s we can find resources to build the common good and change things for the better. It seems to me, and I know this will be uncomfortable for some, that faith groups offer by far the best opportunity. A very striking finding in the report is not just that all these collaborations were set up, but also that they proved a very positive experience for the local authorities involved, and council officers were often quite surprised about that. One of them told the researcher, and I quote, "My personal admiration for faith groups has gone through the roof just in terms of their commitment there. We, as a local authority, didn't know what we were getting into. They've got involved with smiles on their faces and they've done it professionally."

Over two thirds of the local authorities reported that there had been an increase in partnership working with faith groups since the start of the pandemic. That proportion was 58% in areas of low religious diversity, so in those areas it is well over half. But in areas of high religious diversity it was 82%. 91% described their experience of partnership with faith groups as either very positive or positive. 76% expected that new partnerships with faith groups during the pandemic would continue afterwards.

The research team had, as I mentioned, some in depth discussions about their experience with local authority chief executives and this point about the professionalism of the faith groups they had worked with was a striking theme of what many of them said. I hope all of this is going to lead to a change of attitude in central and local government to the contributions that faith groups can be

making. The survey asked the councils to characterise their experience of partnership working with faith groups and faith-based organisations during the pandemic. 61% said it was very positive and 30% said it was positive. None of them said it was negative. The authorities were asked more detailed questions about their experience. They were asked about positive features. Did the faith groups add value because of their longstanding presence in the local community? 60% said 'Yes to a great extent', another 28% said 'Yes to some extent', so 88% altogether.

A clear majority said the faith groups provided a pool of volunteer resources and provided improved access to hard to reach groups. 40% said that was the case to a great extent, another 39% to some extent. 79% altogether said the faith groups improved access to groups that were otherwise hard to reach. The majority said that they acted as a source of local leadership and that they articulated and promoted promising positive values for social transformation.

The authorities were also asked about negative aspects sometimes said to characterise working with faith groups. For example, they were asked whether they were worried about the possibility of proselytisation in the context of partnership working. The proportion of respondents saying that was a feature to a great extent was 1%. The proportion of saying it was a feature to some extent was a further 2%, a total of 3%. These great anxieties, which have been widely canvassed and certainly could cause a problem, have in reality barely surfaced at all over the past two years. The report says, "A recurring motif that emerges from both sides is the sense of admiration and respect for each other's work in response to an immediate crisis and its immediate aftermath." One Council lead reflects, "I'm not a person of faith, but I've been incredibly inspired by a lot of the faith activism in my area."

In February last year, I led an adjournment debate in the House of

Commons on the report. The Minister, Eddie Hughes, commended the report. He said that it, “Shone a bright light on what can be achieved locally between faith groups and local government, and it shows what can happen when faith communities and local and national government can work together effectively.” Later on, I met with Lord Stephen Greenhalgh, who at the time held the faith brief at the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. He particularly liked the report’s proposal that there should be a Faiths Commissioner appointed by the government to promote and champion faith groups collaborations with local authorities. That faith brief has since been passed on to Kemi Badenoch. I do not yet know whether she shares Lord Greenhalgh’s enthusiasm for such a post. I think Colin Bloom’s review of how the Government should engage with faith groups in England may well have something to say on this as well. It was supposed to be published last summer. We are still waiting for it but we are told it is imminent.

In the meantime, I do welcome the announcement of the government’s Faith New Deal Pilot Fund that was launched in September. Faith groups were invited to apply for grants for projects to foster good relations within local communities, and we are waiting now for the decisions on those applications. Lord Greenhalgh wrote to me just before the launch of that fund that the findings from *Keeping the Faith*, “Show that faith groups can provide innovative solutions to complex problems.” The Department’s press release announcing the launch of the Fund mentioned the influence of the *Keeping the Faith* report in its development.

My guess is that everyone at IFN’s National Meeting today will be familiar with the widely held view that religious faith is on the way out, that it is at best irrelevant or, more likely, harmful to community wellbeing. I believe that view is profoundly wrong, and we have seen how wrong it is over these last two extraordinary years. In

reality, in modern Britain, religious faith is our best resource for bringing large numbers of people together, building the bonds between them, building the common good, and the need for that building is greater than ever.

The *Keeping the Faith* report was published, as I said in November 2020. A follow up report based on a further set of in depth interviews, mainly with faith group representatives, is going to be published after Easter, and Professor Chris Baker’s team will again be leading on its production. That will contain some further recommendations about how to build on the lessons of the past two years. The pandemic has been one thing, but what about grappling now with the consequences of war in Ukraine, in which so far 3 million people have had to leave their homes, and with the demands of rebuilding from all these experiences in the future?

The report will argue that we are now entering a more reflective stage, moving from rescue and emergency to building back better, addressing longer term challenges in partnership working. How can we build on practices which were developed of necessity very rapidly in the eye of the storm in the first lockdown, and embed them for the longer term? Emergency food relief and food distribution are still needed, but faith groups and local authorities also find themselves working together now over mental health, public health, domestic violence, care and integration of refugees and migrants, mentoring vulnerable families and individuals, emergency fostering and adoption services. The growing use of faith buildings for statutory mental and public health provision is, we think, likely to be permanent. The report will argue that there are shared values between local authorities and faith groups – compassion, social justice, including determination to end discrimination and poverty, friendship, service, kindness, empathy, hope – and that these shared values enable effective working towards shared outcomes. It will set out ideas for

how that potential can most effectively be realised with co-creation of projects between local authorities and faith groups, rather than just coproduction so that they can take advantage of the moral vision and imagination of faith as well as their impressive capacity to deliver.

In this still quite new decade, it has been the faith groups which uniquely have had both the motivation and the resources to support their communities during the extraordinary challenges of the past two years. Those qualities have not been found on anything like a comparable scale anywhere else. We need to learn the lessons from that, recognise where the resources to change things for the better in our communities can be found in 2022 and enable faith groups and faith-based organisations to make their full contribution. I am certainly hoping local authorities with such a positive experience of working with faith groups in the pandemic will want to maintain and build on those links for the future. I hope that all the organisations taking part in this National Meeting will be enabled and supported from their unique resources to make their full contribution to the common good in their communities as we address the next set of challenges, whatever they may prove to be, in the months ahead. Thank you.

Narendra Waghela: Thank you very much, Stephen.

Response

Rabbi Mordechai Wollenberg, Senior Rabbi of Woodford Forest United Synagogue, London, under the Chief Rabbi’s auspices, and Vice-Moderator, IFN Faith Communities Forum

Narendra Waghela: Next, we are pleased to have a response from Rabbi Mordechai Wollenberg, the Senior Rabbi of Woodford Forest United Synagogue in London under the Chief Rabbi’s auspices and also a Vice-Moderator of the IFN Faith Communities Forum. Rabbi Mordechai

will be responding to Stephen from a faith community perspective.

Rabbi Mordechai Wollenberg: Thank you to Stephen Timms for his thorough remarks and analysis of the particular relationship between faith communities and governments.

I am a relative newcomer to the IFN Faith Communities Forum. For me it has been a lifeline being online because I am able to join in with these events much more easily. But I do look forward to when we will be back together, hopefully in person, of course, as well. I would certainly concur with a lot that Stephen Timms said in regard to the central role that our faith groups have played in the pandemic response. I have even, like many in ministry I am sure, had to become a health and safety expert which is quite an eye opener for me! I am based in Redbridge. I think it is fair to say both in our local Jewish community and the wider faith communities, our organisations have been central to many parts of the pandemic response. Certainly in our local area the relationship between local authorities and elected leaders and the faith groups is stronger than ever.

We had a lot of collaboration. We had WhatsApp groups with faith leaders and civic leaders throughout for issues from opening places of worship, to supporting people and the vaccination programme.

In our own community and our own synagogue, we were very sad to have to close our doors at times, but the positive outcome has been that we have expanded beyond our walls. We have seen a resurgence of volunteering, a restoration of the community. The synagogue is a central focal point, not only as a place of worship, but a central hub for support and for giving to others.

Of course, social responsibility in community and helping the disadvantaged are core values in my own tradition, my own faith and community. I think, though, that until March 2020 we took a lot of things

for granted. Since then, COVID-19, the current war in Europe – which has dispersed a number of Jewish communities – and the cost-of-living crisis have brought to the fore the need for us to be responsive to social needs. It is gratifying to hear that our statutory services are moving towards a more joined up approach to their relationship with faith groups.

I can only speak for my own ministry in my own community when I say that of course, I would like everyone to be more practising, and more fully observant, and in my own faith, Orthodox. But there are many pillars to what we do and right now people's basic physical and material needs are the most vital, and anything we can do to help as a community, both our own faith community and in terms of the wider inter faith community can only be a good thing.

Hopefully, as mentioned, we will remind people that faith communities have a central part to play in British life and continue to do so, and that partnership with government and with statutory services can only help that. We hope that those partnerships continue to be strengthened. Please, God, that what we put in place now in times of crisis, we have to rely upon in times of plenty and of good health and of peace as well.

Narendra Waghela: Thank you very much, Rabbi Mordechai.

Response

Roz Miller BEM,
Director, Islington Faiths Forum

Narendra Waghela: Next, we are pleased to have a response from Roz Miller BEM, who is the Director of Islington Faiths Forum. The Forum has worked closely over many years with the local authority and with other statutory agencies.

Roz Miller: Thank you, to Stephen Timms, for his presentation and Rabbi, for your reflections. Islington Faiths Forum is just that, an inter faith network. We have about

134 faith groups in Islington. We are essentially a second-tier organisation, but also we deliver frontline work. The frontline work informs the strategic work that we do and we work a lot with Islington Council. Islington Council has supported the Forum for a very long time, since 2004. The Council provides core funding, which covers three-and-a-half to four years at a time, which allows us not only to deliver a significant amount of work each year, but it also allows us to match fund to grow the work. As a Forum we work with a lot of different departments within Islington Council. We work with the VCS team, Fairer Together, Community Safety and Targeted Youth Support. We also work with the police, with schools, with other VCS organisations, with local businesses and with local funders.

As an inter faith forum, we work on universal themes, which is, of course, what brings us all together. There was an earlier comment about faith groups being a source of leadership. Our inter faith forum is asked to lead on a number of initiatives in the borough, particularly, I would say, where the community has lost faith in the statutory agencies to do so, where they need to bring in a 'neutral party'.

We make a point of being apolitical and work hard to build relationships of trust over long periods of time. Let me give you an idea of the types of work we deliver. We are leading on a community safety project along Blackstock Road at the moment and we have a lead role in the Islington Hate Crime forum. We work extensively with the Islington Borough Resilience Forum and Emergency Planning, particularly so during the pandemic. We are still on the outbreak control board. We are also leading on women's safety training at the moment, and assisting with immigration support. As I said, we are a second-tier organisation, but we also deliver front line and that informs the input we give to the Council, because through practice we are able to inform the Council of local needs and we are able to develop plans for work around those needs.

The Minister spoke earlier about hurdles and I would like to say something briefly on that. I think a lot of people underestimate the extent to which faith groups and inter faith groups can contribute to the common good. Without doubt, our Forum has contributed to tackling local challenges in a way that others would not have been able to and the Council has drawn a lot of benefit through working not only with us, but also with the faith groups that we can bring together to consolidate their response.

In our work with the police, we act as a critical friend. We have had to do that, particularly in the last couple of years. It is a delicate balance, but it works. Our Forum has supported the pandemic efforts to a very great extent, bringing the different faith groups together. A lot of these faith groups have, as I said earlier, provided food or all sorts of responses locally, which have made a huge difference.

So, I think it is the work of many faith communities, but also the great benefit of having an inter faith forum that can bring those different pieces together and can represent faith communities collectively.

Narendra Waghela: Thank you, Roz. Stephen would you like to respond?

Stephen Timms: I welcome both those responses. I do agree that there are often perceived barriers, I think particularly in local authorities who are anxious about faith groups getting involved. But what I think the pandemic has shown us is that those anxieties are really misplaced, that there are ways of dealing with these things which avoid the potential pitfalls and enable faith groups to make a contribution that really nobody else can. I hope that is a lesson that we are going to learn from what has happened over the last couple of years.

Narendra Waghela: Thank you. We now have time for some questions for Stephen, Rabbi Mordechai and Roz and also for some discussion.

Major David Evans (Salvation Army): Thank you to Stephen for his stimulating talk. My question is why is there such inconsistency in the experience of engaging with parliamentary representatives in getting local councils to liaise with faith groups. I have been a Minister for 38 years and I can think of MPs who have astounded me at their reaction, for instance, Ian Lucas, a Labour MP in Wrexham in North Wales, and Andrew Rosindell, a Conservative MP in Havering. If it was not for their efforts, some of our attempts to make a difference in the community would have failed. But others have not been so helpful. The Welsh CVS Group did a survey and it showed that 95% of all volunteers came from faith groups and that they made a contribution financially of about £3.5 billion towards the community in Wales. I wonder whether there is a reluctance, as Stephen said earlier, because there is a perception that we are out to save everyone. Rather than seeing people homeless or hungry, as people of faith we would much prefer to get them fed and find a place for them to rest their heads at night and we want the local councils to help us to achieve that. It is partly their responsibility, but if there is a shortfall, we want to help.

Stephen Timms: I think those attitudes are fairly widespread and, of course, there are people in organisations like the National Secular Society, I think, who put a lot of time and effort into stirring them up and worrying people that these things might happen if faith groups are involved. I do not think one could rule out difficulties arising along those lines, but in practice, they have not over the last couple of years. One of the aims of the Covenant is to set out clearly, so everyone understands, what the expectations are on both sides. As long as everyone goes into this with their eyes open, knowing those expectations, then we have seen that these partnerships can be extremely fruitful for both sides. Why is it that some people do not think that is the case? I do not know. There is, no doubt, all sorts of history involved in the attitudes people take, but I think it is up to all of us to demonstrate the great value in these partnerships. As we do that, and it has

certainly happened over the last two years, then hopefully we will see attitudes steadily changing, including on the part of some people who have perhaps been very wary in the past.

Christine Kell (North Herts Inter Faith Forum): I am delighted to hear that there is more appreciation of what faith groups can do. However, I feel a little sceptical. I live in an area where we are being encouraged to set up a Faith Covenant. I hear the concerns from the local authority side, but I have concerns too. As faith groups we are continuing to offer voluntary work, such as providing food for people, when across the last decade or so there has been a number of cutbacks in social services and in community work. I am wary of something being called a partnership where it feels as though we are the ones doing all the work.

Stephen Timms: That is a very fair comment. There certainly have been lots of cuts. I referred earlier to the problems caused by the 'no recourse to public funds' restriction on people's leave to remain, which has meant a very large number of people have been dependent on food banks. It is estimated that 1.4 million people in the UK have got no recourse to public funds at the moment, although nobody really knows and the Home Office will not tell us. I think I have been one of the main people in Parliament campaigning for that restriction at least to be suspended during the pandemic, sadly, without success.

I certainly do not think that partnerships of the kind that we are discussing excuse us from campaigning politically for change. I think we have to carry on doing that. I do not think any faith group should see itself as expected or required to do these things. The reality is, though, that very large numbers of faith groups want to help, as we have seen, with food banks and with now a rather bewildering profusion of initiatives. These are the kind of responses which groups make from the starting point of their faith and local authorities should be welcoming these contributions, not turning up their nose at them. I certainly do not

think that we should be in a situation where anyone expects that faith groups are going to sort out the food problems in their area or other issues. Local authority funding has, of course, fallen by about half in real terms over the last ten years. They are desperately stretched. Whereas there used many funded local groups who were doing lots of things in the community, most of them, if they still exist, are a pale shadow of what they once were, because the grants which supported them have gone. But the faith groups are still there, and are energetic, eager, enthusiastic and want to help. If they are allowed to help, they can make a very positive contribution in their local area. My view is if they want to make that contribution, they should be able to do so and they should be supported to do so because they make such a big positive impact locally.

Dr Peter Rookes (Birmingham Council of Faiths): Thank you, Stephen. As you know, Birmingham City Council was one of the signatories to the very first Faith Covenant and we are very grateful for the impetus that you have given to that. We are in the process of revising the Covenant, and have a date for signing the new Covenant, so we are looking forward to that. We are in the fortunate position where our Cabinet member, Councillor John Cotton, is very supportive of this. You mentioned the myth that there is declining faith in this country. There is certainly no evidence of that in a city that I love, Birmingham. In fact, I would say the opposite, that faith is actually increasing. The second myth is that faith organisations cannot work together. Of course, we have disagreements from time to time, but we have means for discussing them, and we have really worked together during the pandemic. We are very glad to see the acknowledgement of faith groups in the *Keeping the Faith* report. I was, however, disappointed that there was scant recognition of the contribution of faith organisations in the Government's 'Levelling Up' proposals. What opportunity does the APPG on Faith in Society have to influence what goes into other reports that are not necessarily inspired by this recognition?

Stephen Timms: As I mentioned, we had a very positive response to the *Keeping the Faith* report from what is now the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, in which Lord Greenhalgh and Kemi Badenoch are Ministers and which Michael Gove now leads. However, you make a fair point that in the Government White Paper on Levelling Up, there is not much about faith groups. That is, of course, a matter for the Ministers in those departments to determine. I think what it indicates is that people like me, and people in the APPG, still have a good deal of work to do to persuade Ministers of the importance of this and persuade them about the things they need to do to make the most of it. We do not have power. We cannot force the Government to do anything or to include statements about anything in their White Papers. We can continue, and we will continue, to draw attention to the potential here and hope that over time, the message gets through. It has certainly got through to local authorities all over the country, Birmingham being an outstanding example, but lots and lots of other local authorities as well.

Narendra Waghela: We now have to draw this session to a close. Thank you very much again to Stephen, and to Rabbi Mordechai and to Roz.

Afternoon workshops

Narendra Waghela: We now move on to our afternoon workshops. As Canon Hilary said this morning, we are most grateful to all presenters, facilitators and rapporteurs. Notes of key points will be taken as part of helping IFN record and share the learning from the day. We will be coming back together before the last session for some whistle stop feedback from the workshops.

[Note: There was a brief period while a Zoom issue relating to the workshops was resolved.]

Dr Harriet Crabtree: During this short interlude while the workshops are being set up on Zoom, may I take this opportunity, Chair, to speak briefly about the Platinum Jubilee?

Narendra Waghela: Yes, of course.

Dr Harriet Crabtree: The extended weekend to mark Her Majesty The Queen's Platinum Jubilee is from Thursday 2 to Sunday 5 June. IFN has flagged this up to member bodies in a number of Circulars and encourages member bodies to think about ways that they can use the Platinum Jubilee to develop further links and partnerships.

There is going to be an amazing array of events. platinumjubilee.gov.uk/ The celebrations begin on the Thursday with the lighting of beacons around the country and throughout the Commonwealth.

Faith communities are taking part in all sorts of different ways, but it is clear that popular from the point of view of inter faith and multi faith activity is the Big Jubilee Lunch, which is on the Sunday. A separate initiative called Thank You Day is happening at the same time as the Big Jubilee Lunch. Thank You Day took place for the first time last year, with a link to the pandemic, and was an opportunity to say thank you to everybody. Its organisers have

decided to hold it again, this year, also to say Thank You to HM The Queen.

If you are considering holding an event for the Jubilee, you may like to think about hosting or joining a Big Jubilee Lunch on the Sunday and inviting people from other faith communities. There are Christian and Jewish festivals on that day (Pentecost and Shavuot), but lunches can be held on nearby days.

Another project that is part of the Jubilee celebrations is The Queen's Green Canopy, through which people across the Commonwealth are being encouraged to plant trees. Here in the UK the tree planting season is from approximately October to March. There are free trees available through a number of schemes. Some faith communities have already been taking part in this.

If you are planning any activities for the Jubilee, do let us know, as we would love to hear about these.

Later in June, The Great Get Together, is taking place as usual. This is another opportunity where people come together. This year the theme is 'Welcome' and it has a connection with Refugee Week.

Web links were included in the Chat.
www.edenprojectcommunities.com/the-big-jubilee-lunch
queensgreencanopy.org
www.greatgettogether.org

Prudence Jones (Pagan Federation): Tree planting is very important but it would also be helpful if people looked after their existing trees and bushes and did not clear the eco-friendly undergrowth so much because of a desire to make things look tidy.

Narendra Waghela: Thank you. We shall now be breaking into our workshop groups.

Feedback from afternoon workshops

Narendra Waghela: Welcome back to Plenary. I hope you all had good discussions. I am now going to invite each Workshop Rapporteur to offer two points from their Workshop.

Workshop A: Faith communities and healthcare – partnerships for health and wellbeing

Rajiv Shah (Jain Network): Our first presentation was from Dr Peter Rookes from the Birmingham Council of Faiths (BCF). He spoke about various meetings and events, and tools that are in place to ensure that health is on the agenda and that people are paying attention to it. He spoke about issues such as safeguarding in places of worship, integrated care system implementation, public health initiatives, radio shows and the creation of faith maps. The overall takeaway was that beyond just having physical resources and links to tackle health and wellbeing, the benefit and the value is that on a conceptual level, faith can be a great way of addressing different problems within health and wellbeing. One example that was given was of how the pandemic has raised awareness of mental health issues and more people are turning to faith as a way to try and combat different mental health issues. People feel that their places of worship are not really supporting them enough on this which is because they do not know how to tackle it yet.

We then heard from Altaf Kazi who is Head of Partnerships and Community Engagement at the NHS Blood and Transplant team (NHSBT). He highlighted the key role that the NHSBT team plays in linking to faith-based organisations, given that blood, tissue, and organ

donation is often a decision which is intertwined with faith. It was interesting to hear, in terms of understanding, that beyond just being a point of contact, his team also plays a key role in working out how we can ensure that people who are making these decisions, and their families, have the right people to speak with, given how sensitive this issue can be sometimes. He also spoke a little bit about how their work is starting to expand and how they are looking at health inequalities and access to health and finding ways to have a positive impact in terms of finding solutions for health disparities.

Workshop B: Inter Faith Week: a time for forging new connections and partnerships

Elliot Vanstone (Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales): Our first speaker was Venerable Seelawimala from the London Buddhist Vihara and Sri Lankan Sangha Sabha. He spoke about how the Vihara was deepening the relationships they already had with people in the local community. Our second speaker was Rhian Hall from the Cynon Valley Museum, who spoke about their fantastic poster competition, which was held during Inter Faith Week and which brought people from the community together and was a great chance to use some visual stimulus to encourage conversation.

Our first key point was about how Inter Faith Week is a chance to really deepen existing relationships, as highlighted by Venerable Seelawimala. The second one was about forming new relationships, which Rhian covered in her example of the

poster competition. Both are equally as important and both can use the opportunity of Inter Faith Week as a chance to express their ideas. We also went around the group and people spoke about different ideas and different initiatives for Inter Faith Week both nationally and locally and how they can affect the community.

Workshop C: Local authorities and faith groups – dimensions of partnership

Dr Joy Barrow (Hillingdon Inter Faith Network): The first point that came out throughout our discussion was the importance of personal relationships between faith communities which ensures that all faiths are treated equally and with respect. Where there are comments made about a faith community that are pejorative or inaccurate, then members of other faith communities can challenge those misconceptions.

The second point came from looking at the interaction between the local authority and the faith group and the acknowledgement from the local authority that faith groups can reach vulnerable people and people who are afraid of being in touch with any authority figures. We talked about the direct and indirect relationship between the faith groups and the local authority. One person made an interesting point that when they received funding from the local authority for a staff member, the people who had previously been active in the inter faith group sat back and let the salaried person do the inter faith work. Local authorities can also sometimes provide validation for a local inter faith group as being significant if, for example, a public body needs to know. In my area the local authority often provides free places for the inter faith group to meet, such as the local library or a meeting room in the civic centre.

Workshop D: Partnership working between local inter faith bodies and higher education institutions

Patricia Stoaat (Nottingham InterFaith Council): We had two excellent presentations. The first one was from Cornwall, one of the most rural counties in England. It was about teaching the Holocaust and how to engage students in this very difficult topic, which seems extremely remote from where they are today. Cornwall Faith Forum and Falmouth University worked together on a series of animations created for students, based on the story of one particular Holocaust survivor, whose daughter narrates the story. The personal connection to the Holocaust was really important. Martha Gensler, who was one of the people who worked on this from the university, is from Poland, and also spoke about what a very emotional experience making these animations was. I think the reason they are effective is because they engage the students at an emotional level and that is how they communicate the reality of the Holocaust. The animations are due to be launched in June 2022. The next step in this project is to tackle, in the same way, a topic on refugees and how Cornwall welcomes refugees.

The other presentation was from a completely different context. It was about how the University of Middlesex and the Barnet Multi Faith Forum (BMFF) have collaborated. The University created an inter faith network, mainly for its staff, and has worked with BMFF in particular on a variety of activities, including environmental issues and faith walks. The outcome of this is that the University is thinking of introducing a chaplaincy. We also saw a very good graph showing the difference between faith in the local population, faith in the university staff, and faith in the student body.

Workshop E: Working in partnership for the safety and security of communities

Jay Anderson (Leeds Faiths Forum): We had a wonderful presentation by Nicky from the Security Advice for Everyone (SAFE) programme, which is run by the Community Security Trust (CST). Our first point is the importance of raising awareness at a grassroots level across all communities and all age groups about community safety and, if your community is not doing these things, then being proactive and approaching the likes of CST and SAFE for assistance on how you can protect it. The second point is to highlight the tremendous work that has been done through the CST SAFE programme over the last two years, but also over the decades that CST has been in existence, offering safety advice to all faith communities, not just their own.

Narendra Waghela: Thank you all very much. We move now to our closing reflections.

Closing reflections

Paul Smalley

National Association of SACREs, RE Council of England and Wales and IFN Trustee

Narendra Waghela: We shall now hear some brief reflections from Paul Smalley, Trupti Patel and Dr Susan Siegel. Let me introduce our first speaker, Paul Smalley. Paul is a Trustee of both the National Association of SACREs and the Religious Education Council and also an IFN Trustee.

Paul Smalley: Thank you. Two years ago tomorrow, we went into lockdown. Who would have predicted what would happen? What I have taken from today is that, in the face of adversity, people of faith are not irrelevant or insignificant. Rather, in the words of Stephen Timms, they are our best resource for building the common good. This is all the more evident and powerful when faiths work together. We have seen some remarkable examples of this, truly inspiring stories – a sacrifice of service carried out for the common good. We have heard about so much good work: from the Royal British Legion and their work to ensure that we as a society remember the sacrifice that so many of many faiths and of none have made on our behalf; from Fadi Itani about the work of Muslim charities; from Grace Buckley informing us of the inter faith work in Scotland among

refugees; in the workshop I attended about real collaboration in developing the new Religion, Values, and Ethics curriculum area in Wales; such inspiring stories from Manjit Kaur about inter faith work in Coventry; and this afternoon more collaboration stories in Barnet, Bolton, Cornwall, Tower Hamlets and in local authorities elsewhere around the country, in higher education, during Inter Faith Week, and all year round.

I was struck just before lunchtime with that poignant moment when we remembered the life and work of Dr Natubhai Shah, committed to his Jain faith, but also committed to inter faith work. I noted Harriet pointing out that the Jain tradition takes its name from a word in Sanskrit that means ‘victor’, a victor over the passions and the self. We are all passionate about our own faiths and beliefs, but we are able, we are willing, and we are passionate about overcoming, but indeed celebrating, our differences in order to work in true partnership for the common good. Thank you one and all for such an inspiring day.

Narendra Waghela: Thank you, Paul.

Trupti Patel

President, Hindu Forum of Britain and IFN Trustee

Narendra Waghela: Our next speaker is Trupti Patel, President of the Hindu Forum of Britain and an IFN Trustee.

Trupti Patel: Namaste, everyone. During COVID-19, when we were all living our lives on Zoom and trying to make sense as much as possible of everything else, COP26 rolled in. It gave a tremendous opportunity for all faiths to get together to tackle climate change. When we started talking about each other’s traditions and about ancient times, the buzzword that kept coming out was about the need to listen to the Indigenous people. We were Indigenous people at one point, I suppose, and there are Indigenous people around the world. What were the traditions? What are the traditions? How are we going to go back to the organic way of living? How are we going to deal with the climate deficiencies? Scottish Inter Faith Week and Inter Faith Week both took place near to COP26 and Diwali celebrations also took place at that time. To me, talking to each other, respecting each other, talking at grassroots level, reading prayers, listening to prayers led to everything bursting with energy. It was an amazing experience. We continued and created the Hindu Environmental Task Force. On the one hand, with COVID-19, Sewa International was doing tremendous

work with the local authorities and others. On the other hand, raising awareness was the buzzword.

A couple of days ago in the Hindu community we celebrated Holi, when people throw colours at each other. It is such a beautiful and vibrant environment, where people are pulled out of winter blues and depressions. It is a celebration of victory over evil, which has been taking place for thousands and thousands of years and the colours are made from all organic materials. Colours of the Holi are made from maize, from rice, from millet and from pounding some dry roots. You can imagine, the land is bountiful with different colours which go into the water and the soil. We are often told these days to ‘rejuvenate the soil’. We know that all these festivals have some way of enriching the environment. It fed the birds, it fed the insects, and it made the whole ecosystem live. Let us remember that and let us value everything that was in the past, and bring it forward together, and discard all single-use plastics and other sorts of evil that have come through in recent years. Namaste, everyone. Thank you.

Narendra Waghela: Thank you, Trupti.

Dr Susan Siegel

Trustee, Interfaith Scotland and IFN Trustee

Narendra Waghela: Finally, we are going to hear from Dr Susan Siegel, Trustee of Interfaith Scotland and also an IFN Trustee.

Dr Susan Siegel: Thank you, and thank you to everyone for a great day. I am taking away some ideas and tips and techniques that I am hoping we will be able to take on board in Scotland. I really like the idea of the Faith Covenant and groups pledging how they will work together. It appears to me that we do have more opportunities to engage with each other, but we need to be communicating them more effectively and more widely. We need to communicate and work to integrate our organisations. One of the sentences that I really enjoyed and I will share with my colleagues is that “The way that you build strong bridges is to work from either side.”

Another theme that prevailed for me throughout the day was that we should be setting the agenda and the goals and asking people to help us, that we should not be allowing others to set our agenda. Someone said during one of the workshops that we need to make sure that it is our narrative and not the narratives that the newscasters build for us, that we need to make sure that we are driving the image we want to create in the community. We should use the legislators as advocates. We should have a vision, we should take charge, we should look for groups with shared goals, and we should not be shy about asking for help, because there are many people out there that once we start the dialogue, are experiencing the same concerns and issues that we are.

My final thought, of course, continues to be. ‘What is the new normal and what does that mean for us?’ Because the world today is very different than it was two years ago. Whether that is because of refugees, or COVID-19 or because of the war going on in Ukraine and the impact it is having on all of

us. Of course, we are all using new technology that we did not have two years ago and we need to consider how we can blend that into the way we are going to do our work. Thank you all. It was a really enjoyable day.

Narendra Waghela: Thank you, Susan.

Closing reflections from the Co-Chairs

Narendra Waghela: I have very much enjoyed being with you all today. In closing I will only say that I have been deeply touched by your conviction and your service. Our members and others have been doing great work. I shall now pass over to my fellow Co-Chair, Canon Hilary, to close the meeting.

Canon Barber: Thank you. It has been an absolute pleasure and honour to have co-chaired today. Thank you to our excellent plenary speakers, to all our discussion group facilitators, presenters and rapporteurs, to our fellow officers and fellow Trustees, and to everyone for attending and participating and sharing their thoughts, and, of course, to the IFN staff for all the arrangements for today.

We wish everyone present today all the very best for continuing your wonderful inter faith work across the UK, for it has never been more important. Thank you all very much and go well.

Workshop 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 workshops as a whole.

Morning Workshops

A: COVID-19, Coming together at a time of need and the emergence of new networks and partnerships

Facilitator: Ms Kate McColgan, Chair, Inter Faith Council for Wales

Presenters: Dr Maureen Sier, Director, Interfaith Scotland and Ms Yasmin Surti, Trustee, Leicester Council of Faiths

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Ms Kate McColgan introduced the session and invited participants to introduce themselves.

Dr Maureen Sier offered her presentation. A summary of her points is below.

- I am going to be focusing in my presentation on three areas:
 1. The deepening and ongoing relationship of Interfaith Scotland (IfS) with the Scottish Government;
 2. The importance of the international networking that developed during the pandemic, due to the possibility of international digital space; and
 3. Scottish Interfaith Week during the pandemic.
- Two main themes of IfS's work have been: connecting during COVID and coming together for the planet (because COP26 was held in Scotland).

- At the start of the pandemic, the Scottish Government immediately asked Interfaith Scotland to distribute emergency funding to faith communities to support the most vulnerable.

- As a result of that response, the Scottish government decided to set up a Faith and Belief group to meet weekly with the Scottish Government, especially with their Connected Communities Department. This was to act as an advisory group to discuss, for example, re-opening places of worship and vaccines. The group has acted as both a sounding board and a conduit to get messages across. IfS still sits on group, but the meetings are becoming less frequent and are now partly reorienting towards the crisis in Ukraine. A few examples of what has been discussed at the group in last few weeks are: sharing e-learning tools about booster vaccines; discussion of changes to transgender laws; settlement scheme for Ukrainian refugees; and encouraging faith communities to fill out the Census.

- IfS is delighted to be part of this group and recognised by the Government, but also glad that the Government also engages directly with faith groups. Although the group came out of a crisis, it is an ongoing partnership.

- IfS has done a lot of work to engage faith communities about the climate crisis, including getting messages out to faith communities that this is a global, human crisis that we can all work together on mitigating.

- An important relationship for IfS has been its relationship with the Interfaith Liaison Committee to UNFCCC. It now has a seat on this committee. In the build up to

COP26, it met with them almost weekly and a number of climate-related webinars were planned as well as an in-person 'Talanoa' dialogue during COP26.

- IfS is now beginning consultation around Egypt and faith engagement for the next COP summit. It is currently in the process of determining what role Scottish faith communities will play in this. The COP in Egypt does not feel quite as immediate as when it was in Glasgow and yet the crisis is ever more urgent.

- One of the legacies of Covid-19 are these international partnerships, which would not have been thought possible before. IfS is now engaging on a number of international platforms. Hopefully this will make its inter faith work more effective.

- The theme for Scottish Inter Faith Week 2020 was 'Connecting'. Important relationships across Scotland were built through this, and these groups have continued to connect.

- The theme for 2021 was 'Together for the Planet'.

- 2022 is the Scottish year of storytelling so the theme for Scottish Inter Faith Week will be around that.

- Scottish Inter Faith Week is a huge opportunity to build new and lasting relationships, for example Interfaith Scotland will be publishing a poetry book with the Scottish Poetry Library.

- IfS is always looking for new relationships that mean building a more inclusive and connected society.

Ms McColgan thanked Dr Sier for her presentation.

Ms Yasmin Surti offered her presentation. A summary of her points is below.

- I will be talking about the relationships built over the course of the pandemic.

- Leicester Council of Faiths (LCoF) has been around for many years, with varying degrees of engagement with local authorities.

- I worked in the local authority for a number of years, and have therefore had some interaction with local Clinical Commissioning Groups, so there were some pre-existing relationships.

- Early in 2020, Public Health contacted me for support with a challenging case that had potential for ramifications in the Muslim community. When I spoke with them, I thought the issue was bigger than the Muslim community, so I engaged LCoF in conversation. Through this, LCoF was able to support the authorities to work through a tricky legal situation.

- Once the authorities had seen the value of faith networks in supporting them through that particular issue, LCoF was able to negotiate an agreement and small fee from the Clinical Commissioning Group to enable it, through LCoF's part-time paid Coordinator, to facilitate further pieces of work, which made a huge difference to how authorities could engage with and reach faith communities throughout the pandemic.

- Leicester was in lockdown for a particularly long time. By having this Coordinator, LCoF has been able to set up social media channel, including a WhatsApp group for representatives of various faith groups and places of worship. LCoF has become a go-to place for advice for dealing with pandemic issues and has continued to be seen as a point of reference and support for faith communities.

- Faith communities have been coming together to help others dispel some of the negative media attention about Leicester's faith groups during Leicester's long lockdown.

- LCoF was also in conversation with the local authorities and Leicestershire Inter Faith Forum resulting in a weekly call to

bring faith groups together. This enabled them to connect further, coming to a more formal network. A number of support groups and food banks were established as a result.

- LCoF was asked by the Clinical Commissioning Group to promote vaccinations, given that the uptake in some communities was more challenging. They agreed some funding and produced videos in first languages from faith communities, featuring respected members of communities and places of worship. Over 100 short videos were created, which had a huge impact. This demonstrated to strategic bodies the importance of having LCoF involved. LCoF was able to remunerate those involved in the videos, helping to cement those relationships.
- They also held facilitated workshops about vaccination take up and became a resource point for faith communities about the changing guidance and law around places of worship, burials, weddings and funerals and also funding opportunities and so on. This continued, and LCoF now provides a weekly update that is wider than the pandemic.
- The work has become broader reaching, for example it now involves work with the police on hate crime. This involves encouraging communities to report hate crimes and to understand what a hate crime is, as well as helping the police understand communities' wariness.
- LCoF is also hoping to develop a youth inter faith forum.

Ms McColgan thanked Ms Surti for her presentation and invited any questions or comments for the two presenters. In discussion the following points were raised. Responses from the presenters are in italics.

- How many messages does the LCoF WhatsApp group get every day?
There is a lot going on in the WhatsApp group. Having a Co-ordinator in place has

helped, as has establishing strict guidelines around what kind of topics can be discussed. [Yasmin Surti]

- How did funding work for the LCoF part-time Co-ordinator?
Initially, funding was only offered for a short period of time, but that demonstrated the worth of having LCoF engaged. With this evidence base, we could then apply for small pots of funding, enabling that post to continue. [Yasmin Surti]
- Reading Interfaith Group asked the mayor to become involved, and he provided in-kind support by holding a reception with representatives of all faith groups, as a way of marking Inter Faith Week.
Applying for small pots of funding and maintaining contacts has been key to raising funds. [Yasmin Surti]
- Was there a lot of competition for limited resources among faith groups?
Not really. LCoF and the WhatsApp group meant that there was an 'all in this together' mentality. [Yasmin Surti]
- The Salvation Army receives a lot of donations from faith groups, for example for its food banks. Faith communities may not agree on doctrine but they do agree on serving the community.
There is an Interfaith Food Justice Network in Glasgow bringing together different groups. [Maureen Sier]
- A WhatsApp group bringing together people doing food delivery and food bank work has enabled sharing food and information about people in need around the Glasgow area.

Ms McColgan thanked everyone for their contributions.

B: Emergency services and faith communities, developing and deepening community links

Facilitator: Hassan Joudi, Deputy Secretary General, Muslim Council of Britain and IFN Faith Communities Forum Vice-Moderator

Presenters: Nicola Thurston, Lead Officer for Equality & Diversity/Inclusion, National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) and Kent Fire and Rescue Service, and Carl Boasman, Director of Community Protection, NFCC and Cleveland Fire Brigade

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Mr Hassan Joudi welcomed participants.

Ms Nicky Thurston and **Mr Carl Boasman** offered their presentation. A copy of their PowerPoint slides is at the end of this note. A summary of their points is below.

- The National Fire Chiefs Council has a variety of remits involving providing resources to local Fire and Rescue Services. They work closely with the Home Office on deciding the direction of travel for their sector.
- Ms Thurston and Mr Boasman are leading the NFCC's work on Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion. They have worked, with input from the Inter Faith Network, to provide training to members of the NFCC partner organisations to increase awareness and consideration of cultural, religious, and belief-based representation for the purpose of better serving their communities.
- The NFCC has a strong focus on community risk management planning. This intersects with EDI through making sure that services like 999 and emergency responses are available to all people and that communities know how to use them and can trust their service

providers. Much of the NFCC's work is focused on prevention and this requires community links.

- The risk management also includes considering factors such as the local environment, water access, roads, and potential outside threats, such as the tragic one on the Manchester Arena.
 - The Grenfell Tower tragedy had a major impact on how the NFCC handles risk management and the level of importance that it ascribes to community links.
 - Community cohesion and access to a variety of community groups is at the heart of risk management planning.
 - Local Fire and Rescue services produce four-year community risk management plans. The NFCC is keen to ensure that all local services are consulting with their communities and truly taking the community into account when making these plans. It is also important to ensure that everyone within a community understands what services are being provided and how to access them.
 - While there are community engagement efforts coming from the Fire and Rescue Services' side, it is also very helpful for community groups, in particular faith organisations, to reach out and become involved in community risk management.
- Mr Joudi** thanked the presenters and invited questions or comments. Points raised in discussion are below. Responses from the presenters are in italics.
- What kind of training and resources do fire services have around equality and diversity?
There are a number of layers. The majority of Fire and Rescue services have someone doing a similar job to me. They may be from an operational background and have trained as a firefighter first, or they may be an outside practitioner who focuses on EDI. It depends on the size and capacity of the service. These people build

local links and run training courses. Helping local services to build these links is part of what the NFCC does, and we have done it while working with IFN. What is on offer can vary across the country as there isn't a standard, but it is our responsibility to serve everyone to the best of our ability. [Ms Nicky Thurston]

- Do you find it easier to have an informal network as opposed to a formal network that may lead to box-ticking exercises instead of real engagement? Yes. Also, this approach is much more risk-driven. The number of fires in the UK has halved since the 1980s. This is because the fire service has been very focused on preventative work. When we have to respond to emergencies we feel as though we have failed in a way. In order to do that preventative work well, we have to understand how people behave so we can evaluate the risk and prevent it or put mitigating steps in place. To do this, we have to have the training to understand what people are doing. [Ms. Nicky Thurston]

- Would it be helpful for local Inter Faith groups to take the initiative and approach their local fire services to start this dialogue? Who is the best person to speak to? Each station in London will have a station commander. However, because it is London, they will have teams specialising in working with various groups. You can get in contact locally, but I am also happy to help you get connected. [Ms Nicky Thurston] That would be really welcome because we don't always know what groups are out there. Any contact you could make would be welcome. [Mr Carl Boasman]

- Is there anything you are doing to mitigate the challenges of the fire service being very male-dominated and the impact that might have on working with some communities? This is a real challenge for us, and we are trying to recruit women, especially in community safety work. If there is anyone you know who would be interested,

please let them know. We do try to be mindful of these considerations. [Ms Nicky Thurston] I would add that, as a sector, we are doing our best to change the perception of what a firefighter is, and to diversify our workforce. Part of that is also understanding the barriers around why people may not want to apply. [Mr Carl Boasman]

- What are some best practices for engaging with places of worship in your community outreach? Having Inter Faith Week as an event that we can plan for in advance has been really helpful in our community outreach. We have used that as a focus for visiting various communities and especially visiting places of worship, many of which are historic buildings and are places where large groups gather. This has allowed us to do safety assessments on the buildings and also speak to the groups about how much engagement they want with us. One size does not fit all so there are different approaches. [Ms Nicky Thurston]

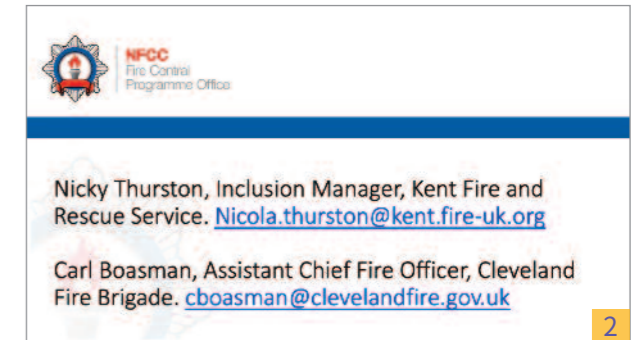
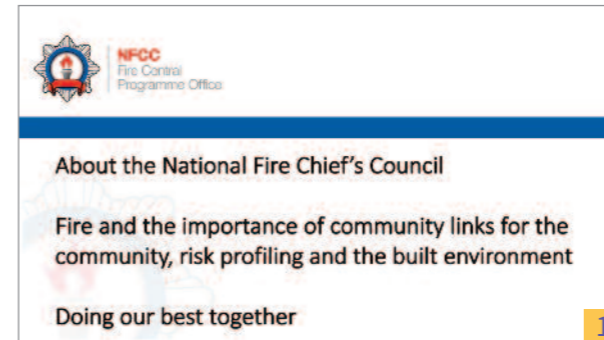
- How effective is the fire service within the local community in terms of different groups with it? Not helpful enough. Because of austerity and the restrictions on rural stations especially, we have not been able to recruit and it has hurt our ability to have good representation. This makes it hard for us to build trust because we aren't reflective of the community makeup. However, this is something we are working to fix. [Ms Nicky Thurston] This is definitely something we are working to change and it is changing slowly. We do not want EDI to be a box-ticking exercise and we are very eager to change things. [Mr Carl Boasman]

- Firefighters can be part-time as well, correct? This is a flexible role? It is, yes. On-call firefighters are very reflective of their community because they have to live close by. That gives us opportunities. [Mr Carl Boasman]

- In Scotland, because of mandates around fire alarm systems in housing, there have been great opportunities for fire departments to reach out to the community and help people install alarm systems for a fair price. Is this an option in England? Scotland is a little bit different because there is one fire service. But it is good that the priority is to keep people safe. [Ms Nicky Thurston]

- Is there anything else we can do to help? Make your group known to your local fire service because they may not know about you. There are people across the country doing a job like mine. Reach out to them. We are happy to facilitate this if it is something you are having trouble with. [Ms Nicky Thurston]

Mr Joudi thanked everyone for their contributions.



C: Employers, staff networks and faith communities – working for religious literacy and good relations

Facilitator: The Revd Andy Williams, Baptist Inter Faith Working Group

Presenters: Sharon Jandu, Director, Yorkshire Asian Business Association (YABA), and Siobhán Anderson, Programmes Coordinator, Workplace & Community at the Faith & Belief Forum (FBF)

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The Revd Andy Williams welcomed participants.

Ms Sharon Jandu offered her presentation. A summary of her points is below.

- The Yorkshire Asian Business Association was established six years ago to give a voice to the Asian community in

Yorkshire. Their primary aims are helping members do business more effectively, engage more with the community, and grow their businesses.

- This is done through networking with members, encouraging them to network with each other, and with other businesses in the region, as well as public sector organisations and professional bodies who might be able to assist them.

- The Asian in the organisation's name refers to the South Asian community, in this context used to mean those from the Indian subcontinental diaspora.

- The networking is done through a combination of events and newsletters.

- The YABA has found that the Asian business community can be circumscribed because people are very focused on running their own business. This often means that they reach a ceiling on the growth they can achieve solely through hard work.

- Most business organisations are solely focused on helping their members maximise their profits and run their businesses more efficiently. The YABA wanted to stand out by incorporating faith and culture into their events, which they have found to be very valuable.
- In the past four years, they have hosted a variety of celebrations for religious and culture holidays and encouraged representatives from different faith communities to speak to business owners about their traditions.
- During this time, the YABA have also been working with corporate partners from the professional sector, such as KPMG and PWC, as well as local authorities. These larger bodies want to engage with the business community and YABA networking events provide them with a unique opportunity.
- This has led to corporate partners asking how YABA can support their Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) policies, which led to these partners improving their policies to better serve their employees.
- For example, one of YABA's partners is Northern Rail. They approached YABA to further their understanding of the community and the faiths present in it.
- Northern Rail's senior leadership came on board to discuss how they can better engage with the Asian community; not only the business community, but the community at large. This took the form of several projects including Northern Rail's senior leadership joining YABA on a faith trail. They visited a gurdwara, a mosque, and a mandir and had the opportunity to ask questions in a non-judgemental environment. The faith trail was very successful in creating bridges between religious leaders and the Northern Rail leadership. It also featured a lot of food, which is instrumental in bringing people together.

Ms Jandu then handed over to **Mr Richard Isaac**, a member of the senior leadership team at Northern Rail. A summary of his points is below.

- Northern Rail wanted to gain a better understanding of faith and how it could better understand the needs of both customers and staff.
- Having a safe space to learn, ask questions, and make connections was a great way to do this.
- Northern Rail's partnership with YABA is ongoing, they are continuing to host events jointly around inter faith.
- Northern Rail is also committed to breaking the stereotype that the rail industry is run by older white men. Reaching out in these ways allows it to begin to reflect its communities better.

Mr Williams thanked the presenters and invited questions and comments. In discussion the following points were raised. Responses from the presenters are in italics.

- Is it possible to have access to the presentation later?
Yes, we will make this information available in a PDF to be distributed later. [Ms Sharon Jandu]
- This is a question for Mr Richard Isaac. Does Northern Rail keep record of the way staff identify religiously? Are you able to measure whether your new EDI policies are leading to changes in the number of staff from different religious backgrounds?
Yes, we are beginning to see changes. We have seen a more diverse pool of applicants, and Northern Rail now has the first female South Asian train driver in the country, who recently qualified. However, women are still very underrepresented on the whole, though we are trying to change this across all levels of the organisation, including senior management. We have been successful, but not successful enough. We

are hoping to change this by building links with schools, colleges, and youth groups to increase our ability to recruit diverse young people. [Mr Richard Isaac]
Within the Asian community, certain careers are prioritised by parents when they are encouraging their children. Much of what we are trying to do is show the community that there are more options out there. This involves the work in schools that Richard mentioned, as well as pushing out content through our various channels to increase visibility. [Ms Sharon Jandu]

- How can inter faith groups get involved with businesses? In particular, how do you get engagement from senior management? In my experience, when reaching out to businesses, you may get a response from HR or EDI or Wellbeing, but engagement from senior management is very unusual.
It helps that we have a very supportive regional director at Northern Rail. He is very passionate about EDI and has made it a part of the agenda. But across the rail industry as a whole, there are similar pushes being made. There is a lot of impetus and support from the Department for Transport to make these changes. [Mr Richard Isaac]
- Can you give us more details about the programme the senior leadership took part in? Was there more to it than the visits to places of worship?
It was not only the visits, but the ability to ask questions during those visits. We had a space to ask difficult questions and get helpful advice. For example, we discussed how to better meet the needs of colleagues who were fasting during work. I grew up in Bradford, which is very diverse, but many of our other managers are from much more rural communities that are not nearly as diverse and having the opportunity to learn and ask questions was very important for them. [Mr Richard Isaac]
In addition to visits with faith groups, we offer business events with presentations and one-to-one networking opportunities. This creates a spectrum of events that the

team from Northern Rail can dip in and out of as they want and need and helps us to develop the relationship further. [Ms Sharon Jandu]

Mr Williams invited **Ms Siobhán Anderson** to give her presentation. A copy of her PowerPoint slides is at the end of this note. A summary of her points is below.

- The Faith and Belief Forum (FBF) (previously known as the Three Faiths Forum) has been working in the UK for 25 years to increase inter faith engagement in various settings.
- FBF partners with a variety of workplaces to improve their engagement with faith and inter faith issues. This is through faith inclusion skills training, which is based on FBF's award-winning educational methodologies. This training is designed to give employees and employers practical tools to engage sensitively with colleagues and clients from diverse backgrounds.
- FBF also offers webinars, which feature the chance to meet people from across the country online and ask questions to a trained speaker pool who represent a variety of backgrounds. This is an opportunity that many adults do not get in their day-to-day life, as these questions can be inappropriate to ask in the workplace.
- In addition, FBF offers inter faith consultancy and training for staff faith and belief networks and hosts inter faith dialogue training for these groups, teaching some of its methods for starting meaningful conversations around religion and identity in the workplace.
- Ms Anderson offered FBF's work with Direct Line Group, an insurance group, as a case study. FBF works with their staff faith and belief network; an internal network that raises awareness and drives conversation about faith and belief. Direct Line Group wanted to highlight the importance of including non-religious participants in events and discussions,

which accords with the values of FBF, allowing an easier partnership.

- During 2021, FBF organised two webinars and four training sessions for Direct Line Group, enabling staff to hold important conversations about their personal beliefs as well as providing an opportunity to talk about challenging scenarios that have come up previously.
- In feedback, 100% of participants said that they felt more confident approaching conversations around religion, faith, and belief.
- Direct Line Group has donated to FBF's programmes for young people and sponsored a category at its annual London Faith & Belief Community Awards. This mutually beneficial arrangement allows both organisations to strengthen their partnership.
- There are several pieces of advice for an organisation beginning a workplace partnership. The first is finding the right people. This could be someone in a corporate social responsibility team, it could be someone from HR, it could be a member of a staff network, or it could simply be someone who is passionate and ready to help.
- It is important to have an idea of each other's goals and interests as well. Funding, venues, and expertise are all good things to ask for. Finally, these relationships take time and effort to develop before they become mutually beneficial. They require patience and understanding.

Mr Williams thanked **Ms Anderson** for her presentation and invited questions and comments. In discussion, the following points were raised. Responses from Ms Anderson are in italics.

- Barnet Multi Faith Forum has worked very closely with FBF to host our own local Faith and Belief Awards Ceremony, modelled after the ceremony in London hosted by FBF. They have been excellent

partners and have also worked with us in connection with their youth programmes.

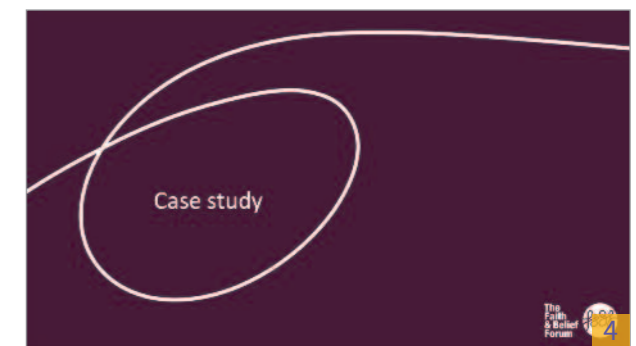
Thank you. If anyone else wants to participate in a similar partnership, please contact me.

- Are you only based in the London area? Do you have plans to expand? Also, how do you recruit young people?
We are based in London, Manchester, and the West Midlands. However, many of our events, including the workplace programmes, are primarily online, which allows us to bring together people from across the country. Most of the way we recruit young people is simply through maintaining partnerships with the local community and higher and further education.
- Have you had a situation in which there was pushback from workplaces? How did you overcome that?
People definitely can be hesitant. We try to overcome this by talking organisations through our approach and why it is so vital to discuss these issues rather than push them to one side. We do things like taster sessions, which allows them to see if we are a good partner for them. And we try to reassure people as much as possible that this is not about controversy, it is about opening those difficult questions in a gentle, positive way. It is about building understanding of different perspectives.
- I just wanted to highlight that this is a great opportunity for FBF to engage with the rail industry as we move towards the Great British Railways proposed by the Department for Transport. EDI is a cornerstone of this new organisation and your organisation is a great potential partner.
- In my local organisation, we frequently have schools coming to see our temple, learning about our values and practises, and learning about our worship. I wish that this could be extended in childhood, so that when we reach adulthood, the sort of interaction you encourage comes naturally.

- Do you approach corporate partners, or do they approach you?
Up to this point, we have largely been dealing with requests from corporate partners. However, we are about to launch a new programme where we are

more proactive and reach out to new potential partners.

Mr Williams thanked everyone for their contributions.



D: Faith communities working in partnership with SACREs and schools

Facilitator: Dr Norman Richardson MBE, Northern Ireland Inter Faith Forum

Presenters: Libby Jones, Assistant Secretary, Wales Association of SACREs and RE Advisor, St Giles' Centre for Religious Education, Wrexham; and Vinay Shah, Institute of Jainology and member, Islington SACRE

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Dr Norman Richardson welcomed participants

Ms Libby Jones offered her presentation. A copy of her PowerPoint slides is at the end of this note. A summary of her points is below.

- I am an Executive Member of the Wales Association of SACREs (WASACRE). Until 2021, I was the Chair of the National Advisory Panel for Religious Education in Wales. I am still on that Panel, but am no longer Chair. I am the RE Advisor for Wrexham Schools. I also do a lot of national work across Wales and have been supporting the Welsh Government with the new curriculum which is due to be rolled out in September.
- I am talking to you today about SACREs, schools and engagement with faith communities, but this is very much a Wales perspective, so it may be quite different to other countries in the UK.
- The new Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Act brings with it some significant changes. This includes the change of name from Religious Education (RE) to Religion, Values, and Ethics (RVE). There will also be a change in the name of SACREs which will become SACs, Standing Advisory Councils, which is linked to the change from RE. There are also changes to the agreed syllabus

requirements. The Act makes it explicit that any Agreed Syllabus must reflect the fact that religious traditions in Wales are in the main Christian, while taking account of the teaching and practices of other principal religions represented again in Wales. Agreed Syllabuses must also reflect the fact that a range of non-religious philosophical convictions are held in Wales. That is quite a big change and has obviously caused changes to the composition of SACREs.

- All maintained schools in Wales are required to design their own local curriculum. The four purposes of the curriculum are the key drivers. The aim of a school's curriculum is to support learners to become: ambitious, capable learners, ready to learn throughout their lives; enterprising, creative contributors; ethical informed citizens; and healthy, confident individuals.
- Schools must have regard to the Curriculum for Wales framework, and that includes the guidance on RVE. The Curriculum itself promotes an integrated approach to learning, and there is a real emphasis on experiences. The guidance says that a school's curriculum should reflect the diversity of perspectives, values, and identities, which shape its locality and Wales and develop understanding of the wider world. For RVE that means engaging with religious and non-religious local communities; experiencing and reflecting on the mystery and wonder of the natural world, historical locations, and religious and cultural sites; observing and participating in cultural activities; visiting local places of worship, and other special places, and landscapes, with significant religious or spiritual dimensions; and meeting people for whom faith and belief is important.
- SACREs have never been more vital. Schools can often feel lost when it comes to engaging with local faith and belief communities, so WASACRE tries to make it easier for them to engage with their local SACRE.

- SACREs aim to ensure that they are visible and contactable. That can sometimes be done through the RE advisor, if they have one, but not all SACREs in Wales have one. They tend to rely on their local authority websites for information. SACREs also share their annual reports with schools and communicate with schools regularly, often through WASACRE.
- WASACRE communicates with its SACREs on a regular basis, offering advice and support. They can then pass this advice and support onto schools.
- In Wrexham a local school has asked the Wrexham SACRE to support it in awarding a Key Stage 3 learner with 'exceptional performance', which is one of our levels under the current curriculum. A few SACRE members will be listening to a presentation from the learner and asking questions. This is really exciting and really important for this particular learner, but also the school and its engagement with the SACRE.
- Many SACREs across Wales hold meetings in schools and places of worship. They also offer training and put schools in touch directly with relevant faith and belief communities.
- In Wales at the moment we are also holding Agreed Syllabus conferences, and ensuring that these have representatives from local faith and belief communities, and not necessarily those that are on SACREs already. These might be from communities that do not want to have representatives on the SACREs, but would like to be part of the conversation when it comes to the curriculum.
- Developing positive relationships within SACREs by holding meetings at suitable times and on suitable days is really important. We find that teachers cannot come at certain times and certain faith and belief representatives cannot come at certain times. We try to ensure that we accommodate everyone.

WASACRE has been doing a lot to engage with schools. At the moment, it is engaging with schools and practitioners in order to develop a suite of professional learning for schools in Wales on RVE in the new curriculum. It is collaborating with the Catholic Education Service and Church in Wales on their guidance. WASACRE, through its member SACREs, is at the fore of education in Wales. It has been identified by the Welsh Government as being a key partner in the development of the curriculum for Wales. The Welsh Government has consulted and collaborated with SACREs directly and through WASACRE throughout its journey, from early curriculum development right up to curriculum rollout, which is this year. Therefore, faith and belief communities have been part of the two through their representation on local SACREs and WASACRE. Such representation is very important.

Dr Richardson thanked Ms Jones for her presentation and invited questions and comments. The following were raised. Responses from Ms Jones are in italics.

- Do you anticipate that there will be any identity problem with the term 'SACs', because the connection with RVE may not be very clear?
Yes, there has been some concern about this, but because SACREs have such a good relationship with the Welsh Government, schools and local authorities, they will probably still be known as SACREs for some time.
- One of the big changes in Wales is that the conscience clause, the opportunity for withdrawal from RE, is not to be continued. That could affect people from some faith and belief communities. Do you have any thoughts on that?
The right to withdraw from RVE will not be included in the new Curriculum for Wales, so from September 2022, no primary school learner will be able to be withdrawn by their parents from RVE. As the rollout happens in secondary, that will be the same for each year group there as well. It will be a shock to some parents

and some communities, including some faith communities, but there is very much a focus on objective, critical, and pluralistic delivery of RVE in this new curriculum. In Wales we have found that very few learners are being withdrawn from RE currently, and schools handle it very well. We have advice on how to manage withdrawal, and this usually results in the parents not wanting to withdraw their children.

- Please could you explain more about how some faith and belief groups are being involved without being formally represented on SACREs?
We have found that a lot of communities, including faith communities, do not have much spare time to attend regular SACRE meetings. However, the agreed syllabus conferences are only held every five years. So some communities and groups have been happy to take part in these instead. That has been a really good way into those communities who have not really wanted to engage before and it has taken the pressure off them. Our local inter faith group in Wrexham is also a good way for groups to be engaged.
- Have you considered using the acronym SACREV, which would stand for Standing Advisory Committee for Religion, Ethics, and Values, rather than just SAC?
Thank you for the suggestion. I would suspect that the term SACREs will continue to be used for now. WASACRE will probably have to change its name.
- Birmingham is very diverse and is blessed with around 800 places of worship. Birmingham Council of Faiths has created a video of six places of worship, accompanied by worksheets and a quiz. This was funded by the Arts Society. These can be very useful to schools, especially in areas where there is less diversity. Scouts and Guides and other groups also have this as part of their curriculum.

Mr Vinay Shah then offered his presentation. A summary of his points is below.

- I am the Interfaith Director at the Institute of Jainology and a member of Islington SACRE.
- Jainism is one of the faiths practised mainly in India, and in Africa, and also in the UK.
- We recently made a presentation on Jainism as part of an assembly being done by Islington SACRE. We explained the main points and tenets of Jainism, which are: 'ahimsa', which is the nonviolence; 'satya', which is the truthfulness; and 'aparigraha', which is the non-possessiveness; and compassion towards all living beings. These are practised in more than one way: in mind, which is what is in your thoughts; through speech, which is what you say; and with your body, which is your actions. It is through the mind, speech, and body actions that we may express our compassion, our nonviolence, and truthfulness.
- Normally, human nature is such that our activities are carried out through the subconscious mind and not in full awareness. That is where mindful action comes in. You stay in your present day awareness, which means that you do not go too deep into the past or think too much about the future. Jainism teaches that if you are in your present day awareness, then you will not commit so many 'karmas', (which is what Jains call it when you inhabit all your wrongdoings).
- Islington SACRE has a person who coordinates between the SACRE and schools and Islington Council. He is called Anthony Doudle. The SACRE's Chair is David Allen, who is a teacher. We can bring our concerns to SACRE meetings and Anthony either answers them or takes them away to find answers.
- There are not many Jains in Islington. The main faiths there are Christianity and Islam. The Jain temple in Potters Bar is open to all and schools can visit.

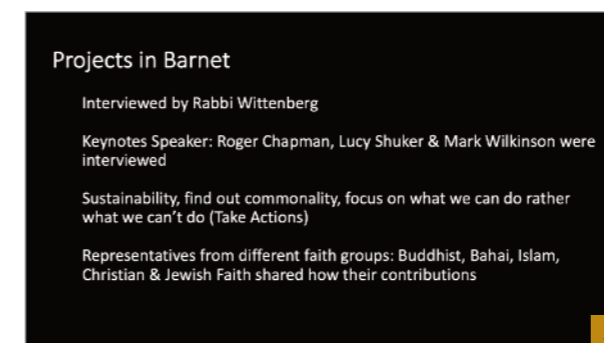
Dr Richardson thanked Mr Shah for his presentation and invited questions and general comments. The following were raised. Responses are in italics.

- Are you aware of the work of Satish Kumar, who lives in South Devon? I admire his work very much.
Yes, I have met him. He is brilliant. He did a pilgrimage around the world. [Vinay Shah] He is responsible for the prayer for peace which begins 'Lead Me from Death to Life, from Falsehood to Truth', which he adapted from the Upanishads. [Norman Richardson]
- My experience of teaching a minority religion has been that it is very difficult to present information, particularly to primary school children when they have no religious background themselves and you have to go back to first principles and explain, for example, what a god is or what an altar is. I am very interested that Wales has decided to rename the subject RVE as that makes it more general and perhaps easier for the children to get their heads round.
- This is a very real dilemma. In Manchester the local inter faith groups arrange for

people from different faiths to go into schools, or for schools to visit places of worship, to try and establish some connection, because learning from a book will not reach someone if they do not have any real experience. Hopefully these visits can resume now that the pandemic is easing.

• Pope Francis realises that inter faith education is very important. He has instigated a synod, which is not just about education, but also about social issues in the Catholic Church. He has asked Catholics all over the world, over a period of two years, to encounter people of other faiths and other beliefs, to listen to what they have to say, and discern. About six months ago he asked Catholic bishops across the world to speak to the people in their parishes to find out what people are saying and what people are thinking in the Catholic Church. In about 18 months from now there will be a report back to Rome and the Vatican. Exciting things will come from the Catholic Church when it comes to social teaching and education.

Dr Richardson thanked everyone for their contributions.



Buddhist quote

"If you care anything about your personal security, you should first of all pray for order and tranquility throughout the four quarters of the land, should you not?"

—Nichiren Daishonin, from "On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land"

5

What our aim is...

Our strategy acknowledges that religious values contribute to staff wellbeing and also make a positive contribution to the life and work of the university

LEADING IN EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

We strive to create a fairer world and embed diversity, inclusion and equality in all we do

6

Our faith demographic - staff

Religion	Number
Buddhist	10
Christian	362
Hindu	35
Info Refused	53
Jewish	22
Muslim	70
No religion	478
Other	28
Sikh	10
Spiritual	24
Unknown	699

7

Community faith demographics

Staff Students Barnet

8

What we are doing

- Bulb planting on campus - HMD
- Heal the World Conference
- Film and Faith screening and online discussion - The Dark Side of Chocolate
- Memorial Forest planting - LA
- Planting saplings - Inter Faith Week 2021

9

Future collaboration

- Research around setting up Chaplaincy service
- Eco Show and Tell
- Faith and Peace Walk
- Tackling food waste

Rumela Kundu
Buddhist member of Barnet Multi Faith Forum
rumela.kundu@centreforlondon.org

Monna Rizvi
Co-Chair Middlesex University Inter Faith Network
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10

E: Sports initiatives and inter faith engagement – partnerships for learning, empowerment and cohesion

Facilitator: Ms Tracey Prior, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints

Presenters: Ms Marie Cartwright, Regional Manager North, Sporting Equals, (responsible for the Breaking Boundaries programme) and Mr Philip Simon, Friends Sporting Club Manchester

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Ms Tracey Prior welcomed participants to the discussion group.

Ms Marie Cartwright offered her presentation. A copy of her PowerPoint slides is at the end of this note and a summary of her points is below:

- Sporting Equals promotes diversity in sport, and the organisation has a history of working with faith centres and community organisations.
- The Breaking Boundaries programme started in 2018 in 5 UK cities, including Manchester. It brings young people together to use sport as a tool to foster friendships and mutual respect.

- During 2020 the programme encountered issues due to COVID.
- The programme, to date, has trained 118 community champions and has created 670 free hours of volunteering, reaching 694 beneficiaries. There have also been 121 regular event sessions run. This data has shown an increase from the second year of the programme.
- Now in the third year of the programme, numbers have continued to rise due to COVID restrictions being lifted, with numbers approaching close to 900 (counting all cities).
- In Manchester, the vision of the programme was to target two specific wards which have had issues around community cohesion.
- The programme has encouraged change by engaging and uniting people through their commonalities and strengthening social cohesion by bringing together through sport people, who might otherwise not ever meet.
- The programme works in partnership to create change and to increase social cohesion.
- Another programme that Sporting Equals has is Equally Active. This works with 10 faith centres across 5 cities. The project specifically targets an older age group and has been very successful in reducing social isolation and encouraging participation in sporting/ physical activity by bringing people together. The groups take part in walking groups or activities such as Pilates sessions which are followed by a coffee morning. It is a chance for people to socialise and meet people from different faith communities. Among the various faith centres have been 4 mosques, 4 gurdwaras and 2 churches which have seen wide participation in the project to get people to know and interact across various communities locally via provision of free, open to all, physical activity sessions and refreshments.
- Sharing food is also crucial in bringing people and communities together. When communities showcase their traditional foods, an initial bond is created. At the outset of a sporting initiative, a 'taster event' should be held with people invited and food shared. It enables people to feel included and makes it easier to share experiences and values. Sharing food is central to community cohesion.
- Mr Philip Simon then shared his lived experience as Chair of the Friends Sporting Club, Manchester (established in 2004), which has partnered with Breaking Boundaries (since 2019) to bring young people, women, whole families and communities together through regular engagement in sporting activities, especially cricket, badminton and football. A summary of his points is below:
 - People of any ethnicity, belief and socio-economic background are welcomed to the Friends Sporting Club (FSC).
 - FSC also provides coaching which facilitates players' promotion to the higher levels in their sport – specifically in cricket and badminton.
 - Since partnering with Breaking Boundaries, cricket has been a tool to bring communities together.
 - Sport gives people common aims and rules and promotes team work. Through sport, people respect one another and discipline is maintained despite their differences, as ground rules for participation are clear.
 - People have no inhibitions in coming to FSC and participating in sport. Christians, Hindus, Sikhs, Muslim and those of no faith come together.
 - The club is supported by four or five young volunteers who are Breaking Boundaries Community Champions.
 - The impact of COVID meant that the programme could not be completed as there were many barriers encountered,

from leaders becoming ill with COVID and COVID restrictions and associated measures to being a COVID secure venue.

- However, aside from the negatives, FSC has continued with the programme.
- It has encouraged greater diversity in participants coming to it. Many parents who have been bringing their children have also become involved in the wider FSC life, for example by making tea and snacks.
- FSC established a Ladies Softball Team in 2019 which plays in the Greater Manchester Cricket League. There are 10 weeks of coaching sessions for the women, many of whom, have never played cricket before.
- Many mothers who play in the team have also brought their daughters to play. Women, especially from the Asian community, encounter barriers to participating in physical activity and the team removed some of those barriers to participation. There are also regular badminton sessions and numbers of participants have been increasing.
- The club has 4 or 5 interleague cricket teams.
- The Breaking Boundaries programme has brought different communities to FSC which previously had a majority of attenders from the Indian community. Now, many other communities have become part of it.

Ms Prior thanked the presenters and invited questions. Responses from the presenters are in italics.

- I am interested by the women's participation in increasing participation and inclusion of girls. Are there mixed gender teams or is it girls-only teams? *The teams started out as mixed gender but now that the numbers of girls coming to the club has increased, there are enough to have a girls-only team which*

has, in turn, attracted even more girls. Some girls prefer it and were not comfortable playing with boys. One girl now plays for the Under 11 Lancashire Cricket Team and another plays for the Under 18 girls Cheshire County Cricket Team. The Breaking Boundaries programme has provided funding which has enabled the club to reach more communities and develop them through the sport. [Mr Philip Simon]

- I have tried to encourage a cricket scheme for Afghan refugees in Brent, North West London, however it has been difficult in terms of outreach and engagement. How have you brought communities in? *Sporting Equals looks for community organisations to collaborate with and Sport England often has projects that organisations may put themselves forwards to and become involved in. Sporting Equals offers free associate membership and welcomes faith organisations. Sporting Equals has its own platform that can be accessed by wider communities and organisations where opportunities are shared and signposted. They also produce a newsletter which flags opportunities. Information about becoming an associate member and examples of different activities around the UK can be found on the website www.sportingequals.org.uk/programmes/projects/associate-membership.html (The link to apply for membership is at <https://form.jotform.com/203143713881048>) Any questions can be sent to info@sportingequals.org.uk. [Ms Marie Cartwright]*
- FSC had created links with the community leaders forum, faith leaders and community leaders. Then engagement sessions at the Emirates Old Trafford stadium were held. It doesn't happen overnight – there is a lot of groundwork. The FSC also found young leaders from the team to get involved. It is not easy to bring communities together individually and contacting groups was easier. The club has Afghani players and, as international players, they were not*

charged fees as refugees. The FSC also supported the refugee players to find jobs and this helped them stay involved in it. The FSC's home ground was selected to host the Afghani Refugees Inter Club Tournament and the Afghani Community Team UK held an event at the home ground. There was a report and interview that BBC conducted that was probably online. [Mr Philip Simon]

- Is cricket the only choice of sport offered? *Breaking Boundaries highlighted cricket as the sport for the programme but in the city, football has the main grip. The FSC altered its strategy and joined football in with the Breaking Boundaries programme. The FSC has good infrastructure for different sports. Ladies, youngsters, girls, whole families come to play badminton [Mr Philip Simon]*

The Breaking Boundaries programme was designed around cricket as a way of bringing two faith groups/ communities together, eg Christian and Muslim. However, it was understood that this was too restrictive. The programme was then opened up to be multi-sport and listened and responded to the desires of the communities and what sport they wished to engage in. This came from the Board of the Spirit of 2012. Other organisations, such as Comic Relief and Children in Need, also put sport at the front of the agenda as a way to bring diverse (ethnic and faith) communities to take part in sport to get people out of the house and to share values in the group [Ms Marie Cartwright]

- IFN has previously done work on sport and inter faith relations. It partnered with Sporting Equals and held a joint symposium with it in 2017 at Leicester Tigers stadium on *The Power of Sport in Inter Faith Relations*. This had contributions about many different sports, including, for example, inter faith cricket matches and inter faith activities of clubs such as Arsenal, Charlton Athletic and Burnley.

- Does the FSC mix the team members or does it have teams from one community. Which works better? *I have lived experience of this as my husband is a cricketer, I have become involved in the social aspects of the clubs and am soon to play with the FSC's ladies' group. I have also travelled around and seen lots of league cricket. I have observed that mixed teams work better (as they also do in my experience with netball teams). Mixed community, and mixed gender, teams gives rise to different strategies, different mind sets of the team. A mixed team makes for a stronger team and the message of inclusion is much stronger when genders, cultural and faith traditions are mixed on teams. [Ms Marie Cartwright]*
- What is the biggest benefit that has been seen from the programme? *The two wards that the project targets in Manchester, which have struggled socially, now feel more safe and secure. The Breaking Boundaries programme could have been influential in the improvement of the social landscape and reduction in social tension in these wards. [Ms Marie Cartwright]*

Ms Prior thanked everyone for their contributions.

transplantation, domestic abuse, parenting, and social prescribing.

- The Birmingham Faith Map shows the 720 places of worship in Birmingham identified by the Places of Worship Registration Act. The information on the map has been drawn from a variety of online sources as well as directly from members of the places of worship.
- This map was initially created by the Faiths' Footsteps for a Low Carbon Future project, which is also part of the Birmingham Council of Faiths. However, it has been a useful tool for the FPHWF and their partners, as faith communities are constantly changing, moving, and growing, and having a dynamic record of their locations and services is vital to providing the best possible community health care.
- The Health and Wellbeing Forum meets every two months on Zoom, which attendees seem to prefer and which is more cost effective. However, it does limit the informal networking that occurred at those meetings previously. Attendees sometimes organise separate meetings to network.

Ms Sabeti thanked the presenter and invited questions. In discussion the following points were raised. Responses from Dr Rookes are in italics.

- Do you discuss health and wellbeing matters in the meeting and then send your points on to a named person within the health and social care sector? Or do you have separate meetings where you jointly discuss initiatives? Or does the health and social sector come to you with ideas? How does this dialogue work? *A little bit of all of those. My background is in healthcare, and I attend a variety of meetings to provide the networking that allows dialogue to happen in all the ways you mentioned.*

- How do you manage communication with such a large umbrella organisation? *We have a monthly mailing list of 500 people from many organisations. Anything of import discussed at a Health and Wellbeing Forum meeting is put into the wider Birmingham Council of Faiths updates to keep everyone informed. Also, the Health and Wellbeing Forum meetings are completely open; anyone can ask to join.*
- I try to encourage networking particularly between faith and non-faith organisations. Faith organisations have become comfortable speaking with each other but can struggle to reach out to non-faith organisations with similar goals. *Regarding minutes, we try to avoid spending large amounts of time discussing them in meetings. I send them out to everyone as a draft and ask for amendments, so that by the time of the meeting everyone has already seen and agreed to them.*
- What is the involvement of faith communities in social prescribing? *There is great potential for faith communities in social prescribing. In Birmingham, the FPHWF is networking between the link workers tied to each primary care network and the faith organisations we work with. We've only just started on that, realistically, so it is a work in progress. There is a social prescribing academy for each of the local regions, which I attend on behalf of the groups I represent for networking.*
- Are there any concepts within certain faiths that are helpful to people struggling with their wellbeing, especially considering current events? *Yes. We are also pursuing a mental health issues initiative. Many people who suffer from mental health issues turned to their places of worship during the pandemic and did not always feel supported. I do not think this is because of lack of care; rather it was because people do not know how to address mental health issues or how to refer people on. This is something*

we want to address in places of worship by having people who are trained to refer someone on when necessary.

Ms Sabeti thanked Dr Rookes and then invited **Mr Altaf Kazi** to present. A summary of his points is below.

- Mr Kazi has partnered with the FPHWF as part of his role as Head of Partnerships and Community Engagement for the NHS Blood and Transplant Team.
- There are two levels to this topic: first, what the NHS does nationally from a strategic point of view and the role of faith in that; and second, what the NHS does locally and how it interacts with different faith groups.
- Donating part of a body can be a very important experience that leads people to seek spiritual guidance and support. In cases of deceased donation, it can be very important for the family to have access to that support.
- On the national level, faith has been recognised as a factor in organ donation through organisations such as the Organ Donation Task Force, the All-Parliamentary Kidney Group, and the National Blood and Transplant Alliance.
- This relationship became very important when the law was changed regarding organ donation. The law is now such that you are opted in unless you specifically request to be opted out. When this change was announced it kicked off conversations with a wide range of faith groups.
- Through these conversations, a process was implemented that ensures that the family members are contacted to ask if a person consents, and the family is given the opportunity to speak to a faith advisor as well.
- Therefore, organ donation messaging nationally is focused on ensuring that loved ones are aware of our choices so

that they do not have to make a decision at a difficult and emotional time.

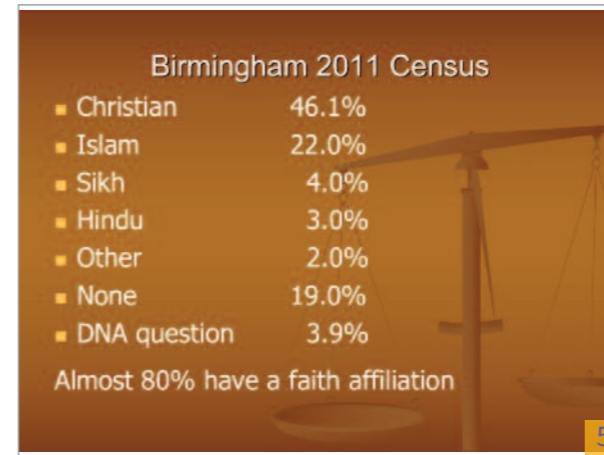
- There are positions within each of the major faiths which are for and against organ donation, especially deceased organ donation, and it is important for the NHS to be respectful of that.
- However, faith groups can also be great motivators for donation and amplify our messaging. We have a community investment scheme which welcomes faith organisations and non-faith organisations to apply for funding to help create what we term 'culturally appropriate content' to be sent out through the right channels to ensure the message is as effective as possible. Faith groups are 'trusted voices' in their communities and working with them allows myths and barriers around donation to be dispelled.
- Within Birmingham, we have specific projects focused on encouraging blood donation, especially from the Black community, where there is a clinical need around collecting a certain subtype of blood. There are also projects focused on the Black and South Asian communities regarding organ donation and stem cell projects related to the Pakistani community.
- On our stem cell projects we are working closely with Al-Falah Mosque and Green Lane Mosque. We are excited to engage with these communities and have these discussions.
- Finally, there are channels like Unity FM, which I also had a show on. It is important to invest in local media because it is often more effective at reaching the communities we are targeting.

Ms Sabeti thanked Mr Kazi and invited questions. The following points were raised in discussion. Responses from both presenters are in italics.

- This is a question for Dr Rookes. What is social prescribing?
Social prescribing is a process by which a GP will refer a patient for an activity other than medication or clinical services. A GP refers a patient to a local link worker, whose job it is to work with them and refer the patient to an activity that helps them. [Dr Peter Rookes]
- Are there other departments in the NHS which are heavily linked to faith-based organisations, or is the NHSBT the one leading the way?
The NHS on a national level is composed of multiple organisations. Most of them will have a role titled Director of Partnerships or Head of Community Resilience that manages matters relating to public health, who has a similar role to me. [Mr Altaf Kazi]

There is a fair amount of restructuring going on in the NHS at the moment, and some of it has been delayed, so it is unclear exactly when these new community-focused positions and systems will come into play. [Dr Peter Rookes]

Ms Sabeti thanked everyone for their contributions.



- ### Birmingham Council of Faiths
- 2 Subgroups –
 - BCF: Faiths Footsteps for a Low Carbon Future
 - BCF: Faiths Promoting Health and Wellbeing Forum (FPHWF)

- ### BCF: Faiths Promoting Health and Wellbeing Forum (FPHWF)
- Meets 2-monthly on Zoom
 - All Members of BCF Management Committee attend
 - Includes members of
 - Faith and Non-Faith voluntary organisations
 - Statutory organisations
 - Voluntary Services Council

- ### Standard Topics
- Progress on –
 - Safeguarding in Places of Worship project
 - ICS implementation
 - Healthwatch initiatives
 - Public Health initiatives
 - Unity FM Radio fortnightly Connecting Communities topics and links.
 - Faith map

Interfaith Network Conference March 2022

BCF:Faiths Promoting Health and Wellbeing Forum

Dr. Peter Rookes PhD, MPH, DHSa, FETC, RCNT, RGN, RNMH
Secretary and 3rd Sector Liaison Officer
Coordinator, BCF:Faiths Promoting Health & Wellbeing
Birmingham Council of Faiths

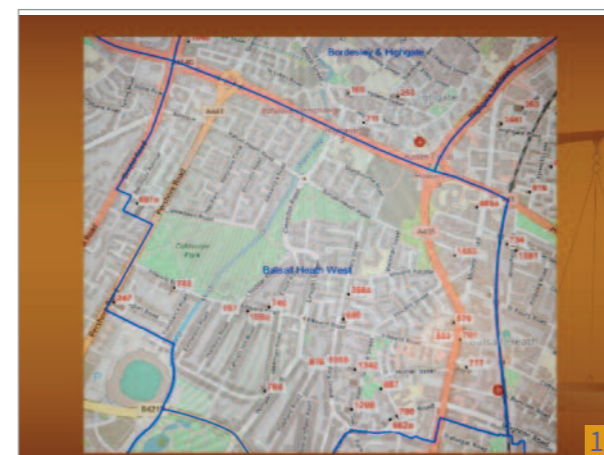
- ### What is a Faith Organisation
- Organisation based on a belief in God or a set of religious doctrines
- 3 Roles
1. Spiritual – Worship, Meditation, Sacred
 2. Pastoral – Support, Nurturing
 3. Community Service – Outreach to wider community

- ### Ad Hoc Topics
- End of Life Care and Bereavement – Cruse, St Marys Hospice, Community Health Trust
 - Mental Health Support – MIND
 - Suicide Prevention – Papyrus
 - Health Inequalities
 - Transfusion and Transplantation
 - Domestic Abuse
 - Social Prescribing
 - Parenting

- ### Birmingham Faith Map
- Information of 800+ places of worship in Birmingham from POWRA (Places of Worship Registration Act)
 - Data in the public domain provided by faith groups, websites, Google maps and other search tools.
 - Faith communities constantly changing and evolving – need to combine official data with local knowledge

- ### Constraints
1. Apprehension to Engage with Faith Organisations as service providers because of an unrealistic concern about proselytization
 2. Knowing which faith organisations provide services beyond their own congregations
 3. Faith organisations provide services for free and, therefore, don't need funding

- ### How Significant are Faith Organisations?
- Collectively Faith Organisations form the largest part of the Voluntary and Community Sector (3rd Sector)
- 2014 Birmingham was the first city to sign a Covenant - of cooperation - between the Local Authority (Birmingham City Council) and Faith Organisations



ID	POWRA/website	C	Other	Address	Postcode
133	POWRA/website	C_Other	TRUE JESUS CHURCH (BIRMINGHAM)	47 GEORGE STREET	B12 9BT
137	AA/Web/POWRA	C_Bap	Edward Road Baptist Church	Edward Rd	B12 9EY
150	AA	C_Bap	Emmanuel Church	Edward Rd	B12 9EY
167	CoE/JN	C_Church of England	St Paul, Balsall Heath	100 Mary Street	B12 9BU
168	CoE/JN	C_Church of England	St Paul, Balsall Heath	100 Mary Street	B12 9BU
198	URC website	C_Ecu	United Church of St Paul (Anglican & Methodist)	100 Mary Street	B12 9BU
483	web / POWRA	C_Other	MARA - CHRISTIAN CHURCH	100 Mary Street	B12 9BU
540	URC website	C_United Reformed Ch	Balsall Heath URC	100 Mary Street	B12 9BU
662	Web/POWRA	C_Methodist	THE WESLEYAN HOLY TRINITY CHURCH	CROFTON ROAD	B12 9DT
683	POWRA / web	Jewish	Birmingham Central Synagogue	4 Spencewell Road	B5 7PB
687	MIB website	Muslim	Al Falah Community Support Centre	46 Tugay Street	B12 9SD
700	MIB website	Muslim	Al Quran Educational Centre	17 Corner Road	B12 9CT
701	MIB website	Muslim	Al-Rasool Islamic Centre	406 Moseley Road	B12 9AA
713	MIB website	Muslim	Clifton Mosque (KSMC)	17 Clifton Road	B12 8SX
742	MIB website	Muslim	Islamic Alouia Zawiya	294 Edward Road	B5 7PH
760	MIB website	Muslim	Islamic Resource Centre	93 Court Road	B12 9EJ
764	MIB website	Muslim	Jama Masjid Bilal Community Centre	1 Willow Crescent	B12 9RS
783	MIB website	Muslim	Muslim Mosque	526-528 Moseley Road	B12 9AE
810	MIB website	Muslim	Muslim Students House Masjid	17 Moseley Road	B12 9BX
876	Web / POWRA	Sikh	GURU GORINDAS SINGH GURDWARA (B-221 MARY STREET)	219 Mary Street	B12 9BB
878	Web/POWRA	Sikh	GURU RAMDAS SINGH SABHASKIHI T-495 MOSELEY ROAD	47 George Street	B12 9BN
1035	OFM	C_Other	The Assembly Hall	47 George Street	B12 9BN
1206	OFM	C_Church of God	Church of God of Prophecy2	17-21 George Street	B12 9BG
1342	OFM	C_Pentecostal not one	Church of God in Christ	17-21 George Street	B12 9BG
1453	OFM	Sikh	Kaura Ram Das Gurdwara	290 Upper Balsall Heath Rd	B12 9DA

B: Inter Faith Week: a time for forging new connections and partnerships

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

Presenters: The Most Venerable Bogoda Seelawimala, Sri Lankan Sangha Sabha (GB); and Miss Rhian Hall, Cynon Valley Museum Trust

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Dr Harriet Crabtree welcomed participants to the workshop.

The Most Venerable Bogoda Seelawimala offered his presentation. A summary of his points is below.

- Each year, Inter Faith Week is a great opportunity for us to do many things. Inter Faith Week is a bridge for all faiths to come together, understand the commonality between faiths, and share wisdom. This leads to a less fearful world.
- Dialogue is the most sensible and effective way of resolving differences and conflicts of interest among individuals or nations. During Inter Faith Week, inter faith dialogue has widely continued, and has gone through stages of development.
- Inter Faith Week has helped us to achieve the most important objective of our programme. Our dialogues are not debates, which in the history of religions have been used to engender rivalry or superiority. Our model of dialogue is the opposite. It is about seeing commonality and developing an understanding and respect for each other.
- Because of Inter Faith Week, the principles of the Inter Faith Network have spread wider, among many levels in our community. Inter Faith Week has

contributed towards a greater awareness in our community, especially for Sri Lankan Sangha Sabha.

- Sri Lankan Sangha Sabha started in 1992 at the London Buddhist Vihara, together with seven Sri Lankan Viharas in the UK. The founder was The Most Venerable Dr Medagama Vajiragnana Thera, one of the pioneers of The Inter Faith Network. In 2006, he was awarded an OBE for his contribution to inter faith dialogue and cooperation in the UK. Since its inception, the head office of the Sri Lankan Sangha Sabha has been the London Buddhist Vihara. This is because the London Buddhist Vihara is the first Buddhist monastery in the UK. It was founded in 1926 by Anagarika Dharmapala, a Sri Lankan social reformer and philanthropist. At state ceremonies the British government have always invited the London Buddhist Vihara to represent the Buddhist community.
- Each year, the Vihara organises an event during Inter Faith Week. We invite all the main faiths to share their views on suggested topics. During the meeting, we ask representatives to present each faith's perspective, followed by prayers, readings and chanting. We always invite Dr Harriet Crabtree, the Director of the Inter Faith Network, as our chief guest. During the last two years, we have used Zoom for events. Except for on two or three occasions, the Mayor or councillors from Ealing Council have also been present.
- There is also a cultural component to the inter faith ceremony. During this, children take part in singing, music and drama. Children from the Vihara Sunday school take part, as well as children from the local church.
- The Vihara's nearest neighbour is St Michael's and All Angels Church. The vicar is always invited to the Vihara's Inter Faith Week event, and to all other important events. We also join in with Bedford Park Festival and Chiswick

Book festival, where we work together with the church. We also worked with the Church to collect donations for victims of the Sri Lankan tsunami.

- Inter Faith Week is a celebration of the diversity of faith. We always invite local places of worship to attend the Vihara, and to share their views. We also invite Hounslow Friends of Faith.

Dr Crabtree thanked Venerable Seelawimala for his contribution. She noted that Venerable Seelawimala and his colleagues have developed strong local relationships over the years, and that he had been invited to speak to share this example of deepening existing relationships.

Miss Rhian Hall offered her presentation. A copy of her PowerPoint slides is at the end of this note. A summary of her points is below.

- Cynon Valley Museum (CVM) used its relationship with the local council to create further connections during Inter Faith Week.
- CVM opened in 2001, after campaigning groups chose it as a place to commemorate the local history and culture of the Cynon Valley. It was developed by a Working Group, working with the Heritage Lottery Fund. The museum had to close in 2014 due to austerity measures. The Working Group worked with Rhonda Cynon Taff Council (RCTC) to reopen the museum. They were able to form the Cynon Valley Museum Trust, and reopen the museum in 2016.
- CVM is a museum that is defined by the community. It offers a room hire strategy, which focuses on the needs of the local community. It proactively approaches local community groups to utilise the museum space for their benefit. By doing this, it has gained a pool of organisations and people that it can consult on relevant matters in the community.

- CVM has a close partnership with the Community Cohesion team at RCTC. The team operate as part of the Community Safety Partnership, which was formed after the introduction of the 1988 Crime and Disorder Act. Community Cohesion teams are a statutory requirement for local authorities across Wales. Some of their priorities include: tackling domestic violence and abuse; creating safe and confident communities; protecting vulnerable groups from violence; offering reassurance; and encouraging participation and collaboration. CVM has worked with the Community Cohesion Team at RCTC on many occasions, including for Inter Faith Week.

- For Inter Faith Week, CVM set up a poster competition. The aim was to be engaging, educate, and have fun. The brief was to create a poster which showcased an interpretation of 'faith and belief'. It wanted to echo the aims of Inter Faith Week: increasing awareness and understanding. The competition was scheduled on social media, and was shared in local schools thanks to our connections with the local council. It was able to bring in a local business person to judge the competition: Raj Tatlah from Tatlah Convenience Stores in Trecynon.

- All of the competition entries were displayed in the museum as part of our day event on Saturday 20 November. The museum also had outreach stalls from the Council and South Wales Police about anti-hate crime awareness, and from the NHS speaking about the COVID-19 vaccine and flu jab. It also tried to incorporate some of the museum collection. There was information about religion and belief, and the museum's research into different faith groups in the Cynon Valley.

- CVM issued feedback surveys about the day event. The main point gathered was that many people found the museum to be a safe space. Many attendees had not known that the museum existed. People had enjoyed the day and learned a lot, and it was an opportunity to bring the

family and learn more about the museum collection.

- For CVM, there are many benefits to working with the community on events like Inter Faith Week. It can deliver CVM's aims of educating and raising awareness of relevant matters. The local council also benefits in this way, achieving their objectives as part of the Safety Partnership. The event also allowed CVM to create relationships with users and non-users of the museum, and to improve its services.
- CVM believes that it is not just a museum that looks after objects; it is also a community space. Inter Faith Week helped it to be more relevant and necessary for its local community.
- Dr Crabtree thanked Miss Hall for her contribution. She then invited questions, comments and reflections.
- A question was asked about how organisations keep the momentum and spirit of Inter Faith Week going beyond the Week. The following points were raised.
- It is important to retain relationships. If Cynon Valley Museum makes connections with local inter faith groups, then they will keep in contact.
- The spirit of Inter Faith Week is helpful for the London Buddhist Vihara to develop and maintain warm relationships with other local faith communities.
- York Interfaith Group's members try to make sure that it has a presence in other events going on in York. For example, they were involved in activities as part of the 'Our City Festival' in York: a 'Sounds and Stories' event at York Minster, as well as a York Interfaith information stall. It also holds an annual inter faith service to mark Refugee Week. It is important for inter faith groups to contribute to local activities and events.

- Reading Interfaith Group used Inter Faith Week to work with the Mayor, bringing together local faith leaders in the Mayor's Parlour. Attendees shared events that they were organising that would be open to other faith groups, and created a multi faith calendar for the year. This encouraged those who may not have been planning any inter faith events to think about possibilities.
- Faiths Together in Lambeth have an annual inter faith walk, visiting different places of worship. This is a chance to reconnect.
- Swindon Interfaith Group has an events evening from time to time, featuring prayers, poems, and music. The last one attended was a great time to share ideas and to plan for the future.
- CBCEW's inter faith coordinators work on a Diocesan level. On a national level, their website is constantly updated with resources on inter faith dialogue, aimed at the Catholic community. They have updated their website with lists of religious festivals, and are in the process of formulating a multi faith calendar. They are aiming to give Catholics on the local level an understanding of other faiths in their area, and guidance on how to speak to them. A crucial part of Inter Faith Week is giving people the chance to make mistakes. CBCEW tries to harness this in its own inter faith work.

Dr Crabtree asked if those present were beginning to consider Inter Faith Week 2022, including what topics they might address or partnerships they might develop. The following points were raised.

- Over the past three or four years, the All Faiths Network has organised an Inter Faith Week event featuring music, dance, song and poetry. For 2021 this event was held at the Central Gurdwara in London. This meant that the event had the spirit of the Sikh faith. They will likely hold the same event this year. However, this workshop had provided lots of ideas on

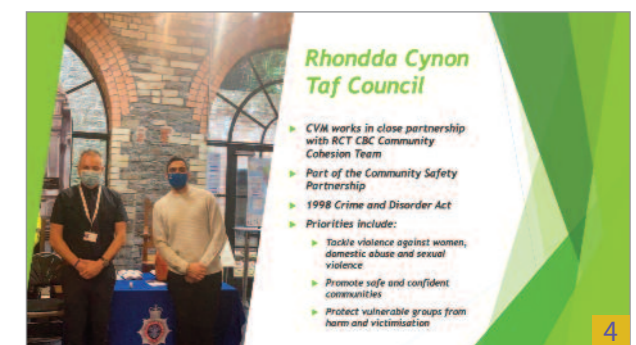
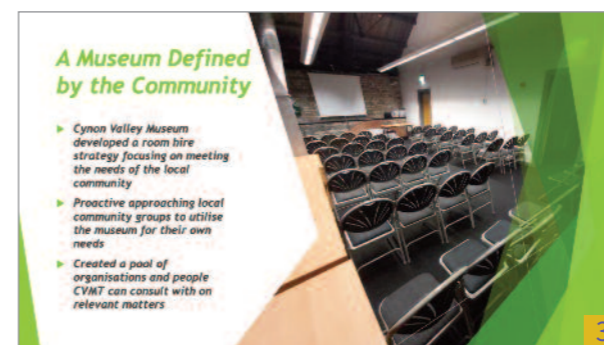
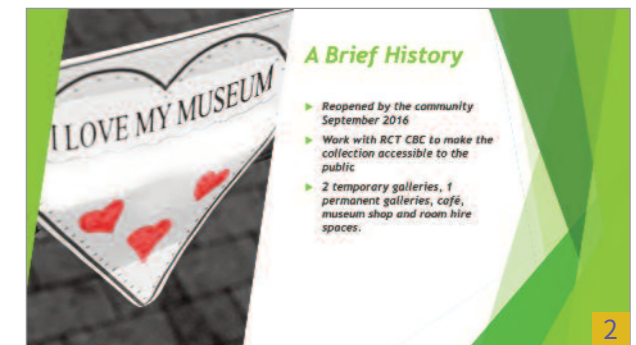
how to continue developing relationships beyond Inter Faith Week.

- York Interfaith Group is continuing the work that was put on hold due to COVID-19. It is keen to work more with schools, for example by holding competitions. The Castle Museum in York has also asked York Interfaith Group to put on an inter faith exhibition in the museum. Recent discussions have raised ideas of engaging with art colleges, as well as the art gallery, to see what they have in terms of depicting faith in art. A lady who was working on the York Interfaith quilt said that she created prayer cards for hospitals, as she could no longer do pastoral work because of COVID-19. This would be a good initiative for York Interfaith. Cards have been created with prayers from the Buddhist, Muslim, Hindu and Christian faiths; but it would be good to create a wider range.
- Women Peace-ing Together is still active. It is continuing with initiatives such as 'knitting for peace', and making blankets for premature babies. Leeds Concord Interfaith Fellowship's main Inter Faith Week event was the inter faith display at Kirkstall Abbey Museum, which is still on

display. The theme was 'faith and the environment'.

- The Druid Network has crafted a 'ritual for peace', which is available on its website. It has a wording that is entirely neutral. It does not glorify or take sides, but instead commemorates those who have died in all conflicts.
 - Redbridge Faith Forum usually holds a 'peace walk' in September. It is trying to revive the activities that it used to hold, including the peace walk. It is also getting in touch with the local library, to encourage it to create a bookshelf or display portraying different festivals. It has suggested that the library get in touch with local communities to ask for donations.
- Dr Crabtree** noted that some groups, particularly those with an international focus, also participate in World Interfaith Harmony Week, which takes place in the first week of February each year.

She thanked everyone for their contributions.





C: Local authorities and faith groups – dimensions of partnership

Facilitator: Major David Evans, Territorial Ecumenical Officer, Salvation Army

Presenters: The Revd Alan Green, Chair, Tower Hamlets Inter Faith Forum, and Emily Fieran-Reed, Strategy and Policy Lead for Engagement, Cohesion and Voluntary and Community Sector, Tower Hamlets Council; and Philip Austin, Chair, Bolton Inter Faith Council and Chiman (Dinu) Tailor, Secretary of Bolton Hindu Forum

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Major David Evans welcomed participants to the workshop.

The Revd Alan Green and **Ms Emily Fieran-Reed** offered their presentation. A copy of their PowerPoint slides is at the end of this note. A summary of their points is below.

The Revd Alan Green offered the following points:

- The Tower Hamlets Inter Faith Forum was formed in 2003. There had previously been a Race and Hate Crime Inter Agency Forum which was intended to handle issues of hate crime and was created in the follow up to the Lawrence Inquiry. However, it became clear that this was not enough to handle the local situation, as it did not directly address issues of faith.
- As a result, individuals who went on to become members of the Tower Hamlets Forum, local police, and council called a meeting of religious leaders to address situations where there was victimisation due to religious dress; young people using faith to express disaffection; and how better to serve the community so that faith could be a positive force. The Forum members pledged to work together on these issues.
- From the beginning, Tower Hamlets IFF has had a minimalist structure with a very

basic concept of membership and no bank account. This was intentional and is intended to foster good personal relationships above bureaucracy. However, in more recent times, the Forum has found that its very unstructured approach has not allowed it to be as representative as it would like, and it is working to change this.

- There is a close relationship between the Inter Faith Forum and the Council, which is maintained through individual relationships between Forum members and Council members.
- One of the first actions of the new Inter Faith Forum was to create a comprehensive faith calendar that allowed all religious festivals to be displayed side by side and cohesively presented in public spaces.
- Following this, we began working on joint projects with secular organisations to embed the Forum into the community and make sure that abilities and resources could flow in both directions. This also allowed us to build relationships with other community organisations.
- Due to its model of working, the Forum has never felt the need for a Covenant. Their work is solely based on the personal relationships between members.

Ms Emily Fieran-Reed offered the following points:

- The Council's perspective was finding it difficult to reach sections of the community outside of places of worship. In addition, because faith organisations were not involved in the charities and community groups in the borough, they did not interact with the Council as frequently.
- The Council also recognised that it had a responsibility to address inequalities faced by faith communities.

As a result, the Council commissioned support for the Forum through Faith Action and the University of Coventry. This has provided more resources and support and put the Forum on the same level of priority as other mechanisms designed to address inequality.

This is aided by the Forum members being very well-connected and having close links to the Council.

The Revd Alan Green offered further points:

- Two key areas of the Forum's work are creating solidarity between different faiths to fight against marginalisation and providing a context of mutual support.
- Tower Hamlets is a very diverse area with a large Muslim population. This frequently attracts unwelcome attention. Various groups use Tower Hamlets as a place to attempt to sow division and spread hate because of its diversity. There have been, for example, the clashes with the English Defence League and Britain First around the East London Mosque, where these groups attempted to provoke young people into attacking them so that they could film it.
- In the context of events like those just described, it was very important to have members of other faith groups coming in and telling the EDL and other groups to leave. In particular, it helped to have Christians telling the EDL that they were misusing Christian symbols and undermining Christianity. Such actions highlight the importance of solidarity between faith groups.
- The pandemic held a magnifying glass to some situations that had previously existed, both good and bad.
- It also allowed the Forum to continue to strengthen their relationships with faith communities and other partners.

Major Evans thanked the presenters and invited questions. The following points

were raised in discussion. Responses from the Revd Green are in italics.

- How did you get to the point you are at currently? What approaches did you use to reach this level of collaboration and integration with the community and local organisations?
Through individuals. It is all about establishing good working relationships, identifying likeminded people within organisations, and ensuring that you work together. Because of this, the actual structure of the Forum is not important. The goal is not the Forum, it is ensuring that faith communities can serve the whole community of Tower Hamlets.
- You are supported financially by the Tower Hamlets Council as part of their equality initiatives, correct?
Yes, however, we do not receive funding directly from the Council. The Council funds a partnership with the University of Coventry and Faith Action, which together support the Forum. This allows the Forum to be independent and also allows for accountability between the Council, the Forum, and the partner organisations.
- Your structure seems very positive and appears to eliminate many of the bureaucratic problems other groups face.
Yes, there are many positive things about it, but it is not perfect. We learned during the pandemic that in times of emergency, we do not have the ability to stay in direct contact with all the faith communities and we end up underrepresenting some groups.
- How do you deal with issues of governance and funding when you have such a loose structure?
We are not a charity, we meet bi-monthly and anyone can be on the steering committee. If anyone wanted to take us over they could, but we have no money and no power, so there would be very little point.

Major Evans invited Mr Philip Austin and Chiman (Dinu) Tailor to make their

presentation. A summary of their points is below.

- Bolton Interfaith Council is formally constituted as both a charity and a company, and as such there is a large amount of bureaucracy involved. The Bolton Metropolitan Council used to fund a full-time worker as well as providing further funding to the three largest faith bodies in Bolton, these being the Council of Mosques, the Hindu Forum, and Bolton Christian Community Cohesion.
- This demonstrated the Council's commitment to including faith groups in building community cohesion.
- During the time the BIFC had the funding for a full-time worker, it hosted an extensive programme of events including a variety of workshops, conferences, festivals, and other events. and had a Young Ambassadors' Programme, and
- Council funding gradually decreased, leading to only having a part-time worker from 2017 to 2020. This funding then ended entirely. Bolton Council has changed its funding structure for funding of voluntary organisations. That funding is now delivered through 'Bolton's Fund', a pool of money from a variety of sources which is then delivered to voluntary organisations via grants.
- In order to receive these grants, BIFC was required to join up with a larger partner with the ability to manage a much larger budget. As a result, BIFC and the faith bodies joined together with Bolton Wanderers in the Community, and the Bolton Solidarity Community Association. They received the grant but then the pandemic began before they were able to develop the work for which the grant was given.
- Through these changes and challenges, the BIFC's previously close relationship with the local council has diminished and they now work collectively with other organisations mentioned above as the Bolton Unity Alliance.

- However, because some of the other organisations are much larger, they have struggled a bit with working with them.
 - Despite this, BIFC as part of the Unity Alliance, has managed to put on a variety of events including sports activities and community walks.
 - The faith communities have been particularly affected by the pandemic and have had many more demands on them, which has made it difficult to deliver some of the programmes in the grant agreement.
 - The lack of flexibility has been difficult at times and it seems as though the example of Tower Hamlets could provide Bolton with some ideas of changes to make.
 - In new partnerships, it is important to take time to get to know how each partner works and the scale of their organisation.
 - Being tied to a very specific funding delivery agreement has been challenging.
 - The next steps include working with the faith communities to rebuild some of the capacity for wider participation and allowing the development of more ideas and further sources of funding and engagement.
- Major Evans thanked the presenters and invited questions. The following points were raised in discussion. Responses from the presenters are in italics.
- There seem to be two main points that have come through in this session. The

first is the importance of good personal relationships. These ensure that people are treated with respect and that misconceptions are handled appropriately. The second is the importance of the local authority acknowledging faith groups. Faith groups can reach parts of the community that the local authority cannot, especially people who are vulnerable and may be frightened to get involved with local authorities. If the local authority provides support to the faith groups, whether through money or through validating their role in social society, the faith groups can reach more people.

• How reliable are your sources of funding and how easy is it to continue to find funding for your programmes?
We have been very lucky to have reliable funding for many years. However, we cannot take this for granted. It is a difficult situation, but we are working with partner organisations, some of which are not from a faith background, in order to deal with it. [Revd Alan Green]
Having a full-time worker can be a mixed blessing. BIFC became very dependent on that person to do most of the work, and this meant that the committee became less and less active. When our funding then decreased, we struggled to deal with this, and it weakened us as an organisation. If you do receive more funding, make sure your committee continues to grow and be active, because inter faith work needs people to nurture and generate vision and commitment. [Mr Philip Austin]

- Major Evans thanked everyone for their contributions.



The Council's Relationship with THIFF

- Commissioning
 - Equalities Hub and networks
- THIFF link to Council and Partnership governance

3

Achievements of THIFF and the Council

- Solidarity across faiths in times of difficulty
- Faith Calendar
- Interfaith week and other interfaith events
- Sharing festivals of individual faiths
- Making joint Council/THIFF statements
- Dispelling myths

4

THIFF during Covid

- Faith communities working together to be safe
- THIFF helping and supporting
- Providing resources e.g. for safe reopening
- Growing links with partners e.g. mosques event
- The recognition of the place of faith communities in the borough

5

What We Have Learned and What's Next

- Representing and being the conduit to faith communities
- Balance between openness and representation
- Reach
 - Next steps
 - Religious literacy
 - Faith communities and the VCS

6

For More Details...

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7

D: Wellbeing and safety, from loneliness to domestic abuse: responding on an inter faith basis

Facilitator: Ms Tara Corry, Development and Communications Manager, Women's Interfaith Network

Presenters: Ms Marta Gensler and Dr Rita Stephen, Cornwall Faith Forum; Ms Rumela Kundu, Barnet Multi Faith Forum; and, Mrs Monna Rizvi, Middlesex University Inter Faith Network.

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Ms Tara Corry welcomed participants to the workshop.

Dr Rita Stephen offered her presentation. A summary of her points is below:

- In the Cornwall Faith Forum, there are members from many different faith traditions. We all work well together.
- CFF runs various education programmes including the Learning for Peace programme.
- CFF partnered with Falmouth University and Ms Marta Gensler, a student at Falmouth University studying Animation, to create an animation based on the story of a Cornish Holocaust survivor. CFF also partnered with Kehillat Kernow (the Jewish community in Cornwall), Cornwall SACRE, and used their connections with the Holocaust Memorial Centre.
- The animation came from CFF's work producing learning resources aimed at Secondary Schools, especially Year 9 students.
- The project captured the story of the survival of Blanka Engelberg, whose daughter is part of the Jewish

community. This personal link created a strong connection to Cornwall. It is important for Cornish youth that what is learnt is connected to Cornwall. The project has grown into a larger project called Cornish Stories of Survival.

- A study by University College London in 2019 surveyed 8,500 students and found that Year 9 understanding of the Holocaust was poor.
 - During the 2020 COVID lockdown, CFF's usual work running multi faith workshops in schools had to stop and we had to create online content. Using animations is exciting.
 - The connection was personal and local and so CFF contacted Falmouth University and a module was created for the Animation students, tasking them to create an animation for client's needs. Kehillat Kernow and CFF became the 'clients'. Creating the animation was very intense and time consuming. Weekly Zoom meetings were held with the students working on the animation project.
 - It was difficult to explain what the role of CFF was in the project and it was difficult to transmit the message that the involvement of minority faith groups is important
 - The project was a challenging emotional journey for the students working on the project. Due to COVID, they were isolated in their rooms and the material they were engaging with was difficult. A connection with the University Chaplaincy evolved to support the students.
 - A conference will be held on 7 June 2022 to launch the school pack, of which the animation is part.
- Ms Marta Gensler** shared her experience of working on the animation project:
- As the Director of the project, I convinced my peers to become involved. In Poland we learn a lot about the Holocaust and

when the project came up I felt a strong responsibility, as a Pole, to take it up and give my perspective.

- It is difficult to introduce young people to the reality of the Holocaust, of what it is and was to Jewish community, Poles and all the nations it touched.
- It was enlightening to talk with peers and also to educate them.
- Cynthia (the daughter of the survivor) was a close contact throughout the project.
- It was a difficult process. To create the animation, we had to think about the feelings of the character and of the audience. To create something real and raw in a medium that is associated with fun and fantasy was difficult. However, it worked very well and I am glad we could tell the story.
- It was a team effort and I'm very grateful to all those who worked on the project with me.

Ms Corry thanked the presenters and invited questions. Responses from Dr Stephen are in italics.

- Who made the links and connections between the different communities? *CFF has been established for about 15 – 20 years so there were already close connections to the faith communities. There was a testimony that needed to be safeguarded, supported and told. COVID has created the need to produce online content. The University had been interested in the project which had started with the Holocaust survivor story and had since evolved to tell the stories of Cornish refugees. 8 refugee families are supported by the CFF.*
- Have there been other animations made since the initial one, for example, for stories of, since then, Afghani refugees

and other communities? Have these developed the same model? *Material has been created for Year 9 students, Year 6 and A Level students. There is a small documentary on how Cornwall supports refugees being created. The animations will be launched in June 2022. The link will be sent to IFN and they can circulate it. Feedback would be welcomed. [Note: the animation is at kehillatknow.com/additional/holocaust-memorial-animation/ It requires signing up for membership to view it].*

- There is a link with Holocaust Memorial Day and the animation, so how are schools and others involved in this process? *The animation was shown at a Holocaust Memorial Day remembrance service on a big screen in the Cathedral which was a very moving experience.*

Ms Corry invited Ms Rumela Kundu and Ms Monna Rizvi to make their presentations. A copy of their slides is at the end of this note.

Ms Kundu offered the following points:

- Information about Barnet Multi Faith Forum (BMFF) was shared, highlighting the faith communities involved and touching on the history of BMFF.
- The Heal the World Conference identified local projects and organisations working towards environmental change. The conference sought to respond to the question 'How does your faith call you to heal the world?' by exploring scriptural based environmentalism and how places of worship act these values out locally. The conference brought people together to share their knowledge and find ways to partner [slide 2]. There were several keynote speakers [slide 3].
- Rabbi Wittenberg, part of BMFF and an environmentalist, interviewed key figures, for example, from Middlesex University and from different faith communities. The focus was on finding commonalities and on sustainability and focusing on what can be done rather than

despairing at what cannot be done. Representatives from different faith groups – Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian, Jewish and Muslim – contributed [slide 3].

- Key points [slide 4] that came up in these interviews were the ideas of: repair rather than destroy; and Esho Funi (a Buddhist concept of oneness and the environment) – that unity is active and a balance must be struck between materialism and spiritualism; and, sustainability.
- A Buddhist quote was shared about personal security and tranquillity and environmentalism [slide 5].
- Mrs Monna Rizvi is the Service Development Liaison Librarian at the University and the library is leading within the university on equality, diversity and inclusion.
- There is a partnership of likeminded people from different organisations working together.

Mrs Monna Rizvi offered the following points:

- Middlesex University is a secular institution but with a vibrant community.
- Middlesex University Inter Faith Network (MDX IFN) was officially launched in 2020, but there were inter faith activities happening for some time. It was created for the staff of the University but also involves the students. It welcomes those of faith and none.
- MDX IFN raises awareness on campus of a range of faith events and festivals using the Shap Calendar and sends greetings in the newsletter for faith festivals.
- Data was shown [slides 6 and 7] which demonstrated the differences in self-identification and reporting of faith affiliations between staff body, student body and the wider community. Staff have not declared their faith

identification as much as the student body has but a diverse range of faiths is represented.

- We began to look outside the University to form links to collaborate to provide spaces for participation comfortable enough for all, those with self-identified faiths and none.
- Examples of activities that MDX IFN have run in partnership with BMFF have been: bulb planting to mark Holocaust Memorial Day; the Heal the World environment conference; Film and Faith events at which a film is shown and there is discussion on a range of faith festivals, themes and human rights topics; and, the planting of a memorial forest during Inter Faith Week 2021. The tree planting was in partnership with the BMFF Environmental Sub Group and used Woodland Trust trees. These trees served as a memorial to colleagues who had passed away during COVID. The trees were planted on campus and across the borough and the University collaborated with other organisations on this project.
- Looking forward, we are exploring the need and desire for a University Chaplaincy, an Eco Show and Tell event, a Faith and Peace walk and ways to tackle food waste and single use plastics on campus.
- If the University had not worked in partnership with BMFF, we would not have been able to collaborate in these opportunities and would not have been able to offer them to staff and students. There are exciting times ahead.
- Contact details of both presenters were shared [slide 10].

Ms Corry thanked the presenters and invited questions. The following points were raised in discussion. Responses from the presenters are in italics.

- Who approached whom in this interesting project between the University and BMFF?
There are personal connections between members of the university and BMFF, in particular a mutual colleague who was a member of both MIFN and BMFF. It was also a matter of word-of-mouth, spreading information on what both organisations do. [Ms Rumela Kundu]

I was aware of BMFF but had only made a connection when services surrounding faith traditions were requested by students which the University staff felt they could not provide. There was a mutual colleague and mutual connections helped the partnership. [Mrs Monna Rizvi]

- Does Middlesex University not have a Chaplaincy at all? Worcester also doesn't have one. How does this affect faith work going on at the University?
No, there is no chaplaincy at present and we are exploring establishing one. There are many faiths represented in the student body and the wellbeing services have been approached by people of faith. This has been an issue as there are not staff who feel they have the expertise or knowledge to support them. The University is mindful of this and the need for a chaplaincy has been identified. [Mrs Monna Rizvi]

- I see the differences between faiths of staff and students and community. What are your colleagues' views on the partnership with BMFF?
There have been positive responses and there are positive outcomes. The Faith and Film discussion welcomed staff and students alike. Staff were reluctant to be involved with the process but keen to be involved in the outcomes. For example, the tree planting resonated with the values of many people and many people participated. They felt free as they did not need to declare their faith or have one. The students benefit from the activities and it gives them a chance to celebrate. This year a student approached me about putting on an event for Purim which may not have happened without these events and partnership.

- The Church of England has a statutory responsibility to provide chaplaincy services to universities and a multi faith chaplaincy should reflect the student body. Perhaps questions need to be asked to the University Trust as it should be providing this service for those who need this.
- This might have changed as post-1992 universities don't have the obligations and the role of chaplains has changed. In my experience, chaplains are strictly by invitation only whereas previously they were welcomed.
- Surely the 2010 Equality Act changed this? At Cambridge University the Multi-Faith Chaplaincy has had to expand. In Universities, students may demand a multi-faith chaplaincy.
We have been in discussion with the University Executives about the Chaplaincy. I would like to be in touch further with those who offered these reflections outside of the workshop as Middlesex University is a post-1992 University. [Mrs Monna Rizvi]
- In my experience as a university chaplain, staff use the service as much as students, depending on who you are and how you set about it.

Ms Corry thanked everyone for their contributions.

Collaborative working: Barnet Multi Faith Forum & Middlesex Inter Faith Network

BARNET MULTI FAITH FORUM

INTERFAITH at Middlesex University

Rumela Kundu and Monna Rizvi

Heal the World conference: aim of the event

- To identify local projects in Barnet
- To understand
 - How does your faith call you to heal the world? (e.g. scripture-based)
 - How does your place of worship act this out locally?
- Share knowledge and understanding with each other and work together to Heal The World

Projects in Barnet

Interviewed by Rabbi Wittenberg

Keynotes Speaker: Roger Chapman, Lucy Shuker & Mark Wilkinson were interviewed

Sustainability, find out commonality, focus on what we can do rather than what we can't do (Take Actions)

Representatives from different faith groups: Buddhist, Bahai, Islam, Christian & Jewish Faith shared how their contributions

Interfaith Climate Crisis Scripture & Actions (2 Qs)

Repair don't destroy (Greed, anger, foolishness)

Esho Funi

Unity is active; Balance between materialism & spiritualism

Sustainability

Buddhist quote

"If you care anything about your personal security, you should first of all pray for order and tranquility throughout the four quarters of the land, should you not?"

—Nichiren Daishonin, from "On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land"

What our aim is...

Our strategy acknowledges that religious values contribute to staff wellbeing and also make a positive contribution to the life and work of the university

LEADING IN EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

We strive to create a fairer world and embed diversity, inclusion and equality in all we do

Our faith demographic - staff

Religion	Number
Buddhist	30
Christian	362
Hindu	35
Info Refused	53
Jewish	22
Muslim	70
No religion	478
Other	28
Sikh	10
Spiritual	24
Unknown	699

Community faith demographics

Staff Students Barnet

What we are doing

- Bulb planting on campus - HMD
- Heal the World Conference
- Film and Faith screening and online discussion – The Dark Side of Chocolate
- Memorial Forest planting - LA
- Planting saplings - Inter Faith Week 2021

Future collaboration

- Research around setting up Chaplaincy service
- Eco Show and Tell
- Faith and Peace Walk
- Tackling food waste

Rumela Kundu
Buddhist member of Barnet Multi Faith Forum
rumela.kundu@centreforlondon.org

Middlesex University

Monna Rizvi
Co-Chair Middlesex University Inter Faith Network
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E: Working in partnership for the safety and security of communities

Facilitator: Mohinder Singh Chana, Network of Sikh Organisations, IFN Trustee and Faith Communities Forum Vice-Moderator

Presenters: Nicky, of the SAFE programme by the Community Security Trust

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Mr Mohinder Singh Chana welcomed participants to the workshop and those present introduced themselves.

Nicky offered a presentation about the SAFE programme run by the Community Security Trust. A summary of her points is below.

- The Community Security Trust (CST) uses its knowledge and experience to try and help vulnerable communities.
- Since inception in 2019 CST has received 444 requests for security advice from outside the Jewish community. In response it has delivered 212 talks and webinars attended by over 4,000 people representing around 1,800 places of worship and faith schools. All of these have been free.
- During COVID-19 CST developed a webinar programme, which has led to the formation of a library of resources. Webinar topics included: basic and event security; personal safety, including women's safety; conflict management, online security and hate crime; lessons learned from past terror attacks; and the current state of the Far Right.
- The webinars have been well-received with good feedback. For example, one comment, which sums up the ethos well, was "Inclusive training to guard against those who are not inclusive."

- Some of the webinars are held in partnership with other organisations, such as the Charity Commission.
- When the pandemic began there was a need to reach out and help more people so marketing for the webinars was increased and I looked for partners with common goals to increase the reach. As there is no cost to attend the webinars, there was no budget for this, so everything was done by word of mouth.
- I connected with new organisations and people through: introductions through CST; introductions to friends of current partners; organisational advertising on social media (focusing on LinkedIn and Twitter); direct marketing emails, asking recipients to forward and share these; and searching Google for groups with similar aims and contacting them.
- CST introduced us to the Mayor of London Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) and Hope Not Hate. MOPAC introduced us to Faiths Forum for London. I contacted the Charity Commission after I had seen that they had put out a Tweet about a webinar they were holding on similar issues. I also saw that the Cyber Helpline was holding an event on a similar topic so I reached out to them through their website. In terms of direct marketing, the police are very helpful at forwarding emails, as are some faith contacts. When I was searching online for organisations with similar goals, I found Nisa-Nashim (Jewish Muslim women's network) and reached out to them. Through these routes we were able to work with all these organisations.
- In-person is the best way to reach out to people. It is always good to ask for help. And we always ask for feedback.

Mr Chana thanked Nicky for her presentation and invited questions and comments. The following were raised. Responses from Nicky are in italics.

- The SAFE webinars are excellent and I would highly recommend them.
- How close a relationship does the programme have with security agencies, such as the police, MI5 or MI6? *The SAFE programme has a close relationship with MOPAC and puts on about four events each year with them. We also work with police around the country and they distribute information through their mailing lists. Police use CST as an example of best practice for the security of vulnerable communities.*
- A contributor commented that:
 - The media does not seem to be interested in non-Abrahamic faiths. Many Hindu temples are keen to know how that can be changed.
 - The Hindu Forum of Britain held healing sessions for those who were traumatised by some members of a much larger group in August 2019 at the High Commission of India. Attacks were not covered by the media.
 - Media covered the attack on the mosque in New Zealand. Hindu temples are also sometimes attacked.
 - The Hindu community has worked with CST on many occasions. Perhaps another event is needed. It is essential that places of worship feel like safe spaces.*The SAFE programme is always happy to talk to any community about raising awareness of security matters and would be happy to speak with members of the Hindu community. There may be some changes coming in with the new 'Protect Duty'.*
- Have you engaged with the new Online Safety Bill?

Not really. There is never going to be complete protection in place for eliminating hate online. The webinars about online security are aimed at everyone and are about taking small steps to reduce the risks of harm.
- The Religion Media Centre has been holding events around the country. The

most recent one was held in Leeds and included lots of faith groups and local news outlets. *I would always advocate keeping a low profile in terms of the media.*

- I was shocked to hear a Jewish lady in my local area (a fairly rural area in the Midlands) say that she did not feel safe in England. *Antisemitism has risen sharply over the last few years.*
- Has this year been the worst for antisemitism? *Last year was the worst so far. Whenever there are incidents in Israel, there is a rise in antisemitism against the UK Jewish community.*
- Sikhs are often the target of hate crime because of mistaken identity and ignorance.
- I have a tetraplegic son who is in a wheelchair. Rather than seeing any unhelpful comments as aggression, his attitude has been that someone is looking for information and he tries to help them understand his situation. The SAFE programme is very good at making people a little bit more aware and a little bit more prepared. It is possible sometimes to be able to diffuse a situation by explaining, or even making a joke. *CST provides training and resources to help all communities. The Jewish community in the UK has been experiencing hatred for years, so it has developed resources to deal with that. It is not just about faith. CST also speaks with LGBT groups, disabled groups and others. Anyone can be vulnerable to hate crime. That is also true of disability.*
- It is important to have a vision, take charge of the agenda and tell people what faiths need. *It is about having confidence to believe in what you believe and stand up for it.*
- In Scotland mothers of Jewish and Muslim children found that there were

many similarities in what their children were facing. The mothers have been able to meet together and bond.

Any group can have many more similarities than differences. The world would be a better place if people focused on these.

Mr Chana thanked everyone for their contributions.

Working in partnership for the common good

PROGRAMME FOR THE DAY

The COVID-19 pandemic spotlighted and also accelerated the ways that faith communities are increasingly working together, and in partnership with other types of agencies, for the common good. It is on the second element of this that this year's National Meeting focuses: faith groups and other types of bodies working together for the common good drawing on values held in common such as service and justice. At the bottom of this page, the words of the Act of Commitment made by the faith communities of the UK are reproduced, which encapsulate these values and commitment.

The day is a chance to hear about and engage with a wide range of examples from different types of organisations working with faith organisations and inter faith bodies for the common good. It also offers an opportunity to reflect on principles that can underpin effective partnership working as well as some of the challenges that can be experienced when developing partnerships. There are many excellent examples that could have been chosen for exploration. Because the 2021 National Meeting was fully centred on COVID-19 response, we have chosen in this meeting to focus mainly other areas of partnership.

*In a world scarred by the evils of war,
racism, injustice and poverty,
we offer this joint Act of Commitment as we
look to our shared future.*

*We commit ourselves,
as people of many faiths,
to work together
for the common good,
uniting to build a better society,
grounded in values and ideals we share:
community,
personal integrity,
a sense of right and wrong,
learning, wisdom and love of truth,
care and compassion,
justice and peace,
respect for one another,
for the earth and its creatures.*

*We commit ourselves,
in a spirit of friendship and co-operation,
to work together
alongside all who share our values and ideals,
to help bring about a better world
now and for generations to come.*

10.30am **Welcome from IFN Co-Chairs the Revd Canon Hilary Barber and Narendra Waghela to the 35th Anniversary Year National Meeting of the Inter faith Network for the UK**

Setting the context for the day, including some opening reflections on the vital importance of faith communities working together for the common good – and of IFN’s contribution to that since its founding in 1987.

10.40am **National organisations and faith communities working together for the common good**

The Royal British Legion

Catherine Davies, Head of Remembrance and Emma Vernalls, Remembrance Officer, Royal British Legion, give an insight into how one major national organisation has worked with faith communities to develop a key strand of its work.

Response: Nitin Palan MBE, Interfaith Coordinator, BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha offers a response from the perspective of a faith community body which has engaged with the RBL and others in highlighting and remembering the service of those of different faiths and beliefs.

Q and A and discussion

11.05am **Faith-based charities working with secular agencies**

Fadi Itani OBE, Chief Executive Officer, Muslim Charities Forum and writer on voluntary sector issues, offers reflections on effective partnership working from a faith-based charity perspective, drawing on examples from some of its members.

Q and A and discussion

11.25am **Multi-faith social action for the well being of refugees**

Grace Buckley, Scottish Faiths Action Together on Refugees (SFAR), Secretary, Archdiocese of Glasgow Justice and Peace Commission and member of the Scottish Bishops’ national Justice and Peace Commission, talks about how, through SFAR, Scottish faith communities have come together for advocacy and action on behalf of refugees, working in partnership, where appropriate, with secular bodies assisting refugees.

Q and A and discussion

11.45am **Workshops**

- A COVID-19, coming together at a time of need and the emergence of new networks and partnerships
- B Emergency services and faith communities, developing and deepening community links
- C Employers, staff networks and faith communities – working for religious literacy and good relations
- D Faith communities working in partnership with SACREs and schools

E Sports initiatives and inter faith engagement – partnerships for learning, empowerment and cohesion

Each workshop will have a note taken of key points. Workshop rapporteurs are asked to feed back to the plenary in under 2 minutes.

12.35pm **Partnerships at the heart of local civic life – the Coventry experience**

Manjit Kaur, educationalist, member of the Coventry Sacred Space Project and Coventry Multi Faith Forum and of Coventry and Warwickshire SACREs gives an illustrated presentation about how in Coventry faith communities have worked with a range of secular partners, including local government and arts and heritage bodies, to develop a special ‘Sacred Space Project’ and also to ensure that Coventry City of Culture 2021 had a strong and vibrant faith dimension.

Q and A and discussion

12.55pm **Feedback from Workshop**

1.05pm **Remembering an inter faith pioneer**

IFN’s Executive Director, Dr Harriet Crabtree OBE, offers a short remembrance of Dr Natubhai Shah MBE, IFN Trustee, who died this month. Dr Shah played a leading role within the Jain community and was also a pioneer and strong supporter of inter faith activity, involved in IFN’s work since its founding in 1987.

1.10pm **LUNCH AND CHAT [The Zoom link will be left open]**

For delegates who would like to chat with others over lunch, there will be a chance to do so from 1.15 pm to 1.35 pm. Breakout groups of three people will be created, on an ad hoc basis, based on advance sign up.

Afternoon Session

1.40pm **Welcome back to plenary**

1.45pm **Partnerships at challenging times**

The National Emergencies Trust

Vijay Jassal, Assistant Director, Policy & Strategic Partnerships, National Emergencies Trust (NET) and Thelma Stober (NET Trustee), talk about the importance of partnership (in the small ‘p’ sense and, occasionally, formal structured partnership) involving faith communities in the context of the NET’s work.

Q and A

2.00pm **Partnership for the common good**

Rt Hon Stephen Timms MP, Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Faith and Society and long term advocate of partnership working for the common good, reflects on the importance of partnerships involving faith and inter faith bodies and public agencies such as local authorities.

Responses

- Rabbi Mordechai Wollenberg, Senior Rabbi of Woodford Forest United Synagogue in London, under the Chief Rabbi's auspices, and Vice-Moderator of IFN Faith Communities Forum offers some reflections from a faith community perspective.
- Roz Miller BEM, Director, Islington Faiths Forum, which has worked closely over many years with its local council and other cross-sector statutory agencies

Q and A and Discussion

2.45pm

Workshops

- A Faith communities and healthcare – partnerships for health and wellbeing
- B Inter Faith Week: a time for forging new connections and partnerships
- C Local authorities and faith groups – dimensions of partnership
- D Partnership working between local inter faith bodies and higher education institutions
- E Working in partnership for the safety and security of communities

3.35pm

Feedback from workshops

3.45pm

Envisioning future partnerships – Plenary discussion

In the light of presentations and discussion during the day, what do you think may be the opportunities and challenges for faith communities working in partnership in the coming years?

[Note: On the day, time constraints meant that the meeting went straight to the Closing reflections.]

3.55pm

Closing reflections from:

- Paul Smalley, NASACRE and RE Council of England and Wales
- Trupti Patel, President, Hindu Forum of Britain and IFN Trustee
- Dr Susan Siegel, Trustee, Interfaith Scotland and IFN Trustee

4.10pm

Closing reflections from the Co-Chairs

4.15pm

Close

Note: IFN links a wide range of organisations and its membership encapsulates a wide diversity of background and belief as well as experience and expertise. That can never be fully reflected in the pattern of presenters in one meeting. The pattern of speakers varies from meeting to meeting so that the benefit of this for learning and good practice can be gained.

Participating organisations

One or more representatives from the following organisations were present at the meeting:

IFN Member bodies

All Faiths Network
Altrincham Interfaith Group
BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir
Barnet Multi Faith Forum
Bedford Council of Faiths
Birmingham Council of Faiths
Board of Deputies of British Jews
Bolton Interfaith Council
Brent Multi-Faith Forum
Brighton and Hove Inter Faith Contact Group
Bristol Interfaith Group
Cambridge Inter-Faith Group
Canterbury and District Inter Faith Action
Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales
Christian Muslim Forum
Christians Aware Faith Awareness
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
Cornwall Faith Forum
Coventry Multi-Faith Forum
Crawley Inter Faith Network
Devon Faith and Belief Forum
Druid Network
Faith & Belief Forum
Faith Network for Manchester
Faiths Together in Lambeth
Faiths United (Tameside)
Greater Yarmouth Inter Faith and Belief Network
Hillingdon Inter Faith Network
Hindu Forum of Britain
Hounslow Friends of Faith
Institute of Jainology
Inter Faith Council for Wales
Inter Faith Working Group of the Baptist Union of GB
Interfaith Scotland
International Association for Religious Freedom (British Chapter)
International Interfaith Centre
Islington Faiths Forum
Jain Network
Leeds Concord Interfaith Fellowship
Leeds Faiths Forum

Leicester Council of Faiths
Medway Inter Faith Action
Methodist Church in Britain
Middlesex University Interfaith Network
Muslim Council of Britain
National Association of SACREs
National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the UK
Network of Buddhist Organisations (UK)
Network of Sikh Organisations (UK)
North Herts Interfaith Forum
North Kent Interfaith
North Kirklees Interfaith
Northern Ireland Inter-Faith Forum
Norwich InterFaith Link
Nottingham Interfaith Council
Pagan Federation
Preston Faith Forum
Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations
Reading Interfaith Group
Salvation Army
South Shropshire Inter Faith
Spiritualists National Union
Sri Lankan Sangha Sabha (GB)
Tower Hamlets Interfaith Forum
University of Salford Faith Centre
Vishwa Hindu Parishad (UK)
Wales Association of SACREs
Watford Interfaith Association
Welwyn Hatfield Interfaith
Women's Interfaith Network
Worcestershire Interfaith Forum
World Ahlul-Bayt Islamic League
World Congress of Faiths
York Interfaith Group
Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe

Other organisations

APPG on Faith and Society
Bolton Hindu Forum
Cleveland Fire Brigade
Community Security Trust
Coventry Sacred Space Project
Cynon Valley Museum Trust
Friends Sporting Club Manchester
Kent Fire and Rescue Service

Middlesex University
Muslim Charities Forum
National Emergencies Trust
NHS Blood and Transplant
Northern Railway
Railway Mission
Royal British Legion
Scottish Faiths Action Together on
Refugees
Sporting Equals
Yorkshire Asian Business Association

The Inter Faith Network for the UK

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

The Inter Faith Network for the UK (IFN) links and works with national faith community representative bodies, inter faith organisations, academic and educational organisations with an interest in inter faith relations, as well as with other organisations including Government and other public agencies, to strengthen inter faith understanding and cooperation in the UK.

IFN is unique in its scope and role both within the UK and in Europe. It has been bringing organisations and people together for 35 years and its work is always evolving to meet fresh needs.

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

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

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

The work of IFN is supported by faith communities, trusts, other donors, and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

SUPPORT OUR WORK TO INCREASE INTER FAITH UNDERSTANDING AND COOPERATION

THE IMPORTANCE OF YOUR SUPPORT

Please help us to continue and extend our work to promote inter faith understanding and cooperation and help people of all backgrounds to live and work together with mutual respect and shared commitment to the common good.

EVERY GIFT, HOWEVER LARGE OR SMALL, IS VALUED AND CAREFULLY USED TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

MAKE A GIFT

Please consider making a donation today to support the work of the Inter Faith Network. Gifts at all levels are valued and are used for maximum impact. You can donate using a debit or credit card through our website at www.interfaith.org.uk/donate, by PayPal at www.paypal.me/ifnetuk or by sending a cheque to The Inter Faith Network for the UK, 24 Tufton Street, London SW1P 3RB

Thank You!

REMEMBERING A FAMILY MEMBER OR FRIEND

From time to time we receive an 'in memoriam' gift after an individual has passed away, from a collection following their death or through a donation from their heirs. Such gifts provide a living memorial to a loved one, supporting inter faith understanding in this country – for now and for the future. If you would like to make a gift in memory of a loved one, you can contact us at remember@interfaith.org.uk or call us on 020 7730 0410.

A GIFT IN YOUR WILL

By leaving a gift in your will to the Inter Faith Network for the UK, you can leave a living inheritance to help deepen and strengthen inter faith understanding and cooperation in this country – for now and for the future.

If you are thinking about making a will, the best thing to do is to get in touch with a professional will writer, such as a solicitor or advocate; they can help to ensure it is legally correct and that your wishes are met. If you have already made a will, you can still make an addition or amendment in the form of a codicil. If you would like to pledge a gift, please provide our name and address, along with our registered charity number 1068934.

Please get in touch with us if you have any queries. You can call Hannah Cassidy, on 020 7730 0410 or contact us at remember@interfaith.org.uk.

Member organisations of the Inter Faith Network for the UK 2020–21

Faith Community Representative Bodies

Baha'i Community of the UK
 BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha
 Board of Deputies of British Jews
 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
 Institute of Jainology
 Islamic Cultural Centre
 Jain Network
 Jamiat-e-Ulama Britain (Association of Muslim Scholars)
 Methodist Church in Britain
 Mosques and Imams National Advisory Board
 Muslim Council of Britain
 Network of Buddhist Organisations (UK)
 Network of Sikh Organisations (UK)
 Pagan Federation
 Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations
 Salvation Army United Kingdom Territory with the Republic of Ireland
 Spiritualists' National Union
 Sri Lankan Sangha Sabha of GB
 United Reformed Church in the UK
 Vishwa Hindu Parishad (UK)
 World Ahlul-Bayt Islamic League
 Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe

Educational and Academic Bodies

The ASHA Foundation
 Cambridge Inter-Faith Programme
 City, University of London Chaplaincy
 The Faculty of Humanities and Performing Arts at the University of Wales Trinity St David
 Islamic Foundation
 Middlesex University Inter Faith Network
 National Association of SACREs
 OneSpirit Interfaith Foundation
 Religious Education Council of England and Wales
 Sion Centre for Dialogue and Encounter
 The University of Lincoln Multi-Faith Chaplaincy
 University of Salford Faith Centre
 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 Rhyngffydd Cymru
 Faiths Forum for London
 North East Regional Faiths Network
 South East England Faith Forum
 Abrahamic Reunion (England)
 All Faiths Network for the UK
 Children of Abraham (Imams and Rabbis Council of the United Kingdom)
 Christian Muslim Forum
 Christians Aware Interfaith Programme
 Council of Christians and Jews
 Council of Dharmic Faiths
 East of England Faiths Agency
 Faith and Belief Forum
 Interfaith Alliance UK
 International Association for Religious Freedom (British Chapter)
 International Interfaith Centre
 Khalili Foundation

London Boroughs Faiths Network
 Multi-Faith Centre at the University of Derby
 Nisa-Nashim
 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
 United Religions Initiative (UK)
 Westminster Interfaith
 Women's Interfaith Network
 World Congress of Faiths

Local Inter Faith Groups

Altrincham Inter Faith Group
 Barking and Dagenham Faith Forum
 Barnet Multi-Faith Forum
 Bath Interfaith Group
 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
 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
 Elmbridge Multi-Faith Forum
 Exeter Faith and Belief Group
 Gateshead Inter Faith Forum
 Greater Yarmouth Inter Faith and Belief Network
 Harrow Interfaith
 Hastings and Rother Interfaith Forum
 Hertsmere Forum of Faiths
 Hillingdon Inter Faith Network
 Horsham Interfaith Forum
 Hounslow Friends of Faith

Hull and East Riding Interfaith
 Inter Faith Isle of Man
 Islington Faiths Forum
 Keighley Interfaith Group
 Kettering Interfaith Forum
 Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames Inter-Faith Forum
 Faiths Together in Lambeth
 Lancashire Forum of Faiths
 Leeds Concord Interfaith Fellowship
 Leeds Faiths Forum
 Leicester Council of Faiths
 Interfaith Forum for Leicestershire
 Loughborough Council of Faiths
 Luton Council of Faiths
 Maidstone Inter Faith Network
 Faith Network for Manchester
 Mansfield Interfaith Group
 Medway Inter Faith Action Forum
 Interfaith MK (Milton Keynes)
 Milton Keynes Council of Faiths
 Muslim Jewish Forum of Greater Manchester
 Newcastle Council of Faiths
 North Herts Faith Forum
 North Kent Council for Inter Faith Relations – Kent Thameside
 North Kirklees Inter Faith
 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
 Plymouth Council of Faiths
 Preston Faith Forum
 Reading Interfaith Group
 Redbridge Faith Forum
 Rochdale Multi Faith Partnership
 Rugby Inter Faith Forum
 Salford Interfaith Network
 Sheffield Inter Faith
 Slough Faith Partnership
 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
 Swindon Inter Faith Group

Faiths United (Tameside)
Torbay Faith and Belief 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
York Interfaith Group

As after July 2021 AGM

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