Learning about inter faith activity

A primary resource for pupils aged 9–11

UNIT 3

Making a difference in the community– inter faith social action

The Inter Faith Network for the United Kingdom

Teacher note: This unit of work is intended as an introduction for pupils learning about inter faith social action in the UK; it is intended to be used after pupils have completed Units 1a *Religious diversity in the UK and the importance of inter faith activity* and 1b *Introducing inter faith activity*. Teachers should consult the *Teacher introduction* before using this unit as a basis for curriculum planning. Teachers may be aware of faith and inter faith based social action in their communities which will provide good examples.

This unit follows a simple progression:

Many faith communities engage in projects that respond to need internationally, nationally and locally where people of different faiths come together to work on projects.

The response to social need from faith communities is rooted in specific teachings in faith traditions.

One example of an issue where faith and inter faith groups are working together is the environment and climate change.

About the unit

This unit is aimed at helping pupils to: learn about and develop an understanding of how people of faith respond to social issues locally, nationally and globally and how at times people from different faith traditions come together to work together for the good of society. Pupils will learn that there are special events organised by faith groups to encourage their members to do good things in their communities which encourage inter faith partnerships. They will also learn that there are inter faith groups responding to both human and environmental issues.

Vocabulary

Social action, advocate, service.

Expectations

At the end of this unit

Most pupils: will know about at least two inter faith social action projects and understand why these are important. They will demonstrate that they know about the religious or non-religious beliefs that inform these projects and show how different religious traditions share similar values when it comes to responding to local, national and global issues.

Some pupils: will not have made so much progress they will be able to talk about one inter faith social action project and be able to identify which religious groups are involved in it. They will show an understanding of the social issue that the inter faith project is responding to.

Some pupils: will have progressed further and will be able to link the projects they have looked at to the teachings of the religions that are involved and understand how the values held by different communities provide a basis for common action. They will be able to demonstrate an understanding of the ways that faith communities, individually and working together, have a positive impact on society and the lives of individuals.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES Pupils should learn…	POSSIBLE TEACHING ACTIVITIES
• **That faith communities and inter faith groups are working in their local area to make a difference to people in need.**	Pupils could find out about faith communities in their area and the social projects they run. They could look, for example, on the Trussell Trust website to see if faith groups in their area are helping run a food bank. There are also particular initiatives like the Navratri Food Bank Collection. Pupils could explore the work that the Salvation Army does with homeless people across England and how it works with people in need by providing night shelters for rough sleepers. Pupils could also investigate the work of One Roof Leicester which runs a multi faith winter night shelter that rotates around seven venues in the city as an example of a local project. Pupils could invite someone from a faith-based social action project into school to speak about their work and why it is important.
• **That religious traditions have clear teachings about service to others and organise events to respond to the needs of local communities.**	Pupils could investigate Sewa Day, which is a day of service and volunteering taking place in September or October each year. They could explore the word 'sewa' and its importance for religions that have their origins in the Indian sub-continent (Buddhist, Hindu, Jain and Sikh) and how they understand that term. Pupils could also research Mitzvah Day and My Sadaqa Day which are led by the Jewish and Muslim communities respectively, or Buddhist Action Month.
• **That inter faith and faith groups respond to national and international crises in a way that reflects their values.**	Pupils could look at the work of Khalsa Aid, a Sikh based charity that works with others to support people in crisis or at another faith based agency such as CAFOD or Islamic Relief. Pupils could research the Council of Christians and Jews resource called: For Refugees, With Refugees: Advancing Interfaith Responses, which includes case studies that pupils could use to show how two faith groups have come together to respond to an international crisis. Nisa-Nashim has a number of relevant initiatives.
• **That faith and inter faith groups are responding to environmental issues at a local level.**	Pupils could learn about how Birmingham Council of Faiths (BCF) set up 'Faiths for a low Carbon Future' in 2015, referred to as Footsteps. The main Footsteps event is held yearly during Inter Faith Week. For two years BCF ran a programme called 'Small Footsteps' for young people aged 8 – 14 years. Pupils could discuss why they think a programme was set up especially for this age range. Pupils could also look at Faith for the Climate, Faiths4Change in the Wirral, or how the Jain community is promoting tree planting to commemorate the 150th anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi's birth and improve the environment. Pupils could explore the teachings of different faiths on care for the planet by visiting the REEP project website and presenting their findings on a wall display. Many faith communities are encouraging action on climate change, such as The Quakers, The Druid Network and the Church of England.

LEARNING OUTCOMES Pupils should be able to	POINTS TO NOTE
• **Talk about and discuss the types of social need faith and inter faith groups are responding to, giving concrete examples of projects they have learned about.**	
• **Identify specific teachings about responding to social issues in at least two different religious traditions.**	The REEP project has resources that can be used as a basis for identifying the teachings of religions on care for the world. Local Agreed Syllabuses are also a resource that teachers could draw upon to help them identify specific teachings on social issues of the religions in their local areas.
• **Discuss why it may be good that different faith communities work together to respond to social need.**	This could be done as a Circle Time activity or as part of a P4C session at the beginning of the unit and returned to again at the end to see how pupils have progressed in their learning.

TEACHER NOTE

As a whole class or school activity pupils could design an event for Inter Faith Week for the school that focusses on how faiths work together to help those in need in their local area, nationally or internationally.

NOTES

The Trussell Trust supports a nationwide network of food banks which together provide emergency food and support. It also campaigns for change to end the need for food banks in the UK.

The Salvation Army is a Christian denomination that has a long history of responding to social problems in the UK and around the world.

One Roof Leicester is an organisation that, as part of its work, runs a multi-faith project that runs a night shelter programme through the winter in the city.

Sewa Day is a day of service and volunteering which usually takes place in September or October. The word 'sewa' comes from Sanskrit and means 'selfless sacrifice' – to sacrifice your time and resources for the benefit of others without wanting anything in return.

Mitzvah Day is a day of social action and voluntary service led by the Jewish community. The first such day established, it takes place in November, and many activities take place to mark both Inter Faith Week and Mitzvah Day.

My Sadaqa Day is a day of social action led by the Muslim community but open to all. Its date varies annually.

Buddhist Action Month is a project of the Network of Buddhist Organisations.

Khalsa Aid, **CAFOD** and **Islamic Relief** are charitable organisations which provide aid overseas but also have projects in the UK. Each is rooted in the teachings of a specific religious tradition but will work with others irrespective of their faith or belief tradition.

For Refugees, With Refugees: Advancing Interfaith Responses is a resource published by the Council of Christians and Jews to encourage an inter faith response to the refugee crisis in Europe.

Nisa-Nashim is a national network, which brings Jewish and Muslim women together to inspire and lead social change.

Faiths for a low Carbon Future is a project of the Birmingham Council of Faiths that encourages faith communities in the city to become ecologically responsible.

Faith for the Climate is a network that has been established to encourage, inspire and equip faith communities in their work on climate change.

Faiths4Change is a charity that brings people together to encourage and help them improve their local environment.

The Jain community has non-violence or 'ahimsa' at the heart of its values and this underlies its work on environment issues.

REEP is the Religions and Environment Education Programme, which has a number of projects, including Faiths for a Future that highlights the teachings of the major world traditions on environmental responsibility.

The Quakers in Britain the formal name of which is Britain Yearly Meeting, is the main organisation of Quakers in Britain.

The Druid Network is a body that represents modern day Druids in the UK, in 2018 the Network declared a climate and ecological emergency.

The Church of England is the established church in England and is the 'mother church' of the worldwide Anglican Communion.

The resource points to a number of resources linked to Inter Faith Network member bodies and other sources. There are many such materials available and those included are in no way exhaustive. IFN's member body list and other resources on its website www.interfaith.org.uk will take you to other useful materials.

The links provided are to materials of independent organisations. IFN takes no responsibility for their content – as it stands at this time or as it may evolve. The links may change over time. They are correct at November 2019 and will be checked periodically. If you find any that do not work, please do let us know so that we can replace them.

The resource covers a broad range of faith traditions in the UK and this is reflected across the resource as a whole, not in all or any one of the individual units.