



Inter Faith Network for the UK day event for local inter faith practitioners

A REPORT

Wednesday 27 March 2019

Peterborough Cathedral Visitor Centre



The Inter Faith Network for the UK closed in 2024, with outward facing operations ceasing in April.

In order to ensure that the material in IFN's publications remained available to the public, to inter faith practitioners, and to scholars after IFN's closure, the copyright status of publications has been changed.

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About the day



Sally Gough, Peterborough City Council, Vivian McFarlane, Warwick District Faiths Forum, and Dina Mandalia, Welwyn Hatfield Inter Faith Group

On 27 March 2019 practitioners from a wide range of local inter faith groups from different parts of the UK came together in Peterborough for a day of learning and sharing held by the Inter Faith Network for the UK (IFN). This followed on from similar events held in Sheffield, London, Coventry, Bristol, Manchester and Bradford across the last four years.

The first local inter faith groups began to emerge in the UK back in the 1970s. From a handful of pioneering groups, local inter faith bodies have grown in number to over 250 and there are also many bilateral initiatives such as branches of the Council of Christians and Jews and groups of Nisa-Nashim and the Women's Interfaith Network, as well as types of local initiative which are not 'inter faith organisations' as such, including bodies such as SACREs and local multi faith chaplaincies as well as projects, initiatives and short term programmes. What are some of the

features of the landscape today and some of the challenges and possibilities in working locally for inter faith understanding and cooperation?

IFN has, since it was established in 1987, advocated strongly for the importance of local inter faith activity. This has been a part of its overall pattern of work. Local activity is organically related to the very important work of national faith community bodies and also benefits from the work of national and regional inter faith and educational initiatives of many kinds. Past IFN National Meetings have explored these links and the importance of the role of national faith communities and inter faith initiatives in supporting and encouraging local inter faith activity.

This day event was offered specifically for local inter faith practitioners to share their experiences, and to discuss issues of common interest and concern and for

focused learning opportunities drawing on the kinds of questions and issues raised by IFN member local groups at link meetings in the last two years. It was open to all local inter faith groups in the UK and also local inter faith practitioners with a particular interest in the issues working in other contexts. #IFNLocal was used as the Twitter hashtag for the day.

The day was chaired by Mr Jatinder Singh Birdi, an IFN Co-Chair and also Chair of Warwick District Faiths Forum. It began with a period of silence to remember in thanks all those in the UK and around the world working for greater inter faith understanding and cooperation.

Participants were welcomed to the day by **Mr Jatinder Singh Birdi**. He commented that he had been pleased to attend, together with IFN's Executive Director, the 40th Anniversary event for Peterborough Inter Faith Council the previous year. It was very good to be back in Peterborough and to be in a venue at the Cathedral, which had recently celebrated its 900th Anniversary. The Very Revd Chris Dalliston, Dean of Peterborough, had been unable to attend today's event but sent his very good wishes. It was good to have present Ms Femi Olasako of the Near Neighbours programme of the Church Urban Fund, which had a new hub based at the Cathedral.

There was then a special welcome to Peterborough from **Mr Jaspal Singh**, Chair of Peterborough Inter Faith Council (PIFC). He said that he had been the Chair of PIFC for 25 years. Peterborough was fortunate in having good community and inter faith relationships. Leadership played an important role in this and Peterborough was fortunate in that the Chief Executive of Peterborough City Council, Ms Gillian Beasley, was very supportive and involved. She attended a lot of functions and was also an honorary Committee Member of PIFC. PIFC had asked the Council for a



Jaspal Singh, Chair, Peterborough Inter Faith Council

representative and Ms Beasley had put herself forward. This two-way relationship was very important.

Mr Singh went on to explain that there were communities of six major faiths in Peterborough and many places of worship, including 5 active mosques, a Hindu temple, a Buddhist temple, 2 Sikh gurdwaras, Christian churches and a Jewish meeting place. PIFC held two main events each year: a faith and food festival and a UN Children's Day event at Peterborough Cathedral. For the latter, children of all six faiths came together and up to 700 people attended. It was always a great success. It did not cost anything. One of the reasons PIFC had survived for so long was, in his view, that it did not rely on external funding. It was relatively poor but had been able to arrange its 40th Anniversary celebrations on a small budget. At the end of the day success was based not solely on funding, but also on the quality of the people involved and the input from each faith community.

A local authority perspective on the importance of working with faith communities and inter faith structures

Gillian Beasley, Chief Executive,
Peterborough City Council and
Cambridgeshire County Council

Ms Beasley offered the following reflections:

- I have been Chief Executive of the Council since 2002.
- Faith matters to me on a number of different levels: it has a personal meaning to me; it has a meaning in relation to my leadership role in the council; and also meaning and significance at our community level.
- I am Chief Executive of both Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council. These are demanding roles which can be challenging. Faith communities often say to me and to my officers that they are praying for us in moments of real challenge. That gives me a sense of the trust and respect between us and it also shows that we are cared about. That makes a big personal difference to me in my role and gives us strength to do our jobs. We are very grateful to the communities for their support.
- Council funding has been reduced and I know that often councils are not as trusted to provide services as you are. Faith communities work with a wider range of people within the Peterborough community and connect better to them. You know those communities, their needs and their issues better than us. I have learnt in my work with faith communities that your knowledge and understanding helps us to better provide services. So that is how faith relates to my leadership role.
- On a community level we are facing some big challenges in Peterborough with hatred and violence. We have come together to stand against that. I know that I can call upon the faith communities because they call upon themselves. We get together as people of different backgrounds and express our love for one another and our commitment to being together and I think that is also what has kept Peterborough cohesive and such a great place to work.
- Our Integrated Communities Strategy says: “Religion has played an important part in our society and has contributed to the formation of many of our shared values”. Faith has certainly been a long standing foundation stone for the community of Peterborough. Peterborough Cathedral has been celebrating its 900th anniversary and the Dean has been doing a fantastic job during the anniversary year to promote that but also to promote faith communities within that agenda. Last Saturday we had a peace vigil in the cathedral grounds which brought over a hundred people from different faith communities together to stand against that hatred and terrorism that we saw in New Zealand very recently.
- As Chief Executive, I have attended quite a lot of faith community events.
 - For example, I took part in an event to mark the Hindu festival of Navaratri, the 9 nights of prayer. I dressed in a saree and learned a traditional dance for the event. People from many other faith communities took part. Such an activity binds relationships in a way that is very important so that you can



Gillian Beasley, CEO, Peterborough City Council

then face the difficult issues together when the need arises. The Council supports the Diwali celebrations in the city centre and Council members attend. Members of the public are able to experience the dancing, singing and recitations and that helps bring learning to the wider community.

- Over the years more and more mosques have been opening their doors and many recently took part in Visit My Mosque Day. I saw more people from diverse communities go through those doors to get an understanding of what happens in mosques than I have ever seen before. During Ramadan the Superintendent of the Police and I fast for a day and then break our fast in one of the mosques. It is important for me to understand the basis of Ramadan, the basis of fasting. Eid in the Park brings together over one thousand people in the heart of our city for a big celebration.

- Holocaust Memorial Day forms an important part of the work that we do and we see the Jewish community working alongside other faiths as part of standing together against all kinds of hatred. Over 400 people attended the most recent HMD event, held in St John's Church in Peterborough and we have seen the level of participation and the diversity of participation increase over the years. Participants included civic, political and public service provider leaders and over 150 children from different schools. Some of the children role play the acts of hatred then we bring that out into the open and talk about it.

- We are also seeing now the setting up of a young people's inter faith network. Peterborough Inter Faith Council is a strong organisation, which Jaspal Singh has chaired for many years. We are opening that up to younger people because they are the future and the agenda needs to be firmly rooted in our community.

- The Sikh community in Peterborough provides regular *langars* (meals) prepared by many honourable volunteers for all members of the community regardless of religion, gender and ethnicity. The Vaisakhi Festival is another highlight in our city.

- I am looking forward in April and August to going to our Drolma Centre with our Buddhist community and to understand more about the peaceful environment that they have created in the city.

- Each year the UN Children's Day inter faith service is a joy for me because I have the great job of giving all the certificates to the children for their performances. They come up onto the stage to be congratulated for their songs, their recitations and their

performances. A lot of people from different faith communities come together to watch that and to share food and it is a joyous event.

- Through the celebrations, festivals and sharing of food over the years I am gaining a true and abiding understanding but also a stronger commitment towards this agenda.
- Peterborough is one of the areas where the Government is implementing its Integrated Communities Strategy. For us that builds on the commitment we have made to the principle of freedom of religion and belief and working very firmly with our faith and inter faith partners. In the Green Paper it says that inter faith dialogue is crucial as “a means of breaking down barriers between communities, building greater trust and understanding, and removing the conditions which can allow intolerance and unequal treatment to flourish”. In Peterborough we are absolutely committed to that.
- All that we have already done is important but how you build on it also matters. Our inter faith work has moved into a rich dialogue about quite difficult issues, such as the social challenges facing Peterborough, rough sleeping, safeguarding children, tackling loneliness, child sexual exploitation, domestic abuse and radicalisation. With Churches Together and other faith organisations the Council talks about its budget consultation and financial challenges. We don't just announce bad news out of the blue. We talk about how we can best handle our budget and talk with our communities about how we can avoid some of the unintended consequences. So I am really excited about how we will be able now to develop the opportunities for our faith work within the context of the Integrated Communities Strategy, working with inter

faith and faith organisations to tackle the difficult issues. I know that our faith communities are absolutely committed to doing that with us. We are not doing it 'to' we are doing it 'together'.

- So, faith matters and it matters to me in so many different ways. To build strong relationships you have to work hard at this. I can never take my eye off this agenda. My thanks always go out to our incredible faith communities who have been absolutely tireless in their dedication to work on real issues that matter to our city. I can remember a headline in our local newspaper on the front page at the time when the English Defence League (EDL) was about to march in our city. It said 'Peterborough United' and it had a picture of civic leaders standing together with faith community members in front of the Cathedral resolute against the hatred that the EDL was going to bring into our city. I also remember a beautiful picture taken in our Cathedral of all the children from our faith communities smiling out, having entertained us brilliantly with their songs and recitations. These are two different images, but two powerful expressions of why I will continue to work hard in the city and demonstrate my commitment to working with faith communities. Thank you very much.

The following questions and comments were raised. Ms Beasley's answers are in italics.

- Do you find that the inter faith groups naturally gravitate towards the council to build a better future?

I found that the faith communities naturally gravitated towards themselves and we were invited in. We had to bring something to the table that was more than just sitting and talking. I felt that I needed to bring an understanding of what the faith communities do and what we can do



Jaspal Singh, Peterborough Inter Faith Council, and Judith Bruni and Francoise Murphy of Watford Inter Faith Association

for each other. Local government has to do that because we affect the lives of all our citizens. As I said earlier, I think the faith groups connect much better to the communities because they are trusted and they know their community as well. So we both bring something that we can work together on.

- You are to be congratulated that you have managed to give this amount of time to faith and inter faith work. My experience of chief executives is that they usually delegate some parts of their role. Is what you are doing unique? Is it something that can be passed on to other localities?

I am the joint Chief Executive of two local authorities. I have got the largest job in the country as a local authority chief executive. It is what you prioritise and what you think is important and I absolutely believe that this [faith and inter faith engagement] is fundamentally important. I think it is fair to say that some chief executives have not completely understood that. But what I think we gain as a city and as a community, through the council engaging with faith communities, is all the things I have described. I think we give to each other in different ways. I think the city is a far richer and better place

because of the way that we work with faith communities. Early on in my time as Chief Executive I recognised and understood the importance of faith communities and I am blessed with brilliant faith communities in Peterborough as well. It isn't about me, it's about how they have come together too.

- In these troubled and challenging times, what more can local authorities do to enable communities living in their towns and cities to feel safer?

We were at a meeting about mosques recently and there was a real sense of concern as a result of what had happened in New Zealand. What we do in Peterborough is get together and talk about those concerns. For example, one of the mosques was particularly concerned and wanted a police presence. The police are keen to understand the concerns as well and to work alongside us. Another mosque was concerned about safety and we have now put CCTV up. It is about understanding and responding, about being prepared, as leaders, to confront issues and deal with them rather than brushing them aside or ignoring them. People have real concerns and we have to take them seriously.

Response

Esmond Rosen, Co-Chair, Barnet Multi Faith Forum

Mr Rosen offered the following reflections:

- It has been very good to hear of the relationship that Peterborough City Council has with its local faith communities.
 - When the Barnet Multi Faith Forum (BMFF) was restarted in 2012 we met with FaithAction and the All Party Parliamentary Group on Faith in Society which has developed a Faith Covenant for local authorities and faith communities.
 - Barnet Council considered the Covenant and agreed to it and it was signed a few months later in Hendon Town Hall.
 - A Faith Covenant is not necessarily right for every community but it gave BMFF a profile to discuss matters with the Council.
 - The Faith Covenant works like a partnership. It has enabled BMFF to say
- that it is the strategic voice of the faith sector in Barnet. In practice, this means that BMFF has a seat at the Council table to discuss strategic issues.
 - BMFF works together with the voluntary sector as a faith partner. It is part of the Barnet Communities Together Network (CTN) which brings together the voluntary sector and the faith sector, the police and the emergency services. This means that BMFF is part of resilience emergency planning. It also means that information about community issues relating to the EU Exit are filtering down to community level.
 - Any events that take place in the Borough are cascaded down through CTN, BMFF and the Voluntary Sector Network. This is part of reaching out to the community.
 - BMFF is able to ensure that the Council is aware of all the work being done on issues such as safeguarding, housing and by local churches, synagogues, mosques, temples and gurdwaras.
 - When the Council organises an event, such as for Holocaust Memorial Day, it plans this with BMFF. One of BMFF's aims



Esmond Rosen, Co-Chair, Barnet Multi Faith Forum

is to get more young people engaged and involved with those commemorations.

- BMFF is setting up a youth faith forum in the Borough. The Engagement Officer who is seconded to the Borough from the Government (through the Building a Stronger Britain Together programme) is a co-opted member of the BMFF Executive and we work together on issues.
- BMFF itself has been developing into a major faith forum. It has created subgroups to tackle matters such as communication and to discuss and address issues such as poverty; food banks; climate change; refugees; homelessness; and loneliness. The Forum also arranges events.
- At a meeting earlier in the present week BMFF members came together at a local mosque for the presentation of BMFF's Development Plan. The Covenant was helpful in creating the Development Plan. The meeting was held not long after the terrible attacks in Christchurch, New Zealand. We were able to come together, stand together and just be together. The Leader of the Council unexpectedly attended this meeting which was very encouraging.
- BMFF has found the Covenant to be very helpful in enabling it to engage and to access information. For example, it has become aware of funding programmes through its engagement with the Council.

The following questions and comments were raised. Mr Rosen's answers are in italics.

- What is the possibility that we can build bridges? There are so many issues abroad, such as the position on the Golan Heights, which are affecting relationships between faith communities.

Overseas issues, such as the Israel-Palestine conflict, have been raised at IFN day events for local inter faith practitioners previously. They need to be addressed from an inter faith perspective but they need careful thought and very thorough preparation.

Dr Crabtree said that local inter faith groups tend to focus principally on issues in the UK. In some cases they have policies that steer them away from engagement with international issues. People may feel passionately about the events in countries to which they have religious and family connections; at the same time, it can be difficult for members of a multi faith body to come to one mind on when it is appropriate to issue a statement or not; and, if so, how to do so in a way that keeps people on board. However, to entirely avoid discussion about overseas issues, such as the Israel-Palestine conflict just mentioned, can result in a sense of an abiding elephant in the room. IFN has touched on this at some of its meetings and there is a discussion group on difficult dialogues later in the day. There is no straightforward answer. Where there is any coalition of people it is important both to engage with issues and also to aim to keep as many people as possible on board and to avoid breakdown in relationships over tense issues.

Trust and confidence matter the most and that is how relationships between faith communities, and between local authorities and faith communities, are built up. The local authority now turns to the faith communities in Barnet when issuing statements of condemnation or sympathy.



Zahraa Ahmed, Muslim Council of Britain

Welcome in! Open door days and inter faith walks and pilgrimages

Zahraa Ahmed, Visit My Mosque Project Coordinator, Muslim Council of Britain

Ms Ahmed offered the following reflections:

- Visit My Mosque (VMM) was established by the Muslim Council of Britain and began in 2015 with about 20 participating mosques. Last year we had 200 and this year we have managed to get over 250 involved. It was an incredible day from all the feedback that we had. The photos on the slides show a few of the mosques that took part this year.
- The VMM project gets coverage from the local, national and even international press. We have also received support from over 25 organisations including corporate bodies like Ben and Jerry's and charities and other community groups.
- Britain and Islam have a longstanding shared history. Islam is mentioned in the 6th century. From the 1400s through to the Victorian Era, understandings of Islam were mainly shaped by encounter with it in the Ottoman empire, while the British empire was a Christian empire. This led to the idea that Islam and Muslims were foreign. So the Muslims who migrated to Britain during the Victoria period were seen as 'other'. But we also have the beginning of an indigenous Muslim community within Britain itself.
- VMM is not the first time that people have come up with the idea of opening the doors of mosques to the general public. Abdullah Quilliam was the founder of the first mosque in England. This opened in Liverpool in 1889. He realised that Muslims were not seen as equal and decided to open up the mosque to everyone. 200 years later, that practice continues.
- Although VMM is about people visiting mosques, MCB was keen that Muslims should also visit other places of worship. So this year some of MCB's Executive Committee members visited different places of worship across the UK. The slide shows MCB's Secretary General, Harun Khan, and Assistant Secretary General, Rashidat Hassan, visiting the West London Synagogue. I am with them, as is IFN's Executive Director, Harriet Crabtree. The photos also show visits to a Hindu temple in Wales, a Catholic Church in

Northern Ireland and a Gurdwara in Scotland.

- Having an open door programme is a great way to build bridges. It is just one step in creating social cohesion and equality.

The following comment was made.
Ms Ahmed's answer is in italics.

- Hindu temples have been open to everyone for centuries. I used to live in a little village. There was no Hindu temple nearby so I used to pray in the village chapel. Sometimes you have to adapt. Going to another place of worship can bring peace as well.

I grew up in an area of London with a large Jewish community and my school was very good at making sure that we had a good understanding of other faiths. I vividly remember visiting a Hindu temple close to my school, which was an incredible experience. It's important to engage young people and for schools to do trips to places of worship.



The Importance of Opening Doors -
#VisitMyMosque

1



What is #VisitMyMosque?

2



3

Origins of Mosque Open Days



4

Visiting Other Faith Institutions



Welcome in! Open door days and inter faith walks and pilgrimages

Judith Bruni, Yogesh Joshi and Francoise Murphy, Watford Interfaith Association

Mr Joshi offered the following reflections:

- Watford Inter Faith Association (WIFA) marked its 40th anniversary in 2017.
- When WIFA began its main activities were house groups and prayer meetings.
- In 2009, during the first Inter Faith Week, we organised an inter faith pilgrimage.
- There are many places of worship close together in Watford town centre. We had fruitful discussions leading to the pilgrimage.
- Last year was the 10th anniversary of the pilgrimage. The pilgrimage began at the synagogue which is furthest from the town centre. The Inter Faith Week pilgrimage is on the same day as Mitzvah Day so we were able to combine celebrations.
- As all the places of worship are quite close to each other, the participants walk from place to place in one afternoon visiting 5 to 6 places of worship.
- We visited a few churches, including a Catholic church, and also visited the Sunni mosque in the town centre. There is now a Hindu temple in the town centre so it was also included in the pilgrimage and the Al-Zahra Shi'a mosque was also included for the first time last year. The pilgrimage finished at Watford Gurdwara. At the end of the pilgrimage langar (a

vegetarian meal) is kindly provided at the Gurdwara.

- There were challenges to begin with. The doors were closed but they were ready to be opened. It just took effort. Francoise and Judith had face to face conversations with lots of people from different faith communities. There was a lot of work to be done in working out logistics, planning the route, ensuring appropriate safety and first aid and keeping everyone together.

Ms Bruni offered the following reflections:

- The Watford and Three Rivers Hate Crime Officer of the local police force is on the WIFA committee from time to time. He advised that we would need permission and public liability insurance for the pilgrimage.
- Another factor was planning the timetable for the day. This had to be created taking into account all the services and prayer times at each place of worship that needed to be avoided. Ones at the mosques and Catholic Church were particularly relevant.



Watford Inter Faith Association presentation

- A local police officer walked the route with us in advance to work out which areas had to be avoided or needed more safety and where and how to cross main roads. We were also lucky to have firefighters involved.
- Any route needs to be safe for wheelchairs and it's important to know where toilets are along the route.

Ms Murphy offered the following reflections:

- The pilgrimage has had a positive impact on the town regarding inter faith relations. It has been very popular among Watford residents. People have been interested to visit the various places of worship around their town and find out about different religions.
- There has usually been an average of 60 to 80 people taking part. Some people visit just a few places, others stay all day. The weather is often cold in November during Inter Faith Week but it does not deter people from participating. There is a great spirit of camaraderie.
- From the start of the Pilgrimage in 2009, we have received the support of the Mayor, the local MP, the Police and the Fire Department. Many have supported and attended the pilgrimage more than once over the years.
- People's views have changed over time. There was reticence and apprehension from the places of worship at the start but this has change considerably as the years have progressed, developing to openness and warm welcome.
- On the foundation of the relationships with the various places of worship around Watford that the pilgrimage had built, the Watford Faith Leaders' Forum was initiated in 2015. It was an initiative of a WIFA committee member. The idea was

to bring together faith leaders to 'be friends before we need to be friends'. Faith leaders responded positively and since then they have met every 3 months in a different place of worship.

- Pilgrimages are a very good way to help develop inter faith relations. The public respond positively to the opportunity and the various places of worship, including their religious leaders, are put in a situation where they welcome people from other faiths or no faith. Through the experience, barriers are coming down and openness and acceptance of people of other faiths has gradually improved.

The following questions and comments were raised. Answers from the speakers are in italics.

- How long did it take to get different places of worship involved? Were people open to the idea or did you have to twist people's arms?

The best way to get people involved has been to talk with them directly. We have often approached individuals that we know within communities and spoken to them on a one-to-one basis and this has worked well.

- Do the people who receive you at the places of worship receive any training, so that they know what to do and say? How do you decide what happens at each place of worship?

We spend a minimum of 15 to 20 minutes at each place of worship. It's up to them what they decide to do. Usually they give some brief information about their faith and the history of their building. Sometimes the hosts want to offer refreshments and we plan in advance to stay longer in those places. Otherwise we try to keep a strict schedule of basically 15 to 20 minutes in each place of worship.



***Living our Faith,
Loving our Neighbour***

WIFA 40th Anniversary Celebration
Celebrating 40 years of interfaith in Watford
 July 9, 2017



Dr Harriet Crabtree, Chair of Inter Faith Network UK cut the anniversary cake



Elected Mayor Baroness Dorothy Thornhill with WIFA Chair Revd Dr Geoffrey Calvert



Some early Chairs and Secretary with Judith Bruni current Secretary

Watford Interfaith Pilgrimage

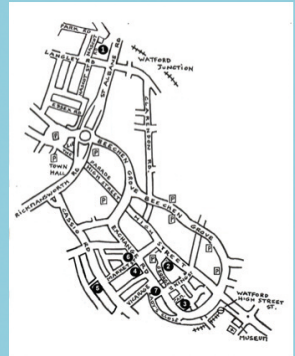


On the occasion of National Interfaith Week in 2009, WIFA organized an interfaith pilgrimage around Watford

Watford in Hertfordshire has a population of over 95,000 inhabitants

This is the list of the main places visited during our annual pilgrimage, walking through the town in one afternoon.

1. Watford and District Synagogue
2. St Mary's C of E Church
3. Watford Central Mosque
4. Velmurugan Hindu Temple
5. Al-Zahra Centre Shia Mosque
6. Holy Rood Roman Catholic Church
7. Sri Guru Singh Sabha Gurdwara



At the Watford & District Synagogue



At St Mary C of E Church



Walking through the town



At the Al-Zahra Centre Shia Mosque



At the Central Mosque



At the Velmurugan Hindu Temple



At Holy Rood Roman Catholic Church



At the Al-Zahra Centre Shia Mosque



At the Sri Guru Singh Sabha Gurdwara



A warm meal at the end of the pilgrimage

The pilgrims walk through the town

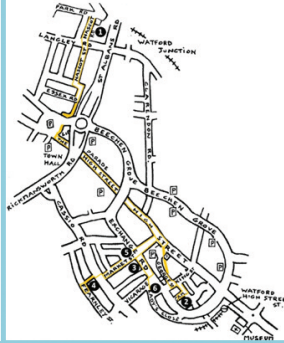


Watford has a unique situation as you can walk to all the major places of worship in just one afternoon.

Strict timetable and choice of a safe route to reach all the places of worship

Watford Interfaith Pilgrimage Sunday 18th November 2018

- 1) 12noon - 1pm, Watford & District Synagogue, Nasscot Rd. As part of Mitzvah Day*, you are invited for tea, coffee and delicious kosher cakes before the Rabbi's presentation.
 - 2) 1.30pm - 2pm, Watford Central Mosque, Cambridge Rd. Shoes should be taken off and women need to cover their heads.
 - 3) 2.15pm - 2.45pm, Watford Yoganuragan Temple, (Hindu Temple), Exchange Road. Shoes should be taken off.
 - 4) 3.00 - 3.30pm, Al Zahra Centre (Shia Mosque), Featrey St. Shoes should be taken off and women need to cover their heads.
 - 5) 3.45 - 4.15pm, Holy Rood RC Church, Market Street.
 - 6) 4.30 - 5pm, Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha, Lady's Close. Shoes should be taken off and both men and women need to cover their heads. Refreshments will be served.
- *Mitzvah Day is the annual day in the Jewish community to engage in acts of kindness.



Support of the Fire Department and First Aiders



The Fire engines follow the pilgrimage



Police escort to advise on the route



Volunteers to marshal the pilgrims



The pilgrimage is one of the most popular and attended interfaith event in Watford

- Positive response from the public, keen to find out and learn about the various places of worship of their town and to learn about other faiths.
- Annual attendance of an average of 60 to 80 people
- Walking together through Watford in one afternoon brought people together from different backgrounds
- Interest and support from the Elected Mayor of Watford, Patron of WIFA and from other officials.



Watford Interfaith Pilgrimage 2018



The Pilgrimage has been very beneficial in promoting interfaith to the Watford's faith leaders

- At first, reticence and apprehension about people from other faiths visiting their places of worship. Negative view on interfaith and insisting on their own faith.
- Over the years progressively change from protective and defensive to openness, welcoming and friendship even acknowledgement of other faiths.



Watford Faith Leaders Forum

Inaugurated on 18 March 2015 at Watford Central Mosque.

'Be Friends before we need to be Friends'



The Watford Faith leaders meet every 3 months in different places of worship around Watford

Our third meeting at the Synagogue. 14 October 2015

Feedback from discussion groups

Full points from Discussion Groups are included later in this report. Below are those key points that the Groups chose to feed back to plenary.

1: Developing local inter faith organisation programmes with impact

Rapporteur: Clesia Mendes

- Impact means different things in different contexts. Issues have impact on communities in different ways depending on their interests.
- In order to assess impact, you have to start with a vision. This can be about starting something new or maintaining current work.
- It's important to think about sustainability, continuity and succession planning.

- Capacity is vital. There is no point in having a great vision if you don't have the resources to fulfil it.

2: Open doors and faith trails: creating opportunities for inter faith learning

Rapporteur: Jack Scotcher

- Cultural sensitivities should be considered when visiting places of worship.
- It's good to engage the public and enable them to learn about faiths.
- Knowing how to keep participants and property safe and secure is key to successful open door day planning.

3: Local inter faith groups connecting with young people (including through schools and colleges)

Rapporteur: Alan Shand

- Making faith fun is one of the best ways to involve young people. This can be



Sean Finlay, Wisbech Interfaith Forum and Prof Harbhajan Singh, Bexley Multifaith Forum and Thamesmead Interfaith Forum

through music, performances, arts and sports.

4: Dialogue amid division

Rapporteur: Patricia Stoa

- There are many issues that can be difficult, for different reasons, to discuss, for example, the Israel-Palestine conflict, grooming, women, domestic violence and curriculum content. Often these issues are not raised but sometimes they do have to be addressed.
- Creating a safe space for dialogue is critical. This is only possible with good facilitation and clear ground rules, such as not interrupting when someone else is speaking.
- Any such dialogues need careful preparation in advance, for instance thinking through all the issues that might arise and where there might be points of tension.
- Trust is vital to any discussions – trust between the participants themselves and between the participants and the facilitator.
- Good stories need to be told about successful dialogues so that people have confidence in dialogues in the future.

5: Making the case for the importance of your work

Rapporteur: Daphne Beale

- It can be helpful to get other bodies, such as local authorities and police involved in local inter faith work. This is a good way to spread the message about the work.
- One of the best ways to communicate your work is through social media, especially Twitter and Facebook.

6: Working in partnership with other organisations towards shared social goals

Rapporteur: Sean Finlay

- It is not possible to do everything alone, so partnerships are very important.
- The challenge is to make imaginative connections and not to play safe. Responding to environmental issues is just one of the ways that you can link with other organisations.
- Partnership working can also be a good way to draw in new people to your local inter faith organisation.

Communicating with a positive purpose

Ashley Beck, Inter Faith Development Officer, Inter Faith Network for the UK

Mr Beck offered the following reflections:

Types of communication

- Communication can take many forms. In our context, we might tend to view it as about dialogue. The main focus of this presentation is on 'getting the message across' which is why the images on the first PowerPoint slide are more associated with 'transmitting' or 'telling stories'. It's important to always consider the type of communication (Slide 2).
- What does bad communication look like? It can be people shouting at one another, or everyone talking at once, or untargeted communication, or just a constant stream of noise that we want to block out (Slide 3).
- What does good communication look like? Good communication begins with listening. This is obviously true for dialogue. It is also true for healthy relationships of all kinds. But it is also true for marketing because you need to know your audience: Who are they? Where are they? How are they communicating with the people/ causes/ brands they are interested in? (Slide 4)

Challenges of communicating well

- What are the challenges of communicating well? There can be many challenges to communicating inter faith activity:
 - Some messages are complicated – and some aren't, but we may still think they



Ashley Beck, IFN Inter Faith Development Officer

- are – so it can be hard to distil them into a key message.
- Balance can be tricky – whether balancing different perspectives, or giving different groups similar amounts of 'air time'.
- It can be difficult to choose what is worth saying and what isn't (Slide 5).
- It can be hard to find good images that help tell our story.
- If you use the wrong media for the wrong message with the wrong audience, it will never reach the people you're seeking (Slide 6).
- Sometimes people find it challenging dealing with negative issues, whether that is the fear of 'getting it wrong', or being misquoted or being criticised, or just being attacked by trolls who are negative about everything.

Best practice for communicating

- So why should we bother? Because you have something worthwhile to say! (Slide 7)
- Deciding how to approach the media and social media can be tough, but you can begin by knowing your audience and knowing what you want to say. You can then build from there (Slide 8).
- The key to effective social media – and most communications strategies in this field – is positiveness. The slides show tweets where IFN has highlighted the positive work of others (Slide 9).
- Finding positive ways to deal with negative issues is also important. In inter faith contexts, that often means telling the stories of how people respond well to something challenging. The tweet shown on the slide about the Winter Night Shelter run by Langar Aid in Coventry has had the most retweets of any of our tweets so far in 2019 (Slide 10).
- The Facebook post about Jewish communities visiting Muslim neighbours after a mosque attack received the most engagement of any we posted in 2018. It deals with a positive cross-community response to something negative and also demonstrates the value that can be added simply by sharing other people's positive news stories (Slide 11).

Making statements

- IFN has always had a policy on making of statements. These are infrequent, and those made by the Co-Chairs and Faith Communities Forum Moderators usually respond to events with an impact on inter faith relations in the UK. Social media is just one of the ways that these are shared. This is again a positive way to show different communities responding together to something profoundly

negative. The Tweet shown is about the statement made by IFN's Co-Chairs and the Faith Communities Forum Moderators in the context of the impact on UK inter faith relations of the terrorist attack on mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand. This is the most recent example (Slide 12).

- Many local inter faith organisations both share statements from IFN and other bodies, and issue their own. Following the attacks in Christchurch the IFN website listed responses from IFN member bodies, including many from local groups. We embedded social media posts or linked to webpages where possible. We also listed those we knew about that weren't online (Slide 13).

Sharing and adding value

- A lot of IFN's posts involve highlighting and lifting up positive inter faith activity run by others. This is a great way of helping to reinforce for the world that faiths working together is normal! (Slide 14)
- Twitter in particular can be a useful way to share information about events. Neither of the events in these tweets were open to the public so tweeting from them was not about finding more participants but about telling more stories of people of different backgrounds coming together (Slide 15).

Planning posts

- Most of the examples so far have been 'responsive' posts, which react to events taking place in the world, or to the social media posts of others. That is one of the reasons that listening is so important.
- But some posts can be planned in advance. For example, IFN posts a lot about religious festivals (and some cultural ones). IFN's post about the

Winter Solstice got the most likes of IFN's Facebook posts in 2018 (Slide 16).

Visual storytelling

- Having good photos helps encourage people to like posts. However, sometimes, there is no perfect photo and then graphics can be used instead.
- For example, IFN posted a series of tweets about the good work of local inter faith groups. These used graphics to tell a story. They all had a recognisable and consistent style (Slide 17).

Themes

- IFN often looks for inter faith dimensions to themes and issues which have a wider resonance beyond the inter faith world.
- The two examples shown in the slides are about sport and women's suffrage. Both of these examples also tag other relevant Twitter accounts and use relevant hashtags. These are good ways to reach a wider audience with positive inter faith stories (Slide 18).

Taming the trolls – being positive

- So is using social media about winning arguments, or taming the trolls? Not exactly.
- It is about telling positive stories about people of different faiths and beliefs working together for the common good.
- This can be both telling our own stories, and sharing others' stories with wider audiences.
- By advancing these kinds of positive narrative, we inherently challenge the negative and divisive narratives that also exist.

Traditional media

- The same is true in many ways of the traditional media. It can be a very good way to lift up the positive, such as this newspaper article about Inter Faith Week in Bolton last year and this article about an Inter Faith Week event in Wisbech, a much less diverse part of the country (Slides 19 and 20).
- As with social media, reciprocity is important. In both cases, the local groups have taken time to build relationships with local journalists.
- Getting stories into the press is a great way to celebrate success. For example, this article is about Islington Faiths Forum getting the Queen's Award (Slide 21).
- Traditional media can also be used to help to demonstrate to people in our communities that people of different faiths and beliefs can and do work together well and by doing so have a positive impact on the wider community and the wider world. This article is about the Cornwall Faiths Forum helping to work with 9 refugee families from Syria (Slide 22).
- Emphasising that inter faith activity is normal, and that faith groups across the UK work together regularly, helps to counter negative narratives, which then tips the balance back toward the positive.

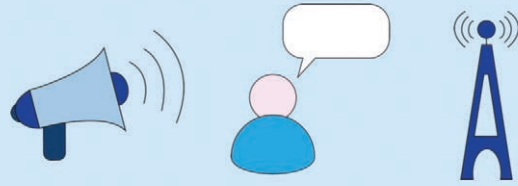
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Communicating Inter Faith Activity



2

What is communication?



3

What does bad communication look like?



4

What does good communication look like?



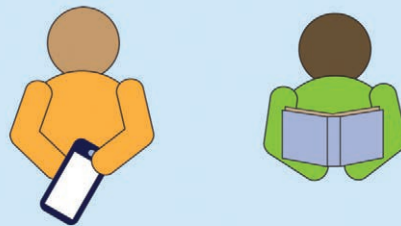
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Challenges of communicating well



6

Challenges of communicating well



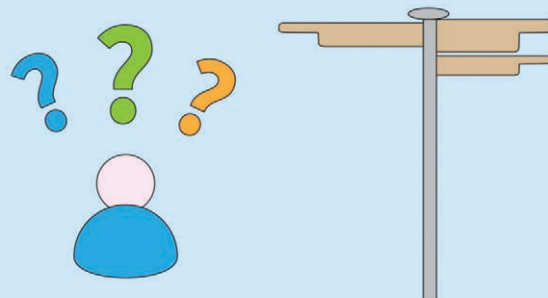
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So why do this at all?



8

Which way to go?



9

Accentuate the positive



10

Latch on to the affirmative



11

Latch on to the affirmative



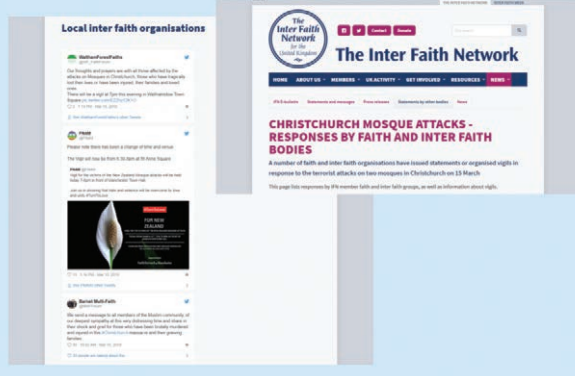
12

Statements



13

Sharing statements



14

Sharing and adding value



15

Drawing attention to events



16

Planned and responsive



17

Visual story telling



18

Themes and issues



19

Traditional media



20

Traditional media



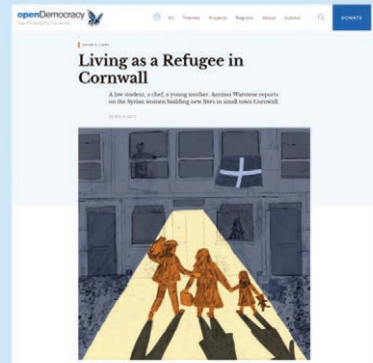
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Traditional media



22

Traditional media



Responding in solidarity to terrorism and hate crime

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

Bishop Atkinson offered the following reflections:

Rise in hate crime

- In the last few years there have been serious spikes in hate crime.
- IFN takes very seriously hate crime and its impact. It has been the subject of discussions at several meetings of IFN's Faith Communities Forum, which brings together the National Faith Community Representative Bodies in IFN membership.
- There is also a continuous backdrop of incidents and of unpleasant attacks on social media, as well as concern about irresponsible stirring up of negative views and feelings of particular groups by some within the media and by some politicians. As Ashley Beck said, filling more of the social media space with positive stories and images is so important.
- Peaks in hate crime often come after events such as the Islamist attack on the Manchester Arena or the far right attack on mosques in New Zealand. There was also a rise in hate crime after the result of the EU Referendum. The UK's Exit from the EU has been very divisive. We shall need to be ready and attentive to respond positively to bring communities together following that Exit (if and when it happens).
- The Community Security Trust (CST) recorded 1,652 Antisemitic incidents in the UK in 2018, the highest total that the CST has ever recorded in a single calendar year. This is an increase of 16 per cent from the 1,420 Antisemitic incidents recorded in 2017.
- TELL MAMA, a body dealing with anti Muslim incidents, has reported that it received 95 reports of hate crimes between 15 March (the day of the attack) and 21 March, with some 89 per cent making direct references to the attack. That amounted to a nearly 600% rise.
- And it is not just Jews and Muslims who suffer. Sikhs, too, have suffered abuse, as have Hindus and some others. For example, gurdwaras have been vandalised and attacked in some areas.
- The Inter Faith Network for the UK has repeatedly stressed the importance of reporting incidents but also of working to counter prejudice and stand in solidarity. An important resource is its guidelines: *Looking After One Another: The Safety and Security of our Faith Communities*. These were produced in 2017 in partnership



Rt Revd Richard Atkinson, IFN, Co-Chair



Reynold Rosenberg, Welwyn Hatfield Inter Faith Group, Shenaz Sajan, Birmingham Council of Faiths, and Marcia Watson, Warwick District Faiths Forum

with the Home Office, MHCLG, the National Police Chiefs' Council, the National Fire Chiefs Council and the Crown Prosecution Service. The guidelines set out practical steps for responding and also underline the vital importance of developing strong faith community networks which form a sound basis for responding in times of tension or if there are attacks. The document also contains details on where to report hate crime.

Responses to New Zealand attack

- As was noted in the previous presentation, following the attack on the two mosques in Christchurch, the Co-Chairs and Moderators of the Faith Communities Forum put out a statement saying that

“..attacks on churches, gurdwaras, mosques, temples and other places of worship of different faiths here and around the world are a reminder of the need to condemn extremist violence in the strongest terms and to stand together and to continue to work together with ever greater urgency against ignorance,

prejudice and hatred. Hatred targeting any community because of its faith and belief is a scourge that cannot be tolerated. There must be freedom to worship and practise our faith freely and without fear.”

- And around the UK, many other national and local faith and inter faith bodies and also religious leaders made statements of solidarity.
- People came together in vigils and meetings arranged by groups such as those held by Bedford Council of Faiths and Luton Council of Faiths (which I attended). The Luton one can be seen on the slides. If you look on IFN's website in the News section you will see that the office has gathered together information about vigils and events held by IFN member bodies.
- A curate in one of the parish churches in Luton put a poster up in his window saying “We love our Muslim neighbours”. It was spotted by members of the local mosque who responded in a number of ways, including inviting the curate to Friday prayers to thank him publicly. This led to the Churches in Luton producing

posters saying the same which are now going up all over Luton. Each locality is different, but in Luton this has been helpful in opening up new relationships, even where there were already good relationships.

Some general reflections on solidarity

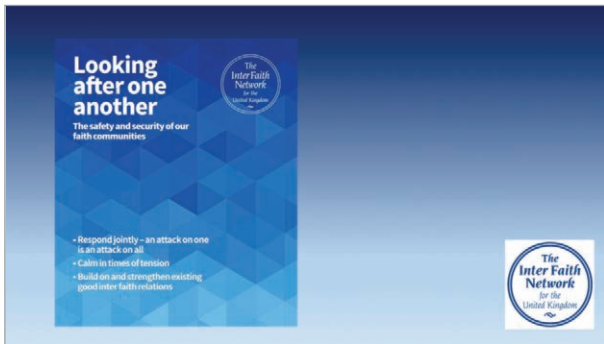
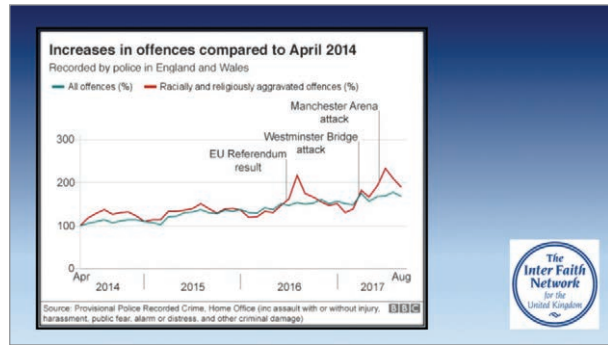
- Sometimes, when an attack takes place, there is a tendency to begin worrying about how to respond because it is difficult to keep finding the right words. But it is vital to keep responding, to keep making the effort.
- A lot of organisation goes into bringing people together locally for statements or vigils. In both Luton and Bedford it was the local inter faith organisations that initiated responses to the Christchurch attacks.
- In coming together to grieve, to express solidarity, to commit to renewed work for understanding and peace and justice, we send a vital message, both to our local communities and more widely.
- In Luton the vigil was held on the same Town Hall steps where one of the early rallies of the English Defence League had been held many years previously, so there was a nuanced story. Peter Adams, speaking for the Churches, had said “We have done a lot but we have to do more”. The banners were part of that extra work.
- It is important to keep talking, to think what more we can do and what new ways we can find to make the message fresh. The vigil in Bedford opened up a number of side conversations. Sometimes awful events present opportunities for good.
- In parts of the country there will have been spikes in hate crime after the Christchurch attacks – but it doesn’t have to be that way. I received a letter from the

Police and Crime Commissioner in Bedfordshire saying that there had not been a spike locally. She said that this was a testimony to the police and its good partnership working. It was also testimony to the good relationships that exist across Bedfordshire. Working with police and local authorities is vital. If you are wondering how to engage with them, there is now good practice in many places and lots of advice available.

- The final slide shows a stained glass window in St Andrew’s Church, Bedford, which I dedicated about 10 years ago. It shows Jesus in the central panel, with the title Prince of Peace, and on either side there are blacksmiths. They are ‘beating swords into ploughshares’, an Old Testament image from Isaiah and Micah. On one level this is about taking weapons of war and turning them into peace. It is, however, also about ideas and extremist ideologies and beating them into peaceful ideas. The blacksmiths have golden halos. The person who designed the image said that it was a heavenly one. It is the work of Heaven, but, as always, the work of Heaven is to be done on earth.

The following comment was made:

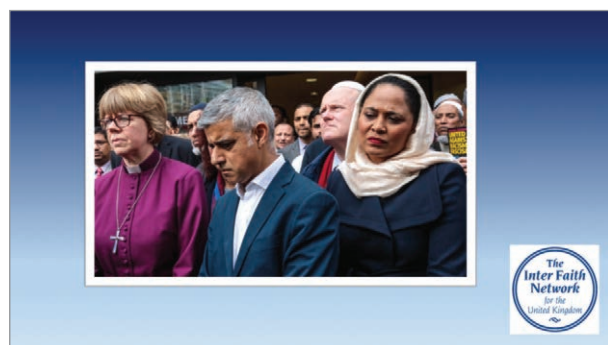
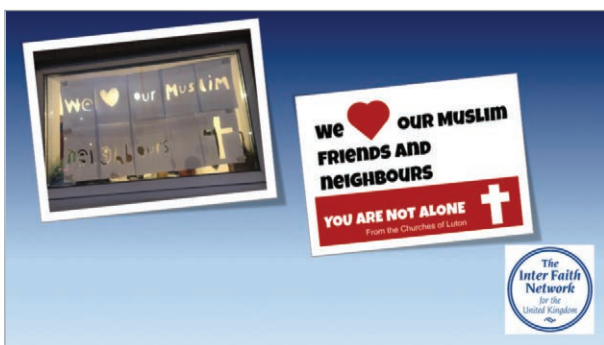
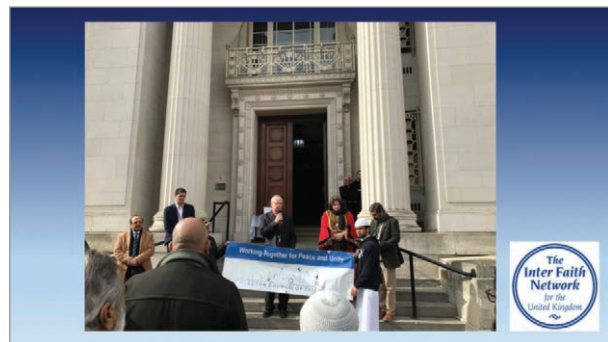
- Filling the social media space with positive stories is so important. In Peterborough and around, the Bishop of Peterborough leads the way on this. It is vital that inter faith organisations stand up to negativity. Individual bullies on social media need to be condemned. There are only a small number of bullies but they become very vocal because the silent majority do not speak out. It is not just the Bishop’s role; it is up to everyone to put their head above the parapet.



"we condemn this cowardice act at #Christchurch. We offers prayers to all those who have been devastated by this extreme and barbaric act, those who lost their lives, those who were injured, all those who have suffered as a consequence and to all New Zealanders." Hindu Forum Britain

"Our thoughts are with the Muslim community and those who've lost loved ones in the terrorist atrocity against innocent worshippers in New Zealand", The Network of Sikh Organisations

"Leeds Faiths Forum sends its condolences, love and solidarity to New Zealand. We stand together with our Muslim brothers and sisters in the wake of the horrific attacks on worshippers at two mosques in Christchurch. Love, not hate. Togetherness, not division." Leeds Faith Forum

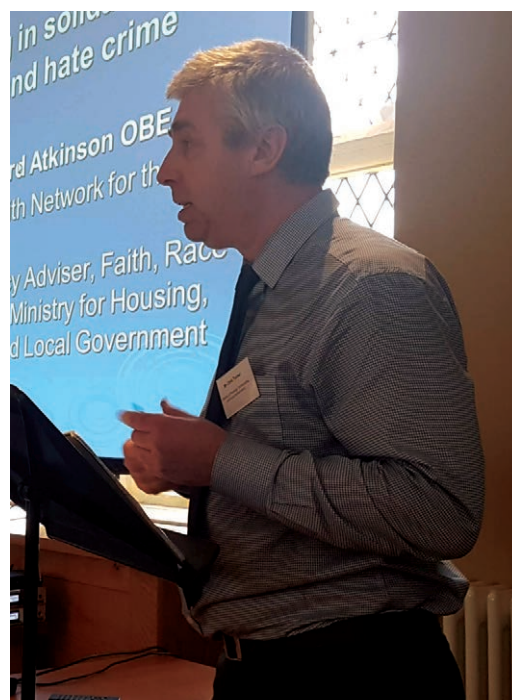


Responding in solidarity to terrorism and hate crime

Chris Turner, Policy Adviser, Faith, Race and Integration, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

Mr Turner offered the following reflections:

- When the Inter Faith Network collated all the responses from its member faith and inter faith organisations to the attacks in Christchurch, it really helped our Ministers to see that so many bodies were supporting the Muslim community.
- Social media plays a major role. Lord Bourne, the Minister for Faith, is very keen on social media and it was very important in responding to the Christchurch attacks.
- The Government has contingency plans in place for dealing with emergencies and crises. Ministers were keen to get out and about to reassure communities, and the Government quickly condemned the attacks on social media as well as issuing press releases. After the Christchurch attacks the Secretary of State wrote to Muslim organisations so that they could pass on his message to all the mosques around the country.
- It is important to see so many communities coming together at these difficult times and to hear of faith and belief groups working together to come out and support the victims of Christchurch.
- Although Muslims were affected in this instance, other faith and belief groups can also feel vulnerable to attacks or hate crime. It is important to allay community fears across all faiths and belief groups.
- Lord Bourne was in Woking on the Monday following the Christchurch attack. There was a vigil at the Central London Mosque which was attended by the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government. The event was picked up by traditional and social media. The Home Secretary also attended and spoke about hate crime and the potential spike of hate crime.
- The Home Office Islamic Network, as part of their Friday Prayers last week, invited civil servants from across Government to the prayer room. This is all part of showing solidarity across Government.
- Earlier this month, the Home Secretary announced an increase in funding for the Places of Worship Fund. This announcement was brought forward in light of the Christchurch attacks. The Scheme was oversubscribed last time. This time there will be £1.6 million available.



Chris Turner, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

- The Places of Worship Fund was established in 2016 as part of the Government's Hate Crime Action Plan. It is about providing financial support for physical protective security, such as fencing, lighting and CCTV. One third of the grants under the previous scheme were awarded to mosques but it is open to buildings of all faiths. Details will be online shortly. It is important that the Fund reaches as many vulnerable places of worship as possible and we are going to simplify the bidding process.
- There will also be an additional £5 million fund to provide security training. That is in recognition of the fact that physical security is only part of the problem and it is important that staff have security understanding as well.
- The Integrated Communities Action Plan was launched in February. In the Foreword our Secretary of State talks about how "faith groups and ethnic minorities make our places better, safe and stronger" and says that "Rather than a problem to be fixed, they are something to celebrate."
- So that other Government Departments are also accountable for their actions we have set up a cross-Government inter-Ministerial group on Safe and Integrated Communities.
- We have also refreshed the Hate Crime Action Plan which was launched in November 2018.
- Peterborough is one of the five Integration Areas and Indy Laska, the MHCLG Integration Lead for Peterborough, is at today's meeting.
- Britain is generally an open and tolerant country which has a long history of welcoming people from all shores and different faiths and none. At the same time, it is important that the people who

come to Britain understand the rights, responsibilities and opportunities that brings. We should be proud as a nation that they choose to come here to live in the UK and to make it their home.

- The Government will always protect people's rights to free speech, to hold traditional views and practise their religion within the law but won't shy away from challenging cultures and practices that can act as barriers to integration, that are harmful to individuals or restrict their rights and hold them back from making the most of the opportunities of living in modern Britain.

The following questions and comments were raised. Mr Turner's answers are in *italics*.

- If you divide £1.6 million by the number of all the places of worship in the country, how much would each one get?



Dr Harriet Crabtree, IFN Executive Director

Although not a large amount, some changes can be made at very little cost. Many places of worship are putting their own security in place. For example I was at a Jain temple last week and they had put up some new fencing at minimal cost for which they had raised funds through voluntary contributions. They had found the fencing a very good deterrent. Door locks and padlocks are also a low cost deterrent. The £5 million security training fund will also be helpful.

- How does Britain being a warm, welcoming, open community fit with its EU Exit? The Community Security Trust notes that Antisemitism is rising.

As part of MHCLG's engagement with communities, it is engaging with as many community groups as possible. At every meeting we ask whether, and if so how, the EU Exit is having an impact on them. The most important question is whether it is affecting community cohesion. At the moment there hasn't been a noticeable spike in hate crime in the way that there was after the Referendum result. There has been a rise in Antisemitism and anti-Muslim hatred but there have not been any direct links made between this and the EU Exit. We are working with the Home Office and Police as part of our community engagement.

IFN's Executive Director commented on the fact that there were calls – as heard during the day – for solidarity and for openness, for welcoming people into places of worship. At the same time, people were worrying about security and about needing to install safety systems. It was a difficult balance to strike. She noted the important work of local inter faith organisations to highlight positive engagement as well as respond to prejudice and hate. Funding and support through central and local government was also needed to resource some of this kind of local inter faith engagement.

Closing Reflections from the Chair

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

Mr Birdi offered the following reflections:

- Today's meeting has been very interesting and informative.
- We have heard how important public sector support is at the highest level for faith communities and inter faith work. We have also learned more about how open doors and faith walks are engaging faiths and different cultures. And many good ideas came from the discussion groups.
- Social media has come up a few times today. It is a good way to engage, especially with young people. It is, of course, not the only way to engage and it's important to use traditional media as well – particularly for older generations.
- Problems within society are nothing new. Nowadays, however, information travels
- If faith and inter faith groups did not do the work that they do, there would be many more problems in society.
- The work of local inter faith organisations is very valuable and it deserves greater recognition.

quickly and we know more about what is happening in the rest of the world. People are more globally connected. Events that happen overseas affect our local communities because many people have connections abroad. We have heard about the importance of local response and of inter faith response within that.

Mr Birdi thanked everyone for attending and for their contributions, including speakers, discussion group presenters, facilitators, note takers and rapporteurs. He also thanked the staff at Peterborough Cathedral Visitor Centre and IFN staff and volunteers.



Participants in discussion



Participants in discussion

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

Discussion Group 1: Developing local inter faith organisation programmes with impact

This discussion group was facilitated by Jatinder Singh Birdi, IFN Co-Chair and Chair, Warwick District Faiths Forum, and included an opening presentation from David Hampshire, Assistant Director, IFN.

Mr Jatinder Singh Birdi welcomed those present and invited them to introduce themselves. The discussion group would be exploring some of the factors that local inter faith organisations have identified as helping their work have impact – from successful projects and events and Inter Faith Week programmes to good communication, strong volunteer bases, choice of venues, agreed methods of operating, and more.

Mr David Hampshire circulated a handout, a copy of which is included in this note and which was drawn on at points during the discussion. He offered the following reflections:

- In some areas there are no local inter faith organisations but there is still inter faith work taking place (which may be part of a programme of other types of body). Some of the questions being explored by the discussion group may be relevant to such other types of inter faith activity.
- Often local inter faith organisations are set up for a particular purpose and that might change over time. It is always worth regularly asking questions, such as:
 - Why do we exist?
 - Are there other bodies in our area now working for the same or a similar purpose?
 - Have we already fulfilled the purpose for which we were established or is there more to do?
- For local inter faith organisations that are clear they have an ongoing role, it is important to ask questions such as:
 - What difference do we want to make?
 - How do we keep ourselves sustainable?

- How can we best tell the story of our work and its importance in such a way as to make people want to get involved?
- Doing background research helps you to find out who is already doing what in your area.
- Once you know what you want to do, then you can consider questions such as “Can we do this on our own?” and, if not, “Who can help us carry out our aims?”
- There are a number of places to find financial or in-kind support. For example, local authorities sometimes offer support. In some areas of England the Near Neighbours programme of the Church Urban Fund provides small grants for projects.
- Being part of IFN is a helpful way to learn from others. Its publications and advice are also useful.
- It’s important not to start a project that can’t be completed because of a lack of capacity. When planning, try to consider which people have key skills and what provision is in place if they are unavailable or move on.
- Checking whether your work has had impact is important when planning for the future, so it’s important to monitor and evaluate. The handout points to some resources to help with that.
- The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government recently produced some material about integration outcomes and measurement guides, which may be of interest.
- It’s important to celebrate your work!
- Each local community is different. What works in one area, doesn’t necessarily work in another. For instance, before the Warwick District Faiths Forum (WDFF) was set up, there were previously two local inter faith organisations in the area which had both ceased to operate.
- Vision, mission and constitution are important basics for any local inter faith organisation. It’s important to think about how to make an impact on the wider community.
- It can be helpful to have members of local statutory bodies involved. For example, WDFF has members of the police, local authority, NHS, and local community and voluntary action. WDFF is seen as a two-way hub.
- For someone to attend a meeting it needs to be of benefit to them, so it’s always worth asking “Would I attend?”, “What benefit will I get?” There is no point in holding an event simply for the sake of it, there should be a purpose. WDFF has recently held conferences on ‘Faith and health’ and ‘Faith and inclusivity’.
- Dialogue is important. It’s also good for faith groups to come together to tackle difficult issues, such as knife crime. There are vulnerable people in all communities.

In general discussion the following points were made:

General comments on impact

- Impact may be viewed differently by different stakeholders who feel ownership of groups. The local authority has a significant stake in the Plymouth Council of Faiths and therefore is looking for specific types of outcome. Another type of group in the area is formed of faith leaders, who come together, for example, when responses need to be made following an attack or emergency. Their

Mr Birdi thanked Mr Hampshire and offered the following reflections:

expectations and measurement of impact would be different from that of the local authority.

- Impact is to do with your mindset. The Sikh gurus preached that everyone is equal but this is not always carried out on a practical level.
- Funding is good but sometimes it can lead to mission drift and lower impact in terms of a group's aims. For example, a group moving away from its inter faith work in order to do general cohesion work funded by the local authority might find that impact in terms of its aims is lessened.
- It is good for local inter faith organisations to be self-sustaining. In that way they can shape their own work in response to the need that they see.

Examples of activities demonstrating impact

Working with local authorities

- Hertsmere Faiths Forum has included in its constitution that it wants to interact with local government and faith communities as a credible go-between. That is its primary role. Its most recent issue has been a shortage of places for faith groups to meet and feel at home. Involvement with the local authority is starting to have some impact.
- There is a gap between what local authorities want to do and what they can do and, to some extent, local inter faith organisations fill that gap. Newmarket Inter-Faith Forum was formed in January. Although the East of England Faiths Agency and West Suffolk Faith and Community Forum exist, it was felt that there was enough community identity to have a separate group in Newmarket and to have real positive impact. Last month the Forum launched a project called

'Looking for change' which is about collecting money for homeless and vulnerable people. The local authority saw a need for that but weren't able to set it up for themselves. They turned to the faith and community groups to meet that need and so the Forum launched the project in February. The project ticks all the boxes for the local authority, is good for the community and faith communities feel that they had been able to provide.

Schools' work

- The Plymouth Centre for Faiths and Cultural Diversity does a lot of work with schools, making hundreds of visits each year. This is a project in itself and its impact is very focused.
- Welwyn Hatfield Interfaith Group has an employee whose job is to get faith speakers into schools. This is becoming more and more successful and the targets for 2019 have already been beaten. Often the school is discussing a festival in RE lessons and then wants a speaker from that faith community.
- West Cheshire Interfaith Forum has many projects going on. Each month the Forum holds either one or two 'harmony weeks' during which speakers from Baha'i, Christian, Hindu and Muslim communities go into schools and talk with children and teachers about their faiths. The children find this a safe environment in which to ask questions and are open and curious. The harmony weeks are fully booked until June 2020. Schools are keen to take part because it helps to fulfil their curriculum and can be helpful with Ofsted ratings. The 'harmony weeks' are delivered by volunteers and the schools pay the Forum's travel expenses. Succession planning is very important. It is good to ask whether events are impactful and relevant and how best to follow up on them.

- Some local inter faith organisations have service level agreements, which enable them to have someone available full time for work with schools. This means they build up experience that helps them be more effective.

Young people

- Near Neighbours has a Catalyst programme for young people aged 16 to 26. There is funding for this for 3 years in Peterborough. One of the topics that the young people discuss is 'faith and belonging'. At the end of the programme they talk about how they can get involved in social action based on what they've learned. The programmes each last 4 days and there is information on the Near Neighbours' website.

Working across a range of issues

- Welwyn Hatfield Inter Faith Group does important projects with schools and with an over 50s club. These did not start as faith-related but people were inspired and brought their faith to them. This has had a positive impact on those participating.
- Leeds Concord Interfaith Fellowship (LCIF) began in the 1970s after local riots and is now 43 years old. It is a subscription organisation with about 50 subscribers and a mailing list of about 150 people. There has been some succession planning and there are people involved from ages 25 to 70 plus. Representatives of the major faiths in the area are on the committee, including Baha'is and Pagans. Events are held every

Handout

Discussion Group 1: Developing local inter faith organisation programmes with impact

1. Thinking about impact

- What do we mean by 'impact'?
- There are lots of good resources easily available on the internet.
- It's important to think about this at the outset – and also how we will measure this; for examples see: <https://www.smallcharities.org.uk/resources-evaluation-impact/> and <https://www.ncvo.org.uk/practical-support/information/impact>

For successful planning, however, it is very important to be clear what our vision and goals are.

2. Our Vision and our goals

- What are our founding objectives, our vision and our 'mission'?
- Do we have a constitution with clear terms of reference?

In order to ensure our work is having impact we need to ensure that we regularly review the work we are doing,

3. Scoping and Planning

- What may our vision and goals mean in our current operating environment?
- Is it time to review what we are doing? What might be involved in that?
- The importance of planning
- Scoping - scanning the environment
- What are local needs?
- Who else is engaging with similar needs?
- Considering partnership working on particular strands

The clearer we can be about these things, the more likely our organisation's work is to develop well and have impact.

At the same time, however, there is a need to avoid the pitfall of forever analysing and planning and not have enough time for the actual work!

4. Resources

- Planning a programme with an eye to resources
- Human resources
- Financial and in-kind resources
- Dangers of being 'funding driven'

Resources are vital to achieving our work – from a free room to funds for a project. Thinking about them creatively and carefully from the outset can help enable work with good impact.

5. Maintaining and growing participation

- Patterns of participation
- Encouraging participation
- Dealing with challenges
- Handling and responding well to change
- Reaching out to particular groups (younger, older, women, different faiths/beliefs)
- Membership and wider participation/engagement

Connection is the lifeblood of local inter faith engagement and along the journey time needs continually to be given to nurturing links and establishing and sustaining good frameworks for cooperation and understanding.

6. Organisational underpinnings

- The less visible but crucial underpinnings of successful programmes
- People
- Communication - making your events known and raising their profile
- Policies such as:
 - GDPR (<https://knowhow.ncvo.org.uk/how-to/how-to-comply-with-gdpr>)
 - Safeguarding (<https://knowhow.ncvo.org.uk/organisation/operations/safeguarding>)

Logistics of running activities and keeping organisations going are unexciting but vital!

7. Programmes

- Building a programme
- Different activities
- Targeting different audiences
- Faith groups
- Involving civic leaders
- A distinctive dimension to your programme
- Special Weeks and Days
- Partnership working

Planning together at least annually helps develop programmes with wide appeal and greater likelihood of impact in terms of widening engagement and making a difference to your local community.

8. Affirmation and celebration

- Lifting up people's achievements and celebrating our work together

Programmes with impact are the product of the work of many volunteers (and possibly staff) and wider engagement by local people and groups. Take time to affirm and celebrate the work.

month. LCIF tries to pick topics of interest for these and also hold musical events with young performers. Other major events are: an Annual Peace Service in the City Hall, attended by the Lord Mayor; a public event during Inter Faith Week, during the preparation for which LCIF engages with other organisations; and occasional Walks of Friendship with community involvement. In the area there is also the Leeds Faiths Forum and the Leeds Religion and Belief Hub run by Leeds Council.

Annual events

- Annual events are good but more regular events are needed for impact. Welwyn Hatfield Inter Faith Group holds an evening event each month. These are open to the public and usually include a

talk on a theme. They are well-publicised within faith communities (although people of no faith don't necessarily know about them). However, people have become so used to them; it might be time to try something new to spark new interest.

Inter faith sport

- Inter faith activity can crop up when you are least expecting it. For example, Table Tennis England set up table tennis tables in gurdwaras, churches and other places of worship in Yorkshire and invited anybody from the surrounding communities to come and play. The aim was to increase people's involvement in table tennis, but one of the outcomes was people from different faiths coming together. Such projects may not be set up as inter faith ones per se but they bring people from different faiths together.
- Some inter faith sports projects are planned, such as an archery project in Luton, other sports in Windsor and Maidenhead and a women's health/sports project in Manchester.

Planning for impact

- Suiting the programme to the local area is essential because there is a different faith make up in each area. In Birmingham, for example, a fifth of the population is Muslim, which is much higher than in some other parts of the UK. Understanding demography can help improve impact.
- Charity Commission research has shown that people in the first five years of retirement have the most time and skill to offer to community and voluntary groups.

Some examples of useful questions for consideration as groups plan for the future or review existing projects:

- What change do we want to make?
- How would we know we'd made it?
- How would we communicate what we are about as a group in one sentence to someone who has never heard of us?
- How clear are we about what we are trying to achieve and why?
- What resources do we have at our disposal already?
- Do we have people with organisational skills that can make things work for us?
- What more assets do we need to resource our programme?
- Why do we want to grow our group, what value would that add to the group and its work in the local community?
- Young people and inter faith
- What have we learned from our previous programmes?
- Can we learn from someone who has tried to do what we are planning to do?
- Who should know the difference we have made?
- Have we celebrated the contributions that every person and groups involved with our group has made?

Building relationships to improve impact

- We must be careful not to say ‘You’ should do this. Who is ‘you’? It’s easy for ‘I’ to take over. ‘I’ am not ‘you’. Everyone should have a vested interest in being together. It’s good for a few people to come together in planning so that it’s more than one person’s focus.
- It’s important to work with the people you can and then try to reach out to others. There is a lot of work still to do.
- Speaking face to face and having quality time is the best way to engage.
- Faith communities bring cultural capital; it is good to build on that capital.

Other

- Clifton Mosque Interfaith in Birmingham is part of Nisa-Nashim. It held a street iftar and many people were involved including local councillors. Some of its members also went on a Faith Guiding

course to help to build connections with other places of worship.

- A contributor commented that they have initiated a lot of inter faith activity in their workplace. This began with telling them about religious festivals, such as Diwali, and moved on from there.

Discussion Group 2 Open doors and faith trails: creating opportunities for inter faith learning

This discussion group was facilitated by IFN Executive Director, Dr Harriet Crabtree.

Dr Harriet Crabtree welcomed participants and invited them to introduce themselves. In this discussion group there would be further exploration of some of the issues from the plenary presentations by Zahraa Ahmed of the Muslim Council of Britain



Ruth Tetlow, Birmingham Council of Faiths and Gurmukh Singh Deagon, Leeds Concord Interfaith Fellowship

(MCB) Visit My Mosque Project (VMM) and by Judith Bruni, Yogesh Joshi and Francoise Murphy of Watford Inter Faith Association, as well as wider conversation. She noted that it was good to have present Mrs Ruth Tetlow who had established the Faith Encounters guiding programme.

In response to questions, **Ms Zahraa Ahmed** said that:

- Visit My Mosque is a national initiative which allows the MCB to engage with their partners to increase understanding on the part of the general public and enables people to network and build friendships.
- There are VMM training workshops for mosques that want to take part about how to do so and about interaction with their local communities.
- Some of the kinds of issues that the training addresses include the purpose of opening doors (learning and engagement not seeking to convert people) and how to explain about your mosque and provide basic information about beliefs.
- The training also addresses handling of dress matters. Mosques vary to some degree in how they wish people to dress. Participant mosques will make clear basic guidelines about dressing modestly (for example legs should be covered out of respect). Some mosques require that women wear headscarves. Where that is the case, some make headscarves available for women visitors who do not come with one.
- A secondary aim of the VMM initiative is to get mosques to communicate with each other. It helps encourage both big and small mosques to work together and build ties and relationships.
- MCB chose March this year for VMM. They would have liked to host it in the early

summer but that would at the moment have led to a clash with Ramadan which would have made it difficult for people to take part.

- MCB works with all sections of the Muslim community on Visit My Mosque.
- This is an initiative of Muslim places of worship as recognised by scholars belonging to the two main branches of Islam.
- Not all areas yet have mosques that are participating. VMM is happy to make direct contact to encourage mosques if people have contacts that they would suggest.
- The Home Office has now provided funding towards security of places of worship. This reinforces community cohesion and togetherness; people can work in harmony together to prevent violent attacks now that they have the resources available.

Other points made in general discussion

- In a particular area of Watford there is not great diversity and people don't always get the chance to learn about each other's faith. In the speaker's view, that was a pity because people are curious and also open to learning about other faiths. A local Muslim lady had, for example, been amazed when she visited a synagogue for the first time.
- More and more people in Watford have been participating in its inter faith pilgrimage since that began in 2009. People are realising that they actually have much in common between their respective faiths. A lot of learning is coming out of encounters such as Sikhs visiting synagogues and Jews visiting gurdwaras.

- Loughborough Council of Faiths holds an annual Pilgrimage of Prayer for World Peace. People learned as they went, with more guidance and more involvement as the years went by. They have a leaflet with guidance about where shoes need to be removed or the head covered.
- There is a lot of careful planning involved in arranging pilgrimages but it is very much worth it.
- It is important, when arranging visits, to bear in mind cultural sensitivities and also other factors such as the length of day; dates and time of year; security; and dress code.
- It is important for hosts to be clear about expectations and also to be aware of potential concerns on the part of visitors. For example, members of other faiths visiting a Hindu temple may be offered prasad – such as fruit or sweets. Hosts need to explain that this is blessed food that has been offered to the deity/ies and that visitors are welcome to receive it but that no offence will be taken if they prefer not to.
- It is important when explaining our beliefs to visitors to use wording such as “We believe that. . .” before a statement such as, for example, “Jesus is the Son of God”.
- We need to be aware of the impact of the threat of hate crime and terrorism. Places of worship want to be welcoming; at the same time, there is a need to be mindful of security.
- Places of worship should also look at accessibility. They should be more accessible for people who have trouble with steps / stairs and who have other disabilities. This is not just an issue for open door days but a wider one.

Discussion Group 3: Local Inter Faith Groups connecting with young people (including through schools and colleges)

This discussion group was facilitated by Ashley Beck, Inter Faith Development Officer at IFN and included an opening presentation by Jaspal Singh and Zahid Akbar, Chair and member respectively of Peterborough Inter Faith Council.

Mr Ashley Beck welcomed those present and invited them to introduce themselves. The discussion group would be exploring how local inter faith organisations can make youth links through faith communities, schools, HE and FE and other routes.

Mr Jaspal Singh and Mr Zahid Akbar offered the following reflections:

- Each year, Peterborough Inter Faith Council (PIFC) holds an inter faith youth service in November celebrating UN Children’s Day and now also Inter Faith Week. It is on the theme of ‘Praying for peace together’ and brings together around 100 children drawn from the six faith communities in membership of PIFC, drawing on and strengthening its community links.
- The service began 25 years ago with adult members of the local Catholic choir and the local Sikh community performing together. People who attended the event would often bring their children with them and from this came the idea to let the children go on stage.
- This idea progressed and the PIFC decided to get local schools involved. They did this by speaking to RE teachers

- and establishing connections between local faith groups.
- These faith groups each contributed performances and the project gradually evolved into its current form.
 - The service usually takes place at Peterborough Cathedral.
 - This year, PIFC partnered with UNICEF to raise money for it and UNICEF provided the children with certificates to thank them for their participation. These were handed out at the cathedral. These are cheap to produce but mean a great deal to the children. They also act as a reminder to them of their inter faith experience in the future.
 - Everyone involved is a volunteer, so costs are minimal.
 - There is a myth that young people are not connected with or interested in faith. PIFC has got them involved and enabled them to learn about their own faith and the faiths of others.
 - PIFC advertises its events and activities with posters and leaflets.
 - Adults get involved in inter faith activity as a result of coming to watch their children's performances and then make connections. The children also form inter faith friendships and raise awareness between each other because they talk about their performances with their peers at school.
 - One challenge that PIFC has faced is attitude changes due to Brexit. One school had withdrawn support, but PIFC had found another to engage with instead.
 - Some groups may require funding to do their work, particularly if they have fewer volunteers to draw on.
 - It is vital to engage children in inter faith work, because children are the future and projects like these will help shape their attitudes.
- In general discussion, the following points were made:**
- Child Protection/Safeguarding Children Policies**
- All groups working with children and young people need to have a child protection/safeguarding of children policy. There is not a standard one but many examples can be seen on line, eg on the website of the NSPCC.
 - Local authorities/ Community and Voluntary Services may also have examples.
- Ideas for local inter faith organisations to involve young people**
- Schools are often the starting point for good inter faith activity. It is vital to try to build parental and staff support.
 - A good starting point is to host an activity to which young people can be invited.
 - Run activities for children and grandchildren of adult members.
 - Hold family events, such as inter faith trips and walks. These help to introduce children in contexts where parents are around, which helps to build trust.
 - Make inter faith activity fun!
 - Young people enjoy events where they can show off their talent, such as a 'Britain's Got Talent' style inter faith event held by one group.
 - Hold inter faith sports events of a not too strenuous variety. Indoor activities, such as table tennis can be ideal.

- Sport, arts and cultural activities are good for this and can appeal to young people – not everyone is interested in theology or in having deep conversations about faith.
- ‘Inter faith quizzes’.
- Involve young people themselves in organising activities (young people consulted during the development of IFN’s *Connect* guide said that they wished to be involved in the organisation of inter faith events – not just attending them).

Some examples of groups’ work

- Welwyn Hatfield Interfaith Group runs an inter faith schools project called ‘Whisper’, which sends ordinary members of faith groups to talk to children in schools about what their faith means to them.
- The Faith and Belief Forum also sends ordinary people of different faiths and beliefs into schools, leading to lively discussions with the pupils.
- The Warwick District Faith Forum holds faith trails in its area, which is one of great religious diversity. The trails vary, including visits to different places of worship. One of the trails has included a rural Catholic and a rural Anglican church. These two churches have also joined together to form a single youth group and that group will be visiting different places of worship. These will include a Gurdwara where a young person of the Sikh faith will give them a guided tour.

Some challenges in engaging young people

- The prejudices of parents can sometimes be a barrier to engagement in schools, for example where parents withdraw their pupils from activities such as visits to

faith community places of worship (and may not be willing to discuss this matter).

- One group in a non-diverse area had experienced difficulty with schools, as it had wanted to send people to speak to pupils about different faiths, but the schools had been concerned that the speakers were coming to convert pupils to a particular religious worldview.

Broader challenges of racism within society

- Some people condemn racism and prejudice in public, but then engage in it privately.
- Some people are unaware of the difference between Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs.
- It is important to remember that prejudice also exists between minority communities; there may be peer pressure not to engage with communities other than your own.

Some general practicalities for inter faith activity

- Venues need to be chosen with care. Sometimes group members or event participants may not feel comfortable with meeting in a faith venue of another faith (the speaker gave the example of some members of the local Jewish community in their areas not having felt comfortable with entering a Christian church).
- Some types of inter faith activity, such as dialogue meetings, are better held in spaces not used for worship. Often this can be achieved by using a hall/ community centre linked to a place of worship, rather than the main worship space.

- It is a good idea to make things personal and about the stories of individual lives. For example, talking about 'a day in the life' of someone from a particular faith, as opposed to just giving facts about that faith, personalises it and creates common ground on the basis of shared human experience.
- Care needs to be taken to schedule inter faith events at times or dates which do not clash with worship, other devotional activity and festivals of participants.
- There are many positive aspects to visiting the places of worship of other communities, including helpful encounters for those hosting and those visiting.
- All initiatives start slowly as trust has not yet been built, but doing that difficult work is how relationships are built.
- In areas that are not diverse enough for people of different faiths to encounter one another day to day, it is still possible to educate people about other faiths.
- Education is key to inter faith work.
- Common issues are a helpful focus. Climate change is a good example of an issue which could bring people together.
- Charity work could be an area of common ground.
- Sometimes shifts in generations mean that new approaches are needed to finding common ground.
- Money is limited but good work is nonetheless taking place in many localities.
- Inter faith practitioners in Cheltenham are looking to reach out to young people.
- Sports activities, such as cricket or football matches, could be a good way to bring people together. There was discussion about cricket matches in Peterborough and Wisbech and the cricket and football contests arranged by the St Philip's Centre, Leicester with teams in Luton and Bradford.

Other

- Many places of worship in Leicester have arrangements for welcoming visitors and have people available who can offer insightful tours.
- One participant said that he is a governor at the Laureate Community Academy in Newmarket. This school has students from 26 countries attending. The school arranged an inter faith cricket match, and also a Muslim speaking about his faith in assemblies. Both of these events were a huge success. The parents of the students were very happy to have the speaker in assembly, as was the head teacher. The school had had people from the BBC giving presentations to the children.

Discussion Group 4: Dialogue amid division – a facilitated discussion with the Revd Canon Dr John Hall, Devon Faith and Belief Forum and IFN Trustee

The discussion was facilitated by The Revd Canon Dr John Hall, IFN Trustee and Chair, Devon Faith and Belief Forum.

Dr John Hall welcomed those present and invited them to introduce themselves. The discussion group would be a facilitated

discussion, exploring dialogue in contexts where there may be deep divisions or separation between groups. He asked those present to offer reflections on some of the causes of division, and topics which were challenging in dialogue contexts.

In discussion, the following points were made:

Causes of division and challenging topics for dialogue

- The conflict between Israel and Palestine could be a divisive and challenging issue. Attacks happen almost daily there but are rarely commented on. Inter faith groups are often comfortable making statements of solidarity when there are attacks in places like the UK and France.
- It can be tough to talk about politics and faith – including political Zionism.
- Groups perhaps feel most compelled to issue statements where attacks are covered widely in the news. There are regular attacks involving India and Pakistan, but this only hit the news recently when it escalated to a point where a plane was shot down.
- The same could be said of Mozambique and Zimbabwe regarding natural disasters. Natural disasters in some places seem to be more of a focus than in others.
- Topics such as the status of women in faith communities and domestic violence are often considered too controversial to pick up in inter faith contexts, but there is potential for much learning.
- LGBT issues are also often overlooked as too controversial.
- Ethical issues where there are a diversity of deeply held views could be very

challenging to discuss well, but this is essential in a diverse society.

- Providing pastoral care in the community in contexts of mental health issues and knife crime is a challenge. Many come to faith communities looking for support, but there is not always an awareness of how best to offer this.
- Talking about the Sikh kirpan in schools could be challenging as people are not always able to understand the ethics around it – that it is only used to protect those weaker than oneself.
- There may be some groups within our local communities with whom we would be unhappy sharing a platform or table.
- Animal welfare and slaughter methods could be divisive issues.
- Large amounts of hatred in public discourse, including Antisemitism and Islamophobia, have created a febrile atmosphere where people feel under threat.

How can dialogue in these contexts be achieved?

- Preparation and relationship building is key.
- Laying the groundwork before tackling the more challenging issues is important. It is helpful to begin by building trust, which might involve discussing areas where common ground exists, or making common cause on a local issue.
- Sometimes people may make assumptions that particular people or groups will be on a particular side of a divisive issue, but this may not be the case. Getting to know the individuals is important and likewise avoiding making assumptions.

- It is important to take a step back from our own fixed positions to enable us to listen well.
- We need to create safe spaces where people feel and trust that they will not be shot down or attacked for airing their views.
- Sometimes tough interactions can be a healing experience for the groups involved, but only where people engage honestly and there is trust in one another's integrity.
- The slogan mentioned in the presentation by Watford Interfaith Association in the plenary session was "Living our faith, loving our neighbour". This was very powerful and helpful.
- Sometimes the skills and relationships built during inter faith dialogue can be helpful in dealing with other issues. Highgate Interfaith Group has arranged a series of talks/discussions on mental health in response to Muslim and Christian leaders in the local community feeling the need themselves. These are an ongoing positive and healing experience for those involved.
- We need to rid ourselves of ignorance and the assumptions we make about others. Building empathy is an important part of this.
- It is essential that we remember our roots in peace and prayer.
- The spiritual heart is part of what we bring as people of faith; it encourages us to listen and to reflect.
- Many inter faith groups begin with a period of silent reflection, enabling us to bring our thoughts and agendas before God.
- Finding common values, as a starting point, is also very helpful.
- It is essential to find skilled facilitators, and in some circumstances those with knowledge of the issues to be explored.
- People have different concepts of knowledge and information – including what sources they consider to be valid. But beginning from 'love your neighbour' is a good starting point.
- Using slogans or soundbites can just cover up divisions without dealing with them. There is a depth to our traditions which we have to engage with.
- It is important to understand that 'chair' and 'facilitator' are different roles – understanding which a situation requires is vital.
- Devon Faith and Belief Group puts its values/ ethics on the table in a literal way – by printing them at the footer of meeting agendas.
- The more difficult the issue, the clearer we need to be about boundaries and ground rules for dialogue.
- Sometimes it is worth trying to learn from good examples of past dialogues where seemingly intractable conflicts were resolved, such as the Good Friday Agreement – asking how these things were achieved can be helpful. Sometimes the examples can be found locally. Learning from these examples is part of the necessary preparatory work.

Are there some dialogues we should not have?

- Sometimes, some dialogues should not be had straight away. Relationships need to be built before truly divisive issues can be engaged with in a helpful way, which may mean focussing on common ground

or working together on an issue or project in the community.

- In a university context, a Jewish-Muslim group chose to run a series of 10 dialogues, the ninth of which was on the Israel/Palestine conflict. The organisers made participants sign in to each session, and people were only permitted to attend the ninth session if they had attended at least six of the previous eight. This worked well – it ensured people had a commitment to genuine engagement, rather than simply wanting to argue or posture on one issue.
- Sometimes older generations find it difficult to move on where they have not healed from past hurts. In those circumstances, it can be best to park the issue until people are ready to heal.
- Where sources of truth or fact are heavily contested, it can be impossible to engage issues where those are essential to the divide; establishing common sources would be a necessary precursor.
- Behind the Good Friday Agreement is a hidden history of many little groups of ordinary people working toward peace with their own neighbours. This is what inter faith groups are doing in a divided society.

Are we always seeking resolution?

- Some things are not resolvable. We need to learn how to hold them in love and disagreement.
- Some issues are for a community to resolve within itself. The purpose of inter faith dialogue must then be to understand – not necessarily to seek agreement. Inter faith activity is not about trying to liberalise people.
- Accepting and respecting disagreement is vital. The Cambridge Interfaith

Programme describes the ‘scriptural reasoning’ process as being about ‘promoting better quality disagreement’.

- Why must we agree? If we trust in the integrity of other people’s actions, we liberate and empower them and ourselves. Parents do not always agree with the actions of their children – but they trust their integrity. This is a process which takes time.

How do we communicate and counter negative narratives?

- There are many good stories we have to tell! Telling them helps to combat negative stories, and people’s assumptions and attitudes about others.
- Working within the structures and networks of which we are a part to cascade these stories is important.
- We need to draw distinctions between political and spiritual issues; we may disagree on politics, but agree on spiritual values. This can help us to see that we need both.
- Over-focus on either the spiritual or the political can be dangerous – it can either lead us to withdraw completely, or to get bogged down in disagreement.
- Making the work of local inter faith groups better known locally is vital – people may not be aware the resource exists. In one area, the local inter faith group was used to mediate a dispute between two business owners as part of a local Business Improvement District project. This was only possible because people knew the group was there.

Discussion Group 5: Making the case for the importance of your work

This discussion group was facilitated by Dr Harriet Crabtree, Executive Director, IFN and included an opening presentation from the Revd Cass Howes, Bedford Council of Faiths.

Dr Harriet Crabtree welcomed those present and invited them to introduce themselves. The discussion group would be exploring methods of getting across the importance of local inter faith organisations' work in a context where these sometimes express frustration that the significance of their activity is not sufficiently appreciated, with the result that it is harder to involve new members and to engage people in their activities.

Dr Crabtree circulated a handout, a copy of which is included in this note. She offered the following reflections:

- Local inter faith organisations do tremendously important work.
 - Members sometimes say that they do good work but that people don't know about it or certain groups won't engage. One of the reasons may be that the case for the work has not been clearly or strongly enough made.
 - It is important to be clear about why an organisation was founded and whether it is doing what it intended. If that is not clear, it's difficult to communicate it to others. The clearer it is, the more others can be told and more people can be drawn in. It can be useful to carry out a mini audit to see what is working and what is not.
 - There are many ways to put out calls for involvement and to communicate –
- person to person engagement is the most valuable. Other good ways to communicate are by telephone, at meetings and events and through social media and the local media.
 - It's good to be honest and to look at what can be improved. And to decide what success will look like.
 - Each one of these pieces of work requires the resources of people giving their time and skill.
 - Having a person with responsibility for communications can be very helpful, so long as there are agreed procedures in place. If there is only one person doing it, make sure others know the relevant passwords and know how to cover when they're away.
 - Purchasing a reasonably priced smartphone may be helpful.
 - Try to keep it simple. Sometimes we can find ourselves using so many types of communication that we get confused!
 - Some people may feel excluded if they can't use social media, so it's important to use traditional media as well.
 - Regularly checking links with local places of worship is helpful.
 - Keep website information up to date – check it at least once a month. Many excellent local groups have out of date sites because those involved are either very busy volunteers and/or don't know how to update the website. Don't be put off by the technology. It is better to keep it simple and up to date, than complicated and out of date. The same is true for Facebook. The IFN office is happy to help local groups set up Facebook pages.

- Groups can get extra publicity by working with others, for example the local authority or the Mayor.
- Start by focussing on what's working well and then look at what could be better. There are a number of ways to evaluate success.

Dr Crabtree then invited the **Revd Cass Howes** to offer some reflections. These are below.

- In the last 2 years Bedford Council of Faiths (BCoF) decided to re-launch.
- A full day launch event was held at a church in the town centre.
- As part of its re-launch BCoF decided that a new logo was needed. At the Further Education college in the town the graphic design course was looking for projects for new students so the new logo was created by two of those college students – one Asian British and one White British. The logo is a series of different coloured petals and looks to have an Eastern influence. On the launch day people were invited to create and decorate the petals and recreate the logo on a larger scale.
- BCoF's website (www.bcof.org.uk) was created with the help of a German student, who has now moved away. A chaplaincy assistant at the University of

Bedfordshire is now going to help with it. It's important to remember that websites don't always look the same on phones and other devices as they do on computer screens.

- BCoF also has a Twitter account.
- It can be challenging to keep communications up to date when you don't have much time. BCoF does not have a dedicated communications officer and does not have the money to buy in help. Luton Council of Faiths is a local organisation with more resources and it has a big presence on Facebook.
- Whenever I go to local meetings of Churches Together, I talk about BCoF. This helps to make people more aware of its work.
- BCoF does a lot of work with partners which spreads the word and provides a wider audience. This includes the Anne Frank Trust, the local authority, the community emergency response team and the Police.
- BCoF takes part in River Festival in Bedford. Having a stall at the Festival is a good opportunity to meet lots of people and talk about BCoF's work. Sometimes people need help with how to talk to people and how to talk about BCoF's work.
- BCoF organised a vigil in Bedford in response to the Christchurch attacks. A wide diversity of people had attended and people had been very pleased that it was done.

In general discussion the following points were made about different ways to raise awareness of, and make the case for, local inter faith work. They have been grouped by theme for ease of reading.



Bedford Council of Faiths

Networking

- Cultivating relationships with council officials, MPs, Mayors and councillors, and keeping them up to date with your work, is very important and such networking can be very useful.
- Lord Lieutenants and Deputy Lord Lieutenants can be very helpful. Welwyn Hatfield Interfaith Group (WHIG) has had some success in building a relationship with the Lord Lieutenant of Hertfordshire. He accepted an invitation to attend its Holocaust Memorial Day event, in which schools have also participated. He and the Mayor released white doves at the event.
- Stevenage Interfaith Forum always invites the Mayor, High Sheriff and others to its events.
- WHIG also has a good relationship with its local High Sheriff, who is very supportive. They don't come up with the ideas but they will support yours.
- The local community policing inspector and the local hate crime officer are also useful contacts.

Partnerships

- Partnership working is helpful. For Holocaust Memorial Day BCoF showed a film called No Asylum which is about Otto Frank. It showed it at a local theatre and they combined their publicity. This led to good attendance and even a small profit!
- The local university chaplaincy is very involved with Loughborough Council of Faiths. This means that students are encouraged to come to events, such as the one marking Holocaust Memorial Day.
- Across the years some mayors have been more involved with Loughborough

Council of Faiths than others. One held an inter faith civic service which had a real impact and since then several mayors have asked for this.

- Local memory is important. People look at what's happened in the past and see documents/photos online.
- In negotiation with the student chaplaincy, WHIG held one of its regular meetings on campus. The relationship with the university needs encouraging, taking into account the short time students are at university and trying to understand the role of the chaplaincy.

Visual images

- Pictures and logos can often have as much impact as words.
- Back at the time of the Millennium, the Cambridge Ethnic Community Forum worked with university students, with funding from the local council, to create mosaics in a park in Cambridge. These are still there. This was an example that inspired others to carry out projects in their areas.

Holding events and increasing attendance

- WIFA often holds events in the Peace Garden, such as several bulb and tree planting sessions, one of them for the Week of Prayer for World Peace. The Mayor, Councillors and High Sheriff of Hertfordshire come to these events and they all attended the recent Watford Celebration, along with the football club's mascot, Harry the Hornet. The current High Sheriff (Sarah Beazley) is particularly interested in inter faith.
- It's important to remember dietary needs when catering for events, so that everyone feels welcome.

Membership

- Dr Crabtree talked, in response to a question, about the pattern of IFN's membership. Its Membership Admission Policy can be seen at www.interfaith.org.uk/members/about-membership.
- Sometimes groups can find it difficult to bring different groups to the table because there are internal debates within organisations about the boundaries of a particular community. There are, for example, some movements and bodies that define themselves as within a particular tradition but where that definition is contested by others who say that they are not.
- IFN does not tell other organisations what their membership policies should be.
- Inter Faith Week can be helpful as a route to involve more people in that groups are sometimes content to be alongside one another at more informal events.

Proselytising

- Hertsmere Forum of Faiths has a point included within its constitution about not proselytising.

Social media and traditional media

- Dr Crabtree said that social media can be a very useful tool. Her colleague Ashley Beck has spoken about this at a number of IFN meetings. The points that he makes include that it's important that:
 - you know what social media accounts you have;
 - you know who updates them;
 - Facebook pages are updated at least monthly and there are regular tweets and/or Instagram posts;

- good photographs are used;
 - adequate notice is given of events; and
 - details of events are clear.
- If you search the internet for 'how to set up a Twitter account' you will find that it is very simple to do. You can draft Tweets in Word and then paste them in if you have any concerns about accidentally posting something that isn't final. Many local councillors and so forth use Twitter.
 - WIFA has an active Facebook page, which is updated regularly.

Handout

Discussion Group 5: Getting across the important of local inter faith organisations' work

Some key questions and potential actions

Some questions and pointers drawing on the experience of local inter faith bodies. They are numbered simply for ease of reference in discussion.

1) Taking Stock

- a) Thinking about our work, why were we established and how would we describe that to other people?
- b) Are we clear about our current journey and goals and able to describe these well?
- c) What kinds of methods are we currently using to let people know about why our work is important and why we hope they will also get involved?
- d) How are we currently putting out our call for involvement? Some routes that might be used:
 - Person to person – through individual meetings, sending speakers to events of other local bodies
 - Through places of worship
 - Through local authority and other public agency routes
 - Through other local organisations such as CVSs or schools
 - Through our website
 - On Twitter
 - On Facebook
 - On Instagram
 - Other
- e) What success would we say that we are currently having, in terms of the breadth of active involvement in our activities and our organisation, of people of different faiths, backgrounds, ages etc? What is positive? Are there any gaps that we see as important to address? How might better communications/outreach help that?
- f) Do we think we are using particular routes very well? Others maybe not quite so well?

2) What steps might we take to strengthen our outreach?

- Stevenage Interfaith Forum initially had low participation in its events but then the Chair stood up and spoke about the Forum at other events and also put up A5 posters in the town centre and at the train station. This helped enormously and many more people came. We should not forget traditional methods of communication. Leaflets and posters are important in addition to electronic communication.

Responding to overseas events/attacks

- 40 Indian soldiers were recently killed but this was not acknowledged in the media. It is as though their lives are not as important as those who died in Christchurch.
- Bad things seem to happen all over the world all the time. It can be difficult for local inter faith organisations to know how to respond.

- a) Some possibilities:
- Agree person/people to carry communications role?
 - Experiment with types of communication that we are not yet using.
 - Ask the local media to carry items about your activities and about inter
 - See if there is any free training available for local charities for communications, including 'social media' (= Twitter, Facebook etc)
 - Have an annual discussion about which local links are strong and which might be further encouraged – designate people to have outreach conversations
 - Consider whether we might need to purchase a cheap but effective smartphone for use by the person who does most of our tweeting or facebooking.
 - Explore whether a local university or college may have students who would be happy to assist on the website.
 - Make sure the website and any FB information is kept up to date.
 - Talk with the local council or the mayor's office about the possibility of working together on some high profile events that involve local faith leaders – such as 'Mayor's inter faith breakfast', Inter Faith Week civic reception for faith groups.
- 3) Thinking about how we will know if we are having success
- a) We could take a series of snapshots across three months of the extent and makeup of our membership and the pattern of people attending our meetings. (Remember to anonymise data in keeping with data protection regulations)
 - b) We could take a look at 6 month intervals to see how membership and engagement with our activities may be changing.
 - c) We might wish to demonstrate our growing involvement through routes such as new quotes on our website, social media posts and local media coverage

Discussion Group 6: Working in partnership with other organisations towards shared social goals

This Discussion Group was facilitated by Mohinder Singh Chana, Bradford Concord Interfaith Society, and included an opening presentation by Ruth Tetlow and Shenaz Sajan, Birmingham Council of Faiths.

Mr Mohinder Singh Chana welcomed those present and invited them to introduce themselves. The discussion group would be exploring how local inter faith groups could work with other organisations to achieve shared social goals.

Mrs Ruth Tetlow introduced the Birmingham based initiative *Footsteps: Faiths for a Low Carbon Future*. She made the following points:

- The initiative came about following the Paris Climate Agreement of 2015.
- At the launch event there was an inter faith walk across the city centre to show how important this was for faith communities.
- Following the walk there were speakers from different faith backgrounds, MPs were invited to be involved and the media was contacted, including the BBC.
- There was also a series of events to bring people together to discuss the pressures on the environment and what can be done, as well as events to involve young people and children, such as tree planting. All those involved were volunteers.

- In order to take the message further visual aids were prepared that could be taken to other events not directly focussing on climate change.
- Importantly, there was work not only with faith based organisations but non-faith based as well.
- Partners involved in this work are the Peace Hub (a Quaker body), Friends of the Earth, Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust and Climate Action West Midlands.
- There are five advantages to working in partnership:
 1. access to a wider audience who share concerns in common
 2. access to different age groups
 3. access to expertise and resources
 4. publicity across more networks
 5. scope to demonstrate good inter faith action
- Success comes with certain conditions, you need:
 1. to be sure you have common aims
 2. good communication
 3. respect for different beliefs and approaches
 4. to be willing to learn, forgive and be patient
- BCF The Muslim Council of Britain decided to do an audit and noticed how many mosques used disposable plates, cups and cutlery.
- The Shi'a mosques in Birmingham worked together to model good environmental practice. They also joined up with churches to carry out positive environmental action.
- When Ramadan was on the horizon they decided that this would be an ideal time to launch Green Ramadan.
- This led to the establishment of an environmentally Green Street Iftar which was open to the whole community.

In discussion, the following points were made:

Examples of building partnerships

- No group can do everything and therefore to achieve your goals you have to work in partnerships.
- Reaching out and working with others beyond the traditional boundaries of inter faith, Cheltenham Interfaith is working closely with Cheltenham Together (CT), which aims to run projects, events and activities that improve the lives of people living and working in Cheltenham's Lower High Street and surrounding areas. CT is working with Cheltenham Interfaith to develop their programme so it can open up wider debates, such as whether faith schools are 'part of the problem or part of the solution'. Cheltenham Interfaith is also working with the local authority and the University of Gloucestershire to hold events for Inter Faith Week. New organisations like Cheltenham Together are still developing and more work needs to be done scoping and building connections but working with Cheltenham Interfaith was of benefit to

Ms Shenaz Sajjan spoke about the involvement of mosques in this project. She offered the following reflections:

- Some mosques were already involved, others not.



Femi Olasoko, Near Neighbours, and the Revd Max Drinkwater, Newmarket Inter-Faith Forum

both bodies. Local inter faith bodies can keep business and industries honest by bringing them into a public forum and looking at their records on issues such as the environment.

- In Kettering the Interfaith Forum emerged from the local Churches Together group, as it was felt that something was missing from the town and surrounding area. The initial move to start an inter faith group began with three people from different churches working up a proposal to put forward to the whole group. Some of the churches in Churches Together Kettering had not wanted to engage with those of other faiths except in an evangelistic capacity. Although not enthusiastic about the development, none had objected to the establishment of the Forum.
- West Cheshire Interfaith Forum has built strong relationships with local schools, whose interest is in part driven by Ofsted. In largely monocultural and rural areas Ofsted often looks at what schools are doing about community cohesion. The group's work is not advertised but built on word of mouth. It has proved to be an effective model and head teachers have become the best advocates for the group's work. Third party endorsement means that schools were approaching them. As a result there is a one year waiting list for schools to become part of the project as they need to build capacity.
- Academy Trusts can be good for cascading information about local inter faith groups to their schools and encouraging engagement.
- Near Neighbours is proactive in building partnerships, both with statutory bodies and charities. It also encourages collaboration between existing charities and faith groups. One such partnership has been between Near Neighbours, Peterborough Council for Voluntary Services (PCVS), and the Peterborough City Council's Community Cohesion and Integration department to deliver a 'grant writing skills' workshop to community groups in the city.
- Chesterfield Interfaith Forum has strong links to Stand Up to Racism and to Volunteering Matters (formerly Community Service Volunteers), which it

has joined. These links have been invaluable and have helped it to build relations with other campaigners such as deaf and disability activists.

- In the experience of Peterborough City Council children often reflect their parents' attitudes and there is a need to work with parents. Working in partnership is essential. It is important to challenge racism and homophobia as soon as it presents itself, hence the City Council has done a lot of work to clean graffiti as soon as it has appeared, such as removing swastikas. It is important to work together with communities.

Challenges to building relationships

- There are difficulties working across the faith spectrum. In Wisbech, for example, engaging with the local Churches Together has been a challenge. What might be the building blocks for building relationships with faith groups?

Opportunities for building relationships

- The Birmingham 'mosque crawl' was done by some members of the Council of Faiths to reach out to communities that had not been engaging, to build relationships with them, and has had some impact. People need to engage with training. In Birmingham an inter faith team trains people in mosques in the lead up to the Visit My Mosque programme in the city. This has proved important for ensuring people visiting have a positive experience.
- There are clear opportunities for building partnerships. Inter faith groups are welcome in schools because of the need to resource RE lessons from within credible sources in the community. There are opportunities for inter faith collaboration and work in areas of social concern, such as support for refugees. There are also opportunities for local inter

faith groups to work with others to 'show the love', such as the Great Get Together, among others.

- Simply turning up at places of worship and introducing ourselves can be a helpful strategy for building relations with faith communities that are not engaging.
- It is important to stress that inter faith is not in competition with faith communities or an alternative to them.
- It is important to be clear that involvement in inter faith activities and events is conditional on not proselytising at those. This is a strong message so that all can feel safe.

- Engaging with local authorities is also important.

The impact of Brexit

- There are already conversations about the impact of Brexit going on in faith communities and this was the topic of the 2019 Tawney Dialogue at Methodist Central Hall. It is not so much Brexit itself which is concerning, but the attitudes that sometimes underpin the Brexit debate. There is a real concern about what Brexit has done to both political and civic discourse. It is often argued that Brexit is a symptom of underlying social discontent.
- The rise in hate crime is a real concern and everyone needs to work together to make their communities more open, accepting and friendly.
- Intolerance may not be growing but it is becoming more obvious and, sadly, more explicit. Everyone needs to be part of the solution.

These are Mrs Ruth Tetlow's slides:

Public Witness – locally & globally



November 2015



Engaging Decision Makers & Faith Leaders



Lambeth Declaration 2015

- Urgent task
- Develop spiritual resources
- Support those engaged
- Mitigate impact on poorest
- Build on examples
- Reduce our own emissions

Sparking Conversations



Many Faiths One Environmental Message



Connecting with our Local Environment



FOOTSTEPS

- Steering Group
- Small Footsteps team
- Faith and values motivation
- Network
- Action

These are Ms Shenaz Sajan's slides:

The beginning of a journey

Summer Faith Walk:
Get inspired for a low carbon future

Sunday August 14th 2016, 2:00 - 5:00pm
Starting from Birmingham Buddhist Centre, 11 Park Rd, Moseley, B13 9AB



Summer Faith Walk Programme

- 2:00 Coffee at Birmingham Buddhist Centre, 11 Park Rd
- 2:10 Welcome in the garden if fine or cafe if not - speaker about Summer Faith Walk
- 2:30 Walk to Balsall Heath Church Centre, Edgbast Rd
- 2:45 Speaker about the church's role in the community and its commitment to environmental issues
- 3:15 Walk to Kings Shire Masjid, 17, Colton Rd
- 3:30 Speaker about Muslim faith and the creation and maintenance of the world and the role of the mosque in the community
- 4:00 Walk to The Green, Edgbast Mosque, Temple St, Home of John Chrysostom, St. Mary's and St. John's
- 4:15 Walk to speak about the story behind the unique project and share some of the low carbon future
- 5:00 Depart

More info: footsteps.birmingham.gov.uk/faith
footsteps@birmingham.gov.uk

Footsteps is a public for a low carbon future in a project of Birmingham Council of Faiths and the City of Birmingham

Become a Footsteps Supporter!



- Share our vision for a low carbon future?
- Join the Footsteps family!
- Open to individuals and organisations.
- From just £10 per year

The journey continued - featuring intrafaith friends & groups

Exploring ISLAM & THE ENVIRONMENT

Discussions

What does the Quran say about the environment? What does the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) say about the environment? What are the actions of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to care for the community and the environment? Identifying positive environmental actions that Muslims can take in the community.

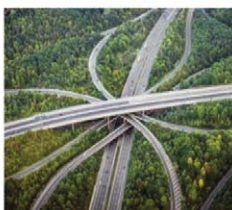
FAITH IN ACTION says:
Take responsibility for your emissions



3 mosques working together



FAITH IN ACTION says:
Tarmac and Roads intrude on Nature



Social evening - sharing the green spirit



An intrafaith social evening bringing together local mosques and celebrating our faith and community spirit. Join us in discussing our shared planet and to raise awareness about our common responsibility to

PROGRAMME FOR THE DAY

- 10.15am** **Registration and refreshments**
- 10.45am** **Chair's welcome, opening of the morning session**
Jatinder Singh Birdi, Co-Chair, Inter Faith Network for the UK (IFN)
- 10.50am** **Welcome to Peterborough**
Jaspal Singh, Chair, Peterborough Inter Faith Council
- 11.00am** **A local authority perspective on the importance of working with faith communities and inter faith structures**
- Gillian Beasley, Chief Executive, Peterborough Council** offers some opening reflections, rooted in the Peterborough context and also drawing on her other experiences at both local and national level, about the importance of local authorities working with faith communities.
- [Peterborough is one of the five areas with which the Government is working to developing local integration plans as part of its Integrated Communities Strategy.]
- Q and A**
- Response** from Es Rosen, Co-Chair, Barnet Multi Faith Forum
BMFF is an inter faith organisation which has a longstanding relationship with its local authority. Es offers some reflections in response from this perspective.
- Discussion**
- 11.30am** **Dialogue on the spot**
– A chance to talk with your neighbours
- 11.35am** **Welcome in! Open door days and inter faith walks and pilgrimages**
- Around the UK many inter faith walks and pilgrimages take place. They provide a visible public witness to positive relations and also afford a valuable opportunity for people to visit and learn more about the places of worship of their neighbours. There are, as well, separate 'Open Door' opportunities which are also ways for encouraging learning and positive interaction.
- Zahraa Ahmed, Visit My Mosque Project Coordinator, Muslim Council of Britain gives a taster of Visit My Mosque (VMM), now in its fifth year, which saw over 250 mosques around the UK opening their doors to the public earlier this month. She reflects on the importance of 'opening doors', and of 'reciprocal visiting', which was also a feature of this year's VMM, where MCB leaders visited a number of places of worship of other faiths in the week leading up to VMM.
- Q and A**

Watford Interfaith Association has each year, since 2009, held a very successful inter faith pilgrimage in Inter Faith Week. Members Judith Bruni, Yogesh Joshi and Francoise Murphy give an illustrated presentation about how it has been developed; some of the challenges in arranging such events; and the very positive impact of the pilgrimage, including weaving in the additional dimension of Mitzvah Day.

Q and A

Discussion

Note: There is a linked workshop where there will be more in-depth exploration of some of practicalities of open door days and trails.

12.05pm

Discussion Groups 1–3

1. Developing local inter faith organisation programmes with impact
2. Open doors and faith trails: creating opportunities for inter faith learning
3. Local inter faith groups connecting with young people (including through schools and colleges)

1.05pm

Lunch

A vegetarian lunch will be provided.

Prayer room available.

2.00pm

Discussion Groups 4–6

4. Dialogue amid division
5. Making the case for the importance of your work
6. Working in partnership with other organisations towards shared social goals

3.00pm

1 Minute Feedback! One key point from the 6 discussion groups fed back to plenary

3.10pm

Communicating with a positive purpose

Ashley Beck, Inter Faith Development Officer, IFN, gives a taste of how local inter faith organisations are using social media and messaging platforms and traditional media to:

- encourage inter faith engagement through telling positive stories of interaction and cooperation;
- tackle prejudice;
- respond to hate crime; and
- help contribute to respectful and harmonious communities.

Q and A

3.25pm Responding in solidarity to terrorism and hate crime

Following the attack on mosques in Christchurch New Zealand, local inter faith bodies in the UK have joined – and in many cases – led vigils and events to express solidarity and commitment to working for tolerance and respect.

Bishop Richard Atkinson OBE talks about the inter faith response at national and local level, including from the Inter Faith Network for the UK, and also more generally about the importance of solidarity of response and common action.

Chris Turner, Policy Adviser, Faith, Race and Integration, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, will speak about the Government's response, including the recent announcement of additional security for places of worship as well as the relevance of the Government's Integrated Communities Action Plan.

Q and A and plenary discussion

3.55pm Closing reflections on the day from Chair

4.00pm Close

Participants

One or more representatives from the following local inter faith groups and organisations were present at the meeting, together with a small number of other local inter faith practitioners:

Local inter faith groups

Barnet Multi Faith Forum
Bedford Council of Faiths
Bexley Multifaith Forum
Birmingham Council of Faiths
Bradford Concord Interfaith Society
Birmingham Council of Faiths
Cheltenham Interfaith
Chesterfield Interfaith Forum
Devon Faith and Belief Forum
Hertfordshire Inter Faith Forum
Hertsmere Forum of Faith
Highgate Interfaith Group
Kettering Interfaith Forum
Leeds Concord Interfaith Fellowship
Loughborough Council of Faiths
Newmarket Inter-Faith Forum
Peterborough Inter Faith Council

Rugby Interfaith Forum
Stafford and District Friends of Faith
Stevenage Interfaith Forum
Thamesmead Interfaith Forum
Warwick District Faiths Forum
Watford Inter Faith Association
Welwyn Hatfield Inter Faith Group
West Cheshire Interfaith Forum
Wisbech Interfaith Forum

Other organisations

Faiths Forum for London
Ministry of Housing, Communities and
Local Government
Muslim Council of Britain
Near Neighbours
Peterborough Council
St Philip's Centre Leicester

Support the Inter Faith Network's work to increase inter faith understanding and cooperation

We need your help to ensure that the Inter Faith Network for the UK's work to promote inter faith understanding and cooperation continues and grows, helping people of all backgrounds to live and work together with mutual respect and shared commitment to the common good.

Gifts at all levels are much valued and make a real difference. You can donate directly at www.interfaith.org.uk/donate or via PayPal.

Donations can also be made by sending a cheque to: The Inter Faith Network for the UK, 2 Grosvenor Gardens, London SW1W 0DH.

Thank You!

Remembering a family member or friend

If you would like to make a gift in memory of a loved one, please get in touch by emailing remember@interfaith.org.uk or call us on 0207 730 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 us on 0207 730 0410 or contact us at remember@interfaith.org.uk

The Inter Faith Network for the UK

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

The Inter Faith Network for the UK (IFN) links and works with national faith community representative bodies, inter faith organisations, academic and educational organisations with an interest in inter faith relations, as well as with other organisations including Government and other public agencies, to strengthen inter faith understanding and cooperation in the UK. IFN is unique in its scope and role both within the UK and in Europe. It has been bringing organisations and people together for over 30 years and its work is always evolving to meet fresh needs.

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

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

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

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



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Front cover photographs (top to bottom):
Zahraa Ahmed, Muslim Council of Britain, and Esmond Rosen, Barnet Multi Faith Forum; Jatinder Singh Birdi, Inter Faith Network for the UK, and Gillian Beasley, Peterborough City Council; Narinder Jeet Kaur, Thamesmead Interfaith Forum, and Alan Shand, Newmarket Inter-Faith Forum; Natalie Steel, Loughborough Council of Faiths, Anuradha Sharma, Stevenage Interfaith Forum, and Clesia Mendes, West Cheshire Interfaith Forum; Yogeshi Joshi, Watford Inter Faith Association, and Jawaid Khan, Peterborough City Council.

Published 2019
by the Inter Faith Network
for the UK
(registered charity no
1068934 and company
limited by guarantee no
3443823 registered in
England)

2 Grosvenor Gardens
London SW1W 0DH
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ISBN 1 902906 87 X

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Network for the UK 2019

