

## Inter faith activity in the UK

A Teacher resource  
for secondary pupils  
aged 11–14



UNIT 4

# Faith Communities in service for the wellbeing of others



**This unit is intended to take pupils on a journey:**

Faith communities all have teachings which emphasise the importance of serving others and treating others as one would be treated.

These values of service to others inspire people to serve those in need.

Faith communities have social capital links, shared values and understandings that enable their members to trust each other and so work together – which helps them respond to need.

Faith communities have infrastructure which also enables them to recognise and respond to need and to emergencies.

During times of local or national crisis, faith communities work individually and sometimes together, alongside other types of organisations, to respond to need and support the vulnerable and most affected.

**Teacher note:** this unit of work is intended as an introduction for pupils learning about how faith bodies and inter faith groups respond together to need, both at the local community level and nationally. The unit uses response to the Covid-19 pandemic in the UK and food justice as its key examples, but also includes a number of other examples.

**About the unit**

This unit highlights a number of examples of the ways that faith communities and inter faith bodies respond to social need and emergencies. It provides pupils with an opportunity to learn about the social capital that faith communities have at their disposal.

**Vocabulary**

Inter faith, multi faith, social capital<sup>1</sup>, social action, service, hospitality, social justice.

**Expectations**

**Pupils will be able to:**

- Make a link between religious teachings and faith-based social action, linking specific examples of the way that faith communities and inter faith bodies act in response to specific teachings and be able to identify the source of those teachings.
- Identify some of the ways that faith and inter faith groups respond to local needs.
- Discuss the social impact of faith and inter faith groups at local, regional and national levels on the basis of their learning.

<sup>1</sup> Social capital is described by the OECD as “the links, shared values and understandings in society that enable individuals and groups to trust each other and so work together”. See: <https://www.oecd.org/insights/37966934.pdf>

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.

Except where otherwise noted, text content in this publication described as Copyright of the Inter Faith Network for the UK is now licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 4.0 International License](#). Unless noted otherwise, the text of guest speakers' presentations remains the copyright the speaker, and any non-textual content (eg photographs) remains copyright the Inter Faith Network for the UK or as stated.



LEARNING OBJECTIVES Pupils should learn:	POSSIBLE TEACHING ACTIVITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• That faith traditions have teachings about service to and caring for others and draw on these teachings as a basis for social action.</li> </ul>	<p>Pupils could look at one example of faith community teachings inspiring social action, for example that of Catholic social teaching reflected in the <a href="#">practical presentation by Westminster Caritas</a> at IFN's 2017 National Meeting, pages 38–41.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• That many traditions hold that feeding the hungry is a key expression of faith, and this can be a meeting point for people of different faiths to work together.</li> <li>• That their teachings also help underpin joint responses to other issues such as homelessness and hate crime.</li> </ul>	<p>Pupils explore how faith communities' teachings on feeding the hungry are translated into action in the context of responding to food poverty.</p> <p>Pupils could look at the work of the <a href="#">Salvation Army</a> to end food poverty in the UK. Other faith communities have also responded to the challenge of food poverty. For example, pupils could learn about the <a href="#">Navratri Food Bank Collection</a> project which is linked to the Hindu community and its connection to <a href="#">Sewa Day</a>.</p> <p>Pupils could also research how two Sikh projects, <a href="#">Nishkam SWAT</a> and <a href="#">Langar Aid</a>, are responding to homeless people's food needs in light of Sikh teachings about langar.</p> <p>Pupils could look at <a href="#">Glasgow's Interfaith Food Justice Network</a> which is an example of faiths making common cause to respond to food poverty; or <a href="#">The Sufra Foodbank</a> in London which operates on an inter faith basis and regularly works with nearby places of worship of other faiths and also receives support from some of these. See, for example, <a href="#">BAPS Charities</a>.</p> <p>They could investigate how food banks run through individual places of worship often have support from other denominations and faith communities. An example is the <a href="#">Bow Food Bank</a></p> <p>Pupils could consider how faith communities also make common cause in a number of other contexts such as homelessness (see for example <a href="#">One Roof Night Shelter – One Roof Leicester</a>) and standing together against prejudice, hate crime and terrorism, for example Nisa Nashim's <a href="#">Active Allies Network</a>, <a href="#">We Stand Together</a> and IFN's <a href="#">Looking After One Another</a>.</p> <p>Local inter faith programmes can also offer an opportunity for young people to think and speak about contemporary issues, such as <a href="#">Voices of Faith</a> in Newcastle.</p> <p>UK faith-based organisations also work to help those around the world who are in poverty. Examples of individual organisations of this kind are <a href="#">CAFOD</a>, <a href="#">Christian Aid</a>, <a href="#">Islamic Relief</a>, <a href="#">Khalsa Aid</a>, <a href="#">Muslim Aid</a>, <a href="#">Tear Fund</a>, <a href="#">World Vision</a> and <a href="#">World Jewish Relief</a> and they work in close cooperation on many issues, including through the <a href="#">faith campaign</a> at <a href="#">BOND</a></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• That faith communities have access to social capital and infrastructure, and work together to help those who experience sudden and catastrophic disasters.</li> </ul>	<p>Pupils could research the response of faith groups to the Grenfell Tower disaster by looking at the <a href="#">Theos report</a> published in 2018 and the coverage of faith based responses by the <a href="#">Religion Media Centre</a> in 2020 and <a href="#">University of Oxford's Law Faculty</a>.</p> <p>Pupils could also read <a href="#">this short blog</a> about how the Somali Bravanese Islamic Centre in Muswell Hill was destroyed in an arson attack; how the community was offered temporary accommodation by Finchley</p>

	<p>Reform Synagogue; and how the new Centre stands as testament to the inter faith solidarity in the local community.</p> <p>Pupils could investigate how Muslims in <a href="#">Bradford</a> helped the Jewish community save a synagogue and how the Muslim community <a href="#">continues</a> to be involved in Jewish life in Bradford.</p> <p>They could also look at the way faiths also work together in a wide range of social contexts such as chaplaincy in hospitals and prisons. Their common values of response to human need and valuing of human worth underpin this. See for example the <a href="#">Network for Pastoral, Spiritual and Religious Care in Health</a>.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>During national emergencies faith and inter faith groups respond by supporting the most vulnerable irrespective of their faith or belief background.</b></li> </ul>	<p>Pupils could explore the wide range of ways that faith communities have worked together to respond to COVID-19 and its impact on local communities.</p> <p>Pupils could explore the ways that faith communities and inter faith groups have responded to the Covid-19 crisis by choosing one or more examples on the <a href="#">IFN COVID-19 Acts of Kindness and Service</a> webpage. One example is <a href="#">The Bradford Volunteer Interfaith Programme</a> supported by <a href="#">Strengthening Faith Institutions</a>.</p> <p>They could also look at the way faith communities have come together to address some particular issues that the pandemic has brought, such as a rise in domestic abuse. An example of an inter faith body addressing the issue of domestic abuse is the <a href="#">Women's Interfaith Network</a>, which worked with <a href="#">Strengthening Faith Institutions</a> and <a href="#">Faiths United</a>, a COVID-19 special initiative. In 2020 the Women's Interfaith Network launched the first Faiths Against Domestic Abuse week. The charity Faith Action has also focused a lot of its recent work on <a href="#">COVID-19 response and information sharing</a>, as have local inter faith groups such as <a href="#">Watford Interfaith Association</a>.</p> <p>Pupils could read about some of the examples of joint social action given in a <a href="#">special debate in the House of Commons</a>.</p> <p>Pupils could also research ways that faith-based bodies have responded to the pandemic, including through reports on this such as that by the <a href="#">Muslim Charities Forum</a> and the <a href="#">Muslim Council of Britain</a>.</p> <p>Pupils may also find it helpful to look at the Woolf Institute's <a href="#">COVID-19 Chronicles</a> a series of video interviews with faith and belief leaders about how their communities adapted during the Pandemic.</p> <p>Pupils could find out about how local faith communities and inter faith groups have helped to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic by <a href="#">finding their local inter faith group</a> and visiting its website or social media.</p> <p>Pupils could research the way that health professionals worked with faith communities and inter faith groups to support the Covid-19 vaccination programme. A useful starting place for research is the <a href="#">Inter Faith Network's page on Covid-19 and Vaccination</a>.</p>

LEARNING OUTCOMES Pupils should be able to	POINTS TO NOTE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talk about the ways that faith and inter faith groups respond to help people in times of hardship, emergency and disaster, drawing on examples they have studied.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Link the actions of individuals and groups in response to the teachings of faith traditions that they have been studying as part of their RE.</li> </ul>	<p>More on the values within different traditions that emphasise service can be found in Unit 3.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss the social impact of faith communities and inter faith groups at a local level.</li> </ul>	<p>The Joseph Rowntree Foundation report <a href="#">‘Faith as Social Capital’</a> includes some helpful explanations of social capital and the ways that faith communities contribute to this. A definition of ‘social capital’ can be found in the OECD publication <a href="#">‘Human Capital: How what you know shapes your life’</a>. The Theos report on the Grenfell Tower disaster, linked above, is also relevant.</p> <p>The <a href="#">All Party Parliamentary Group on Faith and Society</a> with <a href="#">Faith Action</a> has developed a <a href="#">Faith Covenant</a> which provides a framework for faith and inter faith groups to work with local authorities. That has been taken up in some areas. <a href="#">Faith Action</a>’s website also provides useful information.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Write a short paper/article on how one faith or inter faith group has responded to a local, regional or national crisis.</li> </ul>	

## NOTES

**The All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Faith and Society** is a cross party group of MPs and Lords that aims to highlight the contribution to society by faith-based organisations, to identify best practice, and to promote understanding of the groups providing innovative solutions around the country.

**BAPS Charities** is a global Hindu charity with a base in London, it is inspired by the teachings of Swami Narayan.

**BOND** is the UK network for organisations working in international development.

**Bow Food Bank** is an example of a local inter faith response to food poverty in the Tower Hamlets area of London.

**The Bradford Volunteer Interfaith Network** is a local example of a volunteer inter faith network. Operating during the pandemic, it has been supported by Strengthening Faith Institutions with Age UK Bradford.

**CAFOD** is the Catholic Aid for Overseas Development for the Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales.

**Christian Aid** is a Christian overseas aid charity based in the UK, which has been working for 70 years.

**Faith Action** is an initiative that helps to build good relationships between civic society and faith communities through its Faith Covenant programme. It services the All Party Parliamentary Group on Faith and Society. Its work covers a number of areas, including health care.

**Faiths United** is COVID-19 inter faith initiative which has run a number of campaigns.

**Interfaith Food Justice Network, Glasgow** is run by Interfaith Glasgow in partnership with Faith and Community Scotland. It provides a networking space for local faith, belief, and community groups who work to combat food poverty.

**Islamic Relief** is a faith-based international aid agency that provides humanitarian relief and development programmes in over 40 countries

**Langar Aid** is a project of Khalsa Aid International. Its mission is to serve the homeless, vulnerable and those struggling with poverty in the UK. Khalsa Aid

also works internationally to support humanitarian aid in disaster and war zones.

**The Joseph Rowntree Foundation** is an independent organisation which seeks social change.

**Khalsa Aid** is an international NGO with the aim to provide humanitarian aid in disaster areas and civil conflict zones around the world. The organisation is based upon the Sikh principle of "Recognise the whole human race as one".

**Muslim Aid** is a UK based Islamic International NGO. The international humanitarian charity has relief and development programmes in countries across Africa, Asia, and Europe.

**Muslim Council of Britain** is a national representative Muslim umbrella body with over 500 affiliated national, regional and local organisations, mosques, charities and schools.

**Muslim Charities Forum** is a UK network for British Muslim charities working for social good in the UK and abroad.

**Navratri Food Bank Collection** is a project which encourages organisers of festivals and community events to incorporate food collections into community events.

**The Network for Pastoral, Spiritual & Religious Care in Health (NPSRCH)**, promotes and supports pastoral, spiritual, and religious care in healthcare.

**Nisa Nashim** is a UK based network bringing Jewish and Muslim women together by setting up groups of women who build personal friendships, grow as leaders and benefit wider society through our programmes and initiatives

**Nishkam SWAT** is a Sikh based response to homelessness and food poverty.

**The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)** is an international organisation that works to build better policies for [better lives](#). Its goal is to shape policies that foster prosperity, equality, opportunity and well-being for all.

**One Roof Leicester** is an organisation that, as part of its work, runs a night shelter programme through the winter in the city in which a number of different local faith places of worship are involved. The shelter rotates among seven different faith



venues in the city with support from an additional seven faith communities.

**The Religion Media Centre** was established to “broker a better relationship between the media and the world of religion and to act as a trusted source for reporting on religion.”

**Tear Fund** is a Christian charity which partners with churches in more than 50 of the world’s poorest countries.

**The Salvation Army** is a Christian denomination which works widely in response to need.

**The Sufra Food Bank** is a Muslim charity based in North West London providing emergency supplies of toiletries and food to individuals and families in crisis.

**Theos** is a think tank that seeks to stimulate “the debate about the place of religion in society, challenging and changing ideas through research, commentary and events”.

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

**Voices of Faith** is an inter faith project hosted by the Anglican Diocese of Newcastle.

**Watford Interfaith Association** is a local inter faith group based in the East of England that organises inter faith events in Watford and South West Hertfordshire.

**Westminster Caritas** is a Roman Catholic organisation that puts into practise Catholic social teaching in a local context.

**We Stand Together** was established in the wake of the Paris attacks in 2015, becoming a registered charity following the Manchester Arena, May 2017. The idea behind it was to highlight and tackle issues surrounding social division at all levels. The charity’s philosophy is that society is stronger when it is united.

**Women’s Inter Faith Network (WIN)** is an inclusive women’s organisation working with those from all faiths and no faith to build a better society through promoting friendship and embracing difference.

**World Jewish Relief** is the British Jewish community’s international humanitarian agency.

**World Vision International** is an evangelical Christian humanitarian aid, development, and advocacy organisation.

**Woolf Institute** was founded in Cambridge in 1998. Its aim is to provide an academic framework and space in which people can tackle issues of religious difference constructively. It has particular expertise in researching and understanding relations between Jews, Christians and Muslims but also works more widely.

### Technical vocabulary

**Inter faith** is used in this resource to describe interactions between people of different faiths, and in some cases between those of religious and non-religious beliefs.

**Multi faith** is use in this resource of activities to describe activities involving several faiths contributing ‘side-by-side’ where the primary emphasis is not on their interaction.

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

Other than those to IFN’s own materials, links provided are to materials of independent organisations. IFN takes no responsibility for their content – as it stands at this time or as it may evolve. The links may change over time. They are correct at March 2021 and will be checked periodically. If you find any that do not work, please do let us know so that we can replace them.

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

Teachers should consult the Teacher Introduction before using this unit as a basis for curriculum planning.