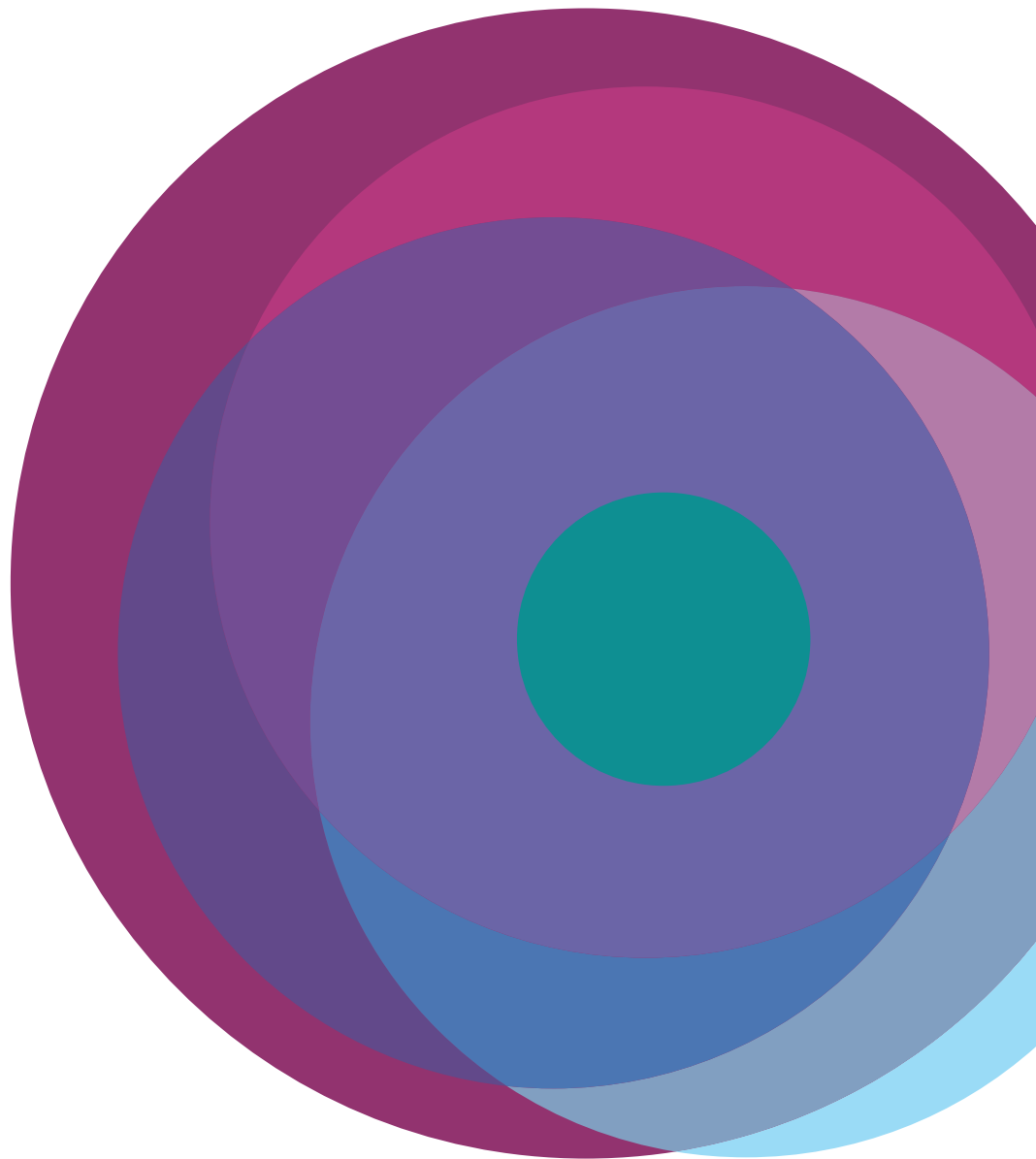


# Inter Faith Week 2009: A report and evaluation

- Promoting good inter faith relations
- Highlighting the contribution of faiths to building community
- Increasing understanding between faiths and wider society



# Inter Faith Week 2009: A report and evaluation

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# Foreword

The first national Inter Faith Week in England and Wales took place from 15 to 21 November 2009. In England it was facilitated in partnership by the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) and the Inter Faith Network for the UK (IFN), working with its member bodies. The Inter Faith Network was delighted to join with Government in working on the Week and that this spirit of partnership was echoed around England in the numerous events involving faith communities and local authorities and other public sector bodies.

The Week in England was developed with the help of a CLG/IFN led Steering Group, with representation from the Department for Children, Schools and Families, the Equality and Human Rights Commission, the Local Government Association and the Community Development Foundation. It drew also on the experience of Scottish Inter Faith Week, then in its sixth year, and we thank those from the Scottish Inter Faith Council who gave valuable advice. The English Regional Faith Forums (RFFs) played a very important role in relation to their respective regions, helping to encourage events and advertise these through their websites and, in a number of cases, to hold regional launches for the Week.

The Week was not a centrally directed, 'top down' one with formal 'badging' of events but, rather, one where all were encouraged to join in. This report on the Week in England gives a flavour of some of the many different kinds of events and projects which took place during a remarkable Week: a week where faith communities came together at local and national level; where people of many different faiths and none learned more about the different religious communities and their contribution to society and visited their places of worship (often for the first time); and where people from different faith backgrounds talked, played music and sang together, and engaged with each other through inter faith sporting events, cooking demonstrations and joint projects from litter picking to tree planting. It was also, importantly, a week where people of religious and non-religious beliefs debated their positions and considered points of commonality.

From the outset there was an intention to try to secure maximum involvement in the Week from young people. So we are delighted to report that it was a week when thousands of school children learned about inter faith issues through classroom and whole school activities; further and higher education students held inter faith events and joined in joint projects; and many more young people had a chance to talk about their own beliefs and learn about those of others through special conferences and events.

We were very pleased that the Department for Children, Schools and Families commissioned special materials for the Inter Faith Week website for use during the Week and that the Inter Faith Youth Trust joined with CLG in supporting thirty five special Week related youth projects. We are also grateful to the National Association of SACREs and the RE Council for England and Wales for their part in encouraging schools to mark and make good use of the Week and to the National Union of Students and chaplaincies for their encouragement to students to take part.

This report, written by the Inter Faith Network office in consultation with the Cohesion and Faith Division of CLG, looks at how the Week was planned and executed. We hope that it offers a helpful record of many of the excellent activities which took place, analyses some of the strengths and weaknesses of the planning and the challenges faced and provides a basis for thinking about future such Weeks. We thank, on behalf of both partners in the Week, all who contributed to the report and to the Week itself and to making it such a success.

Dr Girdari Bhan,  
*Co-Chair Inter Faith Network for the UK*

Rt Revd Dr Alastair Redfern,  
*Co-Chair Inter Faith Network for the UK*

*May 2010*



# Inter Faith Week 2009

- Promoting good inter faith relations
- Highlighting the contribution of faiths to building community
- Increasing understanding between faiths and wider society

## 1) Introduction

The first national Inter Faith Week (IFW) in England and Wales was held from 15 to 21 November 2009. In England it was facilitated in partnership by the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) and the Inter Faith Network for the UK (IFN).

This report on Inter Faith Week in England has been written by the Inter Faith Network office in consultation with the Department for Communities and Local Government. It documents the processes followed to develop the Week; surveys the range of events held for it; assesses the impact of the Week; and considers pointers for the next Inter Faith Week which it has recently been announced will take place from 21 to 27 November 2010.

Sources drawn on for this report include:

- IFW Working Group papers
- Reports to the IFN Executive Committee and to the Faith Communities Consultative Council of CLG and discussions by members of these bodies
- Information on events sent to IFN and CLG, including reports from national faith and inter faith bodies which received grant funding from CLG for Week related events
- Information on events drawn from the sites of the nine English Regional Faith Forums and their reports on the Week and from reports by local inter faith bodies
- Information on events drawn from an

extensive trawl of other listings on the internet during the Week and subsequently

- Blogs of people who attended Inter Faith Week events
- Responses to an IFN/CLG survey about the Week
- National and local radio and press coverage
- Presentations made at events
- Comments offered by members of the public who contacted the Week's organisers through a dedicated email address given on the website

The report, while wide ranging, cannot be comprehensive in the examples it cites of the hundreds of excellent events and projects which took place to mark the Week in England. A more extensive listing will be put on the Inter Faith Week website. A short illustrated booklet about the Week is also planned.

For the two national events involving Government and IFN, details of the programme and speakers are given. Elsewhere, for reasons of brevity, events are reported more briefly and names of speakers not generally included. Those interested to find out more about the events described can contact the organisers. IFN can provide their contact details.

Inter Faith Week in Wales was led by the Inter

Faith Council for Wales (IFCW) in consultation with the Welsh Assembly Government and a separate report on this has been produced by IFCW: "Inter Faith Week and Eisteddfod 2009".<sup>1</sup>

## Other reports on the Week

A number of faith communities and inter faith bodies have produced news round-ups of their communities' and constituencies' participation in the week, for example the Methodist Church document *Inter Faith Week: some of the many contributions by Methodist Church members* which can be downloaded from

[http://www.methodist.org.uk/downloads/if\\_interfaithweekreport-1209.pdf](http://www.methodist.org.uk/downloads/if_interfaithweekreport-1209.pdf); *Inter Faith Week: The Participation of the Board of Deputies of British Jews*; the reports on the websites of the Institute of Jainology <http://www.jainology.org> and of the BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha [http://www.mandir.org/news&events/2009/11/inter\\_faith\\_week/index.htm](http://www.mandir.org/news&events/2009/11/inter_faith_week/index.htm); and the special issue of the Council of Christian and Jews newsletter, *Dialogue*, Winter 2010.

The English Regional Faith Forums (RFFs) played a very important role in relation to their respective regions, helping to encourage events and advertising these through their

websites and, in a number of cases, holding regional launches for the Week. A number have produced their own reports on the Week or carried detailed reports in their newsletter:

East of England Faiths Council  
*Inter Faith Week 2009 in the East of England: Results of Regional evaluation survey undertaken by EEFC January 2010*

Faiths Forum for the East Midlands  
*Coverage in January/February edition of its newsletter 'Know Faith!'*

North West Forum of Faiths  
*Reflections on Inter Faith Week*

South East England Faiths Forum  
*Inter Faith Week 2009 South East England Events Round Up*

Faithnetsouthwest  
*Faithnews Winter 2009 issue*

West Midlands Faiths Forum  
*Inter Faith Week 15–21 November 2009 – Summary of Evaluation Reports and FaithShare: Inter Faith Week Special*

Yorkshire and Humber Faiths Forum  
*Soundings Issue 9, Winter 09*

<sup>1</sup> Available on the Inter Faith Council for Wales website: [www.interfaithwales.org](http://www.interfaithwales.org)

## 2) Background to Inter Faith Week in England

### a) Origins of the proposal

An Inter Faith Week was proposed by the Executive Committee of the Inter Faith Network for the UK (IFN) to the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) in the course of the consultation process leading to the publication, in July 2008, of the Government's inter faith strategy document, *Face to Face and Side by Side: A Framework for Partnership in our Multi Faith Society*.

The idea for such a Week arose in part from the successful Scottish Inter Faith Week held since 2004. Trustees of the Scottish Inter Faith Council assisted IFN in the early stages of development.

The Week was held on a 'one off' basis, although it was noted at the outset that the option for faith and inter faith bodies to hold a similar Week in future years would be considered after the 2009 Week had taken place.

### b) An important example of partnership working by Government with faith communities

The Government agreed to work in partnership with IFN on an Inter Faith Week in 2009 as part of the policy implementation flowing from *Face to Face and Side by Side*. Both CLG and IFN saw the Week as having great potential for helping to highlight and stimulate faith based social action and increasing understanding about and between faiths – and also between those of religious beliefs and those of non religious beliefs. Joint working on Inter Faith Week was seen by Government and IFN as an example of positive engagement between Government and faith communities – very much in keeping with the spirit of partnership

encouraged in *Face to Face and Side by Side*.

IFN was founded in 1987 to 'advance public knowledge and mutual understanding of the teachings, traditions and practices of the different faith communities in Britain' and to promote good relations between people of different faiths in the UK. It links over 170 member bodies including: national representative bodies of the Bahá'í, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jain, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh, and Zoroastrian faiths; national, regional, local and other inter faith bodies; and academic institutions and educational bodies concerned with inter faith issues. It is a strategic partner of CLG.

The nine faith communities formally linked by the Inter Faith Network expressed warm support for the Week through a meeting of IFN's Faith Communities Forum.

### c) Geographical coverage of the Week

Because the Week was held in partnership with Government, the handling of the possible involvement of Wales and Northern Ireland called for consultation by CLG (an England focused department) with the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) and the Northern Ireland Executive. In the event, an Inter Faith Week took place simultaneously in Wales, led by the Inter Faith Council for Wales (IFCW) in consultation with the WAG. The Week was not formally marked in Northern Ireland but may be in the future.

A member of IFCW was invited to give a workshop presentation to IFN's National Meeting on 6 July in Leicester and IFN's office kept in close touch with developments in Wales. IFCW members attended the launch of Inter Faith Week in England and exhibited at this on inter faith work in Wales. IFN's Director and CLG's Head of Faith Communities Engagement attended the Inter Faith Eisteddfod in Cardiff which was arranged as the culmination of Week events in Wales.

## d) Learning from the Scottish Experience

The Scottish experience was extremely helpful in shaping development of the Week in England and Wales. Scottish Inter Faith Week (SIFW) has taken place since 2004. The Chief Executive Officer of the Scottish Inter Faith Council and one of its Council members are members of the Executive Committee of the Inter Faith Network for the UK. They made a presentation about the Scottish Week to the Committee's meeting on 28 January 2008 when the possibility of having a similar Week elsewhere in the UK was being considered. They also spoke to IFN's Faith Communities Forum meeting on 18 March 2009 about the Scottish experience of running such a Week.

At the close of the Week in England, IFN's Director went to the launch of the 2009 Scottish Inter Faith Week in Dundee to express, on behalf of IFN and CLG, gratitude to the organisers of SIFW for their advice and support.

## 3) Planning for the Week

### a) Partnership and consultation pattern

It was agreed at the outset that the Week would be facilitated by the Inter Faith Network for the UK, working with its member bodies, in partnership with the Department for Communities and Local Government, and in consultation with the Department for Children, Schools and Families, the Local Government Association and the Equality and Human Rights Commission. CLG would also liaise, as appropriate, with other public agencies and help facilitate publicity. A memorandum of understanding on the handling of the process was agreed by CLG and IFN.

### b) Aims of the Week

Consultation by IFN with faith communities and with CLG in the early months of 2009 led to agreed aims for the Week. The Week would include and highlight activities organised by bodies around the country designed to:

- strengthen good inter faith relations at all levels;
- encourage local faith groups and communities to reach out to each other and build stronger bonds of understanding and cooperation;
- increase awareness of the different and distinct faith communities in the UK, with a particular focus on the contribution which their members make to their neighbourhoods and to wider society;
- gain positive profile for inter faith initiatives, locally, regionally and nationally as well as for the overall work of building good inter faith relations;
- increase understanding between people of religious and non-religious beliefs; and

- encourage the development of new partnerships within local communities and by faith communities with statutory and third sector partners.

## c) Nature of the Week

It was intended from the outset that the Week should not be a 'top down', centrally organised programme. A national launch was desirable but there was a desire to see local, regional and national organisations generating their own activities and events. Centrally, what would be provided was a press release; a leaflet about the Week; a website with some ideas for projects and events; an enquiry service (through the IFN office); and a mechanism for advertising events.

Also from the outset there was an intention to try to secure maximum involvement by young people.

## d) Working Group and other sounding boards

A small Working Group was established with representation from CLG, the IFN office, the Department for Children, Schools and Families, the Local Government Association, the Equality and Human Rights Commission and the Community Development Foundation (CDF). The Working Group's role was to advise on the handling of the Week in relation to the constituencies with which its members had formal and practical links:

- faith communities
- other Government Departments
- local authorities
- schools and youth organisations
- the Equality and Human Rights Commission (with its 'good relations' strand of work)

The Working Group's other roles were to

consult as necessary on engagement in the Week of other parts of Government and any other relevant constituencies which might be identified; and to discuss practical aspects of planning for the Week, including the provision of resource material, the launch event and the handling of queries.

The Working Group's role was defined as complementing that of separate 'sounding boards' provided by the four categories of membership of IFN: national faith community representative bodies; local inter faith bodies; other inter faith organisations (regional and national); and educational and academic bodies with an inter faith interest. IFN, in consultation with CLG, had principal responsibility for feeding into the planning process points and concerns from these constituencies.

The Working Group met five times: on 13 March; 23 April; 2 June; 14 July; and 9 October and also communicated regularly by email. It was jointly serviced by CLG and IFN. Aspects of planning for the Week were also discussed at key stages with IFN's Executive Committee, its Faith Communities Forum, with member national and regional inter faith bodies and with CLG's Faith Communities Consultative Council. Additionally, there were discussion groups focusing on Inter Faith Week at IFN's National Meeting in Leicester in July and at a day seminar held by IFN with the National Association of SACREs in Coventry in June.

## e) English Regional Faith Forums

The English Regional Faith Forums (RFFs) played a key role in relation to their respective regions, helping to encourage events and advertise these through their websites and, in a number of cases, holding regional launches for the Week.

Through the meetings of the English Regional Faith Forums Network (co-facilitated by IFN with the Faith-based Regeneration Network) there were opportunities to discuss with the

RFFs aspects of planning for the Week. CDF – which is currently helping to build the capacity of the Forums as part of implementation of CLG’s *Face to Face and Side by Side* policy – was invited to join the Inter Faith Week Working Group.

Within each Region, there were internal planning mechanisms for the Week and a number produced reports on the Week (see page 8).

## f) Sub-group planning meetings

In the run up to the launch of the Week, two additional sub-group meetings involving the IFN office and CLG’s Faith Communities Engagement Team and its Communications team took place to discuss the logistics of the national launch.

## g) Shaping the Week

IFN wrote to member bodies on 22 October 2008 asking them for any reflections they wished to offer on ways to develop the Week so that it would involve well all the Network’s member bodies and highlight their important work as well as inter faith issues more broadly.

A draft information sheet about the Week was sent to national faith communities, Regional Faith Forums and IFN Trustees for comment in the course of February. This offered a vehicle for facilitating discussion about the nature of the Week and ensuring that there was agreement with its aims.

At the meeting of IFN’s Faith Communities Forum on 18 March, members were invited to consider the role their communities might play in Inter Faith Week, including:

- ways that faith community representative bodies might use the Week to highlight their own inter faith work nationally, regionally and locally;
- how the Week could be used to increase

inter faith awareness; and

- logistical issues such as timing, pattern of involvement of faith communities, central and local government, educational bodies and other agencies.

Discussion also took place with national inter faith organisations at IFN’s meeting of these on 13 February.

## h) Publicising the Week

An initial news release about the Week was put out by CLG on 24 March, following discussion with the IFN office. This is at Annex A. In advance of the release, the IFN office contacted general secretaries of faith community representative bodies to alert them to it. In the case of the Christian Churches, with the agreement of Churches Together in England, letters were sent by IFN to all the main Christian denominations. A similar process was followed with the Jewish community.

The release went out to CLG’s media list and IFN sent it to all its member bodies; non-member local inter faith groups; general secretaries of faith communities (where these were not the named IFN member body contact); and faith press contacts. It was also circulated through a number of other routes, such as the Faith-based Regeneration Network (UK) and the Community Development Foundation.

The Local Government Association sent an alert on 1 April to its authorities in England about the Week. A letter was sent by DCSF to its ‘faith school provider’ contacts who sent it on to their respective schools. DCSF also sent an email to all the national RE bodies with which it is in contact including the Association of Religious Education Inspectors, Advisors and Consultants (AREIAC) and the National Association of Standing Councils on Religious Education (NASACRE). Information about the Week was also provided to the participants at a major youth conference in Leeds in March, organised by the Young Muslims Advisory

Group (YMAG). DCSF also later sent information about the Week through its electronic mailing to schools. CLG drew the attention of all Whitehall departments to the Week through the Inter Departmental Group on Religion and Belief which it chairs.

IFN encouraged its member bodies to put out information about the Week and about their events across their networks. Faith communities responded energetically to the challenge. For example the Board of Deputies of British Jews reported that in the course of the summer it met with or contacted the community's different denominations and other key Jewish and inter faith organisations to ensure support. It circulated information/resources on Inter Faith Week to constituent members. It continued to do so at relevant meetings and in relevant press releases and it invited IFN's Director and the Director of the Three Faiths Forum to speak to the Deputies in September. The Board also provided a free consultancy service to the Jewish community about the Week through its Interfaith Officer.

Churches Together in England (CTE) carried news of the Week on the home page of its website and developed dedicated pages with resources from churches or centres, useful links and other information. It circulated widely a one page publication 'Action Ideas for Inter Faith Week' and held a preparatory event in October, 'Christian Approaches to Inter Faith Relations: your faith matters!' Inter Faith Week was widely publicised and endorsed by a message from the Presidents of CTE. There were also some official statements from individual denominations welcoming the week:

"As President of the Methodist Conference I warmly welcome the first national Inter Faith Week which begins on November 15th. Inter Faith Relations has and continues to be a priority of the Methodist Church and I am delighted that both its local Churches and individual members are contributing to the Week in a variety of different ways. As I have visited many towns and cities during my Presidential Year I have seen examples of the ways in which members of different faiths have worked together to help and support members of their local community. Inter Faith Week provides an opportunity to highlight the positive relations that exist between members of different faiths, both nationally and locally, and the ways in which they work together for the benefit of all people."

Revd David Gamble, *President of the Methodist Conference.*

The National Association of SACREs, another IFN member body, circulated information on the Week to its SACREs across England and a number, in turn, wrote to all schools in their authority.

A dedicated website, [www.interfaithweek.org](http://www.interfaithweek.org) went live on the day of the news release. This gave additional information and ideas for events.

On 12 November, the day of the pre-Week launch, a news release was put out by CLG which referred to the Week as well as to a number of other initiatives. This is at Annex B.

CLG's Communications team led on the media strategy for the Week. The focus of the strategy was primarily on the regional and local level. This bore some dividends in good coverage by the BBC's local news teams (sample pages are included at Annex C) and in terms of local newspapers. There were also two Radio 4 Thought for the Day pieces about

the Week (by Dr Indarjit Singh and Canon Alan Billings) and a Pause for Thought piece on Radio 2 by Rabbi Pete Tobias. There was little national coverage although the Week was covered in a piece on 24 March by the Times and on the national section of the BBC website on 15 November. There was also coverage on a number of news websites and even in the international press.

Some members of faith communities used several different routes to get the message across, including social networking sites. For example the Institute of Jainology reported “All events were advertised on Facebook. This method was particularly used in promoting the Young Jains / Bhakti Mandal event. . . . Information about all events was on Institute of Jainology website. . . . Oshwal News has published an article about how Oshwal Association UK participated. . . . Young Jains Magazine has published a double spread on all Jain participation in Inter Faith Week.”

In many areas multiple routes were used to promote the Week. Lancashire County Council commented that: “Our voluntary sector partner organisations Lancashire Forum of Faiths, Faiths4change and Preston, Lancaster and Accrington Faith Forums and Building Bridges Burnley and Pendle used local radio and other communications channels to promote their work during this week.”<sup>2</sup>

Many local events sought and received very good media coverage. For example the young people’s inter faith pilgrimage in Coventry arranged by Minorities of Europe (see page 34) was covered in the local newspaper, the *Coventry Telegraph*, with a photo of the participants at the Jamia Mosque, Eagle Street, and on BBC Radio Coventry and Warwickshire, which broadcast an interview with MoE’s Assistant Chief Executive about the Pilgrimage. Bolton Inter Faith Council participated in a live radio programme about the significance of inter faith work and a number of other local groups were interviewed about the Week. The following is an example of local coverage of Inter Faith Week from the *Worcester News*:

<sup>2</sup> From Inter Faith Week survey response from Lancashire County Council.

## Thousands of people have taken part in Worcester’s first Inter Faith Week.

Yesterday, the Bishop of Worcester, the Rt Revd Dr John Inge, was at the Worcester Mosque in Tallow Hill in the company of Mullah Hafeezud Din, head Imam.

The goodwill visit marked the end of Worcester’s hugely successful Inter Faith Week, which aimed to strengthen relations between religious denominations.

It also hoped to encourage local faith groups and communities to reach out to each other and build stronger bonds of understanding and cooperation.

Schoolchildren took part in assemblies about faith, Worcester City Council met with faith leaders to discuss where religion will fit into planned expansion of the city and Mullah Din paid a visit to Worcester Cathedral.

The Revd Duncan Ballard, vicar of St Mark’s in Cherry Orchard, Worcester, was one of the organisers of the new project. He said: “We often hear about these government initiatives and think, ‘Oh, not again’, but this has been brilliant.”

Mr Ballard handed out 60 disposable cameras to local schoolchildren and asked them to take photographs of the places where they find God. He said: “The photos have started to come back and they are fantastic. We had a picture of cobwebs, the inside of a church and a scene from the top of the Malvern Hills.”

For further information about the national scheme, log on to [interfaithweek.org](http://interfaithweek.org) or e-mail [enquiries@interfaithweek.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@interfaithweek.org.uk).

Lauren Rogers, *Worcester News* 21/11/09



## i) Engaging other organisations with the Week

At the first two meetings of the Steering Group there was discussion about bodies which it might be desirable to engage with the Week. In the course of March, April and May letters were sent from IFN's Director and the Head of Faith Communities Engagement at CLG to: the chaplains of the National Offender Management Service (through the Chaplain General); NCVO; Volunteering England, Community Service Volunteers, Councils for Voluntary Service, Higher Education and Further Education chaplains, Sport England, the Football Foundation, the Football League Trust and the Rugby Football Union; Rugby Football League; the Rotarians; the Lions; the Women's Institute; the Townswomen's Guild; Scouts; and Girlguiding. The National Youth Agency, the National Council for Voluntary Youth Services, the National Union of Students and national student religious organisations were also contacted. Many went on to encourage their members to take part. CLG also wrote to the chaplaincies of the Armed Services.

A number of the bodies contacted put out information about the Week to their members. For example NCVO included a short piece about the Week in its bulletin to members. Some of the organisations contacted, such as Girlguiding, produced resources for the Week.

## j) System of listing events

The Inter Faith Week website ([www.interfaithweek.org](http://www.interfaithweek.org)) and websites of the English Regional Faith Forums were the main places for listing IFW events. By agreement with the Forums and with small grant support to them from CLG, they put up event listings for their regions and updated these regularly. The main IFW site explained that national events and regional launch events were listed on the IFW site and that local events were listed on the Regional Forum sites. It contained clearly marked

hyperlinks to the sites of the relevant Forums.

CLG and IFN kept complementary sheets of events listings and these were drawn together to create a combined listing of national events and regional launches for the main IFW site. Following a process agreed by the IFW Working Group and regional faith forums, hyperlinks took users from the main site to listings of events at local level within each of the nine regions. Most regional sites were operational by mid September.

## k) Leaflet and poster

A flyer and poster about the Week were developed by IFN and CLG and cleared through the Working Group. They were designed and printed by CLG. The image of a number of men and women of different faiths at a tree planting event used to advertise the Week was supplied by Bradford District Faiths Forum and was specially chosen to send a strong message of people of different faiths actively working together. Copies are at Annex D.

Copies of the leaflet and poster were sent in September through IFN and Regional Faith Forum networks to a range of bodies. CLG and IFN sent copies to all local authorities in England. Copies of these were also sent by IFN and CLG, together with *Inter Faith Focus* (an IFN booklet with basic information and contact details for national and regional inter faith bodies), to all local authorities.

## l) Information and resources

In March, IFN purchased the domain [www.interfaithweek.org.uk](http://www.interfaithweek.org.uk) and on 19 March a gmail address was set up for enquiries about the week with access to this from CLG and IFN. Text for the website, based on the agreed information sheet, was agreed with CLG and went live on the day of the news release.

The Department for Children, Schools and Families commissioned from the National

Association of Teachers of Religious Education (NATRE) and NASACRE special materials for classroom and whole school use linked to the Week, and these were available from the Inter Faith Week website. Materials produced by the Three Faiths Forum formed part of NASACRE's suite of resources and were made available through the Three Faiths Forum website to which there was a link from the Inter Faith Week website. The Week seems to have caught the imagination of many schools, colleges and universities. The materials for schools are at Annex E.

## o) A competition?

The Working Group discussed whether to have a competition for schools as part of highlighting the Week. It was, however, felt that the lead time was too short.

## m) Timing of events

While the Week was not planned in a 'top down' fashion, regional faith forums were encouraged, through an email from CLG of 9 June, to check with IFN's office and with the Cohesion and Faiths Division of CLG to try to avoid clashes between regional events and the national launch. National faith and inter faith bodies were encouraged to be as aware as possible of potential clashes. But, with many faith communities and inter faith bodies keen to hold events within the Week, it was recognised that there was bound to be a packed and sometimes overlapping programme of events.

## n) National events

From the outset it was clear that there should be a national launch. This is described in detail in Section 6. The faith communities also wished to mark the Week and the Archbishop of Canterbury hosted a special event at Lambeth Palace where a statement was signed by faith leaders (see Section 7). Advance literature about both events underlined the intention to ensure that there was complementarity between the two events.

## 4) Resourcing the Week

### a) Regional Faith Forums

At the meeting of the English Regional Faith Forums Network on 9 January 2009, there was a brief discussion of the potential role of regional faith forums in the forthcoming Inter Faith Week in November. RFFs agreed that it would be good to support IFW, but that they would need resourcing to do so. In the course of March, prior to the announcement of the Week, CLG let the forums know that up to £5,000 per RFF would be made available to enable them to develop a programme of work relating to IFW. This could include a regional event or activities but had to include gathering information on events happening around the region and displaying detailed information about IFW events to the public, for instance by the creation or expansion of a website. CLG and CDF were invited to a meeting of the English Regional Faith Forums Network on 8 May to discuss arrangements in more depth.

### b) National faith communities

Inter Faith Week participation was discussed by the national faith community representative bodies at a meeting of IFN's Faith Communities Forum on 18 March. At this they indicated the desirability of some support to take part. Following further discussion, CLG made available a number of one-off grants of up to £2,000 for national faith community representative bodies in membership of the IFN's Faith Communities Forum and/or represented on the Faith Communities Consultative Council.

The one off grants to national faith communities were available (a) to develop and hold a single, jointly planned and organised event or project during the Week, with one or more other organisations in FCF and/or FCCC membership and belonging to different faith traditions, highlighting ways these communities are contributing to wider society in the UK and also how they are in

dialogue with each other; or (b) in preparation for the week to arrange, in consultation with IFN and CLG, a day seminar on their faith's approach to inter faith relations based on its particular teaching and traditions. A joint event by IFN and the British Humanist Association was also supported as relevant to the Week's theme of 'religious/non-religious dialogue'.

Eight applications were made and a list of the events held is at Annex F.

### c) National inter faith organisations

At an Inter Faith Network meeting of member national inter faith organisations attended by CLG's Head of Faith Communities Engagement on 13 February a number of these organisations raised the question of whether there might be any funding to support projects run by them and linked to Inter Faith Week. On 24 March, prior to the issue of the press release about the Week, CLG let these bodies know, through the IFN office, that the Secretary of State had now approved funding of up to £5,000 for each national inter faith organisation (ie ones operating, according to their terms of reference, across England or across the UK), to help enable them to hold events or run projects for the Week. A list of funded events is at Annex F.

### d) Local projects

Local projects were encouraged to bid for funding from the £130 million Grassroots programme delivered by the Community Development Foundation (CDF). Because of the timing of the Faith in Action fund application rounds, administered by CDF for CLG, and the time by which the dates for the Week was known, it was not possible for most local groups to access funding from this programme for week events. However, where there were groups which had already secured funding and could reasonably include a Week dimension to their project or event, CDF encouraged them to do so.

Some local projects sourced support from a number of different sources. For example, the Learning Together, Living in Harmony group in Aylesbury listed as sources of support for the event: Community Chest Grant from the District Council; a Local Area Forum grant from Buckinghamshire County Council; a grant from the Town Council; a donation from the Quaker Association; and in kind support from the District Council, Thames Valley Police, Aylesbury Vale District Council and volunteers from the Islah Project. A local organisation in the South East funded their youth concert with a Faiths in Action grant to bring together performers from different faiths and a grant from the Inter Faith Youth Trust towards other items such as refreshments and hall hire. In kind support was also secured by some bodies. For example, Eastbourne Borough Council gave Eastbourne Faith Forum support, publicity help and a free venue.

For an inter faith day and tree planting in Sheffield, grassroots members of faith and 'non-faith communities'<sup>3</sup> made voluntary donations to the collection made on the day, which met the incidental expenses. Burngreave Ashram and Pitsmoor Methodist Church hosted sessions without charge. The Islamic Society of Britain provided lunch, and the Forestry Team of Sheffield City Council met the costs of the tree planting. Publication expenses of the launch booklet were eliminated by voluntary desktop production by the Multifaith Chapel and Library at Burngreave Ashram, and a free copy-print run facilitated by Sheffield Faiths Forum / OFFER. It was decided that this would be eco-friendly and non-consumerist, avoiding glossy publications.

One local authority which had organised an event noted that it was given a small budget by both Corporate HR and the Chairman's office.

Where – as in Leicestershire – there was a local authority officer whose remit enabled them to work on the Week and to develop

and co-ordinate local activities for the week, with the help of a working group of interested individuals, this had a marked impact.

## e) Youth projects

CLG made £10,000 available through the Inter Faith Youth Trust (IFYT) for youth projects linked to the Week. The IFYT made available additional support alongside this and the combined fund enabled thirty five youth projects and events for the Week to receive funding (see list at the end of Annex F). A number of these are described in the 'events' section of this report.

<sup>3</sup> Terminology used by the organisers.

## 5) Inter Faith Week – Parameters of the Project

### a) Recognising the distinctiveness of different faith traditions

Initial conversations with some faith community representatives reflected two concerns. The first of these was that the Week might be about ‘mixing up’ faiths, not respecting their integrity. In literature about the Week it was made clear that the Week was not about doing this but was about giving individual, distinct faith communities the opportunity to explain how they relate to each other and to wider society.

The Week was developed with the engagement of the Bahá’í, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jain, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh and Zoroastrian faith communities, through the Inter Faith Network and also with consultation of the Faith Communities Consultative Council of CLG (on which these faith communities are represented) and there was careful recognition of the distinctiveness of each of the major faith traditions. When the Week took place, a significant number of the more conservative religious groups felt able to take part because there was clarity about this issue.

### b) Not about a set approach to inter faith engagement

Another concern voiced by some was that the Week might be about Government seeking to deliver particular policy objectives such as ‘cohesion’ in ways which could be unhelpful to the development of inter faith relations. However, in material about the Week it was made clear from the outset that it was recognised that each faith tradition has its own basis for engagement and it was recognised that inter faith relations have been developed by faith and inter faith bodies for many years. It was also made clear from the

outset that participation in the Week did not assume that everyone understands inter faith engagement in the same way. The Week was not about Government (or IFN) imposing a particular approach.

### c) About faith communities’ contributions to society

The Week was designed to include, as a key component, raising awareness about the different faith communities and marking the considerable contribution which they make to the well being of society – both singly and together.

### d) A Week for everyone or just for people of religious faith?

It was always envisaged that Inter Faith Week would be for any organisations and individuals who wished to take part – regardless of whether their organisations were religious or secular and regardless of their religious or belief affiliation.

While the term ‘inter faith’ highlights the important dimension of engagement and cooperation between faiths, two of the Week’s stated purposes from the outset were, as noted at pages 10-11, to increase awareness of the different and distinct faith communities in the UK and to stimulate a higher level of partnership between faith communities and secular agencies. So the Week naturally attracted and involved many people who would not see themselves as ‘religious’ but who had – or developed – an interest in learning more about religious communities in the UK. And it also drew in many secular agencies such as local authorities and police forces which, as part of their broader engagement with the local community, saw it as an opportunity to deepen and expand those relationships.

As noted at page 10, an explicit aim of the Week was to increase understanding between

people of religious and non-religious beliefs. The British Humanist Association opted to take part in the Week, having a stand about religious/non religious involvement at the national launch; holding an IFW event of its own; and joining with the Inter Faith Network for the UK to hold a by invitation seminar. However, in a press release on 16 November it expressed a wish to see “the Government take a more inclusive approach that celebrates the wider impact of the voluntary and community sector on community cohesion”. A number of emails were received at the IFW enquiries address from local Humanists making similar points.

## e) Branding

In early planning for the Week it was discussed whether there should be a logo or ‘brand’ for Inter Faith Week in England. On the one hand, a logo can help give identity and visibility and possibly encourage bodies such as local businesses to enter into partnership on events. On the other hand, wherever there is a logo for an event it can be seen as giving an official sanction to an event and, possibly, appearing to ‘recognise’ the group organising it. Either permission to use it has to be sought (and that idea sat ill with a Week intended to be open to all and not centrally controlled) or anyone can use it (in which case there is always the possibility that it can be seen as validating the approach or beliefs of any body which organises an event). In early planning for the Week it was therefore agreed that, given the complex and sensitive area of religion and belief, the Week would **not** be ‘branded’.

## f) Fixing the dates for the Week

In discussion in October 2008 between CLG and IFN, it was decided that, while CLG would be fully involved in discussion about the dates for the Inter Faith Week in 2009, these dates should be ‘owned’ by IFN so that they would be less likely to be affected by machinery of Government changes.

Choosing a date was a challenge. Some thought that a summer date would be good so as to increase the likelihood of good weather and make it easier to include ‘faith walks’ as part of the week. On the other hand, consultation with DSCF and with contacts in Higher Education and Further Education institutions pointed to a strong wish by them to have the Week in term time (but not during exam time) to enable as many young people as possible to take part – and, in the case of schools, for classroom activities to be part of the Week.

These considerations, together with the need for adequate lead time for planning, pointed towards mid October or November as the time for the Week. October was ruled out early on when conversation with universities suggested that it would fall too close to start of term; the half term holidays proved hard to avoid; and the organisers of One World Week (a long established Week which falls late in October) indicated that they did not wish IFW to overlap with that Week.

Consultation then focused on November dates. IFN wrote to member bodies on 22 October 2008 and said that a number of factors were pointing towards holding the Week in November and, most probably, within the first three weeks of November. It asked them whether there were any potentially conflicting days/weeks/key events during the month of November 2009 of which they were aware.

It was felt desirable to avoid the two weeks running up to and including Remembrance Sunday due to the commitments of local authorities, faith leaders and others linked to this. The final week of November (which was when Scottish Inter Faith Week would be held) proved not to be viable as a number of religious leaders and key inter faith practitioners indicated that they would be on their way to the World Parliament of Religions meeting which was happening a few days later in Melbourne. Also, *Eid Ul-Adha* and Advent Sunday fell at the end of November; and consultation with Islam Awareness Week

(IAW) had indicated that they did not want to see IFW held directly after IAW which was likely to fall the preceding Week (although the dates had not, at that point, been finalised).

Next, there was discussion with IFN's Executive Committee and with the organisers of Islam Awareness Week about whether it might be appropriate for Inter Faith Week to run at the same time as IAW. There was some sensitivity over this and a need to ensure that IAW organisers and participants did not feel their Week was being undercut and that members of other faiths did not feel IFW was somehow tipped more towards one community than others. The outcome of extended and careful consultation on this was a decision that the two Weeks should overlap and that IAW would choose as its theme for 2009 a linked theme.<sup>4</sup> Its site for IAW 2009 said:

The theme for IAW in 2009, 'Walk the Talk', has been chosen to mark the occasion of the first ever Inter Faith Week in England, which is taking place at the same time as IAW this year. 'Walk the Talk' is about encouraging everyone to get out and about and get to know people of other faiths. This may be people who you may not otherwise get a chance to meet or it may be just your neighbours and colleagues wherever you live. Talking face to face and listening to each other leads to a better understanding of each other and that will hopefully lead to walking or working together side by side to create a better future.

IAW went on to be a key contributor, in partnership with the Mosques and Imams National Advisory Committee (MINAB) to the IFW launch exhibition stall on Islam and it produced a booklet, *Living in a Multi Faith Society*.

"This year Islam Awareness Week coincided with the first ever Inter Faith Week and therefore the activities were merged. The idea for the IAW theme for 2009, 'Walk the Talk', came from the consultation that led to the *Face to Face and Side by Side* Government document. The purpose of the project was to explore ways to: encourage 'face to face' dialogue; build understanding; celebrate values held in common as well as acknowledge distinctiveness; increase opportunities to work together 'side by side'; and develop good relations with people of different faiths and no faith.

MINAB and IAW agreed to use the week to encourage communities to hold events to celebrate and raise awareness of the positive inter faith work that is being undertaken everywhere. The Inter Faith Week activity was launched at the national Inter Faith Week launch event on 12 November 2009. Powerful posters and leaflets were produced to raise awareness and promote living in a multi-faith society, in addition to showcasing good practice on inter faith activities and an exhibition of Holy Books. The event was well attended and proved a good platform to support regional and local inter faith bodies with the contacts and networks of IAW and MINAB. In addition to information used at the launch conference, the materials produced were used across the country at our inter faith events to continue promoting key messages about living in a multi faith society.

*From MINAB report*

Mitzvah Day also took place during the Week (on 15 November)<sup>5</sup>. Although this was not drawn to organisers' attention at the planning stage, it proved a felicitous overlap, with a

<sup>4</sup> Note: It was agreed that were a further Inter Faith Week to be held this would not overlap with IAW and, prior to the dates for the 2010 IAW being chosen, IFN consulted with IAW's coordinator.

<sup>5</sup> A Jewish-led national day of social action with all projects supporting local charities and needy causes.

number of joint events being held at local level (see page 52). The International Day for Tolerance fell on 16 November and was felt to be very compatible with the themes of Inter Faith Week.

There were also two other Weeks which fell at the time under consideration for IFW: Prisons Week and Anti-Bullying Week but these did not come to the attention of the Working Group until the dates for IFW had already been fixed and so it was a case, *post hoc*, of making suitable connections. It was also noted, retrospectively, by one of the Government Offices that IFW fell at the same time as the 2009 Business Enterprise Week (part of Global Entrepreneurship Week).



## 6) National Launch

A major pre-Week launch event, organised by CLG and IFN, took place at the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre on 12 November. It was funded by CLG as part of its contribution to the Week.

The Working Group discussed and agreed issues relating to the launch, consulting as necessary with contributors. The event was administered and serviced by staff at CLG and IFN. CLG appointed one of its staff as Events Manager.

### a) Date and timing

It was decided to hold the launch ahead of the Week to enable involvement of regional faith forums and faith community participants who would be likely to be involved in their own events at the start of the actual Week and also to give the Week advance publicity.

Proceedings began at 11.30am and concluded around 1.15pm, followed by a vegetarian buffet lunch. A morning time was considered best in terms of any possible media coverage and the time of 11.30am was chosen to accommodate a number of participants who would be travelling from areas furthest away from London.

### b) Venue

It was decided to hold the national launch event in London in the Westminster area so that there was a greater likelihood that Ministers could attend. After examination of a number of venues and consideration of best value for money for the requirements, the Benjamin Britten Lounge, Fleming Room and Whittle Room at the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre were booked.

### c) Invitations

The event was attended by around 300 guests

from different faiths, regions and types of organisation.

The guest list was put together by CLG and IFN drawing on their databases of contacts for faith community representative bodies, inter faith organisations, Government departments, educational and academic bodies and other organisations with an interest in inter faith work. Invitations were also extended to the media.

Faith community representatives were invited on the basis of IFN's Faith Communities Forum and CLG's Faith Communities Consultative Council with additional invitations going to key people in faith communities. Each regional faith forum in England was offered ten places to enable them to invite two members of forum staff and eight representatives of local inter faith organisations and faith based social action projects in their region. IFN let local inter faith groups know that they needed to contact regional forums directly to express interest in sending a representative if they wished to do so.

The Working Group had originally hoped that it would be possible to invite a range of Parliamentary, third sector and business guests (and a few were invited) but interest in the event was so high on the part of the national faith communities that as soon as the event was made known large numbers of requests came in for invitations. This was partly because of interest – and pride – in the cross-community exhibitions which saw many organisations within each community working together (some for the first time) to create displays about their faith community. The early list rapidly expanded to just under 600 due to high levels of interest from the faith communities and requests that more members be accommodated.

Email invitations from the Rt Hon John Denham MP, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, were sent out by CLG. The invitation was personal to the invitee and recipients were asked not to

forward it to colleagues in their organisations or to external contacts. Invitees were asked to register for the launch by replying to this email and indicating their full name including title; the name of their organisation; their postal address and phone number, or that of their organisation; any dietary requirements; and an indication of any special needs, such as disabled access. Anyone unable to attend was invited to nominate one colleague to attend in their place.

A full programme, exhibition map and acknowledgement of registration were sent to those who registered to attend and recipients were asked to bring the acknowledgement of registration with them on the day in order to gain admittance to the event. It was noted that there would not be space to display or hand out additional materials.

## d) Proceedings

The launch event programme was compèred by CLG's Director General (Communities), David Prout, and opened by Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, John Denham, and the Co-Chairs of the Inter Faith Network, Dr Girdari Bhan and Rt Rev Tom Butler.

Diana Johnson, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State in the Department for Children, Schools and Families, spoke, reflecting the important role played by DSCF in relation to the Week. The Shadow Secretary for Communities and Local Government, Caroline Spelman and the Liberal Democrat Communities and Local Government spokesperson, Julia Goldsworthy, also spoke. This cross-party participation was an important aspect of the launch.

A presentation about faith and social action was made by Mgr John Devine of the North West Forum of Faiths. This drew on material specially produced by the Faith based Regeneration Network.<sup>6</sup>

Young people from each of the nine faith communities and nine English regions, each highlighting different areas of work reflected in the exhibition, spoke about what their faith meant to them. Swara, a multi faith group of young musicians from Yorkshire and Humber, and Kol Simcha, a Jewish quartet, provided music for the event.

The IFN office worked with the faith communities to identify the young people and worked with them to ensure that all aspects of the Week were covered.

**“I thought the Launch function hosted by the CLG and the IFN was very good. The programme was brief and interesting and kept to time. Above all, I congratulate whoever thought of making it an All Party event. The gesture to invite the Shadow Secretary and the Liberal Spokesman was excellent and was in keeping with the mood of the day. By so doing, the CLG demonstrated the theme of bringing people together rather than treating it solely as a Government event.”**

*Zoroastrian participant at launch*

Presentations by the Secretary of State, Co-Chairs of IFN and the young people are at Annex G.

A programme for the event was designed and printed for all participants.

An exhibition of work on inter faith activity and faith and social action was a key part of the launch. This was open to participants before and after the launch programme and during lunch. It was designed to provide a lively and informative spread of displays which gave an insight into the work of faith communities and inter faith bodies in the UK and some of the many events and projects which were to happen during the Week. All materials were assembled by 9.00am to allow

<sup>6</sup> The presentation by Mgr Devine was not from a prepared text. The PowerPoint slides illustrating his talk can be obtained from FbRN.

early VIPs to tour the stalls before the proceedings began.

“For me, and many others, Inter Faith Week began with a launch event on 12 November in London, many regional and national organisations had displays. There was a tremendous sense of energy and celebration as we shared our stories and details of our events... The highlight of the event was a series of brief speeches by young people of different faiths sharing their thoughts and experiences of inter faith which were truly inspirational and filled us with hope for what the next generation might achieve...”

*From Reflections on the Week by the Director of the Christian Muslim Forum*

*Source:CMF website*

## d) The exhibition

IFN and CLG staff liaised with the QEII Conference Centre and visited the Centre on a number of occasions in advance of the day to discuss the physical layout of the space, together with catering, lighting, sound and staging needs. Staging and seating were set up in the Fleming Room. Six banners with the IFW image (of the Bradford District Faiths Forum tree planters) and with the CLG and IFN logos were located close to the stage and near to the entrance.

A list of exhibitors and a map of the exhibition is at Annex H. The stands were documented photographically by the Assistant Director of the Inter Faith Network and by a young Jain photographer. CLG’s Event Manager oversaw arrangements on the day.

All exhibitors were sent an exhibition pack outlining the details of the day. This included information on accommodation near the conference centre; what to do on arrival; how to send material to the conference venue in advance; who to liaise with on the day of the

event; the availability of stationery and charges for internet usage at the venue; written and photographic descriptions of the available exhibition space, stands and tables; and instructions for removal of exhibition materials after the event. A template delivery note and collection note were also included.

Exhibitors were given stand space and a table to promote their work and were sent guidance on the use of their space. They were told the specific dimensions of the boards and it was explained that these should contain photographs, pictures and other eye-catching and interesting materials and that the size of written text should be 14 point font or bigger.

The standard space allocated to an organisation was a space of three metres by two metres with one metre between each stand, sufficient for a three board display or two boards and a standing banner. A table was provided for each stand and chairs were available for those that needed them.

The Department for Communities and Local Government and the Inter Faith Network for the UK had display stands by the entrance to the event which described their work. IFN made available free copies of *Inter Faith Organisations in the UK: A Directory, 2009* and *Inter Faith Focus* and *The Local Inter Faith Guide*.

### **National faith communities**

National bodies of the Bahá’í, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jain, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh and Zoroastrian communities all presented cross-community displays about their faith community. Their boards were designed to:

- reflect all the most significant traditions or denominations within their religion;
- have a strong emphasis on their faith’s contribution to society in the UK (for example, social action, charitable activities, promoting community cohesion);
- have a strong emphasis on their faith’s

inter faith activity in the UK (for example, commenting on the religious basis for inter faith engagement and about organisations and projects in which it is involved and any inter faith committee, or staff which it may have); and

- include brief material explaining their community's religious beliefs and practices.

Small grant support up to £1,500 per community was made available by CLG to these communities to enable this. Details of which organisations were funded for this purpose are at Annex F. Funding was made available on the basis that the material on the stall would be developed jointly with all organisations of their faith community which were members of CLG's FCCC and/or IFN's FCF. They were also invited to consult with other bodies within their community or working with their community on inter faith and faith and social action issues. Space allocation varied from two to five boards according, broadly, to size of community.

### **Regional Faith Forums**

There are now 'regional faith forums' in each English Region: East of England Faiths Council; Faith Forum for the East Midlands; Faiths Forum for London; North East Regional Faiths Network (NERFN); North West Forum of Faiths; South East Faiths Forum; faithnetsouthwest; West Midlands Faiths Forum; and Yorkshire and Humber Faiths Forum. The Regional Faith Forums' displays were located in the reception/foyer area. Each Forum had three boards and room for a pop up banner. Their materials were designed to convey briefly the history of the body; its make up and how it links and engages with local, regional and national faith, inter faith and governmental bodies; and to convey the work which the forums are doing across their regions to support faith based social action and development of good inter faith relations. Eight forums exhibited (NERFN did

not exhibit due to logistical problems).

### **Local inter faith work**

Examples of local inter faith work featured in the regional boards and an exhibition by the Community Development Foundation<sup>7</sup>. A special display was created by IFN to give presence and prominence to local inter faith work. This used materials drawn from local inter faith groups for the occasion, grouped by themes. Each theme was presented on one panel: pilgrimages, walks and visits; youth; festivals, celebrations and concerts; directories; joint events; exhibitions and displays; publications and resources; civic life; community and social projects; and dialogue.

IFN also created a display board which gave a taster of upcoming local events over Inter Faith Week. The selection of these events was based largely on the themes selected for the 'Local Inter Faith Activities' board.

### **Faith and Food**

'Faith and food' was thought to be a big part of inter faith activity and therefore it was decided to have a display board depicting activities under this theme, rather than just one panel. IFN drew one together including photographs and information from local inter faith bodies as well as from The Big Lunch, a national initiative that uses food to bring people together in neighbourhoods.

### **National and regional inter faith bodies**

National and regional inter faith organisations in membership of IFN were offered space to display their work. These ranged from the oldest national inter faith body, the Council of Christians and Jews, to two new bodies just emerging: the Council of Dharmic Faiths and the Hindu-Christian Forum. Other exhibitors in this category included: Christian Muslim Forum; Christians Aware Interfaith Programme; Coexistence Trust; the East of England Faiths Agency;

<sup>7</sup> CDF's stand also covered the Faith in Action Programme of CLG which it administers and which is supporting many local inter faith and faith and social action initiatives of the kind encouraged in *Face to Face and Side by Side: A Framework for Partnership in our Multi Faith Society*.

Interfaith Alliance UK; Joseph Interfaith Foundation; Minorities of Europe Inter Faith Programme; Multi-Faith Centre, University of Derby; St Ethelburga's Centre for Reconciliation and Peace; St Philip's Centre; Three Faiths Forum; Tony Blair Faith Foundation; United Religions Initiative (UK); and the World Congress of Faiths.

Also in the auditorium was information about relevant work in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. A Northern Ireland exhibition was brought by the CCWA and those of Scotland and Wales by members of the national inter faith bodies in those nations.

### **Faith and Social Action**

In the main auditorium there was an extensive 'Faith and Social Action' area, assembled and run by the Faith-based Regeneration Network with a dedicated grant from CLG. This showcased a number of specific projects through which the different faith communities are contributing to society. Faith communities and other FbRN contacts were invited to let FbRN have material to be drawn on for this. Additionally a DVD on the faith and social action work of the Church of England was shown during the lunch hour on a continuous loop.

Internationally focused faith based social action was reflected in a set of stands in the foyer/reception area including a specially created Department for International Development stand highlighting that Department's work with faith communities and a joint stand with information from faith based aid agencies.

**"Just want to say a big thanks for inviting Islamic Relief to the inter faith event. It was superb!"**

*participant from Islamic Relief*

### **Inter Faith Learning and youth inter faith work and learning**

The adjacent room was devoted mainly to youth inter faith work and education.

The RE Council for England and Wales and the National Association of Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education put together an exhibition on inter faith learning in the classroom and on developing youth inter faith forums. Interfaith Kirklees brought an interactive stand giving an example of how inter faith learning is being brought to life in the schools of Kirklees. The Schools Linking Network and the Shared Futures programme (Three Faiths Forum) highlighted work to encourage linking between different schools to enable greater interaction between students of different faith backgrounds. Images of Inter Faith Week logos created by pupils of Oldknow Junior School in Birmingham were also on display

An NUS and Higher and Further Education chaplaincy board provided a window into developing good inter faith relations on campus. This display reflected the relevant work of a number of other initiatives such as Interact and CCJ. The National Council for Voluntary Youth Services, Liverpool Community Spirit, Girlguiding UK and Three Faiths Forum's Young Professionals Inter Faith Programmes gave an insight into inter faith activity with young people outside of educational contexts. The Inter Faith Youth Trust also had a stand.

There were exhibitions from two academic inter faith programmes: Cambridge Inter Faith Programme at Cambridge University and the Woolf Institute of Abrahamic Faiths.

### **Religious/non-religious engagement**

A stand on religious/non-religious engagement was assembled and manned by the British Humanist Association.

## **Whitehall initiatives**

A number of Government Departments contributed materials to a cross-Whitehall stand. This highlighted various pieces of work that Government was taking forward involving faith communities. Courts and Armed Forces chaplaincies, mental health education and rules on religious slaughter were among the areas of policy featured. The exhibition was assembled and staffed by staff of CLG.

## **Sport**

There was also a stand from Sporting Equals, reflecting the significance of inter faith sporting events in the Week.

## **e) Catering**

For multi faith events there are particular requirements to be met and full catering guidelines were sent to the QE II Centre in advance of the event. Staff from CLG and IFN attended a menu tasting a few weeks prior to the day.

Catering counters serving tea and coffee (including herbal and fruit teas and soya milk), which were staffed by the QE II Centre, were positioned in the Benjamin Britten Lounge and Whittle Room during the day. Cold water dispensers were situated in all three rooms for delegates to serve themselves throughout the day. Tea, coffee and biscuits were made available for IFN and CLG staff on arrival early in the day and servings of tea and coffee were made available from 9am to 11.30am at the staffed catering counters for exhibitors and early arrivals.

A finger buffet lunch was served in the Benjamin Britten Lounge and the Whittle Room between 1.00pm and 2.00pm. The menu was vegan (ie vegetarian with no eggs or dairy products) to cater for all nine faith communities and staff were fully informed of the allergies of any participants. Everything was specially made by the chef and all dishes were labelled with a full list of ingredients.

## 7) Faith Communities' National Inter Faith Week event at Lambeth Palace

A reception for national faith community leaders and IFN trustees took place on 16 November at Lambeth Palace, hosted by the Archbishop of Canterbury. The event was organised by Lambeth Palace in consultation with the Inter Faith Network office and, informally, with CLG.

Representatives of national inter faith bodies in membership of IFN and on behalf of the English Regional Faith Forums were also invited to attend as was Lord Harries, Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Inter-Faith Group. The event was also attended by Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, John Denham, and invitations were extended to his Opposition 'shadows' in the Conservative and Liberal Democrat parties. Speakers included Lords Sacks of Aldgate, Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Great Britain and the Commonwealth; Dr Indarjit Singh CBE, Director of the Network of Sikh Organisations and Vice-Chair, Inter Faith Network for the

UK; and Dr Manazir Ahsan MBE, Director of the Islamic Foundation and Vice-Chair, Inter Faith Network.

A joint statement of common commitment to continue building good inter religious relations and to contribute to the common good from different religious perspectives, developed by the faith communities through the Faith Communities Forum of IFN, was read out by Commissioner Elizabeth Mattear, a President of Churches Together in England, and Venerable Bogoda Seelawimala of the Sri Lankan Sangha Sabha. It was signed by all present. This formed part of a message of loyal greetings to Her Majesty The Queen which was sent on behalf of all present. A message from The Queen anticipating its reception and conveying good wishes to all concerned for a memorable and successful event was read out by the Archbishop. Formal thanks to the Archbishop for hosting the event were offered by IFN Co-Chair Dr Girdari Bhan.

### Statement by national faith communities to mark the first national Inter Faith Week in England

"We believe that good inter faith relations are a vital part of a harmonious, just and respectful society. We pledge, today, to deepen our work to increase understanding about and between our faiths and to strengthen our cooperation on social issues.

We renew our commitment to developing effective and long term ways of dialogue and mutual learning. We shall continue to seek to understand the patterns of engagement of our faith communities – through history and today; to affirm the positive aspects of these patterns; and to heal wounds of misunderstanding where these are found.

While our great religious traditions are distinct in belief and practice, there is much that unites us. We will draw on fundamental values held in common and on the wisdom of our respective faith traditions to continue to work – as individual communities and together – for the wellbeing of our society, our wider global community and the planet that is our home.

Alongside all of good will, we will work to tackle with renewed determination the challenges of poverty, ignorance, injustice, crime and violence, and social fragmentation and to help shape a society where all feel at home; all are valued and justly treated; and all have a chance to thrive."

## 8) Events to mark the Week

Several hundred other excellent and inspiring events are known to have taken place during the Week at national, regional and local level. Most regional faith forums held regional launches. As noted at page 17, a number of events held by national inter faith bodies and national faith communities were supported by small grants from CLG and these are listed at Annex F.

The Week was not centrally directed: the intention was to encourage the broadest possible participation and groups developed their own events and programmes. In many towns and cities – and some rural areas – a week long programme of events took place. Some examples of local publicity for Inter Faith Week are at Annex I.

As noted at the outset this report, while wide ranging, cannot be comprehensive. A more extensive listing of those events around England known to IFN and CLG through direct notification, regional lists and other information on the internet, will be put onto the Inter Faith Week website.

In this section, for reasons of brevity, events are reported more briefly and names of speakers not generally included. Those interested to find out more about the events described can contact the organisers. (IFN can provide contact details.)

The Inter Faith Network office is grateful to its trustees, members of CLG's Faith Communities Council and Regional Faith Forum contacts who saw the report in draft and, in the case of the Forums, commented on this section in particular.

### Pre-Week events

Churches Together in England held a day conference in Manchester in October on 'Christian Approaches to Inter Faith Relations: Your Faith Matters!' with a wide range of speakers. At the end of the day everyone was invited to be a catalyst in their own

congregations to encourage more Christians to deepen their faith in the context of friendship and exchange with people of other faiths and to make good use of Inter Faith Week. Jain Network UK organised a seminar in London in early November on the theme of the Jain contribution to inter faith understanding, reflecting, in this context, on issues such as social philanthropy, pluralism and ecology. Participants from a number of faiths attended.

Pre-Week events were also held by faithnetsouthwest and the Yorkshire and Humber Faith Forum (see immediately below).

## Regional and sub-regional advance events and launches

Regional Faith Forums in England held a number of events connected to the Week, including launches. There were also a number of sub-regional launches. IFN and/or CLG staff attended each regional event.

### i) East of England

East of England Faiths Council (EEFC) held a 'Faith in the Region' networking event for inter faith groups, public sector officers and support organisations at the Cambridge Union Society. Delegates were able to visit and talk with a wide variety of exhibitors that ranged from regional BBC to local Volunteer Centres. Immediately following this, and prior to the Cambridge Union Debate which it co-hosted (see page 37), the EEFC also held a regional launch reception for business people, academics and senior public officers to meet faith leaders.

There was also a county launch in Suffolk: 'A Harvest of People' – an Inter Faith Celebration at the Cathedral Church of St James and St Edmund, Bury St Edmunds. This was attended by around 50 people from various faiths – Bahá'í, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh, by Cathedral Staff, by representation from Churches Together in Suffolk and by Faith Representatives of three



Suffolk LSPs, along with the Strategic Board of Suffolk Community Cohesion and Inclusion Partnership, St Edmundsbury Borough Council, Ipswich Borough Council and Suffolk Constabulary.

## **ii) East Midlands**

In the East Midlands, sub-regional events took place rather than a pan-regional launch. Faiths Forum for the East Midlands offered support to these.

A key event was a launch at Leicestershire County Hall with presentations from a number of speakers from national, regional and local inter faith organisations, along with displays showing examples of inter faith, multi-cultural and community cohesion initiatives taking place across Leicestershire. The event also served as an introduction to the significant range of inter faith activities and events taking place across Leicestershire during Inter Faith Week. Over a hundred people attended the event, which was opened by the Chairman of Leicestershire County Council and the Lord Mayor of Leicester and attended by the Bishop of Leicester and representatives from faith communities across the city and county. At the end of the event, all who attended signed an 'Inter Faith Charter', showing their commitment to the building of positive relationships amongst all faith communities.

## **iii) London**

The Faiths Forum for London had not been formally launched by the time of Inter Faith Week. Although still under development, its forerunner, the Faiths Forum for London project encouraged local markings of the Week and listed events on the FFL section of the London Civic Forum site.

The Mayor of London hosted a reception, at the Greater London Assembly building, for the faith communities of London to mark Inter Faith Week. At this an inter faith conference to take place in 2010 was announced.

## **iv) North East**

The North East Regional Faith Network held two events during the week: a 'Stakeholders Event', with the five local authorities of the Tees Valley, in Stockton on Tees to promote and facilitate engagement between faith groups, inter faith groups and statutory bodies; and a launch event at the Gateshead Civic Centre for a new web-based North East faiths survey. A longer report on the stakeholder event appears in the 'Local Authorities' section below. The launch event included displays by faith communities, music and dancing by various faiths as well as a demonstration of the survey.

## **v) North West**

The North West Forum of Faiths co-hosted two sub regional events. The first took place in Greater Manchester in collaboration with the Greater Manchester Faith Community Leaders (GMFCLF). The aim was to raise the profile of the GMFCLF amongst the local inter faith groups within Greater Manchester; to provide a networking opportunity for these local groups; and to demonstrate the variety and extent of local faith based activity throughout Greater Manchester to local authorities and other statutory partners.

The second event, at the Municipal Buildings in Crewe, launched the Cheshire Inter Faith Network. Cheshire had previously had very little inter faith activity due to its demographics. A steering group, convened by the NW Forum of Faiths and supported by the NWDA, had been working for the previous two years in raising the profile of faith communities in Cheshire, especially *vis a vis* the statutory sector. The aim of the event was to establish an interim county wide faith network which would provide signposting for statutory bodies to faith communities pending further discussions on the most appropriate configuration of local groups to match new local authority structures. The event revealed a high level of interest and support among faith groups along with many useful suggestions as to how the agenda might be taken forward.

## vi) South East

The South of England Faiths Forum (SEEFF) opted to support local inter faith groups' events rather than hold a launch or other regional event.

## vii) South West

Faithnetsouthwest held a pre-Week launch for Inter Faith Week in conjunction with their Annual General Meeting in October. This highlighted the themes of the Week. Presenters included the Bishop of Bristol, the Head of Faith Communities Engagement at CLG and the Regional Prevent Manager at the Government Office of the Southwest. They spoke on the importance of bringing faith groups together, working in partnership and promoting social action to benefit local communities.

## viii) West Midlands

The West Midlands Faiths Forum launch was designed to "emphasise and share the richness of the West Midlands religious and spiritual diversity through highlighting grassroots inter faith understanding, harmony, co-operation and renewal." The evening featured a range of stalls of inter faith groups and partner bodies as well as a photography exhibition, displaying the breadth of faith and local inter faith work taking place in the region. The evening also included a programme of speakers including inter faith practitioners, a leading scholar of Islam and inter faith relations and the Deputy Lord Mayor of Birmingham. Presentations were interspersed with live performances by the Ulfah Collective, an all female Muslim band, the Kings Ministries Gospel Music Group, and the Sonia Sabri Dance Company, performing traditional North Indian dance in the style of Kathak.

The Senior Adviser for School Effectiveness at the Birmingham Local Authority presented prizes for a special Inter Faith Week logo competition that had taken place in schools throughout Birmingham.

## ix) Yorkshire and Humber

Yorkshire and Humber Faiths Forum held a regional event in advance of Inter Faith Week in late September. This was hosted by Kirklees Faiths Forum and attended by over 50 representatives from faith organisations and communities in the region. It was a celebration of faith in Yorkshire and Humber and an opportunity to share thoughts and plans for Inter Faith Week.

During Inter Faith Week itself, YHFF held a high profile event for regional faith leaders. This was hosted by the Archbishop of York. It marked the achievements of the Yorkshire and Humber Faiths Forum to date and was the first opportunity for faith leaders from around the region to meet, discuss and celebrate the contributions of faith communities to wider society. The Forum's Chief Executive Officer spoke of its work and of the City of Sanctuary movement (initiated by YHFF). The chair of United Faiths (the youth forum of YHFF) spoke about its work in schools and played the sitar. The Archbishop joined in the musical performance, playing his African drums.

## Places of Worship

Many events took place at individual places of worship. Some of these took the form of exchange visits:

**"Inter Faith week began with a visit of the Imam to Monday evensong at Worcester Cathedral.....Inter Faith Week ended with The Bishop of Worcester accepting the Imam's invitation to be present at Friday prayers' ..."**

The Christian Muslim Forum launched a booklet on 'Twinning' between mosques and churches during Inter Faith Week. As part of this launch, they introduced the programme and supplied resources on 'how to twin' at Exeter and Newcastle. These events included presentations, readings from Christian and Muslim texts, and entertainment by faith and

inter faith groups. The aim of Twinning is to establish a long term committed, public relationship between neighbouring mosques and churches, involving the members of each congregation.

Other events included 'open days': a chance to let the public find out more about the place of worship and the community to which it belongs. From the Friars Bridge Road Buddhist Centre in Ipswich to the Shri Laxmi Narayan Hindu Temple in Birmingham, the Jinalay (Jain temple) in Potters Bar, the Northampton Hebrew Congregation, Hillingdon Park Baptist Church in LB Hillingdon, the Sri Guru Singh Sabha Gurdwara in LB Hounslow, and the Diamond Road Mosque in Slough, many places of worship and religious centres opened their doors to visitors or offered tours. Some places of worship welcomed visitors from beyond their area, for example the Central Gurdwara in Manchester hosting a visit from Altrincham Inter Faith Group.

Bristol Multi-Faith Forum organised a Diverse Open Doors day with seventeen different places of worship opening their doors.

The local Council of Christians and Jews and Harlow Jewish Community held a special Shabbat service, to which people of all faiths in Harlow were invited. The service began with a prayer for inter faith meetings, and included readings and prayers from faiths other than Jewish, which were part of the introduction to the regular Shabbat service. Many people, both Jews and non-Jews, were asked to read various passages during the service. Guests were also invited to have a look at the Torah scroll, which was much admired. After the service, of course, there was a festive Kiddush (a sharing of food and wine) prepared by members of the community.

Source, *CCJ Dialogue* Winter 2010

A number of places of worship played host to inter faith gatherings, such as a conference on building community links which took place at the Shri Venkateswara (Balaji) Temple in Tividale, Sandwell and a Moseley Inter Faith Group event at Hamza Mosque, Moseley.

Mosques around the country were encouraged by the Mosques and Imams National Advisory Board (MINAB) to include in their sermons at the congregational Friday prayer during Inter Faith Week, the theme of good inter faith relations and to stress the importance of inter faith dialogue and encourage people at the grassroots level to reach out to other faith communities.

## Engaging with Scripture

The Cambridge Inter-Faith Programme held a Scriptural Reasoning event in Cambridge to show the dynamic and evolving inter faith practice in which Jews, Christians and Muslims meet to study their sacred Scriptures together.

The Interfaith Alliance UK, Foundation for Ethnic Understanding, Islamic Cultural Centre and London Central Mosque, Scriptural Reasoning, Liberal Judaism, the Movement for Reform Judaism, Leo Baeck College and Children of Abraham held an event where participants read together and discussed Jewish and Islamic sacred texts. The aim was to build understanding and respect for religious differences.

## Pilgrimages and Faith trails

Despite the November weather, faith trails and multi faith walks and pilgrimages were very popular.

A 'Treasures Revealed Faith Trail' around Huddersfield gave an opportunity to see Huddersfield from a new perspective by walking the town and visiting places of worship along the way. In Lincoln an Inter Faith Walk wound its way from the cathedral to the Friends Meeting House, via Jews' Court and the Lincoln mosque. Hull and East Riding Interfaith arranged two trails: a Faith Trail and a Jewish Heritage Walk.

## Coventry

The city of Coventry saw two different pilgrimages/walks:

Coventry Multi Faith Forum held its annual Peace Walk, starting with the reading of Peace Prayers in Priory Gardens, then visiting the Chapel of Unity (Coventry Cathedral), Zeenat ul Islam Mosque, Hindu Temple Society, a Spiritualist Church and GNP Gurdwara, where a communal meal was enjoyed.

Minorities of Europe (MoE) organised an 'Interfaith Youth Pilgrimage' to principal places of worship in Coventry, taking in the Noor-al-Islam Mosque, the Sri Krishna Temple, the Guru Nanak Parkash Gurdwara, Coventry Cathedral, Methodist Central Hall and St Mary's and St Benedict's Roman Catholic Church.

The pilgrimage provided the opportunity for young people of different religious backgrounds to explore each other's traditions, and ask questions of the representatives of the different places of worship. A list of questions was provided to the representatives of the places of worship before the day of the Pilgrimage. These questions had been developed in discussion with the young people before hand. By way of further preparation, each young pilgrim was provided with a note on dress and etiquette. This was intended to meet the expressed need of the pilgrims for information to help them behave appropriately at the places of worship. . . . The day was completed at Minorities of Europe's offices where the group were able to relax, reflect on their experiences and evaluate the day's activities.

Watford Inter Faith Association held Watford's first inter faith pilgrimage, starting at the district synagogue, visiting the parish church, the central mosque, the Catholic church and

the gurdwara, where walkers received hospitality. Among the sixty walkers was WIFA's patron, the Mayor. The event was announced in the local newspaper, and a whole page about it also appeared in the free paper which sent a journalist and photographer.

In Liverpool, a guided cycle ride round Sefton Park incorporated visiting places of worship near the park.

All Faiths and None organised a multi faith pilgrimage from London to Walsingham. En route it went via the Department for Communities and Local Government where Cohesion Minister, Shahid Malik MP, wished the walkers well for their journey.

## Faiths maps and religious literacy resources

A *Luton Faith Map* was launched by Luton Council of Faiths at the Dallow Learning and Community Centre. The Deputy Mayoress launched the map to the sound of singing by a Bahá'í Choir from Northamptonshire.

Warwick District Faiths Forum used the Week to launch *Meeting Point – A Contribution to Faiths Awareness*, an A5 booklet, providing details of eight local faiths, including background, history and beliefs.

## Playing your way to learning

Waveney SIFRE Circle marked the Week with an evening of hospitality and an opportunity for invited guests to try their hand at playing the Diversity Game. This is a board game, devised by a Co-Founder of SIFRE (Suffolk Inter Faith Resource), where the players acquire knowledge and insight into the beliefs and customs of others. Lowestoft's Mayor and several police members of Safer Neighbourhood teams also took part, along with representatives of Lowestoft International Support Group and players from a wide range of faith backgrounds.

## Dialogues, talks, seminars and conferences

A large number of dialogues took place around the country. For example a Muslim-Christian dialogue with speakers from each faith took place in the Martyrs Church in Leicester, on “Prayer – Does God change things?”

Some dialogues tackled sensitive and difficult topics. For example, West Wiltshire Inter Faith Group held a meeting with a talk from a Vice-Chair of the Runnymede Trust on ‘Institutional Prejudices’ and the Nottingham Jewish Muslim Dialogue group held a dialogue on the current Middle East situation with joint Jewish and Muslim facilitators. The Guildford branch of the Council of Christians and Jews were joined by the Guildford Inter-Faith group and over thirty other people at a meeting on the subject of ‘The Power of Apology’. It was led by the Director of St Ethelburga’s Centre for Reconciliation and Peace who challenged those present to consider what makes a genuine apology.

Many talks, seminars and conferences were held during the Week. A number of these, such as that held at the Shree Ram Mandir in Southall, London, by Hindu Council UK, had as their focus how different communities can interact well and contribute to society.

The Mosques and Imams National Advisory Board, in consultation with Lambeth Palace, held a by-invitation event at the Regent’s Park Mosque in London for religious leaders from various faith groups to highlight the benefits and contributions faith communities can make in building a harmonious and balanced society. This was supported by the British Muslim Forum, the Muslim Council of Britain, the Muslim Association of Britain and the Al-Khoei Foundation. The conference speakers included Muslim community leaders from different denominations and community leaders, the Inter Religious Affairs Adviser to the Archbishop of Canterbury, IFN’s Director and the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, John Denham.

Southampton Council of Faiths held a conference to discuss how the different cultures and communities in Southampton work together to build understanding and shared values. Communities Secretary and Labour MP for Southampton Itchen, John Denham, was the main speaker. Nearly a hundred and fifty people attended the conference from various organisations in the city including the City Council. Hampshire Police, Hampshire Fire Authority, Maritime Agency, local schools, local faith communities and a wide variety of local businesses. The event was hosted at the Vedic Temple with lunch provided by the Hindu community. Following the conference Radio Solent broadcast an ‘Any Questions’ style discussion with a panel of four members from different faiths.

Bushey Interfaith Forum hosted a debate on the motion “Faith schools promote religious intolerance”. It was attended by over a hundred people and debated by distinguished proponents on both sides. Canterbury and District Interfaith Action also focused on this issue, asking “Do faith schools divide?”, at a discussion event with a speaker from ACCORD and EKKLESIA.

Cheadle Muslim Association opened its doors to all communities to discuss the role of women in Islam and in Hastings the Inter Faith Forum discussed faith, the family and society.

The Council of Christians and Jews held a lecture for Inter Faith Week at the House of Commons. CLG’s Communities Minister, Shahid Malik MP, was the invited speaker and addressed the situation facing people of different faiths in the UK, touching on the issue of what it is to be ‘British’ and ‘English’. He spoke about his personal experience growing up in Britain as a Muslim and a child of immigrants and responded to questions and comments.

Over a hundred Jewish and Muslim students, academics and members of the public attended a pre-Week conference on Confronting Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia

held in London by the Joseph Inter Faith Foundation in association with Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies, University of Exeter and the Centre for Jewish Studies at SOAS, University of London and supported by the Fulbright Commission. Organisers described this as the first time that the two concepts were being studied side by side and with emphasis on their similarities and common roots.

The North East branch of the Council of Christians and Jews held an open evening at the United Hebrew Congregation (UHC) of Newcastle upon Tyne Synagogue with St Nicholas' Parish Church, Gosforth, members of Newcastle Methodist Central Circuit and St James' and St Andrew's URC Churches. The rabbi of the UHC synagogue gave an explanation of a synagogue service and this was followed by a question and answer session. Over seventy people attended and the event was covered in the *Jewish Chronicle*.

The London Society of Jews and Christians chose Inter Faith Week for its annual Lily Montagu Memorial Lecture "Is Scripture Still 'Holy'? Coming of Age with the Bible" by a former Dean of Westminster Abbey. Wisbech Interfaith Forum hosted a talk on 'Judaism and Interfaith' where representatives of seven faith groups gave a brief presentation about their faith.

Barnet Multifaith Forum marked Inter Faith Week with an event at the Hendon Town Hall in the presence of a large audience, including a number of Barnet Councillors. Proceedings were opened by the Deputy Mayor who emphasised the importance of faith. He was followed by speakers from the Hendon United Synagogue, the Director of the Faith-based Regeneration Network who spoke on inter faith relationships and the Director of Corporate Governance in Barnet Council. The evening ended with a panel of Faith representatives, chaired by the Commander of Barnet Police, and closing words from one of the councillors.

The Multi Faith Centre at the University of Derby held a conference 'Building a Society

for the Future: Bridges and Bonds in the East Midlands'. Themes for the conference picked up the four 'building blocks' of *Face to Face and Side By Side* (the Government's inter faith strategy). The conference involved academics in the field and practitioners and showcased current thinking within the East Midlands region.

Harrow Inter Faith Council and Harrow Council held a multi faith event looking at Religions and the Law.

## Eastbourne

Eastbourne Borough Council works in partnership with Eastbourne's Faiths Forum. The Council facilitates and provides administrative support for the forum but members set their own agenda. A sub-group was set up during the summer and agreed that during Inter Faith Week the Faiths Forum would hold an 'evening of listening' sponsored by Eastbourne Borough Council, which they entitled 'Hearing is Believing'. The event was advertised and hosted by Eastbourne Borough Council at the Town Hall and approximately 50 members of the public attended, a pleasing number for a first event of its type in Eastbourne. During the evening each faith represented on the forum had a ten minute slot to talk about their faith, its origins and history, festivals and doctrines etc. The Christian faith talk was led by the area Anglican Bishop. People were able to ask questions after each presentation and also chat to speakers when visiting stalls representing each faith during the break and at the end of the evening. Each faith had literature and printed materials were available for people to take away with further literature made available about other faiths not represented that evening. Most of the talks were filmed by a local digital TV station and can be viewed at <http://www.eastbournelive.org.uk/7.html>

*Eastbourne Borough Council*

## Dialogue between those of religious belief and those of non-religious beliefs; and non-religious believers' involvement with faith issues in the public square

The Inter Faith Network for the UK and the British Humanist Association held a by invitation discussion at Barnard's Inn, in London, to provide an opportunity for shared reflection on the extent to which there may be meeting points between religious traditions and the Humanist tradition.

The East of England Faiths Council and the Cambridge Union Society hosted a Cambridge Union debate. The debate attracted some high profile speakers and lively exchanges on the motion: 'This House believes that faith has an essential role in democratic debate.' The proposers included the Assistant Secretary of the Muslim Council of Britain, the President of the Board of Deputies of British Jews and the Director of the Kirby Laing Centre for Christian Ethics at Cambridge University. Opposers included the Chair of the British Humanist Association's Humanist Philosophers Group, founder and director of secular summer camp CampQuest UK and a former British ambassador to Egypt. An audience of about two hundred people, comprising student members of the Society and guests of the East of England Faiths Council, took part in the discussion which concluded with a vote. The proposal won the day by a majority of 22 votes.

"What is the role of faith in community development and cohesion work?" was a discussion seminar with a range of leading speakers presented by the British Humanist Association for the Week. It considered government policy in relation to the contribution of 'faith groups' in community work and asked what this may mean for the voluntary sector, for community development practitioners and for service users.

In Leicester, the Leicester Secular Society provided an exhibition and tour and also hosted a lecture on 'Sikhs in British Society'.

## Faith and the workplace

During Inter Faith Week the Employers Forum on Belief launched Employer Guides to faith networks, quiet rooms and Christmas and held a roundtable in association with the Bishop of London's Chaplain of Canary Wharf and State Street Bank at which employers had the chance to discuss problems and solutions to religion and belief issues in the workplace.

Central Government marked the Week within a number of departments. For example, staff networks at Communities and Local Government (CLG) held a range of activities to mark the Week, including:

- Belief and CLG Policy Areas – four academics and senior faith community representatives gave presentations on aspects of CLG's work and how the policy area relates to faith.
- Belief@Work – staff from different faith backgrounds were invited to speak about what their faith says about work ethics.
- An interactive workshop on 'Skills 4 Dialogue and Communication' with the Three Faiths Forum, focusing on helping people to become more confident, sensitive and effective inter faith communicators.
- Living Library – people from different faiths spoke to CLG staff about their beliefs.

A cross departmental talk on 'Belief and Public Service' was held at HM Treasury. Among the speakers was the Cabinet Secretary who gave a speech about the importance of faith issues in relation to the work of Government, noting the important work of faith groups and the support they provide to their members and others.

## Music

Music of all kinds featured strongly in the Week. There were single faith events such as a Bahá'í evening of Music and Reflection organised by Welwyn Hatfield Inter Faith Group. There were many multi faith musical events. For example the Wiltshire Music Centre held an inter faith music event with a performance by Berakah, a group with musicians of three faiths and an inter faith concert took place at Oxford Town Hall under the auspices of the Oxford Council of Faiths. The Diocese of Leeds Inter-religious Relations Commission, Bradford District Faiths Forum and Bradford Concord sponsored a special event at St Paul's Church Manningham, "We Believe in Music", celebrating music and song from the different religions of their area. Sacred Space in Kingston held a concert to celebrate diversity and creativity with young people from the different faith groups in Kingston.

Hertsmere Forum of Faiths hosted a Celebration of Faiths at Borehamwood Village Hall. There were stalls organised by local charities, local Muslims, two synagogues, the Krishna Consciousness Society (Hindu) and Hertfordshire County Council. Stage events included: 'The Shul of Rock' (a youth band from Elstree Liberal Synagogue), a Christian Music Group singing worship songs old and new, the local imam chanting the opening verses of the Qur'an and translating, and an opportunity to blow the *shofar* (Jewish ceremonial ram's horn).

Brighton and Hove Inter Faith Contact Group and World Sacred Music collaborated on a visit to Lewes New School (primary) to deliver an act of collective worship for Inter Faith Week. Three musicians (Jewish, Christian and Muslim) performed for the children and commented on the meaning of each other's songs so that the children could witness dialogue through music taking place.

Wellingborough Inter Faith Group (WIFG) held an event with various local faith stands/displays and a WIFG stand; a stand

from Faiths Forum for the East Midlands; and other stands from local council groups and community groups. They had workshops in Chinese music and dance, African Drumming, Indian Dance and a performance by local young Christian harpist.

"The cross cultural activities which were not planned but occurred spontaneously were the highlight for me, ie the children on the African drums and the Chinese drums joined together for a session then the Chinese musician asked if he could teach a Chinese dance to the group of Indian children from the Hindu dance group and they thoroughly enjoyed it as did those watching."

*Inter Cultural Dialogue Through the Arts  
Participant at Wellingborough Inter Faith  
Group event*

The Alan Senitt Memorial Trust held an Interfaith Choral Concert in the presence of the Deputy Mayor and Mayoress of Harrow in aid of the Trust. Two inter faith community choirs, two church choirs, a synagogue choir and a Jewish primary school choir all took part (150 choristers in all). 300 people of all faiths supported the event.

Slough town square saw Sikh performers and community members braving the rain and wind to put on a Saturday afternoon series of performances to highlight Sikh faith and traditions. The event was entitled 'Sikhs in the Square' and featured a dramatic performance by ten *dhol* players from the Ministry of Dhol, prayers and *keertan* (Sikh hymns) led by members of all ages from the Sikh community and a *gatka* performed by BabaFfateh Singh Gatka Akahara Spiritual martial arts, accompanied by the musicians.

In Brentford at the Watermans Art Centre there was a concert entitled 'Music from the Faiths', featuring music from different faith communities and denominations – Anglican, Catholic, Russian Orthodox, Hindu, Jewish,



Sikh – together with Quaker silence and the Muslim call to prayer.

Young Jains and Bhakti Mandal (London), supported by the Zartoshty Brothers Hall, Zoroastrian Centre, held an evening, 'In Tune with God', where four different faiths gathered together to celebrate Inter Faith Week and to celebrate the diversity of these faiths in a respectful environment. All four faiths were invited to sing some of their most devotional prayers/hymns/songs for the audience, and also explain a little about the main principles of their beliefs.

## Multi media events

Three Faiths Forum put on 'Artifice': an evening of visual art, music, video, spoken word, graffiti and dialogue about culture, faith and identity – artists from different traditions using different forms of expression took over and transformed a space. This event was linked both to Inter Faith Week and the launch of a Charter for Compassion and co-hosted by the Jewish Community Centre for London (JCC), the Radical Middle Way and Art and Christianity Enquiry.

The Insight Film Festival took place in Manchester with films about faith from young film makers across the UK and beyond.

In Redbridge, the recycling team of East London Waste Authority Partnership celebrated the Week by organising a multi faith community art project about stewardship of the earth. A giant rainforest collage was created from old clothes and fabrics. See Annex I.

At St Philip's Cathedral in Birmingham, children produced a special Inter Faith Week Installation of Noah's Ark to highlight environmental concerns in the run-up to Copenhagen.

## Exhibitions

Leicester Council of Faiths (LCF) put up a specially created exhibition about the eight faiths represented on the LCF during the Week at Highcross shopping centre. Organisers commented that the exhibition was very popular and that it had raised public awareness of the communities which are represented on Leicester Council of Faiths and their contribution to life in the city and had also generate a lot of positive interest in its promotion of good relations between the faith communities of Leicester.

The Greater Peterborough Partnership organised an Inter Faith Exhibition at Peterborough Town Hall with involvement from a range of faith groups and Peterborough Inter Faith Council. A week-long 'inter faith exhibition' was held in Slough which gave different religious groups the chance to set up stalls related to their religion and hold group discussions. The event, organised by the Slough Faith Partnership, was held at Kingsway Church. The Touchstone Centre (Bradford) held an exhibition of 'Sacred Faith Symbols' of the Buddhist, Bahá'í, Muslim, Jewish, Hindu, Sikh and Christian faiths.

Durham County Council organised an open exhibition, 'Building Bridges of Understanding' with a DVD, which was shown in County Hall and Chester-le-Street Civic Centre. The project gave twenty one young people the chance to record interviews with people from various faiths, living in the North East.

Many exhibitions took place at museums and libraries to mark the Week. For example Leeds Faiths Forum arranged a multi faith exhibition at Leeds Museum and Preston Faith Forum and the Lancashire Forum of Faiths organised a multi-Faith Exhibition at the Harris Museum in Preston which enabled people to get information about different religions and faith based organisations and talk to representatives of the different faith communities.

One such was an exhibition in Stockport with a sartorial twist:

## Hats!

The HatWorks museum hosted a special celebratory event for IFW. The event attracted over two hundred people from faith and non-faith backgrounds, who were treated to an evening of food, music, dance, drama and hats! The evening started with the unveiling of the new exhibition of faith headwear at the museum. The faith headwear display at the HatWorks is part of the museum's permanent display of hats and headwear. Over the last six months, members of different faith groups have contributed to the display by donating headwear together with photos and explanations of the significance of the headwear to them. The legacy of this aspect of the work is an ongoing dialogue with different faith groups about how the display can be further expanded and improved.

A series of performances and talks followed. Members of the audience joined in a traditional Indian stick dance. Pupils from Cale Green School gave a performance on harmony. Young people from a number of different youth groups had spent the last 6 weeks learning to play world instruments and gave a well received performance. A group of talented young people had written the music and lyrics to four rap songs which they had produced for themselves, recorded onto CD and shared with the audience. The Bishop of Stockport spoke about the importance of inter faith working and introduced the theme of 'faith headwear' by speaking about his mitre. This was followed by Muslim, Sikh, Salvation Army and Rastafari speakers who spoke about the significance of their headwear. A member of Stockport's Youth Theatre performed a drama monologue on the theme of 'difference'. Three young Hindu dancers from the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan dance school wearing spectacular costumes shared a traditional dance from southern India and a young Bahá'í singer performed two songs to finish the event – one based on a Bahá'í prayer and the other an original song about unity.

Throughout the event, buffet style food was served and display stands illustrated the different ways in which faith groups support and serve the communities around them and work in partnership with other organisations. The stands were organised into different themes: Living together – how faith communities reach out to the communities they serve and how they work together with other faith communities and non-faith partners; Learning and Working Together – work in schools organised by the Ethnic Diversity Service who have speakers from different faiths and cultures who work with the children on arts and crafts, cooking, dance; Living Healthy Lifestyles – sports events organised between different faith groups and for the communities around them; and Living Green – many environmental projects are organised by faith groups. The Police had a stand showing how they have been working in partnership with different faith groups and they displayed photographs of the winners of their 'diversity awards' including members of Cheadle Muslim Association, Stockport Youth Service and Yeshurun Synagogue. The Library Service had a stand showing a sample of the range of books they have available from diverse cultures and in different languages. There was also a Fair Trade stand, as the week coincided with the Fair Trade Fair at Stockport College on 14 November and many faith groups are involved in promoting Fair Trade.

*Report by Stockport Partnership Team on behalf of Stockport Inter-Faith Network*

The Forum of Faiths for Derby gave people a unique opportunity to journey through the history of world faiths with an illustrated walk around the Arboretum in Normanton. The trail was illuminated by hundreds of glow sticks and at intervals along the route there were illuminated displays from each of the faith communities in the order of their historical emergence. The journey finished with an inter faith display showing how the faith communities are working together.

## Living libraries

A living library is where the user ‘takes out’ a person to talk with and learn from – usually for about half an hour. This was one of the activities which the Department for Communities and Local Government chose to hold as part of its own internal marking of inter faith week.

Art Beyond Belief ran sessions of their Borrow a Person programme – on four days at Slough Central Library and on one day at Kingsway. Members of different faiths engaged in conversation with each other on subjects of faith – both commonalities and differences.

A living library was also a feature of the Week in High Wycombe where High Wycombe library and Wycombe Sharing of Faiths held sessions two Sundays running. 108 members of the public registered to borrow ‘books’ and there were a total of 143 loans over the two afternoons. Overall there were 37 individuals from the community participating as ‘books’ in the varied catalogue. In addition, ten volunteers helped to ensure the smooth running of the event. “We are in no doubt that our original objective of helping to promote tolerance and understanding in the community through providing a safe and neutral space for dialogue and learning between those of different backgrounds was met. Most importantly, the Living Library meant that 143 meaningful conversations exploring difference and diversity took place that would not have otherwise happened. This has to be a good thing.”

The Department for Communities and Local Government chose to organise a Human Library as an innovative way of increasing awareness of different faiths amongst staff through face-to-face conversation and exchange of experiences. A range of different faiths were available and among the 16 ‘books’ were a Zoroastrian, a Bahá’í, a rabbi and a Salvation Army couple. The event was the biggest of its kind to take place in a Government Department in this country.

## Celebrations

The British Sikh Consultative Forum held an event at the Nishkam Centre in Birmingham: ‘Celebrating Interfaith Relations’. Opening with a *kirtan* in *raag* (hymn in classical style) from the Guru Granth Sahib (the Sikh holy scripture), the event highlighted the philosophy and writings of the *Bhagats* (devotees or holy men other than the Sikh gurus) in the Guru Granth Sahib as a commitment to inter faith harmony. It was explained that the *Bhagats* were from different traditions and backgrounds. Some were Muslim and Hindu, from different castes and professions. Their message in their different ways was about all being one humanity – interlinked although diverse. The celebration also included local Buddhist, Christian (Catholic), Hindu, Jain and Jewish perspectives on local inter faith dialogue and practice, musical contributions and a presentation from the Head of Faith Communities Engagement at CLG. At the end of the event guests partook of *langar* (vegetarian food served free by Sikhs to all who come to a Gurdwara and wish to eat).

Devon Faiths Forum, Plymouth Centre for Faiths and Cultural Diversity, Torbay Inter Faith Forum, Exeter Inter Faith Group and Totnes Inter Faith Forum organised an informative and celebratory event: ‘Educating Ourselves and Our Children’ in Exeter Central Library’s Music Room. There were stands from the various faiths and other organisations, a buffet supper prepared by the different faith communities and a varied programme ranging from an inter faith choir, to Indian dancing, turban-winding, and short

presentations about the new Religious Education syllabus and Childline.

In Newcastle, People to People North East held an inter faith celebration at the Central Library, 'Opening Doors in the North East' to mark their 25th anniversary and Inter Faith Week. The event was opened by the Mayor of Newcastle and included guest speakers from various faiths and workshops on topics such as one 'faith and the community' and 'faith and the environment' and 'faith and social justice'.

## Sport

Inter faith football and cricket proved very popular. Football matches took place across the country. Crawley Inter Faith Network worked in conjunction with the Borough Council to hold an Inter Faith football match. A football tournament was held on The Forest recreation ground as part of Nottingham's marking of the Week with Sikh, Muslim, Hindu, Christian and Jewish young people. Faith leaders took to the pitch at Tulketh High School in Preston.

An Inter Faith Football Tournament arranged by the Multi Faith Centre at the University of Derby and the University chaplaincy saw six teams play 11 a-side football. The eventual winners were Gad Khalsa Sport (a Sikh Team) who beat the NFA FC (a Christian homeless charity team) in the final 2-0. Over eighty participants from Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Muslim and Sikh communities took part, meeting and developing relationships with other faith teams. Derby County FC provided certificates of participation signed by Nigel Clough and players at the club. The event was supported by the Inter Faith Youth Trust, Faiths Forum for the East Midlands and Derby City Council Community Safety Partnership.

Multi Faith Indoor Bowls for men and women of all ages took place in Coalville near Leicester. By invitation of the District Council, eight Muslims, eight Christians and one Hindu, joined local bowlers. They included local councillors, the MP for North West Leicestershire and a team of 'professionals'.

A sports network for women of different faiths was launched by the St Philip's Centre in Leicester. Speakers included Zara Jurenko (winner of three gold medals for tennis in the Special Olympics) who inspired the fifty or so women present with the story of her personal journey of overcoming adversity to achieving success and the role of faith in her life.

In Leeds, Inter Faith Week saw the start of a programme where over the next 18 months young people aged 11-16 will be able to get free cricket skills coaching and match play at the same time as developing awareness of, and respect for, other faiths and cultures and 15-17 year olds will have the chance to get onto the English Cricket Board's Cricket Young Leaders scheme, as well as taking part in inter-cultural leadership training. Originally the brainchild of a member of the Leeds Jewish Representative Council and the Cricket Development Manager of Yorkshire Cricket and the Caribbean Cricket Club, other partners have now come on board including Harehills Youth in Partnership, the Hamara Centre and Abu Huraira Masjid, both in Beeston, and Together for Peace.

The London Jewish Forum, Community Security Trust and Arsenal in the Community held a panel discussion at the Emirates Stadium (home of Arsenal FC) addressing the topic of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia in football.

## Events for women

Some of the Week's events were organised specifically by and for women.

The Board of Deputies of British Jews and the Hindu Forum of Britain held a by-invitation event at which fifty prominent women from six faith communities confronted the challenges that face women of faith in contemporary Britain. The stimulus for the discussion was the findings from the Preston Report – *Connection, Continuity and Community – British Jewish Women Speak Out*. Speakers included the recently appointed first woman Secretary General of the Hindu Forum

of Britain, the Chair of the Muslim Women's Network UK and expert on family law in Islam and wider society and the Chief Education Officer of the Church of England. IFN's Director offered closing comments.

'Ladies of all faiths and none' were invited by Hounslow Friends of Faith for a coffee morning with a guest speaker (an ex-World Bank agronomist) for a beginner's guide to growing your own vegetables and herbs in your back garden or allotment.

Thames Gateway Women's Multifaith Forum and the local council for inter faith relations arranged an event where Bahá'í, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, and Sikh people came together in trust and friendship to discover more about each other's faith festivals.

A women-only inter faith event with music and entertainment took place at the Middlesbrough Teaching and Learning Centre. In Dudley, the Dudley Borough Inter Faith Network and Worcestershire Inter Faith Forum organised a Women of Faith Conference.

Kendal Women's Meditation Group held a Multi Faith Women's Meditation. A Women's Inter Faith Evening was held by Sukkat Shalom Reform Synagogue in the London Borough of Redbridge as part of a project of Redbridge Forum of Faiths.

## Quizzes, talent shows and even an evening of jokes...

Loughborough Council of Faiths held a Feast of Faiths with a quiz format and encouraged people to collect others of different faiths for their team so they could answer more of the questions on different faiths. Participants also shared food together with dishes to suit all requirements. About a hundred people attended and the Mayor of Charnwood acted as question master. Feedback showed it was much enjoyed. An Inter Faith Week quiz was also held by Huddersfield Inter Faith Council.

Primary Schools of Pendle had the chance to shine in a 'Faiths Got Talent' Competition. There were two categories: one for the 5-8 year olds and the other category for the 9-11 year olds.

In Luton, an evening of Jokes across Faiths and Cultures took place at the launch of the first Fairtrade Hindu Temple in the UK: the Sanathan Sewa Samaj Temple.

## Special focus events

The Board of Deputies of British Jews and the Judith Trust held an Inter-Faith Learning Disabilities Inclusion Event. The meeting drew together representatives from nine major faiths to discuss how people with learning disabilities are included and involved within the different faiths, with an emphasis on learning about and sharing good practice.

## Local authorities

A number of local authorities organised events. For example, Huntingdonshire District Council held an event on how faith organisations can work with the Council in responding to the challenges growth brings to the district. South Somerset District Council Multi Faith Forum hosted an event to inform councillors and staff of the communities that they represent. Lancashire County Council reported that its event 'Understanding Faith in the Public Sector' "...received excellent support from both internal and external partners including Lancashire Constabulary, Probation service, NHS, UCLAN, Fire and Rescue Service, Lancashire Forum of Faiths, Faiths4Change and Liberty Church Blackpool. All LCC Directorates were involved either by offering workshops on good practice or by attending during the course of the day. The support and involvement of all these organisations and individuals demonstrated the commitment from many public, voluntary and faith sector organisations based in Lancashire in making this event a success and promoting the positive work that they undertake around service delivery and

employment related aspects of religion and belief in their work.”

The North East Regional Faiths Network (NERFN) and the Tees Valley Faith Communities Regeneration Group commissioned an event which brought together stakeholders from the five local authority areas that make up Tees Valley – Hartlepool, Redcar and Cleveland, Darlington, Middlesbrough and Stockton-on-Tees, with support and input from the Churches’ Regional Commission (CRC), the Government Office for the North East (GONE) and the Cedar Partnership. The key question at the heart of the day was ‘What is the most appropriate infrastructure to support and encourage inter faith activity and action in the Tees Valley?’

The event reflected the key principles and messages set out in ‘Face-to-Face and Side-by-Side’ (2008), the Government’s framework for partnership in a multi-faith society. Stockton Borough Council hosted the event at Stockton’s Education Centre. The ninety delegates included local authority officers at all levels and from all sections; elected members; representatives from other public bodies including health, fire and rescue services, police and offender management services; representatives from faith communities (both individuals and groups); and from other voluntary and community sector organisations. Delegates received information packs with key information about inter faith activity and who was engaged in such work across the Tees Valley. The event itself was interactive and participative with a mix of presentations, workshops, theatre and case studies. The programme provided opportunities for networking and sharing information and good practice. Each local authority showcased an outstanding example of good practice from their area. These five case studies highlighted the importance of positive partnership working in developing inter faith engagement and activity.

Civic venues also played host to many local inter faith events. Religious leaders from all the major faiths in Croydon came together in

the Mayor’s Parlour in the Town Hall to sign a pledge committing to work together, marking Croydon’s contribution to the Week. More than forty specially invited guests including the Bishop of Croydon, the Imam of Croydon Mosque and the Leader of the Croydon Hindu Council took part.

At Horsham Interfaith Forum’s event ‘Interfaith: From Tolerance to Trust’ the chairman of the District Council talked about the importance of such inter faith groups.

A civic reception took place at Nottingham Council House hosted by the president of Nottingham Inter Faith Council and Nottingham’s Lord Mayor, celebrating 25 years of the city’s Inter Faith Council.

## Schools

Many schools held or participated in events. As noted at page 15, special resources for classroom and whole school activities were commissioned for the IFW website by DCSF and, as noted at page 12 DCSF had alerted schools to the Week, as had a number of SACREs.

In County Durham, secondary school Year 9 and 10 students were invited to attend a conference in County Hall, ‘Different Faith Shared Values’. Buddhist, Christian (Roman Catholic, Anglican, Quaker), Humanist, Jewish and Muslim representatives drawn from the County Durham Faiths Network and the County Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education, took part in workshops.

In conjunction with the local SACRE Thameside Faiths United held a Children and Young People event. Young people from schools and supplementary schools produced displays on the theme of Family and Faith and visited one of four mosques and a church that opened over three days. The event culminated with a presentation evening at the church attended by over a hundred and fifty people. Food was provided at subsidised rates by college students from the catering school.

Torbay Inter-Faith Forum 4 Youth celebrated Inter Faith Week by inviting representatives from secondary schools across Torbay to Torquay Community College to play the Diversity Game (see also above under 'Playing to Learn'). Young people from eight schools gathered to build bridges of friendship and understanding. One participant said, "The game was fun, as it had different types of questions which made you think." Another found it, "interesting to talk with people from other religions and schools." As well as adding to their knowledge, the young people were learning to see issues from different perspectives.

Lancashire SACRE created a display event at the Harris Museum for Preston City Council and displayed materials at a Lancashire

County Hall event. On the same day, the Youth SACRE ran an inter faith conference for pupils from a dozen Lancashire primary and secondary schools.

Newham Student SACRE is a group of students aged 14–16 from across the London Borough of Newham secondary schools from a wide mix of different religious and non religious world views who are interested in Religious Education. They meet every six weeks. During Inter Faith Week they met at Cumberland School in the afternoon, where forty five students talked to one another and reflected on the value of growing up in a Borough that is diverse in the religious views held by different people.

Thurrock SACRE held a Youth SACRE conference with fifty pupils aged 10-15 from

## Bradford

Bradford Interfaith Education Centre organised a range of activities for schools during Inter Faith Week:

**'Reflective Stories'** – members of the Faith Tutor team led story telling sessions for primary school classes using stories from major world faiths on the theme of caring for one another or caring for the environment. The majority of the sessions took place at the Interfaith Education centre where a relaxing environment was created with soft lightings, cushions and rugs. Additional activities were available for children to participate in: symbol pairs, design an Interfaith logo, DVD and exhibition, practitioners from different faiths describing how religion affects daily life for them.

**Environment Sculpture** – 27 pupils from a diverse range of schools came together to design 3 sculptures depicting faith teachings about care for the environment.

**Faith Foods** – staff at the Interfaith Education Centre invited members of the Education Bradford leadership team and management programme to a meal of foods reflecting stories and teachings from a range of faiths – guests were challenged to find the link between food and faith. A complementary display showed how symbolism in faith is shared eg the use of beads, water, light etc – this display and other artefacts were loaned to Haworth Rd Methodist church for their Interfaith Week event.

**Visits to places of worship** – IEC staff continued their work of leading visits to places of worship – all schools received a certificate to indicate that they had participated in Interfaith Week.

**Adult training** – staff from the IEC and Skills for Work planned and delivered adult training on the theme of 'Religion in Bradford' which included visits to places of worship and sessions at the IEC.

seventeen different schools and diverse backgrounds. The children spent the day together investigating issues of faith and belief from many perspectives, focusing on questions about God, religion, the local community ('What makes a better Thurrock?') and values (respect, identity, cohesion, and commitment). After the conference, they were able to replicate the activities held during the day in their own schools. The aim was also to make the resources used during the day available to teachers at the schools who participated in the conference.

Gateshead Council's Diversity Team worked with Gateshead Interfaith Forum to coordinate an event with representatives from local faith groups. Young people from four local secondary schools attended this event and a panel of faith representatives answered questions.

Many individual schools held Week related events. For example John of Gaunt School in Trowbridge held, with the assistance of West Wiltshire Inter Faith group, a 'multifaith day' in the school with local faith community members visiting the school to answer questions that staff and students about their faiths.

As part of Inter Faith Week, the Archbishop of Canterbury visited the London Inter Faith Centre to meet with school pupils. The event brought together a range of mainly independent secondary schools in West London from different faiths: Guru Nanak Sikh Voluntary Aided Secondary School; The Swaminarayan School; Al-Sadiq School for Boys and Al-Zahra School for Girls; Islamia Girls School; Jewish Free School; Hasmonean High School for Boys and Hasmonean High School for Girls; Bishop Ramsey Church of England School; St Gregory's Kenton; The Douay Martyrs RC Secondary School; St Benedict's Senior School; and Brondesbury College for Boys Secondary School. The theme of the event was 'Faithful Nurture' and the broad issues that were put to the schools were: "How has your school encouraged us through the development and practice of our

religious faith to interact with our fellow human beings?" and "How do we understand the development and practice of our particular faith to help us to relate to those of other faiths?"

Younger pupils joined in too. At Yeading Infant and Nursery School in Hillingdon, the children had a special assembly where members of the wider community came and talked about their own faiths and beliefs. Children in Year 2 thought of questions to ask and these were then answered by the visitors. Children throughout the whole school completed a special inter faith art project. In Birmingham pupils at Corpus Christi Catholic Primary, Stechford and Al-Hijrah Muslim Primary in Bordesley Green came together to learn. See Annex I.

## Further Education

Leicester Council of Faiths co-sponsored, with Leicester College, a conference involving students and staff from all four FE colleges in the city at Leicester College. Called 'Many Faiths: One Future' this inter faith dialogue event brought together young people aged 16 to 21 to explore their personal understanding of different values, beliefs and faiths through interaction and association with members of diverse faith and belief communities.

Barking and Dagenham College worked with the national body Faiths and Beliefs in Further Education (FBFE) to arrange an inter faith day. Stockton Riverside College, in Stockton-on-Tees, hosted a 'Respect Day'. Delegates from temples, mosques, synagogues, churches and other places of worship joined local authority, health and other workers, to discuss why faith matters to them.

## Universities

During November, Interfaith Action worked with students from universities across England to help them develop, lead and participate in inter faith volunteer events in each of their



local communities. Leading up to Inter Faith Week it held a training day for students recruited at Universities throughout England who were interested in becoming 'Faith Ambassadors' – inter faith leaders on their University campuses. The training session included workshops and allowed students to develop ideas, engage with each other and learn about leadership and management. Then, over two days during the Week, students from different religious and non-religious backgrounds volunteered together. The idea was to help promote positive inter faith relations within universities and the communities in which they are located; to provide opportunities for students to make positive contributions to their local communities; and to increase understanding between faiths and wider society.

A group of nine volunteers, led by a Faith Ambassador went to Highgate Cemetery in London to undertake conservation work. The volunteers came from a variety of different backgrounds including Anglican, Catholic, Jewish and Muslim, Sufi and Atheist. See the Faith Ambassador's report on page 48.

The chaplaincy at St Mary's University College, Twickenham launched an initiative to mark Inter Faith Week. People were invited to submit photographs and creative writing, under the title 'People of Spirit'. The plan was to display these in the chapel during Inter Faith Week to "show something of the rich diversity of human faith, courage and spirituality across the world".

The University Faiths Forum at Sheffield University held a stall in the Union building as part of Inter Faith Week. Members sold cakes and collected money for the Hallamshire Hospital's young adult cancer ward fund. Organisers said "It was a really successful day, showing the importance of faith to a wide range of students within the university".<sup>8</sup> At Leeds University, students held a harvest festival. They collected donations of food and

sent these to a local homeless shelter.

Kingston University Chaplaincy and the Kingston Inter Faith Forum worked together on a programme of events – exchanges, talks, and an 'inter faith café' – an informal inter faith meeting with cafe tables hosted by the different faith communities. Bristol University's Jewish, Muslim, Free Church Christian and Buddhist chaplains took part in a 'Grill a Chaplain' event.

At Imperial College, London, representatives of eight religions gathered to share insights from their faiths at the outset of Inter Faith Week. The organisation of the event was led by members of the Inter Faith Group, a network of students interested in promoting dialogue and understanding between people of different faiths. Over three hundred people attended to listen to the speakers, following which fifty participants broke off into smaller groups to discuss issues around inter faith dialogue. One audience member, a medicine undergraduate, said: "Seeing Muslims, Christians, Jews, Sikhs, Hindus, Jains, Bahá'ís, and Buddhists come together in such a visible form of unity was absolutely amazing."

Alif Aleph and Muju<sup>9</sup> celebrated Inter Faith Week with three high profile campus comedy performances, alongside participatory theatre and comedy workshops.

The Joseph Interfaith Foundation held a half day seminar, 'Young British and Believer'. The discussion focused on the question: "Why should we live peacefully with people of other faiths today?" It took place at the Regent's Park Central Mosque in London and was for Muslim and Jewish University and Sixth Form students.

Southwark Multi Faith Forum (London) held an event called "More Tea Vicar/Imam/Rabbi?" where young people had the opportunity to discuss their own faiths and to talk to the facilitators on each table about their faith and beliefs.

<sup>8</sup> The Faiths Forum is made up of members of all of the student faith societies, members of the University's multi-faith Chaplaincy team, and members of the Union of Students.

<sup>9</sup> An organisation celebrating Jewish / Muslim collaboration.

## Other youth events and projects

The Coexistence Trust Youth Leadership Project drew together, in consultation with CLG, a group of students aged 19-24 from

different faiths and brought them together for an initial leadership seminar and then the chance to attend a range of different events during Inter Faith Week. The idea was to develop a network of young participants committed to fostering positive and

### Inter Faith Week Student Volunteering

“Highgate Cemetery bristles with foliage and is sparsely forested all around. Work was carried out in the north-western corner of the cemetery, located near one of the access roads. Volunteers got involved in a range of tasks to clear away the unwanted undergrowth that had grown over the course of the last year since the last preservation effort was carried out in that region of the cemetery.

Aid from the onsite landscape architect let volunteers identify both which plants to weed out from the ground so as to maintain the tombstones, vaults and graves; and which ones to leave, so as to conserve the cemetery’s wild life. Bramble, ivy, and unwanted trees were cut down, opening up the grounds of the cemetery for easier access.

Midway through the day volunteers held a general discussion about their faith journeys. In so doing, the discussion drew upon issues of conversion, social upbringing, and media representations.

As the student ambassador for this event, I was pleased and interested by the conversation that emerged, which included a general discussion about the role of faith, as well as international differences between responses to faith...

...Volunteers also related to me how they felt that Highgate was a fitting environment for interfaith dialogue. Within its grounds are buried people from different historical eras and religious persuasions. Volunteers seemed to reflect upon who they are, and where they are

going. The staff at the cemetery noted that the discussion was refreshing compared to usual lunchtime interaction.

...Working on this event opened my eyes to the fact that other people lead entirely different lives from each other, with different challenges along the way. You cannot judge people without first understanding where they are coming from. I met people from faith backgrounds I had never had a chance to speak with about faith, and this opportunity allowed me to hear the experiences of others; people who belong to entirely different traditions to my own. This is important because faith issues often can spill over into the political arena, and it is easy at that point to draw on stereotypes. I learned not only about different religions, but people and their personal journeys; something that is much more easy to identify with, rather than a religious tradition or belief system that is alien to me.

I found it very rewarding to be a Student Ambassador on this day and worked hard to ensure that the day had direction and meaning. At first volunteers can feel shy about talking about their experiences, so the whole thing needs some introduction. Also, discussion can easily go just one way, with one person dominating the conversation, or it can end up focusing on one faith only (and these are not mutually exclusive possibilities!) – that’s when you need someone to make sure things stay open....”

*Student Ambassador’s report Feedback*

constructive communication and to: give them a picture of some key issues and challenges of inter faith work; help expand their knowledge and leadership capacity (through sessions on issues such as: political engagement, conflict resolution, equality and diversity); and enable them to reflect on relations between community groups and what can be done to enhance these and gain mutual understanding and also respect for people of different religions.

The events attended by the young people included the Inter Faith Week national launch – where the young people were able to speak with exhibitors and learn about their work; a debate at City University hosted by Vote Clash; a round table discussion with a lawyer from a leading law firm talking about ‘Faith, Race and Law’; a St Ethelburga’s Sea of Stories event at West London Synagogue (see page 51); Artifice (see page 39); and the Mayor of London’s Inter Faith Week reception (see page 31).

The Three Faiths Forum hosted a ‘young leaders’ Interfaith Week reception’ for its Undergraduate ParliaMentors students and alumni, featuring speeches by the Rt Hon John Denham MP, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, and John Bercow MP, Speaker of the House of Commons.

Noor Youth and Muslim Student Leadership Programme, in coordination with The London Interfaith Centre, held an ‘interactive interfaith discussion’ for young people at the Al-Khoei Foundation with the support of Forward Thinking and the Islamic Unity Society. There were keynote speakers from different faiths and after the talks participants from different backgrounds and religions formed smaller discussion circles to discuss particular issues such as “Has Secularisation been good for Britain?” and “Should religion play a greater role in policy making in Britain?” Participants then had a chance for further fruitful discussion and networking over dinner.

## Across the generations

The United Religions Initiative (UK) held three Faith Evenings in Loughton, Mansfield and Taunton for Inter Faith Week. These brought people of different faiths together in an informal setting to learn about each other’s journeys of faith. Each person was paired with another person of a different faith and a different generation, and encouraged to engage and ask each other questions.

## Prisons

HMP Altcourse held an event called, ‘Inside Faith’ which gave an opportunity for twenty people to see part of the prison, talk to the Chaplaincy Team and meet prisoners from various faith backgrounds. In Nottingham, a discussion was held with Prisons Week and Nottingham Speaker’s Corner on the significance of faith to serving prisoners, both during and after their sentences.

## Police

The Council of Christians and Jews and Birmingham Council of Faiths arranged, as the Roger Hooker Memorial Lecture, a talk by the Head of Diversity and Community Cohesion, West Midlands Police, on ‘Interfaith relations in Birmingham from a Police perspective’. This took place at the Woodbrook Quaker Study Centre in Selly Oak.

## Health

Cornwall Faith Forum held a meeting at the Chapter House of Truro Cathedral on ‘Faith and Well Being’ with discussion of such issues as food, fasting, fitness, end of life care, suicide prevention, addiction issues, mental health and dementia.

The Chaplaincy and the Equality and Diversity team at Stepping Hill Hospital in Stockport produced a display about the nine major world faiths and ran a competition for staff,

encouraging them to find out about different faith traditions.

Kirklees Faith Forum organised a 'Pledge a pound and fast for a day' event with the pound going to neo-natal and intensive care unit in Dewsbury Hospital.

The National Council of Hindu Temples (UK) and Patanjali Yog Peeth UK held a yoga camp in Coventry for all communities.

Ipswich Hospital Multi-Faith Chaplaincy held its annual service of celebration attended by the Mayor and Mayoress. Members of staff, both medical and administrative, as well as Chaplaincy team, volunteers and supporters attended and contributed to the celebration on the theme of 'Light'. Readings and music from various faiths created a peaceful and contemplative atmosphere. This was followed by the dedication of a new multi-faith garden, laid out in an oriental style, including a labyrinth, and watched over by a Buddha figure. In Scunthorpe, the Bishop of Lincoln opened a Tranquility Room at Great Oaks Hospital.

## Food and conversation

Food was at the heart of many of the events for the Week.

Mansfield Inter Faith Forum Network held a Food, Faith and Friendship event at the Mansfield CVS. And in Bolton the Inter Faith Council held a 'multifaith picnic and fun' programme.

The South Derbyshire Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) held a morning drop in event about 'faith and food' designed to teach visitors about different faiths while enjoying a wide range of food from around the world.

The monthly lunch meeting of South London Inter Faith Group was upgraded to a special event for Inter Faith Week held at the Caribbean Hindu Temple in Brixton Hill. It included a presentation about the prayer and worship there, a tasty lunch, and a time of

sharing about other events in the week.

Students at Leeds University held an Inter Faith Week *Food Market* in the Union. Their report on the Week highlighted some of the challenges in arranging Week events. Their organiser wrote: "The idea was that food is important in all religions and cultures and so every faith could bring food representing their faith. Due to Union regulations the food had to be cold and could not include any dairy products or rice. This resulted in a very small variety of food. However, I recommend this as an inter faith event because it is a good way of bringing students together, a lot of interest was expressed in the event and a lot of students participated."

Also in Leeds, the organisation Hamara held an event with workshops and activities around the theme of 'Festivals and Food' for young people, with involvement from the Hardy Street Mosque, Makor (a Jewish educational charity), Holy Trinity church, Ladypit Lane Gurdwara and an individual Hindu representative as well as Leeds Concord Interfaith Fellowship representing smaller groups such as Pagans. The event was attended by around three hundred primary school aged children from the ages of 5-11 years and staff from eight schools. Each faith group presented an activity highlighting the customs and traditions of key festivals. For example the Jewish faith did bread making and the story of Hannukah. The Hindus presented the story of Diwali and the young people made Diwali lamps and sweet dishes. The church hosted an interactive display about festivals and food and the Muslim faith delivered calligraphy workshops and the young people tasted sweet dishes and made Eid cards. The gurdwara presented an interactive display and quiz. Young people dressed up in costumes and sampled food from the different faiths.

Leicestershire proved a 'faith and food' hot spot. At the St Philip's Centre in Leicester a Celebration of Christian Hindu Friendship Dinner took place, with speeches by the Director of the Centre and by a Hindu

Councillor at Leicester City Council. These were followed by a vegetarian meal and a drama performed by Leicester's Hindu community of the International Society of Krishna Consciousness. A Sikh-Quaker Friendship Lunch took place at Clarendon Park Road Gurdwara and the Leicestershire launch of the Week at County Hall saw the launch by Christians Aware of an inter faith recipe book, *Food, Festivals and Faith*.

Woking People of Faith held 'Coffee-house Conversations' in the town centre inviting people of all ages to come and meet and talk with people of different faiths, to listen, learn and share perspectives over a hot drink. Interested people were met at a stand near local coffee shops and taken to join the conversations in progress.

## Story telling

St Ethelburga's Centre for Forgiveness and Reconciliation celebrated Inter Faith Week with a series of five performances of stories and music from different faith traditions, performed at five key religious venues across central London. The programme was developed in a series of workshops with a group of professional and amateur storytellers and musicians drawn from the Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish and Muslim faiths.

## Drama

Blackpool's Inter Faith Forum for Youth worked with Blackpool Police's Community Safety Department and Blackpool Young People's Services to support a group of young people of different faiths to develop a drama production, 'Dare to be Different'. The ten 11-19 year olds performed at local schools.

## Awareness Raising

### Salford

Inter Faith Week was celebrated across the city of Salford in various ways. The local Community Cohesion Task Group in Eccles organised a number of events throughout the week. These included a display in a community shop for a number of days, where Muslims and Christians came together and staffed an information giving stall about the different faiths that exist in Salford. A number of people came in and spoke about their faith and took away resources.

An event took place in the Mosque in Eccles whereby 140 people from the wider community came to hear about the message of Islam and their religion. Lots of questions were asked, and a good dialogue about recent events and the fact that this has brought a lot of concern for Muslims locally. Refreshments were also provided. The event was reciprocated by the local Anglican church, whereby the local Muslim community were invited to come into the Church and to hear about the Christian faith. Lunch was also provided. Both events were well attended and well received and it is something we hope to do on a regular basis.

*Salford City Council*

## Tree planting

To mark the Week individuals from many communities in Sheffield came together to plant an 'Interfaith Tree' at Ellesmere Green. In conjunction with the Sheffield City Council's Community Forestry Team, an Italian Stone Pine (*pinus pinea*) was selected to occupy the southern corner of the green closest to the Burngreave Ashram. Co-ordinated by the Multifaith Chapel at Library based at the

Ashram, the tree-planting was part of the all-day 'Faith, Work and Food in Fellowship' event held on the Sunday which began the Week. The day's activities were aimed at bringing together people from diverse faith and non-faith groups and communities.

## Faith and social action

Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe and the Faith-based Regeneration Network held a day conference on the theme of 'Religious Philanthropy and Social Action: Tools for Cohesion and Building Stronger Communities' with presentations from faith leaders from nine faiths. The three hour long interactive event was followed by a Zoroastrian service of thanksgiving which was witnessed by many of the participants and they were all later entertained to a Zoroastrian dinner.

Birmingham City Council supported a Faith and Climate Change Project Sustainability Forum debate on 'Climate, Faith to Change' which brought together at the Birmingham Midland Institute representatives from different faith communities to speak about their work in combating climate change. After the event, people were encouraged to join a short walk to St Philip's Cathedral to re-launch the Multi Faith Declaration on climate change and to visit an Ark Installation to encourage reflection and lobbying on these issues.

FN4M (the Faith Network for Manchester) held a conference on Faith and the Environment and Lichfield Interfaith Forum held a 'speak in' at the city's new 'speakers corner' on the theme of 'A Matter of Life and Faith – Creation, Climate Change and Copenhagen'.

Wolverhampton Faith Regeneration Network organised a conference on climate change which they described as a great success in terms of numbers and of local groups and individuals being made aware of their responsibility to commit themselves to reducing their carbon footprints, and also the need for concerted international efforts being continued to reduce emissions.

The Tony Blair Faith Foundation chose the Week to launch their Faith Acts Fellows programme in London. The four Faith Acts fellows introduced themselves and outlined their vision for the year of engaging young people in faith communities across London to become involved in the fight against malaria. Faith Act Fellows in other parts of the UK also participated in various events during Inter Faith Week, including mobilising young people to raise money for Islamic Relief in Birmingham, speaking about multi-faith action on poverty and disease at a British Sikh Consultative Forum event, exhibiting stalls at the Jubilee Debt Campaign conference and the West Midlands Faiths Forum Inter Faith Week launch, and giving radio interviews about multi faith action and Inter Faith Week. They also ran workshops on University campuses in the weeks leading up the Week.

The Jubilee Debt Campaign chose the week to bring different faiths together to launch, in Birmingham, a new project 'Global Poverty, Seeking Justice – People of Faith in Action'.

There were also a number of combined Inter Faith Week / Mitzvah Day events. A mitzvah (a Hebrew term for an act of good will) is a way of fulfilling the common religious obligation to do charitable works. Mitzvah Day (see page 21) fell on the first day of Inter Faith Week. In Oxford, as part of the Week, local faith communities of the city joined with the Jewish community which celebrated Mitzvah Day by the planting of 6,000 trees at the Cumnor Hurst Community Woodland.

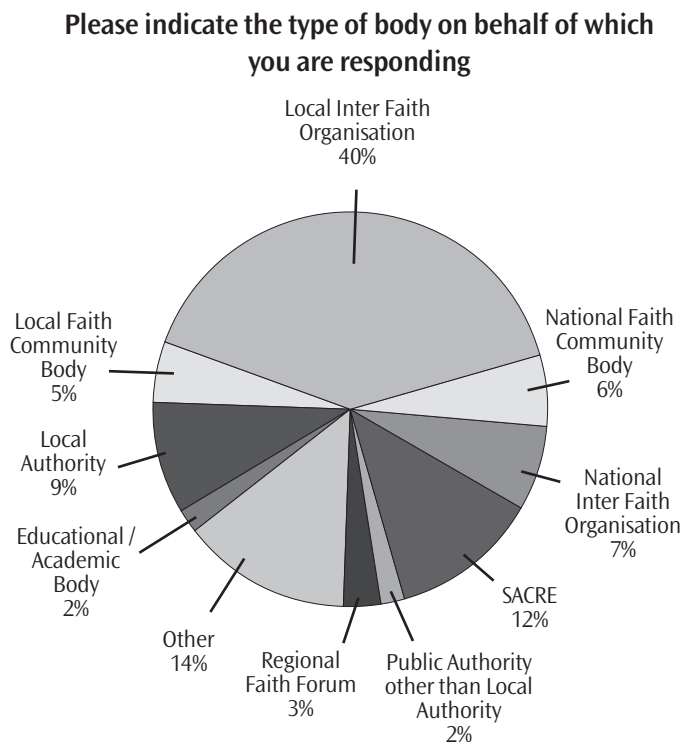
Nottingham saw a special Mitzvah Day celebration involving music, song and prayer, as part of Inter Faith Week, bringing together children aged 10-16 from five different faiths. Children taking part were asked to take a new or nearly-new toy or book for the Salvation Army to distribute.

In Northampton, a mitzvah activity took place for all faiths to participate in internal and external work at the Broughton Mencap Centre in Far Cotton.

## 9) Impact: How well were the Week's aims seen as being met?

### a) Survey

The Inter Faith Week website contained a survey form, developed with CLG, which it was hoped that many organisations would complete, giving feedback on the Week and how well it met its objectives. The form was also sent directly to IFN members, FCCC members and a wide range of other organisations known to have taken part in the Week. The 138 replies reflected a reasonable spread of different types of body and areas of the country. Most were from faith based bodies; non-religious belief bodies; SACREs and other educational bodies.



As well as the survey, there were feedback sessions after the Week at the IFN Executive Committee meeting on 26 January and the meeting of its Faith Communities Forum on 10 December; at the meeting of ERFFN on 26 February; and the meeting of the Faith Communities Consultative Council on 12 January. Comments were also received in individual emails and letters received about the Week.

### b) Appreciation for the Week

Survey respondents made many very positive observations: Typical were: "This was an ambitious project, and ran extremely well" "Great idea – really helped our inter faith group kickstart new life for future events".

"This week was a fantastic opportunity to push us to try new things and engage with different communities and I certainly hope it becomes a permanent fixture in our calendar".

*Warwick District Faiths Forum*

Inter Faith Week shows people from different faiths coming together to help and co-operate with each other. There have been numerous excellent events that have been arranged for Inter Faith Week and these would not have taken place had it not been for this week....

It is very important for Inter Faith Week to continue every year as it is necessary to build on work that has started and much much more work needs to be done to highlight the benefits and contributions that people from different faiths make to society."

*National Jain community*

““It was an excellent week, full of new initiatives and regular events given a new slant. Nor was it just the already committed who supported events; I saw many new faces during the course of the Week. Most of all, it was a week that energised people and caught their imagination, and whose effects I’m sure will continue to be felt and appreciated.”

*Inter-Faith Development Officer, West Midlands Faith Forum/member of the Methodist Church/United Reformed Church Inter Faith Relations Committee (quote from the Methodist Church report on the Week)*

“ I think it was definitely worth doing and should become an annual week. I talked to lots of people in London who had been to/organised new initiatives that week”

*Teacher from South London*

“It was a great opportunity to meet friends and make new contacts. People from different organisations went to each other’s events and there was a cross fertilisation of ideas. Some people were exposed to inter faith activity for the first time, which was good. We need to try to maintain those contacts and build on them to engage more people. . . . It was good that different organisations worked with inter faith groups, eg the Jubilee Debt Campaign, Friends of the Earth, Islam Awareness Week.”

*A respondent from Birmingham Council of Faiths*

“Inter Faith week is a wonderful opportunity to build bridges between the various communities which, although they live side by side in most instances in peace and stability, do not have much actual contact with each other on a grass roots level. During this week I personally learnt a great deal of detail about other faiths which, even as an RE teacher I had no knowledge of. Many of the women who attended the events said similar things and thoroughly enjoyed them. Tolerance and understanding can only be enhanced by this event, both locally, regionally and nationally. Our communities can only benefit from this.”

*Inter Faith Development worker from Burton Upon Trent*

Individual respondents’ comments gave an insight into personal learning journeys during the Week:

“I took part in Coventry Peace Walk and I had the opportunity to go into a Mosque which I had previously not done.”

*(local authority staff member in the West Midlands).*



Another aim of the Week was the encouragement of the development of new partnerships within local communities and by faith communities with statutory and third sector partners. There was ample evidence of this, for example Southwark Council worked with other bodies, including Southwark Multi Faith Forum, to organise an event called 'Having Faith in Southwark'. This began with an introduction by the authority's Community Cohesion Co-ordinator, which set out some facts about faith communities in the borough. This was followed by a question and answer session facilitated by Jumoke Fahola of Radio

London with panellists from Citizenship, Equalities and Communities unit (Southwark Council), Planning Department (Southwark Council), Community Engagement Unit (Southwark Council), Southwark for Jesus, Diverse Ethics and The Christian Legal Centre. The seminar gave faith communities in Southwark the opportunity to raise their ongoing concerns about securing faith premises in the local authority area. It was also an opportunity for Southwark Council to launch their 'Guide for faith premises in Southwark'.

"To mark National Inter Faith Week, the Chief Executive of Huntingdonshire District Council and councillors welcomed over 40 faith organisations from Huntingdonshire at an 'all faiths conference' held at Huntingdon Leisure Centre....The conference highlighted the positive community contributions already made by faith organisations in the district, and discussed how they could work better together and engage with the district council in shaping the future of Huntingdonshire."

*Huntingdonshire District Council*

"The Liverpool Faith Network steering group organised a tour of local faith organisations for staff of statutory bodies. We started off at the Anglican Diocese head office with a presentation from John Devine (Churches' Officer for the Northwest). We then went on to the Jewish synagogue, then on to a local church and finally some Hindu ladies came along to do a presentation. The purpose of the tour was to hear about what faith organisations are doing in the local communities. It wasn't to find out about what different faiths believe. Just under 30 people attended, they were either City Council staff, Police or PCT staff."

*Liverpool Faith Network*

In some areas, the Week provided a chance for new developments. For example in Salisbury the police, with support from faithnetsouthwest and the West Wiltshire Interfaith Group, organised an inter faith lunch at which participants looked at taking forward development of a local group; and in Braintree the Week provided the launch pad for planning for a Faiths Forum:

“A very successful Faiths Engagement event was held . . . at Braintree District Council. This was the first time such an event had been held in Braintree District. 45 people attended, 35 of whom were representatives from a range of faith groups. Other attendees included Councillors and representatives from the Police and other local authorities. Positive feedback was received from those attending and at the final session ‘The Way Forward’ there was overwhelming support for setting up a Faiths Forum for the District. Work to develop this is now underway and we hope the first meeting to set up the District’s new Faith Forum will take place in 2010.”

*Braintree District Council*

## “FROM LITTLE ACORNS. . .

Despite the forecast for the day, “strong to near gale force winds with showers or longer spells of rain”, some thirty or so people from the various Faith groups and religious communities in the city of York stood outside St. Michael-le-Belfry church on Saturday 14 November to pray for peace in our world. On the day, the weather proved to be much more friendly than had been predicted and after the final chime of the Minster clock at midday the Vigil began.

All the various Faith communities and religious groups in the city were invited by the York Interfaith Group to send a representative who would be prepared to offer a short reading of their own choice from their own sacred scriptures or sacred writing. After a prayer followed a time of silence. This coming together was to be York’s celebration of the first National Inter Faith Week in England.

Without exception all the Faith groups invited sent a representative to participate in the prayer event and many brought others in support. Together we prayed alongside each other and discovered how much we share in common when it comes to seeking peace in our hearts, in our homes, in our community and throughout the world. Although the number attending may have been small, the fact that every Faith group was present was of enormous encouragement.

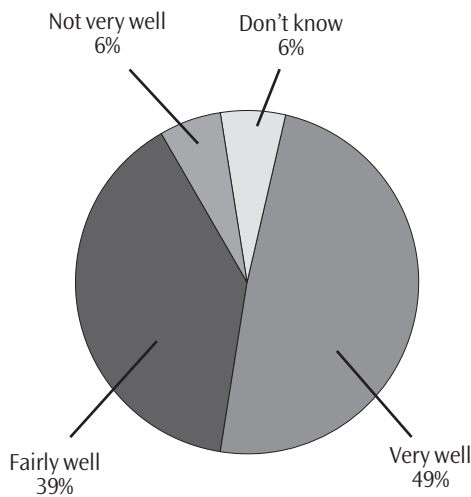
Drawing the event to a close, one of the organisers, the Revd Paul Wordsworth, spoke of the significance of the coming together of all the faiths in such a public way. He encouraged us to see how from small beginnings things can develop and grow; from little acorns come giant oak trees. Many who attended spoke later of how glad they were to be present at such an event, the first ever in York, and how important it was to demonstrate our commitment to promote better inter faith relations.”

Rev David Wilkes

### c) Success level in terms of overall aims

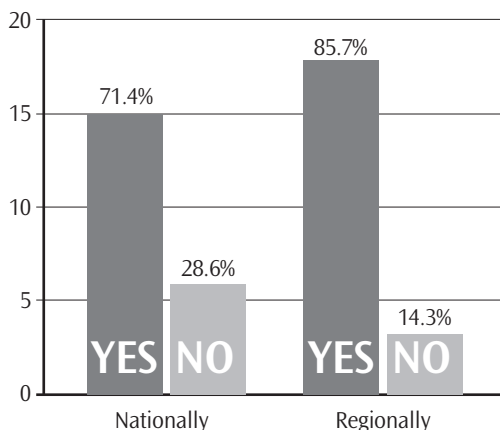
The survey asked respondents about how well they thought the Week had achieved its key aims. Asked how well they thought it had encouraged greater inter faith interaction and raised awareness of the importance of inter faith issue, 49% said very well; 39% said fairly well; 6% said not very well; and 6% said they did not know or did not respond.

**I/we think that the Week encouraged greater inter faith interaction and raised awareness of the importance of inter faith issues.**



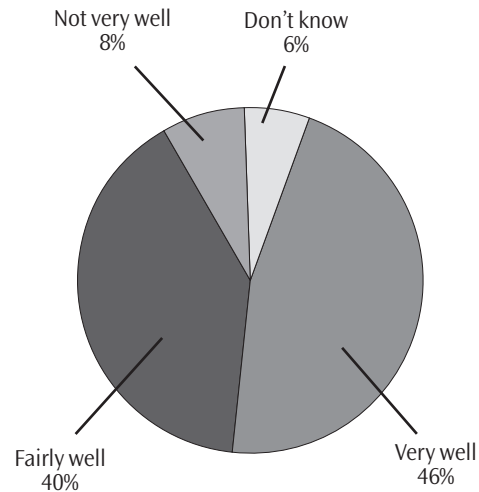
At regional level, the East of England carried out its own survey and it is interesting to see their figures for a similar question:

**Do you consider Inter Faith Week a success in raising awareness of faith / inter faith issues?**



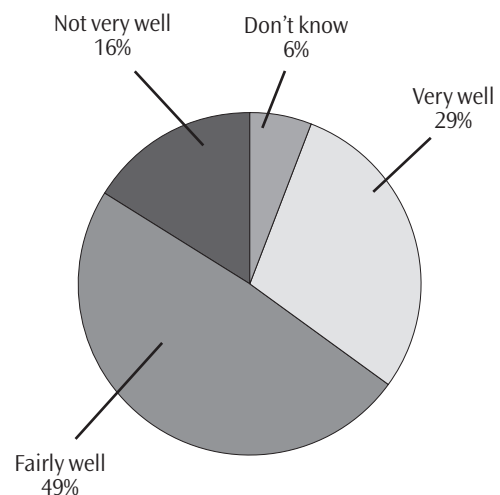
Asked how well they thought that the Week had raised awareness about the contribution which faith communities make, singly and together, to the wellbeing of society. 46% said very well; 40% said fairly well; 8% said not very well; and 6% said they did not know.

**I/we think that the Week raised awareness about the contribution which faith communities make, singly and together, to the wellbeing of society.**



There was a slightly lower level of success on the aim of encouraging dialogue between those of religious beliefs and those of non religious beliefs, with only 29% saying that they thought this had been very well achieved by the Week; 49% fairly well, 16% not very well; and 5% not knowing or responding.

**I/we think that the Week encouraged dialogue between those of religious beliefs and those of non religious beliefs:**



Commenting on the Week's impact, one national inter faith CEO reflected on the depth of its possible effect and the avenues it had opened up:

“Not only did [the Week] affirm the thousands of people in the Council of Christians and Jews and others of faith who for years have tried to tell and show the spiritual and cultural richness derived from listening and learning from the ‘other’, it also called us to think bigger, to take risks and to hope. Inter Faith Week in common with inter faith dialogue did not call for abandoning or changing one’s faith for another or the construction of a 21st century syncretism. Rather it afforded us an opportunity for a renewed hope in one another..[and] .. offered a springboard for us to see ‘the other’ in the image of God, in all their richness, striving, pain and joy.”

*CEO of the Council of Christians and Jews, writing in CCJ Dialogue, Winter 2010.*

## d) The importance of the national dimension

A number of respondents to the survey underlined the importance of the ‘national’ dimension to the Week.

“Thanks to the national team for their support and encouragement. Having a national focus allowed us to investigate inviting folk to visit, as observers, other places of worship. Without the Inter Faith Week, this would have been more difficult to achieve. The ‘Week’ gave it boundaries and ‘safety’ (ie others were doing it as well!)”.

*Hillingdon Inter Faith Network*

## e) Visibility of the Week

Perhaps the area where there was most disappointment expressed by survey respondents and in debriefings on the Week with IFN was about the visibility of the Week: in particular about lack of media coverage at national level.

Some survey respondents felt that publicity levels were good: “Congratulations on what was a very high profile and well publicised week”. A wealth of local newspaper articles and radio interviews were mentioned in people’s reports of events but some felt that advance publicity through this route had been low.

A number of respondents offered criticism about the low level of media coverage at national level. Typical comments were “I didn’t see much national media coverage” and “Didn’t see anything in the national press, or hear anything on radio or TV: more publicity / awareness would be good” and “The main goal of Inter Faith Week was building awareness and understanding of faith and its role in the communities. For this purpose the media strategy could have been much better coordinated especially at the national level.” “Perhaps religious affairs correspondents should be asked why [the Week] was not of interest, and what could be offered that would be of interest. Tips could then be shared about how to gain publicity, and the religious affairs correspondents could gain from ready-made stories.” “It was a pity that it was not covered at all by the media; for instance the Lambeth Palace launch and the statement should have been reported in the national media.”

As noted at page 13, the media strategy for the Week had been to concentrate on the local and regional and so the lack of coverage at national level was perhaps not surprising. The news releases were sent to the national media but there were some of the usual problems with trying to get ‘good news’ picked up. As noted at page 14 the BBC did run the story on its main site but with the heading “Interfaith week tackles tensions”.

Absence of 'branding' in the form of a logo was also thought by some to have been unhelpful in visibility terms. While the reasons for it appeared to be met with understanding and agreement there were some comments from local groups about how useful some kind of logo would have been.

## f) Lead time and dates

For a number of reasons it was not possible to announce the Week formally until March and this only gave eight months to plan, publicise and organise events. A frequent point made in IFN meetings and at FCCC and in the survey comments section was that people felt that they did not have as much time to plan for the Week as they wished. A Regional Faith Forum Director commented "Planning for the week began rather late in the year, and consequently there were many events and ideas that could not take place."

Another issue which drew some sharp criticism from a few respondents was the running of the Week at the same time as Islam Awareness Week. Although this arrangement was made clear on the IFW and IAW websites and explained in the press release for IFW there were comments from two local inter faith bodies which thought that it was wrong that both Weeks should happen at the same time. A similar point was made a university chaplain.

In some cases respondents did not seem aware of IAW and IFW's careful discussions about this and about the complementary theme chosen by IAW. But some of those who *were* aware still had serious misgivings because of the overload at local level. A local inter faith organiser in Leicester commented "We would strongly recommend that any future national Inter Faith Week not be held at the same time as Islam Awareness Week. We found general unhappiness at this having been done in 2009 and did not receive one positive comment about the coincidence of events...both from those involved in organising events for one of the weeks and from members of the public". A South West

London university chaplain said that it was likely to be a real problem to do justice to both Weeks.

There were also concerns voiced by a respondent about the overlap with Beat Bullying Week and by two respondents about the fact that Week did not coincide with One World Week or the Week of Prayer for World Peace.

Some local inter faith group respondents would have liked to see a summer date because of the better weather.

For the reasons that the Week took place when it did, see pages 20-22.

## g) Accessibility of information about the Week

In the survey respondents were asked how they found the arrangement of advertising national events on the main Inter Faith Week website ([www.interfaithweek.org.uk](http://www.interfaithweek.org.uk)) and regional and local events on regional faith forum sites (with hyperlinks from the main site) worked. Only 28% said very well or fairly well (17%) and 34% said not very well. 22% did not respond.

There seemed to be a number of reasons for dissatisfaction. One national faith community respondent said "It was quite hard to find the appropriate link to Week events on the regional faith forum sites. It was often hard to determine which region an event fell into (for example our event at Potters Bar) and I would imagine others also would have struggled." Anecdotal evidence from journalists who rang the IFN office suggested that the very different styles of listing events used by the various regional forums made it harder to scan across the various events happening across the country.

A number of the comments focused on the fact that the "Faith forum sites only cater for those already involved. I think the purpose of the Week was to communicate with others, of

all faiths and none” or that regional faith forum sites were not well known and so people did not go to them (unless from the main Inter Faith Week site). Three respondents commented that it would have been preferable to have everything on one well-structured Inter Faith Week website but there was also appreciation from other respondents of particular Regional Forum sites.

In planning, the Working Group, IFN and the RFFs had assumed that users would know which region to access (clearly not always the case) and that they would reach the relevant site from the hyperlink on the main IFW site. (However if they had not heard about that site in the first place, that would not have helped). In hindsight a search function where the name of the town could be entered on the IFW site and the link would take the user to the right RFF site would have been helpful.

In response to a question about whether they had used regional sites and the IFW main site to plan their event or decide what to attend, 29% of respondents said they had used the Inter Faith Week main site and 21% had used their RFF site for this purpose.

The main Inter Faith Week website was minimalist and there were some comments about this from survey respondents: “It felt like a site which just had links to other sites” and the hope expressed that if another Week were to be run there would be more resources available through this site.

## h) Breadth of involvement

Overall, comments pointed to a good level of satisfaction with the range of people involved in local events, although one respondent commented that “There should be more involvement of the private sector, to encourage a higher profile, the potential for more funding and the involvement of people outside of the inter faith world” and a number of SACRE respondents to the survey underlined the desirability of involving even more schools.

One survey respondent commented that it would have been good if invitees to the national launch had included people beyond the faith communities.

## i) Resources and overload

Some local inter faith organisers found their events unexpectedly popular and also under resourced. An organiser of two very successful faith trails in one city in Yorkshire and Humber wrote:

“A huge amount of voluntary work was put into the two Faith Trail walks – organising two Police Community Support Officers to accompany the c.60 people walking on them (part of the Health and Safety Risk Assessment required), organising the press and radio publicity beforehand and the catering and booking arrangements for the events on the walks, eg opening up the churches and getting guided tours within each, making arrangements for walkers including primary school pupils, people in wheelchairs and with prams, arranging photos including a video DVD made of the first walk, and BBC local radio interviews done on that walk, all this took many hours. Not a penny of financial aid was received from any source: it was all voluntary. I doubt whether any of this will be repeated in future, without some financial support ...”

Overload was also commented on by a local inter faith group in the East of England:

“An extremely successful week, but very tiring and time consuming. I suspect that most inter faith groups are run by volunteers so the amount of effort to make this work is extra large without special expertise.”

This was echoed by a regional forum officer who felt it was like trying to squeeze three months’ worth of work into a week.

“There is a worry that faith communities will use Inter Faith Week as a tick-box exercise, doing inter faith when they ‘should’ rather than part of their normal programming. The need for inter faith still has to be demonstrated by government and inter faith groups.”

*Respondent from a national inter faith body*

“Because so much [was] packed into one week, many inter faith organisations were competing sometimes for the same speakers and audiences (this was not our experience, because we did not go for the “usual” audiences, but we have heard this)...[T]here was a tremendous amount of demand on our time, which we could not fill, our staff attended or were part of 22 events over the week!”

*Director of a national inter faith body*

“The event spilled over to about 6 weeks’ manic work with so many demands made by numerous organisations that it was impossible to meet them all!”

*Chair of a national inter faith body run by volunteers*

Three respondents to the survey suggested that an inter faith ‘fortnight’ was needed rather than a week on the basis that there was so much to fit in.

## j) Content/tone of events

One national inter body CEO commented: “[At the national launch]... there was lots of emphasis on faiths working together, but no real celebration of diversity in which faiths were free to express their unique identities, and much of the event was reduced to a synthesis of common values.”

A director of a national faith community organisation said, at a meeting of IFN’s Faith Community Forum, that he thought the Week had been highly successful but he would like to see any future Week make more space for ‘hard dialogue’ about difficult issues.

## k) Should an Inter Faith Week happen again?

83% of survey respondents said that they would like to see a further Inter Faith Week take place. Some were already thinking about what it might look like in their area.

“The schools and the Education Authority would like to be more involved next year, as would representatives of faith groups from other parts of Worcestershire (already an inter faith choir and a women’s quilting project have been identified as possible events next year).”

Two respondents thought that a ‘theme’ for the Week would be helpful.

## l) Pointers for a future Inter Faith Week

What are the lessons that can be learned from the 2009 Inter Faith Week to make any future such Week equally – indeed even more – successful? Emerging from this report, are the following points:

- Encourage greater interest from the national media
- Widen the spread of organisations and individuals involved
- Ensure visible national profile and support
- Faith communities can build on their work this year to ensure even more of their members are involved next time
- Increase involvement of schools, colleges of further education and students at university
- Consider an annual theme
- Enable the regional faith forums to play a key role again
- Provide more ideas for events
- Improve the IFW website (looking at good practice from other Days/Weeks) and strengthen the level of resources provided
- Put on the website the list of last year's events as ideas for planning another such Week
- Include pointers for careful tackling of more controversial issues (where groups wish to do so)
- Point to possible sources of funding for events and ideas for finding 'in kind' support
- Where there are exhibitions, try to keep these open for the full Week
- Encourage involvement but also make clear in advance material that the Week will (it is hoped) be packed with events and that if organisers are seeking faith community involvement they need to plan well in advance
- Each region to make known in advance any major regional event so local bodies can avoid their events clashing with this
- Try to avoid having the Week at exactly the same time as any other high profile and similar Week
- Ensure all events go up on the regional websites quickly and remind all faith and inter faith bodies to list all their events
- Have a more effective form of listing events and making the Inter Faith Week website better known
- Standardise the style in which events are listed on different regional sites and the IFW site
- Include a 'search' function on the main IFW website and on regional websites to locate events by town/local authority



## 10) Conclusion

Inter Faith Week in England was, overall, very well received. There were some teething problems – in particular, issues with publicity for events, poor national media pick up and overload challenges for some faith and inter faith bodies. But the enthusiasm for the Week and its events shines through the pages of the surveys, the discussion of the Week in the various Committees and the reports of those who held national events and of regional faith forums on events in their regions.

National and local faith communities did a tremendous amount during the Week and deepened their links and raised awareness about their work. National inter faith bodies and academic bodies with a focus on dialogue ran extensive event programmes and drew new people into this vital area of work.

Regional and local inter faith bodies put on an astonishing array of events – between them reaching many thousands of people of all faiths and beliefs, including people who had never before been involved in inter faith encounter. The Week saw, for example, some people setting foot in a place of worship of another faith for the first time.

Non religious belief groups such as the British Humanist Association – while not liking the name of the Week or aspects of how it was framed – played an active part in it and dialogue between them and religious groups was an integral part of the Week.

With the encouragement of the Department for Children, Schools and Families, the Religious Education Council, the National

Association of Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education, the National Union of Students, Faiths and Belief in Further Education (FBFE) and HE and FE chaplaincies many thousands of young people got involved through schools, FE colleges and Universities and organisations such as Girl Guiding as well as through programmes of inter faith bodies.

Local authorities and other public bodies around England were involved in many areas and in some, like Leicestershire, took an active lead in helping gather and share information and raise awareness about the Week. Politicians from all parties were involved in the launch and in a number of local events and were strongly supportive.

It was a Week of raising awareness about the importance of inter faith engagement and of the contribution which faith communities make to society; of affirming good work already in progress in so many areas; and also of making new connections.

People talked together, played and sang together, ate together. They taught and learned, listened and spoke. They celebrated different ways of understanding and living life. They thought, too, about what they hold in common – an important basis for forging a shared society. Many also did not fight shy of talking about difficult areas of disagreement and how these might be resolved. And people worked side by side together on projects in their areas – a visible symbol of cooperation.

**Was it a success? We very much believe so.**

**Note:** In the light of the high level of positive feedback about the 2009 event it has now been confirmed that another Inter Faith Week will take place in England and Wales in 2010. In terms of light touch national support and planning, this will be led by the Inter Faith Network in England and the Inter Faith Council in Wales, in consultation with the Department for Communities and Local Government and the Welsh National Assembly and a range of other agencies. Like the 2009 Week, Inter Faith Week 2010 will be community and grassroots led.





# ANNEX A

News Release 24 March 2009



## ENGLAND TO HAVE FIRST-EVER 'INTER FAITH WEEK'

A football match involving people from different faiths is just one of the activities that could take place in England's first-ever 'Inter Faith Week', Communities and Local Government Secretary Hazel Blears announced today.

'Inter Faith Week' will run from 15 to 21 November with a launch the preceding week. Its aims are:

- to strengthen good inter faith relations at all levels;
- to increase awareness of the different and distinct faith communities in the UK, in particular celebrating and building on the contribution which their members make to their neighbourhoods and to wider society; and
- to increase understanding between people of religious and non-religious belief.

The Week is being facilitated by the Inter Faith Network for the UK and the Department for Communities and Local Government but will be community-led, with local people and groups of different backgrounds holding their own events and to highlight work going on to promote understanding between people of different faiths and beliefs.

Communities Secretary Hazel Blears said:

**"People from different faiths are working at the heart of their communities to help disadvantaged people, including those whose jobs, homes or businesses may be at risk during these challenging economic times. It's arguably more important than ever that people of different faiths and beliefs come together and are able to explore what they have in common. I hope that 'Inter Faith Week' will help to strengthen**

**these relationships and build stronger bonds of understanding and cooperation.**

**"I'm encouraging faith groups and communities to reach out to each other during 'Inter Faith Week' and local authorities, schools, and others to host and encourage inter faith events. England's first-ever 'Inter Faith Week' can provide a wonderful focus for increasing understanding between people and help to shape the new economy that we build together."**

Inter Faith Network for the UK Co-Chairs Rt Revd Tom Butler and Dr Nawal Prinja said:

**"We welcome this important opportunity to increase understanding about and between people of different faiths."**

During 'Inter Faith Week' typical activities designed to encourage the development of new partnerships within local communities could include:

- a church and a mosque organising exchange visits for their congregations;
- a local inter faith group organising a 'faith trail' to different places of worship;
- a temple, synagogue or gurdwara arranging a special open day event;
- a school or college arranging an inter faith debate on the environment;
- a football match involving young people from different faith communities

The possibility of the Week being marked in Wales as well as in England is under consideration. An annual 'Inter Faith Week' already takes place in Scotland.

## Notes for Editors

- 1 In July last year CLG published *Face to Face and Side by Side: a framework for partnership in our multi faith society*. This report (at [www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/898668.pdf](http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/898668.pdf)) set out for the first time the Department's vision for greater local activity to bring people from different religions and beliefs together, and provided a programme of investment and support to help local communities make this happen. Among the support offered is a £4m small grants programme Faiths in Action to help local communities get inter faith projects off the ground. CLG expects to announce first tranche of funding from the *Faiths in Action* programme next month.
- 2 The Inter Faith Network links national faith community representative bodies; national, regional and local inter faith bodies and educational and academic bodies with an interest in inter faith issues. The involvement of the Inter Faith Network ([www.interfaith.org.uk](http://www.interfaith.org.uk)) springs from the aims, shared by over 160 member bodies including national faith community representative bodies (Bahá'í, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jain, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh and Zoroastrian); inter faith organisations and educational and academic bodies – of promoting greater understanding between people of different faiths in the UK. In its response to the consultation for Face to Face and Side by Side it proposed an 'Inter Faith Week', drawing from experience of a successful Week of this kind held in Scotland.
- 3 The Week is being held on a 'one off' basis, although options for holding a similar Week in future years will be considered after this year's Week has taken place. Regional Faith Forums are being invited to carry information on their websites about 'Inter Faith Week' linked events and projects in their regions. A website to support the week is being developed to

provide information and ideas for events and projects: [www.interfaithweek.org.uk](http://www.interfaithweek.org.uk).

- 4 Over 75% of people who answered a question about religion in the 2001 Census said they belonged to a particular religious tradition.

Christian	41,014,811
Muslim	1,588,890
Hindu	558,342
Sikh	336,179
Jewish	267,373
Buddhist	149,157
Any other religion	159,167

*Population of Great Britain by religions, Census April 2001* [www.statistics.gov.uk](http://www.statistics.gov.uk)

- 5 The Department for Children Schools and Families, the Local Government Association and the Equality and Human Rights Commission are also assisting in developing plans for the Week. CLG is also liaising, as appropriate, with other public agencies and helping facilitate publicity.

The UN International Day of Tolerance (16 November) falls during the Week. The Week overlaps with the longstanding and widely marked Islam Awareness Week and the two weeks will be complementary in theme.

Media Enquiries: 020 7944 3288

Out of hours: 020 7944 5945

Email: [press.office@communities.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:press.office@communities.gsi.gov.uk)

News Releases:

[www.communities.gov.uk/newsroom](http://www.communities.gov.uk/newsroom)

## ANNEX B

News Release 12 November 2009



# Government wants to engage with faith communities on social challenges – John Denham

Recognising the important role that faith plays in the lives of individuals, at the national launch of England's first-ever Inter Faith Week, Communities Secretary John Denham will invite the views of faith communities on how to tackle some of the big challenges facing society, like parenting and the environment.

Inter Faith Week (15 to 21 November) is being facilitated by Communities and Local Government in partnership with the Inter Faith Network for the UK. It is faith-community led with organisations around the country holding events – from art exhibitions to inter faith seminars; from football matches to pilgrimage walks; from the good deeds of Mitzvah Day to the good food of shared meals – to bring major faith communities, as well as those with no religious beliefs, closer together.

Mr Denham has responsibility for the Government's public policy on faith. Stressing the importance of respecting faith in its own right, and not as a prop to Government when it has a problem to solve, he will say he wants to see a deeper and broader relationship between Government and faith communities.

Government already engages with faith communities through the Faith Communities Consultative Council (FCCC) where representatives of all the major religions are consulted on policy questions of mutual interest. To deepen this relationship, he has had a round of intensive discussions with faith leaders and he is recruiting a panel of advisers to act as a sounding board on issues of faith and public policy.

In the midst of a global economic recession driven by lending, Mr Denham believes that the values which faith groups share – justice, equality, engagement – and the aim of Inter

Faith Week to bring people of faith and no faith together, could be a starting point for building consensus for a stronger, fairer society.

Speaking at the national launch of Inter Faith Week at the QEII, London, John Denham said:

**“Government should respect – should value, prize and celebrate – those things which matter to citizens. And for many, their faith shapes and defines who they are and this deserves respect.**

**“But Government and politicians are also interested in how society can be shaped for the better. Whether it is parenting, personal health, or sustainability, government is interested in what makes people tick. For millions of people the values instilled by their faith are central to shaping their behaviour. We should continually encourage and enhance the contribution faith makes on the central issues of our time.**

**“Inter Faith week creates more opportunities for people of different faiths, including young people, to explore how their faith helps them understand and respond to these challenges and, through this, build a stronger society.”**

Bishop Tom Butler and Dr Girdari Bhan, Co-Chairs of the Inter Faith Network for the UK said:

**“We are delighted at the level of response to Inter Faith Week. It has clearly caught the imagination of people around the country.”**

Dr Indarjit Singh, FCCC member and Director of the Network of Sikh Organisations of the UK said:

“Inter Faith week should move us from the usual polite exchange of pleasantries to actually looking to ways of replacing false barriers of misunderstanding and prejudice that divide our different religions, with sympathetic understanding and true respect for different ways of life.”

Mr Denham welcomes the practical value to society in having faith groups work closely together to overcome social division, promote cohesion and build social capital. The efforts of faith groups to build relationships at a local level – not only amongst themselves, but also with the police, politicians and councils – has helped manage tension in the face of extreme provocation from right-wing extremists.

To support this, faith communities around the country are set to receive £2m to encourage more local inter faith activity, helping to bring people from different backgrounds together to tackle shared problems.

He added:

“I am confirming that we are making £2m available through the Faiths in Action programme; which faith, inter faith, voluntary and community sector groups can bid for to support projects which will bring people of faith and without faith together to overcome social division and promote cohesion. Faith is a strong and powerful source of honesty, solidarity, generosity – the very values which are essential to politics, to our economy and our society.”

Mr Denham is clear about the common interests government and faith communities share. For instance how parents see their obligations to their children and to each other or the concept of ‘stewardship’ and a common interest in not destroying the planet on which we live. This is why he is keen to acknowledge and welcome the contribution faith makes to shaping behaviour and transmitting values but he is clear that it isn’t necessary to have faith to be deeply moral and profoundly altruistic.

## Notes to editors

- 1 The new funding announced today is being made available to support local activities over the coming years. Faiths in Action aims to bring communities together, promoting positive relationships between people of religious and non-religious beliefs together within local communities to work closely together to overcome social division and promote cohesion and beliefs at a local level. It is a £4m grants programme open to faith, inter faith, voluntary and community organisations and groups in England and is being distributed in two rounds. A total of 216 groups received grants of up to £12,000, totalling £2m in round one in February 2009. Faiths in Action is administered by the Community Development Foundation (CDF) on behalf of Communities and Local Government. For more information please visit [www.cdf.org.uk/web/guest/faiths-in-action](http://www.cdf.org.uk/web/guest/faiths-in-action).
- 2 In July 2008 the Department published *Face to Face and Side by Side – a Framework for Partnership in our Multi Faith Society*. This presented the Government’s strategy for encouraging the further development of inter faith activity in England. It set out how faith communities, Government and wider society can work together, at all levels, to bring people with different religions and beliefs together. One of the commitments was to work in partnership with the Inter Faith Network for the UK to organise an Inter Faith Week in 2009.
- 3 The first stage of broadening the relationship between government and faith committees will be continuing to seek advice from the FCCC and supplementing this with advice from a new faith expert panel and policy adviser. [www.communities.gov.uk/communities/racecohesionfaith/faith/faithcommunities/faithcommunitiesconsultative/](http://www.communities.gov.uk/communities/racecohesionfaith/faith/faithcommunities/faithcommunitiesconsultative/).

- 4 Francis Davis, fellow of Blackfriars Hall, Oxford has just been appointed faith policy adviser to John Denham. He directs the Hall's work on governance, social responsibility, faith and the public sphere. He is also Director of the Las Casas Institute on Ethics, Human Rights And Social Justice. Since 2007 he has been Visiting Lecturer in social enterprise and community development at the University of Cambridge where from 2006-08 he co-directed a research centre on faith in society. A Visiting Fellow at the Helen Suzman Foundation in South Africa he is on the board of judges of the £300,000 Erste Bank Foundation Prize For Social Integration in South East Europe. In 2007-08, he was co-host and organiser of two major inter-religious colloquia in partnership with the Aga Khan University and the University of Haifa. His publications include a special edition of the leading policy journal, Public Money And Management (Routledge/CIPFA) on Religion, Third Sector And Public Management (Nov 2009).
- 5 Inter Faith Week is being facilitated by CLG in partnership with IFN but will be community-led, with local people and groups of different backgrounds holding their own events and to highlight work going on to promote understanding between people of different faiths and beliefs. Its aims are to strengthen good inter faith relations at all levels; to increase awareness of the different and distinct faith communities in the UK, in particular celebrating and building on the contribution which their members make to their neighbourhoods and to wider society; and to increase understanding between people of religious and non-religious belief. There will be a launch for religious leaders at Lambeth Palace on 16 November.
- 6 The English Regional Faith Forums have been collating and listing local inter faith events and details are available on their websites. The Government is providing £130K to help support community groups to develop and grow these projects.
- 7 The Week will highlight the contribution of faith groups to the welfare of society and the importance of inter faith activity and understanding. Faith groups, their places of worship, schools, universities local authorities and other public bodies are holding events that highlight the importance of inter faith understanding and faith in social action.
- 8 The Inter Faith Network for the UK was founded in 1987. It links in membership national representative organisations of the Bahá'í, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jain, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh and Zoroastrian faiths in the UK; national, regional and local inter faith organisations; and educational and academic bodies with an interest in inter faith issues. It works with its member bodies and other agencies to promote good relations between the faith communities in the UK; to combat inter religious prejudice and intolerance; and to help make the UK a country marked by mutual understanding and respect between religions where all can practise their faith with integrity. Inter Faith Week is also being marked in Wales. An annual Inter Faith Week already takes place in Scotland.
- 9 There is a long and positive history in this country of people coming together to talk about and explore their own and each others religions and beliefs in order to build understanding and respect. This dialogue has increased in recent years with 183 new inter faith groups having been established since 2000.
- 10 As a nation we are cohesive with 81 per cent of people believing that people from different backgrounds get on well in their area, and 77 per cent believing they belong strongly to their neighbourhood. However the majority of people questioned in CLG's latest citizenship survey felt there was a need for people



from different religious and ethnic groups  
to mix more.  
[www.communities.gov.uk/communities/racecohesionfaith/research/citizenshipsurvey/](http://www.communities.gov.uk/communities/racecohesionfaith/research/citizenshipsurvey/).

## ANNEX C

### SAMPLES OF LOCAL COVERAGE

From local BBC coverage [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk)<sup>10</sup>

#### BBC LANCASHIRE

### Lancashire's faiths come together

*Penny Warden  
created the  
Stations of the  
Cross at Blackburn  
Cathedral*



It's Inter Faith  
Week in  
Lancashire with  
people

throughout the  
county highlighting the work that is going on  
to bring our different faith communities  
closer together.

I think we sometimes forget how far we have  
come.

I remember a few years ago recording a  
programme with the then Anglican, Roman  
Catholic and Methodist leaders in Lancashire.  
As we left the studio, one of them remarked to  
the other two that five years ago we would  
never have agreed to do a programme where  
they all sat round a table together.

We are about ten years on from that  
comment, but when you consider that was  
three Christian people talking about their own  
differences, how good is it that we now take  
multi-faith events as being commonplace?

It is also Prisons Week and on this week's  
programme we heard from Canon Brian  
Mayne who is one of the chaplains at Kirkham  
Open Prison.

#### High brow

He talked about the power of faith to help  
correct those faltering steps in life when  
someone finds themselves incarcerated and  
thus paying the penalty of being too far on  
the wrong side of the law.

By way of an example, we met Mick, who has  
embraced the spiritual side of prison and to  
illustrate this has created a display of what  
God and prison can offer. It is so effective that  
he has been invited to show off his work at  
Blackburn Cathedral.

This week, I also called in at a conference  
which at first sight was a bit high brow, but  
turned out be fascinating. It was a "Creativity  
& Faith" conference at Blackburn Cathedral.  
Amongst the speakers were Canon Professor  
John Rodwell, an environmentalist from  
Lancaster Priory, and artist Penny Warden  
who created the unique Stations of the Cross  
at the cathedral.

It was a very interesting discussion, which  
often related to how we seem to take what is  
around us for granted and how we also take  
for granted our ability to rearrange what we  
have to give pleasure to us and others.

All right, so it does seem a bit highbrow  
written down, but trust me, it was enthralling!

Joe Wilson

<sup>10</sup> Material in this section is BBC copyright and reproduced with thanks to the BBC for its coverage of the Week.

## Celebrating faiths in Coventry Inter Faith Week

The Inter Faith Week hopes to increase awareness of different faith communities

Coventry is holding its first ever Inter Faith Week between 15-21 November.



The week is designed to teach others about the different faith communities in the city and increase understanding of religious and non-religious beliefs.

Coventry's Multi-Faith Forum has worked with Coventry City Council to bring a wide programme of events.

Lord Mayor of Coventry, councillor Jack Harrison MBE will launch the week at the Hebert Art Gallery on 15 November.

There will be a wide range of activities across the city. Some of the events can be found listed below, but a full programme can be found on the Coventry Multi Faith Forum website.

### **Singing for World Peace**

On Sunday, 15 November from 1500-2100 at St Paul's Community Hall on Foleshill Road, there will be Singing for World Peace. It is organised by the Sathya Sai Baba Centre of Coventry.

### **Discover Islam Exhibition**

From 16-20 November, you can visit the Discover Islam Exhibition at the Coventry Muslim Resource Centre on Red Lane. Inter Faith Week runs alongside Islam Awareness Week and this year's theme is Walk the Talk.

This exhibition takes you on a journey through Islam and class and group visits are available, but must be booked in advance.

### **Guided Meditation**

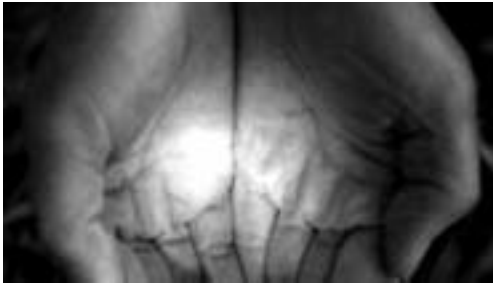
On Wednesday, 18 November, there will be a chance for Guided Meditation from 1730-1900 at the Lord Mayor's Hospitality Suite at the Council House. The event is organised by the Hindu Council and they invite you to experience a relaxing evening and learn how to create inner peace.

### **Meet the Bahá'ís**

On Saturday, 21 November, there will be a chance to find out more about the Bahá'í faith at the Coventry Multi-Faith Centre (Priory Visitor Centre) from 1200-1600.

There will be a slideshow of Bahá'í holy places, a DVD introducing the faith and also a display of literature.

## Interfaith Week comes to Teesside



*North East Regional Faiths Network's healing hands logo*

The North East Regional Faiths Network have organised a National Interfaith Week, beginning on 14 November.

The network of different religious groups works together, to promote good inter-faith relations and understanding in the region. During the week there will be a number of celebratory and educational events across Teesside, County Durham and North Yorkshire. These include a women's event in Middlesbrough, and a 'Respect Day' at Stockton Riverside College, which is open to staff and students at the college.

### **Women only**

The women's event will take place on Monday, 16 November, and will include music and entertainment. It will take place in Middlesbrough Teaching and Learning Centre, at 6pm. This event is only open to women.

### **Respect Day**

On Wednesday 18 November, Stockton Riverside College will be hosting a 'Respect Day'.

Delegates from temples, mosques, synagogues, churches and other places of worship will join local authority, health and other workers, to discuss why faith matters to them.

## Forging relationships with faiths

By Victoria Bartlett  
BBC Hampshire & Isle of Wight



Zahir Ahmed and Martin Goldstein will share their viewpoints

Events across the south are encouraging good relationships between faiths to help build communities.

Inter Faith Week begins on 15 November 2009 and aims to increase understanding of, and between, different religious groups.

It also celebrates the contribution which their members make to their neighbourhoods and to wider society.

People with religious beliefs are also involved in the community-led meetings and activities.

## Inter Faith organisations

The week is being led by the Inter Faith Network for the UK and the Department for Communities and Local Government but local people of different backgrounds will be holding their own events to highlight work going on within their area.

This is the first national Inter Faith Week, but the second year for Southampton to hold a conference on the subject, linking up the emergency services, hospitals, local authorities with local multi-faith communities to share resources and knowledge.

The Southampton Inter Faith Link (SIFL) was started about 15 years ago because local faiths wanted to work together for happiness.

This developed into the Southampton Council of Faiths (SCOF) – a registered charity which consists of five representatives for each of the seven main faiths in the city (Bahá'í, Buddhist, Christian, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism).



*Last year's Youth Peace Walk in Southampton was well attended*

Other times of the year they organise Peace Walks, where up to 300 people walk a route linking places of worship.

Last year the group's walk took in Nanaksar Gurdwara in Peterborough Rd, The Synagogue in Mordaunt Rd, Friends House (Quakers), Abu

Bakr Mosque, Northam Methodist Church, Vedic temple, with talks from Buddhists and Bahá'í along the way.

David Vane is a member of Soka Gakkai International, a lay Buddhist organisation and he is also secretary for the Southampton Council of Faiths and Vice Chair of SACRE (Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education). He said:

“At SCOF we aim to provide education about the faiths because a lack of understanding leads to aggression or fear. Our members advise schools and the provide the major authorities and council with faith advisors each year – which is pretty unique.”

### Local events

There is a Friendship evening to mark the start of National Interfaith week at St Mary's church in Southampton from 1600 – 1800 on Sunday, 15 November. People from all backgrounds can join in this evening of different prayers and sharing food – learning from each other but remaining true to their own faith.

On 19 November the Southampton Council of Faiths conference will take place at the Vedic Temple on Radcliffe Rd.

**We live in a multi-faith society and they all matter, whatever the size of group they belong to.**

*Tim Daykin*

The conference aims to discuss how the different cultures and communities in Southampton work together to build understanding and shared values.

Communities Secretary and Labour MP for Southampton Itchen, John Denham, will be the main speaker along with Alex Marshall,

Chief Constable of Hampshire Police, and Parvin Damani, former mayor of Southampton and one of the founders of the Inter Faith movement in Southampton.

On Wednesday 18 November the Hampshire Inter-Faith Network will be hosting a lecture with Rabbi Blue in the Ashburton Hall, at Hampshire County Council, Winchester. Email [members.support@hants.gov.uk](mailto:members.support@hants.gov.uk) to book your place.

The Lecture will be followed by a performance by Berakah, a group comprised of Jewish, Christian and Muslim musicians.

A graffiti workshop for 10-15 year olds will be happening on Saturday 21 November at the Abu Bakr Mosque. Places are limited so you will need to book a place by going to the Southampton Council of Faiths webpage

Jeff Lynn, Chair of SCOF said: "We have a remarkably diverse community in Southampton and we are remarkably good at living and working together.

"But sometimes we feel, in our working and social lives, that we have to put our faith to one side.

"In the Southampton Council of Faiths we are firmly believe that we should all "speak with pride and listen with respect", whatever the situation.

"I want the conference to demonstrate that and encourage everyone to continue making Southampton a great place to live."

## BBC Radio Solent coverage

## Inter Faith Week



*Attendees at last year's Southampton Council of Faiths conference*

A special programme is being recorded at the conference to highlight Inter Faith Week and reflect the viewpoints of the seven different faiths in the audience.

This show can be heard at 1900 on Thursday, 19 November and 0700 on Sunday, 22 November 2009.

Religious show presenter, Tim Daykin, will be hosting the programme. He said: "It's a unique opportunity to hear the views of a broad spectrum of faiths.

"I think the challenges facing the world today need to be understood through the lens of many different faiths – not just one. We live in a multi-faith society and they all matter, whatever the size of group they belong to."

## Interfaith Week in Merseyside



*Inter faith week kicked off in Liverpool with the Cycle of Faith event*

The first interfaith week is being held in England to strengthen relations and awareness.

Liverpool's religious celebrations kicked off with the Cycle of Faith trail in Sefton Park which visited local places of worship.

Highlights include a youth council meeting, a Hindu cookery workshop and an interfaith quiz at The Reformed Synagogue Hall in Wavertree.

Events take place throughout the week of 15-21 November.

Liz White, Faith Network Development Officer at LCN said: "Interfaith Week is all about celebrating the different faith organisations in the city and their positive impact on the city's population.

"The event will bring people together from all faiths and non faiths so they can better understand each other and combine their efforts to improve communities in Liverpool."

The Week is being organised by Liverpool Community Spirit, LCVS, Faiths for Change and Merseyside Council for Faiths.

Alan Lewis, Chief Executive of LCVS said: "The city has an incredible diversity which is

something we should celebrate more.


"By running these series of events we want to help Liverpool residents to experience the different religions and cultures in the city and bring communities and people closer together."

For full details of events throughout the week visit the Faith North West website.

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/local/liverpool/hi/people\\_and\\_places/religion\\_and\\_ethics/newsid\\_8366000/8366974.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/local/liverpool/hi/people_and_places/religion_and_ethics/newsid_8366000/8366974.stm)


The Week is being organised by the Inter Faith Network for the UK ([www.interfaithweek.org.uk](http://www.interfaithweek.org.uk)) working with its member bodies, in partnership with the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and in consultation with the Department for Children, Schools and Families, the Local Government Association and the Equality and Human Rights Commission. But the Week is not a centrally organised 'top-down' programme; rather it is one where groups and individuals are encouraged to lead their own events and projects.

Regional faith forums in England will be carrying out a range of activities for their regions on their sites and these can be accessed via the Inter Faith Week website [www.interfaithweek.org.uk](http://www.interfaithweek.org.uk)



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## Inter Faith Week

### 15-21 November 2009



## Inter Faith Week

### 15-21 November 2009



A national Inter Faith Week will take place in England and Wales from 15 to 21 November 2009. Its aims are to:

- strengthen inter-faith relations at all levels
- encourage local faith groups and communities to reach out to each other and build strong bonds of understanding and cooperation
- increase awareness of the different and distinct faith communities in the UK, in particular celebrating and building on the contribution which their members make to their neighbourhoods and to wider society
- increase understanding between people of religious and non-religious belief

For further information:

[www.interfaithweek.org.uk](http://www.interfaithweek.org.uk)  
[enquiries@interfaithweek.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@interfaithweek.org.uk)

The Inter Faith Network for the UK  
 16 Lower Grosvenor Place  
 London SW1W 0DN

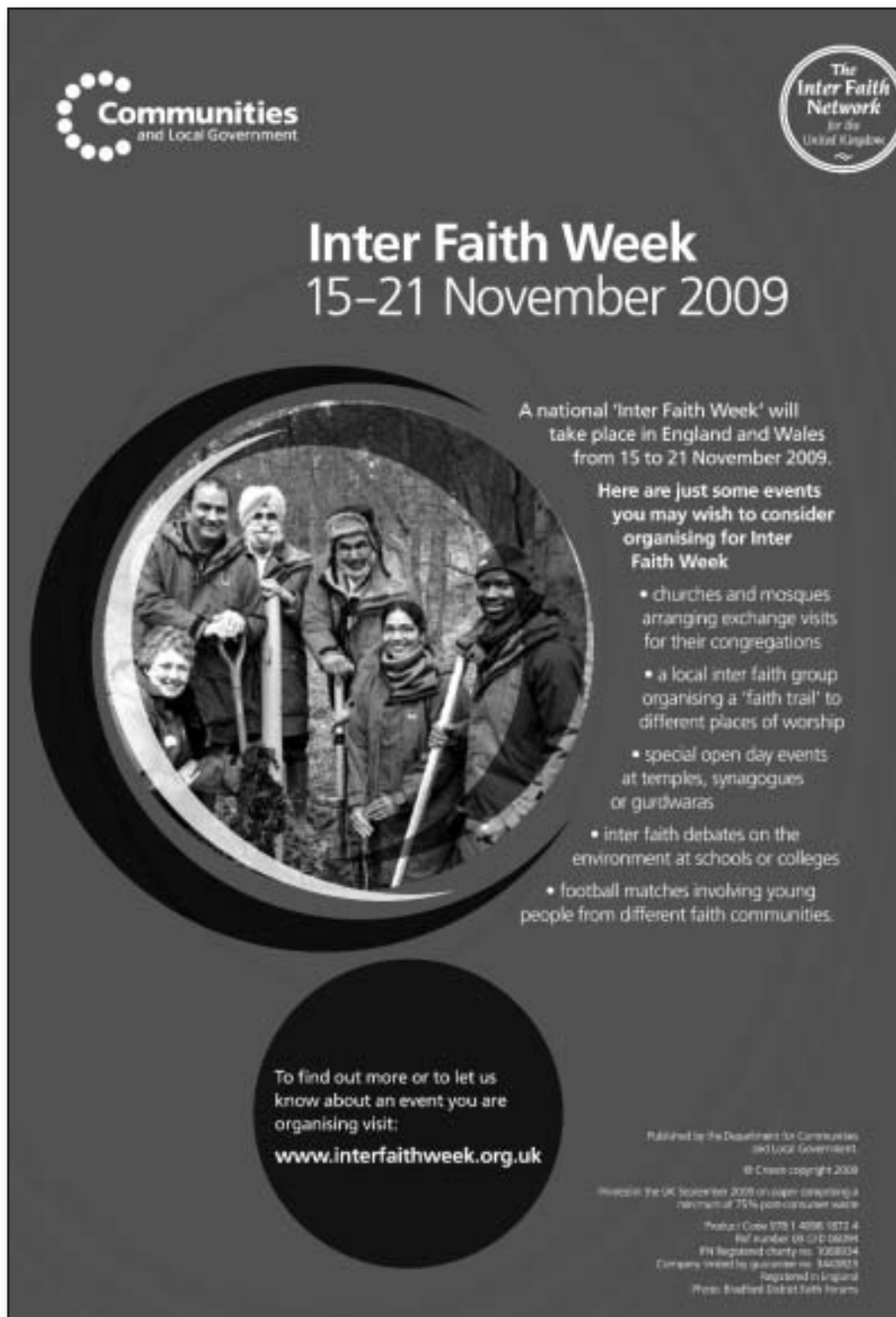
Organisations around the country are taking part in the week. Here are just a few of their ideas:

- churches and mosques arranging exchange visits for their congregations
- a local inter-faith group organising a 'faith trail' to different places of worship
- football matches involving young people from different faith communities
- special open day events at temples, synagogues or gurdwaras
- inter-faith debates on the environment at schools or colleges
- an exhibition about faith and inter-faith activity in the local area
- a dialogue on faith, belief and values in public life

You'll find more ideas at:  
[www.interfaithweek.org.uk](http://www.interfaithweek.org.uk)



# INTER FAITH WEEK POSTER



The poster features a dark background with white text and graphics. At the top left is the logo for 'Communities and Local Government', consisting of a circle of white dots. At the top right is the logo for 'The Inter Faith Network for the United Kingdom', which is a circular emblem with a crescent moon and star. The main title 'Inter Faith Week' is in a large, bold, sans-serif font, with the dates '15-21 November 2009' below it. A large circular photograph in the center shows a group of six people of diverse backgrounds, some holding tools like shovels and rakes, standing outdoors. To the right of this photo is a text block containing an introductory paragraph, a sub-heading, and a bulleted list of event types. At the bottom left, a dark circular area contains contact information. At the bottom right, there is fine print including publication details, copyright, and charity registration information.

**Communities**  
and Local Government

**The Inter Faith Network**  
for the  
United Kingdom

## Inter Faith Week

15-21 November 2009

A national 'Inter Faith Week' will take place in England and Wales from 15 to 21 November 2009.

Here are just some events you may wish to consider organising for Inter Faith Week

- churches and mosques arranging exchange visits for their congregations
- a local inter faith group organising a "faith trail" to different places of worship
- special open day events at temples, synagogues or gurdwaras
- inter faith debates on the environment at schools or colleges
- football matches involving young people from different faith communities.

To find out more or to let us know about an event you are organising visit:  
[www.interfaithweek.org.uk](http://www.interfaithweek.org.uk)

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Place: Bradford, District: Faith Forum

## ANNEX E

### Schools and Inter Faith Week

From 15-21 November this year a national Inter Faith Week will be taking place in England and in Wales. Information about the Week is available at [www.interfaithweek.org.uk](http://www.interfaithweek.org.uk). Its aims are to:

- strengthen good inter faith relations at all levels;
- encourage local faith groups and communities to reach out to each other and build stronger bonds of understanding and cooperation;
- increase awareness of the different and distinct faith communities in the UK, with a particular focus on the contribution which their members make to their neighbourhoods and to wider society;
- gain positive profile for inter faith initiatives, locally, regionally and nationally, as well as for the overall work of building good inter faith relations;
- increase understanding between people of religious and non-religious beliefs;
- encourage the development of new partnerships within local communities and by faith communities with statutory and third sector partners.

The Week is being facilitated by the Inter Faith Network for the UK working with its member bodies, in partnership with the Department for Communities and Local Government, in consultation with the Department for Children, Schools and Families, the Local Government Association and the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

This is not a Week with a programme of centrally organised or officially 'badged' events. It is a week in which faith groups and their places of worship, inter faith bodies,

schools and institutions of further and higher education, local authorities and other public agencies, as well as others, are encouraged to hold their own events and to highlight the importance of inter faith understanding and cooperation and greater awareness about the faith communities and their engagement in building community.

Pupils, teachers and staff in schools around England will be playing a big part in the Week through classroom activities and whole school activities. On the Inter Faith Week website there are some resources for schools specially created for the Week. But each school participating will be choosing its own way to mark this exciting Week. If you carry out an activity for the Week the Cohesion Unit of DCSF would be pleased to hear about it. You can email [community.cohesion@dcsf.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:community.cohesion@dcsf.gsi.gov.uk)

DCSF, CLG and the Inter Faith Network are keen that teachers should be involved in Inter Faith Week and wish to encourage teachers in all phases of education to participate. There is support available either locally through your RE Adviser, Lead/AST RE teachers or local SACRE.

It is important that the distinctiveness of the different faiths is respected during the Week and the educational aims of any activity are considered. In the light of this, it is important when using visitors in the classroom to check issues relating to school policy and that the visitor understands the aims of RE and does not proselytise. There is a leaflet which can be downloaded free from <http://shop.retoday.org.uk/re-downloads> called 'Religious Believers Visiting Schools', which provides useful information about speaking with religious believers in a school context.

Teachers should note that Inter Faith Week

2009 overlaps with Islam Awareness Week The organisers of the two weeks have been involved in careful consultation, the respective aims being complementary.

This note has been produced to accompany material prepared by NATRE and NASACRE on activities for schools in England, which is available to download separately on the Inter Faith Week website.

In Wales, the Inter Faith Council for Wales in conjunction with the Welsh Assembly Government is leading on the Week:  
post@cytun.org.uk

post@cytun.org.ukst@cytun.org.uk

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# Material created by the National Association of Teachers of Religious Education (NATRE) with the support of the Department for Children Schools and Families

## Inter Faith Week Activities for Religious Education – Primary

### A) Whole School Activities

Activity 1: The Seeds of Prejudice Assembly  
Activity 2: Hall Stations  
Activity 3: Schools Linking Network  
Activity 4: A Spirited Arts Exhibition  
Activity 5: Multi Faith Conference

### B) Classroom Activities

Activity 6: Email a believer  
Activity 7: Finding answers to ‘big questions’  
Activity 8: Shared values of service  
Activity 9: Shared values – three world faiths’ teaching on giving and greed KS1  
Activity 10: Digital story telling

## A) Whole School activities

The activities in this section are listed broadly in order of easiest to most time consuming to plan and deliver. This will depend on the school’s existing links with the local community. The first two are largely assembly activities. The last three are designed to involve a great number of the school community and in the case of the fourth and fifth activity will require outside input either to view the exhibition (see number four) or as workshop leaders (activity five).

## Activity 1: The Seeds of Prejudice Assembly

### Rationale:

Assemblies can provide a safe space in which to encourage pupils to reflect on their own attitudes and the impact they can have on other people. The focus here is on how we judge other people. The activity is suitable for 8 – 11s.

### Activity:

**You will need:** Various items of designer wear or current clothes trends (e.g. tracksuit and hoodies)

- **Talk about** the kind of clothes pupils like to wear. Volunteers may model these for you. Discuss why they want to wear such clothes. Is the wearing of such clothes important to them or to their identity? Why? How do they feel when they wear these clothes? Is there a change in the way they feel when they wear them? How does this affect them? Does it affect others? Do the pupils feel if they are treated differently when they wear these clothes?
- **Tell the Muslim folk tale** of Nasruddin and the banquet (see link below).
- **Ask children to suggest** why the people at the banquet treated Nasruddin in such a way.
- **Talk about** how many are judged because of what they are wearing. How would they feel if they were the only one in their group who didn’t wear a hoody or the latest trainers? Would the rest of their group accept it, mock them or even exclude them from the group? How would they feel?

- **Suggest** that wearing designer gear or cheap clothes from the local supermarket does not make someone better or worse than someone else. Wearing hoodies does not make every hoody-wearer a thug.
- **Point out** how people's perceptions can get skewed and before you know it a little seed of dislike is planted. In fact two are planted: those with the hoodies or latest gear will start to dislike those who don't have it. Those who don't have it will start to dislike everyone who does have it because of the way they have been treated. Very soon this can grow into full blown prejudice – intense dislike of all who wear hoodies or intense dislike for all who don't.
- **Explain** how the clothes are just a way of identifying certain groups of people. But the same applies to all groups of people. It could be the way someone talks, the colour of their skin, their religion or the estate they live on. These are all like Nasruddin's clothes – judgments can be made without foundation and prejudice thrives.
- **Reflection:** Think about the effect you have on people whom you have judged because of the way they dress or what they look like. Think of how you would be affected if others judged you in the same way.

**Resources:**

- The story of Nasruddin and the banquet [www.nasruddin.org/pages/stories/banquet1soup.html](http://www.nasruddin.org/pages/stories/banquet1soup.html)

**Time frame:** 15 – 20 minutes

**Possible links with other subjects:** PSHE, Citizenship, Assembly

## Activity 2: Hall Stations

**Rationale:**

The whole school activity below is designed to be used during an event such as Inter Faith Week and to provide an opportunity for children to express their ideas, appreciate those of other members of the school community and reflect on their contribution to developing good relations with all in their community.

**Activity:**

Set up six 'stations' around the assembly hall. A 'station' might be a table and/or a space on the wall; it needs to provide a display space for a statement or other stimulus (see below for examples) and a place for pupils to write their responses (e.g. large sheets of paper, labels, or a book).

Statements/stimuli for the stations might include:

- What is important to me is ..... (focus: the need to recognise self as being important before they can appreciate others)
- What Inter Faith Week means to me is ..... (focus: opportunity for pupils to express their understanding)
- Display board showing a variety of people, religious and non-religious, various cultures and races, who make up the local community. Photographs are numbered and pupils have a worksheet on which to identify which community / faith / race they think the people belong to. (focus: opportunity to break down stereotypes)
- A barrier to good inter faith relations is .....
- A way to overcome a barrier to good inter faith relations is ....
- A prayer tree / tree of hope. Luggage labels

are available for pupils to write their thoughts, hopes or prayers and tie to the tree.

Throughout the week each class takes a turn to visit the hall. In groups, pupils visit each station. They think and talk about the prompts. Group or individual comments can be posted or written up at the stations, although every individual should be given the opportunity to say 'what is important to me' and to put a label on the tree. Alternatively, most of the work can be done in the classroom before the class visits the hall.

At the end of the week the school can draw on comments made at the stations for a final assembly.

**Resources:**

- Inter Faith Network for the UK – 'Connect: Different Faiths, Shared Values' – [www.interfaith.org.uk/publications/connect-web.pdf](http://www.interfaith.org.uk/publications/connect-web.pdf)
- [www.interfaith.org.uk](http://www.interfaith.org.uk)
- 'Listening to children talking', NATRE's online interactive database is a useful resource for ideas about what other children identified as their vision of a perfect world (question 9 – primary section).
- [www.natre.org.uk/db](http://www.natre.org.uk/db)

**Time frame:** Over one week culminating and in a final assembly.

**Possible links with other subjects:**

Citizenship; PSHE; Assembly

## Activity 3: Schools Linking Network

**Rationale:** This work aims to strengthen good inter faith relations at all levels in our increasingly diverse society. It also aims to encourage local faith groups and communities to reach out to each other and build stronger bonds of understanding and cooperation.

**Activity:** The Schools Linking Network provides support on how schools can link with other schools to contribute to community cohesion and support the exploration of issues of identity and diversity.

The Schools Linking Network can provide INSET to staff on setting up a link with a school with a different religious profile to your own school. The organisation can provide support in finding a suitable link. The website has a number of case studies relating to primary schools involved in the project. These are 'Hothfield and Barkerend Primary Schools,' 'In Your Shoes,' and 'Scholemoor Case Study' to help you get started with ideas. The first example is of a predominately Muslim school linking with a predominately white rural school. They focused on sharing their environment and life styles and responding through art and poetry. The second school example is using a city wide project with year7 pupils who produced a film about their own identities and how they see each other. The third example shows two primary schools who worked together on a history project considering the Second World War. This project could be developed by thinking about other curriculum areas, perhaps taking a unit from the local Agreed Syllabus and working across the two schools in RE.

Other opportunities are when schools link in this way digital 'pen pals' can be established or pupil or staff exchanges can take place. This will enable the children to learn from other children about their lives and build opportunities for understanding of others. If pupil exchanges take place work could focus

on how the children in both schools practise their faith and how they can communicate together with respect for differences.

**Resources:**

[www.schoolslinkingnetwork.org.uk](http://www.schoolslinkingnetwork.org.uk)

**Time frame:** on-going communication and exchange between schools

**Possible links with other subjects:**

Citizenship, ICT,

## Activity 4: A Spirited Arts Exhibition

**Rationale:**

The National Association of Teachers of RE (NATRE) holds an annual Spirited Arts competition which encourages young people to respond to one of four or five given themes in creative ways. The themes offered each year provide a wealth of opportunity to connect themes found in religion with those of inter faith and inter-cultural activity.

Preparing an entry provides opportunities for pupils to deepen their understanding of the religion(s) or belief(s) they are representing, show respect for those religions and beliefs, and reflect and express something of their own beliefs and questions on the chosen theme.

NATRE's online Web gallery provides plenty of stimulus material from previous years' entries, as well as a record of the themes which have been offered and some suggestions for working with them. Pupils' own comments, published alongside their art work, give an insight into their own rationale for their art work. The activities below are based on two of the early competition themes – 'Peace' and 'RE logo'.

The activity lends itself well to being done by a whole year group, or by the whole school. There is also potential for displaying children's art work around the school, perhaps as part of a whole school event to which parents and people from the wider community are invited.

**Activity:**

To encourage pupils to explore and think about what respect between religions means, talk with pupils about ways in which RE is a co-operation between different religions and beliefs, alert to what is significant in each religion or belief, but also drawing attention to how they share some ideas and values. Ask pupils to draw a symbol or logo that reflects

the different faiths in the area in a respectful but creative way, and that shows what can be fun in RE. The logo might be for an agreed syllabus cover, for example. Spend some time looking at some symbols for different religions, considering colour and shape. In designing their own logo encourage them to show their vision of all the religions, and avoid copying out the symbols they have looked at. Expect them to write a paragraph explaining what is good about their logo, and how it shows the spirituality of RE and of themselves.

To encourage pupils to think about peace, a central theme to RE, talk with them about the meanings of peace. Ask questions like: What does it mean to have peace through the storm? Where is peace to be found? Does God bring peace? How can anyone be peaceful when the world is so troubled? Most will have lots to say on questions such as these. Ask them to make a symbol for peace to use on a United Nations greetings card or design a logo for a divided city that is trying to work to achieve harmony. Or ask them to design a symbol for the heart. Encourage simple use of colour, considering alternatives and looking at the ideas of others (in the class and on the Spirited Arts website) will stimulate better work.

#### **Resources:**

- Spirited Arts Web Gallery  
[www.natre.org.uk/spiritedarts](http://www.natre.org.uk/spiritedarts)
- 'Inspiring Visual RE: using and making art in primary RE', Ed Joyce Mackley, ISBN 978-1-905893-24-9, is a publication which aims to bring together RE and Art. It contains lots of tried and tested curriculum activities, drawing on a selection of full colour images contained in an accompanying colour supplement.  
<http://shop.retoday.org.uk>

**Time frame:** one hour

**Possible links with other subjects:** Art; Citizenship;

## Activity 5: Multi Faith Conference

### **Rationale:**

A multi faith conference over two days is an exciting and stimulating way of working with members of a variety of local faith communities to support good RE but also to encourage local faith groups and communities to work together, not just in organising and delivering the event, but beyond it, and in a variety of contexts.

### **Activity:**

The background, activities and outcomes of a two-day multi faith conference for 160 primary age pupils from 16 schools are presented in an article in magazine, and available for download from NATRE's website (see link below). Further details are found on Herefordshire Local Authority's website (see link below). These two resources give a rich insight to what happened, what was achieved and what the pupils and teachers thought of the conference. Needless to say, this event has been repeated, with equal success, with another cohort of children.

### **A few pointers in addition might include:**

- Be clear about the aims of the event, linking it in particular to the requirements of your RE syllabus. This will include identifying the religions you will include in the day. The Herefordshire event included Hinduism, Sikhism, Judaism and Islam.
- Draw upon the faith communities local to the school – your SACRE will be an important resource and potentially a source of funding, and parents of some of your pupils will want to help too
- Give yourself plenty of time to organise the event – choose a project leader who has some experience of organising events with large numbers of children and ensure your workshop leaders are experienced and effective in working with children.



- Identify a venue large enough to take the numbers involved and make early contact with the other schools you hope will support and attend the event

- Don't forget to ask children and adults involved for their feedback – and make sure that you report widely on the success of the conference! Parents, SACRE, Local Authority, the press.

**Resources:**

- Herefordshire Multi faith Conference  
[www.hereford-edu.org.uk/faith/default.asp?PG\\_ID=1&GRP\\_ID=1](http://www.hereford-edu.org.uk/faith/default.asp?PG_ID=1&GRP_ID=1)
- RE Today article – report on Herefordshire Multi faith conference  
[www.natre.org.uk/docstore/multifaith\\_08.pdf](http://www.natre.org.uk/docstore/multifaith_08.pdf)
- The RE Teacher's Media Toolkit – sound advice on involving the media in reporting your event  
<http://www.religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk/images/stories/pdf/mediatoolkit.pdf>

**Time frame:** two days for activity; time to organise speakers and rooms in advance (8 weeks)

**Possible links with other subjects:**

Citizenship; Art; Drama; Dance; Music

<http://www.natre.org.uk/>

## B) Classroom RE

The first four activities require web based sources to facilitate a part of a lesson, one lesson or a couple of lessons. The fifth activity would need a visiting speaker to attend the lesson so would need prior organisation.

### Activity 6: Email a believer

**Rationale:**

Opportunities for children and young people to access authentic comment from a wide variety of religious and non religious perspectives on a range of issues of faith and belief is invaluable in terms of increasing their awareness of different and distinct faith communities in the UK, and further afield. Through communication technologies such as email and video conferencing this is easy to achieve. While inviting real people into the RE classroom will always be the ideal, where this is not possible or where greater diversity of opinion, experience or expertise is desirable, then activities such as the one described below provide a useful mechanism for dialogue between learner and faith groups and communities to the benefit of both.

**Activity:**

'People of Faith' is a website which provides a starting point for exploring the diversity of the world's main religions from the point of view of individuals from each religion. It includes details of some of the world's main religions together with a personal view of: what is believed; what it means to 'belong', and how a person's beliefs affect what they do and say.

The site provides a facility for pupils to email a member of one of the six main religions with a question. Alternatively, they can check through a long list of previous questions to see if the answer they are looking for has already been provided. Questions could focus on questions that relate to themes of Inter Faith Week – such as what each religion says about the treatment of other faiths and what each faith has contributed to society. This

provides an excellent opportunity for pupils to access authentic viewpoints from a community of faith, and to develop a deeper understanding of similarities and differences within and between traditions.

**Resources:**

People of faith <http://pof.reonline.org.uk>

- [www.humanism.org.uk](http://www.humanism.org.uk) (select 'education' then pupils). This gives information on Humanism. If questions are not answered in the FAQ section then you can email the British Humanist Association.

**Time frame:** Activity within one lesson.  
Activity will need revisiting once a reply has been received.

**Possible links with other subjects:**

Citizenship; Literacy

## Activity 7: Finding answers to 'big questions': What do faiths teach about God, the world and how to live together?

**Rationale:**

Where people have both the interest and the confidence to engage with others in discussion of 'big questions' in terms of their fundamental importance to the individual, their complexity and their sensitivity then bonds of friendship, co-operation and support can readily be built, and understanding grow between individuals and communities.

Big questions such as those about God, the world and how to live together play a significant part in any RE curriculum – everyone has a point of view to offer or a question to ask. With the right stimulus young people can become engaged with and respectfully questioning of the beliefs of others, and reflective and open about their own. They will note and be comfortable with similarities and differences, and feel comfortable in dialogue with others, whatever their beliefs and perspectives.

**Activity:**

Invite pupils to work in pairs to suggest some responses to the question 'What do faiths teach about God, the world and how to live together?' Record their ideas as a mind map, and then ask them to highlight those which they think have a specifically religious answer.

Introduce pupils to NATRE's 'Listening to Children Talking' database, explaining how to navigate it and conduct a search. To complete the activity pupils in pairs or small groups will need access to the internet.

Their task is to investigate how young people of their own age of a religion they are studying had responded to the issues such as 'What is God like?' 'Vision for a perfect world' and 'Freedom, truth, justice, love and

forgiveness'. Different groups could focus on different sections of responses. The pupils could be split into three groups with one group looking at each of the three sets of statements on the web site. They should notice fairly quickly that some words and ideas are repeated, and begin to identify patterns. Some might spot exceptions which can usefully be discussed – e.g. how can a person who calls themselves a Christian state that they don't believe in God? During the last five minutes ask them to select some key statements and record them e.g. using word processing software.

During class discussions of their findings add to the initial mind map all the words which pupils had found recurring along with any questions of their own. Provide them with an opportunity to submit their own responses to the database. The fact that the database is moderated and they can add their own thoughts encourages pupils to be respectful of the comments they are interpreting and reflective in terms of considering their own thoughts for inclusion.

Finally, ask pupils to form groups of four and share their findings and questions with each other. Give them the sentence starter "After looking at this question today I think [name of religion] believe .....". Following a short discussion each pupil completes the sentence for themselves. A second sentence could also be completed, "There are similarities between some of the faiths I have learnt about. The similarities I have found are...."

#### **Resources:**

- 'Listening to Children Talking', NATRE's online, interactive database of some 30,000 young people's responses to a range of religious and spiritual questions. The database can be searched by age, gender, topic and religious affiliation (including atheism, humanism and 'no belief'). Users can submit their own responses to the original questions and the database is fully moderated.

- [www.natre.org.uk/db](http://www.natre.org.uk/db)

**Time frame:** one hour

Possible links with other subjects: ICT; Citizenship

## Activity 8: Shared values of service

### Rationale:

This task links to Inter Faith Week by seeking to increase understanding between people of religious and non-religious beliefs and to encourage local faith groups and communities to reach out to each other and build stronger bonds of understanding and cooperation.

### Activity:

This activity could be introduced by reading 'Rainbow Crow' (see web link) or a chapter from 'Animals to the Rescue' by Avril Rowlands aimed at 6-9 year olds. Extracts from this story tell of how animals of different kinds help each other in difficult circumstances despite being different and behaving in different ways.

The Interfaith Youth Core, 'Scriptures on the Shared Value of Service' document can be used as a stimulus for class discussion about the values that are important in these faiths. These statements are not currently in 'pupil friendly' language. Following the discussion the children could write or act out a story in groups their own story showing how people can serve each other of different views/beliefs.

### Resources:

<http://www.ifyc.org> Select 'programmes', then select 'outreach education and training' program, then select 'tools and resources', finally select 'Scriptures on the Shared Value of Service'

<http://www.americanfolklore.net/folktales/nj> 7 – Rainbow Crow, Native America Folk tale or similar story such as a chapter from 'Animals to the Rescue' by Avril Rowlands

**Time frame:** one hour

Possible links with other subjects: Citizenship; PSHE; History; Geography (depending on story stimulus)

## Activity 9: Shared values – three world faiths' teaching on giving and greed. KS1

### Rationale:

The aim of this activity is to increase awareness of the different and distinct faith communities in the UK, with a particular focus on how their beliefs affect their behaviour and attitudes. It also aims to increase the understanding between people of religious and non-religious beliefs.

### Activity:

Three stories have been selected that demonstrate a common teaching across three of the principal world religions: Christianity, Buddhism and Sikhism. The stories encourage pupils to consider how wealth should be acquired and whether wealth is necessary for happiness now and in the future.

The story of the Golden Deer is about a deer that speaks. He rescues someone who then breaks a promise to him. The deer is kind and honest and is rewarded for this. The Golden Swan teaches about greed; it also raises questions about reincarnation and bereavement. The story of Guru Nanak and Duni Chand teaches about the rich helping the poor in this life having recognised that wealth cannot be taken to heaven.

The children could watch and listen to these stories. The children can answer these questions:

1. What do the people in each of the stories want to collect more of?
2. What did the religious teacher say? (The deer or swan represents the religious teacher in the Buddhist stories)
3. What is similar in the stories?
4. What might be learnt from the stories a) by a religious believer and b) by the children?

5. What might a person do differently after hearing the story?

This could be extended by the children writing, drawing, or performing using models, puppets or drama to tell their own version of the stories with a moral about greed.

**Resources:**

- [www.jatakkatha.com](http://www.jatakkatha.com) – The Golden Deer or The Golden Swan
- [www.cleo.net.uk](http://www.cleo.net.uk) (RE KS1 section) animated story of Guru Nanak and Duni Chand
- [www.thebricktestament.com](http://www.thebricktestament.com) select the Teaching of Jesus, then select wealth. It is visual with a small amount of written text.

**Time frame:** 1–2 lessons

Possible links with other subjects: Literacy, depending on how task is approached possible links are art, drama.

## Activity 10: Digital story telling

**Rationale:**

Religion is about believing, worshipping and valuing – about belonging to a faith community and living within the wider community. Helping children explore this wider concept of religion means engaging with believers and helping pupils to listen and talk to people of faith.

One way of helping pupils ‘encounter’ people from other faiths and beliefs is through listening to their ‘story’. This helps increase their awareness of the different and distinct faith communities in the UK, and the contribution they make to their neighbourhoods and also to wider society (one of the Week’s themes).

The activity described here shows how **digital story telling** can be an effective mechanism for pupils to explore, present and reflect on their encounter with people of a variety of faiths and beliefs.

**Activity:**

Any unit of work in RE is likely to present opportunities for inviting a member of a local faith community into school, or for pupils to visit them outside school. The RE learning objectives for the activity will therefore be clear and rooted in the syllabus being followed, and ideally shared with pupils. Learning how to use a digital video camera can be built in to work on ICT and provide a valuable cross-curricular link.

Pupils can be asked to identify what new things they want to find out about the religion they are studying, and to separate their ideas into topic areas e.g. family, heaven, prayer, God. Pupils then work in groups to develop a set of questions that could be used to interview their guest. They also choose their group’s interviewer and plan the responsibilities of each member of the group.

Groups interview their guest in turn and are then supported in editing the outcomes into a 'telling' of the story their guest tells them. Opportunities are then provided for pupils to demonstrate their learning by presenting their digital story to the class and taking part in a recorded hot seating activity to support assessment.

**Resources:**

- For information and examples of digital story telling see:  
[www.bbc.co.uk/tellinglives](http://www.bbc.co.uk/tellinglives)
- For a collection of interviews with young people from seven faiths see 'Exploring Religion Around Me', Ed. Joyce Mackley, RE Today Services, ISBN 978-1-904024-96-5. For a photocopiable example of one interview from the book – with Kian, a Bahá'í – see:  
[http://www.natre.org.uk/docstore/kian\\_bahai\\_pg32.pdf](http://www.natre.org.uk/docstore/kian_bahai_pg32.pdf)
- [www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/)

A visiting speaker from a faith community could be invited into a lesson.

**Time frame:** two to three hours, over several days

**Possible links with other subjects:** ICT; Citizenship;

## Inter Faith Week Activities for Religious Education – Secondary

Material created by the National Association of Teachers of Religious Education (NATRE) with the support of the Department for Children Schools and Families

### A) Whole School Activities

Activity 1: Assembly – inter faith cooperation as a catalyst for positive action

Activity 2: Visits to places of worship

Activity 3: ‘Encountering faiths’ – with the Three Faiths Forum

Activity 4: KS4 conference – Promoting Engaging Dialogue

Activity 5: Inter faith day

### B) Classroom Activities

Activity 6: How do beliefs influence views on faith and society?

Activity 7: How communities work together

Activity 8: Places of worship in the Classroom

Activity 9: What do young people say about beliefs? (year 9 or KS4)

Activity 10: How do beliefs influence responses to people in need?

### A) Whole School activities

The activities are listed broadly in order from those that are quick to organise through to those that take more time.

### Activity 1: Assembly – inter faith cooperation as a catalyst for positive action

#### Rationale:

The aim of this assembly is to reflect Inter Faith Week’s encouragement of faith groups and communities to reach out to each other and build stronger bonds of understanding and cooperation; to strengthen good inter faith relations at all levels; and to learn about people who have worked to build good inter faith relations.

#### Activity:

Use the materials from the website below to encourage pupils to consider how people have been inspired by others from different faiths to make a difference in their locality. The pupils could be given a brief introduction to the five individuals and the non-violent action that has marked their lives. Individual pupils could read pertinent quotes from the website to illustrate these men’s beliefs and values. In talking about the lives of these five men the commonality between the faiths in respect to non-violent, social action and how they encouraged people of different faiths to work together can be highlighted.

The five people all believed that all people are created in God’s image or that people should work together. Rev Dr Martin Luther King Jr. (Baptist minister) worked with Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel (Orthodox Rabbi) who believed in the principle of ‘*Tikkun Olam*,’ or healing the world. Another person known of by King was Thich Nhat Hanh, a Buddhist who believed in the principles of compassion and nonviolence and that people should work together to heal the world. Mahatma Gandhi was a Hindu who promoted the concept of satyagraha, or ‘love force’. He believed that all religions were equal and the core of all religion was love and truth. Gandhi greatly influenced the work of King. Fifthly, Badshah Khan, a Muslim who was also influenced by Gandhi and who believed in non-violence.

Where the opportunity exists for follow up work students might like to look at other examples of people of different religious backgrounds who have worked with others to heal the world and spread compassion. Two examples of such people are Aung San Suu Kyi and Helen Prejean.

In a time for reflection at the end of the assembly ask the pupils to consider how they can as individuals or collectively as a form group, year group or school make a difference to a situation of injustice locally.

**Resources:**

- <http://www.ifyc.org> select 'programmes', then select 'outreach education and training' program, then select 'tools and resources', finally select 'Read the Faith Heroes Extended Bios' (under 'A different kind of conversation curriculum').

**Time frame:** Assembly

**Possible links with other subjects:** Citizenship, History links.

## Activity 2: Visits to places of worship

**Rationale:**

One of the aims of Inter Faith Week is to encourage 'open doors' of places of worship to other members of the community. Organising a visit to a place of worship encourages the faith community to reach out and enables pupils to experience what is distinct about different faith communities.

**Activity:**

If you go to the Engaging Places website and click on 'Lat Blaylock's, RE Adviser, 6 activities to inspire learners in RE' section then you can uncover suggestions to help your visit as a class, year group or school be an example of excellent RE. Rather than naming the features of the place of worship the focus should be on questions about how beliefs are expressed in practice, perhaps considering passages from the religion's sacred writings, how, if and when faiths share beliefs, practices and even buildings.

As an activity linked to such a visit, pupils could imagine themselves as welcoming others to their place of worship (possibly hypothetically). How would they explain the importance of the building to others? What guidelines, if any, might be needed to help visitors dress and behave appropriately? An extension activity could be to plan a prayer space for use by people of different faiths, such as a multi-faith quiet room in a new shopping centre or airport. How could the space be used? How would the space be looked after? What challenges may there be in accommodating the needs of different groups? (Consider images and art as a starting point) How may these problems be overcome?

Another activity which could be linked to a visit could be learning about how the people of the faith community being visited contribute to the local community and work to build relationships with others.



If you look at the REonline website and click on places of worship there are a number of suggested activities, planning and assessment information available.

When travelling to the place(s) to be visited pupils could look out for evidence of religious and cultural diversity in the area and give evidence for their conclusion. They might think about some of the reasons for the diversity (or lack of it). If pupils are able to speak to a member of the faith community at the venue they could discuss the benefits and difficulties faced in living in that particular area. Resulting work could focus on how the faith communities make an impact on the local communities they are part of.

**Resources:**

- <http://www.engagingplaces.org.uk/home>
- [http://pow.reonline.org.uk/;](http://pow.reonline.org.uk/)
- [www.natre.org](http://www.natre.org) Religious Believer leaflet

**Time frame:** this will depend on journey time, the number of places of worship visited and the number of pupils involved.

**Possible links with other subjects:**  
Citizenship, History and Geography links.

## Activity 3: ‘Encountering Faiths’ – with the Three Faiths Forum

**Rationale:** The aims of this activity are to encourage local faith groups and communities to reach out to each other and build stronger bonds of understanding and cooperation and to increase awareness of the different and distinct faith communities in the UK, with a particular focus on the contribution their members make to their neighbourhoods and to wider society.

**Activity:** The Three Faiths Forum runs workshops for students in schools. These focus the three Abrahamic faiths of Christianity, Judaism and Islam, although the workshops can draw on issues of diversity, dialogue and identity in faiths generally. These enable students to consider the ethical, practical and civic implications of living in a multi-faith society. Pupils are given the opportunity to reflect on their own beliefs and roles within the communities, and develop a respect for difference wherever it may occur. This programme promotes community cohesion and the Every Child Matters agenda in that pupils are encouraged to deal with difference and conflict in a constructive way.

The ‘Encountering Faiths’ programme focuses on how faiths can work together in dialogue and how understanding breeds friendship. The themes of respect and understanding underpin the discussion and dialogue that takes place during the day. Other bespoke programmes can be organised if you contact the Three Faiths Forum. There are also tools to help deal with controversial issues in the classroom on the website. To book either of these events contact Three Faiths Forum.

**Resources:**

<http://www.threefaithsforum.org.uk/Conflict.htm>; <http://www.3ff.org.uk/schools.htm>

**Time frame:** 1 day activity

**Possible links with other subjects:**  
Citizenship links

## Activity 4: KS4 conference – Promoting Engaging Dialogue

### Rationale:

The activity aims to increase the awareness of the different and distinct faith communities in the UK, with a particular focus on the contribution which members make to their neighbourhoods and to wider society. In addition it aims to increase understanding between people of religious and non-religious beliefs

### Activity:

To introduce the day pupils could watch the Cumbria and Lancashire KS4 Burnley conference clip. This shows how visitors can be used with a year group or key stage to promote engaging dialogue. The activity on the video is an example of KS4 students meeting a Christian, Muslim, Atheist and Agnostic and asks questions about their beliefs. The questions asked in the example included questions on ‘What are the similarities and differences between the beliefs represented and how do they work to achieve social cohesion?’ and ‘How does faith/belief influence your sense of social justice?’

In response to the video clip students could:

- a) Choose one response shown in video. In pairs, ask them to identify the evidence and arguments they would use to challenge the point of view expressed.
- b) Plan a new question for each of the four participants that develops the aims of Inter Faith Week.

For example, the students could consider how the individuals or faith groups work to build a sense of community. How do they think their questions would be answered? What would their response be to the question?

Teachers could select faith representatives from any of the faith traditions, whether

Abrahamic (Christianity, Islam, Judaism) or ‘Dharmic’/of Indian faith traditions (Hindus, Buddhist, Jains, Zoroastrians, Sikhs) to be the visitors on a panel held at the school. Students could ask their own pre-prepared questions of the visitors, questions that are focused on the aims of Inter Faith Week. In the afternoon students could work together to produce their own video demonstrating the aims of the local agreed syllabus and Inter Faith Week and the learning from the morning’s question panels. This could be shared with other schools and faith communities in the area to explore further the ideas of people of religious and non-religious world views working together for the benefit of the local community.

This type of event develops many skills including evaluation, listening skills, questioning and reflection. It builds bridges between faith communities and promotes understanding of commonality between faiths and beliefs systems. This example uses two Abrahamic Faiths and two non-religious views as the basis for the discussions.

### Resources:

- Local faith communities
- Your local SACRE
- [www.humanism.org.uk](http://www.humanism.org.uk) gives information about how to contact a Humanist speaker.
- [http://www.cleo.net.uk/resources/displayframe.php?src=525/consultants\\_resources%2Freligiouseduc%2Fdebate%2Fdebate.html](http://www.cleo.net.uk/resources/displayframe.php?src=525/consultants_resources%2Freligiouseduc%2Fdebate%2Fdebate.html)

**Time frame:** 1 day activity

### Possible links with other subjects:

Citizenship , ICT and PSHE links.

## Activity 5: Inter faith day

### Rationale:

The activity is designed to increase awareness of the different and distinct faith communities in the UK, with a particular focus on the contribution which their members make to their neighbourhoods and to wider society.

### Activity:

Before the event prepare the students by using a traffic light system (red means not committed to, amber means having some commitment to, green means very committed to) and selection of statements relating to people's commitments, the reasons for those views and to think carefully about the commitments of religious people. Carry out a reflection activity with the pupils before the day itself so they can have some experience of this type of learning and have started to develop the skills needed to participate in some of the activities on the day.

The teacher needs to organise speakers from four faiths/non-religious world views so the students can learn about these by getting involved in creative workshops including music, art, dance, story-telling and role-plays.

The example on the video (it is a Primary video but gives an idea of the day) shows children being introduced to Hinduism through Rangoli pattern making and exploring daily worship at the home shrine and the beliefs and values of Sikhism were explored through the use of authentic artefacts and spiritual music. To learn about Judaism the children had the opportunity to participate in dancing, singing, dreidle games and tasting traditional challah bread used on Shabbat in the Jewish home as well as being shown Jewish artefacts and participating in a role-play. They explored Islam through Arabic Calligraphy, the prayer sequence, meditation and a presentation. Whilst the example on the video is of the four faiths mentioned teachers organising such an event could include any

faith that is represented locally including Bahá'í faith, Jainism and Zoroastrianism.

During the day the pupils would benefit from having the opportunity to ask the members of the faith communities questions about their life, practice of their faith including how their communities work for inter faith dialogue and areas of commonality between their faiths. This should be built into the workshops with the speakers being prepared to share and have activities to illustrate how their faith community works together with others. If there is a person of non religious beliefs who is one of the speakers, similar questions can be put to them although the language of a 'community' may not be relevant. The building of bridges across communities and the aims of Inter Faith Week could also be a focus of a question panel activity, held as the last workshop/plenary to the day.

The outcome of the day could be audio, visual or artistic responses – possibly using digital media – demonstrating the experience of learning from faiths and faiths in dialogue and collaboration. These could be used as a school competition and an exhibition put on that members of the council, local faith communities, parents and governors could visit.

### Resources:

- [www.hereford-edu.org.uk/faith](http://www.hereford-edu.org.uk/faith) an article about Multifaith events;
- [www.natre.org.uk](http://www.natre.org.uk) click on films and view Primary video. This has clips from a multi faith event for primary schools and will give a feel for the day.

**Time frame:** 1 day and one afternoon or 2 lessons

**Possible links with other subjects:** Citizenship, ICT, Art, music links.

## B) Classroom RE

The activities on the following pages use web based materials entirely and require little preparation. The first three can be taught in one lesson and the last two activities could take two lessons.

### Activity 6: How do beliefs influence views on faith and society?

#### **Rationale:**

This work aims to build good inter faith relations by increasing the understanding between people of religious and non-religious beliefs. Also it aims to strengthen good inter faith relations at all levels in our increasingly diverse society.

#### **Activity:**

There are four belief perspectives illustrated in the video clip; Christian, Muslim, Atheist and Agnostic. People representing these views respond to certain questions. The three questions identified below are the ones that relate best to the aims of Inter Faith Week.

1. What are your similarities and differences and how can we achieve social cohesion?
2. What does living life to the full mean to you?
3. How do your beliefs affect your attitude to the environment?

Pupils are to watch the video clip and consider how people holding these beliefs could find areas of similarity to help them to work together. What possible issues may result from these four individuals trying to work together? What would you suggest as solutions to these differences or the compromises that could be reached?

#### **Resources:**

- [www.cleo.net.uk](http://www.cleo.net.uk) select KS3/KS4 RE. Use clip called 'Christian, an Atheist, a Muslim and an Agnostic answer questions on faith and society.'

**Time frame:** 1 lesson

#### **Possible links with other subjects:**

Citizenship link

## Activity 7: How communities work together

### Rationale:

This activity supports Inter Faith Week strengthening good inter faith relations in our increasingly diverse society; encouraging local faith groups and communities to reach out to each other and building stronger bonds of understanding and cooperation and seeking to achieve positive profile for inter faith initiatives.

### Activity:

The website contains three short clips that illustrate Christians, Muslims and Jews working together. One clip shows 'Christians and Muslims building links in Indonesia' during Ramadan (1.47 minutes, clip 6545), another shows an 'inter faith group visiting Jerusalem' (5.53 minutes, clip 6559) and a third shows 'three faiths look at Jerusalem' (2.19 minutes, clip 6657). A fourth clip on 'how do faiths work together?' could also be used.

Pupils could discuss these questions:

1. Can inter faith dialogue bring enough insight so people of different beliefs can understand each other?
2. In what ways can inter faith dialogue bring solutions to the issues faced by the groups in the clips? Are solutions always possible? Give reasons for your answer.
3. What do some see as the root of inter faith dialogue?
4. What elements are important in considering successful inter faith dialogue?

To extend this further students could consider how inter faith dialogue could be promoted in their own local area or school. Perhaps a visiting speaker from a local inter faith group could be approached to talk about inter faith dialogue in the locality (see Inter Faith

Network web site and the regional lists).

### Resources:

- [www.bbc.co.uk/learningzone/clips](http://www.bbc.co.uk/learningzone/clips) (select secondary, Religious Education, topic Beliefs in Action in the World (6559); topic ethics and relationships (6545), topic Expressing spirituality (6657).
- <http://www.interfaith.org.uk/local/directory.htm>
- <http://www.peacemakers.tv/polemic.html> – how do faiths work together?

**Time frame:** 1 lesson

### Possible links with other subjects:

Citizenship, History, media studies links

## Activity 8: Places of worship in the Classroom

**Rationale:** This activity supports Inter Faith Week in developing an increased awareness of the different and distinct faith communities in the UK. It would also help pupils to see similarities and differences of the places of worship and could lead to the development of local faith community links.

**Activity:** Video tours of places can be watched on the REonline website. The places of worship featured are representative of the six principal religions in this country. However, the videos don't present the variety within these faiths. Students could watch these (or a selection of these tours of places of worship) and consider the following questions:

1. How are worship practices similar between different faiths? (consider: offerings, images, practices, postures and clothing).
2. What points of commonality can be seen and heard in the videos?
3. What is one universal symbol that connects many of the faith practices seen in the clips?

Following on from this activity, the school could develop links with local faith communities and seek to build long term relationships with visitors from faith communities in the classroom talking more about their place of worship and experience of inter faith work and how they practise their faith in today's world.

### Resources:

- [www.reonline.org.uk](http://www.reonline.org.uk) click other links 'places of worship' and use video clips of places of worship

**Time frame:** 1 lesson

### Possible links with other subjects:

Citizenship links

## Activity 9: What do young people say about beliefs? (year 9 or KS4)

**Rationale:** This task aims to build good inter faith relations and increase understanding between people of religious and non-religious beliefs. This can be achieved through an increased knowledge of beliefs and understanding of shared values.

**Activity:** The True Tube clip 'My religion is better than yours' could be used as a starter activity. The students in the video are asked to decide which faith a particular passage of scripture comes from. The students in the class could make their own decision and hear the students' views on the film. Questions could be asked about why there is uncertainty about the source of the text, leading to ideas of beliefs, values and in some cases histories that are shared.

The People of Faith website includes video clips of young people from the following faiths, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Sikhism and Judaism expressing something about belief, belonging and 'being'. Having identified areas of commonality and difference from the videos the pupils could discuss the statement: 'All people share the same common values.' In a discussion group of no more than eight, students could take on the role of a representative from a different faith and some from non-religious stances for example, humanist, atheistic or agnostic views. They could argue for this statement drawing on knowledge from the video clips and other RE lessons. Further research on the faith perspectives the student is representing may be necessary depending on prior learning.

Students could email questions to a believer representing one of the six largest principle religions in this country (Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, Judaism and Buddhism,) on the People of Faith website. This could be used as an evaluative tool in considering the accuracy of their representations of the faith in the group discussion and may focus

particularly on finding out more about inter faith working in that faith.

**Resources:** [www.reonline.org.uk](http://www.reonline.org.uk);  
[www.peopleoffaith.org.uk](http://www.peopleoffaith.org.uk);  
<http://www.truetube.co.uk/media.php?do=detail&mediaid=700> 'My religion is better than yours.'

[www.humanism.org.uk](http://www.humanism.org.uk) select 'education,' then pupils. This gives information about Humanist views on values.

**Time frame:** 1 – 2 lessons

**Possible links with other subjects:**  
Citizenship links

## Activity 10: How do beliefs influence responses to people in need?

**Rationale:** This work aims to encourage pupils to see how local faith groups and communities can reach out to help each other and to increase awareness of the different and distinct faith communities in the UK, with a particular focus on the contribution which their members make to their neighbourhoods and to wider society.

**Activity:** The work and beliefs of three charities is illustrated in the video clip: Christian Aid, CAFOD, and Muslim Global Relief. There is also an example of work that is carried out by volunteers in Brazil. Pupils can discuss the answers to these questions.

1. How do faiths respond to issues of world poverty?
2. How are the responses similar or different?
3. What motivates people to take action to help those in poverty?
4. What responses do you make individually/collectively to issues of poverty and injustice?

To extend this work further pupils could research other charities' responses to poverty or find out from a local inter faith group how local issues of deprivation are being addressed by inter faith work. The ideas could then be developed by the pupils as a toolkit for inter faith charity work with feedback on the work being given by a representative of a local inter faith group.

**Resources:** [www.cleo.net.uk](http://www.cleo.net.uk) select KS3/KS4 RE. Use clip called 'Interviews with charity workers'.

<http://www.islamic-relief.org.uk/> ;  
<http://www.muslimglobalrelief.com/>;  
<http://www.muslimaid.org/>  
<http://www.cafod.org.uk>;

<http://www.hinduaid.org> ;  
[www.khalsaaid.org](http://www.khalsaaid.org);  
<http://povertyover.christianaid.org.uk/>

[www.humanism.org.uk](http://www.humanism.org.uk) select 'education' and then 'students'. There is an article about 'Humanists working for a better world' in the Humanism section.

'Religion, Justice and Equality' edited by Rosemary Rivett, ISBN 1-90424-71-8 is a publication which draws on The Act of Commitment developed as part of the Millennium celebrations. It contains thinking skills activities titled 'Development charities – the ways they change to world' using both religious and non-faith based charities as a starting point. This can be brought from <http://shop.retoday.org.uk>

**Time frame:** 2 lessons

**Possible links with other subjects:**

Citizenship, geography links

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# Material created for Inter Faith Week by NASACRE with the support of the Department for Children Schools and Families

**Inter Faith Week: Activities in the community to bring together young people from different faiths and schools**

**Aims of Inter Faith Week:**

- promoting good inter faith relations
- highlighting the contribution of faiths to building community
- increasing understanding between faiths and wider society

SACREs have the potential to be a great resource for schools and for the children and young people they serve. The following community based activities can be organised or supported by SACREs as a means of bringing children and young people from different faiths and schools together.

## 1. Exchange and Activity Days

**Rationale:** To facilitate inter faith exchanges amongst primary age children.

**Activity:** The SACRE could commission and support planning of a programme for primary schools in which children from up to four diverse schools engage in inter faith exchanges and activity days (e.g. art, music, sport, and computers). The work would be coordinated by a teacher or consultant on behalf of the SACRE drawing on community links and connections. Local places of worship and community venues could be considered as venues for the activity days and various media including a local newspaper could get involved in recording and sharing the children's experiences.

**Time frame:** Programme planning – September to November 2009 Programme

launch – Inter Faith Week or soon after.

## 2. Going to Secondary School – Faith and Transitions

**Rationale:** To bring pupils together to discuss faith and transition to secondary school.

**Activity:** The SACRE could commission and support an event “Going to Secondary School” for Year 6 pupils in four or five primary schools coming from many faith communities. The event led by teacher or community based youth worker would address issues of concern to the children and young people about faith and its practice in their new schools. As part of the event the pupils explore their experience of, and develop ideas about, what worship means to them, and how schools can help them experience this. SACRE members facilitate small group discussions during the event.

**Time frame:** Event planning – September to November.

Event date – Inter Faith Week

## 3. Sameness and Differences

**Rationale:** To facilitate exploration of ‘sameness’ and ‘difference’.

**Activity:** SACREs and a local Inter faith group could identify specific faith communities within their locality (for example, Greek Orthodox, Sufi Muslims, Jain, Rastafarian community), with whom pupils in Y6 and Y7 from a cross-section of schools within the local authority area explore the statement ‘we are all the same; we’re all different’ through dance, artefacts, music, and texts. This activity led by teachers and supported by relevant

SACRE members would enable the pupils to share reflections on 'our commonality and individuality'. The schools from which the pupils have been drawn share these reflections more widely at a conference convened by the local SACRE and inter faith group.

**Time frame:** Planning of the exploration session – September to November. Delivery of the session – Inter Faith Week.  
SACRE conference – Late spring 2010

## 4. Global Discussions

**Rationale:** To explore specific questions and engender discussion amongst pupils from a range of faith backgrounds.

**Activity:** SACREs and local inter faith groups could sponsor and support discussions using the 'World Cafe' model as a means of exploring specific questions and to engender facilitated, but potentially rich discussion. SACRE members and teachers could facilitate the discussions which would be hosted in community based venues.

Questions that have been tried successfully include:

- Is there a purpose to life?
- What makes me who I am?
- What does it mean to be human?
- What is truth?
- Is violence ever justified?
- Why is there evil and suffering?
- Is religion out of date?
- Which is more important: the question or the answer?

The 'World Cafe' model is explained in detail below.

**Time frame:** Planning of 'World Cafe' – September to November  
Delivery – Inter Faith Week

## 5. Faith Trails

**Rationale:** To introduce children and young people to a range of beliefs as experienced by other children and young people.

**Activity:** SACREs and local inter faith groups could sponsor a faith trail focussing on striking local faith buildings (perhaps a mosque, Sikh gurdwara, Anglican church, Hindu temple). Arrangements are made for groups of KS2/3 pupils of mixed faith backgrounds to undertake the faith trail, visiting the buildings and making contact with the faith community members. At each venue a young person of the faith background of the particular building shares with the group her or his faith experience followed by small group discussions exploring similarities and differences with their own experiences or those of other young people who previously shared at other venues.

**Time frame:** Set up the faith trail – September to November  
Visits of children and young people – Inter Faith Week

## 6. Setting out your Stall

**Rationale:** To bring together contributions from pupils from a range of backgrounds under a common inter faith theme.

**Activity:** The SACRE and a local inter faith group could jointly sponsor a local inter faith event to which secondary age pupils could be asked to contribute. The event, which would have stalls in a high profile public space, would provide a platform on which Y10 and Y11 pupils from local secondary schools could present a series of sketches and songs relating to a common theme. Selecting an appropriate theme (such as child poverty, HMD, the environment, anniversary of 7th July atrocities) would be essential as a means of drawing together communities to share in a worthwhile inter faith effort). The young people would work on the theme in advance with their RE teacher. These contributions, including sketches, dramatic presentations,

recitations and raps from the perspectives of different faiths, could be presented alongside presentations from community groups, local HE and FE students who with the Y10 and Y11 pupils also help “front” their faith stalls at the event.

**Time frame:** SACRE Planning and preparation – September to November  
Event date – Inter Faith Week or later in 2010

## 7. Electronic Links

**Rationale:** To use information and communication technologies to bring young people together.

**Activity:** Depending on how proactive the SACRE is in its use of such technology it could encourage schools to link electronically (using websites, emails, camcorder, video conferencing) supplemented by joint activities, and visits as suggested in the open days, faith trails and global discussions. Where SACREs and local inter faith groups are unfamiliar with the technologies they could, in liaison with the local authority ICT adviser or consultant undertake training and preparation in readiness for demonstrations of the capabilities of such systems during Inter Faith Week. The Inter Faith Week event could be a precursor to longer term work in which mainstream schools and supplementary schools within the faith communities explore how faith and education interact to create better communities.

**Time frame:** SACRE briefings on ICT capabilities – September to November  
ICT Demonstrations – Inter Faith Week  
School Links established – 2010

## 8. Linked Schools

**Rationale:** To bring together young people attending different faith schools and to support links between such schools.

**Activity:** Using the NATRE local network

groups as a starting point the SACRE and local inter faith groups could encourage schools to link and compare experiences e.g. a Roman Catholic school with another school with a high Muslim population as part of an RC/Islam unit.

It is important that schools guard against presenting tokenistic efforts during Inter Faith Week by attempting too much too quickly. However, Inter Faith Week may be a good time:

- to showcase work on school linking already in hand and going well
- to launch the start of new school link; or,
- to ‘feel the pulse’ of relatively new school linking ventures.

After the first year of operation, pupils from the linked schools could share their experience of the linking process at a conference for KS3/KS4 pupils organised by the SACRE and the inter faith group. School links established in this way could be extended and formalised through the School Linking Network scheme. [See the advice note School Linking which provides links to the Schools Linking Network and the Shared Futures programme of the Three Faiths’ Forum].

Working together two SACREs could plan a shared evening meeting during inter Faith Week / Islam Awareness Week to explore the impact of faith schools linking together and how SACREs could better support such initiatives. The meeting would also enable representatives of the SACREs to get to know each other and make their own links in order to provide support and networking (for example the Hindu SACRE reps knowing each other and having each other’s contact details).

**Time frame:** Establishing the links – September to December  
Joint SACRE Meeting – Inter Faith Week  
Conference – November 2010

## 9. Year 12 Multi Faith Conference

**Rationale:** To bring together young people from different backgrounds and key service providers to consider issues of faith and service delivery.

**Activity:** SACRE and a local inter faith group could commence planning of a large scale conference for Y12 pupils with a view to it taking place in the summer 2010. Initial consultations with young people could take place during Inter Faith Week with the outcomes influencing the shape and direction of the conference planning. Consultations could employ techniques such as the 'World Cafe' for drawing out the local concerns around services such as health, education and policing where faith issues might be important factors. Following on from this and working together with the local youth SACRE (if there is one), HE and FE providers and other significant stakeholders, the SACRE and the local inter faith organisation could proceed to organise a multi faith conference for year 12 pupils.

**Time frame:** Initial conference planning – September to November  
Initial youth consultation – Inter Faith Week  
Main conference planning – January to May 2010  
Y12 Conference – June 2010

## 10. Faith Community Open Days

**Rationale:** To raise awareness amongst children and young people of local places of worship.

**Activity:** SACREs and local inter faith groups organise a series of open days during Inter Faith Week when children and young people from a range of backgrounds are able to visit the buildings, make contact with the members of the faith communities and engage in active discussions in small groups. The opportunity of these open days could be taken to hold discussions facilitated by teachers, SACRE members and faith community members around the theme of 'faith in society' using active discussion techniques where small groups circulate to different faiths moving every 10 minutes or so.

**Time frame:** Planning of Open Days – September to November  
Open Days – Inter Faith Week

### **Note on 'World Cafe' Model**

Decide on 4 to 8 questions you wish to discuss. These could be wide ranging across a number of themes, or specific to a particular issue. Set out a table for each question, each table being covered with a paper table cloth, facilitated by one person who stays at that table, having a flip chart with markers next to it and on it a number of different coloured felt-tips or pens.

The delegates are divided into the number of groups that there are tables and spend 10-15 minutes at each table, then moving on to the next one until they have been at each one. (Alternatively, they could cover half of them, or choose a certain number, depending on time available.) The facilitator stays with her/his table. As the group discusses the question, the facilitator notes the main points of the discussion on the flip chart. Individuals also write ideas on the table cloth. Then, when the time to change happens, the ideas of the previous group are outlined by the facilitator and the new group takes on the discussion. Individually they can build upon comments left on the table cloth by the previous individuals. (If you want to allow for each person to take their own notes away with them, you can give them a sheet with all the questions on it and they make notes on that at each table and take it with them to the next table and then take it with them at the end of the session. This is purely for their own personal record.)

The contributions at each table can then be summarised by each facilitator at the end of the session, people go around the tables reading the threads of thoughts and the flip charts and table cloths typed up at a later date and sent out to delegates.

The strength of this approach is that it allows people to build on what has already been discussed and to start their own stream of thinking that others might develop. It is also very enjoyable!

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# Materials for schools commissioned by the Department for Children, Schools and Families from NASACRE and produced for NASACRE by the Three Faiths Forum

## Introduction

The Three Faiths Forum (3ff) is one of the leading inter faith organisations in the UK. The forum has a strong educational programme, delivering daily programmes in schools and colleges. Their work:

- supports learning about and learning from religions
- provides cross curricular opportunities (particularly citizenship education)
- helps schools fulfil their duty to promote community cohesion
- facilitates faith schools linking

In this resource, we will share some reflections on getting the most from speaking engagements in schools, as well as supporting schools to link with others.

Inter Faith Week is an opportunity to get across the “values of inter faith” as well as giving young people the opportunity to engage in a meaningful way with people of different faiths and beliefs. One method 3ff recommends is to organise speaking events in schools. Having a panel of presenters from different faiths/beliefs, rather than individuals speaking in different sessions, gives a powerful message of shared values for the activity.

N.B. As a non-religious organisation, 3ff are very careful that our presenters are not seen to be promoting religion or religious beliefs during sessions. One way we do this is to keep presentations very personal by using statements starting with “I” e.g. I believe that....

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## Inter faith Encounters

3FF's "Encountering Faiths" programme brings guest presenters of different faiths or beliefs together with a group of young people. Presenters are invited to speak for 5-7 minutes, sharing their personal stories before inviting questions and conversation. This is an opportunity to share insights and personal experiences that young people would not learn from a text book or traditional RE lesson.

### **There is no one way of presenting on an inter faith panel.**

- Some of our presenters prefer to speak specifically about their faith, essentially giving an introduction to the main tenets of Islam, Buddhism, Jainism etc.
- Others choose to illustrate their faith journey, i.e. the evolving relationship they have with their faith, often through a series of short stories.
- In our experience, the most effective presenters are those who include plenty of personal experiences.
- Each of us could talk about ourselves for hours, but it is important to maintain focus, and resist the temptation to ramble.

### **Encountering Faiths is...**

- an opportunity for young people to have a positive encounter with a person of another faith, and to see people with different beliefs working together with a shared vision for harmony.
- a chance for young people to hear the presenters' personal stories, and so providing them with a living and memorable narrative rarely found in written resources
- a safe space for young people to ask questions.

### **Encountering Faiths is not...**

- a platform for preaching and converting, whether for the presenters or participants
- an opportunity for presenters to voice their personal frustrations or issues with their or any other faith community
- a means of promoting 'faith' in general
- a debate between people of different beliefs (see "Dialogue not debate" below)

## Roles

### The facilitator

We find it useful to have a facilitator acting in a neutral position i.e. not speaking from a particular perspective. This could be a teacher or someone from outside the school. The facilitator should be responsible for

- maintaining effective timekeeping
- clarifying something that had been said
- directing questions
- helping questioners ask better/more sensitive questions [Link to ASKeR]
- Eliciting guideline/rules for dialogue from the group [Link to Rules for Dialogue]

### The presenters

- Are people from a faith community who volunteer to speak about their experiences
- Speak on behalf of themselves, not as “representatives” of their faith community
- Should be able to explain beliefs and practices from different denominations within their community
- Usually speak for 5-7 minutes, then take questions [Link to Tips for Planning]
- Are not obliged to answer any question they feel uncomfortable with [Link to ASKEE]
- Should be confident and engaging public speakers

## Creating a safe space – Rules for Dialogue

Ask the group to suggest rules for making sure everyone feels comfortable during the session. Each group is different, but you may want to include:

- Show respect to the opinions and beliefs of others
- Use “I” Statements – try not to generalise
- “Oops/ouch rule” – facilitated “time out”  
If someone says something they don’t mean, it comes out wrong, or they would like to rephrase it, they say “oops!”  
If someone is offended or hurt, they say “ouch!”
- Dialogue not debate – discussing the difference between these terms can people express personal opinions in the spirit of sharing and listening, without seeking to change other people’s minds.

### Sensitive issues e.g. conflict & politics

It is up to you and the school to decide the extent to which the activity can be a space for political or conflict-focussed discussions. Sensitive questions regularly come up in secondary school activities and it requires strong facilitation.

- Be clear at the start of the session what the presenters are happy talking about
- If things get heated, remind everyone of the rules for dialogue [Link to Rules for Dialogue] and if necessary, pause the activity and talk about what is happening in the room
- There are no simple questions – the ones that appear straightforward are often the hardest to answer.
- Most questions are loaded with assumptions and misunderstandings that may need discussing.



- The students may need reminding that there are many different (and often conflicting) ways of seeing a situation, which lead to a variety of different truths, all of which may be valid

#### Questions to ask the school:

- **Length of session** – Ideally 45-60 minutes for secondary schools, 30-45 for Key Stage 2 in primary
- **How many students** – is it a classroom or assembly set-up?
- **Who are the students?** – Faiths/beliefs, ability levels, recent issues in the school, special educational needs
- **What age group** – is it one year group, or will it be a mix of ages?
- **What they have been learning in related subjects (RE/Citizenship/PSHE)** – having an idea of students' knowledge will give you an idea how to pitch your presentations
- **A contact number** – teacher's individual mobiles are useful if they're happy to give it

## PART 1: Presentations

### Tips for planning to speak:

#### Before the session

- **Decide on your message** – Think about what you want the “bottom line” or message of your presentation to be, e.g. “Loving your neighbour is important, especially when they are different to you.” Then build your speech from there. [LINK TO Narrative]
- **Plan to talk for 5-7 minutes** – Brief is better. You can always resort to teasers like “You can ask me more about that later...”
- **Know your audience** – make it age appropriate, and think carefully about what young people will find engaging
- **Be selective** about what you include and what you leave out. You've only got 5-7 minutes!
- **Include “I statements”** – Keep it personal to avoid generalisation e.g. “I believe...” or “This is important to me...” as opposed to “All Christians believe...”
- **Beware of value judgements**  
Presenters are not there to instruct young people how to live. It is important to differentiate between “I do this, and it is important to me because...” and “I do this, and you should do it too...”
- **Research diversity** – Find out about the beliefs and practices of different denominations in your faith community, so that you can show intra-faith diversity, e.g. “As a Reform Jew I think...but Orthodox Jews may think...”
- **Create a positive inter faith message**  
Something may be “true”, but also unhelpful in trying to achieve the aims of the session. Think in terms of what is “helpful” towards creating understanding of difference, both inter faith and intra-

faith. At 3FF we encourage presenters to reflect on whether their speech reflects our tagline: “Widening horizons, Confronting prejudice, Encouraging harmony”

- **Distinguish between Narrative & Testimony**

Speaking in an inter faith context is different from sharing a testimony. The focus of the presentation is not just to explain your relationship with your faith, though this will feature in your narrative. [Link to narrative]

- **Bullet points** – Condense your talk into short headings, as they are easier to read at a glance than lots of text

## During the session:

### **Check in with Facilitator**

Make eye-contact with the facilitator while presenting to check how much time there is left, or if you feel uncomfortable and would like them to intervene. Facilitators are there to help.

### **Explain any faith-based jargon**

Avoid ‘jargon’ that is used only by people within one particular faith community. Or if used, explain the word with language that is easy to understand.

### **Sweeping eye-contact**

Throughout the talk, make eye contact with as many people in the room as possible – rather than just focussing on one or two individuals. During question time, don’t just look at the questioner – address the response to the whole audience.

### **Enjoy yourself!**

Presenting should be great fun!

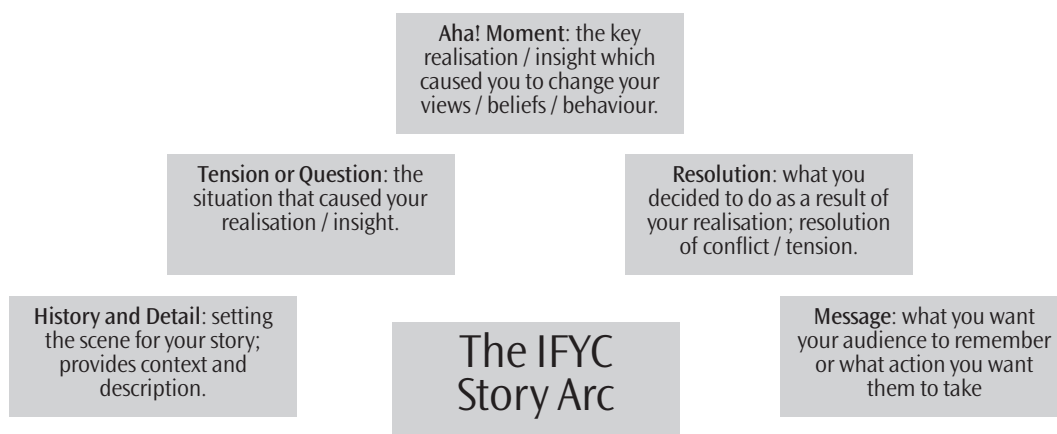
## Sharing experiences using narrative

Presenters can consider using narrative techniques. They are powerful within inter faith contexts as they can:

- Humanise the other
- Serve as an accessible vehicle to explore subtle and complex ideas
- Deliver a powerful message in an engaging and memorable way

NB It is important not to confuse inter faith narrative with faith testimony. This is not a platform for conversion or persuasion, so be sure to choose your message with care.

The Inter Faith Youth Core [[link to www.ifyc.org](http://www.ifyc.org)], based in the USA, suggests a story arc for short, compelling inter faith stories. The arc centres around an “AHA! Moment”, or key realisation that prompts a change in thought, belief, behaviour, or all three. This can be to do with faith, e.g. “I realised that my faith was to take a different course to that of my parents,” or inter faith “I realised how similar my values were to those of my Hindu colleague.”



### Questions to help you plan narrative:

Although the story should be told in the order detailed above, 3FF suggests that you first identify your “AHA! Moment” and “Message” in order to write your story. It is easier to build the other elements of the story with your realisation and message in mind.

#### “Aha moment”

- What was your key realisation/insight?
- What were the implications of this insight?

#### “Message” – “And so...”

- One-liner – what action would you like others to take as a result of your “AHA” moment?
- Which key message of your story would you most like to share with other people?

## “History & details”

- Where were you? When did the story take place?
- What/who was important to you at the time?
- What did you spend most of your time doing/thinking about?
- How would you describe your faith at that time?

## Conflict and tension

- Was there a particular conflict or question that you faced?
- What emotions were you feeling?
- What were the options that were available to you? e.g. “I could have...or ...” or “I felt torn between...and...”

NB Sketching out these options invites your audience into your story, and creates suspense which leaves them wanting more

## Resolution

- What did you decide to do as a result of this experience?
- How did your views change?

Finally, put your five components in the right order and practice it on willing friends or family.

Story Arc: Developed by the Inter Faith Youth Core [www.ifyc.org](http://www.ifyc.org)

Questions: Devised by St Ethelburga’s Centre for Peace & Reconciliation [www.stethelburgas.org](http://www.stethelburgas.org)

## PART 2: Questions

Question Time injects interactivity into an inter faith encounter, but it must be carefully facilitated to ensure that both “askers” and “askees” feel comfortable and safe. A reiteration of the ground rules by the facilitator is important before Question Time begins.

The facilitator should:

- **Be a teacher or appointed person other than the presenters**
- **Be neutral**, at least for the purposes of the session
- **Direct questions** from the floor
- **Feel confident to**
  - Intervene
  - Remind everyone of the ground rules
  - Prevent anyone from speaking for too long
  - Encourage quieter members of the group
  - Ask participants or presenters to explain unfamiliar terms
  - Keep time

## Useful thinking questions

*Remembering the ground rules:*

- “You are doing so well at remembering our ground rules, let’s keep it up.”
- “What did we agree at the beginning about listening carefully; respecting each other; etc.?”

*“Bounce back” questions – If a question is unclear or inappropriately phrased:*

- “Can you explain what you mean by that?”
- “I see what you are trying to ask, but can you phrase it more specifically/respectfully?”
- “What makes you ask that question?”

## **Dealing with sensitive or controversial questions**

**ASKeR** – When someone asks a difficult or controversial question, the facilitator can help the individual/group explore what is contained within the question. It serves as a “facilitated time out”.

**Assumptions** – What is the person asking the question assuming? Why might they assume that?

**Statement or Question** – Is the person asking a question, or telling us what they think?

**Key words** – What are the key words that betray incorrect assumption? Are there words we could be understanding differently?

**Rephrase?** – How does this question need to be rephrased more appropriately before it can be answered?

### **Responding to questions using ASKEE**

Assume good intent – often questions that sound abrupt or rude come from genuine curiosity

Spectrum of views – include viewpoints from across your religious tradition to show diversity

Keep it short and sweet

Explain jargon/foreign words

End on a positive note – this keeps the tone optimistic, even when discussing thorny issues

### **AND**

#### **Feel free to say “I don’t know”**

If in doubt it is better to answer with “I’m not sure about that” or “We can find out for you” than making something up on the spot  
Enjoy it

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## ANNEX F

### Events held during the Week that were funded by CLG

One national faith community organisation from each of the nine faiths linked in formal membership by the Inter Faith Network and reflected in membership of the Faith Communities Consultative Council of CLG applied for and received funding from CLG to work with others within their community to create an exhibition about their community at the national launch of Inter Faith Week. CLG also made funding available towards national faith community events for the Week. Not all national faith communities applied for support towards an event.

Bahá'í Community of the UK	National launch cross-community exhibition stall
Board of Deputies of British Jews	National launch cross-community exhibition stall
Board of Deputies of British Jews / Hindu Forum of Britain	Women's inter faith event to share, communicate and hear the common and distinct faith challenges arising from the Preston Report – "Connection, Continuity and Community – British Jewish Women Speak Out"
British Sikh Consultative Forum	National launch cross-community exhibition stall
British Sikh Consultative Forum	Event at the Nishkam Centre in Birmingham: 'Celebrating Interfaith Relations'
Churches Together in England	National launch cross-community exhibition stall
Churches Together in England	Day seminar, in Manchester, on Christian approaches to Inter Faith Relations.
Hindu Council UK	National launch cross-community exhibition stall
Hindu Council UK	Day event in London: 'Inter faith: a Hindu perspective and exploring commonalities with other faiths.'
Jain Network	National launch cross-community exhibition stall
Jain Network/Jain Samaj Europe	A cross community seminar on the Jain contribution to inter faith understanding.
Mosques and Imams National Advisory Board (MINAB)	An event at Regent's Park Mosque about the benefits and contributions faith communities can make in building a harmonious and balanced society.
MINAB	National launch cross-community exhibition stall
Network of Buddhist Organisations	National launch cross-community exhibition stall
Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe (ZTFE)	National launch cross-community exhibition stall
ZTFE & Faith Based Regeneration Network	Conference: Religious Philanthropy and Social Action: Tools for Cohesion and Building Stronger Communities.

## Inter Faith Organisations

Alif Aleph UK (with MUJO)	Creative Campus Project Comedy performances at university campuses
Inter Faith Action	Student Inter Faith Volunteer Challenges Over two days, students from different religious/non-religious backgrounds volunteer together.
Joseph Interfaith Foundation	‘Young British and Believer’ A half day seminar for Muslim and Jewish University and sixth form students, focused on the key question: “Why should we live peacefully with people of other faiths today?”
London Interfaith Centre	‘Faithful Nurture Day’ An inter faith event held at the London Interfaith Centre with the participation of Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh schools.
Minorities of Europe Inter Faith Programme	Inter faith Youth Pilgrimage Young people visit places of worship in Coventry.
St Ethelburga’s Centre for Reconciliation and Peace	Sea of Stories – Story telling Performance for Inter Faith Week with stories from different faith traditions dramatically recounted at a number of faith community venues in London during the Week.
The Christian Muslim Forum	Providing resources for mosque-church twinning and piloting the programme in Newcastle and Exeter, with the purpose of promoting and encouraging faith leaders to be inter faith aware.
The Coexistence Trust	Student engagement programme Students attended events during Inter Faith Week and wrote reports about these.
The Council of Christians and Jews	Lecture by Shahid Malik MP at the House of Lords.
The Multi-Faith Centre at the University of Derby	Regional Academic conference at the Multi-Faith Centre at the University of Derby.
Three Faiths Forum	Urban Dialogues event for young professionals and a Young Leaders inter faith evening.
United Religious Initiative UK	Beyond Faith Boundaries: A series of cross-generation events held in Taunton, Loughton and Mansfield.

## Youth events funded by the Inter Faith Youth Trust and with CLG support

Organisation	Region	Event
Hamara Healthy Living Centre	Y&H	Cultural Awareness Day
The Multi-Faith Centre at the University of Derby	EM	Football Tournament
Thurrock SACRE	L	Youth SACRE Conference
Oxford Council of Faiths	SE	Musical evening
Aston Mansfield	L	Art /Exhibition
Southwark College	L	Faith discussions
Aik Saath	SE	Calendar
Oxygen – Kingston Borough Youth for Christ	SE	Concert/performance
London School of Jewish Studies	L	Garden project
National Star Centre for Disabled Youth Ltd	SW	Celebrating Diversity (Special needs)
UJS	various	University student events
Southwark Cathedral	L	Arts Event
Lancashire Forum of Faiths	NW	Festival
Havering College	L	Peace garden
College of Haringey	L	Learning day at St Ethelburga
JCORE (Jewish Council for Racial Equality)	L	My Ideal Town project
Islamic Society of Britain	WM	Walk the Talk – On stage accounts of young people and their faith
The Feast	WM	Food and faith
Blackpool Sixth Form College	NW	Celebration
Seven Hills School	Y&H	Visits to places of worship
Young Muslim Organisation	NW	Football
Young Jains	L	In tune with God
Springfield Community Flat	L	Inter-Faith Garden Mosaic
Bristol University Jewish Society on Mitzvah Day (and raising awareness)	SW	Packing foodboxes for refugees in Bristol
Hampshire Interfaith	SE	Debate with Rabbi Lionel Blue followed by dinner
PETROC College for North Devon	SW	‘Faith to Face’
KRAN (Kent Refugee Action Network)	SE	Let’s share together
R & R Care	EM	Understanding Different Faiths
Manningham Youth Action	Y&H	All Different All Equal
Chris Worfolk Foundation	Y&H	Interfaith Panel
Crawley Inter Faith Network	SE	Interfaith Week Football Match and Lunch
Interact	National	Interact Magazine
Loughborough Council of Faiths	EM	Feast of Faiths 2009



## ANNEX G

### Opening and closing presentations made at launch event on 12 November

#### Rt Hon John Denham MP, *Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government*

I am delighted to be able to launch England's first ever inter faith week. Thank you very much to the Inter Faith Network for working with us to make this possible.

The Prime Minister has asked me to pass on his very best wishes and thanks for your efforts – and particularly to say that he's delighted that so many young people have been involved in the planning. We can learn a lot from your open-mindedness, the respect you have for one another – these are the values which are central to Inter Faith Week and which are the building blocks of a stronger, fairer society.

Earlier in the week, Dr Indarjit Singh reflected on his hopes for Inter Faith Week on Thought for the Day with a very powerful metaphor.

He reminded us that 'with the demolition of the Berlin Wall, East and West Europe saw each other for the first time for decades, as fellow human beings with similar aspirations and concerns.' He hoped that Inter Faith Week would also break down 'barriers of suspicion and prejudice' in order to 'see sister faiths in a more positive light'. I share absolutely his hopes – and want to reflect for a few minutes on why Government is so interested in supporting your efforts to do so.

Politicians are interested in shaping society for the better – and faith is one of the powerful forces which shape society. Most people of faith are concerned for the human experience today as well as spiritual welfare in the future. So it is natural and inevitable that we should be interested in one another.

But the starting point has to be respect for faith itself and the powerful meaning which faith has for so many individuals.

For many people, their faith plays a defining role in their lives, their character, their identity. It can inspire and give purpose; it is a source of consolation and comfort. It brings duties and responsibilities; often challenge – but also joy and hope. It motivates some people to get involved in public life – it sustains others through private crises.

There are those who believe that government has an instrumentalist view of faith. That we are only interested in faith groups when we have a problem to solve. By contrast, they want faith to be respected in its own right; not as a prop to Government.

I agree. Government should respect – should value, prize and celebrate – those things which matter to its citizens. And for many citizens in this country, their faith shapes and defines who they are. Any government which treats that lightly will govern badly.

But I also believe that our relationship, though starting with respect, can also properly be deeper.

Whether it is parenting, personal health, or sustainability government is interested in what makes people tick.

We can't – and shouldn't – try to legislate and regulate for every aspect of behaviour. So good government is understandably and sensibly interested in the factors which motivate and drive them.

We must understand and appreciate the forces and institutions which shape people's attitudes and values, and how that is reflected in their behaviour.

It matters to government what shapes the obligations of parents to children and children to parents. How they perceive their responsibilities to the world beyond our shores. How altruism shapes the part they play in their community of their interest in volunteering.

Of course, faith groups aren't the only sources of such values – nor is it necessary to have faith to be deeply moral and profoundly altruistic.

But for millions of people, the values instilled by their faith are central to shaping their behaviour. We should acknowledge and welcome the contribution faith makes to shaping these behaviours.

Anyone wanting to build a more progressive society would ignore the powerful role of faith at their peril. And we should continually seek ways of encouraging and enhancing the contribution faith communities make on the central issues of our time.

That is obviously easiest when faith requires its members to engage in the great issues of the day. Faith communities share a common commitment to community, social justice and peace – and many members strive tirelessly to achieve those goals – with many members of faith groups prominent in international campaigns to Make Poverty History and promote Fair Trade.

Faith is a strong and powerful source of honesty, solidarity, generosity – the very values which are essential to politics, to our economy and our society.

Sometimes, faith groups express their values in a critique of government – on everything from homelessness, unemployment, and social inequality. It is not always easy – but it's right that we hear that legitimate criticism. It

is part of the unique perspective that people of faith can bring to the debate.

And why we should not only permit, but welcome and celebrate the expression of faith in the public sphere as part of the democratic debate on the challenges we face.

Our shared interest in the common territory of what makes people behave the way they do should be a rich and fertile area to explore.

For example, all faith communities recognise the moral imperative of facing up to the threat of climate change – at Lambeth Palace, with 40 days to go till Copenhagen, faith leaders from all communities joined together to pledge they would work together to reduce carbon emissions and promote sustainable practices.

There is a common interest in not destroying the planet on which we live. If the scientific imperative drives our concern, faith concepts like stewardship may help sustain the response.

In the midst of a global economic recession, driven by lending, faith can undoubtedly have something to contribute to the debate about society's values.

We share a common interest in how parents see their obligations to their children and to each other.

While each faith has its own unique contribution to these discussions, their power can be enhanced when faith finds common ground together.

The values which faith groups share – from justice and quality, to engagement and integrity – could be a starting point for building consensus on the kind of society we want to build and how to build it.

And so we should continually seek ways of encouraging and enhancing the contribution faith communities make to the debates around these issues.

There are a whole range of formal and informal ways in which we can work together. Through the Faith Communities Consultative Council, we consult faith groups directly on policy questions which interest us both.

I am pleased to say that I have recently completed recruiting a panel of experts who can support me – and my Department – to act as a sounding board on issues of faith and public policy. The panel will start its work shortly. I have also been recruiting an adviser – and I am delighted that Francis Davis, who many of you will know, will be joining my team. Francis is a fellow of Blackfriars Hall, Oxford University, and director of the Las Casas Institute on Ethics, Human Rights And Social Justice.

I want to have as many channels of communication open as possible. I can't overstate the importance of the relationship between faith and government – and so if there are ways in which you believe we can develop that relationship still further, I am very open to hearing from you.

Should we invest more - either time or money - in facilitating dialogue and developing common issues?

While government shouldn't fund faith organisations per se, would it be appropriate to support those communities which lack the capacity and infrastructure to respond to dialogue?

Inter Faith Week is the ideal place to develop our relationship and dialogue. Now of course, inter faith activity has not suddenly been invented by Government. Quite the reverse. Faith groups have a strong tradition of working together, driven by a desire to better understand each other and to tackle areas of mutual concern.

Back in 1942, the 'Council of Christians and Jews' was founded to promote 'religious and cultural understanding' and combating religious discrimination. Churches and mosques in East London have collaborated on

the 'Living Wage' campaign. Faith groups joined together to condemn the atrocities of 9/11 and 7/7.

Inter faith activity stretches from social action and campaigns for human rights to education and arts projects. I am looking forward to seeing some of the examples for myself at today's event – and later next week, in my own constituency down in Southampton.

It's only right that Government should actively support these efforts. It will enable us to learn from the unique insights that faith groups bring to contemporary issues. They are closely involved in tackling those issues at a local level. They have an invaluable role to play in shaping the national – and international – response as well. I believe government should try to strengthen that joint relationship, without influencing it or compromising the independent perspective that faith groups bring.

Secondly, inter faith activity helps bring people together in a dialogue about who we are and what we want our society to be. Faith has shaped the way we see ourselves today. And as long as there are faith communities, faith will help shape the way we see ourselves in the future.

The truth about our identity is not something that can simply be discovered by looking back to the past. It's an important part of who we are – but doesn't leave much room for many of the faiths and people who now are very much part of modern Britain.

We need to build our national identity together – through shared experience and exploration. Through a strong shared set of values. Through our ability to handle issues where we disagree with respect and without conflict. And faith communities together have a vital role to play here.

Thirdly, there is immense practical value to society in having faith groups work closely together to overcome social division, promote cohesion and build social capital. Positive

relationships between faith leaders helped sustain some communities under intense pressure back in 2001 when other communities were exploding into riots.

More recently, the efforts of faith groups to build relationships – not only amongst themselves, but also with the police, politicians and councils – has helped manage tension in the face of extreme provocation from right-wing extremists.

These issues are difficult, but many hundreds if not thousands of members of different faiths are working tirelessly and quietly to address them. This is something which I am deeply grateful for.

Their efforts not only help to build communities resilient to stress and tension, but are also a powerful force for good and social change.

And finally, but most elusively, another reason for supporting inter faith week is that bringing people together always has unpredictable results. New relationships, new networks, new ideas will be brought about – which will prove invaluable.

I have no doubt that all of you working together will help make this first inter faith week a great success. It is right that we have this opportunity to celebrate the contribution which faith members working together make to their community. Inter faith week will help to strengthen those bonds of mutual understanding and co-operation.

But it is important to remember that this is also about faith communities reaching out and building understanding with those without faith – and remember I count myself among that group of secular humanists.

So today, I am confirming that we are making £2 million available through the Faiths in Action programme; which faith, inter faith, voluntary and community sector groups can bid for to support projects which will bring people of faith and without faith together to

overcome social division and promote cohesion.

One of the most important aspects of inter-faith week is the involvement of young people – with all their passion, enthusiasm and optimism. We need their contribution – and their challenge – to really make this week a success.

Many young people are inspired by their faith to make a difference in their community – and many are involved in inter faith activities through school, university and organisations like the scouts and guides – we will be hearing from some of them later. Young people have a bigger stake than anyone in the future of our society – they are the ones who will ultimately inherit that society: and so they have most to gain from being part of the conversation about the kind of society we want to build and the shared values we need to develop.

Next week, there are a huge number of inter faith projects which give young people the chance to explore their own faith; work with people of other – or no faith – and consider how their faith inspires them to be involved in modern society.

For example, Birmingham Cathedral is using the story of Noah's Ark – a story shared by Judaism and Islam as well as Christians – to help young people think about climate change in the run up to Copenhagen. Dr Rowan Williams will be bringing students from all faiths across North London to appreciate and learn more about their different religions. And in Leicester, the first Islamic secondary school in the country will be opening its doors to local primary schools as the start of what they hope will be a long term relationships. Those relationships, that understanding, between young people is exactly what Inter Faith Week should be all about.

As Dr Singh says, Inter Faith week should 'move us from the usual polite exchange of pleasantries to actually looking to ways of replacing... false barriers of

misunderstanding and prejudice that divide our different religions, with sympathetic understanding and true respect for different ways of life.’

If we can achieve that, Inter Faith Week will have indeed been a great success.

Thank you very much.

# Co-Chairs of the Inter Faith Network for the UK

## Dr Girdari Lal Bhan

### Opening remarks:

Welcome to everyone on behalf of the Inter Faith Network for the UK. The Inter Faith Network is very pleased to be working with the Department for Communities and Local Government on this special Inter Faith Week in England.

Inter Faith Week is about the contribution of faiths to society. It is also about increasing understanding and friendship between people of different faiths and between those of religious and those of non-religious beliefs. Today's programme and exhibition reflects these many different strands.

In towns, cities and rural areas around England numerous exciting events will be taking place in the coming week. Reflecting this, there are people here today from all the English Regions and from an enormous range of faith and inter faith organisations and initiatives as well as from secular agencies and non religious belief groups. The breadth of representation and input to the exhibition is inspiring.

Among the contributors are a number from other special Days and Weeks which have a kinship and close proximity with Inter Faith Week: One World Week, Mitzvah Day and Islam Awareness Week. I would like to make special mention of Islam Awareness Week because, following consultation at the outset with its organisers, our two Weeks are running in parallel and IAW has chosen as its theme: 'Walk the Talk' which is about encouraging everyone to get out and about and get to know people of other faiths.

Today's main focus is Inter Faith Week in England but we also want to welcome today friends who are here from the other nations.

- Inter Faith Week in Wales is being led by

the Inter Faith Council for Wales with the support of the Welsh Assembly Government.

- A number of events will also be taking place in Northern Ireland.
- In Scotland there is a longstanding Inter Faith Week which begins on 22 November.

Scottish Inter Faith Week was an inspiration for the present Week in England. During the consultation process which led to the publication of the Government's document *Face to Face and Side by Side: A Framework for Partnership in our Multi Faith Society* the Inter Faith Network's Trustees – who include members from Scotland as well as from Wales and Northern Ireland – proposed the idea of an Inter Faith Week in England. We were delighted that Government accepted the proposal and that working on such a Week with the Inter Faith Network became one of the planks of the policy implementation of *Face to Face and Side by Side*.

The Inter Faith Network's work with Government is, I think, a reflection of the kind of partnership which is encouraged in *Face to Face and Side by Side*. This is partnership between faith and inter faith bodies, on the one hand, and Government and other public authorities, on the other – each independent and with their own different spheres of operation but cooperating for the common good of society. As we will hear from later contributors, faiths have a great deal to offer society – working both singly and together.

And speaking about working with Government, this seems a very appropriate time to introduce the Right Honourable John Denham MP, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government.

Since becoming Secretary of State earlier this

## Rt Revd Dr Tom Butler

year he has shown a consistent and informed interest in the issues affecting the relationship between faith communities and Government and in how relationships between people of different backgrounds in this country can be strengthened. His presence today – and his planned involvement in both national and local inter faith events next week – reflects his very welcome personal commitment.

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### Closing remarks:

I am glad to have the opportunity to say a few words to round off this launch event for Inter Faith Week.

History records over the centuries many conflicts in the name of religion. This underlines for us the urgency of promoting goodwill between our different faith communities. We began this process by speaking about the need for tolerance of one another, but have moved on to emphasise the need for mutual respect and a recognition that others require the same freedom to practise their religions as we do our own.

The inter faith movement has made significant progress in recent years in promoting space and social harmony. We celebrate that progress today and will be doing so throughout Inter Faith Week.

There is, of course, further to go and we need to widen the range of people who are involved in inter faith activity, encouraging them to get rid of any prejudices they may harbour against those of faiths other than their own, opening to them the windows of their own hearts and minds. I urge everyone to offer the hand of friendship to others, to which many will gladly respond.

We're here today because all of us, I believe, have a commitment to the development of a harmonious, compassionate and just society.

Inter Faith Week is very much about how we develop such a society. It's about highlighting and strengthening the contribution that faith groups – individually and together – make to the welfare of society. And it's about how people of all backgrounds contribute to understanding and cooperation.

As Dr Bhan said earlier, the Inter Faith Network is delighted to be working in partnership with the Government on this Week and we're tremendously heartened by the scale of engagement, with so many organisations taking part from across the country.

In the last few years, faith and social action and inter faith issues have shot up the public agenda. They've become very visible. As you might expect, I very much welcome this as Co-Chair of the Inter Faith Network for the UK, which links national faith community representatives bodies of the Bahá'í, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jain, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh and Zoroastrian communities; national, regional and local inter faith bodies; and educational and academic bodies with a concern for inter faith issues.

You'll be hearing later from Monsignor John Devine, as well as from some of the young speakers, about faith and social action so I'd like to focus my remarks particularly on inter faith issues.

The inter faith landscape has changed radically since 1987 when the Inter Faith Network for the UK was formed. Inter faith issues have moved from the margins to the mainstream. There's never been a better time in history or a better place than Britain for

people of faith to encounter, befriend and benefit from their fellow citizens of a different faith to their own.

Most major faith communities now have staff or trustees with dedicated responsibility for inter faith relations. On the faith community exhibition boards out in the Benjamin Britten Lounge you'll see material about their inter faith work.

There's also been a significant growth in the number of national inter faith initiatives. When the Inter Faith Network was founded there were just 6 national inter faith bodies in membership such as the Council of Christians and Jews and Religions for Peace. Today there are over 20 with such bodies as the Christian Muslim Forum and Three Faiths Forum having coming into being. And, on the horizon, there are other national initiatives under development, such as a Hindu Christian Forum and a 'Dharmic Alliance' of Indic religions. The inter faith scene is very positive then at national level.

At local level, the number of known inter faith groups and forums has shot up since the late 80s, from under 30 to over 230 – an over 700% increase. It's difficult to keep pace with. Also regional faith forums, currently being helped through the Government's Faith in Action programme, have come into existence in the English regions.

There's also been a growth in the prominence of inter faith issues in other contexts such as universities, colleges of further education, schools and youth organisations. We see on the boards in the room next door some of the ways that inter faith learning and engagement is being taken forward. I find the list of educational initiatives taking place around the country this coming week to be tremendously exciting.

These are being helped by the wealth of attractive printed material, both academic and popular being produced, books and study guides of all sorts are available to help individuals and groups to meet and talk with

their neighbours and share food fellowship and fun.

Then you only have to glance around today's remarkable exhibition or to look at the internet to realise that inter faith projects and initiatives are growing at an amazing rate and are ever more diverse – involving young people as well as old, women as well as men, conservatives as well as liberals, people in rural areas and small towns as well as in big multi faith urban areas. I could go on but I think you get my drift.

As someone on the cusp of retirement may I, though, make a quick plug for recognition of the involvement of older people! Rightly we have an excellent focus on the young today. But we should also remember that in many communities it is traditional for those in the last third of their lives to focus on religious faith. Perhaps it's in our interest to do so. But it does mean that older people are well placed to make an excellent contribution to inter faith issues.

We shouldn't, of course, be complacent. There remain many who don't see inter faith understanding as a priority. Much, of course, is being done through various programmes to change this but within the faith communities we have a job of work to do to ensure that our followers are well grounded in the teachings which encourage and underpin engagement in ways which respect the integrity of their own tradition but encourage openness and friendship in relation to others. This is our responsibility. Important though secular support, funding and encouragement for inter faith work is (and it is very important), faith communities themselves need to continue to develop their work on inter faith issues and to strengthen their already growing ability to work together, drawing on shared values, to contribute to the well being of society and to increased mutual understanding.

The Government's support for this area of work across recent years, both through direct support to bodies such as the Inter Faith



Network and through important programmes such as the Faith Communities Capacity Building programme and Faith in Action, administered by the Community Development Foundation, has been of enormous importance. Also welcome has been the growing acknowledgement that faith and inter faith groups do have problems in having the capacity simply to respond to the ever broadening of array of opportunities for involvement. Most faith communities in Britain have minimal organisational back up and need help in developing this if their partnership is to be fully productive.

I've touched on one or two of the challenges but I'd like to return to the immensely positive evolving story of inter faith work in England and in the wider UK and to pay tribute to the work of all the different types of organisations working to make a difference in this vital field. The special Inter Faith Week which begins on Sunday will be your chance to make your work better known. It will be your opportunity to draw in new people, enthuse new audiences and carry on and strengthen your crucial work to shape a harmonious, compassionate and just shared future.

Above all it will be an opportunity for all of us to stand shoulder to shoulder in seeking to tackle together some of the wounds of a fragile world.

## Young People

### Miriam Lorie

Good Morning. My name is Miriam Lorie. I've come from the Cambridge Inter-Faith Programme, part of the University of Cambridge, and I've been asked to talk a little about the place of inter-faith work in higher education and study.

I went to a school attended by girls of all faiths and none, and I was always bothered by the question of how people of different faiths, divided as they may be in many ways, can come together in order to peacefully coexist, and even to enrich one another's religious life. At school and university, I found myself drawn to those of other faiths, not because I wanted to join them, but because I knew that we had points of great connection, and where we differed, we could respectfully stand together, and be all the richer for our friendship.

I truly believe that Judaism as a religion endorses the message of inter faith harmony. In Genesis, all of humanity is created in God's own image. Last week, Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks gave a public lecture in which he said that in this Genesis passage, God is calling upon us to see **His** image in those who are not in our image. In other words, God is the God of all people, and all human beings are equally children of God.

So I feel very lucky that after studying theology at university, I have been able to devote my working time to the field of inter-faith work. I work at the Cambridge Inter-Faith Programme, which is part of the University of Cambridge, and therefore has a strong academic focus as well as a practical, civic focus. High level study of religions has always happened, but at the Cambridge Inter-Faith Programme, scholars of different religions **come together** and collaborate on their study. I think that we are seeing religions play an increasingly major part on the world scene, in a way never anticipated 50 years ago. Such huge movements call for high-level, in-depth responses, and this is where inter faith

work in universities and other higher education institutions has an invaluable contribution to make. There is a growing field of excellent institutions around the country which make an impact on the academic sphere, and upon the students who pass through university doors. You can find out more about us, and other higher education-based organisations in today's exhibitions in the Benjamin Britten Lounge and in the Whittle Room.

I'd like to end with what I feel is the greatest message I have learnt through my time in the 'inter faith world', phrased beautifully by my Synagogue's Rabbi, Rabbi Naftali Brawer, and that is about our tendency to focus solely on similarities with those of other faiths:

"Respect for the other is not contingent on similarity of behaviour or understanding but rather on our commonality as human beings... [The whole point of inter faith dialogue is] to learn how to respect those whose faith is profoundly different from your own".

### Atheah Ghani

Hello. My name is Atheah Ghani and I'm going to be highlighting local and regional inter faith work.

Up until 6 months ago, inter faith activity was just a part of my day to day life – not a vocation. I was born into a Muslim family in Nottingham and, like many people of my age living in a city like that, I grew up in a white majority area, went to a white majority school, and ended up with mostly white friends! So inter faith encounter was part of my everyday existence.

Although I'm a graduate now, and a practising Muslim, I have no academic background in inter faith work, and so to me, it continues to be an extension of the work I did growing up – learning to accept and be accepted by people of different faith backgrounds.

I grew up with diversity right in front of me.

And I found that Islamic teachings described well this reality. I'd like to share a verse which inspires me:

“Unto everyone of you we have given a different law and a way of life. And if God had so willed He could have made you all one single community”. (Maida: 48).

This makes it absolutely clear that the different religions are part of the divine plan. If we believe this, who are we to object to it? Within this diversity is human unity. But we can only come together and find this unity if we learn about one another.

I have been working on a voluntary basis with the Nottingham Inter Faith Council – representing my faith in Religious Diversity training which is delivered to major employers and service providers in Nottingham. I see this as a personal duty – to actively do something – not only to enable people to learn about others, but also to dispel some of the very myths and misconceptions that divide us in society.

I have also been working with the Faiths Forum for the East Midlands since June this year, and feel excited to be playing a pivotal part in an organisation looking to become a champion for local inter faith groups in our region as well as encouraging faith groups in their social action work. You will see information about these regional forums out in the Benjamin Britten Lounge.

There is also information out in the lounge about the enormously important work of local inter faith groups. These bring together people who have lives to share, and stories to tell. Working together their faith is deepened and barriers broken down. I have been supporting the groups, connecting them to useful resources and guiding them in their development.

I feel that Inter Faith Week is an excellent opportunity for them to showcase the efforts they have made to promote mutual respect and understanding between people of

different faiths. It is absolutely vital that their work is recognised and valued – without them, faith will still be alive, but within insular, alienated communities where it cannot truly flourish.

## Esther Copeland-Harrison

Hallo, I'm Esti Copeland-Harrison.

Out in the exhibition you will see information about the work of many inter faith organisations. I've been asked to speak from my own experience about why inter faith dialogue and friendship is so important.

I was brought up in the Methodist church circuit in Newcastle and have always been part of services in the area. Like many, it was during Sunday School that I first began to ask questions. From a young age I was fascinated with the 'who', 'what', 'when', 'where', 'whys' and 'hows' of the lessons we were taught there.

The Girls Brigade (which is an international and interdenominational Christian youth organisation) seemed like a natural progression from Sunday School when I grew older, although my passion for asking questions had by no means diminished!

I have grown up as a practising Christian but from a **very** early age I have been embraced by the Jewish community. My mother has always been heavily involved with the Council of Christians and Jews and this has afforded regular interactions with the local Orthodox Jewish community. I celebrate Christmas and Easter but am also heavily involved in Chanukah and Pesach celebrations and greatly look forward to a Seder meal each year!

My favourite Jewish festival is Purim (which is, as it happens, the festival dedicated to Queen Esther!). This festival is the most fun of all the Jewish festivals, where all the congregation of the synagogue join in the service by dressing up, throwing sweets and shaking rattles at the mention of the name of Haman – the 'baddy' in the Purim story.

The customs, traditions and beliefs of Judaism have not merely **enhanced** my own faith – they have been **invaluable** in my understanding and contextualising of Christianity. It is very easy to forget that Christianity was born out of Judaism; Christ himself was a great Rabbi and prophet. A great amount of Christians (and others) may benefit from experiencing aspects of the Jewish faith. I am so grateful to my Jewish friends in Newcastle who have welcomed me to their homes, services and festivals and who have educated and inspired me.

For me, my own pilgrimage has not meant travelling to a Holy Temple or a journey to a Promised Land, but it has been through the people, the communities, friendships, customs and traditions of Judaism and Christianity that has ‘kindled a flame in my heart’. Next September I hope to be reading Theology at University and continue to enjoy a bilateral dialogue between Judaism and Christianity which will also encompass other World Faiths.

## Rajiv Sethi

Namaskar and Good Morning, friends and elders.

My name is Rajiv Sethi, I am 17 years old and I am a Hindu by faith. I live in Manchester and am an upper sixth student at Altrincham Grammar School for Boys. I have been asked to speak about RE and learning about inter faith issues at school.

As founding president of the school’s Hindu and Sikh Society and also a founding member of its first ever Interfaith Society, I am actively involved in promoting inter faith understanding within the school community.

I have completed two Religious studies GCSEs: one on Hinduism and Sikhism and another on general Religion and Philosophy. These have provided me a good background in the World’s major religions and on the ethical issues in today’s society. Both have been of great importance to me and have given me a

deeper insight into religions and inter-religious relations – including the positive and more difficult aspects of these. I hope that they have also given me an ability to appreciate not only my own beliefs but also of those around me and the need for inter-religious dialogue. For anyone who has the opportunity to study an RE GCSE I would seriously encourage them to do so, as it is a great foundation to understanding today’s society and the ways of life of people of different faiths.

I believe that we need to highlight and celebrate the teachings of faiths that emphasise morality and ethics, righteousness, and universal brotherhood. We should also be committed to mutual learning.

In this connection, I would mention the principle of Universalism as enunciated in the Hindu faith: ‘*Vasudaiva kuktumbhakam*’, meaning the whole world is one family.

It is no surprise that when we pray, we pray for everyone, not just for people of our faith. I believe all religions are part of the same tree, the only difference being they each occupy different branches, contributing to the diversity.

It is only when we genuinely respect each other, people of different faiths, acknowledging that others have the same rights that we take for granted ourselves, we will be able to establish a peaceful world.

Through increasing dialogue between different faith communities and by learning more about each other’s way of life, we will be one step closer to a MORE peaceful, MORE friendly and MORE compassionate world.

## Darius Parekh

Hi, I am Darius.

I'm from Leatherhead in Surrey and have lived there all my life.

I attend Therfield School, a mixed comprehensive and I am currently in year 11, studying for my GCSE's.

I follow the Zoroastrian religion which originated in Iran over 2000 years ago and is now practised by small communities spread around the world. Although I have learnt about the basic teachings of Zoroastrianism from my parents and the Zoroastrian Association, I believe it is essential for me to understand the teachings of other religions.

In GCSE Religious Studies, we discuss current issues such as medical ethics, peace and justice. We consider the values and attitudes of different faith communities towards the topic. We are taught not only what the different beliefs are but why they are held. We learn to listen to each other's varied opinions and try to understand where they are coming from.

As a Zoroastrian, I believe that all people are put on this earth as soldiers of truth to help the cause of Good against Evil. If I want to help make this world a better place, I must first have a greater understanding of the people who make up our world.

From my Religious Studies lessons, I have begun to realise that although there are differences between religions, there is also much in common including many of the fundamental values.

The story goes that when the Zoroastrian people emigrated from Iran to India over 1000 years ago, the local king allowed them to settle in his land. One of the conditions was that the Zoroastrians explained their religion to the King. The local people then realised that the Zoroastrian immigrants were not a threat to them and the different groups were

able to live together working towards the good of the whole community. To me this shows how knowledge leads to understanding and unity.

Thank you very much.

## Iman Fadaei

Good morning! My name is Iman and I am a Bahá'í.

I'm from Stroud, in Gloucestershire and am currently studying law at university.

I have been asked to say something about faith and social action and also about campus inter faith relations.

So, first, faith and social action. Exhibition boards relating to this topic may be viewed (here) in this room. As part of my Faith, I believe that all people "have been created to carry forward an ever-advancing civilization". It is this Faith that inspires my efforts to seek to collaborate with others in working for the betterment of humanity.

The writings of all Faiths encourage individuals to put their faith into action by helping others. Bahá'ís in the UK are participating with their friends, families and colleagues in a structured programme of sustainable community development, based on the belief that only when spiritual and material development are together pursued can true social transformation occur.

Like many other Bahá'í youth, I participate in this programme by running study groups, open to all, that enable the participants to develop the capacity to better serve our local communities. Others run projects for younger youth to empower them to make meaningful contributions to community life.

Finally, campus inter faith relations. Boards on this topic may be viewed in the adjacent room. Promoting religious collaboration and harmony on university campuses clearly plays a crucial part in the process of building social

cohesion. Bahá'í writings encourage us to "consort with the followers of all religions in a spirit of friendliness and fellowship." Bahá'í youth seek to articulate this principle in their inter faith activities to promote harmony between people of all faiths.

Whether through campus inter faith activities, faith and social action projects or other efforts, it is inspiring to join with others around the country in this Inter Faith Week and collaborate to direct our collective energies towards the betterment of our communities.

Thank you.

## Jyoti Mehta

Respected friends, good afternoon.

My name is Jyoti and I am a practising Jain from Croydon in Surrey. I work as a subtitling assistant for Red Bee Media, which provides subtitles for television. When I am not subtitling the news, I enjoy dedicating my time to the Jain community and interfaith activities, and it is for this reason that I've been invited to speak today.

I am currently one of the youngest Trustees of the Inter Faith Network, and this is the result of a journey which started at university when my interest in interfaith dialogue was really sparked. One of the foundational qualities described in Jainism is *maitri*, or universal friendship. The idea of universal friendship had always taught me to theoretically extend friendship to people of all faiths. But it was only when I became involved with other faith communities and our multi-faith chaplaincy at university that I could actively practise this friendship. Engaging in interfaith dialogue at university educated me, inspired me and provided me with new friends. This ancient philosophy of universal friendship, *maitri*, was no longer academic for me, but real and I understood how important it is not just for social harmony, but also for spiritual progression. We are one of the smallest faith communities in this country, but we are

absolutely committed to extending our friendship as far as it can reach throughout society.

It is interesting to note that our translation of *maitri* is not just friendship, but universal friendship, and this is because we embrace all living souls, including plants and animals into this companionship. The central philosophy of Jainism is Ahimsa, non-violence. Expressed in positive terms, this means compassionate love. Because we consider nature and animals to be fellow sentient souls, Jains are committed vegetarians, and we see this as key to protecting animals, the environment and even humanity. Vegetarianism is not just a diet for us – it is a way in which we practically express our compassion. By consuming a non-violent diet, this extrapolates for us into a wider aim to be non-violent in everything single thing that we do, in thought, speech and action. As a result of this central philosophy of Ahimsa, the Jain community has for centuries been closely associated with environmentalism, sustainable living and supporting of animal welfare and animal sanctuaries. The Jain community in the UK, including the youth, continue to live by these virtues and share them with wider society.

On that note, I'd just like to end this presentation by inviting you to view the exhibition boards, many of which demonstrate this friendship and compassion in action, not just by the Jain community, but by all faith communities. Thank you and enjoy Inter Faith Week!

## Seth Pinnock

Hello. My name is Seth Pinnock. Currently I am studying architecture at LSBU and I am hoping to apply my studies to building communities and thus providing access to opportunities to the disenfranchised.

I hail from Handsworth Wood in Birmingham. It is a borough known mainly for its socio-economic problems, including crime. But is also a place of hope and of strong initiatives and action arising from the barrier breaking

pursuit of faith, hope and community.

Within the denomination that I am from – Pentecostal Christian – we learn that faith and love are the fundamental truths above all things. It is with that confidence and determination that, at the age of 17, I set up one of the very few faith based voluntary youth organisations within my city, completely led and run by young people aged 12-25.

The Christian Scriptures say that 'faith without works is dead'. It is void/empty. The organisation I set up has faith in seeing progress and change but we want to act now rather than be forced to react in the future. Our long term aim is reflected in the name of the organisation – 'See & Be Transformation Services'. We endeavour to transform people, families and communities by hosting forums for them to see and be their purpose in life, despite its challenges.

Now with over two hundred volunteers and over a thousand young people attending our conferences from around the UK, See and Be Transformation Services has been established by faith to provide young people to see (envision) and be (become) the best they can be in the world. From litter picking programs, to feeding the homeless, from business seminars to mission trips to Ghana, India and Peru, we are putting our faith into action.

We believe that faith gives us the tenacity to pursue our goals and to grasp and manifest the potential of hope. 'Faith that is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen'. Faith keeps a down trodden generation moving, faith keeps us alive, faith brings well being and it is faith that will bring our organisation and visions and efforts into its future.

The exhibition boards within this room give a more in-depth look at faith and social action – a concept I hope inspires you as much as it does me.

## Lakmini Ratnayake

My name is Lakmini and I am a Buddhist with a Sri Lankan background, but was born and bred in London. I am currently in my second year of university studying Biology.

From the ages of 7 to 16 I attended Sunday school weekly at the London Buddhist Vihara. At the age of 16, I began to repay the temple for all the wisdom it had given me by voluntarily helping the monks teach.

Buddhism has always been of key importance when making decisions in my life. Although it didn't occur to me at the time, the fact that I am studying Biology is due to my love of nature and animals, which is something the Buddha himself held dearly, and had influence on me through the several stories of the Buddha's life I was told as a child.

The Buddhist principles of compassion, kindness and selflessness that I was raised with have also contributed towards my work with charity. Although my time through school was mostly spent studying and ballet dancing, I tried to contribute as much to charity as was physically possible. I volunteered with Orange Rockcorps last year, taught dance for 2 years, contributed two weeks to a rural hospital in Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia and also volunteered in my local Oxfam charity shop for 18 months through sixth form.

My work at Oxfam made me want to work internationally with the organisation and although my free time at university is limited, I do hope to volunteer abroad with Oxfam for a year after university. I feel that we in this country are given such opportunity and I would love for others to have the same chances we do.

In this way, I feel that good faith in any religion or belief leads to the care and well being of millions of people around the world. Although I am only one person, improving the lives of one other person is better than improving no lives at all. Religiously inspired

social action can have huge impact on the world.

In the Benjamin Britten lounge there is a special area with stalls from the Department for International Development, faith based aid agencies and One World Week, which I will no doubt be visiting!

It is not just through faith based aid initiatives that I would want to work through, but also through overseas aid and development action, such as Oxfam. My beliefs would not prevent me from working through other organisations and secular agencies.

As the Buddha said: 'I never see what has been done; I only see what remains to be done'. With this in mind, I cannot wait to volunteer abroad for a year and try to make a difference.

Thank you.

## Jasdeep Singh Degun

Good afternoon. My name is Jasdeep Singh Degun. I'm from the Sikh faith and I'm currently studying towards my A-levels. I am the chair of United Faiths (a youth forum linked to the Yorkshire and Humber Faiths Forum – may I add that they have been extremely supportive of us) and have been asked to speak about 'inter faith and young people' and 'faith and culture'.

United Faiths is the first regional inter faith youth council in England. We have seventeen core members between the ages of 16 to 25. They are from seven different faiths. Our core aims are:

- to act as ambassadors to provide a voice for young people of faith;
- to challenge negative faith related stereotypes by educating the youth and
- to celebrate our religious and cultural differences and share commonalities as young people.

As Chair, I feel that United Faiths has successfully organised many events and workshops which have helped towards tackling our aims (for example the Youth, Media and Music conference which was attended by two hundred young people from all over the region). However I'd like to focus on one particular workshop that United Faiths facilitated at a primary school in Northallerton (a predominantly white town in Yorkshire). Many of the children were shocked to hear that I could speak English. One child had remarked "I thought that all Muslims were terrorists". United Faiths were able to educate the young child and clear all the confusion.

I cannot stress how important it is for young people to engage in faith related dialogue. Young people need the help of all inter faith forums/councils to help set up a safe environment for them to do so. Young people are the next generation and are going to be 'running the place' – we could do with a bit of help.

United Faiths are also planning on working with sports as a route to greater understanding between young people of different backgrounds. Sporting Equals, at the exhibition outside, have many examples of inter faith sporting projects. Please do take a look.

Music and other cultural forms are a key way of promoting inter faith understanding. I myself am a keen music student and believe that music is a stimulating way in which young people can exchange 'musical dialogue'.

I and my fellow friends, of different backgrounds, have been asked to present a musical item today. I'd like to request the rest of the 'band' to join me on stage now. May I introduce: Dilraj Lall – *Santoor*; Upneet Singh – *Tabla*; Greg Barnes – *Cajon* and Edward Harrington – *Guitar*. I shall be playing the *Sitar*.

Thank you.



## ANNEX H

### Alphabetical list of exhibitors at launch event

<i>Stand No</i>	<i>Exhibitor</i>	<i>Stand No</i>	<i>Exhibitor</i>
14	Bahá'í Faith	49	Interfaith Kirklees (Schools)
48	British Humanist Association	39	Islamic Relief – Faith Based Aid Agency
17	Buddhist Faith	15	Jain Faith
54	Cambridge Inter-Faith Programme	18	Jewish Faith
53	Oldknow Junior School Inter Faith Drawings	26	Joseph Interfaith Foundation
22	Christian Faith	39	Khalsa Aid – Faith Based Aid Agency
39	Christian Aid – Faith Based Aid Agency	51	Liverpool Community Spirit
27	Christian Muslim Forum	3	Local Inter Faith Initiatives & Events (Inter Faith Network)
24	Christians Aware Interfaith Programme	26	Minorities of Europe
24	Coexistence Trust	23	Multi-Faith Centre, University of Derby
4	Community Development Foundation	39	Muslim Aid – Faith Based Aid Agency
30	Council of Christians and Jews	21	Muslim Faith & Islam Awareness Week
31	Council of Dharmic Faiths	52	National Council for Voluntary Youth Services
1	Department for Communities & Local Government	9	Northwest Forum of Faiths
42	Department for International Development	40	One World Week
25	East of England Faiths Agency	45	Schools Linking Network
5	East of England Faiths Council	50	Scottish Inter Faith Council
34 – 38, 32	Faith Based Regeneration Network	20	Sikh Faith
11	faithnetsouthwest	10	South East England Faiths Forum
7	Faiths Forum for London	33	Sporting Equals
6	Faiths Forum for the East Midlands	29	St Ethelburga's Centre
3	Food & Faith (Inter Faith Network)	28	St Philip's Centre
43	Girlguiding UK	29	Three Faiths Forum
19	Hindu Faith	23	Tony Blair Faith Foundation
31	Hindu Christian Forum	27	United Religions Initiative (UK)
41	HM Government – Work with Faith Communities	50	Inter Faith Council for Wales
44	Inter Faith Learning in the Classroom RE Council and NASACRE	12	West Midlands Faiths Forum
2	Inter Faith Network for the UK	54	Woolf Institute of Abrahamic Faiths
47	Inter Faith Relations on Campus – Chaplaincy	28	World Congress of Faiths
51	Inter Faith Youth Trust	39	World Jewish Relief – Faith Based Aid Agency
25	Interfaith Alliance UK	13	Yorkshire & Humber Faiths Forum
		46	Young Professionals Inter Faith Programmes (Three Faiths Forum)
		16	Zoroastrian Faith

## List of exhibitors by subject groupings

*Stand No Exhibitor*

### **ENGLISH REGIONAL FAITH FORUMS**

- 5 East of England Faiths Council
- 11 faithnetsouthwest
- 7 Faiths Forum for London
- 6 Faiths Forum for the East Midlands
- 9 Northwest Forum of Faiths
- 10 South East England Faiths Forum
- 12 West Midlands Faiths Forum
- 13 Yorkshire & Humber Faiths Forum

### **FAITH**

- 14 Bahá'í
- 17 Buddhist
- 22 Christian
- 19 Hindu
- 15 Jain
- 18 Jewish
- 21 Muslim (and Islam Awareness Week)
- 20 Sikh
- 16 Zoroastrian

### **GOVERNMENT**

- 1 Department for Communities and Local Government
- 41 HM Government – Work with Faith Communities

### **HIGHER EDUCATION**

- 54 Cambridge Inter-Faith Programme
- 47 Inter Faith Relations on Campus – Chaplaincy
- 54 Woolf Institute of Abrahamic Faiths

### **INTER FAITH NETWORK FOR THE UK**

- 2 About us
- 3 Food & Faith
- 3 Local Inter Faith Initiatives & Events

### **INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

- 42 Department for International Development
- 39 Muslim Aid – Faith Based Aid Agency
- 39 Khalsa Aid – Faith Based Aid Agency
- 39 Islamic Relief – Faith Based Aid Agency
- 39 Christian Aid – Faith Based Aid Agency
- 39 World Jewish Relief – Faith Based Aid Agency
- 40 One World Week

*Stand No Exhibitor*

### **NATIONAL INTER FAITH ORGANISATIONS**

- 27 Christian Muslim Forum
- 24 Christians Aware Interfaith Programme
- 24 Coexistence Trust
- 30 Council of Christians and Jews
- 31 Council of Dharmic Faiths
- 25 East of England Faiths Agency
- 31 Hindu Christian Forum
- 25 Interfaith Alliance UK
- 26 Joseph Interfaith Foundation
- 26 Minorities of Europe
- 23 Multi-Faith Centre, University of Derby
- 29 St Ethelburga's Centre
- 28 St Philip's Centre
- 29 Three Faiths Forum
- 23 Tony Blair Faith Foundation
- 27 United Religions Initiative (UK)
- 28 World Congress of Faiths

### **NATIONAL INTER FAITH LINKING BODIES**

- 50 Scotland Inter Faith Council
- 50 Inter-Faith Council for Wales

### **PUBLIC BODY**

- 4 Community Development Foundation

### **RELIGIOUS / NON RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE**

- 48 British Humanist Association

### **SCHOOLS**

- 53 Children's Inter Faith Drawings – Oldknow Junior School, Birmingham
- 44 Inter Faith Learning in the Classroom – The RE Council for England and Wales and the National Association of SACREs
- 45 Schools Linking Network
- 49 Interfaith Kirklees (Schools)

### **SOCIAL ACTION PROJECTS**

- 34 – 38, 32 Faith Based Regeneration Network

### **SPORT**

- 33 Sporting Equals

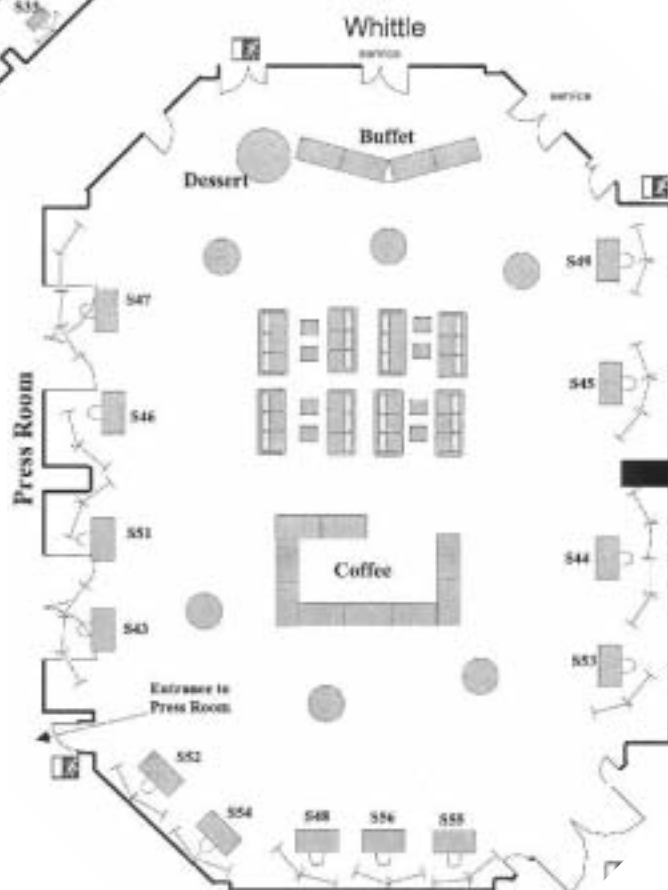
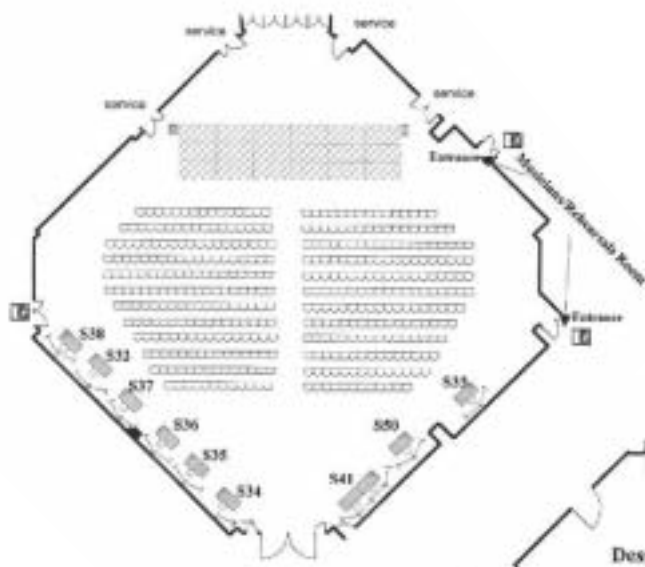
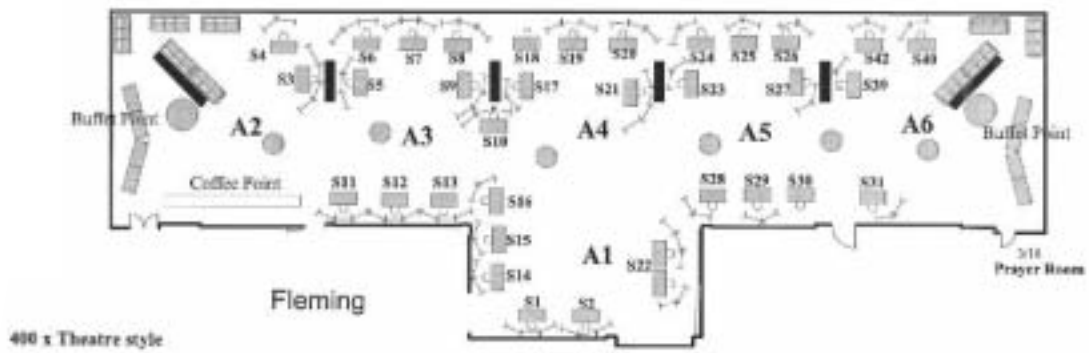
### **YOUTH**

- 43 Girlguiding UK
- 51 Inter Faith Youth Trust
- 51 Liverpool Community Spirit
- 52 National Council for Voluntary Youth Services
- 46 Young Professionals Inter Faith Programmes (Three Faiths Forum)

# Launch event exhibition maps

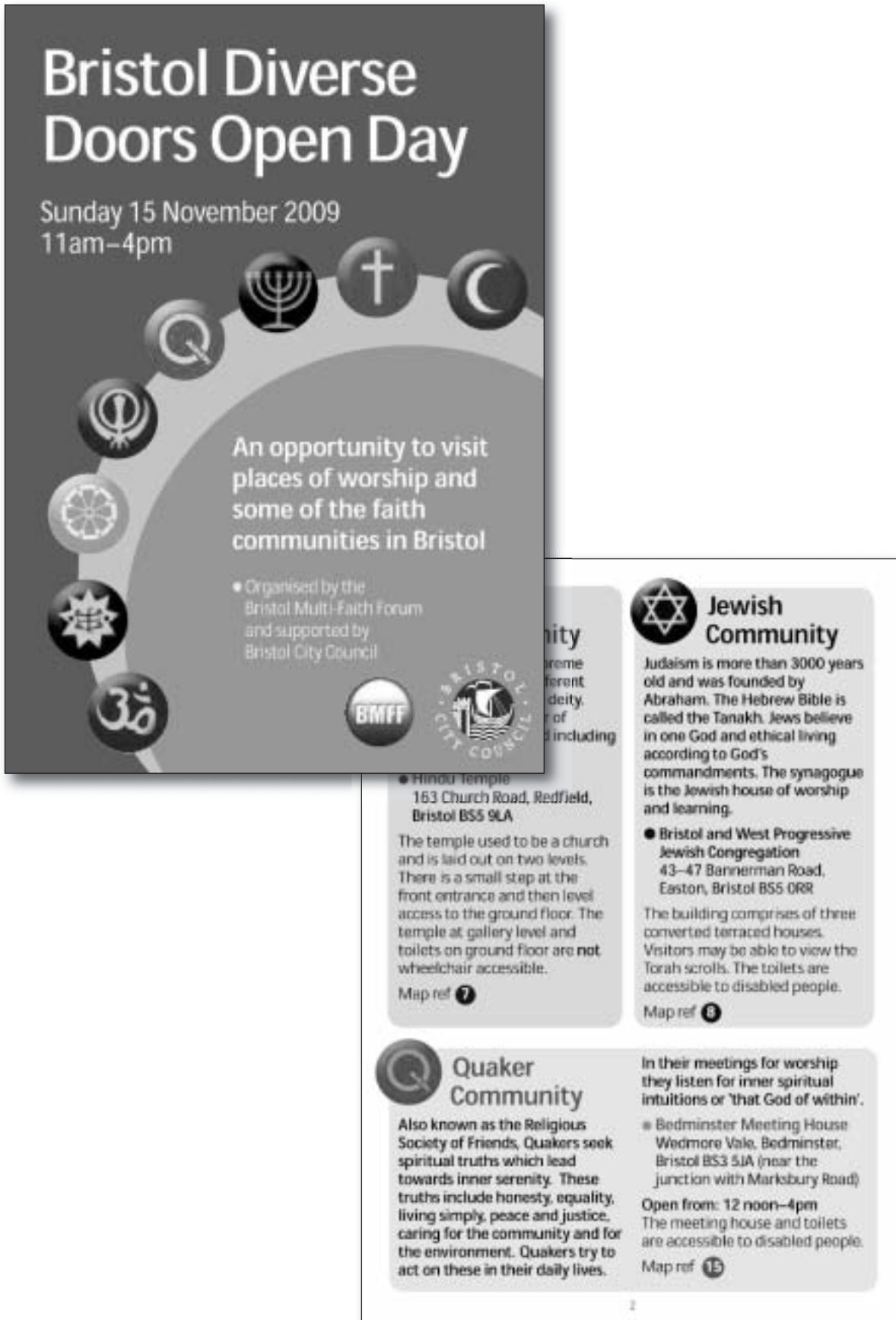
## Communities and Local Government Event

### Benjamin Britten Lounge



# ANNEX I

## Bristol Diverse Doors leaflet



**Bristol Diverse Doors Open Day**

Sunday 15 November 2009  
11am–4pm

An opportunity to visit places of worship and some of the faith communities in Bristol

- Organised by the Bristol Multi-Faith Forum and supported by Bristol City Council

Logos for various faiths: Hindu Om, Sikh Khanda, Quaker Q, Jewish Star of David, Christian Cross, Muslim Crescent, Buddhist Wheel, Jain Hand, and others.

Logos for BMFF and Bristol City Council.

**Hindu Temple**  
163 Church Road, Redfield, Bristol BS5 9LA

The temple used to be a church and is laid out on two levels. There is a small step at the front entrance and then level access to the ground floor. The temple at gallery level and toilets on ground floor are not wheelchair accessible.

Map ref **7**

**Jewish Community**

Judaism is more than 3000 years old and was founded by Abraham. The Hebrew Bible is called the Tanakh. Jews believe in one God and ethical living according to God's commandments. The synagogue is the Jewish house of worship and learning.

- Bristol and West Progressive Jewish Congregation**  
43–47 Bannerman Road, Easton, Bristol BS5 0RR

The building comprises of three converted terraced houses. Visitors may be able to view the Torah scrolls. The toilets are accessible to disabled people.

Map ref **8**

**Quaker Community**

In their meetings for worship they listen for inner spiritual intuitions or 'that God of within'.

- Bedminster Meeting House**  
Wedmore Vale, Bedminster, Bristol BS3 5JA (near the junction with Marksbury Road)

Open from: 12 noon–4pm  
The meeting house and toilets are accessible to disabled people.

Map ref **15**

1

# Burnley and Pendle Inter Faith Week poster

**Interfaith Week 15th - 21st November**

**Burnley & Pendle Faith Centre**  
Barden Lane, Burnley, BB10 1JD

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**Celebrating and Showcasing**

**Religious Education In Burnley**







Are you interested in what your child is being taught in RE?  
Are you a faith leader, and want to know more about RE in Primary  
Schools?  
Have you ever wondered what modern RE is?

**Come and find out at the Faith Centre  
on Burnley Campus,  
15th - 21st of November**

Displays of work and open Seminars on:  
Tuesday 17th November 1.30pm and also at 7.30pm  
All welcome

 **Burnley** **Burnley & Pendle Faith Centre** 

Also Supported by

and the Methodist, Baptist and United Reformed Churches In Burnley

# Harrow Inter Faith Council and Harrow Council 'Religions and Law in Modern Society'

**Saturday 21st November**  
**6 pm - 9 pm**  
 Civic Centre  
 Council Chamber  
 Station Road  
 Harrow  
 HA1 2XF

**An event to celebrate the diversity of faith in Harrow**

A distinguished panel of speakers from all the faiths of Harrow will talk on 'Religion and Law in a Modern Society' and answer questions about faith and belief. Limited capacity. First come first served.

**Harrow Inter Faith Council and Harrow Council's contribution to National Inter Faith Week 2009**

## RELIGION AND THE LAW IN MODERN SOCIETY

...counter  
 ...principles of  
 Non-  
 ...ity.

He emphasize that Unity is Peace. Zoroaster chooses the fire as the symbol of Enlightenment and Unity.

In the 2nd part of our Jashan ritual, we bless the ruler of the land for protecting and looking after his people with his wise laws. In this way religion, acknowledge the civic laws of the land.

Living in British society it is inevitable that we will pick up what it has to offer but we must make sure we balance this with what religion has to give. Every culture has something special to offer us. It is extremely important to give proper religious education to our children. There is nothing worse than our children grow up with conflicting feelings as to who they are. Children need to have pride in their religion, history and culture so they do not shy away from it.

From Zoroastrian point of view one might ask is the Zoroastrian culture so very different from the British culture we

find ourselves in. Certainly, our religion is different. So too are the various customs and ceremonies we perform, the food we eat and the dress some of us wear on certain occasions. It is these things will make the difference.

Civil Laws in Modern Society are there for the protection of citizens but in most of the laws there are always some loopholes by which guilty persons can walk away and nothing can be done about it. In contrast, religious laws based on truth, righteousness, justice always shine out.

I conclude with one of Prophet Zoroaster's cardinal laws given to His followers:

Happiness comes to him who gives Happiness to others. Only through love and service for others can one gain Divine strength and fulfil God's plan.

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# Hertsmere Inter Faith Week leaflet



**What's happening November 15<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> 2009**

**Plan your visit**

Interfaith Week events are open to people of any specific faith. Members of the public of no faith background, or humanistic beliefs are entirely welcome to attend and/or be involved any of our events. Only through education and communication can we break down the barriers dividing our society. Interfaith Week is a great opportunity to start. So get involved!

For more information, or to become a part of Hertsmere Interfaith Week, please contact Event Co-ordinator, Deborah Berenson [Interfaith.herts@gmail.com](mailto:Interfaith.herts@gmail.com) 07849305785

If you would like to make a booking with the Com.unity Choir, contact Chel Revens, Musical Director 01442 400535 or 07958 371119

**Monday November 15<sup>th</sup>**

**Day of faiths**

2.00 pm to 5.00 pm

Come along to this public event and experience the breadth of diversity within Hertsmere. Enjoy a mix of performances, interactive displays, and a variety of foods representing the different faith communities in the local area.

The Sheshay United Jewish Community encourage you to visit their stall, to try traditional Jewish festive foods, learn how to blow the shofar and take part in Mitzvah Day - a special charity designed to offer people of all faiths an opportunity to volunteer and do good deeds.

**Borehamwood**

**Wednesday November 18<sup>th</sup>**

**Let's talk about faith**

Radiett and Bushey Reform Synagogue, 158 Watling Street, Radiett, WD7 7AA

6.00 pm

Angrier discussion between teenagers of different faiths in the Hertsmere community, enabling interfaith dialogue and strengthening future relations. A structured opportunity for community members aged 14 and up to express their faith and learn about others. (Please contact Event Co-ordinator in advance if looking to be involved)

**Radiett**

**Monday November 16<sup>th</sup>**

**A performance by the Com.unity Choir**

Elm Court Youth & Community Centre  
363 Mutton Lane,  
Potters Bar, EN6 3DP

7.00 pm

The Com.unity choir are celebrated for exploring diversity with an emphasis on togetherness. Watch them perform, and enjoy some light refreshments. Please contact Event Co-ordinator in advance if planning to attend as space is limited. (Details on reverse).

**Potters Bar**

**Saturday November 21<sup>st</sup>**

**A Controversial Debate**

*Do faith schools promote religious intolerance?*

Hosted by the Bushey Interfaith Forum

Bushey and District United Synagogue, 177/8 Sparrow Herne, Bushey Heath, WD23 1AJ

8.00 pm

By keeping faiths separate in schools, are we in fact keeping people divided? Have the chance to express your opinions on the growing number of faith schools in the wider community.

**Bushey**

# Kirklees Faiths Forum flyer

## Kirklees Faiths Forum

For info & bookings contact Kirklees Faiths Forum  
 Al Hikmah Centre, 28 Track Road, Batley, WF17 7AA  
 Tel: 01924 324 836 - Fax: 01924 500 556  
[info@kirkleesfaithforum.org.uk](mailto:info@kirkleesfaithforum.org.uk)  
[www.kirkleesfaithforum.org.uk](http://www.kirkleesfaithforum.org.uk)

Please let us know if you plan to attend an event!

**ALL EVENTS ARE FREE!**

## Faith Centres

**DEVONSHIRE MINSTER** - Fishworth Road, Dewsbury, WF12 6DD

**GHURU NANAK GURDWARA** - Prospect Street, Huddersfield, HD1 2BK  
 \*Only open Wed, Thur, Fri 1-2pm\*


**HUDDERSFIELD PARISH CHURCH** - Bryan Street, Huddersfield, HD1 1BA

**MASJID-E-MOOR** - 80 Oak Lane, Batley, WF17 7TN

**MASJID CHARISA** - 73 Victoria Road, Lockwood, Huddersfield, HD1 3RT

**SRI SITA RAMA TEMPLE (HINDU)** - 20 Zetland Street, Huddersfield, HD1 2FA

**VAJRAPANI BUDDHIST CENTRE** - Wheelhouse Terrace, Sinky, Huddersfield, HD2 2UY




For more information about each faith centre, please visit [www.interfaithkirklees.org.uk/](http://www.interfaithkirklees.org.uk/)  
 For more info about events taking place across the region during Interfaith Week, please visit: <http://www.interfaithweek.org/press.com>

## Kirklees Faiths Forum

# Inter Faith Week 15 - 21 November 2009

Join us to celebrate the first ever  
National Interfaith Week!

A week long festival of performances, workshops, dialogues and debates organised by Kirklees Faiths Forum, with help from the rich and diverse faith communities of Kirklees.

Events are running all week in North and South Kirklees, including:

- Christian Gospel Singing
- Hindu Devotional Hymns
- Jewish Bread Baking
- Sikh Sword Fighting, Feasting...and fasting!
- Muslim Poetry & Spoken Word
- Buddhist Meditation
- Interfaith discussion and dialogue events
- Drama
- Quizzes
- Visits to places of worship
- And more! See inside for details!

National Inter Faith Week is an interfaith network UK and local government initiative organised at a local level by people and groups holding events to promote understanding between people of different faiths and beliefs.

The aims of Interfaith Week are:

- to strengthen good inter-faith relations
- to recognise achievements of the different faith-communities in the UK
- celebrating and building on the contribution which their members make to their neighbourhoods and to wider society; and
- to increase understanding between people of religious and non-religious belief

For more information please visit [www.interfaithweek.org.uk](http://www.interfaithweek.org.uk)

## Interfaith Week 15-21st November Schedule

**Thursday 14th Nov**

### Piwali Celebrations

Huddersfield University Hindu Society have organised a Piwali Dinner, including a play telling the story of Diwali, the Festival of Lights celebrated by Hindus, Sikhs and Jains. The evening will also include dance performances, food, information stalls and more.

**7pm @ Sikh Leisure Centre, Prospect Street, Huddersfield HD1 2BK**



**Thursday 15th Nov**

### Faith & Spirituality: An Evening of Inspiration!

Join us to enjoy a meal, a spoken word performance from an inter-faith duo, followed by a panel of speakers, including representatives from various Kirklees' faith communities who will talk on the topic of Faith and Spirituality.

**8.30pm Arrival, Registration and Buffet Meal**

**7pm Event begins @ Huddersfield University, Canal Side West Building, Queensgate, HD1 2BA.**

Parking is available. Contact us to book your place!



**Friday 15th Nov**

### Two days of fun and interactive workshops taking place at the Brian Jackson Centre in Huddersfield

We kick off with **Bread Singing** from members of the Seventh Day Adventist Church, a black-majority church in Oakland Moor. Lunch is provided, followed by an afternoon workshop of **Jewish Bread Baking**, in which a member of the Jewish community will explain the story behind matzah. We planed bread eaten on the Jewish festival, and you'll join in and make your loaf!

On Tuesday morning there will be a display of **Sikh Sword Fighting** - members of the Sikh community will show us with a demonstration of traditional sword fighting. Again lunch will be included, and in the afternoon we have **Hindu Devotional Hymn singing**, which includes a performance of traditional hymns from the Hindu community followed by a chance to learn about traditional instruments and more. The workshops are **FREE**, including lunch, and you are welcome to attend one, two or all of the workshops, but please book in and register your place in advance (see contact details) as we can't be held on the reverse of the night!

**10 - 2 @ Brian Jackson Centre, New North Parade, Huddersfield HD1 2JP**

**Friday 16th Nov**

### Plodge a Pound & Fast for a Day

We invite you to fast for a day, and to make a suggested donation of £1 which we are referring to give to the local hospice, towards the new renal unit in Dewsbury Hospital and the intensive care unit in Huddersfield Hospital. Learn a bit about the spiritual significance of fasting, and plodge a pound!

If everyone in the council joins us, we will raise £16,000!

There will be a communal fast opening feast at **Al Hikmah Centre, Batley WF16 7 TAA, 2-6pm**. Please contact us to book a table.



**Thursday 19th Nov**

### Buddhist Meditation for Inner Peace

Visit Huddersfield Buddhist Centre, a member of Buddhist Centre in Huddersfield. Their Peace Café will be open for evening and afternoon tea from 1-3pm, and Padma, the teacher at the centre, will guide you through a meditation for inner peace, beginning at 1.30pm.

**Wapwood Kelzanga Buddhist Centre, Wheelhouse Terrace, Sinky, Huddersfield, HD2 2UY**

Please contact us to book your place!



**Friday 20th Nov**

### Huddersfield Interfaith Council's Interfaith Quiz Night

Faith, food and fun for everyone, children and adults, all faiths or none!

**8.30pm @ St Thomas' Church, Huddersfield**



**Monday 22nd Nov**

### Kirklees Faiths Forum AGM

Everybody is welcome at our AGM, which will be followed by a meal with a 'flavour of communion'.

**6.30pm at Ashby's Restaurant, 56-60 Bradford Road, Dewsbury, WF12 2DU**

Please contact us if you would like to attend.

**ALL EVENTS ARE FREE!**

**All week:** Kirklees Faith Centres will be open from 1-5pm everyday, for visitors to enter and explore a living, breathing faith community first hand. Please see back leaf for details!



## Leicestershire Inter Faith Week poster



The poster features a black background with white text and symbols. At the top left is the 'one leicester' logo, and at the top right is the 'LEICESTERSHIRE together' logo with a stylized building icon. The central text reads 'National Inter Faith Week 2009' in a large, bold font, with 'November 15th - 21st' below it. The text is surrounded by various religious symbols including a Khanda, Star of David, Om symbol, Cross, Wheel of Dharma, Yin-Yang, Crescent and Star, and a hand. A grey banner below the title contains the text: 'Join in with your local communities to celebrate England's first ever National Inter Faith Week!'. Below this is a paragraph of text and a bulleted list of activities.

**one**  
leicester

LEICESTERSHIRE  
*together*

National  
**Inter Faith**  
Week 2009  
November 15th - 21st

Join in with your local communities to celebrate  
England's first ever National Inter Faith Week!

A number of unique and exciting activities are taking place in and around Leicester and Leicestershire from Saturday 14th November to Sunday 22nd November, to help us demonstrate mutual respect and understanding between our diverse community groups.

Activities and events taking place during National Inter Faith Week include:

- A Faiths Exhibition in the Highcross Shopping Centre every day of the week
- 'Open Doors' at different places of worship across the City and County, throughout the week
- Opportunities to sign up to an Inter Faith Charter
- Launch of Women's Inter-Faith Sporting Events at St Philip's Centre
- A Hindu-Christian Dinner at St Philips Church Hall
- An Inter-Faith Football Tournament at Judge Meadow Community College
- A 'Feast of Faiths' in Loughborough
- Exhibitions at Leicester Secular Society
- An Inter Faith Week Launch Event at County Hall

[www.leics.gov.uk/faith](http://www.leics.gov.uk/faith)

# Northampton Inter Faith Forum Inter Faith Week leaflet

**NORTHAMPTON  
INTER FAITH FORUM**

**CELEBRATES  
INTER FAITH WEEK**  
November 15th - 21st 2009



**A WEEK OF OPPORTUNITIES  
TO FIND OUT MORE  
ABOUT THE RICH DIVERSITY  
OF FAITHS IN NORTHAMPTON**

**All events,  
Sunday - Friday are free**

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> November</b></p> <p><b>an extended program</b> 12 noon - 4pm <i>come when you can - stay as long as you can - do what you can</i></p> <p><i>An activity for all faiths to participate.</i></p> <p><i>A Mitrak is simply an act of good will as a way of fulfilling our common religious obligation to do charitable works.</i></p> <p><i>The chosen project is internal and external work at The Brougham (Newsp) Centre Barnsme Road, Furze Copse, NN4 8AD</i></p> <p><i>Please come in old clothes and bring cleaning materials &amp;/or gardening equipment.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>November</b></p> <p><b>Northampton Inter Faith Forum Biological Society:</b> Abbey Centre Chapel (Overlook C, Low 10/4 Rd) 7.30 p.m.</p> <p><b>Rev. Dr. Alan Spence</b> (Minister: Abington Avenue United Reformed Church)</p> <p><b>"The Christian Theory of atonement"</b></p> <p><i>This will be followed by time for questions and discussion and refreshments.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Friday 20<sup>th</sup> November</b></p> <p><b>The Baha'i Community of Northampton</b> The Hensbury Hill Centre, Harkness Hill, NN4 9QX.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>7.30 p.m.</b></p> <p><i>A celebration of the Birth of Baha'u'llah, the Prophet founder of the Baha'i Faith.</i></p> <p><i>An informal and inspiring entertainment of prayer, music, audio visual presentation and storytelling based on the central theme of Baha'u'llah's message: that of unity, love and goodwill to all of humankind.</i></p> <p><i>Set in an idyllic farmland setting, the celebration will include performances from talented, professional Baha'i artists from across the county.</i></p> <p><i>Delicious refreshments will follow the performance.</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Monday 16<sup>th</sup> November</b></p> <p><b>Northampton Hebrew Congregation</b> 7.00 - 9.00 pm 95-97 Ovenshine Road, Northampton NN1 3PW</p>  <p><b>The synagogue will offer three activities</b> Setting up a synagogue? The How and Why. Writing the old fashioned way: Use a quill pen and ink and learn to write your name in Hebrew A Kosher cooking demonstration and tasting.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> November</b></p> <p><b>Society of Friends peace event</b> 7.00 - 9.00 p.m.</p> <p>The Meeting House, Wellington Street, Northampton NN1 3AS.</p> <p><b>7.00 p.m. to 7.45</b> Refreshments and an opportunity to view the Peace Exhibition.</p> <p><b>7.45 to 8.30</b> Short Presentations of Peace Testimonies and its practical application. With small group discussion to share views of peace of different faiths.</p> <p><b>8.30 to 9.00</b> Refreshments, plus informal chat and another chance to look at the Peace Exhibition.</p> <p>Enquiries: Tel: 01604 717029</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Monday 16<sup>th</sup> - Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup></b></p> <p><b>Children's Art Exhibition at The Guildhall.</b> 10.00 a.m. - 4.00 p.m.</p> <p>The theme is <b>'Respect, Understanding and Friendship'</b> essential aspects of inter-faith work.</p> <p>Artwork from children of the local Hindu, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh communities will be on display.</p> 

# Peterborough Inter Faith Exhibition poster

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# Inter-Faith Exhibition

To mark the first national  
Inter Faith Week 15-21 November 2009

Faith groups and schools in Peterborough have been invited to display information about faith, inter-faith work and other related items on:

**Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> November**

**10am – 4pm**

Reception Room, Peterborough Town Hall,  
Bridge Street, Peterborough

**Faith and the Environment discussion**  
An opportunity to bring faith groups and other environmental organizations together to look at what environmental messages mean for different faith communities including climate change, waste and recycling, transport and green spaces



For further information please ring: 01733 207337  
or e-mail [sue.rampal@gpp-peterborough.org.uk](mailto:sue.rampal@gpp-peterborough.org.uk)


\*\*\*\*\*






# Welwyn Hatfield Inter Faith Week poster



**INTER FAITH MATTERS**  
**WELWYN HATFIELD INTER FAITH GROUP**  
**National Inter Faith Week 15-21 Nov. 2009**


To mark the first national **Inter Faith Week**, designed to strengthen good relations between faiths, and increase awareness of their contribution to society, the Welwyn Hatfield Interfaith Group is hosting several events **open to all**.


 **Sun 15<sup>th</sup>** Invitation to the Friends' Meeting House, Handside Lane, **10.10 am**


 **Sun 15<sup>th</sup>** Invitation to the Christian "Permission to Speak" Discussion Group on "Faith & Creation", Backhouse Room, Handside Lane. **4.00pm** 


 **Mon 16<sup>th</sup>** Illustrated Jewish Shabbat Service, Synagogue, Handside Lane. **7.30 pm to 8.30 pm** Please advise [info@wghatfield.org.uk](mailto:info@wghatfield.org.uk) with name and postcode

 **Tues 17<sup>th</sup>** Bring & Share Meal, Focolare Centre for Unity, 69 Parkway, **7 for 7.30 pm**. RSVP to your community or parish Interfaith Rep. 


 **Wed 18<sup>th</sup>** Invitation from the East of England Faiths Council to the Cambridge Union Society Building **2.30 pm** Networking of regional interfaith groups & **8.00 pm** open debate  
**'This house believes that faith is essential to the democratic debate'**.  
Contact: Phone 01223 421606; Fax 01223 421839; [eeec@cambcatalyst.co.uk](mailto:eeec@cambcatalyst.co.uk)

 **Wed 18<sup>th</sup>** An Introduction to Methodism, the Methodist Church, Ludwick Way **7.00pm to 9.00pm**

 **Fri 20<sup>th</sup>** Muslim Friday Prayers, Ludwick Way Family Centre **12.45 pm to 2.00 pm**. Dress Code: Covered arms and legs; Ladies covered head

 **Sat 21<sup>st</sup>** Baha'i evening of Music & Reflection, Free Church, Church Road (opposite Sainsbury's) **7.30 pm**

**'Open Door'**, an opportunity to visit places of worship within our faith communities. Details to be announced in the local press.

For further information please contact: Christine Novelli  
Email: [christine.novelli@nthworld.com](mailto:christine.novelli@nthworld.com) or Tel. 07814 892273 

West Midlands Faith Forum / Wolverhampton Faith and Regeneration Network Inter Faith Week event poster

# Climate Change.....a matter of faith?

Celebrating the official close of Interfaith Week

**Guest Speaker: Mark Dowd**

*In 2001, Mark became a national figure in front of the camera, fronting a number of award-winning documentaries on Channel Four, including Children of Abraham: a post 9/11 journey through the monotheistic faiths and Tsunami: Where was God? He was awarded the prestigious 'Religious Broadcaster of the Year' by the Churches' Media Council in June 2006. His most recent film, GOD IS GREEN, which challenged the world's faiths over climate change, aired in February 2007. The title of Mark's speech will be: 'The Climate Crisis: is God trying to tell us something?'*

## Featuring Yasus Afari

Yasus Afari - artist, author, philosopher and motivational speaker, but he is best known as a poet - an 'artical', Rastafarian dub poet. His poetry has also brought him international acclaim. Yasus has been given the Honour of being an Ambassador for the Council of the Parliament of the World's Religions

## Speaker Maud Grainger Faith and Climate Change Project Manager

Faith and Climate Change has been working with Faiths across the West Midlands for 4 years supporting them as they respond to the environmental challenges of the day.



**Buffet Provided: Displays: Networking:  
Entrance is Free: Everyone Welcome**

**Wolverhampton Faith and Regeneration Network**



Supported by: West Midlands Faith Forum and Wolverhampton Interfaith Council  
Funded By: WMC Communities of Interest and WCC

**WFRN**

Many Faiths. One Vision



**Saturday 21<sup>st</sup>  
November**

**5.00 - 8.00pm**  
(Main event starts at 6pm)

**The Workspace  
All Saints Road  
(Next to All Saints Church)  
Wolverhampton  
WV2 1EL**

Parking available

Tel: 01902 389918  
to confirm your place.

# ELAWAP website Inter Faith Week feature

Sign up for our newsletter

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The East London  
Waste Authority  
Partnership  
website

HOME
WHERE YOU LIVE
ABOUT RECYCLING
REDUCE & REUSE
SCHOOLS
NEWS & EVENTS
GET INVOLVED

**News**

- Community Recycling Champions Week!
- Join us for Computer Awareness week
- Schools go green by collecting used Christmas cards
- Market traders and Recycling: New pen fences to get the waste composting
- Swap your Treasures at a Give & Take Day!
- 10 new recycling banks in Newham
- Rise Park Infants School are Eco Champions!
- Redbridge Recycled Rainforest
- Charity Clothes Collections for Havering Primary Schools
- Competitions for Schools in Havering
- Waste Minimization Prize Draw in Havering
- Household batteries now recycled at MFCs
- Recycling Superheroes save the day in Redbridge!
- Summer Recycling Roadshow
- New volunteers in school in East London
- Love Food, Hate Waste in Havering
- Recycle Week

Events

**News**

### Community Art Project - Recycled Rainforest

30 November



**"Faiths unite in stewardship of the earth"**

To celebrate the first ever "Inter Faith Week" the recycling team organised a community art project which aimed to unite people of all faiths, in stewardship of the earth. The giant rainforest collage was created from old clothes and fabrics which were kindly donated by LWB Textile Recycling. The old clothes were cut up and recycled into a collage.

The rainforest has been based at Ilford Central Library and has attracted many visitors. People of all ages, abilities, backgrounds and faiths have come along and joined together to create the collage - residents of all ages from 2 to 92, hobby makers, artists, Christians, Muslims, Hindus and many more have all worked together creating trees, flowers, butterflies, monkeys and many other creatures for the rainforest. Recycling officers have also visited local faith schools and faith groups during the week to create more animals!

The project idea was based upon the fact that all faiths have a common belief that it is important to preserve and care for the earth upon which we all live. The collage was surrounded by extracts from a range of religious scriptures. The extracts were all about the importance of looking after the environment. The rainforest scene depicts one of the many ecosystems which are fragile, being endangered by the problems of climate change and is important to us all.

Sarah Partridge, one of the Recycling Officers running the event said: "The project was a great success. The rainforest has attracted a huge amount of attention and a great surge of visitors. So many creatures have been made for the rainforest that there is hardly room for them all! It has been nice to see people from all walks of life working together on this joint project, and making the common link between our faiths and the importance of looking after our planet. We can definitely say that our first interfaith week has been a great success and we would like to run something similar again soon."

**CALENDAR**

➔ Recycle For Your Community event

24 May

**MORE EVENTS >>**

# Birmingham Mail Inter Faith Week article

**BIRMINGHAM**  
**Mail.net**

Home News Sport Forums Videos & Pics Views and Blogs What's On Lifestyle Christmas\*

Birmingham Schools Sandwell Schools Solihull Schools Dudley schools Wolverhampton Schools Walsall schools

A Levels and university advice

5°C - 23 kph

## School of the week - Corpus Christi Primary, Stechford

Nov 24 2009 By Tony Collins [Add a comment](#) [Recommend](#)



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**Related Tags**

[corpus christi primary school](#)  
(What's this)

CHILDREN at a church primary school in Birmingham have been learning all about other religions and cultures as part of a special inter-faith event.

Pupils at Corpus Christi Catholic Primary in Lyttleton Road, Stechford, have been embracing the world faiths of Islam, Buddhism, Judaism and Sikhism, as well as Christianity.

During the course of the week-long project, groups of children were able to visit independent Muslim primary school, Al-Hijrah, in Bordesley Green to watch a performance given by Year 4 pupils there.

The theme of the 'Walk the Talk' performance was about recognising our common humanity, celebrating diversity and respecting each other.

This was followed by a return visit by children from Al-Hirjah School, who spent last Friday morning at Corpus Christi during which the two sets of pupils came together in a multi-skills sporting competition. The whole event concluded with a planting ceremony in Corpus Christi's grounds, with a shrub representing each of the major world faiths.

Head teacher Barry Desmond said the aim was to symbolise common concern for the one planet that everyone shares. He said: "We decided to hold an inter-faith week as part of a national event, which is the first of its kind across the country.

"It has involved children working with different faiths across the city, with a number of people coming into school to do assemblies, visit classes and work with children in lessons. The children have also visited different places of worship, such as temples. What we are trying to do is develop understanding and appreciation of all faiths and cultures so the children can take that into later life."

He added: "Hopefully the week will offer the children and ourselves a great opportunity to broaden knowledge and understanding of world faiths, multicultural practices and traditions, while at the same time promote community cohesion both within our school and between our school and local communities." The inter-faith week was opened by the Bishop of Aston, with further visitors ranging from bhangra and African dancers to traditional Mehndi artists.

Corpus Christi, which recently took delivery of around £30,000 of new playground equipment, also took the opportunity to raise money for the BBC's Blue Peter Appeal in aid of children with cleft palates. This has involved turning unwanted shirts into surgical gowns.



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