



**“All that we are is the result of what we have thought.”
(Buddha)**

What an amazing Interfaith Week this year! The Interfaith forums in Surrey have done an amazing job to keep events going online, some of which have been reported in this newsletter. Not quite the same as physical events but I can testify to the positivity and uplift in all of these events.

Some important information and updates on page 4 for faith organisations from 2 December. There is an important questionnaire for faith communities and some interesting reports on page 5; and upcoming events on page 7 onwards.

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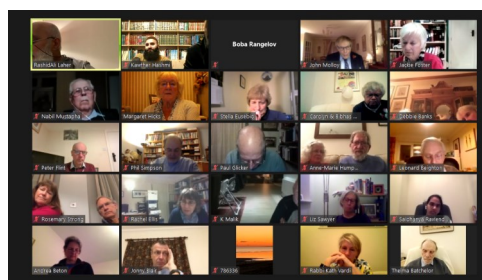
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Religions during Covid-19: Spiritual and Practical

Elmbridge Multi Faith Forum held a virtual event (zoom) on 10th November, during Interfaith Week, to hear from different faith perspectives on how they have coped during this time both practically and spiritually.

Rabbi Kath Vardi from the North West Surrey Synagogue spoke about how community is a Jewish requirement and the challenges with online services. She also mentioned the advantages to online services and being innovative in the present time.

Rev Jonny Blair from Walton Parish highlighted the work of churches during the lockdown including helping with food banks, befriending, and helping those who



Main Faith Festivals in December 2020

8: Bodhi Day (Buddhist)
11-18: Hanukah (Jewish)
24: Christmas Eve (Christian)
25: Christmas Day (Christian)
26: Zaratosht No Diso (Zoroastrian)

For a description of the festivals please visit: [Religious Festivals](#)

had fallen through the cracks of social services. He said the Bible mentions how it is more blessed to give than receive and psychologists say it is good for your mental health to give.

Mohammad Habib from Shah Jahan Mosque, Woking, said Covid-19 served as a reminder that God has power over everything and it was an opportunity to reconnect with faith. The Mosque opened a food bank and served the local community and surrounding area 24/7 with over 1500 food parcels delivered. Habib said, all educational classes are being held virtually.

Saidhanya Raviendrakumar from the Sri Raja Rajeswari Amman Temple spoke about missing their annual Chariot festival which is usually held in public and other festivals which were not able to go ahead. The temple live streamed services to around 300 families and hold youth classes online. She said Hindu scripture say 'health is wealth' and how this crazy time made her realise God really is within us.

John Molloy from the Shinyo En Buddhist Temple said the head of Shinyo En live streamed messages of encouragement and meditation; people came together in unified prayer to overcome the pandemic. He said people could make online prayer requests for all those who died or ill, pray for the safety of front line workers and containment of the situation.

The event was concluded with an interactive Q&A session with 40 participants. Recordings of the talks are available here: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCEBuPCCPktUwnsWyr3BTDBA/videos>

What are Religions Doing About Race Inequality?

Woking People of Faith (WPOF) held a Zoom webinar on Thursday 12th November during Interfaith week to discuss the topic of 'What are Religions Doing About Race Inequality?' Simon Trick, Chair of WPOF welcomed 46 people and handed over to Donovan Blair, who gave an introduction on his parents' background in Jamaica and then told us how life was for them in England.

Panellists included speakers from the Jewish, Christian, Muslim and Baha'i faith.

Rabbi Danny Rich said the Jewish faith has Jews of all races. They teach us to love thy neighbour and to not mistreat a stranger as this is a form of blasphemy.

Rev Paul Davis said Christians love God and neighbour and all are one in Christ.

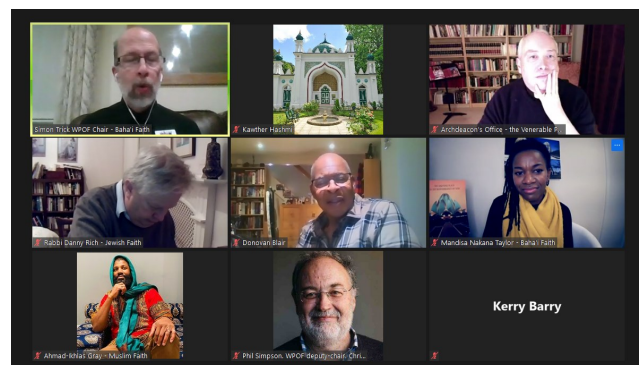
Ahmed-Ikhlal Gray gave the message from Islam that nations and tribes are to know each other and are not to despise each other. There is no superiority over Arab or non-Arabs, or white over non-white.

Mandisa Taylor, who practises the Baha'i faith gave a beautiful analogy of how there are different shades in one garden and we are all created from the same dust.

Simon then gave an update on WPOF's upcoming events which can be found Here: www.wpof.org.uk and Facebook page.

He then handed over to attendees who asked questions to the panellists. A wide range of questions were submitted. The feedback received was extremely positive and recordings can be found here:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCEBuPCCPktUwnsWyr3BTDBA/videos>



Get Surrey reported on the event with a focus on Donovan's story, which can be found [here](#).

Donovan recommends further reading for those interested:

- Natives: Race & Class in the Ruins of Empire by Akala
- Black & British: A Forgotten History by David Olusoga
- Windrush by Mike & Trevor Phillips
- Homecoming: Voices of the Windrush Generation by Colin Grant

Mental Health and Wellbeing in Challenging Times

Guildford and Godalming Interfaith Forum held their annual Multifaith Service on November 15th, with the theme "Mental Health in Challenging Times"

Speakers were from the Hindu, Jewish, Christian, Muslim and Bahá'í communities, each of them speaking about the strength gained from their own Scriptures, and their personal experiences in life, with many parallels.

Before each presentation there was a devotional item, beginning with a Hindu dance choreographed and performed by Nishi Joshi-Batt, a video featuring the Jewish 'Shalom Eleichem', another with the Taizé chant 'Ubi Caritas et Amor', a recitation from Imam Hashmi at the Shah Jahan Mosque, and performance of a Bahá'í Healing Prayer from South Africa.



The speakers – Meeta Joshi, Joanna Hahessy, Wayne Hawkins, Kawther Akhtar-Hashmi and Mandisa Nkaba-Taylor lit virtual candles and held a moment's reflection between presentations.

The Mayor of Godalming, Councillor Penny Rivers, made some rousing closing comments about the path we are now treading together, quoting the 23rd Psalm and urging us to 'Walk on with Hope in your heart.'

Participants were invited to send donations to the local Mental Health Charity – CATALYST:

www.catalystsupport.org.uk/

This was the first of many words of appreciation from an elderly supporter: "I have just finished watching . It was really lovely, all the speakers brought us such kindness and help. Thank you for arranging it so well."

Recordings of the speakers can be found [here](#)

Interfaith Network UK (IFN UK) – Feedback on Interfaith Week

IFN UK would like your feedback to help them report on Interfaith Week and highlight its impact and to develop next year's Interfaith Week. To complete the survey please visit::

<https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/IFW2020/>

Update on COVID-19 restrictions and places of worship

On 23 November the UK Government announced that national restrictions in England will end on 2 December and local tier restrictions will then be in place.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/local-restriction-tiers-what-you-need-to-know>

Places of worship will be permitted to re-open for collective worship, in line with different restrictions in each tier level. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has provided the following chart setting out the position in each tier level.

Activity	Medium (Tier 1)	High (Tier 2)	Very High (Tier 3)
Opening Places of Worship for communal prayer	Open for as many people as can be safely accommodated with social distancing measures		
Attending Places of Worship for communal prayer	Can attend and interact in groups of up to 6 people from different households	Can only interact indoors with your own households, but outdoors can interact in groups of up to 6	Can only interact with your own household both indoors and outdoors
Wedding Ceremonies	Can take place with up to 15 attendees, all of whom can interact.		
Wedding Receptions	Can take place with up to 15 attendees, all of whom can interact	Can take place with up to 15 attendees, all of whom can interact	Cannot take place
Funerals	Can take place with up to 30 attendees, all of whom can interact		
Commemorative events post-death	Can take place with up to 15 attendees, all of whom can interact		
Other Standalone Life-Cycle Ceremonies – that do not take place as a part of communal worship	Can attend and interact in groups of up to 6 people from different households	Can only interact indoors with your own households, but outdoors can interact in groups of up to 6	Can only interact with your own household both indoors and outdoors
Supervised Activities for Children (including Sunday schools, madrassas etc.)	Can take place with no limit on the number of children permitted to attend, following COVID-Secure guidance. Adults must ensure social distancing at all times.		

Enabling safe and effective volunteering during coronavirus (COVID-19)

Please [click here to access the full guide](#) from Government.

Independent Faith Engagement Review: call for evidence

Colin Bloom has been appointed as the Faith Engagement Adviser at the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to lead a review into how best the government should engage with faith groups in England.

This call for evidence will pose a series of questions around how those of all faiths, or none, perceive the government's engagement with faith organisations. Because the review is specifically about faith and religion, priority will be given to responses that fit within those parameters. However, space is given for respondents to share their views in a way that they feel is appropriate. For more information and to complete the online consultation please visit:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/independent-faith-engagement-review-call-for-evidence/independent-faith-engagement-review-call-for-evidence>

Levelling up our communities: proposals for a new social covenant

MP Danny Kruger has produced a report 'Levelling up our communities: proposals for a new social covenant' for the Government. Pages 35-37 relate to the interactions between faith communities and Government, and has some useful evidence about the value of faith communities.

Extract from the report:

Faith communities have a greater asset than their wealth when it comes to providing support and succour to people in need. Their values, their concern for the spiritual wellbeing of individuals and society, provide a motivation and commitment that often exceeds that of paid professionals. They have deep roots in local communities and are there for the long-term. Indeed they often have big buildings in the heart of communities, including the poorest, and they operate both nationally and at the hyperlocal level. The networks of a faith community, the relationships within a congregation or faith group, are a source of huge resilience and opportunities for the people they seek to help.

To read the [full report please click here](#).

How We Get Along

The Woolf Institute has published the largest ever study of personal attitudes to religious, ethnic and national diversity in England and Wales: [How we Get Along: The Diversity Study for England Wales 2020](#).

Lead researcher and report author, Dr Julian Hargreaves, worked closely with Survation, the market research and polling company to collect the data needed to understand how people perceive and experience diversity in their neighbourhoods, towns and cities and how this compared to an overall national picture.

The study is large enough to drill down to understand different attitudes at local authority level and addresses questions such as:

What is the state of relations between people from different backgrounds in the UK today?

How comfortable are we with the increased diversity and pace of change and what are the regional differences?

What is the role of friendship and the workplace in shaping attitudes to diversity?

You can view the full report, executive summary and appendices on the [dedicated webpage](#) or contact Claire Curran at cc640@cam.ac.uk to request a printed copy of the executive summary

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

'Your Fund Surrey' has been launched. Please [click on the link](#) for the information.

You can log ideas on the interactive map on '[Common Place](#)'

Surrey County Council will be putting on a couple of webinars on Common Place. Please book your place as soon as possible.

Tuesday 1st December- 3pm-4pm-

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/commonplace-vcfs-webinar-1-tickets-129996096825>

Monday 7th December- 10.30am-11.30am-

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/commonplace-vcfs-webinar-2-tickets-129996632427>



Grants Online

Here is a link to the 'Grants Online' website which gives up to date information on the latest grants available:

<https://www.grantsonline.org.uk/>

Community Foundation for Surrey Donor Funds

Funding to support groups addressing the Community Foundation Priority areas:

- Health & Wellbeing – Advance people's physical and mental health, wellbeing and safety
- Education & Skills – Improve life skills, education, employability and enterprise
- Disadvantage & Exclusion – Promote reduction of isolation and disadvantage and access to local services
- Stronger Communities – Maximise ability to strengthen community cohesion and build social capacity

CFS are currently accepting applications on a rolling basis with the next awards made in January 2021.

For more information please visit: <https://www.cfsurrey.org.uk/applyforfunding/>

Coronavirus Mental Health Response Fund

To help VCS organisations based in England continue to provide mental health services – or provide additional support – organisations can apply for a Coronavirus Mental Health Response Fund (CMHRF) grant.

Thanks to £5m support from government (the Department of Health and Social Care), grants of £20,000 or £50,000 are available for projects lasting up to 12 months.

For more information please visit:

<https://www.faithaction.net/news/2020/04/23/coronavirus-mental-health-response-fund/>

UPCOMING EVENTS

Building Resilience to the Covid-19 Pandemic and Beyond: Exploring how Faith Communities can Thrive Financially and Support the Vulnerable

The COVID-19 pandemic will surely have a long-term impact on the financial life of congregations, regardless of their denomination, size or makeup. How can faith institutions survive and even thrive in a post-pandemic landscape? How can faith groups and organisations respond to local need?

Faith institutions will need to not only continue to deal with the immediate crisis but they need to simultaneously be thinking about the future landscape of work post Covid.

This conference will discuss and highlight some of the actions faith communities need to take to transition to a safer and more sustainable post COVID-19 world.

Workshops will include:

- Income generation for Faith centres
- How to create a faith-based social entrepreneurship
- Safeguarding children at Faith organisations
- Funding for your group: how to write a grant proposal and what funders look for

For more information and/or to register please [click here](#)

The Great Winter Get Together

December 14th – January 18th

This year's Great Winter Get Together will be like no other. We must join together to build connections during what is already a lonely time of year for many.

So mark your calendars – our exciting winter campaign will run from December 14th to January 18th. With a whole host of new initiatives to take part in.

Let's face loneliness together: one connection at a time.

[Sign up here](#) to join our winter campaign and find out how you can get involved – including exclusive access to events!

For more information please visit: https://www.greatgettogether.org/winter_get_together



Family Learning provides free online parenting courses for parents and carers, including grandparents, who lack confidence or are struggling to support their children with school, homework or behaviour issues.

Bookings open now for FREE courses starting from 8 January

<https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/schools-and-learning/adult-learning/courses/family-learning>

Woking Debates 2021 Programme

11.00 am—12.30 pm

16th January: Are we giving vulnerable children the help they need?

20th February: Future of Woking

20th March: Knife Crime and Gangs

17th April: Air pollution

15th May: Arms Trade—Military Expenditure



Please note these are the finalised titles of the debates but planned areas of discussion/debate.

For zoom joining details, please contact Keith Scott: keithsc_2000@yahoo.com or 01483 824980

For more information please visit: www.wokingdebates.com and/or follow on Facebook

South Asian Carers of People living with Dementia Engagement events - via ZOOM

You are warmly invited to join a series of three (one hour) online forums, organised by the Surrey Carers & Providers Network, aimed at further developing our knowledge and support for carers from the South Asian community affected by dementia.

We are delighted that the sessions will be presented and facilitated by Mohammed Akhlak Rauf MBE, Founder & Director of Meri Yaadain CiC.

To register for the event please contact Hasu Ramji, Event Co-ordinator,
Email: ramjihat@gmail.com | Tel: 01883 626264

The dates are:

- 14th December – Carer experience
- 18th January – Meeting cultural needs

All events will take place between 11-12pm



Free Domestic abuse awareness and practice training:

<https://www.healthysurrey.org.uk/domestic-abuse/professionals/awareness-training>

Free Online Learning

How to teach online, free course: <https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/teach-online>

National Emergency Library: <https://archive.org/details/nationalemergencylibrary>

Free online courses from top Universities: <https://www.classcentral.com/>

Free learning from the Open University: <https://www.open.edu/openlearn/free-courses/full-catalogue>

Journey of Hope

The Journey of Hope is a collaboration between ten of the UK's leading peace and reconciliation centres, who have teamed up to co-host an immersive six-month faith leadership programme to transform communities.

The partnership aims to gather a diverse group of 20 participants who will support one another in their learning and development – including a range of faiths, ages, ethnic backgrounds, geographical contexts, and conflict issues.

We welcome applicants who:

- Have a passion to take action for a more just and peaceful world
- Hold a formal or informal leadership role within their faith community, or a calling to do so
- Can sustainably root their activism in the vision/values of their faith community
- Have some experience of peacebuilding & reconciliation or community activism in any form

The application deadline is 31st December 2020. Although primarily aimed at UK participants, there is a possibility that online-only places could be made available for those based internationally. Bursaries are available.

Rose Castle Foundation will host one of the programme's six modules, as well as the closing annual gathering in July, where all participants and alumni will attend.

For more information please visit: <https://www.reconcilerstogether.co.uk/>

Difference Course

Difference is an accessible 5-session course that teaches transformation of everyday relationships, aimed at a Christian audience. Brought together by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, and leading peacemakers, *Difference* teaches habits to help us cross divides, disagree well, and practise forgiveness.

You can follow *Difference's* newly launched social media channels on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#)

Live Streaming of Religious Services:

A Church Near you: https://www.achurchnearyou.com/live-stream/?tags=Live_stream

Diocese of Arundel and Brighton: <https://www.dabnet.org/>

Surrey Muslim Association: <http://www.surreymuslims.org/Resources/>

Join Wat Phra Dhammakaya Buddhist Temple in daily meditation: <https://www.facebook.com/DMCtvLondon/>

Help us help you

The NHS has launched a new campaign '[Help us help you](#)' to persuade the public to seek urgent care and treatment from the NHS when they need it during the pandemic

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- Charity Registration
- Gift Aid
- Legal matters
- counseling support
- Safeguarding children online
- Health and well-being
- Volunteer opportunities
- technical and financial support for online engagement

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