



Surrey Faith Links Newsletter

December 2019



“By dialogue, we let God be present in our midst, for as we open ourselves to one another, we open ourselves to God.”

Pope John Paul II

Interfaith groups have been busy as usual this year during interfaith week with some amazing events, making a real difference in their communities. Plenty more planned for 2020 from dialogue events, visits, sports and debates.

For more information or support with organising an event, please get in touch. Wishing you all a wonderful Christmas break and season greetings.

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Inter Faith Week 2019 - A growing success!

Across the Week, 650+ activities are known to have taken place across England, Northern Ireland and Wales – and details of further events continue to come in. Many thousands of people of different backgrounds and all ages have taken part.

The Co-Chairs of the Inter Faith Network, Jatinder Singh Birdi and Bishop Jonathan Clark said:

“This has been a fantastic Week. It has showcased the contribution faith communities make to society, helped increase inter faith understanding and sparked new conversations. We have been delighted to see so many local initiatives and also many organisations getting involved for the first time.

At this time so often characterised by division, it has been very good to witness people coming together in such a positive way. There are key values that we share and Inter Faith Week provides a chance to envision ways that we can all draw on them to strengthen our common life and to work together to address such issues as climate change, homelessness, and hate crime”.

Main Faith Festivals in December 2019

- 8th: Bodhi Day (Buddhist)
- 22nd: Winter Solstice (Druid)
- 22nd: Yule (Pagan)
- 23-30: Hanukah (Jewish)
- 24th: Christmas Eve (Christian)
- 25th: Christmas Day (Christian)
- 26th: Zaratosht No Diso (Zoroastrian)

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

Churches, gurdwaras, mandirs, mosques, synagogues, temples, viharas, schools, universities and colleges, sports grounds, parks, council chambers, museums, galleries, libraries, community centres, hospitals, hospices, workplaces and online platforms have been the location of an amazing range of activities. These included celebrations; faith trails; cultural activities; dialogues; volunteering to help local communities; Remembrance events; conferences and talks; tree plantings and litter picks; classroom activities; theatre productions; poetry readings; food festivals; sports tournaments; events linked both to the Week and Mitzvah Day (17 November) and more. The environment and the climate crisis have featured strongly. Details of events can be seen at www.interfaithweek.org/map

Respect and friendship are at the heart of Inter Faith Week. Inter Faith Week coincided this year with Anti-Bullying Week. For Friendship Friday – on the eve of the Week – the Inter Faith Network was invited by anti-bullying charity Kidscape to provide a guest blog with pointers for parents and carers of primary school children about the importance of faith and belief, and respectful engagement in primary school contexts.

Launch of materials for primary schools

In the course of Inter Faith Week the Inter Faith Network launched a new primary school resource designed to help increase pupils' understanding of, and skills for, inter faith encounter, dialogue and action. It focuses on learning about real examples of inter faith engagement, including in their areas. It is aimed at ages 9-11 and is available free of charge at

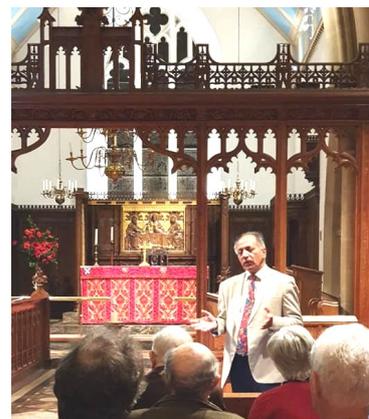
<https://www.interfaith.org.uk/resources/learning-about-inter-faith-activity-a-primary-resource>

Multi Faith Remembrance

Multi-faith remembrance services and activities are a key part of Inter Faith Week and help strengthen good inter faith relations at all levels, and increase understanding between people of religious and non-religious beliefs.

The Elmbridge Multi Faith Forum (EMF) invited Dr Zafar Iqbal from Woking Borough Council to shed light on the contributions and sacrifices of Indian Soldiers in both World Wars. He spoke about the Peace Garden in Horsell, which has been built in honour of the 27 Muslim soldiers who were buried there. Their graves were moved to Brookwood Military Cemetery in 1968 after a spate of vandalism.

Read more about it here: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-surrey-34792865>



The peace garden achieved a national award from the Local Government News Street Design Awards, read more here: <https://www.woking.gov.uk/news/muslim-burial-ground-peace-garden-achieves-recognition-national-awards>

Victor Eyles & David Cooke from Cobham Remembers set the scene of what it would have been like for people in Cobham and then presented backgrounds of some of the soldiers from Cobham and those with links to Cobham.



This was followed by a Q&A session and concluded with delicious food and conversation. The event was held at St Andrew's Church in Cobham on Tuesday 12th November. There was an opportunity for attendees to visit the War Memorial in the Church.

The EMF are planning a guided group visit to the Peace Garden and Brookwood Cemetery on Tuesday 21st April 2020. Please email Kausar.Akhtar@cofeguildford.org.uk if you would like to attend.

Birth of the Bab Celebrations

Bahá'ís around Surrey held many events in October and November to commemorate the Bicentenary of the Birth of the Báb in Shiraz, Persia 1819, sharing the film "Dawn of the Light" prepared for this historic occasion

[Watch the film 'Dawn of the Light here'](#)

and a Message from the Universal House of Justice, supreme governing body of the worldwide community

<https://bicentenary.bahai.org/the-bab/message>

The last of these celebrations was at Broadwater Park Community Centre in Godalming when members of several of Surrey Interfaith groups were among the guests who enjoyed a musical Devotional, an introductory talk from Dr. Vafa Ram and a moving performance from a small choir before sharing an international supper and much animated conversation.



Interfaith Service

Guildford and Godalming Interfaith Forum (GGIFF) arranged a multi faith Service on Sunday 17th November at St. Nicolas Community Centre in Guildford. Similar events have been happening in Guildford for nearly 40 years, previously hosted by Guildford & Godalming United Nations Association during One World Week. Falling U.N.A. membership coincided with the establishment of Inter Faith Week so this is now under the umbrella of GGIFF.

This year we had an environmental theme, following on from South East England Faith Forum's Conference in September, and several local Environmentalists and Extinction Rebellion supporters were among the 60 attendees. Godalming Mayor, Cllr Penny Rivers, spoke about her own commitment. Speakers from the Hindu, Jewish, Christian, Buddhist, Muslim, Sikh & Bahá'í communities, including 3 University Chaplains and 2 Police Chaplains, the rector of St. Nicolas and our Faith Links Advisor, drew on the teachings of their own Faiths on caring for the environment. Imam Hashmi from Shah Jahan Mosque, Woking, sent a recording of his melodious voice, reciting some verses from the Qur'an whilst Geoff Hunt led us in a Buddhist meditation. We missed young Nishi Joshi's Devotional dance and wish her a speedy recovery to her leg injury.

The evening ended with networking over an array of refreshments and £110 so far collected for this year's charity, Practical Action: <https://practicalaction.org/>



Impact of Peace Day 2019 - REPORT

A report was carried out independently for Peace One Day by Digitalis, Social 360 and Signal AI, which highlights the level of exposure generated on the 21st September

Measuring the online Impact of Peace Day 2019 -

http://peaceoneday.org/sites/default/files/peace_one_day_2019_report.pdf

Peace One Day have a 5 Year Plan to make 3 billion people aware of Peace Day by 2025, launched at Shakespeare's Globe Theatre at their 20-year celebration.



The World Congress of Faiths' Essay Award 2019

Congratulations to Rev Jenny Miller, Interfaith Minister from Surrey, who is the Joint Winner of the World Congress of Faiths' Essay Award 2019, writing on the subject: 'Is Interfaith Worship a desirable practice?'

Jenny also gave an interesting talk on Interfaith at St Mary's, Frensham in September, which was based on this winning essay. Jenny's article will be published in The World Congress of Faiths' international journal Interreligious Insight in the December or June edition [and we hope to be able to provide a link to that in due course]. Jenny has asked for her cheque to be made payable to an Interfaith Charity, Spirit of Peace.

For further information about The World Congress of Faiths, see:

www.worldfaiths.org



Sight for Surrey

Do you have sight or hearing loss?

- Sight for Surrey is a local charity based in Fetcham, near Leatherhead.
- We support people in Surrey who are blind, partially sighted, Deaf, deadblind or hard of hearing.
- We offer a wide range of support and/or hearing loss. Please contact us and come and visit our resource centre.
- Please get in touch with our Helpdesk number or on the contact details below.



Phone Helpdesk: 01372 377701 | Sight for Surrey, Rentwood, School Lane, Fetcham, Surrey, KT22 9JX

Email: info@sensoryservices.org.uk | SMS: 07860 026269 | www.sightforsurrey.org.uk

5 million people covered by the faith covenant

There are now 13 local authorities who have adopted the Faith Covenant created by the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Faith and Society. That means 5 million people are covered by the faith covenant.

The Faith Covenant expresses a commitment by local faith organisations and local government and commissioners to work together for the benefit of all in the community.

It has been a catalyst for work on mental health in Essex, equalities awareness in Leeds, and played a part in establishing faith groups as significant part of the civil society in Barnet.

The Faith Covenant as a set of principles has proved to be a flexible platform to bring different people in local areas together.

We (Faith Action) think all areas of the country would benefit from a faith covenant.

During the general election period why not press local candidates to commit to supporting a faith covenant?

This is one of many ideas which will form part of our FaithAction manifesto.

We want to hear your ideas so get in touch email yoursay@faithaction.net

Or tag @faithactionnet #mymanifesto in a tweet.

Daniel Singleton

National Executive Director, Faith Action

For more information about the Faith Covenant, please visit:

<https://www.faithandsociety.org/covenant/full/>



Inter Faith Week Service at Meadow Unitarian Chapel, Godalming

Godalming Unitarian Chapel (www.unitariangodalming.org.uk), which is inclusive of 'All Faiths and None', has had a long history of inviting Guest Speakers from different faith traditions to speak in their annual Inter Faith Week Service. This year, Godalming Unitarians dedicated their annual Inter Faith Week Service to Sikhism. The Chapel was a full-house and the Service, led by Jenny Miller (Interfaith Minister and Member of Godalming Unitarians) invited Guest Speakers to speak about their Sikh Faith. Jasbinder Singh Gill and Rupinder Kaur Gill movingly explored the meaning of the Sikh symbol of Ek Onkar (meaning Unity/Oneness/One God), the origin and meaning of Langar (free community meals) and the 550th Anniversary of the Birthday of Guru Nanak, the founding Guru of Sikhism, which coincided, with auspicious synchronicity, with this year's Inter Faith Week Service, on the 12th November 2019 in the same week, on the night of the Full Moon.



Sikhism's sacred 'Mool Mantra' was played as contemplative music during the Service and Sikh prayers were recited in Gurmukhi, with English translation. The Service ended with a traditional Sikh 'Ardas', which is a humble prayer to Waheguru (God), with traditional sweets handed around to the delight of the congregation. For the 550th Anniversary of Guru Nanak's Birthday, it feels auspicious to end with some of Guru Nanak's words, which form the basis of Sikhism's Mool Mantra:-

'There is but One God, Eternal Truth is His Name, Creator of All Things,
All-pervading Spirit, Fearless without hatred, Timeless and Formless, Beyond Birth and Death
Self-existent, Known through his Grace'

Jenny Miller, Interfaith Minister and Member of Godalming Unitarians

SCC Budget Survey

Surrey County Council have launched a budget survey for residents to complete so they can share their views on how it will be spent.

The survey aims to fulfil two objectives:

1. Raise awareness with residents about the services the county council delivers; and
2. To gather information to shape budget setting.

Access the survey here: <https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/people-and-community/surrey-matters/community/budget-review>

Faith and Cultural Awareness Training for Staff & Volunteers

It has become evident in today's increasingly multicultural society that constructing and developing relations between people of all faiths and none is important for work life as well as social cohesion.

Employers should have a basic level of knowledge of different faiths to get a better understanding of staff/customer needs and requirements.

It is also good for staff to have some level of knowledge and awareness of faiths and cultures for a better experience with the people they work with.

For more information or to organize a training session please contact:

Kauser Akhtar, Faith Links Adviser, T: 01483 790334,

E: Kauser.Akhtar@cofeguildford.org.uk



FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Surrey Education Fund

The Surrey Education Fund provides funding to help disadvantaged children and young people up to 25 years to access education and training.

Grants are awarded to fund costs such as equipment, books, travel or tuition fees or support the costs of providing charitable educational facilities. Funding is also available for voluntary or charitable projects that provide training and skills development.

Grants of up to £5,000 are available.

More information here: <https://www.cfsurrey.org.uk/fund/surrey-education-fund/>

Funding Available for Strategic Projects in Surrey

Community Foundation for Surrey have funds available where their donors are keenly interested in supporting the strategic development of charities in Surrey.

Grants of £5,000 – £20,000 are available to support strategic projects which strengthen charities, increasing your potential impact and encouraging long-term sustainability:

- Capital Expenditure – including equipment, new construction, renovation, and expansion which are critical to sustainability and achieving your mission
- Strategic IT Projects – including investments in hardware/software which will enable expansion or efficiency in service delivery
- Strategic Organisational Developments – including mergers and planning initiatives which use expert consultants to determine new, transformational paths.

Director of Grants and Impact, Kate Peters is available to chat through in more detail and would love to hear from you if you have a project – or a dream you can see this funding fulfilling! If you would like to contact Kate Peters, please email kate@cfsurrey.org.uk

The Four Daughters Charitable Trust

The Four Daughters Charitable Trust is very excited to launch its first grant funding round, focusing on ageing well in the UK. They have the capacity to fund up to £250,000 in this funding round to those who are working towards any of the following areas:

Supporting older people to stay in or find meaningful work or volunteering;

Strengthening communities that are inclusive of older people; and

Supporting informal carers to develop their own peer-based approaches.

Please find more information in this [document](#) on the key focus areas Four Daughters CT is looking to fund, information on how to apply for funding, a timeline and the narrative that underpins their grant giving strategy.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Elmbridge Multi Faith Forum Events 2020

Tuesday 21st January 2020: Modern Day Slavery

Tuesday 4th February: Visit to the Sri Raja Rajeswari Amman Temple, Epsom

Tuesday 21st April 2020: Guided tour of the Peace Garden, Horsell and Brookwood Cemetery. More details on how to book a place soon

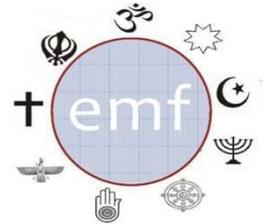
Tuesday 30th June, AGM and talk on Climate Emergency

Primary school competition on Interfaith for Interfaith week (more details to come soon)

For more information please email:

Secretary: Kauser.Akhtar@cofefeguildford.org.uk

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

**Woking People of Faith Programme of Events 2020**

'who do we think we are' Saturday 1st February at Parkview Community Centre

Interfaith Pilgrimage in Byfleet—Saturday 21st March

Horsell Common Preservation Society—28th March

Interfaith Football Tournament—Saturday 6th June, Winston Churchill School

Refugee Week event—Tuesday 16th June, HG Wells, 6 pm—8 pm

Multi Faith Last Post Service—Sunday 2nd August, Brookwood Cemetery

International Day of Peace—Saturday 19th September, Mercia Walk, Woking.

Visit to first eco Mosque, Cambridge—Thursday 3rd October. TBC

Doing God Together, interfaith week event TBA

More information to come, keep updated via the website: www.wpof.org.uk

Or contact Kerry Barry: administrator@wpof.org.uk



Woking People of Faith

Guildford and Godalming Events 2020

Addressing the Climate Emergency—Extinction rebellion. Tuesday 3rd March

Interfaith walk—Thursday 16th July

Interfaith week service, Sunday 15th November

For more information please contact: Bernard Jones (Secretary)

T: 01483 424257 E: bernard.jones10@btinternet.com

Or Carolyn Neogi: E: carolynneogi@aol.com | T: 01483 415773



GGIFF

Runnymede and Spelthorne Faith Forum events 2020

Multi Faith Tu BiSh'vat Walking Seder at RHS Wisley Gardens, Sunday 9th February

Scriptural Reasoning: Tuesday 3rd March, Tuesday 2nd June, Tuesday 1st September and Tuesday 1st December

Speed Faithing—event for interfaith week, Thursday 12th November

Details for the above events to be published in the next newsletter.

For more information please contact Kausar.Akhtar@cofeguildford.org.uk

Woking Debates 2020

Climate Emergency- what can we do? Saturday 11th January 2020

Islamophobia, how much of a problem is it in Woking? – Saturday 8th February 2020

A Rock and a Hard place. Journeymen Theatre play on domestic abuse – Saturday 14th March 2020

Are we giving vulnerable children the help they need? – Saturday 18th April 2020

What good is football? Saturday 9th May 2020

10.30 am Refreshments for 11.00 am start till 12.30 pm

Christ Church, Jubilee Square, Woking, GU21 6YG

Entrance is free, donations welcome.

The Woking Debates are organised by: Woking Action for Peace, Friends of the Earth, Surrey Faith Links, Woking LA21, Woking Quakers and Woking People of Faith.

For more information please contact: Keith Scott: 01483 824980 | keithsc_2000@yahoo.com

www.wokingdebates.com

Bridging the Great Divide: the Jewish-Muslim Encounter

The Woolf Institute is running a 15-week online course, beginning in January, 'Bridging the Great Divide: the Jewish-Muslim Encounter'. The course will explore the history, culture and theology of Muslims and Jews, reflecting both on similarities and differences as well as discussing the major challenges. Run in partnership with the School of International Service at the American University in Washington DC, the course will also offer strategies for building bridges between the communities.

For more information, visit <https://www.woolf.cam.ac.uk/whats-on/news/apply-now-for-online-course-bridging-the-great-divide-the-jewish-muslim-encounter-1>.

The closing date for applications is 15 December.

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