



“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

People from all over Surrey have gathered in various places for Holocaust Memorial Day, a couple of which have been reported in this newsletter. Interfaith forums are busy planning their events for 2020 with ranging topics from climate issues to guided tours and visits, details are on page 7 onwards.

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Who do we think we are?

Approximately 30 people from different faith groups gathered to learn about each others personal stories to Woking. Woking People of Faith organised the event on Saturday 1st February at the Parkview Community Centre in Sheerwater.

Following an introduction, a video clip about DNA was screened, which explored people’s ancestry through DNA and gave them some surprises! Questions were provided to stimulate discussion and encourage people to tell their personal stories about how they came to live in Woking; their parents’ lives; and also their grandparents’ birthplaces and occupations.

Maps were provided so that each individual’s journey could be charted.

Conversation flowed; everyone enjoyed delicious cakes and refreshments during the break.

The groups reported back their findings in the second part of the event. One group was surprised to find that the white Caucasian members had all lived abroad so totted up thousands of miles between them, whereas the young Asian woman was born in Woking and had not lived anywhere else! They felt it was a lesson, similar to the one on the DNA clip, to not



Main Faith Festivals in February 2020

- 1st: Candlemas (Pagan)
- 8th: Parinirvana (Buddhist)
- 9th: Magha Puja (Buddhist)
- 10th: Tu B'Shevat (Jewish)
- 21st: Mahashivratri (Hindu)
- 25th: Shrove Tuesday (Christian)
- 26th: Ash Wednesday (Christian)
- 26th - Start of Lent (Christian)

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

judge and make assumptions about other people. Tasmania, Pakistan, India, Africa, Canada, Ukraine and Cyprus were some of the geographical locations mentioned. When talking about grandparents' occupations, it was a surprise to discover that several of them were farmers.

Everyone said that they had thoroughly enjoyed the afternoon and were even making suggestions, such as bringing photos or artefacts, to improve the same event, if held again in the future.



Modern Day Slavery and Human Trafficking

Elmbridge Multi Faith Forum invited Suzette Jones from the Diocese of Guildford to speak about Modern Day Slavery and Human Trafficking.

Suzette said, 'it is on our doorstep and everyone should keep a look out, at nail bars, car washes, people knocking on the door selling items or service, make a note of car registration and any description and ring the modern slavery helpline.'

A short video of a man who had been through slavery was screened; which highlighted the difficulties experienced by those trafficked and forced into slavery.

It was an eye opening event; the talk was followed by Q&A from the audience and left many reflecting on situations which could have been slave workers.

The event was held at the Sacred Heart Church in Cobham on Tuesday 21st January. For more information about Modern Slavery please visit: <https://www.antislavery.org/slavery-today/slavery-uk/> and call the helpline if you suspect someone has been forced into slavery: **0800 012 1700**



Mutual Respect – Unity in Diversity

Over three days earlier this month our small group of five friends of the Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Baha'i and Hindu faiths, members of the Surrey Heath Faith Forum, held assemblies sharing the above message with some 350 senior students of Kings International College in Camberley.

These assemblies were the latest in a series started in 2017 as a positive constructive response to the incidents of mass violence in London and Manchester of that year. So far, in addition to Kings College, we have shared the message with some 1200 children in eight Surrey Heath junior schools.

The assemblies, which complement the RE programmes of local schools, are educational and interactive rather than devotional, are illustrated by slides and include a video clip ('Momondo', freely available on YouTube).

Reactions and informal feedback from the student indicate that many are interested in our message. In this small way we hope that the students, while young and impressionable, will be encouraged to live as friends and good neighbours while still maintaining their different faiths and traditions.

For more information about Surrey Heath Faith Forum please contact ray.wicksman@gmail.com or visit www.facebook.com/SurreyHeathFF



Mayor of Woking lights candle of remembrance on Holocaust Memorial Day

To mark Holocaust Memorial Day (27 January), the Mayor of Woking, Cllr Beryl Hunwicks, schoolchildren from Halstead School and representatives from Woking's faith communities gathered in the Council Chamber to reflect on the countless lives lost or impacted by genocide.

A symbolic candle was lit by the Mayor to remember the six million Jews murdered during the Holocaust, alongside the millions of other people killed under Nazi persecution and in subsequent genocides in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur.

On this day in 1945, Auschwitz-Birkenau, the largest Nazi death camp, was liberated by Soviet troops.

During the ceremony, the Mayor read a specially written prayer by Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby; Chief Rabbi, Ephraim Mirvis, and Senior Imam Qari Asim, which encourages communities to stand together to stop division and prevent the spread of hate in society.

Woking People of Faith Vice Chair, Phillip Goldenberg, also read the Kaddish, a Jewish prayer, during the ceremony.

Simon Trick, Chair of the Woking People of Faith, said: "On this important day, we remember the victims of the Holocaust, and the millions of innocents persecuted in the name of a minority's ideology.

"We also remember the many murdered during subsequent genocides in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and most recently Darfur.

"Our work in Woking is to continue to educate and engage people of all backgrounds, to lift those veils, to remove the scales of long-held prejudice and mistrust and reveal the truth that the Earth is but one country and mankind its citizens.

"When we can truly see each other as one, and that by hurting one, we hurt us all, then we will not repeat the horrors of the Holocaust."

The ceremony was attended by Mayor of Woking, Cllr Beryl Hunwicks, schoolchildren from Halstead School and Woking People of Faith member's Simon Trick (Chair), Phillip Goldenberg (Vice Chair), Kerry Barry, Hilary Addison, Meeta Joshi and Dr Zafar Iqbal.



The Faith & Belief Forum

Formerly 3FF (Three Faiths Forum)



Media, Faith and Belonging

A new briefing paper by the Faith & Belief Forum and the Department of Psychosocial Studies at Birkbeck calls on media organisations to provide more opportunities for religious groups to represent themselves. The report highlights how journalists, academics, community organisations and religious groups are working to address the issues in three ways: by challenging inaccurate stories, telling their own stories and working together to make a shared story.

Read the report here: <https://faithbeliefforum.org/report/>

Let's use media to break down fear rather than stoke it.

"Social media has created new opportunities to tell engaging and nuanced stories about faith and belief groups to wider audiences. Let's take advantage of these opportunities and be part of a story that makes everyone feel they belong." [Read Phil Champain's blog on the media.](#) (Director of Faith & Belief Forum)

Surrey Heath Holocaust Memorial Day Commemoration

The Mayor of Surrey Heath, Councillor Robin Perry, joined by councillors, staff and Police Commander Bob Darkens gathered in Surrey Heath Borough Council office, Camberley, for the t commemoration of national Holocaust Memorial Day on 27th January, the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp.

After a welcome address from the Mayor and response by Foad Rahimi, Chairman of Surrey Heath Faith Forum (SHFF), he and Ray Wicksman, Vice Chairman, lead the proceedings. This started with a short video 'Learning from the Past' in which survivors of the Holocaust and subsequent genocides in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur gave their personal testimony of the atrocities.

Mr Rahimi brought this up to date by recounting the extreme conditions faced by Iran's Baha'i community, whose members are denied access to education, business permits and most recently to National Identification cards. This is in addition to imprisonment, both physical and arson attacks since the inception of this peace seeking religion in 1844. Baha'i citizens have adopted a posture of 'constructive resilience' towards a policy which states that they are to be treated "in such a way that their progress and development are to be blocked." Mr Rahimi recounted examples in which this service-oriented community, whilst under such oppression, still rise to contribute to the betterment of their country. The Baha'i faith is a global religion which vibrantly contributes to 187 other countries. The UK is one of the countries that seeks to draw attention to this oppression in the land of the faith's home and birth.

Then he and Mr Wicksman briefly introduced the gathering to SHFF representatives and outlined their aim is to promote knowledge, mutual understanding and respect for the different beliefs, practices and traditions of the people of Surrey Heath and the wider community. In particular they explained that a key activity was to hold educational interfaith assemblies in Surrey Heath schools to share the above message. The assembly team comprises five friends: Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Baha'i and Hindu. Together, with the aid of slides and a popular video clip, they explain what the message entails in practical terms. They also both ask and invite questions from the children. The responses so far, from 1200 children from eight schools, indicate keen interest.



The commemoration concluded with an address by the Police Commander and Cllr Josephine Hawkins and concluded with a prayer led by the Mayor on behalf of the Council.

For more information about Surrey Heath Faith Forum please contact ray.wicksman@gmail.com or visit www.facebook.com/SurreyHeathFF

Universal Youth Work Proposal

Surrey County Council (SCC) are consulting on whether they should continue to deliver universal open access youth work and how it could enable the voluntary, community and faith sector to use the youth centres at little or no cost. The full proposal is available here: [Youth Service Consultation - Strategy](#)

The closing date for the consultation is midnight 30 April 2020

For public engagement events and more information please visit: <https://www.surreysays.co.uk/csf/universal-youth-work-proposal/>



Islamophobia

The main cause of Islamophobia is an irrational fear of Islam and people not knowing anything about the religion, the audience at the February Woking debate was told.

This was a simple way of looking at the problem, but it led to things like Muslims not being able to get jobs and Islam not being properly taught in schools, said one of the speakers, Mohammad Shoaib.

Mohammad, representing MEND – Muslim Engagement and Development – opened the discussion on the subject Islamophobia: How much of a problem is it in Woking?

Before talking about Islamophobia and the hate crime it provokes, he explained the work of MEND across the UK, including its reporting centre. The problem was everyone's and should not be tolerated, he said.

Under 5% of the UK population were Muslims, most of them living in "pockets" in England. Around 95% had an affinity with feeling British.

Hate crime was increasing, with just over 8,000 incidents in 2018. In Woking, Muslims seemed to be reporting hate crimes they were experiencing and there were 161 incidents across Surrey last year.

Muslims had to do more to explain their faith to non-Muslims, and make more use of social media to combat far right propaganda.

The other speaker was Woking resident Gemma Ahmed, who was brought up a Catholic but converted to Islam and married a Muslim. She said she was previously Islamophobic, as were her family members, particularly her father, who refused to take part in her wedding. It was only when she lived with Muslims that she learned what the religion was about.

Muslims and members of other religions worshipped the same God and believed in the same things. If they tried harder to understand each other this would lead to better relationships between the communities.

The debate was attended by 65 people, many of whom gave their views on the subject and asked questions of the speakers. Details of the upcoming debates are on page 8 of this newsletter.



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:

Kausar Akhtar, Faith Links Adviser, T: 01483 790334, E: Kausar.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



FCC Community Action Fund

The FCC Communities Foundation is offering grants between £2,000 and £100,000 for projects which involve the provision, maintenance or improvement of public amenities including community spaces in places of worship, which are registered charities.

Projects must be based within 10 miles of an eligible FCC Environment waste facility. The next round opens on 18 December and closes on 4 March. For more information, visit

<https://fcccommunitiesfoundation.org.uk/funds/fcc-community-action-fund>



UPCOMING EVENTS

Elmbridge Multi Faith Forum Events 2020

Tuesday 21st April 2020: Guided tour of the Peace Garden, Horsell and Brookwood Cemetery.

Coach leaves at 9.30 am and arrives back at 1.30 pm at the Thames Ditton Centre, Mercer Close, Thames Ditton KT7 0BS .

10.00 am – 11.00 am at the Peace Garden—a guided tour followed by time for reflection.

11.15 – 12.50 at Brookwood Cemetery—a guided tour and walk.

To book a place on the coach please contact Geoffrey Morris: geoffreymorris@emas-bc.co.uk

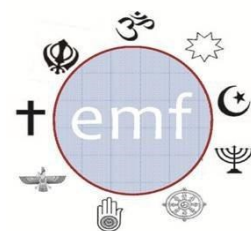
Tuesday 30th June, AGM and talk on Climate Emergency. 7.00 pm for 7.30 pm start.

Further details to come soon.

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/>



Guildford and Godalming Events 2020

Climate Emergency: drastic times, drastic measures?

Can faith give us hope?

Come along and listen to perspectives from people of faith involved with Extinction Rebellion.

Opportunity to ask questions to the panel of speakers.

Tuesday 3rd March, 7.00 pm refreshments for 7.30 pm start
at St Nicolas Church, Bury St, Guildford GU2 4AW

This is a free event, however donation are appreciated.

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

Woking People of Faith Programme of Events 2020

Interfaith Pilgrimage in Byfleet—Saturday 21st March. More details to come soon.

Horsell Common Preservation Society—28th March , more details to come.

Interfaith Football Tournament—Book your team NOW On Saturday 6th June 2020, 10 am—3 pm

At Winston Churchill School Sports Centre, Winston Churchill School, Hermitage Road, Woking GU21 8TL

BOOKING IS ESSENTIAL—to enter a team please contact

Zafar Iqbal: zafar.iqbal@woking.gov.uk or

John West: john.west63@ntlworld.com

Refugee Week event—Monday 15th June, HG Wells, 6 pm—8 pm

Refugee Week takes place every year around World Refugee Day on the 20th June. In the UK, Refugee Week is a nationwide programme of arts, cultural and educational events that celebrate the contribution of refugees to the UK and encourages a better understanding between communities.

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

Epsom and Ewell Inter Faith Forum Events 2020

International Women's Day -Women of faith discuss how their faith has contributed or shaped their success.

Thursday 13th March, 7.30 pm at St Michael's The Sanctuary, 4A Church St, Ewell, Epsom KT17 2AS

23rd of April - **Tour of Guru Harrai Sahib Gurudwara**, 58 Lower Marsh Ln, Kingston upon Thames KT1 3BJ

24th May for the **Flag hoisting ceremony** at Sri Raja Rajeswari Amman

Temple, 4 Dell Ln, Epsom KT17 2NE

June's Summer Social is still TBC

For more information please contact Naajah Oozer: eeiff@outlook.com



Runnymede and Spelthorne Faith Forum events 2020

Scriptural Reasoning:

Fasting—Tuesday 18th March (please note change of date from 3rd to 18th March)

Parish Centre, St Nicholas Church, Shepperton, TW17 9JY. 7.30 pm—8.45 pm

Scripture—Tuesday 2nd June, North West Surrey Synagogue,

Horvath Close, Rosslyn Park, Weybridge KT13 9QZ. 7. 30 pm

Topics yet to be decided for Tuesday 1st September and Tuesday 1st December

For more information about scriptural reasoning, please visit: www.scripturalreasoning.org

Mental Capacity Act and Faith: Training for faith leaders and volunteers.

Thursday 11th June, 9.30 am—1.00 pm. Training and materials are free .

Ashford and Staines Community Centre, 774 London Road, Stanwell, Feltham TW14 8FP

For more information please email: admin@ascc.uk.com

Speed Faithing—event for interfaith week, Thursday 12th November. More details to come soon.

For more information about RSFF events, please contact Kausar.Akhtar@cofeguildford.org.uk

Woking Debates 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

Runnymede's Networking Market Place

After the success of last year's networking event, Runnymede Community Development team have decided to run another event. This year's Networking Market Place will be held at Addlestone Community Centre on Wednesday 20 May, 10:00am to 12:00pm.

Organisations, charities and voluntary groups are being invited to showcase what their services do and make connections with other professionals.

If you wish to reserve a table or have any questions, please contact Azra Mukadam:

CommunityDevelopment@runnymede.gov.uk

Surrey Community Action 70th anniversary conference – save the date!

2020 marks a special year for Surrey Community Action, as they will be celebrating their 70th anniversary. Surrey Community Action will be marking this birthday at their conference on 14 May 2020, in which they will look back at the history of Surrey's voluntary sector and look forward to what it might look like in the future. Please save the date and more details will follow.



Surrey Adult Matters launch event announced

The launch event for [Surrey Adults Matters](#) (part of the Making Every Adult Matter approach in Surrey) being held on 25 February, is an exciting opportunity for delegates to take part in reflecting on working practice and current systems and how they deliver services for adults facing multiple disadvantage.

The event is predominantly aimed at frontline workers but people with lived experience of multiple disadvantage are welcome to attend. Please register your interest [here](#).

Risks and opportunities of artificial super intelligence

When: Tuesday 14th April

Where: The Guildford Institute, Ward Street, Guildford, GU1 4LH

Speaker: David Wood

Intelligence - what is it? And how intelligent could machines become? What factors could accelerate the development of ASI? How could powerful ASI go wrong? And how can we ensure that ASI is beneficial rather than destructive for humanity?

David will consider these questions and their ethical implications. He is an entertaining and very experienced speaker and has researched this subject for many years. He has written a number of books and is the chair at London Futurists. Further info: phone David (01483 800397).

There is no charge for the talks, but a small donation of £2 or 3 is requested to cover expenses (but not from students). For further information please phone David Simmonds (01483 800 397) or Mike Adams (01483 233 324), or see

www.facebook.com/GuildfordWokingHumanists or www.meetup.com/Guildford-Woking-Humanists

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