



HOUNSLOW FRIENDS OF FAITH

Newsletter ~ February 2020

Keeping you up to date with Interfaith News

Dates of Future Events and Activities

Exhibition at the British Library on Buddhism:



Fri 25 Oct 2019 - Sun 23 Feb 2020

Discover the art, origins and its relevance today

Full Price: £14.00

Senior 60+: £12.00

June HFOF Annual Walk of Peace and Friendship visiting various places of worship (date not yet decided)

Wednesday 22nd July HFOF AGM 7pm at Hounslow House (the new Civic Centre)

Some Past Events and Activities

Hounslow Friends of Faith Group was represented at both the following events:

Launch of Homelessness Prevention Strategy by Hounslow Council 22nd October.

The emphasis is to *'stop homelessness before it starts'* encouraging those at risk to seek help from the council early in order to receive support to remain in housing rather than be placed into B&B once homelessness has occurred. Call: 020 8583 3842

Launch of Refugee Community Centre



A community centre and office accommodation for the Afghanistan and Central Asian Association (ACAA) was launched on 22nd November at Unit 9 Griffin Centre, Feltham, TW14 0HS. This charity has moved into these larger premises which will enable it to provide more support services for refugees arriving in UK.

Interfaith Reflections on the Sikh Celebrations held to mark the 550th Anniversary of the birth of Guru Nanak in November 2019

The Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha in Hounslow had an extensive programme of worship, seminars and celebrations from 7th – 17th November.

Hounslow Friends of Faith Group was invited to have a stall in the marquee in the courtyard of the Gurdwara on Saturday 9th and Sunday 10th November. As well as information and photographs of HFOF events there were quizzes to challenge people's knowledge of different faiths and their symbols and sayings. It was interesting that it was those who were younger who managed more right answers! It was an excellent opportunity for many conversations with the mostly Sikh visitors. There was an exhibition of Guru Nanak's life to view as well as varied charity stalls and a programme of poetry, drama, drumming and a variety of talks and demonstrations including flower arranging, Sikh Martial Arts (*Gatka*) and turban tying. The HFOF stall was next to a banner of knitted squares which had been embroidered by ladies from the HFOF knitting group with the *ik onkar* symbol which means 'One God'.

On Sunday 10th November in the afternoon there were three interfaith talks in the marquee which were well attended. Imam Atta-ur-Rahman Khalid an Ahmadiyyan Muslim, Basil Mann, an Orthodox Jew and Joy Barrow a Christian from the Methodist Church all spoke about how their faith viewed Guru Nanak and his teachings.

The Gurdwara is to be congratulated on these splendid celebrations.



HFOF Stall



Barbara Witzenfeld with knitted banner

National Interfaith Week 10th – 17th November 2019

The Three Aims of Interfaith Week are:

- Strengthening good inter faith relations at all levels
- Increasing 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
- Increasing understanding between people of religious and non-religious beliefs



Chair of Hounslow Friends of Faith, Mrs Charanjit AjitSingh with the Rev. Dave Maclure at an interfaith event at West Thames College, Isleworth on 13th November

Hounslow Friends of Faith arranged a most interesting and thought provoking evening during Interfaith Week discussing *“Life after Death?”*



The meeting was hosted by the Baitul Wahid Ahmadiyya Mosque in Hanworth Park. After refreshments and a warm welcome from Muddassar Ahmed, the President of the Mosque, who was in the chair there were four speakers. Here are some snippets from their presentations.

Imam Atta-ur-Rahman Khalid from Baitul Wahid Mosque, informed us Muslims believe in another world after death which is unknown, the descriptions in the Koran of heaven and hell are metaphors but Heaven’s pleasure is everlasting nearness to Allah and the suffering of hell for Muslims is not everlasting but through the mercy of Allah there is the limitless possibility of progress towards attaining heaven.

Nimu Ladva from Hounslow Brahma Kumaris believe in reincarnation. Dying is the process of transition of the soul. The Ultimate goal is to attain Liberation during life from negative habits through transformation which can be achieved by connecting to God the Divine through Meditation.

Roger Haines from the West London Humanist Society said that Humanists see no reason to suppose that as our brains stop functioning when we die there can be any kind of mental life as an individual after death. Life itself continues, but it is lived by others. So death is a bit like letting go of the baton in a relay race.

Father Morkos Fakhry Gamil from Heston Coptic Orthodox Church shared an amusing and helpful story which likens life after death with life after being delivered from the womb at birth. The story takes the form of a dialogue between two babies in the womb who have differing views about what lies ahead after birth. He also spoke about the first human receiving the breath of life from God. This breath of life was not biological breath but the life of God. Jesus, who is the true life, united with human nature not only giving back the breath of life which was lost when Adam and his companion Eve ate the forbidden fruit but also enabling humans to participate in the divine nature - to be truly alive and restored in relationship with God. This life in God begins in this temporal life and continues after biological death.



Hounslow Friends of Faith Knitting Group



Soroptimist International of Kingston upon Thames and District closed earlier this year and used their remaining funds to donate to local charities. They made a donation of £50 to the Knitting Group for materials. This was presented at the November meeting.

The Ladies of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Association, Hounslow South Branch held an Interfaith Event on Sunday 24th November 1 – 3pm at the Baitul Wahid Mosque to raise money for the Armed Forces Community and hear speakers from different faiths speak on the topic: *Inclusion in Religions*.

After a welcome and introduction there was a recitation and translation of words from the Holy Koran by Tayyiba Ahmed.

Barbara McIntivey, retired Methodist Minister, then shared that Christians are to reflect the unconditional love of God and to have no distinctions based on race, gender, disability, age, wealth, or sexuality.

Nimu Ladva from the Hounslow Brahma Kumaris emphasised that all are the children of God and not to judge someone by his or her outward appearance but whether they reflect the Divine light.

Barinder Kaur Sandhu, from the Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha in Hounslow, brought a banner of knitted squares made by the Hounslow Friends of Faith knitting group for the 550th anniversary of the birth of Guru Nanak held earlier in November. The squares were embroidered with the symbol *ik onkar* meaning *One God*. The Sikh community demonstrates its commitment to being inclusive through educational programmes, serving food to all in the langar, and by helping the needy of all faiths and cultures through various Sikh charitable organisations.

Laiqa Ahmad from the Ahmadiyya Community said unfortunately all Muslims are often thought to be divisive like Isis due to the media but the teaching of Islam is that everyone is to be treated with kindness, be free to choose their own religion and accepted as they are with no one person more important than another. Muslim charity and help is to be given to anyone of any faith or none. All religions and their prophets are respected.

Following the speeches refreshments were served giving those present the opportunity to talk and get to know each other. The event was well attended, interesting and enjoyable.

After New Year's Eve celebrations more than 1,500 members of the Ahmadiyya Youth Association took to streets across the UK to pick up the mess – photo below.



The Annual Hounslow Holocaust Memorial Event

This year's Holocaust Memorial Day was hosted by St Mark's Secondary School, Bath Road, Hounslow on Monday 27th January and attended by the Mayor: Cllr Tony Louki , the Deputy Mayor: Cllr Raghwinder Siddhu, Leader of Hounslow Council: Cllr Steve Curran, the local MP: Ruth Cadbury and also representatives from Hounslow Friends of Faith, the local community and pupils from the school. The theme this year is **Stand Together**.



The Mayor gave a welcome and then the Rev Richard Frank, Hounslow CofE Area Dean, led the event which included two short films and a dramatic presentation of a poem by pupils. The guest speaker was Natalie Cumming who gave a moving account of some of her family's history. She told how her Jewish grandfather's violin and his playing helped him and his family survive a long journey through a freezing Russian winter to flee the Bolsheviks in 1917 and finally reach the safety of the UK. His violin passed to Rosa, Natalie's aunt, who became a violinist in the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra. After being arrested by the Nazis in 1938 Rosa spent the rest of the war in concentration camps where she was forced to join the Women's Orchestra but her musical ability on the violin saved her from death in the gas chamber. After Rosa's death in UK, from Tb contracted as a prisoner, the violin was inherited by Natalie's father, a celebrated musician. At his death the violin came to Natalie who decided to write a book telling the story of *The Fiddle*, which after many rejections was published in 2018 by Michael Terence Publishing.



As well as horrifying statistics about deaths of Jews and others during the Holocaust, numbers were also given for subsequent genocides in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur. This year marks the 75th Anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau and also the 25th anniversary of the genocide in Bosnia. Candles were lit as a sign of remembrance followed by a moment of contemplation. Then Cllr Steve Curran urged all present not only to *Stand Together* but *Act Together* to challenge race and faith hate crimes and to promote

respect for diversity. The school orchestra was thanked for the music played as people were preparing for the event and also thanked were all those who had taken part or helped in the planning including Tim Durrant from Hounslow Council and Basil and Penny Mann and Charanjit AjitSingh from Hounslow Friends of Faith. Members of St Mark's drama department were also thanked for their performance of a dramatised reading of the following poem by Misba Sheikh:

Tormented Hearts

Sadness hangs over Srebrenica like a dark cloud ready to spill dark secrets.
Snowy white hills frozen, still tainted by the dark designs of an evil man's dream.

Rivers flow as they always did, the sun sets and rises on a land butchered, violated,
desecrated.
The silence is penetrating, desperate.

Where is the outcry, the indignation, the protest?

Women sit in broken homes waiting for the wait to end.
Praying someone might hear their story as it murmurs through the chilling landscape.

In the face of denial rages a truth undeniable.
Eyes that saw too much meet with eyes that saw nothing.

Tormented hearts pause for a moment at the smallest thought of freedom.

(Thanks go to Saadiq Cornelius for the above photos of the Holocaust Event)

Tribute to Nick Brieger



Hounslow Friends of Faith were sorry to hear of the death of Nick Brieger on 21st January this year after a long illness. Nick always had a lively interest in intercultural issues. HFOF would like to express thanks for the support Nick gave to his partner Debbie Brenner in organising and stewarding the Annual HFOF Walks of Peace and Friendship which visit different Places of Worship in the area. He also last year took on the role of HFOF Gift Aid secretary. May we hold Debbie and all the family in our hearts at this sad time.

Leaving the EU: The important role of faith communities at a time of transition as faith communities are trusted sources of information and community support

Congregation members and other local residents may seek information about particular practicalities linked to Brexit, for example about living and working in the UK and travel. Links to up-to-date information can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/brexit>.

The Government has said that it does not anticipate that leaving the EU – whether or not with a deal and regardless of date of departure – will bring shortages of supplies of food or medication and is working to ensure that these will not occur.

At a time of change, with some developments which will be affected by factors that are hard to predict, faith communities will naturally be engaging in contingency planning so as to be as helpful as they can be in a range of circumstances.

Where shortages of essentials occur – whether linked to Brexit or for any other reason - the most vulnerable people in society are likely to experience particular challenges. The support and advice that faith communities offer to their members and their local communities is very important – as is coordinating with other local faith and civil society bodies that provide services to the community to ensure that service users can be signposted to the most relevant sources of support, irrespective of where they first make contact.

Faith communities working for community unity, promoting good relations and tackling hatred

After the EU Referendum there was a spike in hate crimes and across recent times there has also been an increasingly aggressive tone in some public discourse and online.

During and after Brexit, faith communities have a very important role to play in encouraging respectful and positive dialogue and positive relationships - even where people have profound disagreement - and counteracting prejudice and hatred.

8 possible actions for faith leaders.

1. Include in sermons and talks regular reflections on the importance of finding ways to disagree respectfully and to seek to find common ground, as well as encouragement to reach out to and support those who may be affected by prejudice and hatred.
2. Create and encourage the use of special prayers for harmony
3. Model and inspire good relations through being seen to engage positively in common causes with members of other faith communities.
4. Encourage members to get involved with their local inter faith body and to work together with those of other backgrounds for good relations and to stand up against hatred.
5. Find out from your local authority what other local initiatives may be working to bridge divides and encourage your members to become involved in these.
6. Encourage your members to report any suspected hate crime to their local police.
7. Be aware that children may suffer increased bullying relating to their religious and/or ethnic identity at this time.
8. Encourage your member organisations to work to ensure that their places of worship are as secure as possible.

[Excerpt from <https://www.interfaith.org.uk/resources/leaving-the-eu-the-important-role-of-faith-communities-at-a-time-of-transition>]

Talking Pants Campaign



Have you heard of the **Talking PANTS** campaign? You might have heard of Pantosaurus and his song on the NSPCC website. Here is a link if he's new to you. <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/support-for-parents/underwear-rule/> Hounslow Safeguarding Children Partnership has been talking to Hounslow parents about how to protect their children from sexual abuse for a few years now through schools and nurseries. We want to broaden our reach now to include parents in other places and settings.

We would like to hear from you if you would be interested in hosting an information session for parents in your place of worship or in a parents group or coffee morning or other gathering that you might have.

We can arrange a session for interested people to share the information with parents to reassure them about talking to their young children to protect them. If you would like to take part please contact Barbara McIntivey on info@hounslowfriendsoffaith.org or 07928345959

It is twenty years since Hounslow Friends of Faith began in the year 2000, it is hoped to have a celebration to mark this achievement.

Best wishes to all those who will be observing days of special significance

February

8th/15th Buddhists will be marking Nirvana Day

25th February is observed by Christians as Shrove Tuesday which is followed by the season of Lent from Ash Wednesday 26th February for six weeks until Easter on 12th April

March

2 – 20th Baha'i Nineteen Day Fast

6th Women's World Day of Prayer

9th Buddhist Magha Puja Day

9/10th Purim – Jewish

9.10th Hola Mohalla – Sikh

10/11th Holi – Hindu

Please send details of any religious festivals, special events or items of interest which you wish to be included in the next newsletter to info@hounslowfriendsoffaith.org

Please note: If you are receiving this newsletter as the named person from an organisation please circulate it within your group and do let me know if there is someone else to whom it should be sent as well as/or instead of you.