



HOUNSLOW FRIENDS OF FAITH

Newsletter: December 2021 ~ January 2022

Keeping you up to date with Interfaith and Community News

National Interfaith Week 14th ~ 21st November

To celebrate National Interfaith Week this year *Hounslow Friends of Faith* supported by the Council Prevent Team held an evening meeting on Thursday 18th November at Hounslow House Civic Centre. Fifty people attended who between them represented the Baha'i, Brahma Kumaris, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Muslim, Jewish, Sikh and Zoroastrian faiths. Also present were the local Police Faith Liaison Officer and members of the Community Inclusion and Development teams from Hounslow Council.

After sharing a vegetarian finger buffet and engaging in a short interfaith quiz devised by David Baldwin, an interfaith calendar was launched for 2022 which shows photographs of local places of worship and other faith related pictures. The idea for a calendar came from Rev Anne Dollery who was assisted by Debbie Brenner and Anne van Staveren in its production. The printing of the calendar was sponsored by Hounslow Council. A booklet entitled *Faith, Symbols and Facts* was also launched, in which individual members of HFOF briefly describe their own faith and its symbol. The booklet was the initiative of Barbara Witzendorf and the HFOF interfaith knitting group following on from their knitted banner showing all the faith symbols which was produced for the 20th anniversary of HFOF last year. Advice and assistance were given by several HFOF trustees and Katie Bennett, Debbie Brenner's daughter, did the attractive graphic design. If you wish to receive a booklet please request one from Barbara McIntivey on info@hounslowfriendsoffait.org



David Baldwin, HFOF Vice Chair, who introduced Ajit as a Patron; with Ajit Singh, LBH Mayor and Charanjit Ajit Singh, HFOF Chair

The Mayor of Hounslow, Councillor Bishnu Gurung, presented certificates to Mr Prem Sondhi and Mr Ajit Singh MBE to mark their becoming Patrons of HFOF in recognition of their longstanding support and promotion of interfaith relations.



Prem Sondhi and Divya Din, HFOF Vice Chair, who introduced Prem as a Patron

The occasion was ably chaired by Charanjit AjitSingh and it was good to be able to meet in person after so long. It was a worthwhile and enjoyable evening thanks to the organisers and all who attended.



In their Interfaith Week message the Revd Sonia Hicks and Mrs Barbara Easton, President and Vice President of the Methodist Church Conference wrote:

At the core of every religious experience there is a flame of hope in God and in humanity. It is significant that we take time to meet each other and to offer friendship and solidarity to one another.

Making friends and getting to know each other is very much at the heart of what Hounslow Friends of Faith seeks to achieve. The group's aims are to increase knowledge and understanding about faiths and to promote contact and good relations between people of different religions and philosophies.



Recently **Refugees Welcome Hounslow (RWH)** held its fifth AGM. Instigated by HFOF, it was launched in 2015 to welcome Syrian refugees arriving in Hounslow under the

government's Resettlement of Vulnerable Persons scheme, though the remit has now become broader. In 2020 the arrival of government-supported refugees was paused due to the pandemic. But the efforts of those doing face-to-face welfare work were redirected to asylum seekers who filled all the cheaper Hounslow hotels, some of whom arrived with no more than the clothes they stood up in. This intense and demanding work gradually diminished as the pandemic receded and people could be moved on around the country.

Resettlement has now resumed and one more Syrian refugee family has arrived in Hounslow. Meanwhile, the eyes of the world have turned to refugees from Afghanistan. Hounslow has offered to receive five families, and the first is expected in December. RWH is working alongside the local Afghan community to prepare a welcome, including raising money for equipment not provided by the Home Office funds (like a second set of bed-linen for each bed, or computer tablets if the children are expected to have them for school). Volunteers will show them for example how to take a bus or where to find the local pharmacy. Perhaps just as important, RWH can represent a welcome from the 'host' community, a visible sign that British people are anxious to contribute to their wellbeing..

For these activities, RWH moving spirits Rachel Tanner and Shelagh Allsop were recently selected for the *Community Heart Award*, one category of nine in the One Hounslow Community Awards 2021, and also for the overall *One Hounslow Spirit Award*. This has already proved valuable in drawing RWH to the attention of possible donors of funds!

The Jewish Festival of Hannukah



Basil Mann, a trustee of HFOF, arranged a zoom Hannukah on Thursday 2nd December which was presented by Rabbi Hersh Vogel of Ealing Orthodox Synagogue and attended by 25 people.

Hannukah is an eight day Jewish wintertime festival commemorating the rededication of the Temple of Jerusalem in 165 BCE after the Jews had emerged victorious over their enemies and been able to reclaim the Temple for Jewish worship. When they re-entered the Temple just one jar of pure oil was found which was only enough for the lamps to be lit for a single day; yet it was used for lighting the required set of lamps for eight days until they managed to press olives and produce pure oil. Because of this it was ruled that these eight days should be observed annually as days of rejoicing and praising the Lord. Lamps are lit in the evening on each of the eight nights to remember the miracle of the oil. This year Hannukah ran from November 28th – December 6th. Hannukah is sometimes called the Festival of Lights and Rabbi Vogel reflected that the Festival of Hannukah can encourage us, all whatever faith we follow, to introduce light to the people around us through kind acts.

Book Review:

WHY BRITISH MUSLIMS STILL LAGGING BEHIND? Researched and written by Dr Qadir Bakhsh and Maqsood Ahmed.

A Review by Kholā Hasan (*a Sharia Council Scholar in the UK*)

The premise of the book is that Muslims in Britainare failing miserably in material progress. Bakhsh and Ahmed argue that Muslims are the new underclass in Britain and have documented their book with statistics and research that one cannot dispute. But I take strong objection to their conclusion that "...Muslims are content with 'mediocrity' with the promise of Jannat in the life hereafter." (p82) I would argue that Muslims are aspirational and are desperate to succeed materially, but often do not have the support structures from family or schools to allow them to achieve their potential.

Bakhsh and Ahmed (p83) further ask why Muslims are lagging behind morally and spiritually..... but I dispute the premise regarding morality and spirituality. Muslims are not angels, far from it. But they do have a strong sense of Islamic ethics and morality. Even when they engage in crime or un-Islamic behaviour such as adultery, they will exhibit a sense of embarrassment and shame. One also sees that Mosques across the country are packed to the rafters with worshippers on Fridays, Ramadan and Eid festivals; furthermore, they are packed with young worshippers, both male and female. The sense of spirituality and pride in their faith is clearly evident in their use of language, dress, and even the places they choose to holiday.

Notwithstanding my objections, I would recommend this book as serious reading for Muslims themselves and policymakers.

The book is available from:

Mr Haris Ahmed, Markfield, Leicestershire, LE67 9SY, UK

or contact **Maqsood Ahmed, OBE** on 07983565112

Also sold by Kube Publishing- an independent publishing house.

ISBN13: 9780907577140 **Publication Date:** 03-02-2021

Hounslow Police Encourage the Reporting of Hate Crimes

Hate crime can take many forms:

- verbal abuse
- physical abuse
- graffiti
- criminal damage to your home or property
- threats to harm you, your friends or your family
- intimidation
- bullying
- producing offensive printed material about you
- online and social media

If you believe you have been abused because of your race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, age, gender identity or disability you have experienced hate crime. And it is important to report it. Hate Crime affects everyone in our communities and should never be taken lightly, this is why the police and Hounslow Council encourage everyone to report it to the police. If you make a report you will be listened to and appropriate action will be taken. It will also help to see which particular communities are being targeted more than others and allow allocation of staffing and funding where these areas appear.

Ways to report:

To the police:

call 999 in case of emergency or 101 for non-emergencies

If you not wish to report to the police directly then contact:

Crimestoppers:

on 0800 555111 - all calls are free and you do not have to give your name

or visit <https://crimestoppers-uk.org/>

or visit **TrueVision** <https://www.report-it.org.uk/>

There is a Powerpoint giving the questions asked on the police online form available from:
PC Pete Trueman Hate/Faith Crime Liaison officer for Hounslow, Hillingdon and Ealing
peter.trueman@met.police.uk

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

December

- 8th** **Buddhist:** BODHI DAY remembering Gautama's attainment of enlightenment under the Bodhi tree.
- 10th** National HUMAN RIGHTS DAY In 1948 The United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: 'All human beings are born with equal and inalienable rights and fundamental freedoms.'
- 24th** **Christian:** CHRISTMAS EVE is marked with carols and Midnight Holy Communion services to inaugurate the festival of Christmas.
- 25th** **Christian:** CHRISTMAS DAY (see also 6th – 7th January) celebrates the birth of Jesus, whom Christians believe to be the Son of God. Nativity sets are displayed in many churches and homes.
- 26th** **Zoroastrian: (Iranian)** ZARATOSHT NO DISO is the anniversary of the death of Prophet Zarathushtra and is a sorrowful occasion. Tradition records that he was assassinated at the age of 77. It is customary to visit the Fire Temple, participate in special remembrance prayers and ponder upon the *Gathas* or Hymns of Zarathushtra, which embody his eternal message to humanity.

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- 5th** **Sikh:** BIRTHDAY of the tenth GURU - GOBIND SINGH in 1666 who instituted the practice of the five K's and established the Order of the Khalsa.
- 6th** **Christian:** EPIPHANY celebrates the visit of the magi/wise men to the infant Jesus, bearing symbolic gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. This is the twelfth day of Christmas.
- 6th/7th** **Christian:** CHRISTMAS EVE and DAY celebrated by Rastafarian Ethiopian Christians and many Eastern Orthodox Christians.
- 12th** **Hindu:** BIRTHDAY of SWAMI VIVEKANADA Vivekananda, an Indian Hindu monk and a disciple of Ramakrishna.
- 13th** **Hindu/Sikh:** LOHRI a cultural festival celebrating the family.
- 14th** **Hindu:** MAKAR SANKRANTI – a winter festival to worship the Sun God Surya in Northern India PONGAL - the festival in South India and Sri Lanka to worship Surya, the Sun God
- 14th** **Sikh:** MAGHI remembering the sacrifice of 40 Sikhs who fought for Guru Gobind Singh.
- 16th** **Buddhist:** SHINRAN MEMORIAL DAY Shinran was the founder of Jodo Shin-shu, one of the schools of Pure Land Buddhism.

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- 16th** **Baha'i:** WORLD RELIGION DAY This day promotes interfaith understanding by emphasizing factors common to all faiths. It was first introduced among Baha'i communities in the 1950s, and is now celebrated by a wider spread of communities, including the Baha'i, usually on the third Sunday of January.
- 17th** **Jewish:** Tu B'Shevat is the Jewish 'New Year for Trees'.
- 25th** **Buddhist:** HONEN MEMORIAL DAY Honen (1133-1212 CE) is one of the outstanding figures in the history of Japanese Buddhism, and was the founder of Jodo Shinshu, one of the schools of Pure Land Buddhism.
- 25th- 27th** **Buddhist:** LOSAR Tibetan New Year festival, often celebrated in Nepal as well. Although largely a secular celebration, it also includes the rededication of the country to Buddhism. It especially celebrates the miracles performed by the historical Buddha at Sravasti, the capital city of the kingdom of Kosala.
- 27th** **NATIONAL HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY** A day for remembrance of people who suffered, chiefly at the hands of the Nazis during the second World War but also in other persecutions. It aims to keep memory fresh and ensure that no such atrocity happens again.
- 30th** **Zoroastrian: [Iranian]** JASHN-E SADEH A mid-winter bonfire festival to signify that days are getting longer. The litany to fire, the *Atash Niyayeesh*, is recited, and Iranian legends are told of King Hoshang (who discovered the art of making fire). There is piping hot stew, dancing and merry-making.

February 2022

- 1st** **Chinese** New Year Festival – 2022 is the year of the Tiger.
- 1st – 7th** **World Interfaith Harmony Week**
- 4/5th** **Hindu: Sarasvati Puja/Vasant Pancham** widely celebrated in North India, this festival marks the beginning of spring. For Hindus it is usually linked with Saraswati, the goddess of learning and the arts. Yellow is her associated colour.

Please send details of any religious festivals, special events or items of interest which you wish to be included in the next newsletter to HFOF secretary Rev Barbara McIntivey info@hounslowfriendsoffaith.org by 25th January. Do share this newsletter with others in your group or faith community.