

Hounslow Friends of Faith
Charity number 1147028
Annual Report 2016-17

Human beings are naturally spiritual, so research shows, and demonstrate this in many different ways, formal and informal. Good community relations come from understanding how this is expressed, and how cooperation is necessary between faiths to make it happen. Interfaith groups play their part too. So stated Marianne



Rankin, Director of Communications for the Alister Hardy Trust in a stimulating talk after our 2016 AGM in July. “Public representation of harmony between them is important as is co-operation in our communities.” Marianne added, referring to joint witness such as at Remembrance Sunday.

Marianne Rankin (5th from left)
sharing refreshments after the talk

In August over 30 women shared hymns, songs and chants from their faith traditions at a gathering in Feltham. Interesting connections in practice were found. Hosted by the Centre for Spirituality and Cultural Advancement, the session ended with generous refreshments when tea and conversation flowed. The event was followed up at the same venue in November with a felting workshop for women. This was well attended with a number of people attending a HFOF event for the first time. We are grateful to Near Neighbours for funding this project.



Hana Horack explains all

This event was one of three held during Interfaith Week in mid November 2016. A second was a working lunch at Hounslow Civic Centre held as a follow up to the Mayor of Hounslow’s Meeting of Faiths reported in last year’s annual report. The original event had celebrated the social welfare work of faith communities in Hounslow and discussed areas where more information and support was needed. The new Mayor, Councillor Ajmer Grewal re-emphasised the recognition at this working lunch when updates and information was provided.

The third event in Interfaith Week was a public meeting to assess the response which could be made to the needs of refugees in Hounslow. It was chaired by Rev Tom Gillum, Vice Chair of Hounslow Friends of Faith. Spurred on by the positive level of interest, further meetings have been held with a view to establishing a Refugees Welcome Hounslow group to support Hounslow Council in welcoming up to 10 Syrian families resettled in the borough as part of the government’s Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme. It is hoped that Hounslow Friends of Faith will continue to offer support and



resources to this group, to channel the contribution faiths can make to supporting and welcoming families from war torn parts of the Middle East.

During the year we were pleased to hear that PC Karmi Rekhi, the Faith Liaison Officer for Hounslow Police had been honoured by being awarded the MBE. We very



much appreciate the support which Karmi has given to many sections of the faith community in the borough. Later in the year we were sorry that the time had come for Karmi to take retirement and we wish her all the best. We are pleased to welcome Sergeant Dave Turtle into the role of Faith and Community Engagement Officer and we look forward to working with him.

Karmi receives flowers to say thank you from Hounslow Jamia Masjid at their iftar meal (photo courtesy Cllr Mukesh Malhotra)

Unfortunately to the time of writing (20th June 2017) there have been four terrorist outrages this year, on Westminster Bridge, Manchester Arena, London Bridge and outside Muslim Welfare House in Finsbury Park. After the first one Hounslow Friends of Faith endorsed the statement issued by the Faiths Forum for London. Following the others we issued our own statements, expressing our sadness and condemnation, pledging our resolve to stay as one Hounslow community and to challenge hate crime. Several members attended and spoke at a vigil following the Manchester attack organised by Hounslow Jamia Masjid.

A number of faith representatives attended a meeting of the Faiths Consultative Group, launched by Sgt Dave Turtle when issues relating to community security and standing up against hate crime against any faith were aired.

In March Father Pesce of St Peter's Church just north of Chiswick held a Scriptural Reasoning session when members of different faiths shared what their scriptures say about hospitality.

In May our Chair and Information Officer were pleased to attend and offer congratulations to the consecration Service for St Mary's and Pope Kyrillos II Coptic Church in Hounslow. This was a particular honour as the ceremony was carried out by His Holiness Pope Tawadros II, on his first pastoral visit to the UK.



Also in May Bharti Tailor ran a session for us demonstrating the meaning of rangoli patterns in Hinduism. She also taught participants how to make rakhi bracelets, which sisters give to brothers to show enduring brotherly and sisterly love. This event was held in the newly refurbished Hanuman Hindu Temple in Brentford. Again at the time of writing this report we have planned to be there

again on 1st July at the start of our 2017 Walk of Peace and Friendship. From there we move on to visit the Russian Orthodox Cathedral where we have generously been offered lunch. From there we visit Christ Church Turnham Green parish church and finish at the London Buddhist Vihara. The Mayor of Hounslow, Councillor Sue Sampson plans to join us for part of the time.



Our Women's Group continued to meet throughout the year. Topics discussed have included Putting down Roots, What makes me happy, and Breast Cancer Awareness. There was also a visit to the Victoria and Albert Museum. The Knitting Group meets monthly and donates items made to the Riverside Vineyard Storehouse project in Feltham.

For Red Nose Day March we ran a stall at the event organised by Heston West Big Local community group. The Mayor made one of our doves of peace!

Hounslow Friends of Faith publicises relevant events and its own activities through emails, bi-monthly newsletters and on its website. We now in addition have a Facebook page which can be found on <https://www.facebook.com/Hounslow-Friends-of-Faith-724712751039387>. Have a look and as the saying goes, 'follow us on Facebook'!

As we approach our AGM we note with pleasure that committee member Debbie Brenner was elected Chair of Hounslow Community Network, the voice of the voluntary sector in Hounslow. We are however sorry to say goodbye to Rev Tom Gillum, one of our Vice Chairs, who is moving from St John's and St Mary's Church in Isleworth to new responsibilities in Nottinghamshire. We wish him and his wife every success in their new life.

During the year, Hounslow Friends of Faith was surprised, but very pleased to be nominated for Queen's Award for Voluntary Service. Although we didn't win the award, we are very conscious of the honour of being nominated. We see this as a mark of our contribution, however small, to good community relations in the borough of Hounslow, a service we hope to continue to be able to make well into the future.

20th June 2017

All photos HFOF except where stated

Bessie White Information Officer

Charanjit Ajit Singh Chair