

Hounslow Friends of Faith
Charity number 1147028
Annual Report 2017-18

This annual report covers Hounslow Friends of Faith activities from our last AGM in July 2017 to the end of June 2018.

After the formalities of our 2017 AGM Hounslow Friends of Faith (HFOF) members were pleased to welcome Rev Dr John Parry, a United Reformed Church Minister and Co-Director of the London Interfaith Centre who has studied Sikhism for over 30 years, who shared his insights with a well attended multi-faith audience at the Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha in Hounslow. He spoke about Guru Gobind Singh, the 10th and last spiritual leader and creator of the Khalsa, the observant Sikh community, in 1699. John Parry discussed the value to a faith of scriptures, the understanding of the concept of God and the obligation of service to others. This talk presented something new and different, a soul searching for those who are at the front line of interfaith activities, having to deal with histories of strife between faiths and yet finding a way forward together as one, diverse humankind.

Earlier in July, HFOF were delighted to be chosen by a group of Year 8 students at Kingsley Academy as part of a First Give competition to research local charities. Danish and his fellow students made a link between bullying and hate crime, vividly explaining how the scars of both remain long term. They made the case that Hounslow Friends of Faith brings people together and stands up against intimidation of anyone just for being who they are.

The presentation won the group a runner up prize and HFOF received £250. We put this sum towards a series of three workshops for a Year 9 group at the school in March this year run by 3FF (now known as the Faith and Belief Forum) which specialises in running programmes to change perceptions, behaviours and attitudes in individuals and organisations in a more positive direction.



Feedback from the school was very positive. Stephen Dray, Head of Humanities said *"Fantastic session, loads of energy and debate from students. Could easily have had a double session as students were so engaged. Thank you!!"*. And from a student: *"Even if we are from different religions we are still the same."*

During this year we provided speakers at two schools for school assemblies, in Hammersmith and in Brentford and at the annual SACRE Sixth Form Conference.

Our Women's Group has met five times over the year. Over 25 adults and children enjoyed the sunshine at a picnic in Osterley Park. Some people had enjoyed the Walk earlier in the summer, some were regulars at the Knitting Group while others again are active with Refugees Welcome Hounslow for which HFOF is a founder member and sponsor.

In October a panel of speakers shared 'What my Faith means to Me' at Feltham Evangelical Church. A well attended and enjoyable bring and share food session at the Bait-U-Noor Ahmadiyya mosque in Hounslow took place during Interfaith Week in November. January

2018 saw a session on loneliness held at the Hounslow Jamia Masjid. The meeting planned with Detective Superintendent Shabnam Chaudhri, Faith & Partnership Lead at New Scotland Yard in February had to be rescheduled due to the snow and took place in May, at the Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha. We are grateful to the faith organisations for hosting these Women's Group events.

Hounslow Friends of Faith supported the Joint Services fun day in Thornbury Park in Isleworth on 9th September. Organised to promote the Police, Fire and other public services who serve the community, the day provided information and activities for 2000 local people. On the HFOF stall children enjoyed making our doves of peace and our gazebo provided shelter from the showers.



We were active during Hate Crime Awareness Week in October, working with the Hounslow Borough Community Safety Unit to put on a multi-faith day at Montague Hall to celebrate diversity, increase awareness of hate crime and encourage people to report incidents. HFOF challenges hate crime including Islamophobia and Anti-Semitism, whoever commits it.

During Inter Faith Week, we supported the performance of a challenging play about asylum which was put on by Brentford and Isleworth Quakers. The collection was divided between Refugees Welcome Hounslow and refugee projects in the West Midlands where the theatre group Journeymen Theatre are based.

Back in 2016 our former Vice Chair Rev Tom Gillum returned from a visit to refugee camps in Jordan determined to make a difference. On behalf of Hounslow Friends of Faith he arranged a meeting during Interfaith Week in 2016 which was well attended. Refugees Welcome Hounslow (RWH) was set up with the aim of designating Hounslow as a welcome borough for refugees and specifically to provide community support for households from Syria accepted by Hounslow Council through the Government's Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme.

During 2017 discussions continued with Hounslow Council about the Syrian scheme. In July HFOF committee agreed that RWH should be a separate organisation, but with active HFOF involvement. The group was established as an unincorporated charity on 9th October 2017 with two HFOF trustees on the managing committee. In addition there are currently five other HFOF members also on the committee or otherwise involved with the group. Generous donations have been made by St John's Church in Isleworth and Hounslow Jamia Masjid as well as many other donations from well wishers from other faith groups or individuals. The group are most grateful for this community support which is helping the refugees cope with the transition from refugee camps to life in a new country.



At the time of writing six households have arrived and with the help of the group are settling in the borough. A celebratory garden party was held on 21st June 2018 at St Paul's Vicarage Garden in Chiswick to welcome them and say thank you to the volunteer befrienders for their hard work.

During the year we have worked with other sectors in the London Borough of Hounslow to give advice and information e.g. the Contingency Planning and Resilience Unit, Adult Social Care, the NHS Clinical Commissioning Group and Community Partnerships Unit on a new directory of community buildings. We have also been represented at meetings of the Faith Consultative Body organised by the Hounslow Police Faith and Community Engagement Officer.

HFOF supported the organisation of Holocaust Memorial Day by LB Hounslow and was represented at the marking of the Dewachan Buddhist Centre Buddha's Anniversary, Om Day, the induction of Rev Sarah Guinness the new Team Rector of St Paul's Church in Brentford and the Civic Service for Armed Forces Day.



In April 2018 the Commonwealth Heads of Government met in London. With the encouragement of the Deputy Lord Lieutenant for Hounslow, Maria Pedro, HFOF assisted with the organisation and publicity for a number of relaxed and enjoyable events, at the Civic Centre, the Hounslow Jamia Masjid, the Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha and West Thames College which brought people together and reached new audiences.

In June our annual Walk of Peace and Friendship took place in Feltham and Hanworth with, in the words of local MP Seema Malhotra, once again the message of the value of walking in each other's footsteps and through each other's doors. Mayor of Hounslow Councillor Samia Chaudhary also attended and welcomed the work of Hounslow Friends of Faith.



At the Athula Dassana Buddhist Centre in Hanworth monk Bhikkhu Assaji explained Buddhist philosophy and practice before the community members served lunch. Crossing Hanworth Park the second visit was to the Riverside Vineyard Church in Browells Lane where Senior Pastor Andy Chapman explained the work of the church in meeting the needs of the area. He described their newly completed community centre and the Storehouse Project which provides food and equipment to families in difficulties.

There was a warm welcome at HIRA (the Hounslow Islamic Relief Association). Imam Sheikh Mohammed Sayed gave a short talk on Ramadan before a tour of the centre. He joined us for the final visit to St Lawrence's Catholic Church on The Green. Deacon Colin Macken responded to a range of questions about the church. "The wealth of the church is its people" he said.

Our knitting group continues to meet monthly in partnership with St Mary's Church in Twickenham. Items such as blankets, baby and children's clothing and hats and scarves have been donated to the Red Cross, Riverside Vineyard Church in Feltham and elsewhere. Proceeds from the sale of one blanket was donated to the Grenville Tower relief fund.

Over the year, Hounslow Friends of Faith has publicised relevant events and its own activities through emails, bi-monthly newsletters, on its website and on Facebook

page which can be found on <https://www.facebook.com/Hounslow-Friends-of-Faith-724712751039387>. Do follow us on Facebook and share posts with your friends.

Finally to note changes of personnel for 2018/19. Having served for 12 years as Secretary and then Information Officer, Bessie White is stepping down from that role and from the trustee board. We wish Bessie all the best for her retirement. Barbara McIntivey, our current committee secretary will become Secretary and replace Bessie as the point of contact for Hounslow Friends of Faith. Do get in touch with her if you have any questions or events you would like circulated among faith groups in the borough.

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