

## Newsletter October 2024

### Walk of Peace and Friendship 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2024

The walk covered four places of worship, starting at Laxmi Narayan Hindu Temple. Here, it was festival time, and we arrived to singing and prayers being offered to the gods. We were joined by the Deputy Lieutenant and walked on to West London Jamatkhana, the Ismaili Muslim centre in Isleworth, where we were given a hearty lunch. We were joined by the Mayor of Hounslow. We were told about the precepts of the Ismaili faith and the prominent role they play in the Hounslow local community.



*Being welcomed at the West London Jamatkhana*

The next venue was the Brentford and Isleworth Quaker Meeting House, where we were given a history of the historic building and garden established in 1785. We were told about the history of the Quaker movement and the method of prayer. Our host had baked us a special cake, which was much enjoyed.



The last visit took us to Our Lady of Sorrows and St Bridget Catholic church in Old Isleworth. Our guide, a local historian, had a wealth of information about this fascinating old Church, one of the oldest Catholic communities in England. There are currently worshippers from 20-30 countries.



*Outside Our Lady of Sorrows Church*

The Walk was amazing, and by the end of the day we were all exhausted, full of information, and stimulated by the diversity of places we visited. Really a highlight of HFOF's calendar.

### **Annual General Meeting 11<sup>th</sup> July 2024**

We are thankful to Hounslow Council for hosting our AGM at Hounslow House. This was well attended by the members and the trustees and ably supported by Council Officers under the leadership of Joan Conlon.

Charanjit started the meeting by introducing the annual report. She said,

‘To all intents and purposes, it has been a challenging year for HFOF because of external conflicts affecting many people in our local faith communities, especially since October 2023. We have worked very closely with Hounslow Council and Met Police to monitor faith-related incidents and ensure harmonious relationships within our locality. We have been able to meet in person in our valued places of worship. The continued use of online has enabled us to participate in a range of local and London-wide events. Joan Conlon and her team have given us support and kept the lines of communication going.’

She thanked the Officers and trustees who raise the profile of HFOF and deliver events and projects such as Interfaith Week, Holocaust Memorial Day, the Interfaith Walk of Peace and Friendship, and the Women's Knitting Group with vigour and sensitivity. We are proud of our partnerships with the Local authority, the voluntary sector, and West Thames College.

The Committee for 2024-2025 was elected unanimously.

This was followed by a talk by James Holland, the new coordinator of Westminster Interfaith, on "Dialogue: A Pilgrimage of Hope" A Catholic exploration of the virtue of hope and the path towards dialogue.

Pope Francis has declared that the theme of next year's Jubilee Year is "Pilgrims of Hope". Linking it with the local situation, he conducted a very interactive and engaging session about what hope looks like in Catholic thought and how dialogue might be a way of journeying together towards a more hopeful future for us all.



*James Holland and some of the audience at his AGM talk*

### **West London BAPS (Hindu Fellowship) Celebration 29-31st August 2024 at Spring West Academy**

During the holy months of Chaturmas (the four sacred months of the monsoon in India), many Hindus engage in additional acts of devotion, particularly scriptural learning and discourse. Such acts of devotion hold tremendous spiritual merit.

BAPS West London Satsang Mandal invited HFOF to a special three-day series on Sthitapragnatā as defined in the Shrimad Bhagavad Gitā.

The discourses were delivered by Pujya Narayancharandas Swami, a learned swami of His Holiness Mahant Swami Maharaj who was the personal attendant to His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj for over 35 years. Through his discourses, he shared his considerable knowledge to inspire us and motivate devotees to uphold stitapraghnata—mental balance—in their lives.

Hundreds of people attended the ceremony. Ajit Singh and I attended and were welcomed on the evening of 30 Aug. We expressed our gratitude to everyone who made the evening a great success. Although some of the higher level Gujarati was a bit above my understanding, the Swamis kept us all spellbound and knowing that Pramukh Swamiji's teachings areas if the fifth Veda has been revealed, must have had a great impact on the devotees.

We enjoyed a sumptuous meal and great hospitality. Ajit being garlanded by Swamiji was a big cherry on a beautiful evening of spirituality and food.

Charanjit Ajitsingh

### **Borough Faiths Forum 9<sup>th</sup> September 2024**

Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha Hounslow hosted a meeting of the London Resilience Faith & Belief Sector Panel combined with the London Borough Faith Forums.

Approximately 50 people attended this significant event.

The Bishop of Southwark chaired the meeting, assisted by the Convenors Steve Millar and Malak Sawan: [partnerships@lbfm.org.uk](mailto:partnerships@lbfm.org.uk).

This interactive meeting focussed on the following issues of current concern and interest:

- a) The role of faith communities in responding to public disorder and race/religious hatred
- b) First reflections on Grenfell Inquiry report
- c) Preparation for Winter/Cold weather issues
- d) Plans for Inter Faith Week.

Those who had not been to a Sikh place of worship were treated to a tour. It is important to note that Her Majesty the Queen opened the new wing of the Gurdwara in October 2004, and it was mentioned in the Christmas message of that year. The King and Queen Camilla also visited the Gurdwara.

Everybody who attended enjoyed the hospitality of vegetarian food in the langar, the free kitchen for all, regardless of who they are.

There was a good opportunity for networking and it is hoped that the outcomes of the sharing will be made available to those who attended.



*Participants at the Borough Faiths Forum*

### **St. Mary & Pope Kyrillos VI. (SMPK) Coptic Orthodox Church Hounslow 10th anniversary 8<sup>th</sup> Sept 2024**

On September 8, 2024, SMPK joyfully celebrated 10th anniversary, a significant milestone reflecting a decade of spiritual growth and community cohesion. The celebration took place at

the Windsor Church Hall, graced by the presence of His Eminence Bishop Angelos, who offered words of encouragement and blessing to the congregation.

The afternoon was a vibrant showcase of talent and creativity, featuring various performances. An orchestra captivated attendees with harmonious melodies, while the children's choir brought innocence and joy through their uplifting songs. A short play performed by congregation members added a touch of theatricality.

As the sun set on this remarkable day, the congregation gathered to savour an exquisite buffet lovingly prepared by church members. This communal meal was not just a feast but a symbol of the unity and friendship that have flourished within SMPK.

The celebration underscored the dedication and hard work of many individuals who made the day memorable. Their efforts were recognized and appreciated, reminding everyone of the strong bonds built over the years. Happy anniversary to SMPK, a community that continues to thrive through faith, fellowship, and shared purpose!



### **London Buddhist Centre (Vihara), Chiswick**

The Mahabodhi Society put together a series of events at the Vihara to celebrate the 160th anniversary of the birth of its founder Anagarika Dharmapala. He established the Mahabodhi Society in 1926, and the Vihara was the first monastery for Buddhist monks in the UK.

On 6<sup>th</sup> September, there was a fascinating presentation on Buddhism and AI by Professor Thrishantha Nanayakkara of Imperial College.

On 7<sup>th</sup> September, there was an online discourse, 'Is Buddhism a Religion, a Philosophy or a Way of Life?' By Venerable Olande Ananda Thero, who spoke from Colombo. He was born in The Netherlands but in his mid-twenties, embarked on an eventful journey seeking spiritual fulfilment. He settled in Sri Lanka, ordaining as a Theravada Buddhist monk, and now offers teaching and meditation guidance to followers in his adopted home and internationally.

On 14<sup>th</sup> September, Professor Kate Crosby of Oxford University kept the audience mesmerised with her knowledge of Pali and Sanskrit and her use of original texts in her presentation on 'Anagarika Dharmapala & the Meditation Manual: Window into a Lost World of Self-Transformation.'

Charanjit Ajitsingh

## **UPCOMING EVENTS**

HFOF Interfaith week 10-17 Nov

**7 Nov 7pm** London Buddhist (Vihara) Centre presentation by Ven Seelawimala on Buddhism and the role of the Vihara in Interfaith. Chanting takes place from 6.30-7.0pm and we are invited to listen or take part.

**10 Nov 10 am** (TBC) Holy Trinity Church Remembrance Sunday

**13 Nov 6:30 pm**, Hanuman Mandir, Brentford, The Healing power of music

**14 Nov (online) 6 pm** Dr Nayana Shah (Jain) the Parliament of World Religions organised by Animals Interfaith Alliance

**15 Nov** (all day) Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha, Guru Nanak's birthday Celebrations

11 am Flag changing ceremony, 12.0 Cardinal Michael Fitzgerald will deliver a message from the Pope

**18 Nov** online webinar Peace advocacy network with interfaith vegan panel

## **List of Festivals October to December 2024**

3 October Rosh Hoshana, Jewish New Year 5785

3 October 1st day of Navratre, Hindu

12 October Dusshera Navratre end ,Hindu

12 October Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement) Jewish

17 October Sukkot ( First day of Tabernacles) Jewish

30 October Hanuman Jayanti, Hindu

1 November Diwali, Bandi Chhor Diwas, All Saints Day – Hindu, Sikh, Christian

9 – 17 November Interfaith Week

10 November Remembrance Sunday

11 November Armistice Day

14/15 November Guru Nanak's birthday, Sikh

1 December First Sunday of Advent, Christian

6 December Martyrdom Day Guru Tegh Bahadur, Sikh

8 December Bodhi Day, Buddhism

25 December Chanukah, Jewish

25 December Christmas Day, Christian

26 December Boxing Day, Christian