



December 2024 Newsletter

GREETINGS FOR THE FESTIVE SEASON AND A VERY HAPPY 2025
FROM HOUNSLOW FRIENDS OF FAITH.

Our prayers are for peace in our communities at this time of conflict in many places on earth and extend our goodwill to all people for a harmonious future.

We are also looking forward to our 25th anniversary which we intend celebrating with all our friends, community partners and Well Wishers.

Interfaith week news

On 7th November, members of the HFOF committee were welcomed to the London Buddhist Vihara (LBV) in Chiswick to hear the Venerable Bogoda Seelawimala the head monk and the Chief Sangha Nayaka of Great Britain talk about his Faith journey. Some of us were able to attend the daily chanting and also learnt more about the history of the LBV.

The LBV was founded in 1926 and is a leading teaching centre for Theravada Buddhism. It was the first Buddhist monastery to be established outside Asia with a community of monks from Sri Lanka.

The Venerable Bogoda Seelawimala gave a fascinating talk about his upbringing in a Sri Lankan Buddhist family, his schooling, his decision to become a monk and his later studies. His talk also described his support for interfaith programmes including the World Congress of Faiths which was of great interest to us all. He answered questions about life and work in London and internationally.

The HFOF Committee meeting followed. We were given a delicious buffet and an opportunity to look round the Vihara's main hall and library and to talk with trustees of the LBV.



Chanting at the Vihara.

On Saturday 8th November Richmond Synagogue led a Remembrance Service attended by the Richmond Civic leaders, members of the Richmond Faith and Belief Forum and community groups. It was a particularly poignant experience for those who have links with friends and families affected by the conflict in the Middle East.

On Sunday 9th November, HFOF members attended the Memorial Service organised by the Royal British Legion and conducted by Revd Sally Baily, in the front of the Holy Trinity Church in Hounslow High Street as part of the annual event in the Council Calendar.

On 13th November, the Hanuman Hindu Temple in Brentford showed a wonderful video of a concert of healing music, played and composed by the world-renowned musician, Sri Ganapathy Sachchidananda Swamiji. The Temple's high Hindu Vedic Priest, Jitubhai Dave, gave a fascinating commentary on the music, explaining the particular healing powers of the different pieces of music, and the therapeutic use in medical settings. Jitubhai kindly gave us CDs of the Swami's music.



Sachchidananda Swamiji



Dressing the flag at the Gurdwara.

On 15th November, the Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha, Alice Way celebrated Guru Nanak's birthday. This was attended by large numbers of people from the Sikh community, local Councillors, members of HFOF and members of Westminster Interfaith. We watched the flag being lowered, re-dressed and raised up again, accompanied by chanting and singing, in honour of Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism. We were warmly welcomed and invited to eat at the Langar Hall.

The celebration included a talk from his Eminence Cardinal Dr Michael Fitzgerald M.Afr who read a message from the Pope.

We include his talk here:

WAHEGURU JI KA KHALSA, WAHEGURU JI KI FATEH

I wish to bring you greetings from the Vatican, from the Office which helps Pope Francis, the leader of the Catholic Church, with interfaith relations:

"May your festivities be filled with serenity, joy and peace, and strengthen fraternity in your neighbourhoods and communities!... we wish to share with you some thoughts on how both Sikhs and Christians can sow seeds of hope, with courage, conviction and commitment, and together reap a harvest of peace. and according to Pope Francis, peace is "a journey of hope in the face of obstacles and trial".

In Sikh history you have experienced many trials, and so you are ready to be 'Pilgrims of Hope'.

We are all members of the one human family, created by the One God. So we are all brothers and sisters together.



His Eminence Cardinal Dr Michael Fitzgerald

Wednesday evening I was in Chester giving a talk on the 'Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together' which Pope Francis signed together with a Muslim leader, the Grand Imam of al-Azhar. This document starts with a statement of faith:

"Through faith in God, who has created the universe, creatures and all human beings (equal on account of his mercy) believers are called to express this human fraternity by safeguarding creation and the entire universe and supporting all persons, especially the poorest and those most in need."

Pope Francis chose the name of Francis, when he was elected Pope, after Saint Francis of Assisi on account of this saint's attention to the poor. This coming Sunday, Pope Francis will be having a special prayer with the poor and then will have lunch with over 1000 poor people.

The Sikh tradition pays attention to the poor, providing *langar*; I heard that with the recent flooding in Spain Sikhs offered assistance immediately, and that during the time of COVID they provided oxygen *langar*.

Another reason for Pope Francis to adopt the name of Francis was the attitude of the Saint towards Creation. He said we belong to one family instituted by the Creator God where we are all Brothers and Sisters in humanity; Francis spoke about Brother Sun, Sister Water, Brother Fire. Pope Francis has written an important letter, *Laudato Si'* in which he encourages all of us to exercise responsibility for the whole of creation around us.

I return to the Message for Guru Nanak's Day:

"As believers, we are "pilgrims of hope", steadfast in our own religious traditions and with a shared commitment to strengthening the wellbeing of humanity. Let us, Christians and Sikhs, join hands with the people of other religious traditions and with all people of good will, in order to promote unity, harmony and prosperity for all, and to encourage everyone to become "a sower of seeds of hope and peace". We wish you once again a happy feast of Guru Nanak Prakash Diwas!"

SAT SRI AKAAL

Then the Head priest Bhai Karnail Singh honoured the Cardinal with a Saropa, a saffron sash as a mark of the Sikh community's respect for him.

Other news:

On 19th October 2024 the Islamic light in the West event was held at the Baitul Aman Mosque, Uxbridge

The event marked one hundred years of the foundation of Fazl Mosque – the first Mosque in London during a historic tour from India to the UK by the second Caliph. There was an Exhibition and history detailing the Caliph's travels to Britain across Europe and meetings with faith and Political leaders. As part of the



Caption here

celebration there were guest speakers including Charanjit Ajit Singh from Hounslow friends of Faith. There was an Address from the current Caliph via Telecast from **The Mubarak Mosque**. The evening was rounded off with a very pleasant meal and wonderful opportunities to mingle with the community.

Alan Murphy, Prevent Team, LBH



On 8 December 2024 an Interfaith Community Memorial Service was held at the South West Crematorium, on the initiative of Richard Ward, Manager and Registrar and his team.

Rebecca Lee, the Independent Celebrant led the service very thoughtfully and sensitively with Richmond Brass Band providing the seasonal uplifting music. The Mayor of Hounslow Cllr Karen Smith, talked about the wonderfully diverse population of the Borough and the universal feelings of grief and love. She quoted the words of late Queen Elizabeth, 'Grief is the price we pay for love.'

The service created an inclusive memorial event for people of all faiths and no faith, who have lost loved ones. This was reflected in the diversity of attendance by about 50 people from Christian, Hindu, Jain, Sikh and Zoroastrian backgrounds and by the speakers from Christian and Sikh faiths, and Hounslow Friends of Faith. Names of the departed were read, candles lit and messages by the bereaved were put on the tree. The event concluded with sumptuous refreshments and good networking. HFOF leaflets were received well.

The next day, Rebecca Lee wrote to those who participated, said, 'I think we can deem yesterday a success, such lovely feedback both afterwards and on my Facebook posts.'

Thank you for the opportunity to create and lead the service and thank you to everyone involved – especially the wonderful band – truly added some magic!

Future events

Holocaust Memorial Day

27th January 2025 11am Holocaust Memorial Day Commemoration at Chiswick School.

This event is a prominent part of the Civic and HFOF calendar.

The speaker Gloria Silver will talk about the experiences of her father Tony Chuwen, a Holocaust survivor.

The event is by invitation only, please contact us if you would like to attend.

IFTAR at West Thames College

14 March 2025 6pm

Festivals of Faiths Calendar – January to April 2025

New Year's Day

2 January – Last Day of Hannukah (Jewish)

5 January – Guru Gobind Singh Birthday (Sikh)

6 January – Epiphany (Christian)

12 January – Lohri Cultural festival – (Hindu and Sikh)

13 January – Maghi / Makar Sankranti, Pongal (Sikh and Hindu)

2 February – Basant Panchami (Sikh and Hindu)

12 February – Guru Ravidas Jayanti (Hindu)

26 February – Maha Shivaratri (Hindu)

1 March – First Day of Ramadan (Muslim)

5 March – Ash Wednesday (Christian)

14 March – Holi (Hindu)

15 March – Hola Mohalla (Sikh)

31 March – Eid-ul-Fitr (Muslim)

6 April – Ram Navmi (Hindu)

10 April – Mahavir Jayanti (Jain)

13 April – First Day of Passover (pesach) (Jewish)

14th April – Baisakhi (SIKH)

18th April – Good Friday (Christian)

20th April – Easter Sunday (Christian)

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