



# HOUNSLOW FRIENDS OF FAITH

**Working Together for Community Cohesion  
Open Doors. Open Minds**

## **Spring Newsletter**

**Celebration of the feasts of Christmas and Epiphany, held on 17<sup>th</sup> January**



St. Mary & Pope Kyrillos VI Coptic Orthodox Church welcomed members of the congregation and Hounslow neighbours to join in the occasion. The celebration was honoured by the presence of His Eminence Archbishop Angelos, Archbishop of London. Also the Mayor of Hounslow, Amy Croft, MP Ruth Cadbury, Council Leader Shantanu Rajawat and HFOF Chair Charanjit Ajitsingh, together with other Councillors and a group from the Met police reflecting the spirit of unity and community.

The evening was composed of Christmas carols and traditional Coptic Egyptian hymns, filling the church with a spirit of joy and reverence. This was followed by heartfelt words from the Mayor, MP, Council Leader and the HFOF Chair, who each spoke about unity, faith, and community. The celebration concluded with a dinner buffet, where guests enjoyed food, conversation, and fellowship, making the evening a truly memorable and blessed occasion.

## Hounslow's Holocaust Memorial event held on 27<sup>th</sup> January



The event was organised by Hounslow Council and Hounslow Friends of Faith, and hosted by Heston Community school's staff and pupils. The theme of this year's event, was Bridging Generations.

The event was chaired by Rev Martine Osborne and attended by Council staff, Councillors, members of the Met police, the Mayor, Cllr Amy Croft, the leader of the Council, Shantanu Rajawat, MP Ruth Cadbury, Deputy Lieutenant Rosie Prescott and members of Hounslow Friends of Faith.

The speaker was Eliana Ostro, who told the story of the Holocaust through the events of her grandfather's life in Poland during WW2.

Grandfather Max, was born in a small town in Poland. When the war broke out, Jews were deported first to labour camps and then, as the war progressed and borders closed, to death camps. Massacres became common, and the town's Jewish population was decimated. Max, his parents, and his brother, were herded into a cattle car bound for Treblinka. Max escaped certain death by jumping from the moving train. Continually on the run, he was caught by the Nazis and sent to a labour camp, again he managed to escape - and survived for months in a hole in the ground, dug under a henhouse.

When the war ended, Max returned briefly to his shattered home town, but found all his family were dead, and the remaining Jews were still being targeted. He left Poland entirely and travelled the world, following work wherever he could find it, never feeling safe enough to settle, but ending up in the UK where he married and had 2 children.

After her talk, Eliana answered questions from the school students about her grandfather and the Holocaust.

Memorial Candles were lit by those in attendance.

## Richmond Holocaust Memorial event



Charanjit and Ajit attended the Richmond Civic event held at Richmond Synagogue. Over 200 people attended this very moving event. Two survivors of the Holocaust told their stories of escape from Nazi occupation. Young people who had been on a trip to Poland talked about the impact it had made on them. Holocaust music and poetry was recited.

## Celebrating Our Lottery Award



We are delighted to have been successful in our Bid for £10, 000 from the Lottery Community Fund to be spent over the next 18months. We have commissioned a consultant, through Ealing and Hounslow CVS, to start work on the website, our social media and data base so that we have a robust and more professional infrastructure. We will be developing a programme of activities, and money is assigned to an interfaith Youth sports project.

## **‘Mindfulness amid mayhem’ event**

On 15 February we joined BAPS Swaminarayan Hindu fellowship in West London, part of the internationally renowned Neasden Temple. It was an inspiring evening, featuring a keynote address by Paramtattvadas Swami, a learned sadhu of His Holiness Mahant Swami Maharaj.

In today’s overwhelming world, finding balance and mental clarity is increasingly essential. This seminar shared profound yet practical guidance helping devotees and attendees to cultivate focus, resilience, and inner peace in their daily lives.

This year’s event was particularly meaningful as it coincided with the auspicious celebration of Mahashivaratri, a time symbolising spiritual elevation, discipline, and introspection – perfectly aligned with our theme of mindfulness. The event also featured networking opportunities and concluded with an authentic Indian vegetarian meal.

## **Iftars**

HFOF have been involved in organising two community Iftars this year, and have been invited to many more events. Iftar is the meal eaten by Muslims to break their daily fast, at sunset, during the month of Ramadan.

## **Annual Interfaith Iftar held at West Thames College 6<sup>th</sup> March**



Our event brought together around 50 guests from different religious and community backgrounds.

It was hosted by Marta Gajewska Principal of West Thames College; Charanjit Ajitsingh, Chair of Hounslow Friends of Faith and College Governor; and Shamama Lateef, Director and Trustee of Al Mustafa Welfare Trust.

Shaykh Ammar Siddiqui, Head Imam at Hounslow Jamia Mosque, opened the evening with a recitation from the Qur'an.

Zubair Awan, who delivered the opening remarks, highlighted the importance of bringing communities together through interfaith dialogue and thanked Hounslow Friends of Faith for its continuous efforts over the past 26 years.

Among the guests was Councillor Amy Croft, Mayor of the London Borough of Hounslow. She said "Our borough's diversity is one of its greatest strengths, and it is wonderful to see people coming together to celebrate each other's traditions and build friendship and understanding."

Marta Gajewska said the college was proud to host an event that reflects the diversity of its students and staff; "events like this create opportunities for people of different backgrounds and faiths to connect and learn from one another."

Charanjit Ajitsingh pointed out the festivals celebrated by other faiths at this very time.

Ruth Cadbury MP, Member of Parliament for Brentford and Isleworth, said "These occasions help us to recognise the universal values of compassion and understanding that unite communities."

Tameem, a Student Ambassador at West Thames College, spoke about balancing faith and study and how he felt supported by the College to do this.

Ahmed Nawaz, Fundraising Manager at Al Mustafa Welfare Trust, spoke about the charitable spirit associated with Ramadan. "Through compassion, charity and partnership between communities, faith groups and educators, we can support vulnerable people and create stronger, more caring communities."

The evening continued with the guests enjoying a vegan meal, talking together, sharing stories and meeting new people.

## Community Iftar at West Middlesex Hospital 9<sup>th</sup> March



This was organised by a new partnership between HFOF, Al Mustafa Trust and CW+, which is the fundraising arm of the Chelsea and Westminster Hospital NHS Foundation Trust.

Charanjit writes 'I would like to offer my heart felt congratulations to the CW+ Trustees, and members of your team for organising an enjoyable and informative event. There was a great buzz around the place and every speaker shared a wonderful insight about West Mid and their services to our local community of different faiths, cultures and languages.

Being made welcome by the Chief Exec Lesley Watts, was an unexpected bonus. I would also like to thank Dr Sanjay Krishnamoorthy and Professor Sadia Khan for sharing their vision and challenges for the hospital expansion, while continuing to serve as busy clinicians.

The Imam gave us an excellent context for Ramadan and Iftar and led us to the opening of the fast and the Iftar celebration.

It was also a joy to meet the leaders of the Aariyan and Bader Community Initiative and thank them for their generosity. With Shamama and Sadaf Javed of Al Mustafa Trust, our partnership is both richer and highly valuable.'

## Study on dementia awareness for faith communities

Researchers at Imperial College London are developing educational materials on the prevention and awareness of Dementia, for use in diverse communities in North West London. It is well known that cultural mores and religious beliefs influence health-seeking behaviours.

Much can be done to create awareness of early symptoms and support those already affected by dementia by providing informed pastoral care and making places of worship 'dementia-aware'.

The researchers are seeking support from faith leaders and inter-faith groups to scope local need and to co-produce and test their materials. Their EU-funded project is known as AD-RIDDLE (Alzheimer's Disease Real-World Implementation, Deployment, and Validation of Early Detection Tools and Lifestyle Enhancement).

If you would like to learn more about this project or be involved, please contact Louise Ward at [ad-riddle@imperial.ac.uk](mailto:ad-riddle@imperial.ac.uk).

## **Interfaith Music Event to be held during Interfaith week in November**

We are very excited to be planning a musical event to celebrate the special and varied music which defines the different faiths of our membership.

We are looking for ideas and musicians to contact us who may be interested in performing.

Please contact us at [info@hounslowfriendsoffait.org](mailto:info@hounslowfriendsoffait.org)

## **80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of United Nations at Methodist Central Hall Westminster on 17<sup>th</sup> January**

Charanjit attended a service of Thanksgiving which was held to mark the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of first meeting of the United Nations General Assembly in the Great Hall of Methodist Central Hall. On January 10<sup>th</sup> 1946, representatives from across the war-torn world gathered there. Then it was not an exercise in ceremony but was a deliberate act of responsibility-an attempt to build cooperation strong enough to prevent the return of global conflict.

The service brought together representatives of the UK Government, diplomatic community, civic leaders, faith representatives from across different faith traditions, students and members of the public, who reflected on what began in a church building: the conviction that dialogue is stronger than division and cooperation stronger than vengeance.

The United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres and a royal representative shared their thoughts about the anniversary and Cardinal Vincent Nicholls delivered the address.

## **Opening of new Isleworth Deen Centre, 114 Twickenham Road, Isleworth TW7 7DU**

The Centre (previously known as the George) was established in 2011 but has been running its services from a hired public hall until the completion of the new building. After a very careful internal renovation and refurbishment of this historic building, it had its grand opening on 8<sup>th</sup> February, a great celebratory occasion for the Muslim community locally.

We were made welcome by Imam Ansari, the secretary, Mizan Rahman and his brother, a fellow trustee Khalid Rahman. We also had the opportunity to attend the prayers and also enjoyed refreshments.

Hounslow Friends of Faith look forward to working with the Deen Centre.

### **Become a member: We need your support to grow**

**Annual individual membership: £10**

**Annual group membership: £20**

- **Keep you informed:** Through the newsletter and information updates
- **Keep us independent:** Ensuring our voice remains unbiased and community-focused.
- **Deliver impactful events:** Funding the interfaith gatherings that bring us together.
- **Empower the next generation:** Supporting our vital education and youth engagement projects.

#### **Bank Details**

Account Name: Hounslow Friends of Faith

Account Number: 20072554

Sort Code: 60-11-18

Reference: Your Name

### **Save the date**

Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> June 2026: Annual walk

## **Festivals of Faith in March-April 2026**

- March 20 – Nowruz (Bahá'í / Zoroastrian)
- March 26 – Khordad Sal (Zoroastrian)
- April 2 – Pesach / Passover (Judaism)
- April 3 – Good Friday (Christianity)
- April 5 – Easter Sunday (Christianity)
- April 13 – Vaisakhi (Sikhism)
- April 14 – Mesha Sankranti (Hinduism)