



HFOF Newsletter January 2026

**Wishing all our members and friends a peaceful,
healthy and joyful new year.**

We look forward to continuing to work together in 2026 to create links, partnerships and understanding between people of faith and no faith.

The Faith and Belief Forum's London Dangoor Awards 25 November 2025



At a glittering ceremony at the Royal Society of Medicine, celebrating London's Faith and Belief Communities, our Interfaith Iftar project was recognised as outstanding. HFOF together with Al-Mustafa trust and West Thames College have been celebrating Iftar for four years now. Our thanks are due to Debbie Brenner who had submitted the project.



Richmond Faith and Belief Climate Dialogue Wednesday 19th November, St Mary's University

Along with approximately a hundred participants, we joined the **London School of Economics Religion and Global Society (LSE)**, **Richmond Faith & Belief Forum**, and **Richmond Council** for a **superb** interactive afternoon of discussion and collaboration on the intersection between faith, belief and climate change.

This workshop is part of a series of events LSE Religion and Global Society are running with London councils through a 12-month project, *Harnessing Faith in Local Climate Policy*, funded by the LSE Engagement and Partnership Fund. It is interesting that this dialogue took place while COP30 was being held in Brazil and it included representation from UK government and faith based NGOs.

A summary report of Climate Dialogue will be shared when available.

World Day of Prayer and Action for Children 20 November 2025

An online event, organised by Arigatou International, *Keeping Faith in Children: Building Our Shared Humanity*, was a global gathering which brought together the voices and experiences of children, grassroots participants and the World Day Planning Committee. They explored how faith in children becomes faith in humanity, a living commitment to compassion and an invitation for collective responsibility and intergenerational solidarity for and with children.

Across the world, children are growing up amid overlapping crises that reach into their daily lives, threatening their safety, belonging, and right to grow up in peace and dignity. Yet children continue to show courage, creativity, and belief in change, imagining peace where others see division and raising their voices for justice, equality, and care for the planet. Keeping faith in children means recognizing their wisdom and determination to rebuild trust and peace, and how families, educators, faith leaders, and communities rekindle empathy, solidarity, and hope.

AIA (ANIMALS INTERFAITH ALLIANCE)

On 20th November 2025 AIA's President, Dr Richard Ryder talked about half a century of his experience of campaigning for protecting the animals from human inflicted harm and the successes achieved through legislation in the UK and across the globe.

He introduced his new book "*The Ban on Hunting with Hounds: and Other Campaigns Against Speciesism*" which will be available in December. He coined the word 'speciesism' the human-centric view.

The talk was followed by contributions and questions from the attendees. They were reassured by discussions which have taken place at a Government level to reduce animal suffering through experimentation.

Community Memorial Service 7 December 2025 at South-West Crematorium



In its second year of this beautiful and meaningful service of remembrance of those who passed away during the year, the trustees of HFOF shared with the

congregation, its work in bringing diverse communities together and joined in reflections, readings and prayers.

Richard Ward, the manager and registrar wrote to Charanjit:

I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to you for your valuable time and participation in such a meaningful and dignified Community Memorial Service.

I feel that the event went exceptionally well, and it was wonderful to see such a strong attendance from the community.

It was great to have the Hounslow Friends of Faith there to represent the many communities within the London Borough of Hounslow, the Leader of Hounslow Council, the Richmond Brass Band played beautifully, and their choice of music was perfectly suited to the occasion, I feel that Father David was excellent in leading the service and how lovely to finish with the hot food kindly provided by the Gurdwara.

I am certain that all who attended found comfort and support through the thoughtful and compassionate atmosphere you helped create.

On behalf of the Board and myself, I would like to say a sincere “thank you”, and I hope that you will agree to attend/participate within next year’s Community Memorial Service too!

Warm regards
Richard

Women’s Interfaith Knitting Group Seasonal Celebration 20th December at St Mary The Virgin’s Church Hall, Twickenham

The Women’s Interfaith knitting group has been meeting every month for many years. Lynda Imir, the coordinator of the group writes, *New members from all faiths are welcome. We knit items such as blankets, baby clothes with hats and mittens. Hats and scarves for adults. These are distributed by the Methodist Church in Sunbury too refugees and other families in need in Hounslow and Richmond Boroughs. We also knit for the homeless and Prosperity Ukrainian Café which takes all items to Ukraine.*

It is a very friendly group of skilled knitters who produce beautiful items for charity. When I joined them for the party, there was a big display of different foods representing a variety of cultures and faiths which they had brought to celebrate the occasion, literally the world on a plate. I enjoyed both the delicious food as well as talking about the work of HFOF. The quiz to name symbols of faiths was really rewarding and a good learning experience.

Please contact Lynda on **07545 054 481** for more information.

The next meeting is on Sat 17 January 2026 at 10.30

International Town Carol Service at Holy Trinity Hounslow held Sunday 21 December

This was a great occasion to celebrate the story of the birth of Jesus, through readings from the Bible, singing of Carols and musical performances.

Participants included DL Rosi Prescott, the Mayor Amy Croft, Ruth Cadbury MP, Seema Malhotra MP and Councillors. Songs were sung in Nepalese, Ukrainian, Telugu, Urdu, Farsi and English in a truly international spirit. Revd Sally Baily conducted the service beautifully and her sermon delivered to a packed audience was very meaningful and uplifting.

Mulberry Centre 13 November 2025

This joint event was held during Interfaith week, and attended by HOF and Richmond HALO.

The Mulberry Centre is an independent charity providing support to people and their families affected by cancer. Although it is situated in the grounds of the West Mid hospital, it is an independently funded charity.

At the event we heard about the range of support services the Mulberry Centre offers, counselling, physical therapies, stress management and many others. They were keen to reach out to people from 'harder to reach' communities who we may be in touch with.

Halo – multicultural Richmond



Members of HFOF have joined together with a new initiative in Richmond.

HALO is an interfaith leadership and wellbeing initiative bringing together faith, belief, and community leaders. The group offers a reflective, non-clinical space for dialogue, learning, and connection, with a focus on mental health, wellbeing, and reducing stigma within communities.

Through regular gatherings, participants share lived experience, explore common values, and strengthen their confidence as frontline helpers, while building bridges between faith communities and local services. HALO emphasises relationship-building, compassion, and small, meaningful actions rooted in shared wisdom.

Halo was initiated by **Mariana Cano-Márquez, Community Mental Health Officer of Multicultural Richmond**. If you are interested in participating, her contact is **020 8893 9000 / multiculturalrichmond.org.uk**

International association for Religious Freedom

As a valued member of the organisation, Charanjit was asked to give a talk on religious freedom to commemorate the 350th anniversary of the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur in 1675. She described how the Guru defended the freedom and rights of all religions, not just Sikhs, against the intolerant policies of the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb, who had the Guru killed for his beliefs.

Upcoming events

Coptic Nativity and Epiphany Carols Celebration 17th January 4-6pm

You are invited by St. Mary and Pope Kyrillos VI Coptic Orthodox Church on the feast of the Epiphany, for a traditional carol performance, followed by a reception.

Holocaust Memorial Day annual event 27th January 2026

In partnership with Hounslow Council, the Memorial event will be hosted by Heston Community school.

The national theme for 2026 is 'Bridging Generations'. This is a reminder that the responsibility of remembrance doesn't end with the survivors – it lives on through their children, their grandchildren and through all of us. The speaker is Eliana Ostro who will describe the harrowing journey of escape from the Nazis, by her relative, Max.

If you wish to attend, RSVP to tim.durrant@hounslow.gov.uk by 21st Jan

Iftars

HFOF's annual Iftar event with West Thames College and Al Mustafa Trust will be taking place on Fri 6th March.

We are also partnering with CW+, the charity associated with Chelsea and Westminster NHS Foundation Trust, to hold an Iftar event to be held at West Mid Hospital for staff, patients and other guests. This will probably take place on 9th March.

Festivals of Faiths January to April 2026

- Jan 13** Lohri (Sikh and Hindu)
- Jan 14** Maghi and Makran Shukranti (SIKH and Hindu)
- Jan 16** Jashan of Bahman for animal creation (Zoroastrian)
- Feb 15** Maha Shivaratri (Hindu)
- Feb 15** Nirvana Day (Buddhist)
- Feb 17** Chinese New Year
- Feb 18** Jashan of Spendarmad for earth (Zoroastrian)
- Feb 18** Ash Wednesday (Christian)
- Feb 18** Ramadan begins (Muslim)
- March 2** Purim (Jewish)
- March 3/4** Holi (Hindu)
- March 4** Hola Mohalla (Sikh)
- March 20/21** Eid ul Fitr (Muslim)
- March 20** Naw-Ruz, the Bahai New Year
- March 22** The feast of Baha (Bahai)
- March 27** Ram Navmi (Hindu)
- Late March/early April** the start of Fravardigan reverence for nature and ancestors
- April 2** Pesach (Passover) begins (Jewish)
- April 2** Hanuman Jayanti (Hindu)
- April 3** Good Friday (Christian)
- April 5** Easter Day (Christian)
- April 13** Theravada New Year (Buddhist)
- April 14** Vaisakhi (Sikh)