



Faiths engage

Monthly Newsletter—Issue 16— December 2020

WELCOME

to the latest issue of Faiths Engage

Interfaith Week this year was a muted affair; while I was able to join in with various conversations and discussions, it was not the same. As well as missing the chances for small talk with friends old and new, I missed the food!

I think this highlights the challenge of our current situation. We can continue with our work; as you can see from the pages of this issue, we continue to deliver all kinds of interesting and innovative projects and workstreams. But we recognise that people are tired, that they are missing being able to socialise face-to-face.

As the nights get longer, we must make sure we take time to look after ourselves and each other. Please stay safe and take care of yourself as we continue to learn how to live well together.

Tom Wilson

Interfaith Week and Talk Money week

On Thursday 12th November, I hosted an online discussion about money from different faith perspectives, as part of Interfaith Week and Talk Money week, which happily fell at exactly the same time. We heard a Muslim perspective from Abdulkarim Gheewala, a Hindu perspective from Shaunaka Risi Das, a Jewish perspective from Uri Gordon and a Christian perspective from Ashiedu Joel. What struck me about all four presentations was the common thread that for people of faith, there are more important things in life than money. A particularly powerful point made by Shaunaka was that if the global investments of all people of faith were leveraged together, then they would have a tremendous impact in driving change, for example in ensuring a shift to investment in cleaner, greener forms of energy. It was also sobering to consider Uri's presentation of the links between money and anti-Semitism. We agreed that money is useful but should not control us. The challenge is to ensure we put it to use for the good of all.

**Thursday 12th November
10am to 11am**

An interfaith conversation about faith and finance
as part of Talk Money week

Email: onlinetraining@stphilipscentre.co.uk
to book a place

talk money week
9-13 November 2020
#TalkMoney

Photo by Michelle Henderson
on Unsplash

Tom Wilson

Local communities tackling hate crime

The St Philip's Centre was commissioned by Leicester City Council and the Safer Leicester Partnership to undertake a community engagement project to gather views from local community and grass roots organisations about hate crime and community cohesion, with a view to them running events around that theme.

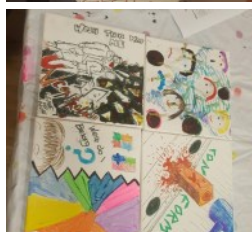
Here are some highlights:

Hate crime Awareness:

The activity consisted of two one-hour (Covid-safe) face-to-face sessions raising awareness of hate crime run by Isla Dixon and Vishal Dave from Leicestershire Police. They shared with the audience about what hate crime is and how and where you can report it, with a Q & A session following. Isla has agreed to run a drop in once every two months as a way for this work to continue.

Using creativity to discuss hate crime:

The aim of the workshops was to give people the opportunity to express the emotion and trauma experienced due to hate crime, using creativity as a tool. There were two types of workshops, one called 'Blank Canvas Art' and the other using the medium of creative writing. There were two 'Blank Canvas art' workshop sessions, one at a community coffee morning and the other at a school for children with behavioural needs. The children's session was eye-opening as they realised the ways they had been discriminated against and how they had discriminated against others, too.



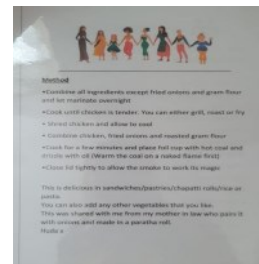
There were four creative writing workshops. For many participants this was an exciting new experience. The sessions involved a spoken word artist/facilitator encouraging the group to write lines for a collective spoken-word piece about hate crime and community cohesion. The process of writing lines created a space where people could openly discuss their thoughts on hate crime and community cohesion. The facilitator reflected on these workshops saying *"The groups engaged well with the session. It was apparent that many people are dealing with hurtful experiences of hate crime and racism but have nowhere to vent their anger or frustration"*.

These sessions helped to start the process of reflecting and dealing collectively with these difficult experiences.

Celebrating Leicester - Multiculturalism and Bringing Different Communities Together:

The activity consisted of five discussion sessions on zoom on sharing recipes, sharing memories and sharing lullabies and stories. Following the session on recipes, recipe cards were made and shared with the group and goody bags were given out to participants who attended at least three sessions. Participants shared their thoughts on the sessions:

"I'm looking forward to trying new recipes" . "It was nice to get to know people and see them during these testing times" . "I enjoyed seeing [people] from different walks of life and cultures" . "I learned new things about different religions."



Thanking volunteers:

One of the organisations that hosted a focus group had seen a significant increase in volunteers during the early stages of lockdown, as people were put on furlough and had more time on their hands, though the number of people available tailed off as people had to return to work. The organisation wanted to hold an event thanking volunteers, especially the seventy or so first-time volunteers who had worked with them over the past few months. However, after the event had been planned and refreshments and gifts bought, the increased Covid-19 restrictions meant the event had to be cancelled and the gifts and refreshments hand-delivered to the volunteers' homes.

Islamophobia awareness:

A community organisation with a significant Muslim user-base hosted an online seminar on Islamophobia and hate crime during Hate Crime Awareness week. Panellists included Isla Dixon from Leicestershire Police, Ben Smith from Leicester City Council and Tom Wilson from the St Philip's Centre. Issues related to Islamophobia and awareness of hate crime reporting mechanisms were explored at length. Follow up activities are being planned.

Reclaiming the Swastika

A Hindu organisation that facilitated a focus group ran an activity for young people connected to their organisation to reclaim the swastika from the Far-Right. The young people drew pictures of the swastika within a Hindu context.



Thank you to all the organisations who took part for their hard work in running the events.

Beth Henwood

Church Facing training

This month, we have run training for the Centre for Youth Ministry: a round robin and a virtual visit to both Avanti Fields and Madani Secondary Schools. We also ran training for curates for the Diocese of Leicester on interfaith engagement, a session on preaching with Jewish Communities in mind and a session for Methodists on Christianity and the Far Right. We are grateful to Bernard Glick, Aamenah Patel, Nima Suchak, Tony Nelson, Imran Suleman, Liz Wilson, Mike Kelly and the school staff who made all this training possible. If you are interested in any of our church facing training, then please do get in touch.

Tom Wilson

Vacancy for Methodist Churches Engagement Officer

We are currently advertising for someone to help us develop our work with Methodist churches. This is a fixed-term, part-time role and there is a genuine occupational requirement that the post-holder is a Christian.

Right-click on the image for a full-size version of the advert and download the application documents using the links below:

[job description and person specification](#)
[application form](#)

Or you can download them from our website: www.stphilipscentre.co.uk/node.39



St Philip's Centre
Living well together

Confident Christianity

Methodist Churches Engagement Officer

The main purposes of the role:
Promote, develop and co-ordinate work with Methodist churches in Leicestershire in particular, and the East Midlands and wider Methodist Connexion more generally. Ensure the Centre delivers the objectives set out in the Connexion funded project "Confident Christianity."

Explore the potential for new activity which supports and strengthens associations between Christians and people and groups of different faiths and ethnicities, including people of no faith.

Hours: 12 hours per week
Pay: £7,344 per annum

This is a fixed-term contract for the duration of the Confident Christianity project
There is a genuine occupational requirement that the post-holder is a Christian.

The post is subject to an enhanced DBS check
Applications will be considered on a rolling basis.

Full details, including application pack at:
<https://www.stphilipscentre.co.uk/node/39>

For an informal conversation about the role please contact the Director
Read Dr Tom Wilson
director@stphilipscentre.co.uk

The Methodist Church

Education Work

We have had some great feedback from the online education work we have been doing in recent weeks.

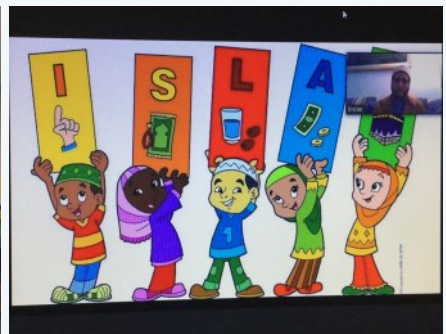
'I wanted to drop you a line to say thank you so much for the thought and work put into yesterday's session by both you and your advocates. It has undoubtedly enhanced our offer for RE and teachers were able to go and review their teaching and learning offer for RE on the back of the discussions they had with your advocates. Please do pass on our thanks to all involved.'

Another school put out the following Tweets after the online sessions on Hinduism and Islam which we ran for them during Interfaith Week:

"Year 3 have thoroughly enjoyed and learned so much about Hinduism from their virtual visit as part of @Interfaith Week. We wish all Hindu's around the world a very happy Diwali. Thank you so much @SPCLeicester. #happydiwali" and

"Year 5 have had a super morning learning more about Islam and enjoying a virtual visit from Imam Imran as part of @Interfaith Week. Everybody found out a lot of information as well as seeing different Mosques. Thank you to @SPCLeicester and Imam Imran for your time today."

As always, we are immensely grateful to our faith practitioners who made these sessions possible.



SKILLS sessions on staying mentally healthy

As we entered a second period of national lockdown (which in all honesty makes little difference to me, as I live in the City of Leicester, and we've not left lockdown since March), I decided to re-offer SKILLS sessions on staying mentally healthy in challenging times. I have run these sessions a few times, and they are always well received. I enjoy delivering them, not least because it helps me do a stocktake and make sure I am looking after my own mental health and wellbeing. We looked at developing strategies for working from a place of rest, how to take care of your mental health and how to become more aware of how you respond under pressure. If you are interested in me running some sessions for a group you are part of, please do get in touch.

Tom Wilson

Award from Allchurches Trust



We are very pleased to have received a grant from Allchurches Trust as part of their Hope Beyond grants scheme. Our project is called "Faith in Mental Health."

The first part is running over November and December; a small group of us from a number of faith communities are undertaking an online course in Mental Health First Aid. In the New Year we are planning on putting on some events to help raise awareness of how to take care of your mental health and ensure we all thrive even in our current challenging circumstances.

If you would like to know more about this project, please do get in touch.

Tom Wilson

Tributes to Professor Ataullah Siddiqui

All of us at St Philip's Centre were saddened to hear of the death of Professor Ataullah Siddiqui on 8th November. Ataullah had been a supporter of St Philip's Centre from its earliest days and many tributes to him have been shared on social media, including these from Tom and Riaz:

Tom described him as a *"wise and experienced guide for Muslims and others taking their first steps in interfaith engagement. His good humour, honesty and willingness to deal with the difficult issues was a continual source of encouragement and challenge. He had a profound impact on community relations and was a real force for good."*

Riaz said: *"Professor Ataullah was a deep thinker, highly spiritual, supremely respected and wise. I mourn the loss of a friend and brother who people associate with the word 'gentleman' -he was the epitome of that."*

Further tributes can be found in this [Leicester Mercury](#) article.



Funding Support

Allchurches Trust
Anglican Diocese of Leicester
The Baptist Union
Diocese of Southwell & Nottingham
Home Office
The John James Trust
The Laing Trust

Leicester College
Leicestershire & Rutland Masonic
Charity Association (LRMCA)
Leicester City Council
Leicestershire Police
Masonic Charitable Foundation
Methodist Connexion

N C Bellefontaine Trust
Near Neighbours—(MHCLG)
Northampton District of the Methodist Church
Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner
Open Society Foundations
P & C Hickinbotham Charitable Trust
Spalding Trust



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