



Faiths engage

Monthly Newsletter—Issue 23—July 2021

WELCOME

to the latest edition of FaithsEngage

We have just held our AGM, looking back at all we managed to do during 2020. The year began with us developing all kinds of plans for activities that would foster interfaith engagement locally, regionally, nationally and internationally. Whilst many of the precise plans have yet to come to fruition, we still managed to achieve the overall objective of learning to live well together. We had hoped to visit police colleagues in Antwerp and Rotterdam, and host visitors from Germany, but sadly this has yet to take place. Instead we managed to engage with colleagues from Bethlehem, Amsterdam, amongst other places, as well as the aforementioned police colleagues. Like many, we discovered that hosting training online meant it was easier for people from across the country and across the region to engage with our training offer, something we intend to continue as we also resume in-person interaction.

You can see this balance between both online and in-person sessions in this issue; hopefully as society opens up, we can have more of the latter whilst still offering web-based sessions where that is the best way of bringing people together. I look forward to welcoming you to one of our events soon.

With every good wish

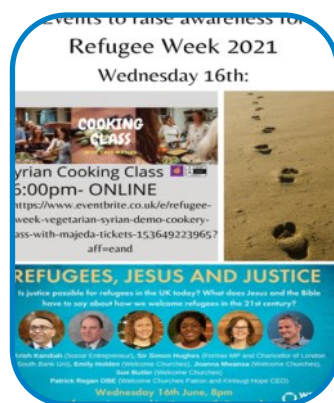
Revd Dr Tom Wilson. Director, St Philip's Centre

NEAR NEIGHBOURS

BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER

Refugee Week

It was great to celebrate refugee week by compiling and promoting lots of events to raise awareness. Please see below the variety of events and activities.



Beth Henwood
Near Neighbours Leicester Co-ordinator



Events Update

Webinar on changes to the marriage registration service

We are very grateful to Amanda Ballentyne, County Superintendent Registrar for Leicestershire County Council, for making the time to speak at a webinar at the end of May. Amanda gave an overview of the changes and then answered individual questions and responded to particular concerns that participants had.

The St Philip's Centre organised the webinar because we recognised that many people, especially those in smaller faith organisations, were either not aware of the changes, or were unclear as to the impact the changes would have on their processes and procedures. Amanda answered all the questions clearly and straightforwardly, and participants left with a much clearer understanding of what was expected of them.

Training for interns

On Tuesday 15th June, Tom led a whole day of training for New Wine Discipleship Year and Church of England Ministry Experience Scheme participants. Earlier in the year, Tom facilitated an introduction to interfaith engagement for the group. They enjoyed this so much that they asked him to come back and provide some leadership development input. The focus of the day was on developing an appropriate work-life balance and on responding well to conflict within a faith community. Participants were enthusiastic and engaged, interacting well with the material and thinking through how to apply their learning to their own context.

Abrahamic Discussion Group

As part of our work funded by the Methodist Connexion, Tom and James host a monthly "Abrahamic Discussion Group." This group, although small in number, has met online since March 2020 to discuss a range of topics agreed by the group. Recent topics include the role of women in leadership, different understandings of human sexuality and views on gender identity. Those who take part have a range of views on these topics; what has been particularly striking is how those perspectives have been explored with sensitivity and respect, something that sadly is not always the case. We are grateful to the Methodist Connexion for the funding, and to the participants who are demonstrating their willingness to learn how to live well together.

Tom Wilson

Education Programme

In May, we had the opportunity to deliver a Multi Faith Carousel workshop for Market Harborough CE Academy. The Multi Faith Carousel is a combination of 3 – 4 faith workshops working simultaneously and rotating with different classes. Each hears from one different faith practitioner. This gives the children a chance to experience different faiths, to identify similarities and hopefully understand the differences as well. The feedback has been really positive and all of the children said they had learnt lots of interesting facts.

Quotes from the children:

"We learnt that no matter what your religion is, we are all the same." Jude

"They answered our questions in a lot of depth. We found out lots of new information." Sophie

"The people we spoke to were very welcoming and easy to talk to." Enid

If you would like further information about either our face-to-face programmes or our E-Programmes, please e-mail education@stphilipscentre.co.uk



Ramila Chauhan
Education Support Officer



Church Work

On Wednesday 23rd June, James Blackhall ran a session for Methodist preachers which explored the issue of Christian anti-Semitism. The event was hosted by the Eastern Region of the Methodist Learning Network.

The session began with specific focus on Methodist hymnody and liturgy, exploring possible places where anti-Semitism may be present, before considering aspects of Christian history and discussing how to preach on Biblical texts which have been used in problematic ways to promote anti-Semitism, either knowingly or unintentionally.

We are very grateful to Michael Wadsworth, Regional Learning and Development Officer, for his support in putting the session on, and to Bernard Glick for his input from a Jewish perspective.

If you are interested in hosting a session on this important topic, please contact James, Churches Engagement Officer, on courses@stphilipscentre.co.uk

Linking in Leicester

Recently things have been taking off with both the linking projects : Schools Linking and Intergenerational Linking.

Schools Linking

Requests from schools to take part in schools linking have been coming in from both City and County schools with both Primary and Secondary schools showing an increased interest. As of today, June 28th, the number of schools that wish to take part has passed 20 and this means we are potentially able to engage over 50 classes or 1500 young people during 2021-22.



The children and young people engage in carefully planned and fully resourced activities around various themes such as identity and community, initially working within their own classes. They exchange work and information with their partner class over the year, in a thoughtfully managed way, that deepens the connections and builds friendships. It is more than just a way to meet people who have a different faith, ethnic background, cultural heritage or family socio-economic

status, it goes much further and provides an opportunity to develop a sense of a shared Leicester identity.

Intergenerational Linking

The Intergenerational Linking project was given a target of ten links, where a care home for the elderly is linked with a school or youth group, and we have currently secured 4 and have another 11 schools that have signed up and their link is close to completion. It is looking like the total partnerships will be around 15 when the project begins in September.



There is still time for anyone interested to get in touch and get involved.

Ruth Sinhal, Linking Project Officer
Email- schools.linking@stphilipscentre.co.uk
Phone- 07957212122

Corporate Work

Since the Centre's formation in 2006, we have delivered Religion & Belief training to thousands of police recruits. This work continues apace—in just over one week in June, we trained nearly 100 police recruits and PCSOs. Leicestershire's new Police and Crime Commissioner, Rupert Matthews, called in to one of our recent training sessions at Police HQ and is hoping to undergo the training himself some time soon!



Prevent News

Prevent Coordinator Sean Arbuthnot recently took part in a panel discussion hosted by US-based Rantt Media that focused on the increased threat of radical right extremism. Alongside other counter-extremism experts, Sean answered questions submitted by the public on topics such as the distinction between hate speech and free speech, regulation of social media and whether religion plays a role in extremism. The full panel discussion can be viewed here:

<https://rantt.com/panel-of-extremism-experts-answer-questions-on-how-to-counter-extremism>



Our Prevent projects have commenced activity and we are pleased to report that schools are prioritizing our local providers as the first external visitors to attend their settings since lockdown restrictions began. Warning Zone Roadcrew have been taking their immersive online safety presentation to local schools and feedback so far has been excellent. Their presentation focuses on online radicalisation and grooming and contains interactive elements to engage audiences and encourage reflection. As a result, young people are more resilient against online harms and are better able to safeguard themselves by assessing risks and having the confidence to ask for help if they are in vulnerable situations.

*Sean Arbuthnot
Prevent Co-ordinator*

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Leicester College

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Charity Association (LRMCA)
Leicester City Council
Leicestershire Police
Masonic Charitable Foundation
Methodist Connexion
N C Bellefontaine Trust

Near Neighbours—(MHCLG)
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