



# Faiths engage

Monthly Newsletter—Issue 47—July 2023

## Welcome to the latest edition of Faiths Engage

The July issue has been published slightly later than usual but we are still busy with all kinds of activities taking place. In this issue you can read about some of our work with churches, my reflections on our recent AGM, different community activities that recently took place, some of our recent corporate training, and schools linking celebration week. It was a particular delight at the AGM to be able to thank all our supporters and to note that we are now back to pre-pandemic levels of activity. The road to recovery has been a long and winding one but things are definitely improving despite the challenges and difficulties we face. I encourage you to keep on with the work of helping people learn how to live well together.

With every good wish.

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

## Work with Churches

The Methodist Church in Blaby CAMEO group invited us to a meeting in June where Sheila Gewolb spoke about Judaism and what her faith means to her. The talk was really well received and provoked some interesting questions.

If your church group would like to have a speaker of another faith or faiths come please do get in touch with me at [courses@stphilipscentre.co.uk](mailto:courses@stphilipscentre.co.uk) or 0116 273 3459 (Option 6) and I'd be really happy to help.

*James Blackhall*



# Reflection on the AGM

On Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> June we held the St Philip's Centre's AGM. Our strapline as an organisation is that in a world that is divided in so many ways, we believe we can learn to live well together. We use four criteria to assess our work: encounters between those who are different, developing understanding about those differences; forming relationships of trust between people and enabling them to cooperate with each other for their own benefit and the good of society at large. There is still a significant need for this work. In 2022, we worked with over 10,000 children and young people, and several thousand adults. To put it differently, we're approaching our pre-pandemic levels of activity, and probably by the time we report on our 2023 activity we will be exceeding the numbers engaged within 2019. So, we're very much back in business as an organisation.

These levels of engagement are only possible because of the hard work and dedication of both the staff team, the trustees and most importantly the volunteers, without whom none of our work would be possible. At the AGM I thanked three groups of people.

First, the trustees, for coming to meetings and most importantly for asking awkward questions. It's good to have a trustee board that are supportive and permission giving, but at the same time aren't afraid to ask challenging or awkward questions when those are needed.

Second, the staff team. Everybody at the Centre works incredibly hard, often going above and beyond what they're contracted to do, to make sure that everything that is needed is provided and to ensure that programmes run smoothly. I am proud to be Director of the St Philip's Centre and grateful for all my colleagues do to support our fantastic work.

Third, our volunteers. I know it is not always easy, especially not when you have to get up at 5:30 in the morning to drive to Boston in Lincolnshire to do a school roadshow. The friendships that exist between people of many different faiths and no faith are crucial examples that enable people to learn how to live well together. Our volunteers all model it, and other people then copy you and as a result we make the world just a little bit of a better place.

I will end on a slightly more serious note. The thing that troubles me most about life at the moment, is the ease with which people have embraced victimhood as an identity and the difficulty people have in getting on with each other, celebrating our differences and enjoying the company of those who aren't like them. We are not as good as mixing as we used to be, and we need to recover that art before it does to do serious damage to our society. Responding to this is not something I can do on my own so I would be really grateful if all of you will join me in the journey as we make Leicester, Leicestershire and the UK places where people understand each other even when they do not agree, places where people recognise their differences but still trust each other, most of all places where people are working together for the good of everybody.

Tom Wilson



# Community

The past few weeks have been busy for different community festivals and commemorations. I've managed to attend a few, including the Sikh Lens film and cultural event, the Jain Centre's thirty-five year anniversary, a Windrush commemoration event, Muslim School Oadby's awards evening, and the Rath Yatra festival. It's great to be able to join such a rich variety of people learning how to live well together.

Tom Wilson



## Corporate Training

We were very grateful to Urvashi & Angela for a highly impactful session for our safe-guarding project with faith groups which took place at the University of Leicester (Brookfield Campus) on 14th June.

Big thanks are also due to Sheila Gewolb, who spoke about our work in her interview with Rupal Rajani on Radio Leicester. If you missed it, you can catch up with it here—[Jo Bostock - Rupal Rajani sits in \(04/06/2023\) - BBC Sounds](#) Listen from 2 hours 40 minutes.

### Leicester Dharmashoka Buddhist Vihara

Riaz was delighted to pay a visit recently to the Leicester Dharmashoka Buddhist Vihara to hear more about the work of the community.



### Leicestershire County Cricket Club

We were pleased to have run several interfaith workshops for a variety of schools at the sports day run by Leicestershire County Cricket Club. A great day was had by all.

### Police Recruits Training

Our Religion & Belief training sessions for police recruits continue to be very well received.



# Linking Projects

## SCHOOLS LINKING CELEBRATION WEEK - July 3<sup>rd</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> 2023

Around 100 classes from 33 schools in Leicester and Leicestershire have been engaged in Schools Linking programmes this year along with thousands more from 26 other local areas.

They were all invited to take part in a Schools Linking Celebration Week from July 3<sup>rd</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> sharing their answers to the question: 'How do we all live well together?' Follow the celebrations and find out how you can support us by checking out our Twitter page [@LinkingSchool](https://twitter.com/LinkingSchool)

The primary and secondary schools are all part of a national initiative called Schools Linking - a unique programme helping to build cohesion and solidarity in our communities, designed by [The Linking Network](#). Schools Linking started in Bradford over 20 years ago as a way to, '... give pupils an opportunity to have meaningful interaction with other students they wouldn't normally get a chance to meet.' The initiative has grown and grown, and now more than 29,000 young people take part in linking activities each year across England.

At the heart of the work is the process of 'linking'; the sharing of time, experiences and conversations with other children and young people from different backgrounds, such as rural, urban, or different faith or ethnicity. Through the schools linking programme, teachers encourage children and young people to develop a sense of belonging in their community and foster a commitment to supporting the communities they live in.

In Leicester and Leicestershire our aim is to connect young people from across the County and the City through shared activities that help them understand the concepts of identity, diversity, community and justice.

Sixteen Primary classes were able to meet their partners at Attenborough Arts Centre in June this year, and through art explored the concepts of schools linking in more depth – building bridges to deepen their appreciation of the value and the strength of diversity.

Ruth Sinhal



**The Linking  
Network**

Identity Diversity Community Equality

### Funding Support

Active Together  
All Saints' Educational Trust  
Anglican Diocese of Leicester  
The Benefact Trust  
The Dunhill Medical Trust  
Home Office  
The J R Corah Foundation Fund  
Leicester College  
Leicestershire & Rutland Community Foundation  
Leicester City Council  
The Linking Network

Methodist Connexion  
National Lottery Heritage Fund  
N C Bellefontaine Trust  
Near Neighbours (DLUHC)  
Northampton District of the Methodist Church  
Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner (OPCC)  
Open Society Foundations  
P & C Hickinbotham Charitable Trust  
Shire Funding  
The United Reformed Church



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