



Faiths engage

Monthly Newsletter—Issue 51—November 2023

Welcome to the latest edition of Faiths Engage

In a divided and fractured world, we at the St Philip's Centre believe we can learn to live well together. In the eight years I have been Director of the Centre, never has my belief in our vision been as sorely tested as it is being now with the brutality of the conflict in the Middle East, in our own continent of Europe, not to mention all the other wars and conflicts across the world. As I lament our broken world, I also feel determination to pray and to act, to ensure that conflicts around the world have a minimal impact on inter-community relations here in Leicester. And that is why we will continue our work enabling people to encounter those who see the world differently, to understand their perspectives, to build relationships of trust and cooperation for the good of all. We can only play a small part but play it we must or else the forces of darkness will win.

Tom Wilson
Director, St Philip's Centre

Scriptural Reasoning and Noah's Pudding!

The St Philip's Centre has been partnering with the Leicester branch of the Dialogue Society to run a scriptural reasoning group discussing shared prophets and spiritual figures. On Tuesday 24th October we met to discuss Noah. Although the story of the flood is held in common across the three faiths, the precise details differ. For example, whilst in the Quran, Noah's wife and one of his sons are drowned, this is not a feature of the text of the book of Genesis. In Genesis, Noah gets drunk after leaving the Ark, but this episode is not in the Quran. These are significant differences, which generated a lively discussion.

It was quite an eclectic group of us who gathered, not just Jews, Christians and Muslims, but also a Sikh and a Humanist, as well as the local police inspector. The police officer's observation towards the end of the meeting was that whilst he had no idea what he was coming to, he was pleased he had made the effort, because in a world that seems divided upon religious lines it was good to see people of different faiths and no faith gathering, understanding each other's perspectives more deeply, and strengthening bonds of friendship. This is what the Centre is all about. Thanks to Uri, Liz, and Nilufer for your wonderful talks, and to Betul and colleagues for the Noah's puddings.



Abrahamic Dialogue Group: Prophetic Families

21st November: Abraham, Sarah and Hagar

19th December: Isaac and Rebecca

23rd January: Jacob, Leah and Rachael

20th February: Joseph and his brothers

**All meetings 7.00—8.30 pm at
The Dialogue Society, 105 The Lodge, Margaret Road, Leicester LE5 5FW**

Email courses@stphilipscentre.co.uk to book a place

Work with Churches

Inter Faith
Week
12-19 November
www.interfaithweek.org



“Meet the Faith” at Bishop Street Methodist Church

Inter Faith
Week
12-19 November
www.interfaithweek.org



Monday 13th to Friday 17th November
Gather from 12 noon Talk—12.30—1.00 pm

Monday	Judaism with Tony
Tuesday	Islam with Rehana
Wednesday	Sikhism with Surinder
Thursday	Bahá'í with George
Friday	Hinduism with Nima

Bishop Street Methodist Church Vestry—at the front of the church
Refreshments available from the Chapel Café

James has been organising visits to places of worship for ordinands studying at St Mellitus College. The first of these visits was to Leicester Hebrew Congregation where they were given a tour of the Synagogue and the Heritage Room and invited to reflect on Judaism and the history of the Jewish Community in Leicester.



We continued our series of a *Taste of Faith* in partnership with Christchurch Clarendon Park by inviting Nima and Pradip to bring food that reflected something of their tradition and to talk about what it means to them to be Hindus in modern Britain. People commented on how much they enjoyed the presentation- as well as considering the similarities and differences between the two faith traditions.



James also visited the Mothers' Union in Glenfield to give an introduction to interfaith work and the work of the St Philip's Centre. This was an enjoyable visit where we reflected on the make up of faith communities both in Glenfield and Leicester and thought about how we could live well together. If you would like someone to visit your group please contact James on courses@stphilipscentre.co.uk or 0116 273 3459 (Option 6).

Corporate Work

Sadly this month we heard the news that Surinderpal Singh Rai had passed away. Our Deputy Director attended the funeral to pay our respects. Surinderpal hosted many of our groups and provided excellent insights into the Sikh faith. His approach and hospitality were very much appreciated. We give thanks for his life and our thoughts are with his family at this time.

De Montfort University's leadership team heard a presentation from Riaz about Leicester's faith communities and how the University can promote strong relationships on campus. Also in October, Riaz attended the National Space Centre on behalf of the Universities Partnership which connects DMU, University of Leicester and Loughborough University. Here Riaz promoted the faith and belief landscape to an international audience which was exploring Leicester as a venue for future students.

Riaz met the new Coordinator for Leicester Humanists to hear about their plans and how the Centre might work with them moving forward. A number of areas were discussed with schools work a particular area of interest.



Prevent Programme

Leicester Prevent support Leicester City in the Community E-Sports Event with E-Safety Workshop

On Monday 16th October, Ben Smith, Leicester Prevent Coordinator was pleased to be able to support Leicester City in the Community (LCitC) at the King Power Stadium with their Half Term E-Sports event. Ben attended the event and had arranged for Ray Douglas, CEO of Socio Logical Ltd to participate and during the course of the afternoon Ray provided two workshops to over 60 young people in attendance.

Linking with the online gaming elements of the event, Ray's workshops provided the young people with an opportunity to carefully think about their safety online. Some invaluable tips were offered, and the young people were encouraged to carefully think about who else was online and where sadly there may be risks of unknown strangers or groups attempting to manipulate and exploit online gamers.

The workshop attendees discussed their social media platform usage, where they sourced their news from, and what type of online influencers they were following. This all contributed towards developing improved critical thinking and media assessment skills for the workshop participants.



Work with Schools

In October, there have been two roadshows, to Fairfield Preparatory School and Donisthorpe Primary School. These provide the opportunity for children to speak to someone from a number of different faiths. The faiths represented have been: Sikhism, Hinduism, Christianity, Judaism, Bahá'í, Islam and Paganism. These events are great for allowing children to experience something of each of these traditions and to ask any questions that they have. They also particularly enjoy the chance to dress up. It is also a wonderful experience for the volunteers who get to deepen friendships with people of other faiths.



Safeguarding Training

One of the projects that we are currently running at the St Philip's Centre is focused on safeguarding. We are working with a range of faith-based organisations to help them improve their policies, practice and processes for safeguarding children and adults at risk. It has been running in different forms for at least four years and we have seen real changes in that time. Although of course it is important to get paperwork and policies organised, safeguarding is fundamentally an issue of culture. What do we do when things go wrong? How do we ensure vulnerable people of all ages are appropriately cared for? How do we have a culture of healthy scepticism that recognises it could happen here?

A crucial element of the project has been training from different sectors. On Tuesday 10th October, we were delighted to welcome three staff from the REIGN Collective, a community interest company run by survivors of child sexual abuse, who use their own horrific experiences to train other people, to ensure the risk of children being sexually abused is reduced as much as possible. The reality of personal experiences, the lessons drawn out from them, and the willingness of the three survivors of child sexual abuse to have honest conversations with us made for highly challenging but ultimately very rewarding training session. We will be asking them back to help the faith-based organisations we are working with develop their ability to deal with disclosures and safeguard the children they work with. I highly recommend you work with them as well.

Tom Wilson

Research into interfaith and inclusion

On Tuesday 3rd October we welcomed Suzanne Vernon-Yorke to the St Philip's Centre. She talked with us about her research into interfaith and inclusion. For her PhD fieldwork Suzanne interviewed 40 people, four men and four women from each of the five biggest faiths in the UK (Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh). The focus was on their experiences and understanding of issues of gender inclusion in interfaith contexts.

Some of her findings were uncomfortable but unsurprising. Many of the women Suzanne spoke with were much more comfortable in women only spaces. Men dominate "high level" (senior leader) interfaith spaces. Men prefer to talk theology. Women prefer to share from personal experiences. For women to feel included in mixed gender interfaith spaces, men need to act as allies, including refusing to take part in events that are unduly dominated by men.

Suzanne's talk generated a lot of discussion. It's not our place to impose change, but to help people navigate the tricky terrain where different understandings, desires and aspirations come into conflict.



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

The M B Reckitt Trust

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

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The United Reformed Church

The Westhill Foundation



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