



Faiths engage

Monthly Newsletter—Issue 56—April 2024

Welcome to the latest edition of Faiths Engage

March has been a busy month as you can read in the pages that follow. It was with particular sadness that we said goodbye to Ben as he moves to his new role at the City Council. We wish him all the best for the future.

Revd Dr Tom Wilson
Director, St Philip's Centre

Real People Honest Talk (RPHT)

Over the past month or so three groups have met in various parts of the city – St Paul & St Augustine – Fosse Ward, St Peter's Highfields and Netherhall.

During RPHT we've been thinking about the ingredients that go into building a resilient, safe and healthy community. One of the ingredients that RPHT highlights is to provide safe spaces where ordinary people can be heard when they raise local issues and where those issues can be discussed in an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect.

If people in a community don't know each other or don't talk to each other then it's likely that trust will be hard to build up. United voices present a powerful sound in the ears of those people who hold power.

So Real People Honest Talk aims to create public spaces for honest conversations between all people in a particular community – identifying issues that matter to the whole community and taking action to address them.

It often feels like community development and action happens over a period of time and in small steps. However, some of the groups involved in RPHT have already made some movement towards making a difference in their particular locality. In Netherhall, the community have engaged with the council to try to improve the area around the shops whilst taking steps themselves by clearing the rubbish and generally tidying the local environment. The group in Fosse Ward based in St Paul's & St Augustine's Centre have also made inroads into the local litter and fly-tipping issue. The Highfields group are proactively working on how to become a sign-posting hub for locals and those new to the area.

The three groups met together to take part in a Big Conversation where they were able to meet people from outside their area, from the other RPHT groups and also make contact with a local councillor and a City Council representative. Some of the people who attended gave the feedback that one of the best things about taking part was *"getting a chance to meet with others who are wrestling with the same questions"* and *"hearing solutions that other groups have come up with that we can adapt to our situations"*.

Each of us plays a small but significant part in the ongoing story of our community and RPHT helps to give a voice to people who aren't always heard and helps them to make a difference.

Viv Froggatt



**NEAR
NEIGHBOURS**

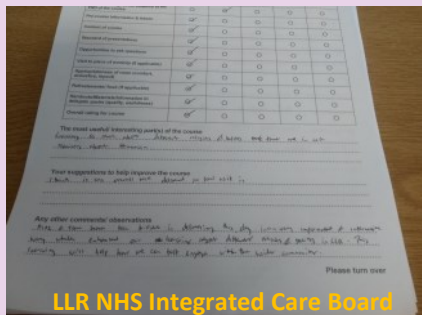
Corporate Work

Our Religion and Belief training sessions have continued apace in the last month, with a session for Leicestershire County Council, one for the Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland NHS Integrated Care Board and one for Leicestershire Police Community Support Officers. As always, the reviews were excellent—the main complaint being that the training session is not long enough and they want more!

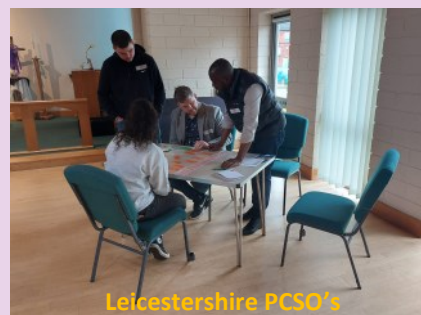
We are indebted to all the faith practitioners who come along to answer the very challenging questions posed by the participants, which is an invaluable part of the day.



Leicestershire County Council



LLR NHS Integrated Care Board



Leicestershire PCSO's

Work with Schools

The highlight of this month was a Roadshow with six schools located in the Coalville area—an RE day where the children from the schools intermingled with each other and took part in four different activities, one of which was our Religion and Belief Roadshow.

They met representatives from faiths and beliefs that they had never heard of before like Jain, Bahá'í and Humanism. They had fun in our dressing-up tent trying on sarees and dresses from different cultures (the Rastafarian dreadlock being the favourite), and had the opportunity of trying some snacks at the food display table. This was received with caution, as many of the children had never tasted Indian snack before.

The schools involved were Hugglescote Community Primary School, All Saints CE Primary School, New Swannington Primary School, Thringstone Primary School, Warren Hill Community Primary School & Whitwick St John the Baptist CE Primary School.

Also in March, we had a repeat visit from year 5 children from Burbage Junior School who visited the synagogue followed by faith-related activity in the church.

We were also invited back to Thrusington CofE Primary School for our 'Understanding Celebrations' workshop on Easter for year 1 children. They enjoyed the Easter story from Rev Ted, the chocolate eggs and Hot Cross buns.

Ramila Chauhan



Many of the Roadshow team came in their cultural dress.



Burbage Junior School visiting St Philip's Church



Thrusington CE Primary School—Understanding Celebrations

Work with Churches

On Tuesday 5th March, I had a very enjoyable morning, reading the New Testament Letter to the Hebrews with some Christian and Jewish colleagues. I realise this is a niche activity, but as I reflect upon the morning, it exemplifies the four values that the St Philip's Centre espouses.

This kind of open enquiry Bible study requires us to trust each other, to have confidence we can express our questions, concerns, doubts, and opinions, without being judged or condemned by those with whom we are in conversation. It requires cooperation, working out a plan of study together, utilising the knowledge and expertise of members of the group. As we read and talked, we encountered our different perspectives on the text and so understood ourselves and each other better.

I think the key challenges in Christian-Jewish relations is that Christianity sees itself as the fulfilment of Judaism. This begs the question of what place Judaism then has in a Christian's worldview, and the history of Christian antisemitism shows how destructive this has been. While some might want to deny this is still an issue, our concern was more to inhabit the tension, to recognise that we have very different understandings of the world, of God and of scripture, understandings that are only an inch apart but are miles deep. How do we understand our differences and yet remain friends?

We do so through respectful honest and open conversation, not shutting down the debate, but inhabiting it in all its awkwardness and difficulty, not to win, but to understand and so to learn how to live well together.

Tom Wilson

Community Events

It has been great to attend community events over the past month. Pictures on the right are the Dialogue Society's Iftar and the Sikh Museum Initiative's contemporary Sikh art exhibition which is running throughout April and May at the Leicester Adult Education College on Belvoir Street, Leicester. I have been to other events but did not manage to take any photos.

Tom Wilson



Dates for your Diary



What Vaisakhi means to me

12:00 to 1:30pm, Tuesday 9th April 2024
An opportunity to learn about Vaisakhi with Kartar Singh Bring.

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

Lunch provided



**St Philip's Centre's
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**Tuesday 11th June,
5.00—7.00 pm**
St Philip's Church
Evington Road, Leicester LE2 1HN

'The Future of Interfaith in the UK'
Andrew Davies,
Professor of Public Religion,
University of Birmingham
Further details to follow

Farewell to Ben

The Home Office has advised that from 1st April 2024, the role of Prevent Coordinator will be transferred to Leicester City Council.

From that date, Prevent delivery will be the responsibility of the local authority, as is the case in other parts of the country. The St Philip's Centre is proud of their Prevent work, in particular the strong and lasting partnerships forged with local communities in the area. The Home Office and Leicester City Council recognise the effective and successful community-based approach to management of the Prevent programme since the St Philip's Centre was invited to take on the role in 2012. In that time, the 'Leicester model' has been widely praised. The partners now look forward to continuing their strong relationship in other ways.



In March, we therefore said farewell to Ben Smith our current Leicester Prevent Coordinator. Ben has been an invaluable and helpful member of the SPC team and colleagues will very much miss his presence. We wish him all the very best as he transitions to the same role at Leicester City Council from April.

Riaz Ravat

Thank You, Israel

On 12th March, the Trustees of St Philip's Centre said 'farewell' to the Revd Israel Selvanayagam who stepped down from his role as Trustee, in preparation for his forthcoming retirement. He has served on the Board of Trustees for almost four years, but has a very long association with St Philip's Centre.

He was presented with a card and a small gift as a token of our thanks for all that he has contributed to St Philip's Centre and we wish him well in his retirement.



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

P & C Hickinbotham Charitable Trust

Shire Funding

The Spalding Trust

The United Reformed Church

The Westhill Foundation



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