



Faiths engage

Monthly Newsletter—Issue 57—May 2024

Welcome to the latest edition of Faiths Engage

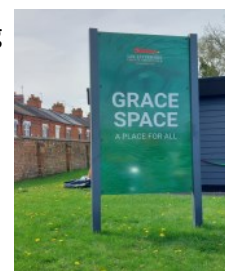
We have had a busy month of training, both for NHS staff and Police recruits. After a quiet period, due to school holidays, our education team is back in action, and as busy as ever. We also supported the opening of Leicestershire Cricket Club's "Grace Space." Read on to find out how this space could be of benefit to you. As well as events for church groups, we also relaunched our Member Churches scheme, to reconnect with churches that have a heart for interfaith work. If your church, or indeed any place of worship, want to find out more about the scheme, do get in touch.

Revd Dr Tom Wilson
Director, St Philip's Centre

Corporate Work

Leicestershire County Cricket Club 'Grace Space' Opened and Blessed

On 12th April, St Philip's Centre arranged for eight faith practitioners to take part in the opening of the new 'Grace Space' at Leicestershire County Cricket Club. It was officially opened by Bishop Saju and the eight faith practitioners were given the opportunity to say and prayer and bless symbolic items from the Club. Also present at the opening ceremony were the Lord Lieutenant, Mike Kapur and Lord Mayor, Cllr Dr Susan Barton. This inclusive space can be used as a prayer room, meditation room, classroom, accessible changing place, or as a sensory experience. You can read more about it here: <https://www.leicestershireccc.co.uk/news/leicestershire-ccc-blessed-as-grace-space-officially-opened>



Training on Religious & Belief Diversity in Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland

We have had a number of training courses in April focussing on religious and belief diversity. Two of these courses were for NHS staff and another was for Leicestershire Police Recruits. These courses are always well-received and the participants are very appreciative of the time spent with faith practitioners in the 'round-robin' exercise: *"I enjoyed the round robin exercise as I got to speak to different people from a variety of religions and learnt a lot from it."* *"The most useful part was meeting all the faith practitioners. They were all very knowledgeable."*

Other comments received from recent NHS courses included: *"Very relaxed environment to learn and feel confident to interact and ask questions."* *"Loved every minute. Such kindness!"* *"Well-rounded course with a mixture of interaction and presentation with opportunity to tailor to our organisation and services."*

Thank you to all the faith practitioners and places of worship who give up their time to help us with these courses.



Work with Churches

Seder meals

On Wednesday 17th April, I had attended an interfaith seder meal organised by the Board of Deputies of British Jews. Then on Tuesday 23rd April, I attended the seder organised by Leicester progressive Jewish Community. It was a real pleasure to attend both events, to catch up with old friends and to make new ones. The interfaith seder took place before Pesach had started and was an opportunity for those who are not Jewish to understand what and how Jewish people are celebrating at this time.



Every time I talk with my Jewish friends and colleagues about how they live out their faith, I am always struck and challenged by how family orientated Judaism is. There is worship in the synagogue, there are official structures and committees and so forth, but there is also a real emphasis on sharing faith as a family, of gathering to eat, inviting others to the meal, building relationships, fun, laughter, debate, questioning, discussion.

We enjoyed great food, stimulating conversation, and a chance to learn how other people live out their deeply held religious convictions. I am grateful for the opportunity and wish all those celebrating Chag Pesach Same'ach.

Methodist Women in Britain

On Saturday 20th April, Nima Suchak and I joined Methodist Women in Britain's annual gathering. We did not have to travel though, as our contribution was online. We ran two sessions, the first for those participants who were joining the conference via Zoom, and the second for delegates in person at Swanwick. Nima shared what it is to live as a Hindu in Britain today and took questions from the audience. Thanks to all who participated.



Training at Queens

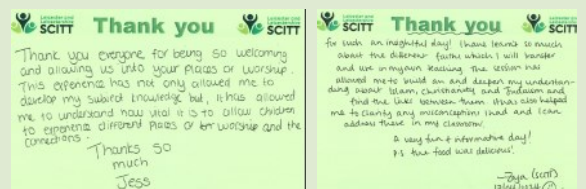
On Thursday 4th April, I had the pleasure of visiting the Queen's theological foundation in Birmingham to deliver some religion and belief training for ministers in training. I am always struck by how small interventions can clear up misunderstandings, whether about arranged marriages, the experience of Jewish people in Germany in the first two decades of the 20th Century, or how Sikhs pray. There was rich discussion and opportunities to learn how to live well together. Thanks to Miriam, Nima, and Surinder for their input, and to Laura for hosting us.



Tom Wilson

Work with Schools

Teacher trainees from the Leicester and Leicestershire SCITT visited Masjid Al Falah Mosque, Leicester Hebrew Congregation Synagogue, and St Philip's Church. Their visit followed the same structure as school visits by children. They observed the distinctions among the faiths, yet, more significantly, they noticed the similarities shared by the Abrahamic faiths.



Martinshaw Primary School (Groby) visited a Mandir and Synagogue. The teacher wrote: *"The people at St Philip's Centre were prompt at organising and the trip went seamlessly. On arrival at the first place of worship, a member from the St Philip's centre was there to greet us and guide us to each of our places of worship as well as introducing the speaker. The people at each place were very knowledgeable and the children enjoyed listening to the stories and symbols associated with the different religions. The children then used this to compare as we went to first the synagogue and then the Mandir."*

We are seeking to continuously expand and improve our education offer. A vital part of this is our ability to recruit high quality faith practitioners and in April, we were able to bring on board two new colleagues who will provide input on Humanism. In the same month, a new Buddhist practitioner assisted us with a school assembly.

MEMBER CHURCHES SCHEME

St Philip's Centre
living well together

St Philip's Centre is an independent, Christian-led charity. We work to build understanding, respect, trust and co-operation among people from many different backgrounds. We have a real and continuing commitment to help facilitate the search for solutions when community threats and tensions emerge, working across wider society to provide a safe space where difficult and complex issues can be discussed.

Our premises and the Director's salary are provided by the Anglican Diocese of Leicester and we receive a grant from the Northampton District of the Methodist Church, but all other costs must be met through our activities and fundraising.

It costs at least £60 a day to cover our overheads and £180 a day to pay the support staff. An annual gift covering one or both of these costs for a day's operation would make a real difference.

Would your church (or group of churches) partner with us by making an annual donation?

In return, we would support you in the form of an annual talk/visit/bespoke course by someone from St Philip's Centre.



More about what we do:
www.stphilipscentre.co.uk



CONTACT US

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Stories from Sikh and Punjab History found in British Churches

On Thursday 25th April, I had the pleasure of going to Leicester Cathedral to listen to Rav Singh from *A Little History of the Sikhs* share stories from Sikh and Punjab History found in British churches. We covered a lot of ground, taking in ten churches in all. What struck me particularly is the power of dispassionately told history to challenge people's prejudices and blind spots, especially using individual stories as a way of confronting the realities of our past. I am not about to go into a detailed discussion of the legacy of colonialism but suffice to say whilst there is good in the actions of the British Empire there is also an awful lot of unscrupulous, dishonest, exploitative, and shameful history that must be acknowledged and responded to. This includes actions by the Anglican Church that were profoundly unchristian. Rav did a great job of opening up this conversation, focused specifically on how the British treated the Sikhs. I learned a lot and was profoundly challenged by some of what I heard. I am looking forward to continuing the conversation.



Tom Wilson

ST PHILIP'S CENTRE'S ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Keynote Address:

“The Future of Interfaith” Professor Andrew Davies

Professor of Public Religion at the University of Birmingham and Director of the Edward Cadbury Centre for the Public Understanding of Religion

**RSVP with dietary requirements to admin@stphilipscentre.co.uk
by 5th June 2024**

Tuesday 11th June 2024

5.00 pm—7.00 pm

St Philip's Church

Evington Road, Leicester LE2 1HN

Light refreshments provided

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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