



# Faiths engage

Monthly Newsletter—Issue 71—July 2025

## Welcome to the latest edition of Faiths Engage

As you can see below, we have been particularly busy this month working with groups from different colleges on our community integration program. We are grateful to MHCLG for funding this work.

We have also been running a further iteration of our Come Dine program; testimonials are included in this edition. We also held our AGM a few weeks ago. Finally, we said goodbye to Maureen, who has retired after over fifteen years of dedicated service to the work of helping people learn how to live well together. We wish her all the best in her retirement.

With every good wish.

Revd Canon Dr Tom Wilson  
Director, St Philips Centre

## Corporate Work

June has been an intense month for our CoIN (community integration) programme. The Eyres Monsell Club for Young People have taken part in a series of interactive sessions including round robin Q&As with colleagues from Baha'i, Buddhist and Humanist communities. This reinforced the learning they had a few weeks prior when they met Christian, Hindu and Sikh faith practitioners. Last week they visited a synagogue and a mosque visit is upcoming too.



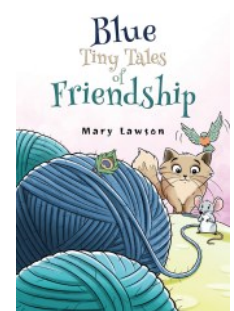
The same programme resulted in a talk about inclusivity in business at Gateway College. The owner of Bobby's Restaurant on Belgrave Road, dubbed the 'Golden Mile', answered questions from students about creating and sustaining a business model which appeals to a cross section of society and how the company has overcome challenges such as covid and continues to operate in a fast paced environment.

The highlight for students at The City of Leicester College was a Q&A about 'Fame, Fortune and Misfortune' with former West Ham United, Birmingham City and Brighton & Hove Albion footballer George Parris. He spoke powerfully about his family background, entry into football, successes and pitfalls which came his way, including an addiction to gambling.



In June, our Independent Person for safeguarding conducted a very helpful review of our safeguarding policies and practices. In the same month, we took part in a training day organised by Active Leicester which seeks to boost activity and wellbeing across the city through a new project.

We also attended the launch of a new book written by the late Canon Mary Lawson – former Diocesan Director of Education. 'Blue: Tiny Tales of Friendship' was launched at Krishna Avanti School where Mary worked for some of her time in Leicester. RIP.



Riaz Ravat

## Come Dine Together Friendship Meals

One of the core areas of the St Philip's Centre's work is to help individuals and communities build strong relationships and friendships. We help people connect, through our Come Dine Together Friendship Meals project. This is based on the Channel 4 programme – Come Dine with Me. People are suitably paired up and meet to share food, get to know each other and build friendships. They are encouraged to share their interaction on social media as well as through talking with their peers.

We recently ran the program. Here's what some of the participants said about the experience:

*"Very interesting people, indeed well-matched. We are likely to meet again."*

*"We met last Friday evening and yes, we had a great time. ... We shared Indian curries and English desserts. We all learnt a lot about our different cultures and faiths and hope to meet up again sometime in the future. I think I am speaking for us all when I say what a great opportunity this was, and is, to appreciate each other and encourage each other, thank you for 'putting' us together."*

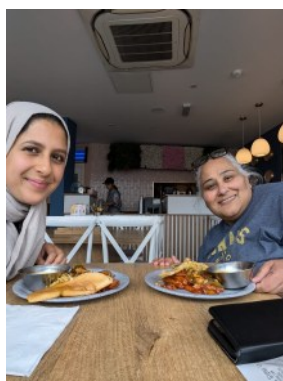
*"Thank you for pairing us together. Had a very interesting conversation and we hope to meet up again!"*

*"Thank you for letting us have this opportunity as I believe we have made 2 new lovely friends."*

*"Thank you for the opportunity to meet a fascinating person. ... Great conversation, ranging from politics to cricket!"*

*"This was a fantastic experience which I hope has led to long term friendship. We were both a little worried that we might struggle to find things to talk about but this couldn't be further from the truth. It turns out so much of our lives between our study, mutual friends and places we've lived crossed over greatly. If anything, we still have far too much to talk about!"*

*"The fact that the cafe we aimed for turned out to be closed was actually a blessing, as it gave us that impulse to just hang around each other's places of worship, which led to fascinating conversations! We said that you clearly knew what you were doing by pairing us up!"*





## Men in Sheds Project Open Day

The New Parks Methodist Church 'Men in Sheds' Project Open Day started with heavy downpours – not ideal when you want to show off a gardening project! It did however mean that everyone came together indoors and had time for a chat with our Faith Practitioners.

Serving samosas and demonstrating how to make them promoted conversations and paved the way for lots of questions to be asked of Parbin about her Islamic Faith and Goody about her Sikh Faith.

Harinder took up his invitation to the Open Day which was issued following a successful visit to Hamilton Gurdwara the previous week.

*Cathryn Parsons  
Churches Engagement Officer*



## Annual General Meeting

On Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> June we held our AGM in St Philip's Church. Approximately 25 people gathered to hear about the progress we have made in our oral history project, 'Memories of Living Well Together'. We are grateful to The National Lottery Heritage Fund for the provision of finances to carry out this work.

The project has progressed very well, and we can rejoice that 103 interviews have been completed. Therefore, our target has been achieved around 6 months ahead of the original deadline. Tom and I are currently in the process of reviewing all the recordings to identify themes. This work should be completed by August which will enable material to be gathered to form the basis for the exhibitions and booklets.

I'm very grateful to the six interviewers who have participated in the project alongside me – Tom Wilson, Cathryn Parsons, Sean Dudley, Nima Suchak and Elliot Harris. We have recorded conversations with some people from the visually impaired community, neurodiverse community and those who are wheelchair users as well as trying to hear stories from as many ethnicities and faith/belief communities as we could. We have been privileged to hear the stories from a range of ethnicities within the LGBTQ+ community. The gender split is approximately 50%.

*Viv Froggatt*



## Staff News

On Monday 16th June, we gathered at St Philip's Church to say thank you and farewell to Maureen Hebblewhite. She has worked for the St Philip's Centre for over fifteen years and will be sadly missed. Maureen was always reliable, able to turn her hand at anything the Centre needed, and more often than not had thought about what needed doing before her colleagues had realised something needed to be done. Maureen said that it had been a great privilege and joy to work at St Philip's Centre - a special and unique place because of its dedicated staff team and wonderful group of volunteer faith practitioners. She had no doubt it would continue to go from strength to strength in the future and looked forward to seeing its future progress and hearing about its 20th anniversary celebrations next year. We wish Maureen all the best in her retirement.



## Funding Support

St. Philip's Centre is grateful for the funding it receives from the following and from many individual supporters, Friends, Associates and Member Churches.

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The Anglican Diocese of Leicester  
The Garfield Weston Foundation  
The Home Office  
The Keswick Hall Trust*

*Leicestershire & Rutland Community Foundation  
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