



# Faiths engage

Monthly Newsletter—Issue 79— April 2026

## Welcome to the latest edition of Faiths Engage

This edition celebrates the many ways our community is building understanding, trust and shared purpose across cultures and faiths. From capturing oral histories at a vibrant heritage celebration to accompanying an ordinand on visits to gurdwaras, a synagogue, and a Jain temple, we've seen how personal encounters continue to deepen connection and learning. Our team has also been active on the national and international stage: Riaz contributed to the Future of Interfaith conference and the International Conference for World Harmony in Paris, while I joined colleagues in public health to listen closely to people's questions and concerns about vaccination. Locally, our Intercultural City gathering at Leicester Cathedral brought partners together to reflect on progress and make fresh pledges for the future. As we look ahead, we're also preparing for our forthcoming AGM — an important moment to take stock and shape the next chapter of our shared work.

**Revd Canon Dr Tom Wilson**  
**Director**

## St Philip's Centre Brings Oral Histories to Life at Heritage Celebration

Tom and Sean from the St Philip's Centre attended the Celebration of Heritage event at University of Leicester on Saturday 21st March.

This event is organised by University of Leicester's Heritage Hub in collaboration with Literary Leicester, and brings together a host of active organisations from across the local area.

Our stall helped showcase the Living Together Oral History project, and there was plenty of engagement with attendees, who commented on how worthwhile and interesting the project was.

The book we have produced as part of the project proved to be particularly popular with attendees, while many people filled in our activity cards and gave their thoughts on life in Leicester, whether they feel free to be themselves in the city, and where they identify home as.



We're looking forward to the other exhibitions in the coming months. We are also holding sessions here at St Philip's Centre to explore some of the themes that emerged from the project. These are running 11:00 – 12:30 at the Centre, with lunch provided. The dates and topics are:

- 23rd April: Migration
- 5th May: Barriers and Challenges
- 20th May: Where is home?
- 15th June: Celebrating Leicester

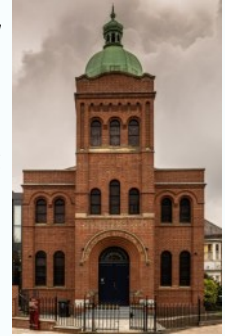
Please email to book a place at [admin@stphilipscentre.co.uk](mailto:admin@stphilipscentre.co.uk)

## A Journey of Understanding: Three Faiths, One Shared Humanity

As part of my ordinand training, I was required to visit three places of alternative worship and write a theological reflection. With help from the St Philip's Centre in Leicester, I visited the Leicester Hebrew Congregation and Synagogue, the Jain Centre and a Sikh Gurdwara. My previous career had already exposed me to people of many nationalities and faiths, and these visits built on that experience.

At the Synagogue, the centre manager gave an in-depth tour that highlighted the community's strong commitment to tradition. The layout of the worship space reflected deep reverence for the Torah, with inward-facing seating to focus attention on scripture, and facilities for ritual cleansing. The heritage centre also showed how the Jewish community has been part of Leicester life for over 150 years.

The Jain Centre visit was entirely new to me. We were welcomed by former and current presidents, joined by senior members for discussion, and shared a communal lunch. We observed morning worship, where our guide explained how prayer moves the worshipper from the material to the spiritual in the presence of their chosen tirthankara. Chanting and candles had a liturgical familiarity. They described four Jain traditions, each with its own focus, and explained their belief in the soul's reincarnation until perfect knowledge is reached. Their respect for all living beings shapes their way of life. During lunch, I spoke with a trainee priest whose calling requires complete dedication.



At the Sikh Gurdwara, we again received a warm welcome. Our host explained that Sikhism, founded about 550 years ago, is rooted in peace and the teachings of ten gurus. Their history of oppression allows for self-defence but forbids aggression. The Khanda symbol throughout the temple represents justice, God's presence, and universal brotherhood. Their scripture, drawn from the gurus' writings, is treated as their living teacher. Sikhs believe God is present in all life and that reincarnation continues until perfection is reached, which underpins their strict vegetarianism. Communal meals are central both to worship and to caring for those in need, and respect and equality were evident throughout.



I remain deeply grateful to all three communities and to the St Philip's Centre for making these visits possible.

**Paul Armstrong**  
Ordinand

## AGM 2026

As this year marks our 20th anniversary, we are celebrating the milestone with a series of events throughout the year. In light of this, the Annual General Meeting will focus solely on the formal business required, and therefore the meeting will only be open to trustees, staff and founding members, and not include the usual programme of presentations or refreshments.



# Ancient Hatred or Socio-Political?

## Why Relations Break Down

Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> April 2026

1.30pm - 3.30pm

St Philip's Church, Evington Road, Leicester, LE2 1HN

*Light refreshments will be provided*

Dr Mohammed Ahmed is Policy Lead and Research Fellow at the Woolf Institute, where he leads the Institute's policy engagement and heads the Secretariat for the Commission on Interfaith Relations: UK Faith Groups and Global Conflicts. His academic training includes an MPhil and PhD focused on Muslim-Jewish relations, with a particular emphasis on perceptions of the "other". He is Post-Doctoral Research Associate at St Edmund's College, Cambridge and is an Associate Fellow at the Development, Concepts and Doctrine Centre.



**St Philip's Centre, 2A Stoughton Drive North, Leicester, LE5 5UB**

**[www.stphilipscentre.co.uk](http://www.stphilipscentre.co.uk)**

**Tel: 0116 273 3459**

**BOOK YOUR PLACE at [admin@stphilipscentre.co.uk](mailto:admin@stphilipscentre.co.uk)**

## Deepening Connections at Christchurch Clarendon Park

On Wednesday 25th March, Angela Langrick was our speaker for a Deepening Connections evening at Christchurch Clarendon Park. She shared music that was meaningful for her, and her own spiritual journey. It was a fascinating evening and I am very grateful to Angela for her honesty and the depth of her answers.



## Education

March has been a busy and productive month. We welcomed a number of school groups to our *Places of Peace* programme, with pupils travelling from Leicestershire, Grantham, and Lincoln to visit places of worship and develop their understanding of faith within the local community.

Our faith practitioners have also delivered workshops across Grantham, Northampton, and Leicestershire, supporting schools with structured and engaging learning experiences.

Feedback from teachers includes:

“It was valuable for the children to see local Hindus attending the Mandir for worship and prayer during our visit.”

*Leicestershire Teacher*

“This was a well-delivered session for Year 3 and 4 pupils. The use of video content supported engagement, and the session was both informative and appropriate for the age group. Pupils particularly enjoyed the concluding activity.”

*Northampton Teacher*

These programmes continue to provide meaningful educational opportunities for pupils, supported by the ongoing contribution of our faith practitioners.

**Ramila Chauhan**  
*Education Officer*





We would like to invite you to St Philip's Centre  
**20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Concert**  
**6.30pm-8pm Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> May 2026**

Trinity  
Methodist  
Church,  
Oadby,  
LE2 5AB



Singing  
Dancing  
Drumming  
Instrumentals

St Philip's Centre  
[www.stphilipscentre.co.uk](http://www.stphilipscentre.co.uk)  
Tel: 0116 273 3459

**Free**

**Book your free ticket**  
**here!**

## Outreach in Action: From Gurdwaras to Community Halls, Strengthening Understanding Around Vaccination

On Sunday 8th March I joined colleagues from the city public health team and Patient Care Locally for a drop in session at Gurdwara Shri Guru Harkrishan Sahib Ji, to understand people's questions and concerns in relation to vaccination. We held another session Wednesday 25th March with the Asian Elders group that meet at St. Paul's Church. We will be visiting Muslim School Oadby in April for a similar discussion. This is all part to work we're doing for the Preventing Health Inequalities Fund, to help colleagues to develop relationships and understanding as to why vaccination rates are lower in Oadby than the rest of the county.



*Drop in session at the Gurdwara Shri Guru Harkrishan Sahib Ji on Sunday 8th March*



*The Asian Elders Group at St Paul's Church on Wednesday 25th March*

## From London to UNESCO: Showcasing Innovation in Intercultural Education

In March, our Deputy Director - Riaz Ravat, was asked to speak at two events.

The first was a contribution to a talk at the International Centre for Sustainability in London about the 'Future of Interfaith' which highlighted examples of good practice and how to address some challenges.

The second event was the International Conference for World Harmony which took place at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, France. The event was co-sponsored by a range of global Buddhist organisations and over 300 delegates from around the world.

Riaz's talk was titled 'Issues, Innovation and Impact in Intercultural Education' and profiled in particular, our flagship Religion & Belief Roadshow.



## Pledging to Live Well Together: Insights from Leicester's Next Generation

On Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> March around 120 people from organisations across the city gathered at Leicester Cathedral to mark one year since the launch of the Intercultural City project, to hear about the successes so far, and to make pledges for the future.

Recognising the importance of children and young people's voices, those gathered in the cathedral then heard presentations from pupils from St John the Baptist primary school, and students from Gateway College, Leicester College, and QE College. The pupils from St John the Baptist primary school described how they saw interculturalism play out in their school, where 46 different languages are spoken, and how their school values brought together children from different backgrounds. Each of the presentations given by college students covered what they liked about Leicester, what fears and misunderstandings got in the way of people living well together, and what could help people to do so. A common theme was how much Leicester's diversity was valued – students described how it gave them freedom to be themselves, and abundant opportunities to learn about different cultures and histories. But they also recognised that fear of the unknown, stereotypes – especially on social media – and mistrust could prevent people from connecting across difference.

Everyone present was then invited to discuss with others how they, as an individual or an organisation, could help bring people together across difference and help Leicester become more intercultural, which they then wrote up as pledges. The pledges are less about starting new big projects, and more about being intentionally inclusive with current activities. This might be for example a religious community opening their doors to the neighbourhood, a youth group reaching out to another youth group in a different part of the city or a business providing opportunities for staff to join in different religious and cultural events. This is all part of the St Philip's Centre's mission of helping people learn how to live well together.



# Celebrating Leicester's Global Sisterhood: A Vibrant International Women's Day Gathering

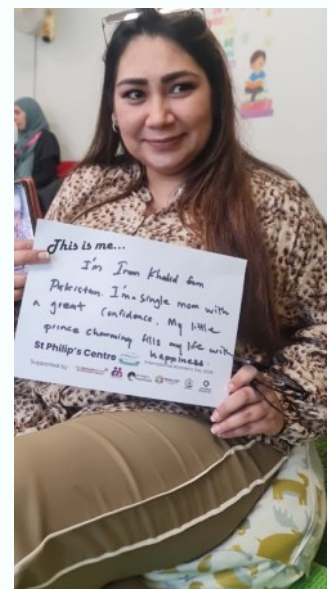
Showcasing the diversity that is Leicester, eighty ladies hailing from Antigua to Albania, Gambia to the Philippines and many places in-between, came together for a St Philip's Centre International Women's Day event.

Hosted by Wesley Hall, Leicester Mamma's @Highfields Children's Centre and St Peter's Highfields, ladies from these and other organisations attended either their own venue as a host or one of the other two venues as a guest.

The food was as varied as the experience at each of the venues. Of the activities, Leicester Mamma's guests enjoyed the 'getting to know you' bingo whilst Wesley Hall guests took to the 'this is me' activity. St Peter's participants had a go at both activities which were designed to give opportunities to get to know new people and share experiences with others.

Thank you to all who helped make this a fun and successful event. We hope to do it again next year, spreading our wings to other areas of Leicester, so do please let me know if you would like to be involved.

**Cathryn Parsons**  
Churches Training Officer



You are invited to join me and a group of  
Young Women for monthly discussion, visits and food!



We explore how our faith impacts how we see the world.  
We learn about our differences and what we have in common,  
make new friends and deepen our own faith. We meet influential  
people from different walks of life.



**Next meeting: St Philip's Centre**  
2A Stoughton Drive North, Leicester, LE5 5UB

**Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> April 10-11.30am**

How do you celebrate your festive season - why is it important?  
Share food you would eat during that season.

**Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> May 10-11.30am**

Visit to Gurdwara

**Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> June 9.30am - 12.30pm**

Visit to Halstead Hill Farm

Contact [courses@stphilipscentre.co.uk](mailto:courses@stphilipscentre.co.uk) for more information  
or 077707640885





## Leicester Living Together: Belonging and Change

Interactive workshops  
exploring what it means to live  
and work in Leicester.

23<sup>rd</sup> April: Migration  
5<sup>th</sup> May: Barriers and Challenges  
20<sup>th</sup> May: Where is home?  
15<sup>th</sup> June: Celebrating Leicester

All workshops are  
11:00 - 12:30 at  
St Philip's Centre,  
2a Stoughton Drive North,  
Leicester LE5 5UB

Lunch provided

Please register by emailing [director@stphilipscentre.co.uk](mailto:director@stphilipscentre.co.uk)

### 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.

*The P & C Hickinbotham Charitable Trust*  
*The Anglican Diocese of Leicester*  
*The Garfield Weston Foundation*  
*The Keswick Hall Trust*  
*Active Together*

*The N C Bellefontaine Trust*  
*The Northampton District of the Methodist Church*  
*The National Lottery Heritage Fund*



**Faiths Engage** is the newsletter of St Philip's Centre Ltd

2A Stoughton Drive North, Leicester LE5 5UB

Tel: 0116 273 3459

[admin@stphilipscentre.co.uk](mailto:admin@stphilipscentre.co.uk)

X: @SPCLeicester Facebook: [stphilipscentre](https://www.facebook.com/stphilipscentre)

[X](#) [Facebook](#) [Website](#)

Company registered in England & Wales no. 5657062

Registered Charity no. 1114686