



"Holding on to anger is like grasping a hot coal with the intent of throwing it at someone else; you are the one who gets burned."
 Gautama Buddha

It's snowing! Hope you are keeping warm. Thank you to everyone who contributed to this newsletter, plenty of interesting events planned for you to take part in. Imams Online, the 3FF and the Interfaith Network UK have given statements about the barbaric Paris attack and the need for interfaith work to continue.

Kauser Akhtar
 Faith Links Adviser

Inside this issue:

A Conversation with Muslims	2
Safety, Security & Living Well Together	3
3FF Declaration against hate	3
Marriage and Relationships	4
World Interfaith Harmony Week	4
Fairtrade Fortnight	4
Islam Awareness Week	4
Faith and Belief News	5
Muslims and the Holocaust	5
New Guidance on Freedom of Expression	5
MP's on High Quality RE	5
Funding Opportunities	6
Upcoming Events	7

Interfaith Prayer Vigil

'Around 80 people gathered for an Interfaith Prayer Vigil for World Peace at St Mary's Church, Rydes Hill, Guildford on Monday 5th January. The purpose of the evening was to share in a community expression of commitment to tolerance, non-violence and peace as we begin a new year.



The evening was led by various members at the gathering through prayers and readings and opportunities to respond were given at different points during the vigil. Possibly the most moving moments of the evening were when those present were invited to offer individual prayers for peace, and also when everyone was invited to come

forward and each light a candle to affirm that God brings true light into the darkness of our world.

On the programme for the evening were printed the following words by Pope Francis: 'Any violence which seeks religious justification deserves the strongest condemnation'. A relevant and fitting thought for people of all faiths to consider.

Reported by Rod Boreham
 (Guildford Town Centre Chaplain)

Main Faith Festivals in February 2015

- ◆ 15th - Nirvana Day ☸
- ◆ 17th - Shrove Tuesday ✝
- ◆ 17th - Shivaratri ॐ
- ◆ 18th - Ash Wednesday ✝
- ◆ 18th Feb—5th April ✝

'A Conversation with Muslims', Knaphill & Brookwood Church

One of WPOF's central aims is to strengthen relationships between people of all religions and cultures in Woking - to build friendship and understanding between people of different cultures and faiths, for the good of the whole community. WPOF has become skilled at creating 'safe' spaces for people to meet, learn and ask questions of one another.

One such event was a recent 'Conversation With Muslim Women' which WPOF was pleased to facilitate at a women's breakfast hosted by churches in Knaphill and Brookwood. 30 – 40 women gathered over delicious breakfast to meet three brave Muslim women from Woking People of Faith's management committee and trustees. Fatima Martin, Somia Shafiq and Kauser Akhtar introduced themselves and talked briefly about some of the things they most value about their faith, and then made themselves available to respond to a wide range of questions which arose from discussion which took place in groups.



The facilitator, Rev Pippa Ross-McCabe invited attendees to remember that speaking about one's faith to a group of people of a different faith was a brave thing to do – simply because one was subject to the weighty (and incorrect!) assumption that one was speaking for the whole of one's faith group! But the gracious and respectful welcome and interest offered by our hosts suggested that Pippa's caution was unnecessary in this context.

Questions covered a range of topics including issues of culture, understanding of theology, prayer patterns and responses to the tensions in the immediate national and international context. The integrity, kindness and openness of the panel members was very much appreciated and those who attended commented afterwards that the morning had triggered valuable reflection on issues of prayer, culture and understanding of our Neighbours.

A fortnight later, this same group visited two mosques in Woking where they enjoyed brief tours and time for further questions and exploration. The group was first welcomed at the Shah Jahan Mosque where they were generously hosted by the head Imam and his wife. The group then visited the Al-Asr Education Centre where they were invited to walk around and look and talk to the children in their Saturday School. Their host then tried to answer some of the very hard questions put to her on how Muslims perceived Jesus and did very well! Hosts at both venues were generous with their time. For many who attended this was the first time they had visited a mosque or enjoyed the freedom to ask questions.

There has been very positive feedback from those who attended these events. Woking People of Faith has received comments about how helpful the discussions and visits have been particularly in bringing about a better understanding of Islam - and enabling neighbours better to understand one another.

The format of 'A Conversation With' provides a space for learning and permission for questions (both 'ordinary' and more sensitive) to be asked. It is also a space for listening. Feedback from these events is always very positive – providing ample evidence that people have, often for the first time, met and communicated with a person from a faith and/or cultural group very different from their own and learned a great deal. Meeting, getting to know as individuals and sharing ideas with people from different backgrounds removes stereotypical perceptions. If you or an organisation you know may benefit from such a conversation, Woking People of Faith would be pleased to discuss possibilities.



W: www.wpof.org.uk, E: coordinator@wpof.org.uk

Safety, security and living well together: statement by Co-Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the Inter Faith Network for the UK



The recent murders in Paris, as well as reported rises in anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim comments and attacks in the UK and more widely in Europe, have brought in their wake increased anxieties about the safety of Jewish and Muslim communities. In the case of manifestations of violent extremism and terrorism they have brought anxiety about the safety and wellbeing of all communities and of our society overall.

There is, and will be, debate about best ways to respond to these disturbing developments, as well as to the implications of others around the globe. At an immediate practical level, however, where communities feel their very safety is under threat, mutual support is vital. Inter faith initiatives are fundamental to achieving this and play a crucial role alongside that of the emergency services and other secular agencies working to ensure public safety. The principles, drawn from the IFN and partners document 'Looking After One Another: The Safety and Security of our Faith Communities' remain very relevant. (Download here: http://www.interfaith.org.uk/resources/briefing-notes/doc_download/130-principles-from-looking-after-one-another)

Among the Government statements made was that of Home Secretary Theresa May: "Without its Jews, Britain would not be Britain, just as without its Muslims, Britain would not be Britain - without its Sikhs, Hindus, Christians and people of other faiths, Britain would not be Britain". We wholly agree. We would add that Britain would also not be Britain without our continuing commitment as people of different faiths, within its four nations, to finding ways to live together well – including with those of non-religious beliefs - and continuing to work together to shape our society in the light of our shared values while retaining the integrity of our religious beliefs and appreciating the positive dimensions of diversity.

There has been fresh discussion in recent times about "values", including in the context of discussion of 'British values'. The Inter Faith Network has, across the years, explored the ideas of 'common values' and 'shared values' in a number of ways, from the seminar The Quest for Common Values <http://www.interfaith.org.uk/quest-for-common-values>, through working with the faith communities on the Act of Commitment for the new Millennium <http://www.interfaith.org.uk/resources/act-of-commitment>, to such documents as 'Living Well Together' www.interfaith.org.uk/living-well-together. Further work on values will be taking place within the Inter Faith Network across the year.

Faith and community organisations sign declaration against hate

Following the Paris attacks, and in commemoration of Holocaust Memorial Day, several faith, community and other organisations have signed a [joint statement against hate speech and intolerance](#).

The 3FF are now inviting charities, community groups and other organisations across the UK to join us and become signatories of the declaration. Email: anya@3ff.org.uk if you are interested in signing, and be sure to include your organisation's logo.

Staying united after the Paris attacks. [Read 3FF's thoughts on the importance of staying united after the tragedy](#).



Marriage and Relationships

Guildford & Godalming Interfaith Forum usually devote the first hour of their bi-monthly 'business' meetings to learning more about the beliefs of it's members. Last month they decided to share practices and opinions about 'Marriage and Relationships' in each of the Faiths currently represented, which proved very interesting.

Arranged marriages, Muslim divorce and the notion of Jews marrying their brother's widows were all discussed as well as same-sex marriage which most of the Christian groups are fairly comfortable with. The Unitarian Chapel where the meeting was held was the first Church in Surrey to obtain a license for such marriages but have not been called upon to perform one yet. This would not be possible within the Muslim and Bahá'í communities.

Modern Hindu families were reported to still be opting for arranged marriages, with sometimes one sibling finding a partner through work or studies and then seeking their parent's blessings whilst another will ask their family to introduce a suitable life partner. Bahá'ís must also seek their parents' permission before marrying the person of their choice in order to start out in unity. Bahá'í marriage is for Eternity, not 'Until Death do us part' with partners being responsible for the spiritual development of one another in preparation for the afterlife.

Reported by Carolyn Neogi

(Bahai representative of the Guildford and Godalming Interfaith Forum)

World Interfaith Harmony Week – first week of February

World Interfaith Harmony Week is a UN recognised Week which takes place each year during the first week of February. WIFW was proposed at the UN General Assembly on 2010 by HM King Abdullah II of Jordan and adopted by the UN. It is based on the work of the Common Word initiative which started in 2007 and called for Muslim and Christian leaders to engage in a dialogue based on two common fundamental religious Commandments - Love of God, and Love of the Neighbour - without compromising any of their own religious tenets. Events can be registered on the website www.worldinterfaithharmonyweek.com

Woking People of Faith have organised an event for World Interfaith Harmony Week, please see page 7

Fairtrade Fortnight – 24 February to 9 March

Fairtrade is about better prices, decent working conditions, local sustainability and fair terms of trade for farmers and workers in the developing world. The Fairtrade Foundation's vision is of "a world in which justice and sustainable development are at the heart of trade structures and practices so that everyone, through their work, can maintain a decent and dignified livelihood and develop their full potential". Information on Fairtrade Fortnight can be found at <http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/>.

Information on how faith communities and places of worship can get involved can be found at <http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/en/get-involved/in-your-community/faith-groups>.

Islam Awareness Week – 16 to 22 March

The theme for the 2015 Week is 'Give a little of yourself'. Further information about Islam Awareness Week can be found online at <http://www.iaw.org.uk/pages/page.php?id=home>.

Faith & belief news

- [Paris anti-terror rally: all religions, ages and nations in massive show of unity](#)
- [Charlie Hebdo: Muslim police officer killed in Paris attack commemorated with #JeSuisAhmed](#)
- [#JeSuisJuif: Twitter Stands In Solidarity With Paris Jews As Second Siege Unfolds At Kosher Supermarket](#)
- [This Muslim Man Saved Several Hostages During The Paris Kosher Market Siege](#)
- [Interfaith Friendship Is the Boldest Way to Defy Extremists](#)
- [Muslims and Jews Should Work Together Now More Than Ever](#)
- [Women keep the faith as majority of men say they do not believe in God](#)
- [Thousands of Hindus arrive at holy water to celebrate Magh Mela](#)
- [Holocaust Memorial Day: thousands to mark 70 years since Auschwitz liberation](#)
- [Why we all need Holocaust Memorial Day](#)

Muslims and The Holocaust

Read about the tremendous courage and bravery shown by Muslims in protecting Jews during the Holocaust:

<http://imamsonline.com/blog/muslims-and-the-holocaust/>



Communities Working Together: Holocaust Memorial Day

Read Dr Qari Asim's piece on the importance of interfaith unity between different communities:

<http://imamsonline.com/blog/communities-working-together-holocaust-memorial-day/>

EHRC to produce new legal guidance on freedom of expression

The Equality and Human Rights Commission has announced that (on 3 February) it will be publishing new legal guidance on freedom of expression. In explaining the context, it says that "Following the recent tragic deaths in Paris, there has been considerable debate both nationally and internationally about free speech. Freedom of expression is a fundamental right which is essential for democracy, a free media and political, artistic and scientific development." The guidance will explain that a) there are legitimate ways the state restrains what can be said but the test for curtailing freedom of expression in law is a stringent one, and much that is offensive is still legal; and b) Freedom of expression can however be restricted in certain circumstances (for example, where it incites violence against others or promotes hatred based on the colour of someone's skin or their sexual orientation or their religion).

Further information: www.equalityhumanrights.com/search/site/freedom%20of%20expression

MPs express support for high quality Religious Education

MPs from across the main political parties took part in an All Party Parliamentary Group event to publicise their belief that good RE should be available for all young people. They discussed the subject and its value for modern life with a team of Young Ambassadors for RE, students at St Bede's School in Cambridge. Further information can be found on the RE Council website at <http://religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk/public-engagement/news/2015-01-28/mps-publicise-their-support-for-high-quality-re>

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

COMMUNITY FOUNDATION FOR SURREY

The Foundation is currently keen to receive applications from organisations in the following areas:

- Groups supporting people at a time of crisis, such as survivors of domestic abuse or addiction or those with mental health issues;
- Established charities and social enterprises seeking one-off sustainable investment to support an expansion or strategic organisational development to increase impact;
- Groups taking steps to support people affected by flooding;
- Small volunteer-led community groups which conserve or improve the wildlife value of an area and/or raise awareness of and access to the environment.

If you wish to apply to the Foundation please complete an expression of interest form on their website:

<http://www.cfsurrey.org.uk/apply-funding/apply-grant/groups/donor-funds> where you can also find more information about their funding and application process. Please note that meetings are held monthly to consider applications so you can apply at any time.

BIG LOTTERY – new funding – Power to Change

The Big Lottery Fund has awarded a £150m endowment to the Power to Change. This is a new independent grant-making foundation that will champion community businesses across England. The Power to Change will be the largest Trust of its kind in Europe and will give funding and support to existing and new community businesses. Examples of support from The Power to Change could be for local people who want to save their local library or leisure centre, run their community shop or pub, or start new enterprises to regenerate a neighbourhood or high street. Full details of the eligibility for the grants is not yet available but it is understood that it will be released later this year.

The trust will operate an initial grants programme, Call for Community Business Champions, for existing community businesses already making a difference in their local communities and groups can register their interest here. You can find out more at <http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/powertochange>

Strengthening Faith Institutions

The Department for Communities and Local Government is inviting bids from organisations to run a £400,000 programme to help strengthen and support faith institutions. The programme aims to help strengthen and support faith institutions in a number of ways including, providing training on key topics for faith institutions and consultancy-style support for those facing specific challenges. Bids are welcomed from 30 January – 2 March. Further information can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-strengthening-faith-institutions-programme-now-open-for-bids>

O2 Think Big

O2 Think Big is looking to find young people with great ideas and help them turn their ideas into reality. This is done by awarding funding and delivering training and support. Projects have to help the community or tackle a problem with society. Projects that only help one person will not be accepted. Beyond that, applicants can do everything or anything - in fact the more bold and creative the ideas, the better. There are two levels and applicants must start a level 1 before being invited to level 2. The deadline for applications is 11th March 2015. Individuals or groups between the ages of 13 and 25 can apply for, and run, a project; however, people of any age can get involved by becoming fans or members of the project in the UK. More information on this funding and how to apply can be found at: <http://www.o2thinkbig.co.uk/>

UPCOMING EVENTS

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

ADHD - myth or reality?

A talk by Dr Sethu Wariyar; Consultant Paediatrician, St Peters Hospital

Come along and hear about ADHD – what it is and where you can go for advice and help and strategies to use. Suitable for teachers: other professionals, parents and for anyone else who wants to know a little bit more on this topic!

Friday 6th February at 4.30pm until 6pm

Parkview Centre for the Community

Blackmore Crescent, Woking, GU21 5NZ

To book and for further information contact Bob Morgan,
bob.morgan@woking.gov.uk 01483743340



Religious Extremism is a virtue or a vice

Saturday 7th February, 3 – 5pm

At the Beacon Café, Christ Church, Woking, GU21 6YG

There will be three presentations (different faith perspectives), discussion time, refreshments in the café and questions to the panel. Entry is free – refreshments will be sold at the Beacon Café.

Misunderstanding and lack of information feeds fear, prejudice and emotive reporting in an increasingly tense international context. This gathering is one space in which to listen, learn, discuss, offer opinions and explore issues of faith, fundamentalism, violence, spirituality and the health/well-being of society generally but particularly the well-being of our own community in Woking Borough.

For more information please contact: Rev Pippa Ross-McCabe, Coordinator

www.wpof.org.uk, E: coordinator@wpof.org.uk

M: 07986342355, T: 01932 342374



Living with Dementia

Wednesday 11 February 2015 , 10 am—1pm

Bourne Hall, Spring St, Ewell, Surrey, KT17 1UF

Come along to our event dedicated to people with dementia, their carers and families. We will be providing practical help and advice for people living and working with dementia.

Book your place today! Call 01372 216 158 , engage@sabp.nhs.uk, Text 07775 220 205

Please let us know in advance if you have any special requirements.

Everyone is welcome, do bring a friend!

Surrey and Borders Partnership 
NHS Foundation Trust

THE FIGHT IN THE DOG BY RIB DAVIS

A public reading by members and friends of Woking Community Play Association.

A play about the First World War 21st February, 7.45pm Trinity Methodist Church Brewery Road Woking.

Free entry with collection on the door.

WOKING COMMUNITY PLAY ASSOCIATION LTD Registered Charity No. 1010788

For more information contact Anna Molesworth on 07903943616. Or email a.molesworth@ntlworld.com.

50th Anniversary of Woking Quakers

2015 is the 50th anniversary of Woking Quakers having their own building and a recognised meeting in Woking. On 17 May Paul Parker the Recording Clerk roughly the Chief Executive of Quakers in Britain will speak about Quakers today at 2pm.

People from other faiths will be invited to attend. For more information please contact Keith Scott: keithsc_2000@yahoo.com



Council of Christians and Jews in Staines
We are Jews and Christians Meeting Together
ccj.org.uk/staines

Protecting Children Online is the theme at the February meeting of a local Jewish-Christian interfaith group. The Staines and District branch of the Council of Christians and Jews (CCJ) has invited Miranda Suit of the Safer Media for a Safer Society charity to speak on Wednesday 25th February at Staines Synagogue. Safer Media campaigns, lobbies, educates and raises awareness about potentially harmful and offensive material on the internet and print media.

Its recent campaign SafetyNet, run in conjunction with Premier Christian Media, has called for internet service providers to block pornography at network level, so adults have to opt-in to view it.

Everyone is welcome at CCJ's meetings which start at 8pm. There is no entry charge but donations are invited towards CCJ's work.

Staines Synagogue is at Westbrook Road, Staines, TW18 4PR.

Another date to note is April 23 when distinguished American academic and author Rabbi David Zucker, currently serving North West Surrey Synagogue at Weybridge as interim rabbi, will speak on a Jewish understanding of Isaiah's Suffering Servant Songs.

To find out more call us on 01252 622978 or email ccjstaines@gmail.com.

More information: www.ccj.org.uk/staines

WOKING DEBATES 2015

Saturday 14th February, 11:00am to 12:30pm

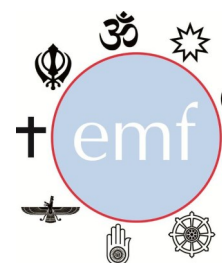
What future for the National Health Service?

Dr Louise Irvine, a founder member of the National Health Action Party and chair of the Save Lewisham Hospital Campaign, will be opening the discussion on another of the major issues of this General Election season. As usual, there will be ample opportunity for local residents to share their views on this important topic. Entrance is free.

Saturday 28th March: Should the UK replace Trident? With Dr Frank Boulton of Medact

The Woking Debates are organised by Woking Action for Peace, Churches Together in Woking, Friends of the Earth, LA21, Quakers, Surrey Faith Links, Transition Towns, Woking People of Faith.

For more information please contact Keith Scott: keithsc_2000@yahoo.com or 01483 824980

**" ACT OF UNITY"**

Date: Tuesday 17th March, Time: 7.30 pm

Venue: Thames Ditton Village Hall, Mercer Close.

Speakers from different faiths will share Readings on the Sanctity of life. More information to come in the next newsletter or please contact:

Geoff: geoffreymorris@emas-bc.co.uk

"Are we what we eat?"

Food, the Environment and Peace in the world....how are they linked?

Main speaker: Joyce D'Silva of Compassion in World Farming.

Tuesday, April 14th at 7.00 pm for 7.30 pm at St Jospeh's Church, York Road, Guildford

Guildford & Godalming Interfaith Forum is an informal group of people interested in interfaith. It exists to promote understanding and friendship among people of all Faiths and none.

For more information contact : tel 01483 424257 or 01483 415773, www.spanglefish.com/gginterfaithforum

ASK Topical Lunches

Spring 2015

Thursday 16 April: Cllr Kevin Davis, Leader of the Royal Borough of Kingston
Kingston is getting bigger - The challenge of keeping it better

Lunch from 12:15 pm – Special £4.50 meal deal at the new ASK East End Cafe; or bring your own sandwiches.
Introduction by speaker 1:00 – 1:15 pm Questions, comments, discussion. Finish 1:45 pm

For further information, contact Leslie Packer E: leslie@packerhome.fsnet.co.uk or 020 8549 1960

“Why is secularism important in the UK today?”

Sunday February 15th at 7.30pm
Daniel Hall, Long Garden Walk, Farnham, GU9 7HX

Everyone is welcome!!
Do come along and join in the discussion.

Talk by Secular Lawyer
Sadikur Rahman

Sadikur was the first to bring to public attention the Law Society’s discriminatory guidance on how to write compliant sharia wills which the Law Society has now apologised for and withdrawn. He will discuss the National Secular Society and his personal journey towards secularism.

This talk follows Farnham Humanists short AGM.

Admission £2 to cover costs. Tea and coffee with other drinks available from the Hop Blossom Pub close by.

Hosted by **farnhamHUMANISTS** 
Enquiries: 01252 723044 www.farnham.humanist.org.uk

The place of Faith in British Schools

Conference organised by the South East England Faith Forum (SEEFF)

Date: Thursday 3 September.

Venue: Stripe Centre at Winchester University (Easy access from the city and plenty of parking.)

Speakers will be professionals in the field of religious education, parents of school age children, trainers of RE teachers, faith leaders.

There will be time to discuss issues such as ~The Birmingham and Portsmouth Trojan Horse accusations, ~Fundamentalism, ~Grooming” etc.

The Talks and discussions will be from 10.00 am to 4.00 pm with a Vegetarian lunch available. At 4.15 the AGM of SEEFF will be held to look at our finances and future direction of our work.

Further details will be provided in the next newsletter.



Surrey Faith Links c/o CET, Diocese of Guildford

Diocesan House, Quarry Street, Guildford, GU1 3XG

T: 01483 790334, E: Kauser.Akhtar@cofeguildford.org.uk



Designed & Edited by:
Kauser Akhtar