



**Connecting  
Faith  
In the  
South East**

## CONNECTING FAITH IN THE SOUTH EAST

### A PACK OF RESOURCES

#### FOR

### FAITH ENGAGEMENT & UNDERSTANDING

In addition to its introduction, this Resource Pack Folder has four sections. They all relate to the one “Mapping and Religious Literacy” exercise, but they can also be used as separate, stand-alone documents.

#### RESOURCE PACK SECTIONS & CONTENTS

##### 1. INTRODUCTION

Linking with “*Face to Face and Side by Side*”

##### 2. UNDERSTANDING EACH OTHER

Helping dialogue between SE faith communities and government, the public and third sectors.

##### 3. CELEBRATING DIVERSITY

A contribution of faith in communities.

Tables listing Inter-Faith Groups & The Four Blocks - Actions

##### 4. STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP FAITH LINKS

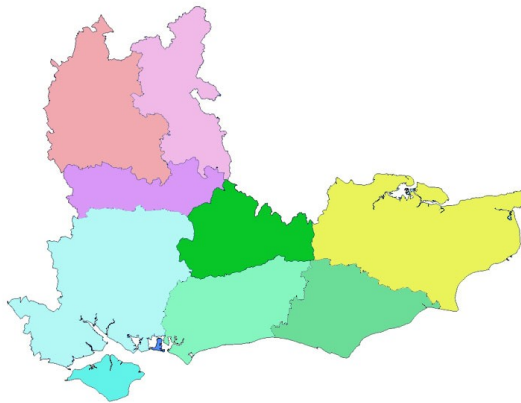
Strategic Partnerships, Local Authorities and Faith organisations.

##### 5. MOVING FORWARD & FINDING OUT MORE

Further actions, research and finding out more.

This pack of resources may be downloaded from the SEEFF website:

[www.se-faithforum.net](http://www.se-faithforum.net)



The 2001 Census of England & Wales noted that the population of the South East Region was just over 8 million.

In the previous ten years it had grown by 6.7% and it continues to grow and with increasing diversity.

Of these people over 76% (about 6,080,500) recorded that they had a religion.

16.5% said they had no religion and 7.6% didn't say whether or not they had one.

Of those who indicated that they had "a faith", 73% were Christian; 0.3% Buddhist; 0.56% Hindu; 0.24% Jewish; 1.36% Muslim; 0.47% Sikh; and 0.36% Other Religions.

There are seventy-four local authorities in The South East (7 Counties, 12 Unitaries and 55 Districts. Among them there are 68 Strategic Partnerships and 56% have a Faith-Link person (38 out of 68).

There are 40 Inter-Faith Networks and 11 Councils of Christians & Jews.

There are about three thousand local faith groups, mainly covering the six World Religions, and each one part of a wide variety of infrastructures depending on their religion and denomination.

## INTRODUCTION

*“Inter-Faith activity” suggests meaningful interactions between people from different faith communities and between faith communities and wider civil society.*

So said the introduction to the Department of Communities and Local Government (CLG) “Face to Face and Side by Side” consultation in December 2007.

Its name was suggested by Sir Jonathan Sacks, The Chief Rabbi, who distinguished between “face-to-face” and “side-by-side” relationships: two of the main components of Inter-Faith activity.

“Face-to-face”: relates to dialogue which leads to faith communities having a better understanding of one another, including celebrating the values held in common as well as acknowledging distinctiveness.

“Side-by-side”: relates to collaborative social action (including participation in local democracy) involving different faith communities and wider civil society, which brings about positive and concrete change within local communities.

This consultation followed on from The Local Government White Paper *Strong and Prosperous Communities* which made it clear that HM Government wanted to see more local inter faith work and suggested that every local authority should have an inter faith forum, and that they should be linked closely into Local Strategic Partnerships.

The results of the consultation led to the national launch of “Face to Face and Side by Side – a framework for partnership in our multi-faith society” in July 2008. About it, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, the Rt. Hon Hazel Blears MP, said *“I am proud to live in a society where people of faith, and those of none, can come together as equals. I do not believe that government should be afraid of working with faith based organisations. Instead, we should provide opportunities for people of faith to come together and do more of the great work that many already do... The framework sets out how, over the next three years, we will support a stronger dialogue between people of different faiths and beliefs in every community and encourage the kind of practical inter faith cooperation that can make pleasant and harmonious neighbourhoods for all.”*

This is true for the South East as well as all the other regions in the country.

It is something that SEEFF, The South East England Faith Forum, also believes in and seeks to encourage in all parts of its region.

It has been witnessed to this for several years and particularly so in its 2004 report, *Beyond Belief*.

But “*coming together as equals*” and “*not being afraid of working with faith-based organisations*” cannot happen without knowledge and know-how.

In the summer of 2008, SEEFF, supported by CLG, set about asking questions and gathering information about faith relationships in the South East.

- How many and where are the Inter-Faith Networks in the Region?
- How many and which Local Strategic Partnerships have active faith-links?
- Which faith communities are represented and where are they spread around the region?
- How well do faith communities and other civil bodies, particularly local authorities, understand each other?

This “mapping” and “religious literacy” exercise was undertaken on behalf of SEEFF by The Department for Social Responsibility of The Church of England Diocese of Guildford.

The Inter-Faith Network mapping work has been done by Elizabeth Clark and the Religious Literacy work by Richard Hay. David Tonkinson has mapped the Strategic Partnership and Faith-Links and compiled the Report.

Helpful advice and assistance has been given by the three key regional bodies: The Government Office of the South East (GOSE), The South East England Development Agency (SEEDA) and RAISE (Regional Action and Involvement in the South East).

We thank most sincerely the research partners and all those who have responded so willingly.

The information in this report is, of course, dynamic. It will keep changing and we hope that people and organisations will keep SEEFF up to date. This can be most easily achieved through its website.

The information gathered here will help to identify the areas to concentrate on in order to address the actions suggested in the Three Principles and Four Building Blocks of the *Face-to-Face and Side-by-Side Framework*.

This work also provides a good foundation for further work to research the economic and social impact of faith in the South East.

It will also help to guide SEEFF's ongoing development in terms of its governance and the scope of its influence in the Region.

David Tonkinson

Guildford

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