

# Inter-faith Week 2011

## Events Round Up

South East England



# Inter-faith Week 2011

**The first Inter-Faith Week** during 2009 was a huge success and described by onlookers, not necessarily claiming to be of a faith tradition, with words like; “Ingenuity, enthusiasm, energy and a real heart for people and community”. November 2010 heralded the second Inter-Faith Week where the success of the first year was built upon with ingenuity and freshness. This round-up gives a flavour of the many events held across the South East in the three Sub-regional areas which South East England Faiths Forum (SEEFF) work to:

**Thames Valley** (Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Milton Keynes, West Berkshire, Reading, Wokingham, Bracknell Forest, Windsor & Maidenhead, Slough)

**Central** (Surrey, Hampshire, Isle of Wight)

**Eastern** (Kent, East & West Sussex, Brighton & Hove, Medway)

People of Faith are great contributors to communities across the UK. During 2010 SEEFF launched its report ‘The Hidden Contribution?’ of the economic impact of Faith across SE England. This shows an economic contribution to the economy of at least £328 million and around 70% of all social care volunteers. The economic report and the events of Inter-Faith Week underline the commitment and enthusiasm of people of faith celebrating the diversity of faith, love for people and a wish to work for a vibrant, accepting and inclusive society.

I commend this round-up as a flavour of the vitality of Inter-faith work across the South East and would like to thank all those who organized events and the thousands that attended. Alongside the events co-ordinated under the auspices of SEEFF, working with the network of Inter-faith fora and faith groups across the South East of England,

I would like to commend the SEEFF annual conference on 11 April 2011 at the University of Surrey, Guildford picking on the theme ‘Faith & the Big Society’. I hope to see you there.



Chris Rich  
Chair, South East England Faiths Forum  
Director, Dept. for Social Responsibility, Diocese of Guildford



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# Subregion: Central

(Surrey, Hampshire, Isle of Wight)



## Launch of Interfaith Week

**Organisation:** Guildford & Godalming Interfaith Forum

**Date:** November

**Venue:** St. Nicolas Parish Room, Guildford

**Link:** [www.spanglefish.com/interfaithfriendsinsurrey](http://www.spanglefish.com/interfaithfriendsinsurrey)

This Multifaith event featured contributions from members of the Interfaith Forum and other groups in the area. Rev. Jan Moore, spoke about facets of her work as a multifaith chaplain with Surrey Police. The Mayors of Guildford, Godalming & Waverley were also in attendance.



Rev. Jan Moore

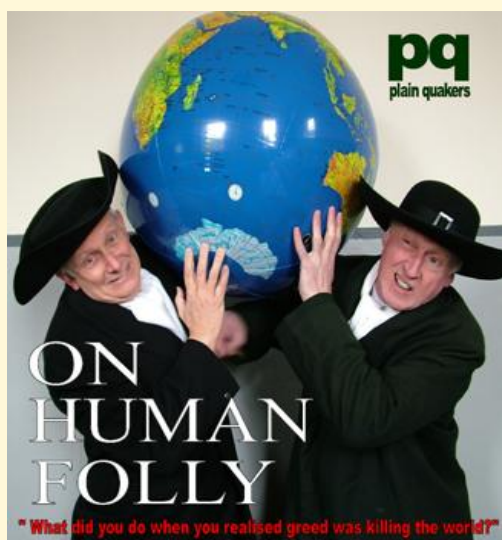
## On Human Folly

**Organisation:** Woking Quakers

**Date:** Sunday 21 November

**Venue:** Friends Meeting House, Woking

**Link:** [www.wokingquakers.org/more.html](http://www.wokingquakers.org/more.html)



As our contribution to Interfaith Week, we have invited the Plain Quakers theatre company to come and perform their two-man play, 'On Human Folly'. The play, which was performed at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in 2008 and toured nationally and internationally, challenges contemporary values; can we stop getting and spending long enough to think of the consequences of our thoughtlessness? Do we have too much 'stuff'? Is being green really the answer? There are no sermons, but a good story, some jokes, and some painful decisions.

## Understanding Each Other's Faith and Beliefs

**Organisation:** Surrey Minority Ethnic Forum

**Date:** Tuesday 23 November

**Venue:** Astolat, Guildford

**Link:** [www.smef.org.uk](http://www.smef.org.uk)

Because the core job of the Forum is to be the voice of minority ethnic people in Surrey, the development and articulation of that collective voice is what we hope to build on. As 21st to 27th November 2010 marked the nation's Inter-Faith week, we at SMEF couldn't think of a better way to do it than through understanding each other's faith and beliefs.

We recognise that faith communities have been at the heart of civic society for centuries, making a vital contribution to national life, guiding the moral outlook of many, providing solace and comfort to those in desperate need, binding communities and providing support to one another.

Members of the Forum gathered together on Tuesday 23rd November at Astolat in Guildford to celebrate and share their faith. The event was aimed at understanding each other's faiths and acknowledging and celebrating the vital contribution that faith communities make. Indeed we often come to understand and appreciate our own faith more when we are called upon to explain it to one another.

Our guest of honour was Reverend Sir John Alleyne, who is from the Diocese of Guildford's, Department of Social Responsibility. John also leads Guildford Refugee Action and the work that he has done to raise awareness on the plight of refugees and asylum seekers is inspirational. Meeting John restores one's faith in humanity, especially at this difficult time when the economic recession has hit the world and equality and diversity are made to feel less of a priority. He gave us a warm and welcoming talk about his feelings on faith, in particular its ability to create unity, regardless of which faith group a person may belong to.



Rev. Sir John Alleyne

Six different community groups attended: Gypsies and Travellers, Pakistanis, Indians, the Nepalese, Africans, Italians and people of the Baha'i faith, each of whom shared stories with the group about their faith and how that faith motivates them to do voluntary work. A map of Surrey was displayed on the wall and each speaker placed their faith symbol on the map to give us an idea of where faith-based activity is taking place in the county.

Ann and Michael from the Gypsy community spoke about the born-again Christian Gypsy Church they belong to. Grace and Victoria from the African community spoke about their Upper Room Ministries congregation. Bhagawan from the Nepalese community spoke of the varied faiths followed by the Nepali people. Bridget from our British and Italian community spoke of the Catholic faith. Shaheen and Naheed from the Pakistani community spoke of the Muslim faith. Rekha and Aparna from the Hindu community spoke of their faith. Carolyn and Bibhas from the Baha'i community spoke of their faith.

Cont....

Suzanne Akram, Development Manager for SMEF, gave a warm welcome to the gathering and invited everyone to share their views openly throughout the event. As talks drew to a close, Suzanne encouraged the new-found friends to stay on to join together for refreshments.

We at SMEF would like to extend warm thanks to all those who attended, particularly those who shared their stories with us. The feeling amongst the group was that the event was positive and beneficial, Bibhas Neogi from the Baha'i community remarked, 'It was encouraging to see so many people thinking alike on Peace and Unity!'

A gallery of photographs from the afternoon can be found <http://smef.org.uk/news/343>



Members of Elmbridge Interfaith Forum, Guildford Interfaith Forum & Waverley Faith Forum visit Woking Mosque

## Faith and Networking in Eastleigh

**Organisation:** Eastleigh Asian Welfare & Cultural Association / Eastleigh Borough Council / Hampshire Interfaith Network

**Date:** Monday 22 November

**Venue:** Church of the Holy Cross, Eastleigh

A free event was hosted giving an opportunity for faith leaders and individuals to appreciate how faith plays its role in people's lives in Eastleigh and spoke about the key celebrations in the calendar year for the Asian Welfare and Cultural Association members.

## Havant Gathering of Faiths

**Organisation:** Havant Council of Community Services / Community First East Hants / Hampshire County Council / Hampshire Interfaith Network

**Date:** Monday 22 November

**Venue:** The Emsworth Centre, Emsworth

**Link:** [www.hants-interfaith.org](http://www.hants-interfaith.org)

A free event, open to all was jointly hosted by several groups. Representatives of different faith communities in Havant and East Hants gave short, informal talks about their beliefs.

## Protecting Planet Earth World Café (for 16 to 25 yr old)

**Organisation:** Hampshire Interfaith Network / Winchester University / Hampshire County Council / Winchester Action on Climate Change

**Date:** Saturday 27 November

**Venue:** University of Winchester

**Link:** [www.hants-interfaith.org](http://www.hants-interfaith.org)

A free day of fun, food and shared concern, as young people of faith from across Hampshire gathered in Winchester's World Café to explore the threat of climate change. Leaving with the challenge of finding ways to help others save the planet.

## Fourth Annual Hampshire Interfaith Lecture

**Organisation:** Hampshire Interfaith Network

**Date:** Thursday 25 November

**Venue:** The Castle, Winchester

**Link:** [www.hants-interfaith.org](http://www.hants-interfaith.org)

The objective of the Hampshire Interfaith Network Lecture is the continued promotion of inter-faith understanding, enhancing harmony between faiths for the benefit of the people of Hampshire. With an ideal opportunity to network on the night.

The Guest Speaker is the Bishop of Winchester, and after his lecture on "Respect, Collaboration and Mystery" guests had a question and answer opportunity before the close of the evening.

## Church Invites Wessex Madressah

**Organisation:** The Wessex Shia Ithna Asheri Jamaat

**Date:** November

**Venue:** St Nicholas Church, Wickham



The Wessex Shia Ithna Asheri Jamaat arranged for several activities to observe the National Interfaith week 2010.

Following from a successful October event 'Bridging with Neighbours in the Wickham Community'. Members of Wessex Jamaat joined hands in friendship with the residents of Wickham village for an event titled 'Bridging Wickham'. The event arose as a result of dialogue between the leaders from the local St. Nicholas Anglican Church, Catholic Church, the Wickham Parish and AL MAHDI Centre. By organising this event, Wessex Jamaat and St Nicholas Church strove to build links as neighbours.



In November the Jamaat was invited to bring its young people to the St Nicholas Church, Wickham to participate in "The Big Draw". The theme of the draw was "First 10 Years of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century in Wickham." The annual event works to raise the profile of drawing and promotes it as a tool for thought, creativity, social and cultural engagement. Pat Fray, the local organiser in Wickham said: "It was a delight to have the young people of the Muslim community to come and share their thoughts through art as to what it means to be part of the Wickham Community. Such events enable greater understanding, more social cohesion and friendships." This was the first time that Wessex Jamaat had participated in this event, credit goes to Pat Fray for taking the lead in organising this. Over 20 youths of Wessex Madrasah participated with their parents.



Tahir Salim Kanani, one of the participants said: "We were invited to start off with the drawings which would then be put upon the walls of the church to remember the diversity of faiths in our area. Everybody was drawing items related to Islam and our new Al-Mahdi mosque. There were children and adults joining in as well. I saw some great pictures drawn by all ages including our present mosque, sketches of our new mosque, a colourful picture of the word Allah, and a great picture of the Ka'bah. Half way through the drawing session, we stopped for Dhuhrayn salaah. So we entered the meeting room and said our salaah in congregation. After that, we carried on with our colourful drawings." He concluded by saying: "It was a very fun day for the community to come together with another faith and we really enjoyed ourselves. We were glad that we had taken the first step into a good relationship with another community who were really close by to us. This was also a good opportunity to learn more about the diversity of faiths in our area and for us to try and raise awareness for our new AL MAHDI project."

The Resident Alim Sheikh Fazle Abbas Dato commented: "This is one of the outcomes of success from the Bridging Wickham Project. Experiences like this expand the horizons of our children. We get an insight into their understanding of our faith. I am thankful to Pat Fray for her hospitality and to the St Nicholas Church for giving us a place to pray our Dhuhrayn salaah. May the organisers be rewarded for their efforts to bring communities to-

## Inter-faith Matters

**Organisation:** Woking People of Faith

**Date:** Wednesday 24 November

**Venue:** Bedlam Theatre Woking College, Woking



Peer Productions and Woking People of Faith presented 'Inter Faith Matters' an evening of drama, discussion, learning, food and friendship. Woking's Local Youth Theatre company 'Peer Productions' worked with *Woking People of Faith* to create three dramatic sketches on inter faith issues as part of our Inter Faith Week Celebrations .

The sketches looked at the effects of the media's portrayal of faith groups, what faith means for young people in the current culture and finding commonalities between faiths. Each sketch was followed by group discussion from the audience.

The production was excellent: creative, amusing and thought provoking. The professionalism of the young cast was outstanding. One participant commented 'Brilliant, I thought the drama and discussion was thought-provoking and valuable. On top it is great to hear the actors were challenged through working with this material, and they too wrestled with the issues in their production.' Another said 'Drama was a most effective vehicle for highlighting ideas and issues and opening up communications'.



The Talented Young Cast of 'Peer Productions' presenting 'Inter Faith Matters'

## Coffee-House Conversations

**Organisation:** Woking People of Faith

**Date:** Saturday 27 November

**Venue:** Mercia Walk, Woking Town Centre



Free Coffee! People of all ages met in an informal setting while chatting with people of other faiths about living in Woking as a person of faith. New friends and acquaintances talked about what faith meant to them and shared ideas about how faith groups are serving the community. Enjoying informal discussion about faith and culture.



Woking People of Faith hosts welcomed participants to informal conversation and free hot drinks in Woking Town Centre.

Refreshments at each event provided invaluable opportunities to chat, make new friends and learn about one another's faith and cultures



## Inter-Faith Forum on Faith Awareness

**Organisation:** Inter-faith Forum at HMP Kingston

**Date:** Thursday 25 November

**Venue:** HMP Kingston

Held during Prisons' Week and Inter-Faith Week 2010 Thursday 25 November. The calculatedly ambivalent title "Faith and Religion Matters" was noted by some and justified as 'both-and', not 'either-or.' The event was attended by 21 prisoners with key questions:

- What are the good things about religion?
- What are the bad things?
- How are our perceptions formed? Are they correct or unbalanced?
- How may we live together with honesty, openness and respect towards others' with different or opposing beliefs?
- Is that what our Christian, Muslim, Sikh or other religion requires we do?

Invited guests included 3 Imams; our locum Muslim chaplain, plus 2 Imams from Portsmouth Central Mosque (recently attacked by some locals in reaction to more distant 'poppy' burnings), our Sikh chaplain, Ephrat Miller a Bahai from the Portsmouth Inter-Faith Network, Wanda Nash from the Hants Three-Faiths Forum/Inter Faith Network, and our Free Churches p/t chaplain Eric Massey.

In her report of seven Inter-Faith week events in which she participated, Mrs Nash writes: "This was the event which carried the most surprise, openness and personal authenticity of all. About 21 people gathered in the Chapel of HMP Kingston where most of the men are serving life-sentences. The Co-ordinating Chaplain used part of a powerpoint training package "Faith Awareness" designed by the Chaplaincy Service for prison staff-training. Discussion and reflection in small groups was followed by plenary feedback and open forum. Perhaps it was the intensity of emotion and self-realisation that the inmates (sic) had had to confront in their own lives, but the eagerness and honesty of their responses were astonishing. They didn't interrupt nor compete with each other, but everyone spoke with sincerity and often, profundity. They were all ready to respect each others' differences, and welcomed variations of opinion. If only all Inter-Faith encounters would emulate this-!!"

Ephrat Miller from Portsmouth Inter-Faith Network wrote: "I found the discussions, comments and insights shared throughout the afternoon both thought-provoking and moving. I was wondering whether you are planning to hold this kind of event on a regular basis. It seemed that everyone really appreciated the opportunity to discuss these fundamental and spiritual matters. I would be delighted to assist in organising/participating.

Paul Newman  
Anglican & Co-ordinating Chaplain  
HMP Kingston



# Subregion: Thames Valley

(Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Milton Keynes, West Berkshire, Reading, Wokingham, Bracknell Forest, Windsor & Maidenhead, Slough)



## Interfaith Walk

**Organisation:** Interfaith MK

**Date:** Saturday 20 November

**Venue:** Start at Reform Synagogue, Milton Keynes

**Link:** [www.interfaithmk.org.uk](http://www.interfaithmk.org.uk)

An Interfaith Walk for Peace and Harmony was planned to take place on Saturday 20th November, starting at the Reform Synagogue in Giffard Park and finishing at the Shia Granby Mosque, calling at a number of places of worship en-route. The full distance of around 8 miles. People were free to join and leave the walk as they wished. There was a planned lunch stop at the Buddhist Temple.

The aim of the walk was:

- 1) to publicise National Inter-faith Week, 21st – 28th November
- 2) to witness to the importance and variety of religious faith in the lives of large numbers of people in Milton Keynes
- 3) to display the respect which people of faith hold towards people who hold a different faith
- 4) to promote friendship and understanding between people of different faiths
- 5) to engage in some shared spiritual activity where this is thought appropriate



## Faiths Coming Together in Celebration

**Organisation:** Network of Sikh Organisation / Wokingham Borough Council / Ramgarhia Sikh temple and Wokingham Interfaith Network

**Date:** Saturday 20 November

**Venue:** Ramgarhia Sabha Sikh Centre, Earley

**Link:** Wokingham Interfaith Network

Wokingham Borough Interfaith Network, funded by Wokingham Borough ChangeUp Consortium, launched Inter-Faith Week 2010 with its *"Faiths coming together in celebration"* event. The Ramgarhia Sabha Sikh Centre in Earley hosted the hugely



enjoyable event for a second year. Ramgarhia Sabha's Mr. Surjit Singh Jutla chaired the evening's full and inclusive interfaith programme and the Deputy Mayor of Wokingham Borough, Councillor Bob Wyatt, launched the event. The evening's keynote speakers Dr. Indarjit Singh CBE, (President of the National Sikh Organisation) and Reverend Canon David Hodgson (All Saints Church, Wokingham and the Local Strategic Partnership Interfaith Representative) gave memorable and thought provoking talks in celebration of what

interfaith diversity means and why it's important to work together across faiths for greater understanding and unity. In total, six faith groups (Bahá'í, Christian, Hindu, Muslim, Christian and Sikh) presented their perspective of sameness over difference and the importance of finding common ground through faith. There was an opportunity to ask the speakers questions. The highly successful evening was extremely well attended with around eighty people of all ages celebrating together. The evening drew to its close with a delicious hot vegetarian supper prepared by members of Ramgarhia Sabha.

Mel Cox

Voluntary Action Wokingham Borough

## Tree Planting on Cumnor Hill

**Organisation:** Oxford Jewish Community with Oxford Church of England community

**Date:** Sunday 21 November

**Venue:** Cumnor Hill, Oxford



As part of Mitzvah Day community event with Faith Communities of Oxford were invited to plant trees on the community land on Cumnor Hill. The afternoons event was open to all people of faith to share in returning to community, the benefits given to us all.

## Abraham (Ibrahim), The Father of Faiths

**Organisation:** Faith Anchor of Renaissance Readers Club UK (see Slough Faith Partnership report below)

**Date:** Tuesday 23 November

**Venue:** Stoke Poges Mosque, Slough

Brief talks by Arshas Gamiet and Dr Henna Khan about Prophet Abraham's position in various faiths followed by discussion and light refreshments.

## Slough Faith Partnership's National Interfaith Week Events

**Organisation:** Slough Faith Partnership

**Date:** November 2010

**Venue:** The Centre Farnham Road Slough/various

**Link:** [www.sloughfaithpartnership.org.uk](http://www.sloughfaithpartnership.org.uk)

Interfaith Week in Slough were organised by Slough Faith Partnership, with one third funding from Slough Borough Council and the remainder from private donors. The organising group comprised members of the Baha'i, Brahma Kumaris, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh communities.



A week-long exhibition was held in The Centre in Slough; each faith group and local interfaith groups were invited to exhibit throughout the week, and each faith was allocated a day to hold events at The Centre. In addition, many other events were organised across the town by individuals, faith and interfaith groups throughout the week.

The opening event was held at The Centre on Sunday afternoon, when the week was officially launched by Mayor of Slough, Cllr Jagjit Grewal. More than sixty people attended the opening, which also featured contributions from co-chairs of SFP Zafar Ali and David Sparrow, and Fiona MacTaggart MP.

At the opening event, a period of silence was kept in memory of Jo Osbourne, and the week's upcoming activities were dedicated to her memory. Jo was a passionate and tireless worker for interfaith and intercultural understanding in Slough and beyond, and a long-time supporter of Slough Faith Partnership.

Our 2010 Interfaith Week activities involved more faiths and faith groups, and have been attended by more people than in 2009. All who took part agree that this year has been an important stepping stone for interfaith understanding and cooperation in the area. We aim to build on this with early planning for our events in 2011.



**The Opening Event** The opening event of Interfaith Week was held at The Centre on Sunday afternoon, when the Week was officially launched by Mayor of Slough, Cllr Jagjit Grewal. More than sixty people attended the opening, which also featured contributions from co-chairs of SFP Zafar Ali and David Sparrow, and Fiona MacTaggart MP.



Fiona Mactaggart, MP for Slough, at the opening event

**The Week's Events** Immediately following the opening event, The Sikh community offered entertainment and Langar to coincide with the birthday of Guru Nanak Dev Ji (the 1st Guru of the Sikhs). There was singing of spiritual songs lead by a team from the Khalsa School; everyone greatly enjoyed the Langar, both at this event and throughout the week - free samosas, pakoras, sweets, fruit and drinks. The Langar was also available every day at the Ramgarhia Gurdwara and the Singh Sabha Gurdwara.



Opening Event

On **Monday**, it was the turn of the Jewish Community to host events at the exhibition space. Nigel Cohen from the Maidenhead Synagogue was on hand to explain about some of the artefacts used in Jewish prayer and worship, share information about Jewish festivals, answer questions on Jewish life and culture and discuss aspects of the Jewish faith.



Mayor of Slough and Meera Javeed of the Brahma Kumaris



Renaissance Readers discussion

On **Tuesday**, the Hindu community welcomed visitors to learn more about Hinduism. The eminent scholar Shri Pt Naresh Saraswat spoke on 'Hinduism in the 21st century', after which there were questions and discussion, and refreshments were served.



Abraham, Father of the Faiths at Stoke Poges Lane Mosque discussion

Also on **Tuesday**, the Renaissance Readers Club organised a talk and discussion between the Christian, Jewish and Muslim communities at Stoke Poges Lane Mosque on Abraham, the Father of Faiths. The event was well attended, with fruitful discussion on the shared history and tradition of faiths.

**Wednesday** saw more than thirty people of six different faiths visit the prayer labyrinth organised by the Christian faith group. The walk towards the centre is about shedding the cares of the outside world and turning towards God. The centre provides an unhurried place to be still and give yourself over to God. Coming out from the centre is about taking what has been received back out into the world. All the visitors found the labyrinth a moving experience.



**Thursday** was shared between the Buddhist and Baha'i groups. Throughout the daytime, the Buddhist group showed films about Buddhism in the Community, and answered questions on their path through life. Visitors were invited to sample a number of events taking place regularly at the SGI centre in Taplow.

**On Thursday** evening, the Baha'l group ran taster sessions of the faith's core activities. These included a study circle (theme; reflections on the life of the spirit), sample children's and young people's activities and devotional sessions that included readings from sacred writings of various faiths and discussion.



**Friday's** events were organised by the Muslim group; members of the community were on hand to answer questions on the faith, on community, on attitudes to and of British Muslims and on how faith impacts on daily life for Muslims. In the afternoon, the Renaissance Readers Club hosted a talk and discussion on faith and family as part of the 'Faith Anchor' series. Two distinguished Muslim speakers addressed the

discussion, along with Nigel Cohen of the Jewish faith and contributions from other faith representatives. On Friday evening, the Baha'l group organised a 'spiritual tea' devotional event at the Friends Meeting House, The event was very successful, an opportunity to reflect on the week's events.

On the final day (**Saturday**), the Brahma Kumaris group were on hand at the exhibition space to introduce their community and share aspects of their faith. Visitors were invited to attend regular sessions organised by the group in Langley and Windsor,

**Insight Interfaith Training** Art Beyond Belief delivered their *Insight* programme at Aylesbury prison on four days during the week. Organised in conjunction with the Chaplaincy team at the prison the sessions enabled 24 young men to explore faith and relationships, both at community and a personal level. ABB have more sessions planned for 2011.

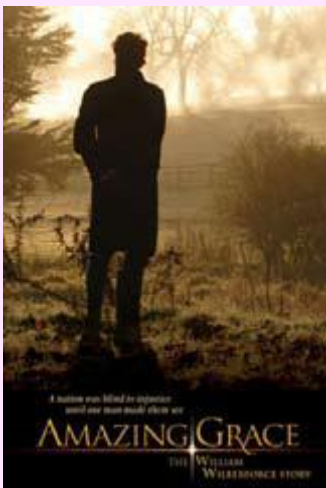
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**Thames Valley Police** During the week, the local police organised a meeting of faith leaders and staff in Slough. This was an interesting and worthwhile discussion on how to build bridges between the different faiths and the police, and overcome perceptions of the police as 'the enemy'.

**Films at West Wing** For three evenings during Interfaith Week, Art Beyond Belief, in partnership with Slough Co-operative Film Society and Slough Faith Partnership, showed three movies at the West Wing Arts Centre in Slough. The movies were chosen because they show – in completely different ways and through very different styles – the powerful effects of a personal faith. They were:

*Amazing Grace, Le Grand Voyage, Dean Spanley*

Average attendance for the three films was 14, with 29 attending in total. All reported that the films were 'excellent' or 'good'.



**Plans for next year** This year's activities have involved more faiths and faith groups, and have been attended by more people than in 2009. All who took part agree that this year has been an important stepping stone for interfaith understanding and cooperation. We aim to build on this with early planning for 2011. Suggestions include: planning from March, events over a long weekend, town centre location, larger exhibition space and wider advertising. The Faith Partnership will be looking at these and further suggestions in January, with a view to the new SFP committee starting to plan for 2011 after elections early in the year. above: coverage of the opening ceremony in the Slough Observer Thank you to Slough Borough Council and all who contributed to the success of the week.

## Yours Faithfully

### A musical evening for Oxford from the faith communities

**Organisation:** Oxford Council of Faiths

**Date:** Tuesday 23 November

**Venue:** Oxford Town Hall

**Link:** [www.oxcof.org.uk](http://www.oxcof.org.uk)



The Town Hall was again booked for an evening of entertainment from the faith communities of the city for the city, the excitement of getting there and making sure that the lights worked, that the sound system was available that the piano was in the right place. Also there was the sadness that Leslie Cowan, (our newly departed treasurer) was not there, but having two pieces of his composition to be performed in his memory during the evening.

The public arrived and the Lord Mayor opened proceedings with a speech of welcome and support for the work of OxCoF. Let the entertainment begin was the order of the day as Katy ably introduced the first act. All was going well until we needed the piano – on the opposite side from last year and therefore in almost total darkness – but a cyclist from the audience had got his flashlight and so things could carry on.



The variety was as great as ever with contributions from Sikhs and Hindus from Pagans and Christians of many traditions and singing, dancing, poetry, prayer and music. All different all absorbing for those present and then as a gift from the Quakers and Buddhists a silence – not felt as an absence but as a positive gift from those communities a something that was precious to them and could be gifted to the rest of us. Then moving on to the conclusion with everyone encouraged to join in singing Peace, Shalom, Salaam, 'let every tribe and people bring peace to the place where they dwell'; this had been the message of the evening and we hope that those who had shared it with us had appreciated this work that OxCoF does for its city.



The evening was free but a collection was taken for the work of the Save the Children Fund in Pakistan and just over £400.00 was sent to them. Many thanks are due to Kathy, Katy, Jenyth, and all who took part and all who came to the Town Hall that rather cold night in November.

Cont...

## Yours Faithfully cont.....

The evening was free but a collection was taken for the work of the Save the Children Fund in Pakistan and just over £400.00 was sent to them. Many thanks are due to Kathy, Katy, Jenyth, and all who took part and all who came to the Town Hall that rather cold night in November.

Bede Gerrard  
Oxford Council of Faiths



## Who am I? Religious Identity and Young People

**Organisation:** Oxford Diocesan Committee for Inter-faith Concerns in collaboration with Churches Together in Berkshire, Reading Faith Forum and Reading Interfaith Group

**Date:** Thursday 25 November

**Venue:** The Friends Meeting House, Reading

**Link:** [www.readingfaithforum.com](http://www.readingfaithforum.com)

Faith and Identity in young people conference on the Thursday commenced with a meal (vegetarian and halal) after which Dr Eleanor Nesbitt who is Professor of Religious Education at Warwick University; spoke and responses were made from young people of various faith communities. Group discussions then followed.



## Bucks Faith Cafes

**Organisation:** Bucks Forum of Faiths & Learning Together Living in Harmony (Aylesbury)

**Date:** Tuesday 23 Nov

**Venue:** Aylesbury Vale District Council Offices, Aylesbury

and

**Organisation:** Bucks Forum of Faiths & Wycombe Sharing of Faiths

**Date:** Wednesday 24 Nov in

**Venue:** Arts4every1, High Wycombe

A lively interactive evening modelled on world café principles. We started with a meal, time to mingle and look at various religious artefacts and generally see what's what. Then at our café tables we explored the impact of faith on decision making at personal, community and national/global levels. We followed themes of equalities, suffering and resilience, relationships, and responsibility to tease out the role faith has to play in the big society. We used incisive questions along with cartoons and news clips to stimulate discussion and we came up with thoughts, ideas, inspiring examples, a mind map of post-its, symbols, graphics, video sound bites... which will be distilled into a creative travelling exhibition.

**Link:** [www.bucksinfo.net/bucks-forum-of-faiths](http://www.bucksinfo.net/bucks-forum-of-faiths)



Faith Café Plenary



Faith Cafe

## LOVE AND MY NEIGHBOUR: what (my) faith has to say....

**Organisation:** Wycombe Sharing of Faiths

**Date:** Monday 22nd Nov

**Venue:** Bucks New University

**Link:** [www.bucksinfo.net/bucks-forum-of-faiths](http://www.bucksinfo.net/bucks-forum-of-faiths)

This was the university's first interfaith event. Stalls at lunchtime in a much-frequented thoroughfare displayed some of the faiths in the university and attracted some interest. Also invitations to the twilight event were handed out liberally and questions were collected to be 'answered' in the evening. The evening event took place in Rusty Bucks café with a wonderful spread of homemade snacks. About 30 people attended--students, staff and a few invited visitors. The short personal presentations made by a Christian woman and a Baha'i man drew a lot of lively interest. The chaplain was left with basketsful of food to distribute in halls of residence the next day!

## Scriptural Reasoning — Religious Leaders, Worldly Power

**Organisation:** Scriptural Reasoning

**Date:** Thursday 25 November

**Venue:** Old Divinity School (Bodleian Library),  
University of Oxford

**Link:** [www.scripturalreasoning.org.uk](http://www.scripturalreasoning.org.uk)



Scriptural Reasoning is the national interfaith charity for the study by Jews, Christians, Muslims and others of their sacred books and traditions, in order to promote understanding of religious differences - and "better quality disagreement".

In the spectacular surroundings of Oxford University's Old Divinity School, some of the world's leading Jewish, Christian and Muslim scholars debated texts from the Bible and Quran on the relationship between faith leaders, the state and power.

At this event there will also be the presentation of an historic document by senior Muslim scholars from Al-Azhar Al-Sharif, being the first such document inviting to dialogue with Jews as well as Christians.

Speakers included:

- \* Sheikh Professor Fawzi Al-Zifzaf (Al-Azhar Al-Sharif)
- \* Professor John Barton (University of Oxford)
- \* Sheikh Professor Mohamed Elsharkawy (Al-Azhar College, Al-Azhar Al-Sharif)
- \* Professor David Ford (University of Cambridge)
- \* Dr Ida Glaser (Centre for Muslim-Christian Studies, Oxford)
- \* Professor Tariq Ramadan (University of Oxford)
- \* Professor Christopher Rowland (University of Oxford)
- \* Rabbi Professor Marc Saperstein (Leo Baeck College)
- \* Rabbi Dr Michael Shire (Leo Baeck College)
- \* Professor Guy Stroumsa (University of Oxford)
- \* Chair, Rabbi Mark Solomon (Leo Baeck College)
- \* Vote of Thanks, Rabbi Dr Charles Middleburgh (Leo Baeck College)

The free event was open to practising, believing Christians, Jews and Muslims of any tradition.

## Faith & Family

**Organisation:** Faith Anchor of Renaissance Readers Club UK

**Date:** Friday 26 November

**Venue:** Sapphire Room. The Centre, Slough

**Link:** [www.sloughfaithpartnership.org.uk](http://www.sloughfaithpartnership.org.uk)

Held on the 'Muslim Day' of Slough Faith Partnership (SFP) as a part of National Interfaith Week (IFW) and was open to all faiths. Brief talks about the value & nobility attached to the traditional family life in different faiths, specially in today's difficult times wherever every individual is in need of support & love more than ever before, followed by interactive discussion & light refreshments. Guests were invited to come & share ideas & experiences with the invited speakers: Nigel Cohen (Maidenhead), Arshad Gamiet (Egham) Dr.Henna Khan (Slough & Reading)

(see Slough Faith Partnership report )



Renaissance Readers discussion

# Subregion: Eastern

((Kent, East & West Sussex, Brighton & Hove, Medway))



## A Question of Faith

**Organisation:** Eastbourne's Faiths Forum

**Date:** Wednesday 24 November

**Venue:** Winter Garden, Eastbourne

**Links:** [www.eastbourne.gov.uk/faithsforum](http://www.eastbourne.gov.uk/faithsforum)

[www.eccn.org.uk](http://www.eccn.org.uk)

In support of the aims of National Inter-Faith Week, Eastbourne's Faiths Forum held a 'Question Time' event at the Winter Garden. The panel was chaired by the Rev Peter Owen-Jones and six different religious faiths were represented by the Rev Malcolm Weisman (Judaism); Abdel Rahim (Islam); Glen Scrivener (Christian Churches); James Smith (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints); Lynda Lindfield (Paganism); and Tony Lobl (Christian Science).

The questions were submitted by members of the audience and covered a wide range of religious issues. It is no surprise that the answers were as diverse as the representative faiths, but if there was one theme that emerged, it was respect for the people and beliefs of all religions. Unfortunately, there was not enough time for discussion or supplementary questions from the floor, but audience members were able to chat to individual panellists at the end of the meeting. Ronnie Taylor, Chairman of the Eastbourne Hebrew Congregation, said, "I found the Forum very interesting and hope that the different faiths in the Eastbourne Community will have a better understanding of each other's religions, which might lead to more tolerance and respect."



The panellists in the photo are, from left to right: Glen Scrivener; James Smith; Rev Malcolm Weisman; Rev Peter Owen-Jones; Lynda Lindfield; Abdel Rahim; and Tony Lobl.

## BELIEVE — APPRECIATING EACH OTHER

**Organisation:** Hastings and District Interfaith Forum - Funded by Faiths in Action

**Date:** Saturday 20 November

**Venue:** St Mary's Special School, Bexhill on sea

**BELIEVE** A chance to discover each other's true value



St Mary's Special School gave us such a warm welcome as six adult members of the Interfaith Forum and ten young people from the BELIEVE project (half of them Tibetan and Nepalese from Pestalozzi Village) gathered to share with about 40 students and staff from the School.

Not only did we share profoundly about faith through the talks provided by Kelsang Lam-ma and Sheikh Magdi Osman, but also the beauty of music and the preciousness of each person's uniqueness through songs from Michelle (accompanying herself on piano) and Sonam and Thinlay from Tibet.

The time spent enjoying a splendid buffet prepared by St Mary's staff and students provided a further hour to get to know one another as young people with and without disability, young and old and various faiths, races and culture mingled in mutual appreciation.

Tim Miller

Chris, Hastings and District Interfaith Forum

## Spiritual Reflection

**Organisation:** Baha'is of Horsham

**Date:** Tuesday 23 November

**Venue:** Friends Meeting House, Horsham

An evening of multi-faith spiritual reflection for National Interfaith Week through music, readings & prayers on theme of Faith.

## Experiencing Sacred Spaces' and Talk

**Organisation:** Brighton & Hove Interfaith Contact Group with World Sacred Music

**Date:** Sunday 21 November

**Venue:** Unitarian Church, Brighton

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



Visits to Christian and Buddhist sacred spaces for silent meditation and readings from various faiths, followed by a talk by Peter Owen Jones of BBC TV's 'Round the World in 80 Faiths' with sarod player Tarun Jasani.



Peter Owen Jones

## Bring a Cake !

**Organisation:** East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service & Eastbourne Cultural Communities Network

**Date:** Tuesday 23 November

**Venue:** HQ Building, Eastbourne

**Link:** [www.eccn.org.uk](http://www.eccn.org.uk)



East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service and Eastbourne Cultural Communities Network planned to host a Bring a Cake or something sweet event to highlight the importance of inter faith understanding and co-operation.

They welcomed everyone who was interested in attending the event to bring a traditional cake or sweet of your choice which we can all discuss and enjoy with tea, coffee or soft drink.

The aim of the morning was to celebrate and strengthen faith relations. This was an opportunity to increase awareness of the different and distinct faith communities of Sussex and to build an understanding between people of religious and non-religious belief.

Short presentations from some faith communities were planned and invited guests with plenty of time to meet new friends while enjoying tasty cakes and sweets that represent the diversity of Sussex.



## KRAN Riverside Project Interfaith Week Activities

**Organisation:**

**Date:** November 2010

**Venue:** Riverside Youth Centre, Canterbury

**Link:** [www.kran.org.uk](http://www.kran.org.uk)

KRAN Riverside Project offers week day education and training for unaccompanied asylum seeking young people and separated children living in the community in East Kent. Activities offered include basic English and Maths, Lifeskills training covering all aspects of independent living and confidence building and practical activities such as sport, the arts and cultural events.

This is the second year KRAN Riverside Project has participated in Interfaith Week and the young people have responded positively to the opportunity to discuss their own faith and learn about others. The young people come from Christian and Muslim backgrounds and those of no faith.

The young people completed a questionnaire about their knowledge of other religions and how they would like to learn about other faiths. Most said they would like to use books and the internet rather than meet other young people. The young people at the project value the opportunity for education and most prefer the formal classroom learning situation so we tried to include this method as well as a variety of other experiences.

Therefore we used worksheets, video, guest speakers and practical workshops as well as a Cathedral Visit.



Anti Bullying Week workshop

As members of WEDG – the Canterbury based World Education Development Group – we were able to access their resources and chose a variety of illustrated easy readers to help the young people find out more about a particular religion, We also used a video of festivals from four religions celebrated by young school children for the young people to watch and comment on.

As Interfaith Week also coincided with Anti Bullying Week we also ran a session on the effects of bullying and tied this in with respect and toleration especially to do with other faiths. The young people did a project on “the Golden Rule” using quotations from the writings of different world faiths to illustrate the concept of treating all people with respect.

We invited two guest speakers: Canon Norman Woods came and talked to the young people on aspects of Christianity and Paul Babra from Canterbury Curry Club talked about his Sikh faith bringing along pictures and artefacts from his Sikh faith. He gave a demonstration of a simple Sikh rice dish and the young people participated in the preparation and ate together.

Cont..

## Kent Refugee Action Network Riverside Project,

Some examples of our teaching and learning activities in November:

### World Religion Facts Workshop

One example of the workshops held is 'World Religion Facts'. Young people were given a map of the predominant religions in each country on a world map.

The map prompted questions such as: Why are there three colours for Christianity? Is it right that Egypt is predominantly Muslim? Why are there hardly any predominantly Jewish countries? The looking at six pictures of buildings (church, mosque, synagogue, temple, mandir, gurdwara). Do they recognise any of these? What are they? Which religion worships in which type of building? In which country would you find these particular buildings? (They were all in London –*many different religions coexisting in one city*)

The young people were then asked to fill in a table of the key facts about 6 different religions using information found in their given resources eg: Name of follower, date founded, founder, place of worship, holy book, and symbol. Which led to further questions such as: What do AD and BC mean? Isn't Christianity the oldest religion? Do Hindus believe in one God? Also talked about: Abraham features in Jewish, Muslim and Christian holy writings. Christians believe Jesus was the Jewish Messiah but Jews are still waiting for a Messiah. What the word "guru" means.

### Meet and Cook with Someone from the Sikh Faith

Paul Babra from Canterbury Curry Club to lead a session cooking vegetable rice with raita, spicy potato salad and poppadoms. Young people to participate in the preparation. Paul to bring a selection of Sikh teaching resources – ceremonial knife, bangle, pictures and writings. Discussion about what the young people know about Sikhs, what Sikhs do and what they believe



## South East England Faiths Forum (SEEFF) Area Map



### Thames Valley

- 1 Milton Keynes
- 2 Oxfordshire
- 3 Buckinghamshire
- 4 West Berkshire
- 5 Reading
- 6 Wokingham
- 7 Bracknell Forest
- 8 Windsor and Maidenhead
- 9 Slough

### Central

- 10 Surrey
- 11 Hampshire
- 12 Isle of Wight

### Eastern

- 13 Kent
- 14 East and West Sussex
- 15 Brighton and Hove
- 16 Medway

## 'Faith & the Big Society'

**SEEFF's annual conference** will be on 11 April 2011 at the University of Surrey, Guildford. For further details please see our website [www.se-faithforum.net](http://www.se-faithforum.net) or please contact:

Email: [contact@se-faithforum.net](mailto:contact@se-faithforum.net)

Post: SEEFF, C/o Diocese of Guildford, Diocesan House, Quarry Street, Guildford, GU1 3XG

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