

Interfaith Scotland

NEWSLETTER 2016: ISSUE 28

SCOTTISH INTERFAITH WEEK
CARE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY
DON'T STAND BY

YOUTH NEWS
INTERFAITH IN SCHOOLS



MAKING A DIFFERENCE THROUGH DIALOGUE

“*Love* and *compassion*
are necessities, not luxuries.

Without them, *humanity*
cannot survive.”

Dalai Lama



EDITORIAL

In looking back to summer 2015 and forward to summer 2016 I am always so grateful for the hard work and dedication of Interfaith Scotland's staff, board members and volunteers and for the continued support of our member organisations and friends across Scotland. Interfaith Scotland, as an organisation and interfaith engagement more generally continues to grow in importance as the world continues to face intolerance, bigotry and religious hatred. It is critical that we tell another story; the story of engagement, friendship building, and religions working together for the common good. This newsletter is one small way of telling that positive story.

In the past we have sent out smaller newsletters on a more regular basis but it has recently been decided that with so many people now engaging with us via our website and social media that an annual newsletter showcasing interfaith engagement in Scotland would be more appropriate. This allows us and local groups across Scotland to be able to have to hand a professionally produced and beautiful magazine, and we hope that you enjoy this new, colourful and creative format.

The world continues to face the challenges of extremism and hatred and we need to stand together as people of faith to say such extremism in the name of any religion is wrong – religion should be a source of good in the world. We can be grateful for the support that the Scottish Government gives to building good relations and perhaps this was highlighted most significantly for us when we were invited to facilitate an Interfaith Summit in the First Minister's residence in Bute House. It was such an honour and privilege and a proud moment for interfaith activists and faith communities throughout Scotland page 4.

In February 2016 we moved into new offices at Flemington House, 110 Flemington Street, Springburn, Glasgow, G41 2BF. Our internet contact details remain the same. These offices give us so much more space and a room will be dedicated to meetings for dialogue and engagement (an International Dialogue Centre for Scotland). We hope that many of you will be able to visit us over the coming months.

Dr Maureen Sier
Director



Interfaith Scotland provides a forum for people from different religions and beliefs to dialogue with one another on matters of religious, national and civic importance. We run dialogue events for young people, women, faith communities, religious leaders, members of Interfaith Scotland and local interfaith groups. We run interfaith workshops in schools and produce interfaith publications and resources. We provide ongoing support to local interfaith groups. We give public presentations, seminars and training on interfaith and faith awareness. We promote and encourage participation in Scottish Interfaith Week.

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FIRST MINISTER INTERFAITH SUMMIT

SCOTTISH INTERFAITH:
LEADING THE WAY

‘ *INTERFAITH* WORK AND THE CONTRIBUTION OF FAITH GROUPS IS ESSENTIAL IN TRANSFORMING LIVES AND BUILDING A STRONGER, FAIRER AND EQUAL SCOTLAND. ’

The First Minister called an Interfaith Summit in Scotland so she could hear about the work that is being done by interfaith organisations and faith communities. Nicola Sturgeon met with a cross-section of religious leaders from diverse faith traditions as well as Dr Maureen Sier, Director of Interfaith Scotland, Dr Rose Drew, Project Manager of Interfaith Glasgow and Mr Iain Stewart, General Secretary of Edinburgh Inter-Faith Association.

What was clear from the Summit was that Ms Sturgeon values diversity within Scotland – indeed she welcomes the broad spectrum of religious diversity in Scotland and the impact it has in taking our country forward. Ms Sturgeon said, ‘*Interfaith work and the contribution of faith groups is essential in transforming lives and building a stronger, fairer and equal*

Scotland. By working together with all communities I want to see a safer, stronger and more inclusive society, one which we are all able to fully contribute to and benefit from’.

Reflecting upon the meeting, Dr Maureen Sier said, ‘*it was a great honour and privilege for Interfaith Scotland to be asked to help facilitate such an important and historic summit. I was particularly keen to highlight the great work that grassroots local interfaith groups and faith communities do to ensure good relations and to emphasise the need for continuing support for those working with such dedication in a voluntary capacity. Scotland is often hailed as a leader in interfaith relations and we all must work hard to ensure that this is indeed a reality that continues to help keep our country safe, open and tolerant*’.

INTERFAITH SCOTLAND AND THE
INVERNESS PEACE CONFERENCE

Interfaith Scotland was delighted to host a national peace conference in Inverness and to work in partnership with Inverness Interfaith Group to ensure a successful event.

Key note speakers to the conference were Justine Huxley, Director of St Ethelburga’s Centre for Reconciliation and Peace and Liz Weir, an award winning storyteller from Northern Ireland who had been involved in using storytelling to tackle the sectarian issues that have beset Northern Ireland. Both speakers engaged in a dynamic and creative way with the audience and the dialogue focussed on four key questions; 1) What do our scriptures, prophets and faith leaders teach us about how to respond to conflict; 2) What tools are within our own faiths, both practical, theological and spiritual that might give us strength to deal with conflict well; 3) What is systemic change and how do we bring it about, 4) What role does dialogue play in a culture of peace?

Those present at the day shared personal experiences that moved the dialogue from theory to realistic practice. Perhaps the most moving story shared was one told by a young Imam whose brother-in-law was blown up and killed by a suicide bomber. He bravely shared the journey he took from feelings of anger and revenge to eventual peace and reconciliation – a peace brought about through dialogue and engagement.

‘ *WHAT ROLE DOES DIALOGUE PLAY IN A CULTURE OF PEACE?* ’

IONA
INTERNATIONAL
RETREAT

Participants from six faith traditions enjoyed an interfaith week on the Isle of Iona in June 2015. Led by Dr Maureen Sier and Frances Hume from Interfaith Scotland, participants explored aspects of interfaith dialogue. They stayed at the MacLeod Centre and joined in with the rhythm of life of the Iona Community. A highlight of the week was an interfaith service, created and lead by participants, which took place in the Abbey on the theme of ‘Care for the Environment’ which was the theme for Scottish Interfaith Week 2015.

IMPROVING UNDERSTANDING

On 29th October, Interfaith Scotland's Religious Equality Officer, Jamie Spurway, delivered a well-received workshop on working with students from diverse religious backgrounds. Most of the forty people attending were in chaplaincy roles in Scottish colleges and universities. The session looked at core beliefs and practices of the six main faiths; considerations when setting up a quiet/prayer room; as well as posing some more abstract questions like 'do you choose your religion?' A number of longer courses have since been booked at specific colleges following that workshop.

“ THE SESSION LOOKED AT... CONSIDERATIONS WHEN SETTING UP A QUIET/PRAYER ROOM ”

Jamie also assisted the Equality and Human Rights Commission in their development of pamphlets to improve understanding of employer's responsibilities in relation to religion and belief in the workplace. The commission is producing a set of guides that explore a range of employment issues including:

- Time off for religion and belief reasons.
- Dress codes and wearing of religious symbols.
- Food and dietary requirements.

The guides will be published in the coming months and should prove a useful resource for employers and staff across the country.



NETWORKING SEMINAR

Interfaith Scotland's annual networking seminar for local interfaith groups took place on 7th October at the Bield in Perthshire. With the event being held not long before Interfaith Week we thought it would be a good opportunity to look at the theme of 'Care for the Environment' in more depth. Paul Daly, Interfaith Scotland's Parliamentary Officer, gave a presentation about the effects of climate change. Participants broke into small groups to discuss scriptural readings from seven different faiths on caring for the environment and why this is so important from a faith perspective. Zarina Ahmad from CEMVO led a creative workshop looking at the things that we value the most and how these might be affected by climate change. This was a really useful exercise to help people connect the issues with their own lives. Jamie Spurway, Interfaith Scotland's Religious Equality Officer, delivered a session on 'facilitation skills', giving those gathered some useful tips to improve the way that interfaith meetings are managed such as setting a clear purpose and developing a working together agreement with the group. It was a very successful afternoon and all enjoyed networking in the beautiful grounds of the Bield.

PARLIAMENTARY NEWS

Interfaith Scotland's Parliamentary Officer, Paul Daly, has the role of bridging the gaps between faith groups in Scotland and the Scottish and UK Parliaments. The aim is to make it easier for faith groups to be aware of what is going on, why issues are relevant to them and how they can engage with political processes.

Following on from the Westminster Elections in 2015 we are now focused on the Holyrood Elections on 5th May 2016. The current Scottish Parliament is dissolved on 23rd March and candidates across Scotland will hit the campaign trail. This is the time for people in Scotland to have the opportunity to elect a new Government to the Scottish Parliament. Interfaith Scotland will be getting in touch with faith communities with ideas of how to engage people in the process and provide opportunities to meet local candidates.

To commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day, the Scottish Parliament's 'Time for Reflection' was led by school pupils from the Falkirk area who had travelled to Auschwitz. Afterwards, Stewart Maxwell MSP led a debate in the chamber, during which the work of Interfaith Scotland and various partners were noted.

Interfaith Scotland's guests, Inge Auerbacher and Mukesh Kapila, were given a tour of the Scottish Parliament building by Mr Maxwell. They took time to view the exhibitions by 'Gathering the Voices' and artist Robert McNeil displayed in the members' areas. The Gathering the Voices project collected oral testimony from men and women who sought sanctuary in Scotland to escape the racism of Nazi-dominated Europe. This project is available online at www.gatheringthevoices.com



INTERFAITH SCOTLAND'S ANNUAL PUBLIC LECTURE

In October 2015 the Chief Executive of The Scottish Refugee Council, John Wilkes, gave the annual public lecture preceding the AGM of Interfaith Scotland. John was able to outline in great detail the current refugee crisis and what the UK and Scottish Government were respectively doing to try to tackle this huge humanitarian crisis.

After the public lecture there was an opportunity for all those gathered to engage in dialogue with each other around some crucial questions relating to 'asylum'. Many noted that within their own faith traditions the founders had often had to seek asylum and just how important kindness and compassion is to those who are undergoing such trauma.

SCOTTISH INTERFAITH WEEK



Scottish Interfaith Week took place from 22nd – 30th November 2015. The theme for the week was 'Care for the Environment'. The United Nations Climate Change Conference was due to take place in Paris in December 2015. At the conference the world governments were meeting to agree the ways which we could avoid the very worst impacts of climate change which disproportionately impact on the poorest communities across the world. Looking at the scriptures of the major world religions it is evident that they have a lot to say about caring for the environment and protecting it for future generations. The theme of 'Care for the Environment' provided a focus for faith communities and local interfaith groups to explore this in more detail and look at practical ways in which they could impact the environment for good. Around seventy events took place across Scotland during a vibrant and thought-provoking week, many of which are outlined in this newsletter.

The week began with Interfaith Scotland's formal launch event at Dynamic Earth in Edinburgh and was attended by almost a hundred representatives from faith groups in Scotland. There were a number of interesting and dynamic speakers at the event. These included Aileen McLeod, Scottish Government Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform; Kathy Galloway, Head of Christian Aid Scotland; Zarina Ahmad, Climate Change and Environment Officer, CEMVO; and Tom Ballantine, Chair of Stop Climate Chaos. Soul Riders and the Edinburgh Gurdwara outlined their climate change faith based projects, illustrating what can be done to make a difference in their local communities and

beyond. Guests were entertained with traditional African songs from Cynthia Gentle and the children's choir.

Minister Aileen McLeod, who was about to leave for Paris to represent Scotland at the United Nations Climate Change Conference, spoke passionately about the contribution of faith communities:

'Faith and belief communities across Scotland make a vital contribution to our society, and interfaith dialogue has a crucial role to play in addressing the challenges we face - such as conflict, poverty or climate change. The strength of interfaith activity in Scotland is one of many ways we can channel our response to these crises, and it is only through dialogue on issues of common concern that we can build relationships and achieve our vision for a fairer and greener society. I very much welcome that climate change is the focus of this year's Scottish Interfaith Week as in the run up to next month's UN negotiations in Paris, it is important that Scotland speaks with one voice to promote the moral case for global action on climate change.'

At the event representatives of all of Scotland's major faith communities presented a joint declaration (see below) to Dr McLeod. The declaration called on people of faith in Scotland to learn more and to be guided by their faith to take action on climate change, and urged the participants in the Paris talks to agree as ambitious a programme as possible to mitigate the effects of climate change, especially on the poorest communities throughout the world.

SCOTTISH FAITH GROUPS JOINT DECLARATION ON CLIMATE CHANGE

We, diverse members of Scottish faith groups are gathering today in Edinburgh to attend the national launch of Scottish Interfaith Week. During this week people of all faiths and none will meet to discuss the theme of 'Care for the Environment'. Climate Change is one of the most pressing environmental issues of our time. As people of faith we recognise the moral obligation to act on climate change. Failure to take the necessary steps to abate climate change is having serious impacts on the poorest communities across the world. We are calling for people of faith in Scotland to learn more of the implications of climate change and to use their faith as a guide to action on climate change. We recognise our duty to stand shoulder to shoulder with our global family and call on our political leaders to agree as strong a deal as possible at the climate change negotiations in Paris in the coming weeks.

FAITH REFLECTIONS ON THE ENVIRONMENT...

BUDDHISM

We are part of nature and not set apart from it. This requires respect for all sentient beings, not merely human beings.

HINDUISM

Hindus revere sacred rivers, mountains, forests and animals. Trees, rivers and mountains are believed to have souls, and should be honoured and cared for.

ISLAM

The prophet Muhammad taught: 'The world is green and beautiful, and Allah has appointed you his guardian over it'.

CHRISTIANITY

Christians believe we are the stewards of creation, not masters of it. From the book of Genesis: 'The Lord took the man and settled him in the Garden of Eden to cultivate and take care of it'.

SIKHISM

A simple life free from conspicuous waste is the Sikh ideal – a life that stresses mastery over the self, rather than mastery over nature.

JUDAISM

The Bible informs us that the earth is given to humans 'to use and protect'.

BAHA'I FAITH

The world reflects the qualities and attributes of God, and should therefore be greatly respected and cherished. Baha'i scriptures describe nature as an emanation of God's will.

PAGANISM

Pagans believe that nature is sacred and that everything that lives contains a small spark of the divine. Human beings are seen as a part of nature and they acknowledge the interdependence of all life. This gives them a strong reverence for life and environmentalism is seen as a religious duty.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

The theme of this year's Interfaith Week, as well as the UN Summit in Paris, focused all our minds on 'Climate Change'. Skye Faiths Together hosted an event during Scottish Interfaith Week to look at this issue. Pat McNicol introduced the subject by creating a beautiful exhibition featuring relevant quotations from the major world religions. Jim Towers, who led the meeting, imparted the very real sense of urgency of the situation we face. In normal circumstances climate change may have occurred naturally over thousands of years. But there is now indisputable evidence to suggest that the effect of human activity has sped up the process of Climate Change at an alarming rate. Since humans have caused this, are there actions we can take to slow down, halt or even reverse the process?

We asked ourselves 'what is the root of the problem?' And our belief is that the problem is a moral one - the issue of caring for the environment in a culture of materialism. There was a call to live simply, as in the words of the visionary leader, Mahatma Gandhi, who said '*live simply so that others may simply live*'. Ordinary people can also be visionary. One member of the group advocated 'a simple life', ensuring that crafts such as spinning and weaving were maintained and also threw down the challenge - what are you doing?

So, what are we doing? Some people have invested in sustainable energy like solar panels. Some having grown up in the shadow of the Second World War and avoid waste and



challenge the disposable society. For some, resisting advertising and fashionable trends, made more sense than the present complex modern materialistic lifestyle. The aim was to attempt to live simply and sustainably. It is important that the next generation understand this and are impassioned by this imperative.

The Paris Summit on Climate Change is too important to be left to politicians. Faith communities have a role to play too. We need to link with others across the world to demonstrate our concern and commitment.

Trish Rogers, Skye Faiths Together

‘ *LIVE SIMPLY SO THAT OTHERS MAY
SIMPLY LIVE* ’



GET INVOLVED!

There's lots of ways of getting involved in the work of Interfaith Scotland. Here are just a few!

BECOME A FRIEND

Becoming a Friend of Interfaith Scotland is a great way to support our work. Our Friends are individuals, groups and organisations who are passionate about interfaith work and the impact it makes on communities. For a small subscription fee you can receive our newsletter, annual report and invitations to attend interfaith events organised by Interfaith Scotland.

SCOTTISH INTERFAITH WEEK

We can provide you with ideas and advice for setting up an interfaith event in your area to celebrate Scottish Interfaith Week. We can advertise your event on our website and to our contacts list. Small amounts of funding are also available to assist with events.

LOCAL INTERFAITH GROUPS

We can help you get in touch with the nearest interfaith group in your area. If there is no interfaith group in your area we can help you to set one up and provide advice and support for the group.

SCHOOLS AND YOUTH GROUPS

We have volunteers from different faiths who are available to speak in schools and youth groups about their faith and/or the importance of interfaith dialogue. We have also created interfaith resources for schools and youth groups.

WOMEN'S INTERFAITH DIALOGUE

We host women's interfaith dialogue events in different cities in Scotland throughout the year. Get in touch if you would be interested in us hosting a women's dialogue in your area.

TRAINING AND RESOURCES

We provide training to voluntary and statutory agencies on faith awareness and religious equality. We have also produced a number of useful publications and resources which are available at the office or can be downloaded from our website.

EASY FUNDRAISING

There is a new way that you can raise money for the work of Interfaith Scotland and it won't cost you a penny! We have joined an organisation called Easyfundraising. If you buy on-line, many retailers will add a percentage donation to our organisation. All you have to do is register at www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/interfaithscotland. Having registered, whenever you are thinking of buying something on-line, log into EasyFundraising and see if the retailer you want to buy from contributes. If they do, simply by clicking through to their retail site from the Easyfundraising site can earn up to 7% of anything you spend.

DONATE TO OUR WORK

You can donate to our work by posting a cheque to Interfaith Scotland at our new address. We use Gift Aid so please let us know if you would like to make a Gift Aid donation.



OUR NEIGHBOUR

THE ENVIRONMENT

On Thursday 26th November, the Scottish Council of Jewish Communities held an event for Scottish Interfaith Week at the Gracefield Arts Centre in Dumfries. Margalit Borowski gave a presentation on 'Jewish Stewardship of the Environment' in which she discussed God's relationship with humanity and the environment as outlined in the Genesis story of Creation, and the Rabbinical directives in the Talmud, to work and care for the earth in the context of 'serve' and 'conserve'. Examples of this include:

- the need to avoid needless environmental destruction.
- the avoidance of noise, air and water pollution in urban planning.

These examples endorse the basic tenet of all major world religions, to 'Love your Neighbour' by citing Hillel the Elder's admonition not to '...do anything to anyone that you would not want to be done to you.'

Several environmental projects are underway in Jewish communities throughout the world including desalination, recycling compost materials from rubbish and the interfaith activities undertaken on Mitzvah Day.

During and after the presentation participants enjoyed a kosher buffet and lively discussion on many of the environmental themes touched upon in the talk, as well as aspects of Kashrut (Jewish dietary laws) and Jewish life in general. They also had a chance to see

the exhibition, 'Scot's Jews: Identity, Belonging and the Future' by photographer Judah Passow. Many of the pictures capture the life and environment of some of Scotland's Jews who live far away from the bigger communities.

Participants came from Dumfries and Carlisle and one couple commented that they "...thoroughly enjoyed the talk ..." and another "... hopes there will be more occasions when we can find out about the Jewish faith."

Margalit Borowski

Scottish Council of Jewish Communities



Photo by Judah Passow

COMMON GROUND SEMINAR: RELIGIOUS AND NON-RELIGIOUS ENGAGEMENT

The annual 'Common Ground' Seminar held in partnership with Interfaith Scotland, the Conforti Institute, The Church of Scotland and the Episcopal Church and representatives of the Muslim Community was held at the Conforti Institute in Coatbridge. The theme for the dialogue between the religious and the non-religious was 'care for the environment' to link in with both Scottish Interfaith Week and the Climate Change Summit being held in Paris.

On the first evening representatives of the Baha'i, Muslim, Jewish, Christian and Humanist traditions shared their respective faith's teachings on the environment. Each presentation had a different nuance but all shared a common commitment to taking care of the planet and the struggle to deal with the injustices that emerge because of the over-consumption of the wealthy nations and the disproportionate impact this has on poorer nations.

During the following day there was a keynote presentation by Dr. Katherine Trebeck who is the Global Research and Policy Advisor in Oxfam's Research Team. Katherine is exploring an economy that delivers social justice, good

lives, vibrant communities and which protects the planet. In doing so she is particularly interested in steps towards a 'new economic paradigm'.

Before this role Katherine was Policy and Advocacy Manager for Oxfam's UK Programme, and prior to this she led research and policy for Oxfam's Scotland office. Here she developed Oxfam's Humankind Index, a measure of Scotland's real prosperity developed through wide ranging community consultation (see her Tedx talk outlining the need for the Humankind Index). Katherine also managed Oxfam's Whose Economy? This project asked why, despite decades of economic growth, Scotland's poverty has not been addressed and inequalities have deepened.

Katherine's presentation was both stimulating and challenging and led those present into the dialogue sessions for the rest of the day. This annual seminar has deepened the friendship between people with and without religious beliefs and has shown that working for the common good of humanity crosses all barriers of belief.

INTERFAITH ENGAGEMENT WITH THE BBC CHARTER

Representatives of Scotland's diverse faith communities were invited by Interfaith Scotland and BBC Scotland to BBC Scotland's HQ to engage with the proposed BBC Charter.

An outline of the main proposals for the Charter was given by Ian Small, Head of Public Policy and Corporate Affairs at BBC Scotland and thereafter Ian chaired the proceedings. Those present enjoyed a stimulating panel presentation by distinguished members of the BBC including; Aaqil Ahmed, BBC Commissioning Editor of Religion and Head of Religion and Ethics; Reevel Alderson, BBC Scotland, Home Affairs Correspondent; Colin Paterson, Editor for Speech, BBC Radio

Scotland; Mona Siddiqui, OBE, Professor of Islamic and Inter-religious Studies at the University of Edinburgh and Chair of the BBC Religion and Belief Equality Committee and Ailsa McIntosh, senior content producer with religious radio in Scotland.

After the presentations the audience had an opportunity to ask questions of the panel and a full, frank and at times challenging dialogue took place. Interfaith Scotland was grateful to BBC Scotland for the opportunity to engage on the outline of the BBC Charter which will be launched in 2016/17.

ART, RELIGION AND THE ENVIRONMENT

November saw the launch of Scottish Interfaith Week as well as an exhibition showing the art of Glasgow artist Hannah Frank (1908-2008) at the Riverside Gallery in Inverness. The exhibition had come to Inverness at the request of Inverness's small Jewish community. A talk linking Hannah Frank's work to the theme of the Week, 'Care of the Environment' was an ideal opening event for the exhibition.



Garden by Hannah Frank

Fiona Frank, Hannah Frank's niece, who is also Projects and Outreach manager for SCoJeC, the Scottish Council of Jewish Communities, gave the opening talk, entitled '*Hannah Frank: Art, Religion and Identity*'. After a kosher buffet at the gallery sponsored by SCoJeC and a chance for visitors to look round the exhibition, the group moved to the YMCA next door for the talk and discussion.

The evening started with a showing of Interfaith Scotland's presentation on the importance of caring for the environment, and participants talked about what that presentation brought up for them, and about the forthcoming 'Inverness Climate Walk' that weekend, which was linked to the Paris climate talks and which was to feature the launch of an 'Earth Ark'.

We then moved on to talk about '*art, religion and the environment*', and participants were invited to think about their early memories of the intersections of art and religion, or art and the environment, in their lives. Responses included people remembering specific pieces of art in their homes or their schools – including Dali's 'Christ on the cross' among other things. One lady, now an artist, remembered the stained glass windows of the church when she was growing up spurring her on to make her own art; there had never been any art at home on their farm. Others spoke about landscape art – expressions of solidarity with nature expressed by all kinds of different artists.

Fiona Frank talked about the portrayal of religion and of the environment in the art of her aunt. Several drawings show biblical scenes like Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, or scenes from the Book of Job – often with a large wing denoting a larger being, mostly unseen. Many of Hannah Frank's works portray nature; with trees, gardens and suns and moons being constantly recurring motifs in her work. The subsequent discussion touched on the relationship that different religions had with portrayals of human and animal form; and the evening finished with the showing of the film '*Hannah Frank, The Spark Divine*' made by award winning film maker Sarah Thomas in 2008 to celebrate the artist's 100th birthday.

“PARTICIPANTS WERE INVITED TO
THINK ABOUT THEIR EARLY MEMORIES
OF THE INTERSECTIONS OF ART
AND RELIGION, OR ART
AND THE ENVIRONMENT,
IN THEIR LIVES.”

Fiona Frank
Scottish Council of Jewish Communities

NEWS FROM

LOCAL INTERFAITH GROUPS

INTERFAITH GLASGOW CELEBRATES SCOTTISH INTERFAITH WEEK

With nearly 30 events across Glasgow, from community meals, to dialogues on the environment; from Scriptural Reasoning to tours of places of worship; and from interfaith meditation, to the launch of a multi-faith chaplaincy for refugees and asylum seekers, it was Glasgow's best Interfaith Week yet!

As well as supporting events, Interfaith Glasgow organised a number of their own events including the highlight of their calendar: Glasgow's annual Interfaith Family Fun Day. Held this year in Glasgow's West End, this colourful annual event attracted a record 200 participants, including 34 volunteers. Participants came from religious (Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Baha'i, Pagan, Sikh, Hindu, Buddhist, and Brahma Kumari) and non-religious backgrounds and, as ever, the focus was on creating opportunities for people to socialise in a fun and friendly atmosphere, and to learn something about each other's traditions in the process. In addition to a range of other activities and dance performances, this year there were 'Faith Table Workshops', where people had the opportunity to make things associated with particular religious traditions—such as Buddhist prayer flags, Diwali clay lamps, Christian Christingle oranges, or Jewish lollipop-stick menorahs—whilst hearing about their significance from volunteers belonging to that tradition.

Feedback was excellent, including such comments as: 'I saw the world here'; 'Had great fun: Pedalled a bike until enough energy was generated to make a smoothie, made a Baha'i prayer beads string, made a drawing following symmetry, watched capoeira, Persian and Spanish dances, ate samosas...'; 'I love that there is still peace in the world'; 'Best interfaith event I've been to!'. A short film giving a flavour of the event can be found on our YouTube channel: <http://bit.ly/1nAOUST>



SOUTH EAST GLASGOW COMMUNITY MEALS

The latest in the series of interfaith community meals in Glasgow's religiously diverse South East was jointly hosted during Interfaith Week by the Christian community of Pollokshields Parish Church and the Muslim community of Madrasa Taleem ul Islam. The meal was very well attended, with nearly 60 participants from Christian, Muslim (Sunni and Shia), Jewish, Baha'i, Hindu, and Sikh backgrounds. Dialogue focused on the Interfaith Week theme 'Care for the Environment' and, following their discussions, guests were encouraged throughout the evening to adorn a colourful interfaith tree, in the middle of the room, with statements about why protecting the environment is important from their particular faith perspective.

Our focus for the Community Meals project is on providing opportunities for people within the religiously diverse South East of Glasgow to meet each other in relaxed settings, in order to give people from different communities a chance to meet who wouldn't normally have that chance, to break down barriers of prejudice, and to build friendships and mutual understanding across religious and cultural boundaries.

INTERFAITH FOOD JUSTICE NETWORK



This partnership project between Interfaith Glasgow and Faith in Community Scotland's Transformation Team aims to foster communication and collaboration between people from different faith communities who are engaged in practical projects combatting food poverty. The initiative is creating opportunities for online and face-to-face networking so groups can support each other's work. There is now an 'Interfaith Food Justice Network' Facebook page and the next large networking event will take place in April. In the meantime, there are interfaith 'volunteer swaps' taking place between food justice projects across the city, which are strengthening links between those involved in this crucial work. So far Café Simon, Glasgow Gurdwara, and Kagyu Samye Dzong have participated, and a short film is being made about their experiences.

WEEKEND CLUB

This initiative is an interfaith response to the social isolation facing many asylum seekers, refugees, and new migrants arriving in Glasgow. Project Officer Mohamed Omar is working with a multi-faith group of 12 volunteers who, having received training last year, work together to devise and deliver a series of monthly social events for asylum seekers, refugees, and new migrants. These events offer interactive activities designed to help newcomers better understand Scottish culture and feel more at home in Glasgow.

The first event took place at St Mungo Museum and involved, amongst other things, a history of migration to Glasgow and an interfaith quiz; the second saw participants taking a virtual tour of Glasgow's art museums, getting stuck into a hands-on art activity, and practising their 'Glasgae' slang; the third event was Christmas-themed, with input from Alternativity at Scotland Street School Museum, and concluded with a trip to Glasgow's famous Christmas market; and the most recent event was 'Burn's Night'



themed: a haggis was piped in and participants had the chance to practice their Ceilidh moves. There is free food at all events and Interfaith Glasgow is endeavouring to reimburse participant travel expenses. Please contact Mohamed for information about how you can support the Weekend Club: weekendclub@interfaithglasgow.org

FESTIVALS EXCHANGE EVENTS

Interfaith Glasgow's Festivals Exchange Programme aims to enable people of all faiths and none to observe a variety of religious festivals in a welcoming atmosphere, so as to better understand the religious beliefs and practices of their neighbours. Project Worker Kemal Okan has been working with volunteers from three participating communities (Sikh, Christian, and Muslim) to open up three festivals to witnesses from other traditions. The first event was a celebration of Bandi Chhor Divas at Glasgow Gurdwara, the second a Christmas Eve service at Pollokshields Parish Church, and the third a commemoration of the birth of Prophet Muhammad (Mawlid al-Nabi) at Zia ul Quran Mosque. These events have generated an enormously positive response, with participants valuing the opportunity to be welcomed into different places of worship, to see the faith of different communities in practice, and to ask questions. According to one participant, 'It was a great

pleasure to be welcomed into the mosque, and to sit in the atmosphere of worship, and observe the pattern of the prayers ... I greatly enjoyed the chance to talk with people of Muslim faith, with a freedom to ask simple questions'.



SCRIPTURAL REASONING



Scriptural Reasoning is a method of interfaith dialogue where people—usually Jews, Christians and Muslims—come together to discuss a passage from each of their scriptures to build understanding and, ultimately, friendship. We facilitate a group for Jews, Muslims, and Christians that meets regularly, and we have also begun to host larger Scriptural Reasoning meetings open to people of all faiths and none. The last of these took place during Interfaith Week and took 'Care for the Environment' as its theme. Participants felt that widening the discussion to include other faiths was valuable and Interfaith Glasgow will continue to organise more such events, alongside its regular group meetings in the future.

EDINBURGH

MEETING A CITY THROUGH ITS FAITHS

In August last year I started working alongside Iain Stewart at Edinburgh Inter-faith Association (EIFA). New, not only to the job but to Edinburgh, the last six months have provided a rich and unexpected introduction to this city, its people, history and the contemporary issues that occupy it. The meeting was gradual, beginning on foot at the Peace Walk held to commemorate International Peace Day in September. This pilgrimage took us around many of Edinburgh's centres of faith and places of worship, from the Synagogue on Salisbury Road, purpose-built in 1932; on, skirting the meadows and down a cobbled street to the Greek Orthodox Church; then on again, passing, among others, the Central and Annandale Mosques, St Mark's Unitarian Church, the Tibetan Buddhist Centre of Samye Dzong, the Baha'i Centre and St Mary's Cathedral, stopping for a while in Leith's Sikh Gurdwara before finishing at the Hindu Mandir where we were treated to some prayers in the temple and a feast from their kitchens. Hospitality was offered at every stage of the journey as we passed through and learnt about the communities and histories upon which the city is built.

The theme of peace continued with the visit of Arun Gandhi, grandson of Mahatma Gandhi, to Edinburgh. He spent a couple of days in primary schools and then delivered an inspiring talk to a packed audience at the Queen's Hall. During his talk he related lessons learnt from his grandfather and spoke of the importance of recognising and dealing with the violent thoughts and actions that arise in every one of us and which result in the social inequalities and environmental problems that surround us.

Scottish Interfaith Week in November provided yet more opportunities to engage with some of the tough questions facing today's society. Both in its theme of Care for the

Environment and some of the annual events such as the Religious Leader's Conference, the idea of uniting came through strongly. Nowhere was this clearer than in Peter Owen Jones' talk and his call to action: to cherish our faiths and what we know to be true for ourselves, but not to let it lead to judgment, exclusivity or barriers to appreciating and valuing all those around us, near or far. His was an appeal, again, to lay down arms.

The first event of 2016 was for Holocaust Memorial Day, commemorated by EIFA in collaboration with Firrhill High School. Here time was given to remembering the past and reflecting on its meaning today through the moving testimony of holocaust survivor Zigi Shipper and observations from some students. Yet as Mukesh Kapila, who was head of the UN envoy to Darfur during the genocide, went on to powerfully remind us, we have not really learnt from the past. We continue to stand by and look away, allowing political, economic or other interests to take precedence over human rights, dignity and compassion.

However, quite aside from the big, headline events, it has mainly been through the day-to-day, the small meetings, conversations over coffee, news heard on Facebook or reported by someone dropping into the office, that I have gradually learnt about the many facets of faith in this city. Events can inspire and spark connections, but for these to remain strong and mature needs on-going work. I feel privileged to be meeting and working alongside some of the people who are dedicating so much time and energy to developing a culture of peace, tolerance and understanding, in Edinburgh and beyond.

Aliya Ryan - Administrator and Events Coordinator, Edinburgh Inter-faith Association

TO RECEIVE INFORMATION ABOUT EIFA EVENTS OR TO BECOME A MEMBER PLEASE WRITE TO INFO@EIFA.ORG.UK

UPCOMING EVENTS WITH EIFA:

- First Monday of every month join us for an interfaith discussion and community meal (email for details)
- 29 May 2016, Interfaith Peace Walk
- 5 September 2016, EIFA General Meeting
- 21 September 2016, Vigil for International Day of Peace



REDRESSING THE BALANCE

The 'Caring for Mother Earth' event was Kagyu Samye Dzong Edinburgh's contribution to Scottish Interfaith Week and what an educational and hugely enjoyable day it was! Community gardener Natalie McAll made imaginative use of an apple to demonstrate the stretched resources of our planet then guided us through some positive, practical steps to help redress the balance. Everyone was eager to get their hands in the soil and plant fruit trees and shrubs destined to blossom in our new Centre's courtyard garden. We each made a wish and planted a broad bean to take home. Then, after a warming cup of delicious Nepalese Chai, we watched an inspiring film of His Holiness Karmapa's talk on Environmentalism in the 21st Century. The day was rounded off with a rousing and very moving music video by Artists for Project Earth featuring Eminem and a group of talented African teenagers rapping to raise awareness of Mother Earth.



INVERNESS SHARING OF FAITHS



Gatherings of the Inverness Inter Faith Group alternate between business-like meetings at which we plan future activities, and more personal events, which we call 'sharing of faiths'. Our 'sharing of faith' meetings are very much appreciated by all members. This is where we really get to know each other and also find out about different religious beliefs and practices. Beginning the meeting with a potluck supper we then spend an hour or so having a discussion on our chosen topic. The last two 'sharings' were on 'Perceptions of Truth' and 'Inspiring Scriptures' and our next topic is 'The Times we Live in'. We also participated in 'Earth Hour' in March, beginning with a meal, and then during the time of

candlelit darkness using prayers from the different religious traditions represented in the group.

We celebrated Interfaith Week by holding a 'Caring for the Environment' day, at which we had two speakers. Iona Finlayson, a local environmentalist, ran an awareness raising workshop on 'Ecology and Environmental Considerations'. This was followed with a presentation by the Rev Doug McRoberts, on 'The Impact of Climate Change on migrants from Africa to Malta'.

Inverness Interfaith Group



ABERDEEN A COMMON CONCERN

‘COMING TOGETHER TO FIND SHARED GLOBAL VALUES.’

Aberdeen Inter Faith Group held an Interfaith Service at Aberdeen Unitarian Church on Sunday 22nd November to begin the celebration of Scottish Interfaith Week. The service was led by Caroline Cormack on the theme of 'Care for our Environment' and included very interesting contributions from several faith group representatives, including those from the Varapunya Buddhist Meditation Centre, Baha'i faith, Brahma Kumaris, Pagan, Ahmadiyya Muslim, and Unitarian Church. Although those contributing had different faith backgrounds, it was clear that care for our environment was a vital and common concern for all participating, and ideas about how we could improve things were shared enthusiastically.

On Tuesday 24th November Dr Nigel Dower led a talk at the University Chaplaincy with the theme 'Care for Nature and Interfaith Dialogue'. He gave examples of groups with different worldviews coming together to find shared global values. This led into an interesting discussion as to whether people of faith should have a particular approach to nature, or whether their religious tradition should be prioritised over their personal attitude to nature. It was generally thought that supporters of interfaith dialogue tend to hope, that those of different faiths, will work towards a shared moral vision of care for nature.

DUMFRIES AND GALLOWAY

TIME FOR REFLECTION



In September Ken and Venus Carew, from the local Baha'i community were invited to lead the 'Time for Reflection' at the Dumfries and Galloway Council meeting. The Council's priority is to be inclusive and one of its commitments is to 'increase equality of opportunity'. By having a 'Time for Reflection' led by different leaders, the Council is promoting diversity by recognising and respecting the people from different faith traditions and none who live and work in the region and who the elected members represent. This inclusive approach has been shown to develop greater mutual understanding and good relationships between people of different religious faiths or none in Scotland.

The 'Time for Reflection' focused on the importance of the work of the local interfaith groups and the support and

encouragement they receive from local councils. As members of the Baha'i community, being part of the interfaith group is central to our faith that encourages its members to 'consort with the followers of all religions in a spirit of friendliness and fellowship'.

*‘ THIS INCLUSIVE APPROACH
HAS BEEN SHOWN TO
DEVELOP GREATER MUTUAL
UNDERSTANDING ’*

DUMFRIES AND GALLOWAY INTERFAITH GROUP CELEBRATES SCOTTISH INTERFAITH WEEK



The Dumfries and Galloway Interfaith Group held a special event on Wednesday 25th November 2015 in the 'Usual Place Cafe' to celebrate Scottish Interfaith Week. This year's theme was 'Caring for the Environment' and through sharing readings from all the different faith traditions it was clear that there is a great deal of common ground between them all.

Jan Lethbridge, of the Dumfries and Galloway Interfaith Group, introduced the evening by sharing that *'caring for the earth and its resources is an important part of all faiths, and the idea that we are stewards of the planet and must behave responsibly, individually and collectively, is also*

common to all'. Jan had also arranged to play some music that gave people time for reflection and helped set the tone for the lively discussions that then took place.

In closing, Liz Manson said: *'In these difficult times across the world it is essential that faith groups come together and show how much we agree on, we have so many shared principles. The record attendance tonight demonstrates that people in our region care about that and want to show their support for each other'*.

The Dumfries and Galloway Multicultural Association Chair Yen Hongmei Jin, who attended the event added, *'Working across different faiths and cultures makes an important contribution to peace and harmony in our local area as well as nationally and internationally. Events like this allow us to celebrate our diversity in a very positive way'*.



FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

On the 24th November, Shetland Inter Faith Group hosted an event entitled 'Care for the Environment' at Gilbert Bain Hospital Sanctuary to mark Scottish Interfaith Week. With the Climate Change Summit taking place in December, the focus was on what faiths have to say about caring for the environment and protecting it for future generations. This early evening event was an informal gathering with contributions from attending faith groups.

After welcoming everyone, an extract from 'The Baha'i Statement on Nature' produced by the Baha'i International Community, was read by a member of the Baha'i community. The statement highlights the main issue facing the environmental movement then and now, namely that all problems such as ocean pollution, the extinction of species, acid rain and deforestation respect no boundaries. All require a transnational approach and a general recognition of the wholeness and interdependence of humanity.

This was followed by a presentation on the document, 'A Buddhist Diagnosis of the Climate Crisis', written by Ven.

Bhikkhu Bodhi. This analysis identified the problems and possible solutions of climate change using the Four Noble Truths of Buddhism as a structure. This informative document can be found online at: www.ancientdragon.org/dharma/articles/buddhist_diagnosis_climate_crisis.

A member of our Christian community then read the words of the hymn 'Touch The Earth Lightly' by New Zealand hymn writer Shirley E. Murray. We concluded with a short video on the nature of Climate Change, which highlighted that it is the developing countries which are bearing much of the trials and suffering associated with the current stage in its course.

This enjoyable and successful event then finished with sharing food, further discussion, and a workshop for making green poppies, a contribution from our Quaker friends. The green poppies are to raise funds for those islands already under threat from rising sea levels.

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY



Shetland commemorated Holocaust Memorial Day on Monday 25th January at the town hall. This was led by Tom Macintyre, the present chair of Shetland Inter Faith Group and Chaplain to Shetland Islands Council. Members of the Shetland Interfaith Group were involved in the public ceremony as were others from the Shetland community. Primary 6 pupils from Bells Brae school gave a poignant presentation, a video clip of a holocaust survivor's story was shown, a young lawyer from Ukraine gave a moving account of her grandparents persecution during the Nazi regime and finally a poem entitled 'One person can make a difference' encapsulated the theme of HMD – 'Don't stand by'.

WORLD RELIGIONS DAY

Shetland Inter Faith celebrated World Religions Day on Sunday 17th January. The programme consisted of readings from the different faiths expressing the ways to peace and harmony. These were interspersed with recorded and live music by our own musicians. A fellowship meal followed.

Led by the Lord Lieutenant and the Convener of Shetlands Islands Council the gathering outside to lay floral wreaths to commemorate and remember the holocaust and subsequent genocides. Prayers for peace and reconciliation were said.

MORAY

THE GROWING GROVE

Interfaith Moray celebrated Interfaith Week by turning our usual bimonthly meeting into a public meeting where each faith tradition had an opportunity to speak on 'Caring for the Environment'. There were talks, tables with information displayed, and a few dances offered with the opportunity to join in. The evening also included a presentation by Trees for Life, a local charity that encourages people and groups to plant groves of trees.

We decided during the evening to establish an interfaith grove of trees. Interfaith Scotland kindly gave us a small grant to help with this, which made it possible for us to create the 'Interfaith Moray Growing Grove'. The grove webpage is at: <http://treesforlife.org.uk/plant-trees/grove/7030/>, and individuals or groups can add trees at any time. We already have 23 trees, donated by three individuals and one group. Members of Interfaith Moray are hoping to go out in the field later this year to plant the trees that we have bought.

Please consider supporting our 'Growing Grove'. It costs only £5 to contribute a tree, and you can leave your name, organisation, and a comment. It's an easy way to show support for interfaith and in a way that does something

positive for the environment. Trees are being planted in Scotland, and the idea is to help restore the native Caledonian forest.

We continue our bimonthly meetings with 'Sharing of Faiths'. Attendance is strong with around 15-25 people at each meeting. Our group is diverse and we are enjoying getting to know one another's faith traditions.



EAST KILBRIDE

ENVIRONMENTAL REFLECTION

To mark the end of Scottish Interfaith Week, members of the Muslim, Baha'i and Christian communities in East Kilbride came together on Sunday 29th November, for 'Time for Reflection on Care for the Environment.' With the COP21 Paris summit on climate change happening so close to Scottish Interfaith Week it was an ideal opportunity to reflect upon what the world's faith traditions have to say about the world and humanity's part to play in that.

During the event passages of scripture from the world's faiths were read and there was time for personal reflection using images of the natural world and quotations from secular and religious leaders.

Pupils from Duncanrig Secondary School kindly contributed a series of posters depicting thoughts on the environment from seven of the world's religions and Humanism.

It was interesting to hear from Dr. Lisa Cameron MP, Shadow Spokesperson on Climate Justice, who spoke of the opportunities she had had to meet people in Africa and discover the impact of climate change first hand. She encouraged those gathered to do what they could to reduce their negative impact on the environment. Linda Fabiani MSP also spoke of the important role of faith communities in Scotland with regards to challenging climate change and shared information with the group about the Scottish Government's response to the refugee crisis.



FAITH IN FIFE

‘ THIS IS WHAT INTERFAITH IS ALL ABOUT -

DISCOVERING WHAT WE SHARE IN COMMON. ’



During Fife Diversity Week in September, Fife Interfaith Group organised an event called 'Try Interfaith' which was held in the chapel of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in Dunfermline. A panel represented by four faiths had been organised, with each speaker to give a five-minute talk about their faith and beliefs, followed by a question and answer session. The speakers were Daryl Watson from the Latter Day Saints; Samarah Haq, a Muslim; Behdokht Eliasieh, a Baha'i ; and Colm Wilson, a Quaker.

Many interesting and lively exchanges were made. One in particular was when Samarah was answering a question from a Muslim perspective and Daryl, who identified with what she was saying, said that he would be happy for Samarah to teach that at the Latter Day Saints Sunday School class for young women. This is what Interfaith is all about - discovering what we share in common.

The group then went a short drive to the Dunfermline Mosque where we were welcomed by the Imam and two other members. We were taken on a guided tour of the Mosque that had been refurbished since the last time the Fife Interfaith Group had visited a few years previously. Through hard work and fund raising it now had a large Community Hub area for the Muslims in Dunfermline. The visit finished with the Chairman of the Fife interfaith Group hosting a meeting on how we can help immigrants

who come to Fife settle in and feel at home. It was proposed that the Fife Interfaith Group would work with the Muslim Community to guide and help migrants find their Faith in Fife when they arrived.

About forty people turned out on a cold dark November night to hear the Bishop of St Andrews, Dunblane and Dunkeld, the Rt Rev David Chillingworth, speak on interfaith dialogue at the Holy Trinity Church Hall, Dunfermline. This was the 4th Annual Lecture organised by Fife Interfaith Group as part of Scottish Interfaith Week and was introduced by Francis McFarlane, Chairman of Fife Interfaith. The talk was entitled 'Interfaith Relationships – a challenge for a time like this', the time being not long after the attacks in Paris. The Bishop spent his early years in Northern Ireland just as 'The Troubles' started. He observed first hand the polarising effect of entrenched prejudices and how they grow and take over communities and people's common sense.

He stressed how all religions preach tolerance and peace but these can be twisted to suit the purposes of those who want to dominate and use religious prejudices for their own ends. No one was left in any doubt that tolerance and the understanding of other points of view are the essence of interfaith dialogue and the only way forward. Everyone was moved by the stories he told from his own experiences. He also highlighted the secularisation of Britain and talked about the short film advertising the 'Lord's Prayer' which had been banned by a cinema chain as it 'might offend'.

After the event a vote of thanks was given by Shazia Ahmad, the Vice-Chairman of Fife Interfaith Group, drawing on some of her own experiences of racial tensions. The evening closed as it had begun with refreshments and Fife Interfaith Group wishes to acknowledge the generous donations from Interfaith Scotland and Fife Centre for Equalities to help stage the event.



‘ HE OBSERVED FIRST HAND
THE POLARISING EFFECT OF ENTRENCHED
PREJUDICES AND HOW THEY GROW
AND TAKE OVER COMMUNITIES
AND PEOPLE'S COMMON SENSE. ’

INTERFAITH SCOTLAND SCHOOL INITIATIVES

FAITH SHARING IN SCHOOLS

Interfaith Scotland's 'faith sharing' project brings volunteers to primary and secondary schools all over Scotland to speak about their faith and what it means to them. The volunteers assist the Development Officer, Frances Hume, in delivering 'interfaith days', classes and school assemblies. Since September they have lead sessions for secondary school pupils at Anderson High School in Shetland, Beaconsburst School in Bridge of Allan, James Young High School in Livingston, and St Modan's High School in Stirling. They have also led classes in three primary schools in Shetland, Lincluden Primary School in Dumfries, Muirkirk Primary School in East Ayrshire, Iona Primary School and three primary schools in Spean Bridge and Fortwilliam.



VAF SCHOOLS PROJECT

‘ I THINK INTERFAITH SHOULD BE INCORPORATED INTO SCHOOL MORE AS I FEEL SOCIETY WOULD BENEFIT FROM BEING MORE ACCEPTING OF OTHERS BELIEFS ’

In April 2015, Interfaith Scotland was awarded funding for one year from the Voluntary Action Fund (VAF) to help recruit new volunteers to work alongside our staff in schools. We began by developing a new interfaith dialogue workshop for pupils in S4 – S6 and our aim was to deliver at least 20 sessions across Scotland, with one or two volunteers assisting a member of Interfaith Scotland staff on the day.

We successfully recruited 18 new volunteers from Shetland to Dumfries, and designed a two-day training course which all the volunteers attended either at Aberdeen or Glasgow University. Our volunteers have assisted us in 27 workshops so far. One volunteer said *'In today's current political climate it's important to teach young people to value the diversity individuals of all faiths and none bring to society. That's why I decided to volunteer with the interfaith dialogue project. I really enjoyed the workshop I co-facilitated especially seeing the pupils engage with the material. They were keen to learn and ask questions and practice the techniques provided in the workshop. It would be great if this workshop and project could be rolled out to a wider audience.'* We have engaged with hundreds of pupils, from Lossiemouth to Pollok in Glasgow

and the feedback has been fantastic from the young people. As one pupil commented, *'I think interfaith should be incorporated into school more as I feel society would benefit from being more accepting of others beliefs'*.



Many of the schools we have been into had never worked with Interfaith Scotland before and we will continue to build on these new relationships. According to one of our volunteers, *'Interfaith Scotland was the first group of friends for me in Glasgow. I forgot who was Jewish, Christian, Baha'i or Muslim. We are all friends with one ultimate goal to spread love and respect everywhere. I am lucky to be part of Interfaith Scotland, even if it is a tiny part.'* After the final workshops have been delivered, we will be bringing all the new volunteers together to get their feedback and learnings and to say a big thank you to all of them as we could not have done this without their help and enthusiasm. We are so proud of what our volunteers have helped us to achieve. Many have become good friends and will continue to work with Interfaith Scotland in the future.



SIKH STUDENTS SOCIETY

To celebrate Scottish Interfaith Week, the Sikh Students Society at the University of Strathclyde held an International Night, which was attended by around 25 people of different faiths. Those attending enjoyed lovely Indian food and one of the students spoke about the principles of Sikhism.

THE REAL DEAL

There was standing room only at the Giffnock launch of SCoJeC's new educational resource, *'JOES boxes' – 'Jewish Objects for Education in Scotland'* – which was attended by more than thirty teachers from as far away as Caithness, as well as MSPs Annabel Goldie and Hanzala Malik.

The vision for an educational resource that is *'positive, educational, and memorable'* came from SCoJeC's Education and Community Development Worker Zoe Jacobs, who also co-ordinates our programme of information sessions about Judaism for schools and community groups.

The boxes include a range of objects including a tallit (prayer shawl), siddur (prayer book), and Passover Seder Plate, that can all be used to stimulate interest about Judaism and understanding of the Jewish way of life – as Zoe said at the launch, *'to increase the quality of Jewish education, deepen understanding, and make abstract ideas and people, real and living.'*

This initiative was welcomed by Joe Walker, Senior Education Officer for Religious and Moral Education at Education Scotland, who recently participated in a "Glow Meet" with SCoJeC at Giffnock Synagogue. He described the resources as *'authentic – the real deal'*, and encouraged teachers to use them *'to help young people engage, and ask the deep and meaningful questions.'* He also emphasised the importance of continuing professional development, and highlighted Education Scotland's newly published Professional Learning Paper about Judaism.

Prof Joe Goldblatt, who enthusiastically sourced many of the items in the resource boxes, thanked the many donors, some even from the United States and Canada, who had sent items for the boxes, and singled out his favourites – small Torah scrolls which were donated by the synagogue in Dallas that he attended as a child, and tzedakah (charity) boxes that have been decorated by children from the Edinburgh Liberal Jewish Community.

The highlight of the event was a demonstration by Zoe Jacobs on how the resources can be used to make Judaism real to pupils, many of whom may never have met a Jewish person. She summarised SCoJeC's objective in creating this new resource for Scottish schools saying, *'We hope that these artefacts offer you the chance to explore some of the traditions in Judaism with young people across Scotland, giving them the opportunity to learn about Judaism, explore their own ideas, and to increase tolerance and understanding in schools and in the wider community.'*

The presentation concluded with a lively question and answer session, and an opportunity for everyone to handle the various resources.



Any schools wishing to borrow one of 'JOES Boxes' should contact their local Education Authority.

Interfaith Scotland has seven faith boxes, each containing a variety of religious objects. There is one box for each of the following religions in Scotland: Baha'i faith, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, and Sikhism. These may be borrowed on request.

If anyone is interested in purchasing religious artefacts from any of the major faiths then please go to www.articlesoffaith.co.uk.

MAKE IT HAPPEN

‘LEARNING BECOMES MORE REAL WHEN PUPILS HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO COME INTO CONTACT WITH INDIVIDUALS WHO PRACTISE THEIR BELIEFS’



As a qualified Religious and Moral Education teacher I have always been interested in understanding my own faith and the faiths of others. At the root of it all I think our values are very similar. I have learned this from being involved in interfaith activities for 30 years. I count the Muslims, Buddhists, Christians, Jews and Humanists whom I know, as my friends, as they do me. I would not be without them in passing on their wisdom and experience to my pupils and colleagues alike.

Pupils at Albyn School have regular opportunities to meet people from different faiths and beliefs as well as visit places of worship and attend meetings where they can appreciate the different views and opinions of others and share their own as well. Here are just a few insights into some of topics and issues they have been doing:

- Last school session a few pupils from Upper 1 visited the synagogue in Aberdeen and learned a lot about Judaism from Debby Taylor.
- Part of the course in Upper 1 or 2 is to study Islam and at the end of this unit Mumtaz Jaswinder comes to the school with one or two Muslim friends to answer questions which the students have about the Muslim faith. According to Mumtaz, 'Learning becomes more real when pupils have the opportunity to come into contact with individuals who practise their beliefs and do the things that they do. I have always found the pupils engage well in discussions and ask relevant questions which help enhance deeper understanding and reflection. This enhances the learning process as they move beyond the stereotypical perceptions and are able to form objective opinions. I think this adds a very positive value to the education they receive in school'.
- One year we had a really interesting conversation between an Imam and a Pastor, who opened the door of his church for the neighbouring Muslims to pray. The pupils were asked to think and discuss whether Muslims and Christians should or should not pray together.

- As a result of the earthquake in Nepal and as Upper 3 were looking at Buddhism, we had a visit from Sujan from the Varapunya Buddhist Centre, who spoke very movingly about his beliefs about suffering as a Buddhist monk as well as how this event had affected his family in Nepal.
- Every year Upper 4 pupils choose a moral issue to research, where they must find out religious and non-religious views. At the end of this unit my friends from different faiths and belief groups come to our 'marketplace' in the library. There the students are free to move around and ask their opinions on their issue of choice which this year has included stem cell research, abortion, gender roles, capital punishment and euthanasia.
- Upper 5 pupils chose to find out more about radicalisation, so we had a very enlightening talk from the Imam, Dr Emad Jodeh, about the different reasons why people become radicalised.

However, the most important visits and visitors and work that has been done, to me, is around the Holocaust. We have taken part in the Lessons from Auschwitz Project for several years. The project takes pupils to see Auschwitz-Birkenau where many people lost their lives. I had the opportunity to go there three years ago and as a result I planned a silent walk across the Bridges of Dee to represent the genocides which have taken place. People from different faiths, continents and orientation took part in readings on one of the bridges and then we shared breakfast together. When I originally asked a German lady if she would play the harp for us at the end of the walk, she said "but I am German, will that matter?" I said, 'No of course not, that is exactly what we



are trying to do - to overcome this.' I then introduced her to a Jewish lady and it turned out they both play the harp and planned to play together afterwards. This story shows what can and should happen- and we can make it happen- so that it does not happen again, in our land. Last year pupils and staff did pop-up readings in the public spaces of the school for Holocaust Memorial Day. This year we have had two important visits - a poet, Charles Whittaker who was commissioned to write a poem for HMD in 2014 and 2015 and most importantly Harry Bibring, a Holocaust survivor in his 91st year, whose impact none of us will ever forget.

*Patricia Findlay
Teacher of RMPS, Albyn School*

‘PUPILS AT ALBYN SCHOOL HAVE REGULAR OPPORTUNITIES TO MEET PEOPLE FROM DIFFERENT FAITHS AND BELIEFS’



INTERFAITH SCOTLAND

WOMEN'S EVENTS

INTERFAITH SCOTLAND CONTINUES TO HOLD DIALOGUE SESSIONS THROUGHOUT SCOTLAND FOR WOMEN OF ALL FAITHS AND NONE.

WOMEN'S INTERFAITH FAIR

Interfaith Scotland teamed up with Interfaith Glasgow, the Scottish Refugee Council and Women of Faith and Community (Glasgow) to host a Women's Interfaith Fair in June 2015 at St Francis Centre, Glasgow. The event was to celebrate 'Refugee Festival Scotland 2015'. One hundred women enjoyed a variety of stalls and workshops ranging from dialogue to arts and crafts, Arabic calligraphy, learning African songs with the Waverley Care Voice of Hope Choir, exploring religious objects, storytelling and trying on clothes from different cultures and faiths.



HEALTH AND WELLBEING FOR BODY AND SOUL

In September 2015 the women of Sikh Sanjog in Edinburgh kindly hosted one of our dialogue meetings on the theme of 'Health and Wellbeing for Body and Soul'. Sikh Sanjog is a charity that was set up by Sikh women in Edinburgh with a vision to inspire and empower Sikh and other minority ethnic women. It aims to advance women's life opportunities through the building of skills, confidence and social inclusion. The meeting took place at 'Punjabi Junction', a community café on Leith Walk set up and run by women from the Sikh Sanjog.

After sharing a delicious vegetarian curry prepared by the Sikh ladies, participants discussed the theme of the evening. They explored the links between spirituality, health and wellbeing, both in a healthcare context and in people's individual life experiences. 'Spiritual needs' are recognised within the NHS alongside physical needs and these can include a sense of meaning and purpose in life and a sense of belonging and connection to others and to something greater than oneself. Texts from three different faiths were explored, including a quote from the Christian scriptures, 'even though our physical being is gradually decaying, yet our spiritual being is renewed day after day', and from the Baha'i faith, 'We should all visit the sick...when they are suffering it is a real help and benefit'. Those gathered also participated in a Buddhist 'Metta' meditation, focussing on 'radiating kindness' to others and looked at how assisting the health and wellbeing of others can also have a positive impact on one's own sense of wellbeing. The evening concluded with an activity involving each participant writing a postcard to themselves with thoughts on how they would contribute to the wellbeing of themselves and others in the future.



INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Interfaith Scotland hosted a women's dialogue to celebrate International Women's Day at the Stirling Highland Hotel on 8th March 2016 bringing together 45 women from seven faiths alongside S6 pupils from St Modan's High School.

CARE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

During Scottish Interfaith Week in November, Interfaith Scotland hosted a women's dialogue at Birnam Arts Centre on the theme of interfaith week, 'Care for the Environment'. The event was held in partnership with CEMVO Scotland. Frances Hume and Zarina Ahmed outlined the main issues around the effects of climate change and what each faith has to say about our role in protecting the environment.



NEWS FROM LOCAL WOMEN'S INTERFAITH GROUPS

UNITING WOMEN OF FAITH

Women of Faith and Community is a group open to all women of different faith backgrounds who come together to unite. The group is based in Glasgow and the monthly group is really diverse and led by the women who attend. There are activities such as discussion, visiting religious places and various workshops on different themes.

Women of Faith and Community linked in with Scottish Interfaith Week in 2015 holding an event at the Kibble Palace at the Botanic Gardens in Glasgow. There were 25 women who came along to share the day. Those gathered read quotes from the scriptures of the different faith traditions, and explored what they had to say about caring for the environment and we talked about the common themes that emerged. Later a tour of the Kibble Palace gave an insight into the diverse and exotic plants from around the world.

‘WE TALKED ABOUT
THE COMMON THEMES
THAT EMERGED’

Other events organised by Women of Faith and Community have included a class on flower arranging and a workshop run by WSREC on the topic of food. Meetings usually run on the first Monday of the month from 9.30am - 11.30am but this can vary depending on bank holidays so please drop us an email if you want to come along or be placed on our email list: womenoffaith@hotmail.co.uk.

Women of Faith and Community (Glasgow)



DEEPENING SPIRITUAL UNDERSTANDING

On 18th November 2015 the Edinburgh Women's Interfaith Group (EWIG) celebrated Scottish Interfaith Week at the Methodist Church in Edinburgh. The theme of this event, 'Caring for the Environment' provided a great focus and opportunity for local women to get together and promote understanding and co-operation between people of different religious faith communities. Over twenty women, individuals and groups, took part in this event. It allowed us to share an understanding of our personal and inner faith journeys towards greater spiritual understanding.

After a delicious finger buffet, which included traditional homemade Indian sweets, we welcomed our guest speaker, Jan Williamson who works for Streetwork, an Edinburgh based charity that works with the homeless. She shared her experience of the work and services that Streetwork provide for homeless young people in Edinburgh and Lothian and their commitment to never ignore people in need. This was followed by an engaging Question and Answer session.

Victoria, from the Himalayan Centre for Arts and Culture, talked about 'Home Energy Visits'. They are provided free and aim to help households become more environmentally friendly by reducing the amount of energy they use at home, which makes up 25% of the average person's carbon footprint. These visits, which are carried out by trained members of their team, entail a quick energy audit to provide practical and tailored tips on how to be more energy efficient at home. They also help households find out if

they're eligible for any grants or schemes that may contribute towards the costs of any home improvements or heating costs. The Centre provides a free starter pack and the possibility of borrowing an Energy Monitor to track one's carbon emissions. More information can be found at <http://www.himalayancentre.org/>

It was a really enjoyable day and a great success. The EWIG are very grateful to **Interfaith Scotland** for their support and funding of this event.

Edinburgh Women's Interfaith Group



EWIG group usually meets on the third Wednesday of the month from 7pm to 9pm in Edinburgh. EWIG meetings are hosted by the various faith communities.

REMEMBRANCE:

On 27th January Scotland, and the UK, remembered the Holocaust and other genocides. Given the challenging financial situation in the UK, some may question whether the hosting of memorial meetings across the country is a good use of Scottish or UK Government resources. Many may think that life is depressing enough without having to remember that the last 100 years has witnessed some states sponsoring the planned, systematic mass murder of their own populations including Turkey, Germany, Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and in the Darfur region of the Sudan. Millions die every year from hunger, disease and war so why pause on this day in January and remember the Holocaust and other genocides?

In his book 'Rwanda and Genocide in the 20th Century', former secretary-general of Medecins Sans Frontieres, Alain Destexhe, says: '*Genocide is distinguishable from all other crimes by the motivation behind it. Genocide is a crime on a different scale to all other crimes against humanity and implies an intention to completely exterminate the chosen group. Genocide is therefore both the gravest and greatest of the crimes against humanity.*'

The UN Convention on Genocide came into effect in January 1951 and it is estimated that 20 million men, women and children have died as a result of the Holocaust and other genocides in just over 100 years. Despite a UN Convention; such shocking figures; and the now overused and under implemented words 'never again' the genocidal process is still allowed to develop.

So what is the point of remembering? Is remembrance enough? Remembering without understanding the process of genocide might well make us feel marginally better but will it prevent further genocides happening? Surely we must find better ways of learning from remembrance and from challenging the processes of genocide whenever and wherever we see them beginning to take root.

Gregory Stanton, President of Genocide watch has identified 'ten stages of genocide'; in each of these stages he outlined

what can be done to stop the process and stated that '*ultimately the best antidote to genocide is popular education and the development of social and cultural tolerance for diversity*'. He further identified that '*the movement that will end genocide must come from popular resistance to every form of discrimination; dehumanization, hate speech, and formation of hate groups. It must rise from each of us who have the courage to challenge discrimination, hatred, and tyranny*'.

**‘SO WHY PAUSE ON
THIS DAY IN JANUARY AND
REMEMBER THE HOLOCAUST
AND OTHER GENOCIDES?’**

Education is often put forward as a tool for building a fairer society but I would ask the question 'education for what?' The Nazi's were extremely well educated; educational games were developed for children that encouraged hatred of the Jews; scientists developed the equipment of the death camps; social scientists developed the racist theories that underpinned the Holocaust; even the cultural education of classical music, literature and the arts were used as tools of propaganda against the Jews. So the question again has to be asked 'education for what'? Do we need to have, right at the heart of our education system, the 'social and cultural tolerance for diversity' that is identified by Gregory Stanton as the 'best antidote' for genocide? As Director of Interfaith Scotland, I often ask are children learning the tools needed to successfully talk about difference and to do so with respect and openness?

As adults how influenced are all of us by what we read, hear and see in the media? The media had a powerful role to play in the dehumanizing process of genocide. So are we constantly vigilant and questioning of the stories told in our national media? We just have to think of some of the shocking negativity towards refugees reported in the press. As far back as 2010 a Red Cross report stated that 72% of respondents in a poll said newspaper reporting about asylum seekers and refugees was negative and the public most readily associated the word scroungers with refugees. No one can have missed the extreme language used by Katie Hopkins, columnist for the Sun Newspaper, when she described migrants as 'cockroaches' and 'feral' – similar language used in the Rwandan genocide! Thank God the decent British public rose up and condemned her, demanding an apology.



TO LEARN, TO UNDERSTAND, TO CHALLENGE

‘DO WE NEED TO HAVE, RIGHT AT THE HEART OF OUR EDUCATION THE ‘SOCIAL AND CULTURAL TOLERANCE FOR DIVERSITY’ THAT IS IDENTIFIED BY GREGORY STANTON AS THE ‘BEST ANTIDOTE’ FOR GENOCIDE?’

On Holocaust Memorial Day, Scotland remembered the Holocaust and other genocides. It embraced the theme for 2016 – *‘Don’t Stand By’* and welcomed to Scotland Mukesh Kapila, the former UN Ambassador to the Sudan who had the courage to blow the whistle on the genocide taking place in Darfur. Scotland also welcomed Inge Auerbacher, who as a child survived Terezin a concentration camp in Czechoslovakia. Of the 15,000 children who entered only 1% survived. Mukesh and Inge, both know only too well that doing nothing to prevent discrimination, hatred and intolerance has terrible, unthinkable consequences. Inge was a child in November 1938 when she witnessed first-hand ‘Kristallnacht’. She saw how Nazis torched synagogues, vandalized Jewish homes, schools and businesses, killed close to 100 Jews and in the aftermath sent 30,000 Jewish men to concentration camps.

Mukesh witnessed first-hand the atrocities committed in Darfur. In his book *‘Against a Tide of Evil’* he tells the moving story of how in March 2004 he was sitting in his office in Khartoum writing a report for the UN about the situation unfolding in Darfur when he heard a commotion outside his office. A tall woman in torn, dirty clothes fought her way in to speak with him. Her name was Aisha. He offered her a chair but, fearing she would spoil it, she sat cross-legged on the floor. She had travelled from North Darfur, from a village near the town of Tawila, and now she told him her story. She had been in Tawila with her family on market day when Arab militia – the Janjaweed – on horseback and in vehicles stormed the marketplace. They rounded up the women and girls and raped them systematically *‘like it was a production line in a factory’*. Her father, husband and two sons were in the crowd as she was raped repeatedly until she passed out. Huts and trees were set alight. In the aftermath, she couldn’t find her family and fled 1,000km to Khartoum. This was a testimony from one brave victim, sitting on the floor of his

office and it was the catalyst he needed to blow the whistle, to defy his superiors and throw the story open, telling the world that *‘the first genocide of the 21st century’* was taking place in Sudan.

In an interview with Alice Wyllie of the Scotsman Mukesh said that *‘the higher you climb in office, the more distant you become - the numbers are there but in a way the bigger the numbers, the more abstract they become. In Darfur, meeting the individual victims and perpetrators, I began to realise that each little mini situation in the big drama was utterly unique. This really came home to me when I returned to Rwanda... for the first time in 18 years. I looked at a room full of skulls and bones and, with my medical knowledge I could tell how each individual had died; a blow on the head, a machete in the back of the neck. And I realised that amidst the hundreds of thousands, each death was unique and hence each survival was unique. From that grew the idea that I wasn’t interested in speaking to the intellectuals or the policy makers. I was interested in speaking to ordinary people’*.

It was the ordinary people of Scotland that Mukesh and Inge talked to - so yes Scotland will remember but it will do so much more. In the week that followed a befitting national memorial event was held in Falkirk; hundreds of local memorial events took place across Scotland; thousands of school children learned about the Holocaust and other genocides; films were shown; dialogue events took place; public lectures at Universities across the country were held - and we will not forget; we will honour the victims; and we will do what we can to understand, to learn, to speak out, and to say very loudly and very clearly that yes the Holocaust and other genocides are worth remembering.

*Dr Maureen Sier,
Director of Interfaith Scotland*



'DON'T STAND BY'

Once again it was a pleasure for Interfaith Scotland to facilitate the Holocaust Memorial 2016 event. Interfaith Scotland was honoured to work with a dedicated team who assisted in organising a further 15 HMD events surrounding the national memorial. Falkirk Council was our partner Local Authority for hosting the Civic reception and National Memorial event and we are grateful to the Provost of Falkirk Council for his support.

The two international guests for the week (23-30 January) were Mukesh Kapila the former UN Ambassador to the Sudan and whistle blower on the genocide taking place in the west of Sudan in the Darfur region; and Inge Auerbachar a child survivor of the Terezin ghetto.

24 January

Glasgow Film Theatre: 'The Devil Came on Horseback'

50 people attended a screening of 'The Devil Came on Horseback' and Q & A with Mukesh Kapila afterwards.

24 January

Interfaith Scotland's Members Dialogue event

Members, Associate Members and Friends of Interfaith Scotland were able to enjoy an intimate engagement with Mukesh and Inge held at the Garnethill Synagogue. After refreshments and a tour of the Synagogue there was an opportunity for dialogue on the theme of HMD 2016 – 'Don't Stand By'.

25 January

School events: Shawlands Academy and St Ninian's High School

Inge Auerbachar spoke to senior pupils at St Ninian's High School in Giffnock; she told her life story and described her time in Terezin. It was a very moving and personal account and pupils had the opportunity to ask her questions.

25 January

Public Lecture and book signing by Mukesh Kapila; Glasgow Caledonian University

Over 150 people attended the public lecture and book signing. Mukesh gave a riveting presentation on the historic and continuing situation in Darfur and this was followed by an intense period of Q & A.

26 January

St Mungos School event Falkirk

Mukesh and Inge were invited to St Mungo's High School in Falkirk where they met with the staff responsible for the Lessons from Auschwitz programme, prior to presenting to an audience of nearly 200 senior pupils.

Mukesh and Inge were shown some of the projects which the school have been involved in this year, which included a whole school memory quilt, where each form class were given a victim of Genocide and were asked to write a message or design on a piece of material for their victim – these were all then sewn together and are a lasting reminder to the pupils.

Following the talk, our guests were thanked by the school's Lessons from Auschwitz ambassadors for this year, Robbyn Todd (S6) and Aidan Callaghan (S5) and were presented with an engraved Quaich to commemorate their visit.

26 January

'World First' Polmont Young Offenders Institute

Around 80 guests were welcomed to Polmont Young Offenders for a 'world first' Holocaust Memorial Event. Many young men at Polmont had been studying the Holocaust and subsequent genocides and a group of 12 had worked tirelessly to create an exhibition and to become Holocaust Memorial Youth Champions. Each young man was awarded a Youth Champion Certificate.

The artistic presentations were followed by three moving talks given by Mukesh Kapila, Inge Auerbachar and Claire McCauley (from Scottish Action for Refugees) and the evening ended with a reflective moment prepared by the Polmont Chaplaincy team.

27 January

Falkirk Council School and Community event

A diverse schools and community memorial event was held in the morning at Falkirk Town Hall with around 400 school children and community members present. Speakers included Mukesh Kapila, Inge Auerbachar and Umutesi Stewart (a Rwandan genocide survivor living in Scotland) along with community representatives and school children.

27 January

Darfur and Holocaust Exhibition hosted by Falkirk Council Community Development Officer, Charlie Hastie

Falkirk Council facilitated a three day public exhibition from the 21st - 23rd of January within the Howgate shopping centre. On display for the first time in Scotland were 10 of the original child drawings from Darfur loaned from Waging Peace and also artwork focussing on the Holocaust produced for HMD 2016 by local schools and community members.

On the 27th of January the exhibition was installed at Falkirk Town Hall for the Schools and National HMD event. Overall including these events and the public exhibition over 1000 people in Falkirk were made more aware of the Holocaust and subsequent genocides.





NATIONAL MEMORIAL EVENT SCOTLAND 27TH JANUARY 2016



Once again the National Memorial Event for Scotland was a moving and appropriate event. The Masters of Ceremonies were two pupils from Falkirk Schools. After a warm welcome by Provost Pat Reid, Mr. Alex Neil, Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Communities and Pensioners Rights, spoke inspiringly about Scotland's commitment to fairness and justice, its investment in educating the next generation about the horrors of the Holocaust and subsequent genocides and how to tackle discrimination and prejudice wherever they find it. The evening continued with the recital of the poem 'I am a star' written by Inge Auerbachar and was immediately followed by a vivid presentation by Inge of her experience as a child victim of the Holocaust.

Falkirk Primary School Choir contributed with some beautiful singing and this was followed by a short film commissioned by The Holocaust Memorial Day Trust on the theme of HMD 2016 – 'Don't Stand By'. Dr Mukesh Kapila then spoke movingly of the on-going genocide in Darfur and raised a call to action, not just to governments but to all of us wherever we are confronted by injustice.

After a beautiful rendition of a lullaby by Gideon Klein on the violin, memorial candles were lit and a Jewish prayer recited by Rabbi Rubin from Giffnock.



FURTHER EVENTS

28 January

**Glasgow Schools' event, City Chambers Glasgow
(385 pupils)**

The annual Glasgow Schools Holocaust Memorial Event was held in the City Chambers and was hosted by 2 pupils from John Paul Academy and involved schools from across the city sharing their learning on the Holocaust and subsequent genocides.

28 January

**Glasgow Schools Conference, St. Mungo Museum of
Religious Life and Art**

Museums Learning in Glasgow held a one-day conference for young people from four Glasgow secondary schools, St Mungo's Academy, Smithycroft Secondary, Holyrood Secondary and St Roch's Secondary. The young people debated and explored the reasons for genocide and also heard Inge Auerbacher and Dr Mukesh Kapila tell their stories.

“THE YOUNG PEOPLE
DEBATED AND EXPLORED
THE REASONS FOR
GENOCIDE”



FURTHER EVENTS

28 January

Edinburgh School event

(Edinburgh Interfaith Association)

HMD Edinburgh took place in Firrhill Hill High School. This event attracted an audience of over 350 people. Guests were invited to visit the Anne Frank exhibition and were asked to donate old shoes which formed a Holocaust memorial during the event.

The main contributions came from Holocaust survivor Ziggy Shipper and the human rights speaker Mukesh Kapila. Ziggy's talk reflected on his experiences of the holocaust and the lessons that could be applied from this. Mukesh, presented a call for action, to challenge the audience and politicians to do more to stop present genocides and conflicts today. The prayer for the dead was given by Rabbi Stephen Fuchs, former President of the World Union for Progressive Judaism and representatives were asked to light a candle for all those who had passed away in the holocaust and subsequent genocides.

The event reminded us that with growing levels of Islamophobia and anti-Semitism it is important not to just 'Stand by' but to challenge prejudice and discrimination where it can be found before it takes hold to dangerous levels as history has tragically taught us



29 January

Parliamentary Visit with Inge Auerbachar and Mukesh Kapila

Inge and Mukesh went with Interfaith Scotland's Parliamentary Officer, Paul Daly, for a tour of the Scottish Parliament building conducted by Stewart Maxwell MSP. Earlier in the week Mr. Maxwell had lead a debate in the parliament to commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day, during which the work of Interfaith Scotland and partners was noted.

29 January

Shabbat Dinner with the Jewish Community in Giffnock

The Giffnock synagogue congregation held a Friday night Shabbat dinner and this year it was to honour Inge and Mukesh. A traditional Sabbath meal was enjoyed by all and both Inge and Mukesh said a few words to those who attended. Rabbi Rubin also spoke about HMD and after dinner led everyone in a very lively and joyous grace after meal song. This event was a truly befitting end to a highly successful week.



“ IT IS IMPORTANT NOT TO JUST ‘STAND BY’ BUT TO CHALLENGE PREJUDICE AND DISCRIMINATION WHERE IT CAN BE FOUND BEFORE IT TAKES HOLD TO DANGEROUS LEVELS AS HISTORY HAS TRAGICALLY TAUGHT US. ”

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

The Scottish Alul Bayt Society became a member of Interfaith Scotland last year. It is a faith-based organisation meeting the needs of the Shia Muslim community here in Scotland as well as engaging with other faith communities and society in general.

Monday 24 November 2015 saw the launch of the Scottish Ahlul Bayt Society's annual blood donation drive in Edinburgh for the Scottish National Blood Transfusion Service (SNBTS). **The cause is rooted in three aims:-**

- ***Saving lives***
- ***Public outreach - to urge people to become regular donors, and caring for the human family***
- ***Promoting peace - harmony and fellowship with all segments of society***

This initiative was supported in a friendship of interfaith with the Bishop of Edinburgh, The Archbishop and Metropolitan of St Andrews & Edinburgh, the Rev. Maud Robinson from the



Unitarian Church and Iain Stewart from the Edinburgh Inter Faith Association. The support, which was greatly appreciated, demonstrated a belief that each individual can make a difference.

A huge thanks to all those who donated: you cannot be thanked enough, be content knowing that people, your brothers and sisters in humanity, are still alive because of your kind gift.

SPIRITUAL NEEDS

Being unwell often makes you feel removed from people and wanting to retreat into yourself. Friends and family, knowing something is wrong may either steer clear or smother you with sympathy. In hospital it can be even more of a challenge as you find yourself in a strange place, where people do things to you and you may feel dreadful. You may think that things are out of control, away from the normal.

At such times some of us rely on our faith. No matter how bad things get, we believe there is a plan, reassuring though never easy or simple. We're afraid of what's happening to our bodies, what might happen. We think about leaving loved ones behind and things half finished. We get angry and fearful and sad, and our thoughts and feelings churn every which way. We often feel alone - why me? why not me?

**‘INTERFAITH, THEN,
OFFERS SPACE FOR
COMPASSIONATE
UNDERSTANDING
AND EXPLORATION’**

Healthcare chaplains, and the many volunteers and hospital visitors who work with them, have unique access to people in hospital. In the NHS and beyond, there are representatives of all main faiths and beliefs, many smaller ones, and some from a secular and humanist background. Hospital patients

can ask to see them and can ask for specific sacramental things too. However, I feel that many are not taking a specifically interfaith line where connections between faiths and beliefs, and similarities of view and emphasis, can be compassionately explored and explained.

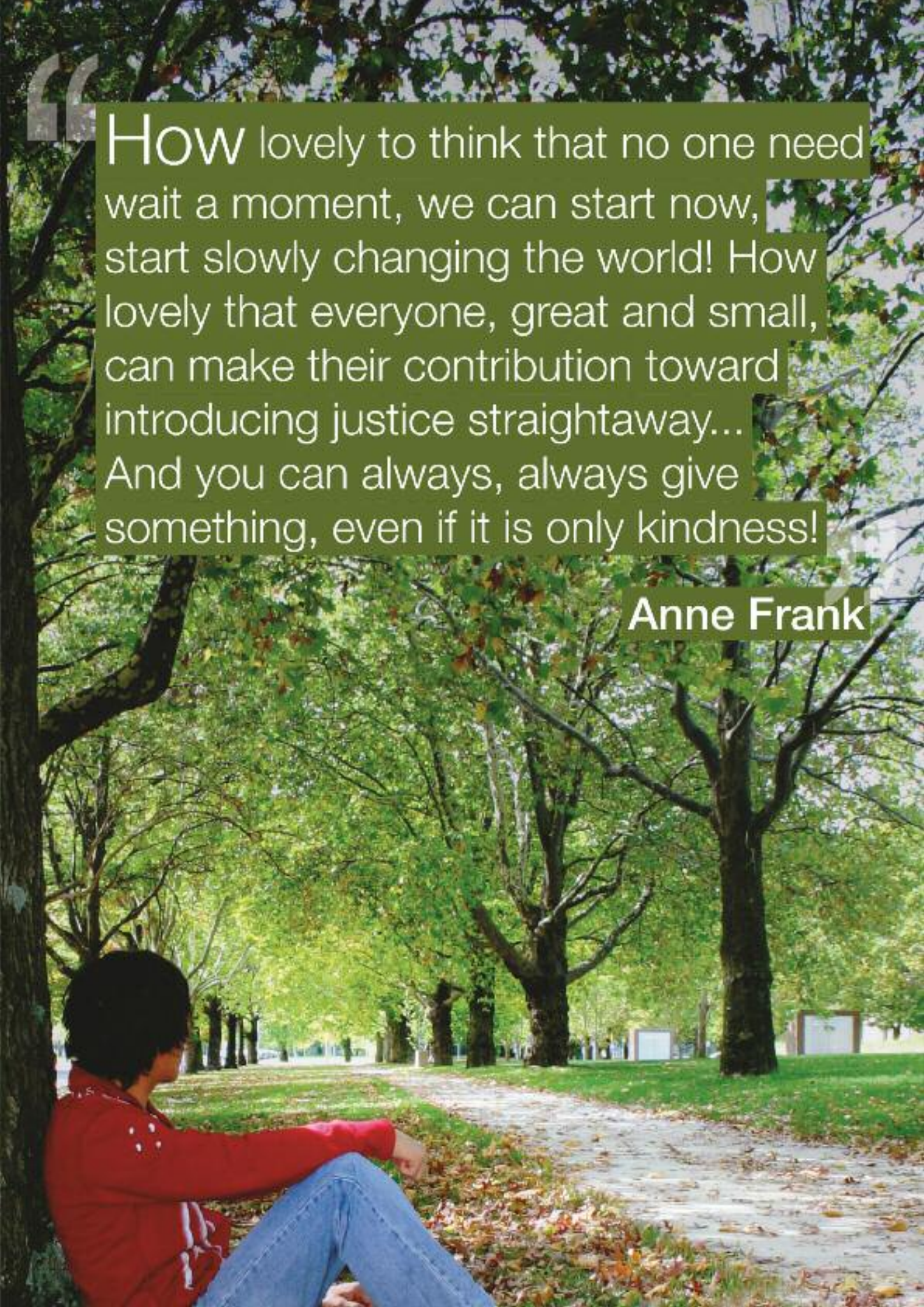
Many patients have no formal faith or belief framework or 'family'; many are searching for meaning and acknowledge that some of this meaning is spiritual. Much healthcare chaplaincy work rightly calls itself spiritual care for this reason - it is inclusive, porous, willing to come alongside, above all at times of crisis like being in hospital.

The interfaith approach has a key role here. Chaplains and volunteers willing and able to take this approach can - at best - deal with the central faith and human issues of each faith. But they can also deal with what it's like to be spiritual, to have a faith or no specific one.

This opens up the conversation patients can have when they are ill in hospital, wondering what the doctors will find next, how long they'll be ill and what the future holds, and how on earth they'll ever get back to normal life. These are all human hopes and fears, harder to deal with when we're unwell and when hope seems lean. Interfaith, then, offers space for compassionate understanding and exploration, above all for patients in search of 'conversation' rather than 'conversion'. It's a stance that doesn't come with strings, and patients like that.

Dr Stuart Hannabuss

*Member, Aberdeen Interfaith Group, and Honorary Chaplain,
University of Aberdeen*

A photograph of a person with dark hair, wearing a red jacket and blue jeans, sitting on a path covered with fallen autumn leaves. The person is leaning against a tree on the left and looking down the path. The path is lined with tall trees that have green and yellowing leaves. In the background, there are some buildings and a clear sky.

“How lovely to think that no one need wait a moment, we can start now, start slowly changing the world! How lovely that everyone, great and small, can make their contribution toward introducing justice straightaway... And you can always, always give something, even if it is only kindness!

Anne Frank