

# Interfaith Scotland

Newsletter 2018: Issue 30

Making a Difference through Dialogue



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### An Interfaith Place of Worship

School pupils from all over Scotland design an interfaith place of worship for the 21st Century



# Editorial

**Interfaith Scotland has successfully secured funding to engage more young people in interfaith dialogue. Involving young people in Interfaith Scotland has long been a dream of ours and I am thrilled to announce this news! Our success in engaging with young people during 2017 has no doubt assisted in securing this funding. With Scotland's Year of Young People upon us, we hope to place young people at the heart of what we do in 2018 and beyond.**

Michael Hail, from youth leadership organisation Dare2Lead, will be our project leader for setting up the National Interfaith Youth Forum. We hope this forum will design youth-led interfaith events and have a knock-on effect in inspiring young people to engage in interfaith dialogue, in their faith communities and local interfaith groups. We have also co-opted a young person of faith to the Board of Interfaith Scotland, Ali-Abbas Hussnain, who is the Treasurer and Youth Strategic Director of the Scottish Ahlul Bayt Society.

We are privileged to have had an international intern, Simon Wiegand from Germany, working with us since July 2017. Simon has thoroughly enjoyed getting to know the local interfaith groups of Scotland, and assisting the UK Interfaith Network in updating their 'Connect' booklet which seeks to involve young people in interfaith dialogue.

Further youth engagement in 2017 and 2018 includes the Rwandan Muslim/Christian Dialogue exchange that we co-facilitated with the Church of Scotland; the development of an inclusive youth work training programme hosted in partnership with five European countries through Erasmus funding; and our National Youth Conference in partnership with the youth-led St Andrews Coexistence Initiative. I think it is safe to say that our desire for youth engagement has been fulfilled in 2017 and will no doubt be enhanced in 2018.

At the grassroots level, interfaith engagement continues to flourish in Scotland and this newsletter is a testament to the commitment of local faith communities and interfaith groups throughout the nation. We continue to be grateful for the Scottish Government's commitment to dialogue, equality and human rights, and we appreciate the annual summit with the First Minister of Scotland, held in partnership with the Religious Leaders Forum.

The Interfaith Scotland staff, Board, and volunteers feel privileged to engage in such important work and look forward to spending time with many of you over the coming year. I have just returned from New Zealand where I have been showcasing the interfaith work taking place in Scotland and I think all those who support our work can justifiably feel proud of Scotland and its interfaith story – I know I do.

**Dr Maureen Sier, Director**

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# Annual General Meeting and Public Talk

Over 50 people attended the annual public talk this year which was given by Reverend Dr Kathy Galloway and focussed on 'Faith in Gender Justice'. Kathy Galloway is a practical theologian, activist and writer. She was ordained as a minister of the Church of Scotland in 1977, and was Head of Christian Aid Scotland between 2009 and 2016.

Kathy was formerly Warden of Iona Abbey, and Leader of the Iona Community from 2002 to 2009, the first woman to be elected to the post. She has also worked for Church Action on Poverty as their Link worker for Scotland. She is the author of a dozen books on justice issues, spirituality and poetry and her writings have been widely anthologised. Kathy was one of 1000 women worldwide who were collectively nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2005, and she has an honorary doctorate from Glasgow University. It was an honour for Interfaith Scotland to have Kathy come and give our annual lecture.

The topic was very hard hitting as Kathy shared with us statistics and stories from around the world of the hardships and discrimination

that many women, in fact too many women, face. Kathy challenged the diverse faith communities present to support gender justice and live up to the positive messages within their traditions that support equality. After the presentation there was an opportunity for everyone present to dialogue on the topic. The AGM took place after the annual lecture. Larry Blance from the Buddhist community was thanked for his service as Chair of Interfaith Scotland for the last three years and Alan Kay from the Jewish Community was welcomed as the new Chair of the Board. Jeremy Fox, who represented the Baha'i Community on the Board, and Marlene Finlayson, who represented local interfaith groups, were also thanked for their services to the Board.



## Annual Networking Seminar for Local Interfaith Groups

The annual networking seminar for local interfaith groups took place at Interfaith Scotland's Dialogue Centre in Glasgow on 21st August 2017. There are 20 local interfaith groups in Scotland and the seminar provides an excellent opportunity for members of these groups to share good practice and discuss issues that affect them. Presentations were given by members of Dumfries and Galloway Interfaith Group, Borders Interfaith Group and Edinburgh Interfaith Association. Interfaith Scotland's director, Dr Maureen Sier, outlined possible responses to crisis situations to ensure the safety and security of our faith communities. Stephen Bullock from Education Scotland looked at the topic of 'Creativity' to open discussion on the Scottish Interfaith Week theme of 'Creativity and the Arts'. The new Scottish Interfaith Week website was also launched.





# Members Meetings

## Spirituality and Dementia Dialogue

Interfaith Scotland in partnership with Faith in Older People, hosted a dialogue on 27th April 2017 on the theme of Spiritual Care for People Living with Dementia in Scotland at our dialogue centre in Glasgow. There was a presentation of findings from the spiritual care survey of people living with dementia in Scottish care homes given by Simon Jaquet, Director of SJCS followed by dialogue.

## The Art of Connection

Interfaith Scotland, the Scottish Refugee Council, Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees and the Mental Health Foundation hosted an event in the Scottish Parliament on 21st June sponsored by Bill Kidd MSP and in celebration of Refugee Festival Scotland 2017. Interfaith Scotland brought renowned artist Hannah Rose Thomas to Scotland and participants heard about how she connected through her art with refugees in Jordan and Calais. There was an opportunity to view Hannah Rose's artwork alongside the artwork of refugees connected with the Mental Health Foundation's Refugee Programme.



Hannah Rose sewed together a tapestry of paintings by Syrian girls living in Za'atari Camp. The most common image they painted was home, highlighting their longing for the war to end so that they can return to Syria. To the right is a poem by a Syrian girl about her beloved home.

*Take care of my house,  
I left in it feelings of safety  
and security.  
Don't mess with my closet,  
It has my clothes drenched with  
the smell of memories that no one  
else knows  
And pieces of paper that have no  
value except to myself.  
Don't lift my pillow,  
I hid under it my tears in times  
of sadness*

*And creatively created many dreams.  
Don't change the order of the  
books on my bookshelf,  
On their pages notes I have  
written that no one will  
understand like I do.  
As for my desk, don't touch it,  
But leave it with the mess  
I make while I study.  
Please keep my traces in my  
beloved home,  
I will be reunited with it soon.*

## The Great Get Together

Interfaith Scotland organised an afternoon tea for the Great Get Together in memory of the murdered MP Jo Cox. Around 50 people graced the Dialogue Centre and demonstrated that we will stand up to hatred and bigotry and continue to work for the betterment of society. Simple dialogue menus were created and tea and cakes were served in an informal atmosphere.



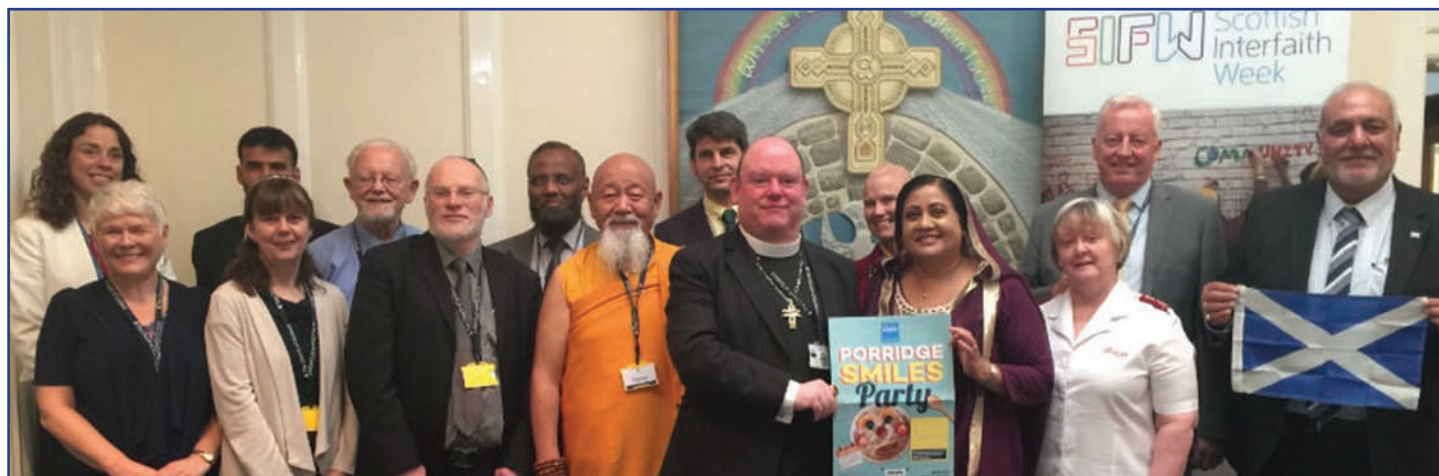
## Identity and Belonging

On 17th October 2017 Interfaith Scotland held a national dialogue on Identity and Belonging in partnership with Faith in Older People, Stonewall Scotland and Edinburgh University Chaplaincy in Linlithgow. The aim of the conference was to explore where our sense of identity and belonging come from and to look at ways in which religion, culture, sexual orientation, class and family influence our sense of being human and our attitudes to society.

Fundamental to our spiritual, emotional and physical well-being is our sense of personal identity and where we feel we belong. We often make assumptions about where other people belong based on, for example, work, class or religion. We need to challenge these assumptions and make space to consider what we as individuals understand as our own identity and how this is affirmed by those around us. This collaborative conference explored the issues from different perspectives – faith and culture, end of life, sexuality and spirituality and how they interlink. Key note speakers included Maureen O'Neill from Faith in Older People, Dr Maureen Sier from Interfaith Scotland, Reverend Dr Harriet Harris the Edinburgh University Chaplain and Sophie Bridger from Stonewall Scotland.

As part of this conference Lord Bracadale also gave an overview of the consultation on Hate Crime Legislation in Scotland.





# Religious Leaders Meetings 2017

The regular meetings of the Religious Leaders Forum in Scotland, supported by Interfaith Scotland are an important aspect of the interfaith landscape of Scotland. These meetings, where leaders come together in friendship, give a very strong message to religious communities across Scotland and to the wider public that interfaith engagement is healthy and an important building block of a cohesive society. The first bi-annual religious leaders' forum of 2017 took place in the Berkeley Street Gurdwara in Glasgow on 9th May.

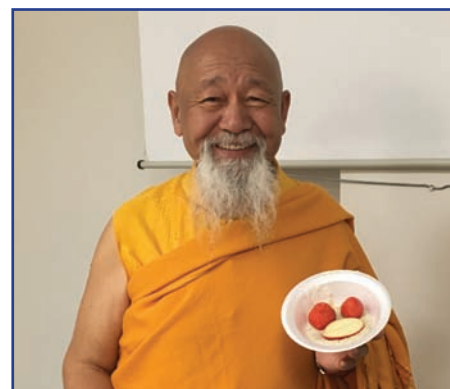
A second meeting took place on 19th October at the Church of Scotland Moderator's House in Edinburgh. The Moderator, Right Reverend Dr Derek Browning said, "It is important that whilst we acknowledge where we are distinct and different, there are many areas where people of faith can and must work together. When sisters and brothers in faith can meet together, talk together, listen together and work together, then this can only ever be a good thing. Faith motivates our compassion and our care and enables us to make a difference to people who are often isolated, left behind or marginalised by society."

Ravinder Kaur Nijjar, Sikh representative for the Scottish Religious Leaders Forum, asked the religious leaders to put compassion and care into practice by discussing the Porridge Smiles campaign. The campaign is run by Mary's Meals as a fundraising strategy to highlight the hunger experienced by school children around the world. Mary's Meals is a Scottish based organisation that provides a daily meal per child in schools to attract chronically hungry children into the classroom. Mary's Meals

now works in 14 different countries and provides meals for more than 1.2 million of the world's poorest children every single school day.

The campaign encourages people to decorate their porridge with a smiley face and donate money to buy children in Malawi and Liberia vitamin-enriched maize porridge for school each day. Mrs Nijjar was delighted that £160 was raised during the meeting which was enough money to feed eleven children for a full year.

The annual meeting with the First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon and the religious leaders of Scotland took place on 7th November in Edinburgh. The meeting was facilitated by the director of Interfaith Scotland working in partnership with the Scottish Government Equality Unit. The topics covered included building community cohesion through interfaith work, tackling hate crime, bringing communities together in times of crisis, and Scotland's Year of Young People.





# Religion and Belief Equality Training

Throughout 2017 our Religious Equality Training Officer Jamie Spurway was travelling around the country delivering training to a range of audiences.

As with previous years, the most frequent audience were staff of higher and further education colleges. In addition we provided courses for Barclays Bank, the Golden Jubilee Hospital and our neighbours in Flemington House, Experiential Play. The focus of our training is usually on how to work with people from diverse religion and belief identities – how to understand the needs that may arise from their religion and belief, and how to ensure those needs are met.

Our courses with Experiential Play were particularly well-received and presented an opportunity for us to consider new issues not covered in our other training courses. As the staff of Experiential Play train people to become early years teachers, our training sessions discussed a young child's experience of faith, spirituality and religious identity. We plan to continue delivering training to the students at Experiential Play in 2018.



## Islam in the Media

**An Islam in the Media event was organised by Interfaith Scotland, and was designed to bring together two sections of Scotland which, at times, have a difficult relationship with negative impacts; Muslim communities and the media.**

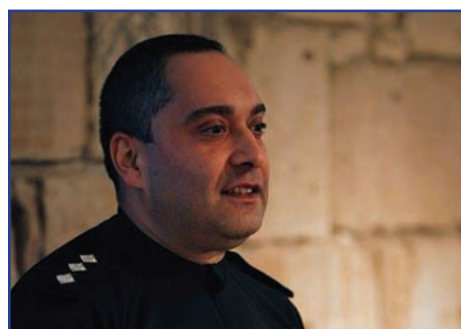
The event took place on Wednesday 24th May 2017 in the Lighthouse in Glasgow. This was two days after the terrorist bomb attack in Manchester which profoundly highlighted the need for such dialogue and relationship building here in Scotland and across the UK.

The day brought together carefully selected members from the Muslim communities in Scotland, academics, interfaith professionals, Police Scotland and journalists to share experiences and impacts of press reporting of Islam. The event allowed delegates to explore the impact of the reporting of extremism and radicalisation on Muslim communities in Scotland, and to explore what next steps could be taken to lessen the negative impact.

The seminar was chaired by Dr Maureen Sier, Director of Interfaith Scotland who took time to contextualise the subject. Key notes speakers were Dr Michael Munnik (academic), Safa Yousaf (Muslim Community), Sohaib Saeed (Muslim Community), Angela Haggerty (editor and media expert) and Chief Inspector Shaheen Baber.

There was ample opportunity for dialogue and the following recommendations evolved from the day and it is hoped that some of these recommendations can be taken forward in 2018:

- Development of Islam in the Media guidelines for those working in the media
- Development of a strategy to encourage Muslim media internships
- Creating a directory of appropriate Muslim contacts with media expertise
- Encouraging Muslim organisations to appoint media officers
- Explore the possibility of a capacity building workshop offering practical tools for those within the Muslim community with an interest in media engagement





# Holocaust Memorial 2018

Hosting the National Holocaust Memorial for Scotland is always a great honour for Interfaith Scotland and The Power of Words was an important theme to frame the Memorial around. Prior to the event, Dr Lev Atlas, a Russian musician from Rostov-on-Don, approached Interfaith Scotland to ask if the Memorial could focus on the historical massacre in his hometown.



Over the course of a few days in August 1942, 27,000 people were massacred by the Nazis in Rostov-on-Don, the majority of whom were Jewish. Dr Atlas and his wife Julia felt it was an important story to be told. Rostov-on-Don is linked to Glasgow through a Glasgow City Council twinning project and the Lord Provost's Office supported Interfaith Scotland in the decision to focus the Memorial on the massacre.

The main memorial event took place on 24th January in Glasgow Caledonian University and was attended by the Lord Provost of Glasgow and the First Minister of Scotland. Both spoke of their commitment to remembering the Holocaust and subsequent genocides. The story of the massacre in Rostov-on-Don was told through the voices of Dr Christina Winkler, a renowned historian on the massacre; through the personal account of Julia Atlas who lost five family members in Rostov-on-Don; and through a specially commissioned video interview with the former Chief Rabbi of Israel, Rabbi Lau. The latter told the profoundly moving story of how he was kept alive and rescued by a young teenage boy from Rostov-on-Don, Feodor Mikhailichenko. Scotland was honoured to have the surviving daughter of Feodor present at the Memorial.

The Masters of Ceremonies for the evening were two school pupils from



Shawlands Academy and during the memorial the Notre Dame School Choir, the Glasgow School String

Ensemble with Dr Lev Atlas, and Rosshall Academy gave striking performances. Additionally two young

people who had visited Auschwitz and the Rwandan Genocide Museum spoke movingly of the personal impact of the visits. The final candle lighting ceremony was preceded by a prayer by Rabbi Moshe Rubin and was followed by Dr Lev Atlas playing on a lone violin. Many commented on the power of the 2018 Memorial.



## Additional Holocaust Memorial Events

Interfaith Scotland was responsible for ensuring that two exhibitions were on display throughout the week of HMD 2018. In Glasgow Caledonian University, to complement the main memorial event, a newly created exhibition outlining what had happened in Rostov-on-Don was on display and was visited by school children from Glasgow. Additionally the Scottish exhibition, 'Gathering the Voices', was on display in the Glasgow City Chambers and was visited by staff of the City Council and the general public.

Shawland's Academy also hosted the Anne Frank exhibition; a schools conference was held at St Mungo Museum of Religious Life and Art; and the main event for Glasgow schools was held in the City Chambers. Appropriate films were shown at the Glasgow Film Theatre and one of the highlights of the week was a specially commissioned musical performance at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland.

Throughout the week Interfaith Scotland hosted a Russian historian, lawyer, archivist and Rabbi from Rostov. Each of these men had worked most of their adult lives to tell the story of Rostov-on-Don and it was a great honour to have them present when Scotland was able to appropriately remember the massacre of the Jewish population of Rostov-on-Don. These Russian experts were able to visit the Jewish Archives in Garnethill to share experiences of recording history and keeping alive the memory of those who suffered so much.

# Adventures of an Intern: Simon Wiegand

I started my internship with Interfaith Scotland in July 2017 and since then I have had many adventures and met a diverse range of fascinating people. The one-year internship is part of my training to become a minister in the Protestant Church in Germany. The goal of my year was to learn more about how interfaith dialogue can be done and what's going on in Scotland in this important field. And I can say, with still some months to go, that my goal has been achieved and exceeded!



Simon with the Fife Interfaith Group

An important part of my internship has been to visit local interfaith groups across Scotland. I have met many engaged people, who put a great deal of effort into promoting interfaith dialogue in their communities. I felt very warmly welcomed and it was very interesting to see the different ways in which the groups are organised and to learn about their different dialogue activities.

The first interfaith group I visited was in West Lothian. Not knowing a lot about the local interfaith groups before, I was surprised about the strong connections between the group and the local Council. In my opinion it is really good that local authorities are supporting interfaith work in their area. The next group I met was in Fife, where I was impressed by the huge diversity of events they organise, not only during

Scottish Interfaith Week, but throughout the year.

In Edinburgh, Iain Stewart told me about the interfaith activities of EIFA in the capital and I took the opportunity to visit a couple of their events and their impressive 'Our Story' Exhibition in the Museum of Edinburgh. In Dumfries I learned about the different interactive activities they organise throughout the year and enjoyed my visit to an arts and crafts lunch during Scottish Interfaith Week. I also had the opportunity to speak at Ayrshire's annual Peace One Day event. In Aberdeen I heard about the

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interfaith walks that they organise. In Orkney I was really impressed by the deep dialogue the group is having every month on different themes.

Before my internship ends in July 2018, I'm planning visits to Inverness, Moray, Central Scotland, East Renfrewshire, Renfrewshire, Skye and Shetland. The visits to the local interfaith groups are a great opportunity for me to explore the diversity of interfaith work in Scotland but also discover the country in an exciting way.

The two most important parts of my work in the second half of the internship are connected with 2018 being Scotland's Year of Young People. I will be assisting Interfaith Scotland's Development Officer, Frances Hume, in organising a national interfaith youth conference at the University of

St Andrews with a very engaged group of students. To bring more young people into interfaith work is also the goal of my other project. The UK Interfaith Network has set up an advisory group, which together with young people from the whole of the UK, is working on providing material for young

people who are interested in interfaith dialogue. The updated Connect guide will be available for download and as a copy from Interfaith Scotland and the





Simon with the Aberdeen Interfaith Group

UK Interfaith Network from July 2018.

With Interfaith Glasgow I was mainly involved in two very special projects. One is the Weekend Club. Here volunteers from different faith traditions organise a monthly programme for refugees and asylum seekers. This project gave me a better understanding for the situation of refugees and

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I’m very thankful to everyone who has made – and continues to make – my year so special  
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asylum seekers here in Scotland. The other main project was the series of Faith-to-Faith dialogue events

organised together with St Mungo Museum of Religious Life and Art.

Other highlights during my internship include assisting with the organisation of Scottish Interfaith Week and Holocaust Memorial

Day and attending a meeting of the

religious leaders of Scotland and meetings with other charities. I’m very thankful to everyone who has made – and continues to make – my year so special, particularly my colleagues at Interfaith Scotland and Interfaith Glasgow. I enjoyed the opportunity to travel so much around Scotland (and also some other parts of the UK) and to meet so many engaged people! I’m hoping that I can use the experiences I have gained here for my future life as a minister in Germany.

## Four Nations Interfaith Link Meeting



On Tuesday 6th June 2017 a meeting was held with the Inter Faith Network for the UK, the Northern Ireland Inter-Faith Forum, Interfaith Scotland and the Inter-faith Council for Wales/ Cyngor Cyd-ffydd Cymru to explore issues of common concern across the United Kingdom. The meeting was hosted by the Northern Ireland Inter-Faith Forum and was held at the famous Clonard Monastery in Belfast.

It was pointed out that the meeting was taking place in the room where Father Alec Reid had met with Gerry Adams and John Hume, initiating the Northern Ireland peace process.

Presentations were given by each of the interfaith organisations present and in-depth dialogue then took place around the following themes: ways of working together; Interfaith Week; the

power of social media; tackling hate and prejudice; and involving young people in interfaith dialogue.

This annual UK wide meeting is an important opportunity to explore collaboratively how we can ensure better interfaith relations and a more cohesive and safe United Kingdom. The 2018 meeting will be held in Scotland.

# International Youth Leaders Exchange to Rwanda

## International Youth Leaders Exchange to Rwanda

**In September 2017, I had the privilege to co-lead an educational trip to Rwanda with a group of ten young people from across Scotland – five Muslims and five Christians. The trip was organised on behalf of Interfaith Scotland's SAFE Programme in partnership with Church of Scotland, Al Waleed Centre (University of Edinburgh), Al-Maktoum College and PROCMURA (Programme for Christian and Muslim Relations in Africa).**

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Rwanda is a landlocked country in Central Africa known as the 'Land of a Thousand Hills' – it is a beautiful country with warm and welcoming people. Rwanda is smaller than



Scotland but with twice the population. The majority of Rwanda's 11.6 million inhabitants are Roman Catholic, and an estimated 4% of the population are Muslims.

Rwanda has a rich past, but the one-hundred-day genocide in 1994 has left an unforgettable mark in the country's history. Between April and July 1994 one million Tutsi and moderate Hutu were brutally killed by their fellow Rwandans, leaving behind hundreds of thousands of orphans, widows, widowers, and people with disabilities. Rwanda learned a great deal from the genocide. The Rwandan people have done a great deal of work to rebuild a country where people are no longer divided by race or ethnicity and also in rebuilding

the confidence of its people. In this process it seems that faith, in particular the concept of forgiveness, has played a huge role in peace-building.

In order to understand this context better from an interfaith perspective, PROCMURA arranged a number of insightful activities to engage and reflect with Muslims and Christian representatives during our time in Rwanda. We had a reception with Sheikh Salim Hitimana (Mufti of Rwanda). He gave an historical overview of the segregation faced by the Muslim community in Rwanda. The colonial powers had forced Muslim communities to be segregated into certain areas of Kigali where they experienced deprivation and discrimination. This continued even after Rwanda gained its independence from colonial rule. However during the genocide, Muslims hid and protected those fleeing the genocide. As a result of this act of kindness, the Muslim community became fully integrated into







Rwandan society after the genocide, with the same civic and political rights, and many people have converted to Islam.

The Mufti invited our group to pray and celebrate Eid al-Adha with him at Kigali regional stadium. It was an incredible experience taking part in the Eid prayer with thousands of other Muslims praying together. We also attended the Friday (Jumma) prayers at the mosque.

Likewise, we experienced a lively Christian church service. We were amazed that the service lasted for over three hours! It was a unique experience with lively singing and dancing. During the service each member of our group was given a gift by the pastor symbolising peace and friendship. After the service, children in the congregation were keen to play their part, picking wild flowers and giving them as gifts to their guests.

One particularly moving experience

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**I am delighted to have had the opportunity to engage with such an energetic group of young people from Scotland and Rwanda on this educational journey.**”

was visiting the local community in the town of Remera. Reverend Jerome Bizimana, President of the Presbytery of Remera, gave us of a tour of local schools and hospitals. Reverend Bizimana established ‘The Light Group’ after the genocide in 2009. He witnessed perpetrators of the genocide who were released from

prison returning to their local communities, living alongside those whose family members they had brutally murdered. The Reverend set up the group for both genocide survivors and perpetrators to meet and work together to improve community relations. We were given the opportunity to meet this group and hear their testimonies; it was a touching moment to see survivors sitting beside those who had killed their loved ones.

The most challenging and emotional experience for many of us was the visit to Kigali Genocide Memorial. The vivid stories of survivors and photos of victims provided more context and helped put real faces to the genocide. I found it difficult to accept that



civilians were prepared to ethnically cleanse their friends, colleagues and neighbours – fellow human beings – merely because they were from a different ethnic group.

It is important to remember that the Rwandan genocide did not happen in a vacuum and that it was directly linked to the demonization of the Tutsis. In times where hate crime, such as Islamophobia, is on the rise – it is crucial that as a society we are empowered to challenge hatred towards one another.

I am delighted to have had the opportunity to engage with such an energetic group of young people from Scotland and Rwanda on this educational journey. As we celebrate the Year of Young People in Scotland, young people must take the lead to connect with one another, understand each other’s beliefs and collaborate on ideas to make the world a better place.

**Mohamed Omar**





# Interfaith Training Programme in Ukraine

Dr Maureen Sier and Farkhanda Chaudhry delivered Interfaith Dialogue Training in the Ukraine from 17th - 21st July 2017 as part of a peace building programme designed by ODIHR, the Office of Democratic

Institutions and Human Rights. There are religious tensions in Ukraine because of the political situation there and participants in the dialogue were both religious leaders and civil society leaders from across Ukraine.

The training was a great success and activities are to be planned now in the local areas of tension. This is the third training where Interfaith Scotland has helped the excellent peace-building work of ODIHR.

## OutsideIn

**For the last few months Interfaith Scotland has been taking part in a really innovative programme called 'OutsideIn'.**

The programme deals with hate speech in youth work, and aims to better prepare youth workers in how to respond. For example, a young person might make a comment that is seen as racist or homophobic. A youth worker might respond by ignoring the comment because they feel unable to handle the situation or they might respond very forcefully and ban the young person from the youth group. Both of these responses have problems with them. So the OutsideIn project aims to provide training to youth workers so that they can recognise hate speech, manage the situation when it occurs, and hopefully act to change the outlook of the young person involved.

To do this, we have selected five very impressive young people who are each involved in youth work to some extent. They each come from groups that are relatively uncommon in youth work – for example ethnic and religious minorities. Along with four other organisations across Europe, Interfaith Scotland has sent our participants to two sets of training courses. One in Slovenia, and one in Portugal. At these trainings, the participants have learned a great deal about hate speech and how it is experienced. They have also developed the training courses that they will soon begin delivering to youth workers here in Scotland. In total we hope to train 100 youth workers,

and will be offering free one day training courses over the coming months. The courses will be designed to help youth workers recognise hate speech when it happens, know how to respond in the moment, and work to transform the attitudes of those involved. We will be thinking of 'youth workers' in a quite a broad sense, so it could include people who work with teenagers and young people in many contexts.

If you would like to discuss the training, please contact the Project Coordinator, Jamie Spurway at [jamie@interfaithscotland.org](mailto:jamie@interfaithscotland.org) or 07921 439 952.



# Inclusive Youth Work Project



**Interfaith Scotland was delighted to be working on a European wide Erasmus + project that seeks to train youth workers to be inclusive of people with protected characteristics in their youth work practice.**

During Interfaith week we welcomed to our Dialogue Centre 22 young people from five European Countries who had the opportunity to undertake training in Religion and Belief awareness and to attend Interfaith Week events. Everyone who took part in the project said it was a transforming and moving

experience and we are currently sending three youth leaders and workers from Scotland to Finland to learn how to be 'gender inclusive' in their practice. Later in 2018 we will be sending youth workers to Slovenia to engage with a creative LGBTQI project so that they can also be inclusive of

LGBTQI in their practice.

The coordinators of the project met initially at St Mungo Museum of Religious Life and Art and the learning at the international level is an exciting aspect of the project.





# Scottish Interfaith Week 2017

Scottish Interfaith Week 2017 was one to remember with over 80 events from every region in Scotland, from the Northern Isles down to the Scottish Borders. The theme for the week was 'Creativity and the Arts'. Faith and belief have been an inspiration for the expression of beauty, witnessed in creative activities such as architecture, art, music and dance.



The theme gave an opportunity to celebrate the diverse expressions of this creative activity in different religions and cultures. It also celebrated ways in which creativity can uplift the human spirit and assist in the improvement of health, well-being and community relations.

Faith communities from across Scotland were represented at events including Pagan, Jewish, Baha'i, Hindu, Sikh, Muslim, Christian, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Buddhist, Brahma Kumaris, and those of no faith. Cities and towns across the nation celebrated the 'creativity and arts' themed week with dancing, music, crafts, movie nights, theatre performances, poetry readings, and so much more. The range and diversity of events made it a stand-out year for







Scottish Interfaith Week with revellers enjoying hikes, meditations, peace gatherings, food workshops, LGBTQ+ events, quizzes, and thanksgiving dinners.

Interfaith Scotland hosted the launch of Scottish Interfaith Week at the Discovery Point in Dundee. Guests were entertained to the sound of bagpipes, clarsachs and flutes from local musicians on arrival. MSP Shona Robison, Interfaith Scotland's Director Dr Maureen Sier and Development Officer Frances Hume gave speeches to the audience of over ninety people on the theme of 'Creativity and the Arts'. Katja Shröder, a volunteer on Interfaith Scotland and the Church of Scotland's International Youth Exchange to Rwanda shared insights gained from her visit.

Representatives from Kirkcaldy High School then received their prizes in the Scottish Interfaith Week school's competition to 'design an interfaith

place of worship for the 21st Century'. In line with the theme, workshops had been organised after the speeches so guests could have an opportunity to 'get creative' and experience dancing, singing, storytelling and drumming.

It was a wonderful vibrant event and many thanks are due to the planning group from Dundee Inter Faith Association, Faith in Community Dundee, Al-Maktoum College and Amina Muslim Women's Resource Centre who met regularly with our development officer, Frances Hume, in the months leading up to the event and were an invaluable support on the night.

Two beautiful religious buildings opened their doors to the public for Scottish Interfaith Week; the



Hindu Temple of Scotland and Bait-ul-Mahmood Mosque in Dundee. Museums also invited local communities to take part in interfaith activities at Glasgow Museum Resource Centre and St Mungo Museum of Religious Life and Art.

“  
**Cities and towns across the nation celebrated the 'creativity and arts' themed week with dancing, music, crafts, movie nights, theatre performances, poetry readings, and so much more.**  
”

Interfaith Scotland and the Erasmus programme arranged for twenty youth leaders from Portugal, Slovenia, Romania, Finland and Scotland to attend interfaith training in the Interfaith Scotland Dialogue Centre throughout the week. The young people visited interfaith groups in many regions and took part in Scottish Interfaith Week activities.

Four theatre groups performed shows in Peebles, Kirkcaldy, St Andrews,





Glasgow, and Edinburgh. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints put on a West End musical extravaganza and Citizens Theatre performed *Lampedusa*, a moving story about the current migrant crisis. Magnetic North put on a playful show which explored the dynamics of an Evangelical Christian family and the youth of PACE Theatre Group gave a challenging performance on racial, cultural and religious hate crime.

Children and young people were invited to learn more about other faiths throughout the week at events such as the Interfaith Glasgow Family Fun Day and the Hats of Faith after-school workshops. Medeia Cohen, author of children's book *Hats of Faith*, said: "At every workshop from Renfrewshire to Edinburgh and back to Glasgow I was met by open-minded and kind-

hearted people from every faith and sometimes, no faith at all, who were keen to learn and share."

A sense of community could be felt throughout the week, with event organisers setting aside time from their own busy schedules to attend the events of others. Medeia and her family attended the Family Fun Day and had a wonderful afternoon. "Interfaith Glasgow's Family Fun day stood out as a particularly stellar event with really engaging interactive events for families and chance for people of all faiths to learn and have fun together. My son loved making

prayer beads and painting Pagan rocks and at each activity, we learned more about the customs we share across faiths."

Organisations across Scotland held conferences and dialogue events to discuss the politics, history and social impact of interfaith relations. Al-Maktoum College of Higher Education ran a two-day interfaith event called the Building Bridges Symposium. Professor Godazgar from Al-Maktoum College said: "We are opening our doors in this way for the second time as

**“With the close of another Scottish Interfaith Week, we are delighted to announce the success of our ever-growing dream to develop a welcoming interfaith community for the whole nation to embrace.”**

part of our aims to promote religious freedom, pluralism and shared understanding in the 21st century. Our inaugural symposium in 2016 proved to be a success as it engaged people from many different walks of life who all wanted to examine the ways we can build bridges between Muslim communities and societies, and non-Muslim communities and countries, which is our core mission at the College."

Deveron Projects in Aberdeenshire organised a weekend event in which they explored the relationship between community and pacifism, and the impact of peace and conflict in the







local, national and international context. South Lanarkshire Health and Social Care Partnership hosted a Community Justice Conference to collectively identify ways for services to support those from different faith communities. Edinburgh Interfaith Association hosted the Our Story exhibition at the Scottish Parliament which explored Edinburgh's faith communities through oral histories.

Muslim and Christian youth leaders from Scotland spoke to several communities about their recent interfaith trip to Rwanda organised by Interfaith Scotland and the Church of Scotland. The group discussed their experiences of learning about reconciliation after genocide and meeting local Christian and Muslim communities in Rwanda.



Scottish Interfaith Week had many more vibrant, moving and thought-provoking events but we unfortunately cannot list them all in this story! If you would like to explore the events further then please visit the programme section of our website where all the event descriptions are listed at [www.scottishinterfaithweek.org](http://www.scottishinterfaithweek.org) With the close of another Scottish Interfaith Week, we are delighted to announce the success of our ever-growing dream to develop a welcoming interfaith community for the whole nation to embrace. We hope to see you all again next year for SIFW18!







# The Scottish Council of Jewish Communities Celebrate Scottish Interfaith Week

**The theme of Scottish Interfaith Week – "Creativity and the Arts" – gave a wonderful opportunity for faith communities to explore their own cultural traditions alongside those of other communities.**

The Scottish Council of Jewish Communities (SCoJeC) was delighted to join together with Muslim organisation, Al Masaar, to host a unique event called Hand in hand: Paper-cutting from Jewish and Muslim traditions. Al Masaar, meaning 'the Path to Progression', promotes positive community relations, supporting vulnerable, isolated, and disadvantaged families, as well as working with the wider community to break down barriers with education and new experiences.

The two artists, Abi Pirani and Maryam Golubeva, both take inspiration from their own traditions. Abi is a Jewish

artist living in Scotland. Her themes are nature and Jewish Festivals, and she creates intricate papercuts that resemble stained glass. Maryam is a Russian Muslim artist living in England whose work is inspired by Middle Eastern motifs and Russian folk art.

SCoJeC's Projects and Outreach Manager, Fiona Frank, said: "I met Abi and Maryam a few years ago, and ever since I've had the idea of bringing them together for an event like this. Our partnership with Al Masaar, and the funding from the Inter-Faith Youth Trust to bring a group of Jewish Guides from Glasgow, made the day work perfectly. Abi and Maryam's complementary approaches to the same art form meant that everyone was able to participate and learn something."

The event was well-attended by members of the Jewish and Muslim communities, and after a short presentation on the 2000-year tradition of paper-cutting, the participants were



able to create their own papercuts. One guest commented: "I learned about how Judaism and Islam share the tradition of papercutting and how promoting shared traditions can promote love and peace between faith communities."

Sofia from Al Masaar thanked Inter-Faith Youth Trust for sponsoring the event and said: "We are delighted to have had the opportunity to work with SCoJeC on a fantastic event, where young people and families were able to come together to meet people from different traditions and cultures and learn new things. This event continues our ethos of promoting community cohesion."





## Fife Interfaith Group Celebrates Scottish Interfaith Week

### Sixth Annual Fife Interfaith Lecture

Our Annual Interfaith Lecture took place in Kirkcaldy Central Mosque during Scottish Interfaith Week. Imam Mohammed Hammad gave an encouraging talk on the 'golden rule' – "Do unto others as you would have them do to you". He acknowledged the diversity of Scotland and reflected on several cases where faith communities have worked together for the common good. He stressed the importance of respecting one another's faiths, working together to promote understanding among faiths, and embracing our differences.

Fiona Grant, Councillor for Fife Council, and her husband Peter Grant, MP for Glenrothes attended the event, along with the Imam of Dunfermline Mosque. The Mosque provided a lavish spread of refreshments which gave visitors a chance to interact with Mosque members and build stronger ties.



### Balwearie School Interfaith Assemblies

Fife Interfaith Group promoted interfaith dialogue throughout Scottish Interfaith Week by organising talks at Balwearie School in Kirkcaldy during their morning assemblies. Faith representatives from Christian, Buddhist, Jewish, Muslim and Baha'i faiths discussed their faiths with pupils. Fife Interfaith Group would like to thank both Balwearie School for their help and the faith representatives for sharing their stories with the pupils.

### Our Story Goes On

The show 'Our Story Goes On' was performed in Edinburgh on November 18th and was hosted by Fife Interfaith Group in Kirkcaldy the following day.

The show was written, directed and performed by volunteers from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints – many being professional singers and actors. The score included original songs from West End musicals such as Les Miserables ('Bring Him Home'), Fiddler on the Roof ('Do You Love Me?') and many others, to powerfully portray the love that binds families together.

The show – a celebration of family, love and relationships – entertained, inspired and delighted audiences. Nearly 300 people attended the Edinburgh event and the Fife event organisers were delighted to welcome Councillor Lesley Backhouse from Fife Council.

Our Story Goes On will return to Scotland in 2019 - if any interfaith groups would like to host a performance, please contact Carole at [carolesneddon@gmail.com](mailto:carolesneddon@gmail.com)





## Inverness Celebrates Scottish Interfaith Week

The Inverness Interfaith Group marked Scottish Interfaith Week with a 'Sharing of Food and Poetry' evening followed by an event exploring Islamic art. Poetry recitations for the first event included "The Lord is my Shepherd" (Psalm 23), "The Snake" by DH Lawrence, "The Colour of My Dreams" by Peter Dixon, and an inspiring passage from the Bhagavad

Gita. The Islamic art event took place in Inverness Mosque and included a presentation and a tour exploring Islamic art in context, and the witnessing of evening prayer. The chanting of the Imam was a beautiful expression of art in the service of religion. The evening concluded with tea and delicious middle-eastern sweets and snacks.



## Women of Faith and Community, Glasgow

The Scottish Interfaith Week theme of 'creativity and the arts' provided inspiration for a range of activities run by Women of Faith and Community at the Napierhall Street Centre. Khadija Abdulsattar guided the hands of those who wanted to copy the very beautiful Arabic script used by Urdu speakers. Mary Kennedy provided massages including a 'metamorphic massage' which involves a physical change in one's body. Mary Whyte introduced the group to embroidery and the Paisley tear drop project which celebrates the history of Paisley. Stone decorating and henna was also available. One group was introduced to the charity 'Days for Girls' [www.daysforgirls.org](http://www.daysforgirls.org) which provides feminine hygiene packs for girls and women in countries where many miss their education due to a lack of sanitary products. The morning event was memorable and all involved had a wonderful time exploring faith through art.

## Dumfries and Galloway Celebrates Scottish Interfaith Week

Two events took place in Dumfries to celebrate Scottish Interfaith Week this year, both focussing on the theme of Creativity and the Arts. Dumfries and Galloway Interfaith Group and Dumfries and Galloway Community Planning Partnership held a celebration evening. Stimulating conversations were had by attendees who discussed how art is viewed and utilised by different faith groups. All seem to recognise a dimension to art which goes beyond the artist to reveal something of the universal creative process and often the imparting of an important message.

The local multicultural women's group hosted an event at the Dumfries and Galloway Multicultural Association. People were invited to bring examples of creativity which held significance for them. One person brought along an Ethiopian processional cross which had been sold to buy food during one of the famines which ravaged Ethiopia. Other people brought items such as home-made bread; a Quaker Tapestry book; a Baha'i candle holder; and little doll-like figures traditionally given as gifts to mark a boy's circumcision by Muslims. Those present also took part in the making of a community art piece which involved cutting out hand shapes in fabric and writing down words of inspiration, to be mounted as a circle of friendship and unity and displayed at the multicultural centre in Dumfries.





## Al-Maktoum College Symposium for Scottish Interfaith Week

Al-Maktoum College of Higher Education in Dundee held a two-day 'Building Bridges' Symposium during Scottish Interfaith Week focussing on interfaith dialogue and art.

It was the second year running that the College had successfully staged such an event, attracting expert speakers pre-eminent in their fields.

The Symposium is seen as an opportunity for people from many different walks of life to examine the ways bridges between Muslim and non-Muslim communities, cultures and countries can be built. The 60-plus delegates were offered lectures on subjects such as 'experience and art' and 'a framework for Christian/Muslim dialogue'.

The College's Director of Operations, Dr Abi Abubaker, said the aim was to "embrace diversity and tolerance"



while encouraging positive dialogue between different faith groups. All of those attending had the freedom to share their views and the hope was that it would benefit those seeking to build bridges of friendship and expand interfaith trust at the same time.



## Edinburgh Women's Interfaith Group Celebrates Scottish Interfaith Week

Edinburgh Women's Interfaith Group organised their November meeting as a part of Scottish Interfaith Week. The event brought local women from different faiths and beliefs together in a relaxed and informal way to explore the theme of creativity and the arts. Two entertaining and knowledgeable young women put on a wonderful educational workshop informing the group about the Indian - Bollywood Film Industry. In their open and fun way they took us through the 100 year history of the industry and where it is today in light of globalisation and world trends.

We were delighted when they sang a variety of well-known and well-loved Hindi film songs in their melodious voices and encouraged attendees to sing along as well! The workshop ended with them teaching us a few dance moves. The evening passed by much too quickly and it is hoped that we will see them perform again at a future interfaith event.

After that, the group enjoyed a delicious vegetarian finger buffet with traditional homemade Indian sweets. Over 30 ladies from

various group and individuals took part at this event which was enjoyable and a great success. Edinburgh Women's Interfaith Group is very grateful to Interfaith Scotland and Edinburgh Interfaith Association for their support for this event.

The Edinburgh Women's Interfaith Group is a safe, organic, open and informal group, welcoming women of all faiths and none. We are women who are committed to fostering friendship and understanding between ourselves and our local communities by providing a safe space for women from a variety of cultures, to learn more about each other.

## Skye and Lochalsh Celebrates Scottish Interfaith Week

Skye and Lochalsh Faiths Together Group marked Scottish Interfaith Week by collecting and sharing a range of poetry and quotes on the subject of faith. The following beautiful example is by Persian poet, Hafiz.

The sun will stand as your best man and whistle  
When you have found the courage to marry forgiveness  
When you have found the courage to marry love.

# Schools Art Competition

As part of Scottish Interfaith Week 2018, Interfaith Scotland invited primary and secondary schools to take part in a competition to design an 'interfaith place of worship for the 21st Century'. There was an overwhelming response with over 150 entries from 13 schools. With so many excellent entries it was decided to allocate first, second and third prizes to the best classes rather than to individuals. These were divided into four categories: nursery, primary, secondary and additional support needs.

It was fascinating to see the thought that went into the various designs that endeavoured to create a place of worship where people of all faiths and none could feel comfortable and included. Some of these focused

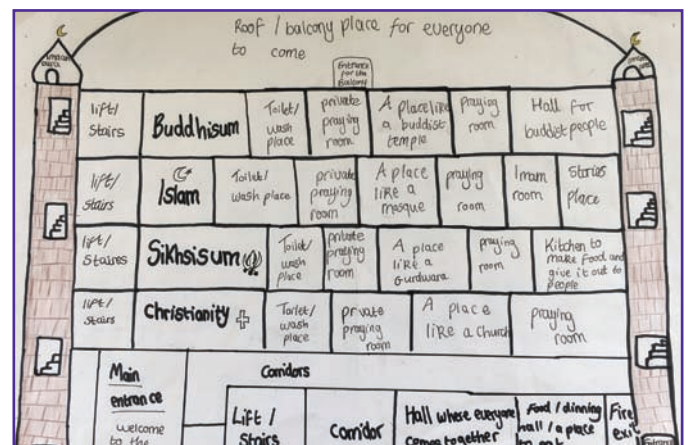
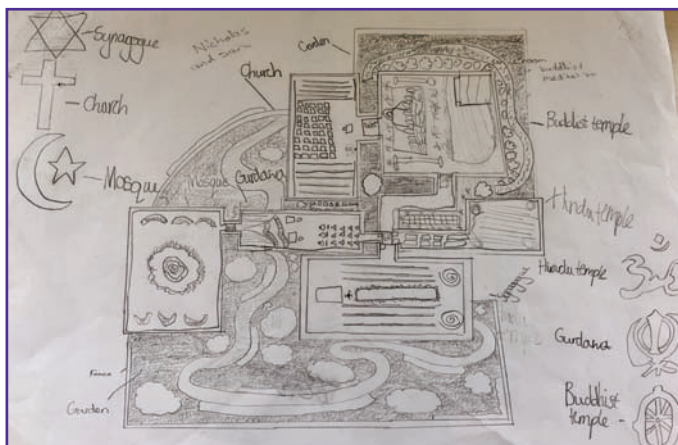
on having a calming and spiritual environment where people from any faith could feel at home. Others went into great depth about the worship needs of different faith communities and how these were all incorporated

into the design. Some had separate spaces for the different faiths to worship but a communal area such as a café or garden (even a BBQ!) where people of different faiths could meet together to get to know one another.

## Secondary First Prize - Bellahouston Academy

The 'We Unite Place for Worship' is a building where all the religions can worship, a place where we can respect and learn about other religions. All religions would have their own prayer rooms and would be filled with whatever they need. There would be a 'United Room' right in the middle so all the religions can eat and bond with each other.

**Cameron Fairgrieve**



## Second Prize - Notre Dame High School

Our project is based along the phrase 'bringing the outdoors inside'. This includes a glass wall, a calming view of nature where a colourful garden can be admired. The second wall has three beautiful stained glass windows, as the sun streams through the windows it lets in colours turning the room into a relaxing place for all the faiths. The third wall is called 'The Wall of Words'; this includes inspiring words to cheer up the people using the room. The final wall has a world map surrounded by people of different nationalities and religions. Constantly playing in the background will be a soundtrack of naturalistic sounds, e.g. birds chirping, leaves rustling, rain, etc. The ceiling is an attempt to also bring technology into the room. The ceiling is a large screen displaying stars, clouds, etc. at different times of the day. This is to show the great beauty of our world. – **Asma Khan Afridi, Ellie McClure and Dhruvi Mistry**





**Third Prize -**  
Kirkcaldy High School



## Primary First Prize - St Denis Primary



## Second Prize - Merrylee Primary

Our place of worship offers time to relax and socialise with people of other faiths. You can worship, drink and eat in our delicious café. Our facilities are top notch and are pleasant to stay in. Please come to our place of worship! – **Jack McNeil and Axel Unkle**

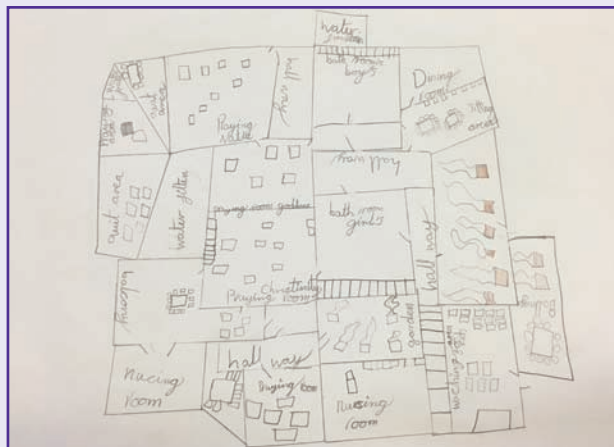
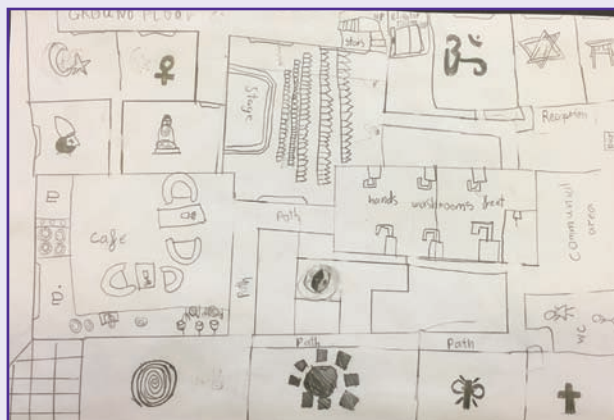
Our place of worship welcomes people from all faiths because everyone is equal. In the big hall there is a prayer section, a café and a stage for the leader of worship. – **Archie Mclean, Scott Mcmillian, Joe Esson**



Here at the 'Religious Centre Scotland' we give you the best of the service from eating to praying. All religions are welcome. This is a place we all come together as one big family, even if you are one religion you are welcome in all sections and even if you are not religious you are still welcome to visit. – **Katie Taylor and Stella Wishart**



### Third Prize - Blairdardie Primary



## Nursery

**First Prize** - West College Scotland, Paisley Campus



## Additional Support Needs

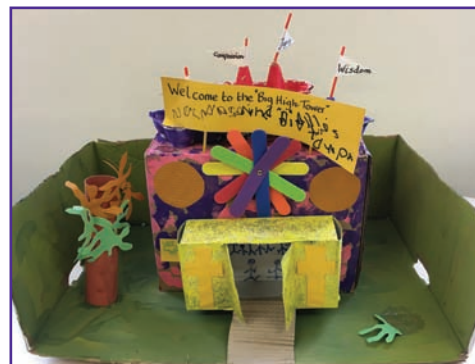
## First Prize - Howford Primary



## Second Prize - Langlands Primary



## Third Prize - Abercorn School





# National Youth Assembly

**Interfaith Scotland delivered an interfaith workshop at the National Youth Assembly of the Church of Scotland on 22nd July.**

The development officer outlined the Christian imperative for interfaith dialogue and the work of Interfaith Scotland. Volunteers from the Muslim, Sikh and Baha'i faiths gave presentations on their faith.



## 'Face to Faith' Schools Programme

**Our flagship 'face to faith' school engagement programme allows young people across Scotland to meet members of Scotland's diverse faith communities face to face to engage in a carefully facilitated dialogue programme.**



The programme aims to break down barriers and stereotypes of people from different faith communities and promote greater respect and understanding in local communities. The development officer brought two volunteers from the Muslim and Hindu faiths to four local primary schools in Fort William and the Ardnamurchan Peninsula from 16th - 18th May 2016. She also brought four volunteers from the Baha'i, Buddhist, Muslim and Jewish faiths to speak at the annual interfaith day at St Modan's High School in Stirling on 8th December.





# Local Interfaith Groups News



## East Renfrewshire Faith Forum

East Renfrewshire Faith Forum held their Festival of Colour event in Rouken Glen Park on Saturday 29th July 2017. This was a huge success with unprecedented numbers taking part. In addition to the throwing of colour there was coloured hand printing, henna and a volunteer who agreed to have sponges soaked in colour thrown at him. The attached photograph epitomises the atmosphere at the event.

## Inverness Interfaith Group

Earlier in 2017, the Inverness Interfaith Group spent two nights at Samye Ling which is the largest Tibetan Buddhist monastery in Europe. They also hosted an interfaith picnic in the summertime and arranged regular meetups in Inverness to share food and faith throughout the year.

## Dundee Inter Faith Association

The Dundee Inter Faith Association has had a quiet few years but members have been keen to re-invigorate the group with new passion and energy. Interfaith Scotland's Development Officer, Frances Hume, worked with some of its members to plan the launch of Scottish Interfaith Week in 2017 with support from Faith in Community Dundee, Amina Muslim Women's Resource Centre and Al-Maktoum College. The launch brought a variety of organisations in Dundee and people from all faiths and none together for a very special evening. In January 2018, Frances contacted faith communities throughout Dundee and called a meeting to discuss the way ahead for the Dundee Inter Faith Association. Those gathered were keen to engage in re-envisioning activities and organised an interfaith lunch and dialogue at Dundee West Church in March 2018. Interfaith Scotland has received funding for a sessional interfaith worker for Dundee who will be able to assist the group in reaching out to local faith communities and planning future events.



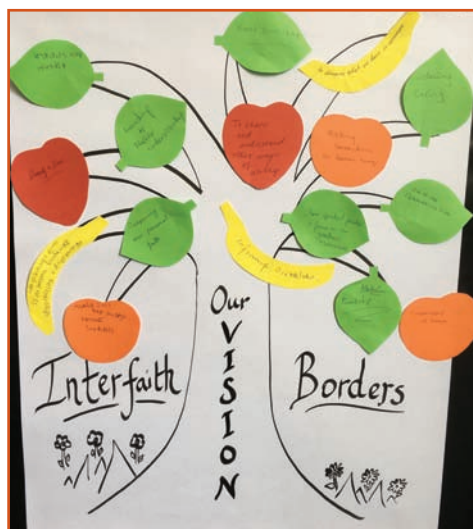
The group marked Holocaust Memorial Day with an event at Inverness Town House. They invited Holocaust survivor Kathleen Hagler to speak about her family's experiences during the German invasion of her native Hungary. As a 1-year-old, Ms Hagler was smuggled out of Hungary to live with her aunt, and several days later her family was sent to Auschwitz concentration camp. It is believed that all her family died there. Ms Hagler moved to Israel at the age of 16 before coming to Scotland at around the age of 35.

Former Interfaith Scotland Board Member, Marlene Finlayson, one of the organisers of the Inverness event, said: "The Inverness Interfaith Group hopes that this event will provide an opportunity to think about the impact of words, and create awareness of the need to be alert to any signs of discrimination or dehumanisation in our own region here in the Highlands."



## Interfaith Borders

Interfaith Scotland's development officer, Frances Hume set up a meeting in the Scottish Borders in March 2017 for anyone who might have an interest in being part of a local interfaith group there. 12 people from a number of different faiths came along to the first meeting at Borders General Hospital Chaplaincy Centre in Melrose on 9th March. There was an interest shown by those gathered to reach out to different faith communities in their local area and hold interfaith events. The first event that was organised by the group was a 'pot luck lunch' which took place on 7th May at the Chaplaincy Centre. Local residents from a number of faiths attended including Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Pagan, Quaker, Buddhist and Baha'i.



For the next event, members of Interfaith Borders organised a visit to the recently opened Borders Islamic Centre in Galashiels on 16th July. There was so much enthusiasm to attend that a larger venue had to be found to accommodate everyone. 30 people attended a wonderful afternoon of sharing at the Langlee Centre in Galashiels between members of the group and members of the Islamic Centre, facilitated by Interfaith Scotland.

Interfaith Borders celebrated its first Scottish Interfaith Week with a tour and interfaith meditation at Coldingham Priory on 18th November.

The development officer was contacted by Borders Council in December which was keen to establish links with the local faith communities in the area to assess if they were providing adequate support for the different faith groups. 12 members of the group attended this meeting and there was a very fruitful discussion on the different issues affecting people of faith.

After being ably led and supported by Frances Hume, the group is now self-sufficient with two new secretaries who are planning the programme for 2018.







## Aberdeen Interfaith Group

Aberdeen Inter Faith Group organised an interfaith walk in June 2017 along the old Deeside railway line. The weather was damp but a small group enjoyed walking together and sharing lunch after the hard work was done.

An interfaith community concert was held in September at The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Aberdeen. Various faith groups took part in the evening, and home baked goods were sold for Clan – a local charity helping those affected by cancer. This was the second time the Church hosted the event and looks forward to hosting it again in 2018.

In October, representatives from eight faiths came together for a One World Week Interfaith Service with the theme of 'Good Neighbours – my world depends on us' at Aberdeen Unitarian Church. The service was led by Caroline Cormack, with inspirational contributions from each of the represented faiths; Hindu, Baha'i, Quaker, Pagan, Buddhist, Unitarian, Church of Scotland, Brahma Kumaris. This was followed by a shared lunch with a talk on

the many activities of the local charity Community Food Initiative North East by their Chief Executive Dave Simmers.

Earlier last year, the Shi'a Muslim group contacted the Latter-day Saints asking if they could use a church building in Aberdeen for their Friday prayers. The Latter Day Saints warmly welcomed the group, setting aside an area for them. This allowed the Shi'a Muslim group time to find a permanent location in Aberdeen. Strong friendship links between the two groups have been forged, and later in 2017 both got together to attend a Blood Transfusion event. The Shi'a Muslim group also presented the Latter Day Saints with a silver platter as a token of friendship and thanks for the use of the building.



During Scottish Interfaith Week, an interfaith singing event was led by Chloe Greenwood, leader of Moray Threshold Choir. She taught beautiful songs and chants from various religions to a small group, and many found it to be a spiritually enriching experience.

The final Aberdeen Interfaith Group event of the year was held in December and the group explored different festivals which celebrate light. Lakshmi from the Hindu Association discussed Diwali and students from the Jewish Society in Aberdeen shared their experiences of Chanukah. The event was a lively and lovely way to round-up a year of interfaith activities in Aberdeen.



## Orkney Interfaith Group

The Orkney Interfaith Group is celebrating their 20th Anniversary this year. The group was started by a local primary school teacher who enjoyed talking with her colleagues about their respective faiths; Christian, Hindu and Baha'i. She wrote a letter to the local paper about starting an interfaith group in Orkney and was thrilled with the response.

The first meeting welcomed people from a variety of faiths including Buddhists, Jewish people, Quakers and those from other Christian denominations. Everyone had been asked to bring a reading or story from their own faith to share, and something by way of refreshments – the two aspects provided spiritual and physical nourishment. Before anyone left, it

was unanimously agreed that such an interfaith group was an excellent way to bring diverse people together; details for the next meeting were agreed, and people were keen to invite friends and family along.

Since then the group has met on a monthly basis and has welcomed Muslims, Pagans, people from the



Unification Church, and those with no faith. As well as local residents, the group has hosted visitors from the Czech Republic, Canada, the USA, Germany, Pakistan, South Africa and New Zealand.

The Orkney Interfaith Group has discussed many fascinating subjects over the years including 'Should we obey laws?', 'Them and Us', personal spiritual journeys, and pilgrimage. They try to organise events for occasions such as Peace One Day, and join in with the activities of others including walking the newly created pilgrimage route to commemorate the life and martyrdom of St Magnus. Altogether the group hopes to continue welcoming others and enhancing the spiritual life of the Orkney community.



## Shetland Interfaith Group

Shetland Inter Faith Group hosted a talk in April 2017 on Christianity and Islam – Points of Unity and Misunderstanding. Dr Lameh Fananapazir, author of *Islam at the Crossroads*, spoke to the audience about the similarities and differences between the Hebrew, Christian and Islamic scriptures. Over 50 people attended the talk at the Shetland Library and took part in the subsequent interfaith dialogue. The genuine discussions created an atmosphere of fellowship and growth in the spirit of mutual investigation. A young local composer performed at the event which embraced people from all backgrounds and faith communities.

Shetland Inter Faith incorporated its Annual General Meeting into an ambitious and successful Partnership Evening which attracted around 40



participants. The event was organised with the generous support of Dr Maureen Sier and Lord Bracadale, Chair of the Independent Review of Hate Crime Legislation in Scotland. The evening helped Interfaith Scotland to reach out to partner organisations and individuals within the wider Shetland community. The Convener of Shetland Island Council Malcolm Bell warmly

welcomed the honoured guests.

Dr Sier's talk *Faith Communities: Safe Communities* highlighted the work and initiatives undertaken by Interfaith Scotland to support and promote mutual understanding and cooperation between faith groups within Scotland and abroad. Dr Sier discussed the programme SAFE (Scotland Abroad Faith Exchange) which shares and learns from best practice in interfaith peace-building globally.

Lord Bracadale gave a brief overview of the current Hate Crime Legislation in Scotland and chaired a roundtable dialogue with the audience around the impact hate crime has on individuals and communities. The partner organisations that took part in the event included Shetland Island Council Departments, Shetland Library, Aith Junior High School, several local church groups and voluntary groups, members of the Baha'i Faith and local Councillors.







## Edinburgh Interfaith Association

Edinburgh Interfaith Association's main project for 2017 was Our Story – an exhibition to celebrate Edinburgh's rich diversity through the stories of people who live there. Members of various faith communities were interviewed and their stories collected to create the stunning exhibition. The exhibition is presented through a series of photographs taken by local photographers who have volunteered to take portraits of local people, religious buildings, and artefacts from communities and the Edinburgh Museums collections.

The exhibition was launched in November with a private viewing at the Museum of Edinburgh, followed by an inspiring event at the Scottish Parliament during Scottish Interfaith Week, attended by over 100 people

and sponsored by Alison Johnstone MSP. It is now being held at the Museum of Edinburgh on the Royal Mile until April 23rd 2018. If you would like more information about the project, or would like receive educational resources (such as a fun timeline of Edinburgh's religious history, or a city guidebook through our faith communities) please email [info@eifa.org.uk](mailto:info@eifa.org.uk)

Edinburgh Interfaith Association (EIFA) have organised a variety of events throughout the past year including a service for the International Day of Peace. Over 70 people attended the service which brought together leaders from across Edinburgh's diverse faith



communities; from Sunni and Shi'a Muslims to representatives of the Hindu and Sikh communities. During Scottish Interfaith Week, EIFA hosted a successful concert, quiz and creative meditation event in partnership with the Edinburgh University Chaplaincy. They also organised events for Hate Crime Awareness week, and most recently for Holocaust Memorial Day – in partnership with Gracemount High School. The audience heard from Darfur genocide survivor, Rya Malik, and children's author, Annemarie Allen, who draws on the theme of the Holocaust.

EIFA hosts regular community meals and the current focus has been on Unsung Women of Faith, which fits perfectly with the 100 year anniversary of women winning the vote. Keep in touch with what's going on in Edinburgh by following EIFA's Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/EIFA.page](http://www.facebook.com/EIFA.page)





## Interfaith Glasgow



### One Big Picnic

Over 2,000 members of the public took part in this large-scale community meal to promote unity and dignity for all in George Square on 3rd September 2017. Delivered without a budget by an interfaith team of volunteers, this event demonstrated grassroots community spirit at its best. Those serving food came from Christian, Muslim, Sikh, Buddhist, Humanist and non-religious food initiatives that are providing food to those in need on a regular basis, and the support was even wider reaching. Over 30 buskers gave the day a festive atmosphere and many people, as the organisers hoped, stuck around for a chat with people they hadn't met before. One Big Picnic came together because of the Interfaith Food Justice Network – which Interfaith Glasgow together with Faith in Community Scotland have been working to develop since 2015. For more information contact Magdalen at [development@interfaithglasgow.org](mailto:development@interfaithglasgow.org). Watch out for One Big Picnic this summer!



### Interfaith Family Fun Day

Our annual Interfaith Family Fun Day offers an opportunity for members of the public to socialise in a fun and friendly atmosphere with people from a diverse range of religious traditions and to learn something about those traditions in the process. In keeping with this year's Scottish Interfaith Week theme "Creativity and the Arts", we continued with a hands on approach to interfaith learning with our

**My girls really enjoyed the hands on activities... and especially trying on a turban and learning about different beliefs related to head coverings.**

Faith Table Workshops, all hosted by members of the faith community concerned. Alongside many diverse activities, performances and delicious free food, these workshops featured: Rangoli Patterns (Hindu); Kalgi Making (Sikh); Sacred Geometry (Muslim); Christmas Tree Decorations

(Christian); Paper-cut Menorah (Jewish); Prayer Bead Making (Baha'i); Painted Stones (Pagan) and Prayer Flags (Buddhist). Come join us during Scottish Interfaith Week 2018!



### The Weekend Club

Interfaith Glasgow's Weekend Club started in 2015 and continues to deliver fun, free, educational and social events for asylum seekers, refugees and new migrants in Glasgow once a month on a Saturday. A group of 10 volunteers from different religious and ethnic backgrounds work closely with each other and our Project Manager, Lynnda Wardle, to plan and deliver each event. The volunteers are crucial in welcoming participants - who come from over 20 different countries – and helping the process of integration. Thanks to grants and donations, we can provide travel expenses and a free meal making it possible for many families to attend who would not otherwise be able to afford a family outing. The Weekend Club model has been so successful that Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees has set up a sister Weekend Club in Edinburgh. For more information contact Lynnda Wardle at [weekendclub@interfaithglasgow.org](mailto:weekendclub@interfaithglasgow.org)

**It was the best feeling ever; for me it feels like we are on a family holiday.**

# Celebrating a Special Bicentenary in 2017

**In October 2017, the Baha'i community celebrated the bicentenary of the birth of Baha'u'llah, the founder of the Baha'i Faith.**

In her message to the Scottish Baha'i Community Nicola Sturgeon, First Minister of Scotland said, "This year marks a significant milestone in the history of the Baha'i community. This is a time for reflection – remembering the teachings of Baha'u'llah. The Scottish Government welcomes the Baha'i bicentenary celebrations this year. We greatly value the important relationships with Scotland's Baha'i communities, and appreciate their contribution to promote understanding and respect in our communities in their active participation in interfaith activities."

The Baha'i Community hosted events across Scotland to mark the Bicentenary. On 25th October, Right Honourable Ken MacIntosh MSP, Presiding Officer of the Scottish Parliament, hosted a reception for the anniversary with Angela Constance MSP as the keynote speaker.



Also in October, the 'Time for Reflection' at the Scottish Parliament was given by a member of the Scottish Baha'i community.

In Glasgow, a special service of thanksgiving was held at the chapel at the University of Glasgow, with over 100 people in attendance. At the service there was a showing of a film specially commissioned for the Bicentenary called 'Light to the World'.

At the end of October over 70 people from Dumfries and Galloway attended the Bicentenary celebration which was organised by the local Baha'i Community and held at the Dumfries and Galloway Multicultural Association. The room was specially

decorated for the occasion with symbols to represent the unity of nations, cultures, religions and people, highlighting the principle teachings of the Baha'i Faith.

“  
**This is a time  
for reflection –  
remembering  
the teachings of  
Baha'u'llah.**

”

Allan Forsyth, chair of the Baha'i Council for Scotland, encouraged participants to study the life and teachings of Baha'u'llah and to reflect on their positive impact on individual and community life.

These teachings include the independent investigation of reality, equality of women and men, harmony of science, reason and religion, education for all, eradication of all forms of discrimination, an end to division and otherness, and the oneness of humankind.





# New National Interfaith Officer for the Scottish Pagan Federation

**After almost twenty-five years of service as the Scottish Pagan Federation's National Interfaith Officer, beginning back in 1994, John Macintyre announced his retirement and stepped down from the role.**

Both the Scottish Pagan Federation and Interfaith Scotland would like to thank John for his immense contribution to the role - all his hard work in ensuring Paganism is recognised and included among the other faith traditions within the Interfaith umbrella. We wish him every success in his retirement and would like to ask others to join us in that sentiment.

John's successor is Stephen Haggerty. Stephen is District Manager for the Scottish Pagan Federation, Federation



**John Macintyre**

Co-ordinator for the South West of Scotland and Vice Chair of Renfrewshire Interfaith Group.

Stephen is the first Pagan to be elected to the role of chairperson in a regional interfaith group. During that time, Stephen has been involved in many interfaith

events including debates, hate crime seminars, begun dialogue with college and university chaplaincy teams, spoken at an Interfaith Peace Gathering, given a speech at the

Scottish Interfaith Week launch event in Paisley 2016 and at St Mungo Museum of Religious Life and Art in Glasgow. Alongside his interfaith work, Stephen also studies the 'Bible lands', comparative religion, Egyptology and the Ancient Near East at Glasgow University.



**Stephen Haggerty**

Stephen would like to take this opportunity to extend a warm hand of friendship to the other faith representatives in Scotland and looks forward to many wonderful years of interfaith work and collaborations ahead.

## Side by Side: Faith Movement for Gender Justice

**'Side by Side' is a growing global movement of people of faith who want to see gender justice become a reality across the world. It emerged from the work of international development and faith-based agencies on gender, acknowledging that gender inequality violates human rights and keeps people in poverty.**

Since March 2015, global chapters of Side by Side have emerged - including Brazil, Ghana, Honduras, Rwanda, Tanzania, and now Scotland.

People from across the globe are working together and are committed to challenging gender inequality. In Scotland, years of gender justice work by faith communities has created a platform for Side by Side to flourish. Our vision is to shine a light on the particular challenges faith communities face when working towards gender justice, and also to highlight the

innovative tools and approaches faith communities have taken to ensure gender justice becomes a reality.

International Women's Day 2018 saw the official launch of the exhibition 'Faith in Gender Justice', which showcases the role women from Scotland and across the globe have played in challenging gender norms - breaking the silence, and being messengers of hope.

All the women whose stories are told, both from Scotland and from around the world, work side by side

with partners, colleagues, social movements, local communities, NGOs and faith organisations. Alongside them stand many others; none of them work alone. They are part of a wider movement for gender justice.

Side by Side is keen to develop future projects with women and men from different organisations and faith communities in Scotland. If you are interested in joining this movement, or hosting the 'Faith in gender justice' exhibition please get in touch via our website. [www.sidebysidegender.org](http://www.sidebysidegender.org)



# 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence Campaign

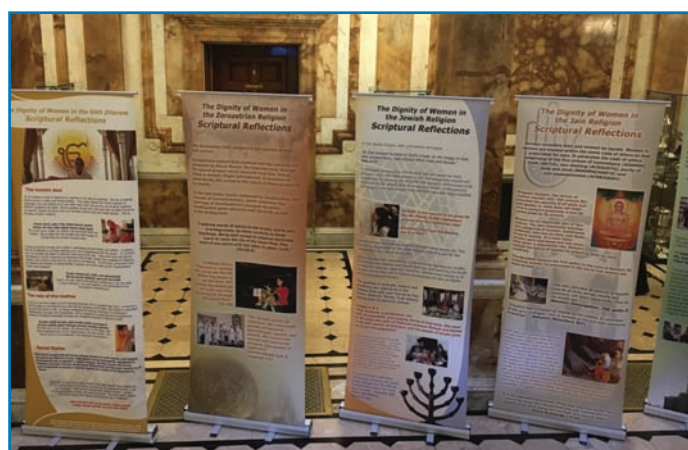
**This year with high profile sexual harassment cases in many countries the need to make society aware of violence against women is becoming even more imperative.**

The Lord Provost of Glasgow Eva Bolander supported the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence by allowing Religions for Peace UK Women of Faith Network to display the Dignity of Women-Scriptural Reflections Exhibition at Glasgow City Chambers from November 25th to December 11th 2017. The exhibition relates verses from the world's nine religious scriptures on the honour and status of women.

The Lord Provost was presented with a booklet of the exhibition by the Chair of Religions for Peace UK Women of Faith Network Ravinder Kaur Nijjar, Madhu Jain from the Hindu community and Layli Semple from the Baha'i community.

When questioned by those present as to what the Council had done to help women facing sexual harassment, the Lord Provost said an emergency motion put to the Council had been approved unanimously. The motion instructs the Chief Executive to look at putting in place an additional confidential, independent route to raise issues, ensuring women in particular have the confidence to raise any concerns they might have about conduct in

the workplace. The Chair thanked the Lord Provost for her proactive role and other initiatives to help women who experience violence in any form.





# Sikh Community in Glasgow Hosts Special Guests

**Church of Scotland representatives visited Guru Granth Sahib Gurdwara in Glasgow on January 31st 2018. Moderator, Right Rev Dr Derek Browning; Interfaith Programme Officer, Mirella Yandoli; and Presbytery Clerk of Glasgow, Rev George Cowie were welcomed by Ravinder Kaur Nijjar, Charandeep Singh, the President Lubaya Singh and Dr Inderjit Singh. Church of Scotland representatives were given a tour of the Gurdwara and were informed of the history of the building and Sikhism.**

The Moderator spoke to the congregation bringing greetings from the Church of Scotland emphasising the need for dialogue and relationship building between the Sikh and Christian communities. The discussion continued while everyone shared a vegetarian meal made and served by volunteers.

On 21st January the Lord Provost of Glasgow visited the new Central Gurdwara in Berkeley Street, Glasgow. She was welcomed by the President Mr Surjit Singh Chowdhary, Dr Inderjit Singh who serves on the Board of Interfaith Scotland and Ravinder Kaur Nijjar who represents the Sikh community on the Scottish Religious Leaders Forum. She spoke with children aged 3-17 who were learning Panjabi in the educational area of the Gurdwara.

Lord Provost Eva Bolander then spoke to the congregation; she said "Sikhs were the silent contributors of Glasgow



who have made a great impact on the city of Glasgow throughout the years. The golden dome of the Gurdwara is a welcome addition to the city's skyline."

The Provost then shared a vegetarian community meal and had an

opportunity to see the permanent exhibition depicting the history of the Sikh religion and beliefs, the purpose of life, Sikh women and the contribution of Sikh soldiers to both World Wars including Victoria Cross winners.







Interfaith  
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Making a Difference  
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