

Interfaith Scotland

Newsletter Spring 2020: Issue 33

Making a Difference through Dialogue



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Celebrating our past achievements and planning for the future...

2019 was a year of celebration where we were able to celebrate our 20th Anniversary in style. We reflected on our achievements over the years but also our dreams and hopes for the future. This edition shares with you our uplifting celebratory event. So many of you have been part of our journey and we thank all of you for your time, commitment and energy.

2019 was also the year when the Climate Crisis really hit the headlines. Many of you will have been aware of the growing global concern over what is happening to our planet and indeed many of you will have been working within your communities to find ways to be more eco-friendly and consumer aware.

In Interfaith Scotland we played our part by hosting a dialogue event on the Climate Crisis (with the former Head of State of Samoa); re-published our 'Sacred Earth' booklet; established our World Interfaith Harmony Grove; hosted world famous environmentalist, Arthur Dhal in a round-table discussion in our Dialogue Centre and held a youth event 'going green together' during Scottish Interfaith Week. But the question is always on our mind – is it enough? Clearly it would be difficult to ever do enough to highlight the world wide crisis that faces humanity.

2020 will find the COP26 Climate Summit being held in Scotland (Glasgow) and we are working with others to explore what creative, purposeful involvement the faith communities and interfaith organisations of Scotland might have with the Summit. The very fact that the summit coincides with Scottish Interfaith Week lends itself to Interfaith Scotland and local interfaith groups across Scotland hosting events linked to the Climate Crisis. We are exploring a creative and headline grabbing theme for Scottish Interfaith Week 2020 and we would love to hear from you.

Whatever we face in the years ahead, good interfaith relations and working together as faith communities for the common good is going to be central to our country's future and we at Interfaith Scotland look forward to our continuing engagement with so many of you.

Dr Maureen Sier, Director



Dr Maureen Sier, Director

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20th Anniversary Celebration of Interfaith Scotland

The 20th Anniversary Celebration of Interfaith Scotland, held on 20th October 2019, was held exactly 20 years to the day when Interfaith Scotland was registered as a Charity. The anniversary event took place in the Fore Hall of Glasgow University and was attended by over 100 faith community representatives and friends from across Scotland. We were thrilled to receive a letter of congratulations from both Her Majesty the Queen and also The First Minister of Scotland, Nicola Sturgeon.

The celebration opened with some wonderful celebratory Bollywood style songs from the Hindu Ladies Choir and this was followed by; an address by the Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government, Ms Aileen Campbell; a wonderful potted history of Interfaith Scotland from Sister Isabel Smyth, one of the Co-Founders of IFS; the current story given by the Director Dr Maureen Sier; a look to the future by three young interfaith activists, Fariha Saeed, Aparna Ramesh and Robin Downie; and a beautiful and uplifting poem, written and shared by National Development Officer, Frances Hume, an extract of which is featured below. The climax of the evening found all participants being piped into the Glasgow University Chapel where the Chapel Choir sang as all present lit over 100 candles of hope for the future of interfaith relations in our country and in the world. The evening also included a light supper and drinks reception and no-one appeared to want to leave the party!



A heart beats, a new life has begun
One of billions, under the sun
An innocent child in a world of need
What will matter to her, is it colour or creed?
Or is it the love, the joy and the kindness?
Or will she see bitterness, chaos and blindness?
Interfaith brings us right to the heart
Where love and goodness play their part
To making the world a better place
For people and planet, we must make haste
And harness the wisdom of all that is true
So working together we can make it through
And as divine light burns in the realms of the sun
We can say we all worked together as one



Asian Food Awards

Interfaith Scotland was delighted to be chosen as the charity partner for the Scottish Asian Food Awards 2019 in celebration of Scottish Interfaith Week 2019 'Eat Share Love'.



The awards were held at the Crowne Plaza Hotel on 25th November in Glasgow. The award ceremony is the first of its kind to promote Asian cuisine, connect communities through food and culture, and highlight the entrepreneurial spirit and creativity of Asian restaurants across Scotland. Director Maureen Sier said: "Nothing brings people together quite like food, which is why our theme for Scottish Interfaith Week 2019 is Eat Share Love - we're looking forward to massive community engagement and are thrilled to be charity partners for this event that will undoubtedly connect different communities." Nearly £1000 was raised for the work of Interfaith Scotland during the event.



Interfaith Summit: Food Justice and Community Cohesion

On Monday 18th November around 49 representatives of diverse faith communities, interfaith organisations and civic society gathered at the Interfaith Dialogue Centre for the annual Interfaith Summit.

Although the First Minister could not be present this year due to pressing business the Cabinet Secretary for Communities and local government, Ms Aileen Campbell was able to attend the Summit and enjoy a meal with those present. The commitment of Ministers to interfaith engagement and dialogue was appreciated by all those present. Prior to the arrival of

the Cabinet Secretary there was an opportunity for the summit participants to engage in workshop discussions around the topic of Food Justice and Community Cohesion. They were also able to hear from the Glasgow Food Justice Initiative and an Edinburgh based food charity 'Heart in the Community Café'.



Scottish Parliament's Cross-Party Group on Freedom of Religion or Belief

The Cross-Party Group (CPG) on Freedom of Religion or Belief meets every three months or so in one of the committee rooms at the parliament. John Mason MSP chairs the group and Interfaith Scotland acts as secretariat – helping organise the meetings and taking notes of the discussions.

The group usually hears a presentation about a specific community that is facing persecution or discrimination over their beliefs. In recent months we have had some particularly varied and interesting meetings. In October we heard an emotional presentation on the harrowing circumstances of the Yazidi, a minority religious community of Iraq. They have experienced attempted genocide at the hands of ISIS including forced conversions, kidnapping and appalling levels of sexual violence. Towards the end of the meeting we learned that there are concerns that many Yazidi women are currently in refugee camps unable to return home and that DNA tests may be used to help identify them. The

group agreed that John Mason MSP would raise this issue with relevant people on behalf of the group. In December our meeting heard inputs from two different communities: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) and the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU). In both cases the presentations focused more on the persecution experienced by their community in the early years of their movement. We heard about violence and forced displacement that members of the LDS community faced in Ohio, Illinois and Missouri in the 1800s as well as the murder of their founder, Joseph Smith. Similarly, the group learned about the repeated

imprisonment of the founder of the FFWPU, Reverend Moon and of imprisonment and kidnapping of members of the movement. The speakers from the two communities described that although circumstances are a great deal better for their groups now, many members still face discrimination, stereotyping, ridicule and misunderstanding in relation to their beliefs. Some members of both groups still choose to keep their beliefs private, or to choose carefully who they disclose to.

If you are interested in coming along to a meeting of the Cross-Party Group then please email Jamie Spurway on jamie@interfaithscotland.org

Religious Equality Training

In the last few months of 2019 our training officer Jamie Spurway was kept on his toes by an interesting range of training events. He supported a conference by the Fife Equality Centre on the theme of 'Embrace Differences – conflict resolution in practice'.

Jamie delivered a twist on his '3 mottos for equality and diversity' course, this time focusing on the elements most often involved in arguments and conflict. Just a couple of weeks later he delivered the '3 mottos' course again, this time from our dialogue space in Springburn. The course focuses on three patterns of thinking and perception that often reduce our ability to understand the differences between people.

He also worked with Glasgow University to deliver a couple of sessions of our religion and belief diversity course. The audience were mostly staff who support students with disabilities, so although they were very familiar with the discrimination experienced by people with disabilities, they were less aware of the barriers that people face in relation to their faith or philosophy. In a workshop with Glasgow Clyde College he facilitated a workshop on religion and belief diversity with a large group of their students.

During Scottish Interfaith Week the University of the Highlands and Islands arranged a couple of interesting and innovative events with Interfaith

Scotland. Jamie travelled to Inverness to contribute to a panel discussion and then deliver a training course. Both events focused on the interesting challenge of communicating across culture – something that Jamie has a lot of experience of, having worked as a tour guide across the Middle East, North Africa and Indian Subcontinent. In the panel discussion Jamie was interviewed alongside aerospace engineer and martial artist, Naziyah Mahmood, about their experiences engaging across the cultural divide. People often have a fear that they may accidentally cause offense when communicating cross-culturally. In Jamie's experience it is much more common that our cultural differences are a source of confusion, or perhaps a bit of embarrassment, but accidental offense is pretty rare.

Following the panel discussion Jamie delivered a session of our training course 'Interpreting Culture' to a group of staff from the university. The session focuses on the influence that our cultural background has on the ways that we understand each other's behaviour. So a simple gesture like holding your palm open towards someone might mean 'stop' or 'hello'

or the number five in some contexts, but in Greece it is an offensive gesture meaning that you are pushing dung into the other's face! Something to be aware of on your next trip to the Greek islands! When there has been a misunderstanding like this, it so often comes down to how each party interpreted what happened – what meaning did they make of it? What often helps is for both parties to share how they understood what the other person did, and to explore how the intentions may well have been very different. When we feel we need to challenge someone on their behaviour a useful tool is: observation, impact, request. An example might be: when you are late for our appointments (observation), it means that I do not have time to help other people (impact), so please try to arrive on time (request). We explored this and a number other tools for improving our ability to work and communicate cross-culturally.

To find out more useful advice, come along to one of Jamie's courses! More information can be found at <https://interfaithscotland.org/get-involved/training>

Religious Leaders of Scotland

The Religious Leaders' Forum met on 20th October at Glasgow University and engaged in a very full agenda. Over the course of a number of hours they covered in depth such topics as; Hate Crime Awareness Week; The Climate Emergency; National Child Protection Guidance Revision; Sectarianism, Islamophobia and Anti-semitism; and Challenge Poverty Week. The Forum has now been meeting twice a year since 2002 and at the October 2020 meeting there were 20 religious leaders and guests in attendance.



Scottish Interfaith Week 2019

Eat Share Love

Scottish Interfaith Week 2019 took place from 11th – 17th November on the theme of 'Eat, Share, Love'. Scottish Interfaith Week provides an opportunity for interfaith groups, faith communities, schools, organisations and local communities across the country to celebrate Scotland's religious diversity by planning events that bring people together to promote dialogue, understanding and co-operation between Scotland's diverse religious communities and cultures.

Over 80 events took place all across Scotland. As in previous years we had an enthusiastic group of volunteers who attended events as SIFW Ambassadors, taking photos and writing blogs, some of which appear in our newsletter. This year we were excited to have the addition of a vlog (video) created by two of our youngest volunteers, Eve and Ellen, which can be found on our Scottish Interfaith Website here: <http://scottishinterfaithweek.org/resources>

The launch of Scottish Interfaith Week took place on 11th November at the



Council Chambers of the City Hall in Perth introducing the theme of 'Eat, Share, Love'. There was a great opportunity to 'Eat' on arrival, with guests being treated to a generous buffet. There was a very special chocolate for every attendee, kindly donated by the Highland Chocolatier of Grandtully in Perthshire, two time winner of the chocolate truffle of the

year award! After a warm welcome from the Lord Provost and from the Chair of Interfaith Scotland, Alan Kay, Dr Maureen Sier addressed the audience on the theme of 'Eat Share Love'.



Guests were then treated to some beautiful Persian music by Musicians in Exile, a fantastic initiative which provides asylum seekers and refugees who have been musicians in their own country, with the instruments and rehearsal space to perform again as musicians. Tracey Robbins gave an inspiring talk about the Eden Project, an organisation which encourages people to love and appreciate nature and our neighbours around us. In particular she mentioned the Big Lunch, an initiative which encourages people to have an event in their neighbourhoods where people can eat together and get to know each other, combatting loneliness which is a big issue in modern life today.

Lesley Wilson read a thought-provoking piece of work she had written called 'The Land that Forgot', reminding us to



appreciate everything in nature around us. Love and respect was clear to be seen during the afternoon, a real acceptance of others, no matter what the background in culture or faith.

As part of Scottish Interfaith Week, Interfaith Scotland held a competition for young people to create a piece of artwork, music or writing on the theme of 'Eat, Share Love'. There were 60 entries from primary and secondary schools and youth groups. The winning entries showed a wide variety of ideas from poetry to recipes to a game of senses where different food types were displayed on plates for you to decide the contents by smell and texture! First prize went to pupils at Calderwood Lodge Primary School in East Renfrewshire who produced several pieces of artwork, poems, recipes and even an animation about fruit and vegetables!



Second prize went to the 5th Giffnock Girl Guide Group and to Class Arran at Howford Primary School. Third prize went to Tulloch Primary School in Perth.



Interfaith Glasgow Celebrates Scottish Interfaith Week

The team at Interfaith Glasgow were excited to deliver a varied programme of events for Scottish Interfaith Week.

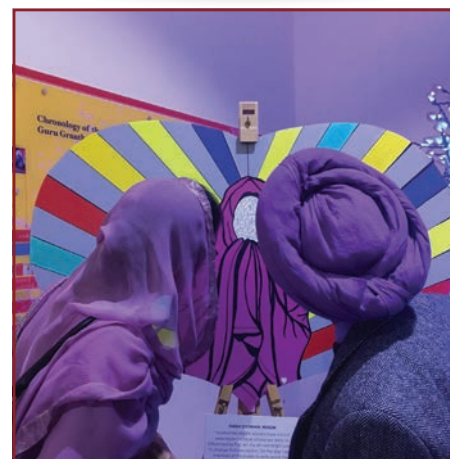
We focused on our three forms of engagement – friendship, dialogue, and cooperation – and linked these with the theme of ‘Eat, Share, Love.’ Our hope was that the people of Glasgow would have a great variety of events to attend during the always popular Scottish Interfaith Week. We kicked off our SIFW programme of events by taking Interfaith Glasgow’s Faith to Faith programme on a field trip. These monthly events are usually held at St Mungo Museum of Religious Life and Art, however during our November session we brought our guests out and about in Glasgow. As the theme of Scottish Interfaith Week was ‘Eat, Share, Love’, we visited two places of worship where food plays an important role: a Hindu Mandir and a Sikh Gurdwara. The Glasgow Hindu Mandir invited us for a guided tour where participants witnessed the Aarti ceremony, an act of worship where light is offered to the Deities, followed by a delicious lunch. We then made our way to the nearby Central Gurdwara Singh Sabha, enjoying the rare Glasgow sunshine on our walk. The group saw the launch of a special interfaith art series, had a guided tour of the Gurdwara, and learned about the significance of the free Langan (community meal) in the Sikh tradition. This event was a wonderful opportunity for our guests to experience the incredible hospitality of various faiths, and for local places of worship to share a little more about themselves and their food.

Our next event of the week was titled What Calls Us to Action? At a time when so many social and environmental problems compete for our attention the result is often hopelessness and inaction. But there are those rare religious and moral leaders - from diverse traditions and backgrounds - whose words manage



to cut through the noise and motivate people to act. Local activists from different backgrounds shared stories about the people whose words have touched them deeply and inspired their work. Community organiser and educator Sapna Agarwal spoke about Wangari Maathai, who was a Kenyan social, political, and environmental activist who was the first African woman to win a Nobel Prize. Human ecologist and activist Luke Devlin spoke about Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German pastor, theologian and anti-Nazi dissident who was ultimately killed by the regime. People of various faiths and beliefs then reflected together on the words of these inspirational leaders and shared their own inspirations and what calls them to action!

Halfway through the week, Interfaith Glasgow planned a Civic Reception



at Glasgow City Chambers. This was hosted by Glasgow City Council and we were delighted to see members of so many faith communities come together. Bailie Marie Garrity gave a warm welcome, and she emphasised the City’s support for interfaith engagement. She also highlighted the great opportunity for faith groups





to come together to tackle climate change in the run up to the UN climate summit COP26, which will take place in Glasgow during SIFW 2020.

As the week came to a close, the staff and volunteers at Interfaith Glasgow were still in 'full steam ahead' mode, in preparation for our annual Interfaith Family Fun day! 300 people from diverse backgrounds came together

at Hillhead Primary School, enjoying arts and crafts activities which offered an insight into Glasgow's many religious traditions. Eight faiths were represented at these craft tables – the Baha'i faith, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Paganism and Sikhism – and children were able to do all sorts of activities from making dreidels and mala beads, to painting diya lamps and symbolic stones. Our 'try it on' stalls were as popular as ever and gave people the chance to try on various types of religious and traditional dress, such as a Jewish kippah, Indian sari, Muslim hijab, Sufi and Sikh turbans and church altar server vestments. One of the highlights of the day was the wonderful mix of classical and contemporary Indian dancing by the children's dance group, Jhankar Beats who told the story of Lord Krishna

and his beloved Rama through dance.

We at Interfaith Glasgow consider ourselves to be fortunate to live and work in a city with such rich diversity. SIFW offers so many chances to engage with different faith communities and alongside our events, there was an incredible range of things to do in the city during the week. Many groups worked hard to create their own projects and events.

Katie Sproull, Interfaith Glasgow Project Leader



Dumfries and Galloway Interfaith Group

Our small and enthusiastic group decided to hold two events during SIFW. The first was an arts and crafts afternoon based on the theme of 'Eat, Share, Love'. A group of women came together at the Multicultural Association to make small gift boxes to give to someone else as a token of their love and friendship. We then had soup and sandwiches provided by the Multicultural Association with meaningful conversation about how sharing food and eating together is one way of getting to know others, learning about their faith and culture



and a way of building strong bonds of friendship.

Our second event was a gathering to share food which might be considered unique to a particular faith and explore some of the dietary traditions of the major world religions. After sharing a wholesome spread of soup and a variety of vegetarian cuisine, we got into groups and worked on a quiz created by Interfaith Scotland. For this, we had to match a religion to a brief description of dietary requirements. It was well received and led to much dialogue, laughter and the occasional access to the internet to get some facts and figures about dietary practices of a given religion.

We all agreed that there is something about sharing a meal in person with others that connects the giver with the

receiver, something that is missing when simply giving away our surplus food to food banks. By developing qualities of generosity and compassion to all, and not just those from our own 'tribe', we develop a healthy and positive mind-set. This in turn will be a means of achieving mutual understanding and more connected and empowered communities. We all enjoyed each other's company and agreed that we should have more get togethers to share food and explore themes common to all faiths and cultures. Thank you Interfaith Scotland for this thought provoking theme for SIFW!



Moray Interfaith Group

The Moray Interfaith Group is a well-established group which has had many associations with Interfaith Scotland.

The advertisement for their event during Scottish Interfaith Week promised an experiential, participatory interfaith gathering so I was curious to join them at St Sylvester's Church in Elgin. Their gathering was well supported by clergy with a Catholic Priest, Church of Scotland Minister, two interfaith ministers, and a lay

Franciscan. We were invited to sit around a lighted candle. Interfaith Minister Juanna Lagada sang to us and welcomed us 'Just as you are'. Sylvia Robertson read a poignant piece, a passage by Vietnamese Buddhist Monk, Thich Nhat Hahn which

was perfect for the SIFW theme 'Eat, Share, Love'.

“
**In this food I see clearly
the presence of the entire
universe supporting
existence....each morsel of
food is an Ambassador from
the cosmos. It contains
sunshine, clouds, the
sky, the earth, the farmer,
everything.**”

people who care so much about all peoples of the world. I was inspired by their excitement about interfaith and its possibilities in empowering much good work and projects to benefit society.

Shanny Newall, SIFW Ambassador

Then there was an opportunity to chat and enjoy tea and treats and mingle. The whole evening was so thoughtfully constructed around relevant readings and a space to think and interact and effort had gone in to ensure that it was just right for everyone. They are a wonderful and dynamic group of



**Interfaith Minister, Sylvia Robertson,
Interfaith Minister, Juanna Lagada
and Church of Scotland Minister
Rev Jenny Adams**



Dundee Celebrates 'Eat Share Love'

Dundee Inter Faith Association (DIFA) celebrated Scottish Interfaith Week with an 'Eat Share Love' event in the Dundee West Church Lower Hall.

Guests came from different faiths and beliefs including Quakers, Humanists, Muslims, Christians, Pagans and Baha'is. After a brief welcome, guests were invited to play a game which came from Interfaith Scotland's SIFW resource pack, matching the labels of religions to the dietary requirements. This was a successful icebreaker, as it got people moving around and talking to each other.

Before eating, readings were shared on the theme of 'Eat'. A mix and match buffet ensured everyone had something delicious to eat, before we settled down to hear the first item of music. Young people from the youth choir of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints entertained us with their singing. It was great to have such

an enthusiastic bunch of young people there and they fully participated in the whole programme.

After readings on the theme of 'Share', we were invited to take part in Dances for Universal Peace which had us all up on the floor, singing and dancing. There was a lovely family feeling to this part of the celebration, as older and younger generations happily joined together in a spirit of unity. More music

was followed by readings on 'Love'.

The aims of DIFA, and its imminent relaunch as Faith and Belief Dundee and Tayside (FaB Dundee) were the subject of a short presentation. A warm welcome was given to everyone to attend our future meetings, which will be taking place monthly in the chaplaincy of Dundee University. The evening finished with us all reciting the Celtic Blessing.

Celtic Blessing

**May the road rise to meet you
May the wind be always at your back
May the sun shine warm upon your face
The rains fall soft upon your fields
And until we meet again
May God hold you in the palm of his hand**

Renfrewshire Interfaith Group at the Peace Garden

On Sunday 10th November, a committed band of people of different faiths gathered at the Rowantree Cafe in Barshaw Park before walking and singing together to the Peace Garden. Representatives of the Baha'i, Jewish, Christian, Ahmadiyya, Buddhist and Quaker faiths and the Peace

Federation each spoke on the SIFW 2019 theme of 'Eat, Share, Love'. It was evident how much these faiths held in common and all have the golden rule of loving your neighbour and hating no-one. We gathered round a fire pit, provided by Friends of Barshaw, which gave a gentle warmth on a very cold

afternoon. Walking and talking on the way back to the cafe provided some reflection time on the words heard in the garden. Once in the cafe, hot soup was enjoyed by everyone. Many thanks to all who supported this annual event.

Faiths Together Skye & Lochalsh: Waste Free Lunch

To mark Scottish Interfaith Week 2019 and its theme of 'Eat, Share, Love' the group decided to host a lunch using only the contents of a foodbank bag given out to clients, of whom there are sadly ever increasing numbers in Skye & Lochalsh. We thought it was very important that the shared lunch should

also be 'waste-free' and that it should be vegetarian. The Rev Rosemary Bungard kindly allowed us to use the parish room and kitchen at St Columba's Episcopal Church in Portree so we set to with the advertising and planning the menu.



At 11am on Saturday 16th November the event began with a cup of coffee and conversation around the texts sent from Interfaith Scotland on the theme. At this point we were joined by a local lady and a visitor who had travelled all the way from Glasgow by bus especially to be with us. Before starting our lunch of tinned soup, pasta and tinned fruit accompanied by a delicious home-made bread pudding made from Co-op reduced-basket bread, Rosemary said grace, then a blessing was offered by one of our members who is an Interfaith Minister. A few minutes' silence followed in which we reflected on the inequity

and injustice of those who never have enough to eat and those - like our fortunate selves - who always do. These thoughts in mind, we ate and enjoyed our delicious meal together.

As planned, nothing leftover went to waste: some was served later to the Church's Youth Group, some taken home to family and friends while later that day, somewhere in the deep south, could be heard the sound of contented chickens polishing off the last few tasty morsels!



Scottish Interfaith Week in West Lothian

The West Lothian Faith Forum hosted 'Curry and Conversation', an interfaith shared meal in the Canon Hoban Hall in Broxburn. Over 20 people attended including those from the Muslim, Buddhist, Baha'i, Christian and Jewish faiths. Friendships were renewed and

new friendships were made and the group hopes to make it an annual event. A visit was also arranged to the Livingston Islamic Centre and Mosque during Interfaith Week. This was hosted by the Imam, who gave a tour of the mosque followed by a talk

on the Muslim faith. The visit was open to all and was really well attended by around 25 people of different faiths and backgrounds. Excellent feedback was received, with those visiting agreeing that this was a very enjoyable and informative event.

Interfaith Prayers for Healing and Peace in Helensburgh

As part of Scottish Interfaith Week I attended the Interfaith Prayers for Healing and Peace in Helensburgh. The group meets every Wednesday morning for prayer at the United Reformed Church where Rev Mitchell Bunting (Bungie) is now the Minister. I had met Bungie through CAIRS or Churches Agency for Interfaith Relations in Scotland. It was lovely to see him again and his continued work to promote interfaith dialogue. Rev Bunting said,

"Mindful that Wednesday 13th November would be during Scottish Interfaith Week, with it being my turn to

lead the prayers and in conversation with a Baha'i colleague, Allan Forsyth, I decided to offer a time for interfaith prayer and reflection for peace and healing. Although this was arranged at short notice and publicity was limited, we were delighted our regular group was joined by some visitors who were coming especially for the interfaith nature of this week's gathering".

Rev Bunting used the NHS and Interfaith Scotland's resource book 'Reflections of Life' as the basis for his session. He asked folk to choose a prayer or a meditation from the book to share. In this way we shared words

on peace and healing from a wide variety of faith and belief traditions. After half an hour of sharing we concluded with a moment of silence. When the session concluded those able to stay remained for coffee and a time for chat. Rev Bunting said that this was the first time they had organised anything for Scottish Interfaith Week but buoyed by its success he is keen to continue this next year and to develop interfaith relations in Helensburgh and the surrounding area along with Allan Forsyth, Chair of the Baha'i Council for Scotland, so watch this space!

Shanny Newall, SIFW Ambassador

Bagel Making Workshop on Arran

Years ago, when the kids were little, we used to visit Whiting Bay on the beautiful Isle of Arran. We all loved the place. So, when Barb Taub's Bagel making workshop appeared on the Scottish Interfaith Week website, a revisit to Arran really appealed. This was the first time that a group on Arran had hosted an event for SIFW. I had never made a bagel before and was keen to learn how, so overnight bag in hand, off I went.

With a degree of trepidation, I wandered in with the other guests, but Barb and her home were so warm and welcoming any anxieties soon melted away. We gathered around her dining room table and were presented with carefully prepared goody bags for each person.

These included Hanukkah chocolates, a game and recipes. Clustered together around the table, kneading, slapping and

rolling ensued as we vigorously

knocked the bagels into shape, with much chat and laughter. In a flurry of flour, the first phase was complete, and we were ushered into Barb's conservatory with its panoramic views of the sea. Here awaited another table groaning with Hanukkah goodies. While we were indulging, the yeast was busy rising and the bagels were soon ready to boil and bake. Off to the kitchen next. It was fun rotating around all the rooms while chatting and mingling with Barb's other guests, hearing their stories and getting to know one another.

One by one the bagels were completed and garnished with poppy seeds, garlic, onion and honey amongst other treats. Then we said

our goodbyes and our newly initiated bagel chefs drifted gradually off home with their prized bagels. Then after a quick tidy up I had a chance to chat to Barb about interfaith on Arran. Barb had hosted a

couple of concerts with talented Jewish



musicians in her home in response to an interfaith drive started by her friend who has since had to return to the States. Barb was full of enthusiasm for further projects, building on the success of her concerts. She hopes to host the next in a local church hall to accommodate the swelling numbers who are interested in attending. You can read Barb's blog about her bagel making session, along with a recipe at the link below:

<https://barbtaub.com/2019/11/17/best-bagel-you-ever-had-humor-scotland-sifw19/>

Shanny Newall, SIFW Ambassador



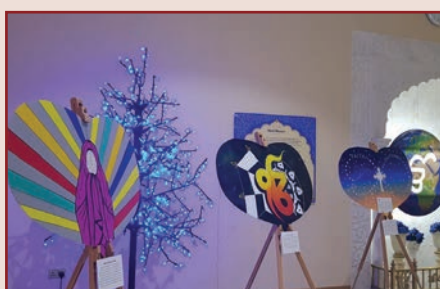
Sikh interfaith events celebrating the 550th Birth Anniversary of Guru Nanak Sahib and Scottish Interfaith Week

Eat Share and Love

Langar or free community kitchen is a unique facet of the Sikh religion established by the first Guru and founder of the Sikh religion, Guru Nanak Dev Ji. It is designed to uphold the principle of equality between all people of the world regardless of religion, caste, colour, creed, age, gender, or social status; to eliminate the extreme poverty, and to bring about the birth of caring communities.

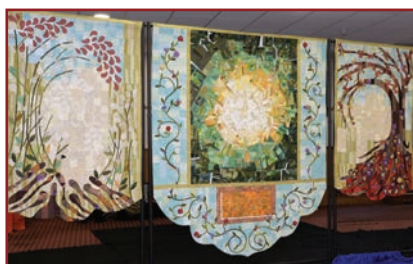
Central Gurdwara Faith and Art Display event

BBC The One Show for the first time gave a report about Interfaith Week. The show asked three young women artists whose artwork was influenced by their faith, to produce a piece of art. They invited members from the Christian, Islamic and Sikh communities in Glasgow to attend the filming session and comment on the artwork once it was revealed at the end of the day. The artists' work was launched and displayed in Central Gurdwara, Glasgow during Interfaith Week. Closing words from Ravinder Kaur Nijjar of the Scottish Sikh Community were "Without love humanity could not exist".



Guru Nanak 550 Tapestry

This unique multi-faith artwork, the first of its kind in Scotland, was launched on 9th November 2019 at Glasgow Gurdwara to celebrate the legacy and 550th birth anniversary of Guru Nanak Devji, the founder of Sikh faith. Guru Nanak's message of oneness, peace and equality was the inspiration to use art as a means of bringing together people from different faiths, backgrounds and cultures. 90 participants put in over 200 hours of dedication, love and hard work over 18 months, ably led by the collaborative efforts of project leaders Manjit Kaur Jheeta and Paula Hope. From 17th Feb 2020 the tapestry will be displayed at the Mitchell Library in Glasgow and it is hoped that it can travel as a roadshow to different venues.



The tapestry consists of three panels, each outlining different aspects of Guru Nanak's message: Meditation, Honesty and Sharing. According to the Sikh faith, meditation on a daily basis charges the divine spark inside each one of us and we become interconnected, experiencing oneness. This helps us to live wisely, by respecting the pure love that dwells inside each one of us and everything around us. The inspiration for this panel is from symbol EK ONKAR ੴ which means one Creator, one Universe. The white area represents Divine energy that radiates from this source and illuminates the entire universe. The outer area made of several shades of green represents all forms of life sustained by this energy. The beautiful flowers adorning the borders are handmade and embellished with beads used by the Masai Tribe in Kenya, reminding us to offer our gratitude and appreciation for so much beauty around us. On the panel representing honesty, the drops of milk, made from white silk fabric represent the purity and virtue of honest hard work. The final panel illustrates the principle of sharing that inspires one to live a generous and selfless life.



East Kilbride Faith and Food Event

Dr Inderjit Singh took part in an event organised by Rev Lindsay Sanderson on Faith and Food. He spoke of the importance of helping to overcome hunger and the concept of langar in the Sikh religion.



Supporting Food Banks

The Sikh Council of Scotland invited faith communities to collect and donate supplies for the North and Southside food banks in Glasgow during SIFW. These were greatly appreciated by the volunteers. The Sikh Council informed the volunteers that people could come and share a vegetarian meal any day at the Gurdwaras in Glasgow and in other parts of Scotland.



Aberdeen Interfaith Group

The inaugural meeting of Aberdeen Interfaith Forum took place on Saturday 9th November at the start of Scottish Interfaith Week. The event was delivered in partnership between Grampian Regional Equality Council (GREC) and Interfaith Aberdeen. The event was attended by 35 people from at least 12 faith groups. Interfaith Scotland Director, Dr Maureen Sier, gave the keynote speech for the event on the SIFW theme of 'Eat, Share, Love' outlining ways in which food can play a key role in breaking down boundaries between people of different faiths and cultures. Sheila McDerment from Police Scotland spoke about the important role that communities have in encouraging individuals to report on hate crimes in a supported way. Gun Orgun explained to us about City of Sanctuary, which is a grassroots movement and organisation, which encourages cities, groups, and organisations to create sanctuary for asylum seekers and refugees. Ross Mackay gave a brief overview of GREC's work with young people in Grampian, including the Anne Frank Awards. He highlighted a useful resource recently published by Action On Prejudice, called 'Speak Up', which is a really helpful guide to safe ways of being an 'active bystander' in a hate crime situation. The guide can be downloaded here: <https://actiononprejudice.info/speak-up/>

On Thursday 14th November members of Aberdeen Interfaith Group joined the Holy Family Sisters of the Needy to provide a three course community meal for the homeless at St Mary's Roman Catholic Cathedral. Buddhist, Hindu, Humanist, Christian, and Muslim volunteers worked happily together to produce the delicious meal. Christmas Eve brought some of us from the Buddhist, Christian and Hindu faiths together again to cook a three course Christmas dinner for our



homeless friends.

On Saturday 16th November we were delighted to hold our annual interfaith gathering in conjunction with Aberdeen Hindu Temple Trust at the end of Scottish Interfaith Week. Representatives of different faith groups were joined by the Lord Provost at an event held to share words, prayers, song and dance on the theme of 'Eat, Share, Love'. This was followed by a Food Mela, where many enjoyed a delicious variety of foods cooked by the Hindu community to raise funds

for their new temple. The whole event was a wonderful coming together of cultures, faith traditions, food and music greatly enjoyed by all age groups living out the values of love and sharing.

We always enjoy a quiet reflective evening in Advent and in 2019 it was beside a real fire, thanks to the invitation of the Aberdeen Brahma Kumaris. Sister Mary Chidalo from the Holy Family Sisters of the Needy joined our interfaith gathering for the first time and thanked us for our involvement in feeding the homeless during Scottish Interfaith Week.

After the event she shared, "I felt so great representing my religious community during your interfaith gathering. Your commitment, maturity and love was amazing and

commendable. I appreciated most of all the spiritual presentation from each and every one of you, awakening our yearning for peace and love at Christmas. I encourage you to hold on to the faith while maintaining equality, diversity and inclusion, all to the glory of God".

A Sikh member of Aberdeen Interfaith Group and a couple of New Scots from Syria and Iraq had the opportunity to speak to Primary 5 pupils at Culter School in Peterculter who had been studying Sikhism. The teacher Alison Davies invited us to go along to answer the pupils' questions about Syria and Iraq, about becoming a New Scot and our respective faiths of Sikhism, Islam and Christianity.

Alison said, "It is so important for the children to learn about real issues and hear first-hand about the difficulties that many New Scots have experienced. I do hope that it will help the children on my class develop empathy for others and consider how they can be responsible citizens in their own little ways. Kindness, understanding, making connections and celebrating similarities, rather than differences were a strong message throughout both visits."

The pupils showed their appreciation of the visits by writing thank you notes to the speakers. One pupil wrote, "We all wish you peace and happiness in your new home and hope you will see an end to the troubles in your homelands."



Fife Interfaith Group

Annual Interfaith Lecture

The Fife Interfaith Group, sponsored by Interfaith Scotland, held their Annual Interfaith Lecture at The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Kirkcaldy, on Wednesday 13th November 2019. Mike Haines O.B.E. and founder of Global Acts of Unity gave the lecture. He spoke about his brother David who was captured in Syria by terrorists whilst on a humanitarian mission and publicly executed after several months of imprisonment and torture. Mike spoke of his fight, not against the terrorists themselves, but against all forms of extremism and hatred.

The audience of over 50 people consisting of many faiths and beliefs were moved by his passionate plea for tolerance. His mantra, "If we hate, they win" was repeated throughout his presentation.

Bishop Dale Black, representing the local LDS congregation said of the event, "The topic of love, tolerance, and forgiveness was the overwhelming message". Alisha Ahmed, aged 11 from Kirkcaldy High School, said she attended this event as part of SIFW and found it "emotional and touching". Joyce Bloomfield, a local LDS church member, remembered hearing of David's death in the news was touched by Mike's honest, uplifting, and humble account. "It gave me a desire to serve and make a difference in my community" she said.



Pictured: Mike Haines O.B.E., Bishop Dale Black, Alisha Ahmed, Judy Hamilton (Local Authority Councillor), and Usman Saeed (President of the Edinburgh & Fife Ahmadiyya Community)

Usman Saeed later said of the presentation, "it is so refreshing and inspiring that Mike is going out there to all the communities up and down the country as well as abroad to show how important it is to reject all forms of hate fuelled ideologies whether it be daesh or the far right".



Pictured: Iain Liston (Chairperson, Fife Interfaith Group) with Usman Saeed (President of the Edinburgh and Fife Ahmadiyya community).

Most of the attendees were able to linger afterwards to socialise and enjoy the refreshments. Iain Liston, Chairperson of the Fife Interfaith Group, expressed his desire to increase the influence the Fife Interfaith Group had in the community and encouraged the attendees to volunteer in whatever capacity they could to support events like these. "I believe we can go back to our congregations, organisations, and social groups, armed with the motivation to make the world a better place, one community at a time".

Put the Kettle On, Kirkcaldy Central Mosque

Fife Interfaith Group held a joint event with the Kirkcaldy Central Mosque on 12th October. The aim of the event was to give people an opportunity to find out more about each other in an informal way. Imam Mansoor Mahmood gave a presentation about activities that take place in the mosque. People come for the five daily prayers and there are classes to teach children about Islam and the

Qur'an. The mosque also acts as a community centre for meetings and events and is open to anyone of any faith who wishes to visit and pray in his own way there. The Imam showed the final plans for the new mosque which is currently under construction. The presentation was followed by a lively question and answer session. It was well attended by around 30 people from five different faiths. Everyone left feeling uplifted and with a greater understanding of what we all share in common.

Visit to Edinburgh Sikh Gurdwara

Fife Interfaith Group organised a visit to the Gurdwara in Edinburgh on 9th November to take part in the 550th Anniversary Celebration of the birth of Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji. On arrival at the Gurdwara we saw that a large crowd had gathered to watch a ceremonial washing of the front steps. Once inside we removed our shoes and both women and men put on headscarves. We were taken to a room where we were given talks about the Sikh faith. We were told that the Gurdwara is open to all faiths and to anyone who needs help. Sikhs are renowned for giving food to those in need and after the talks were over we were all treated to a delicious meal in the Langar Hall. After this we made our way upstairs to the Diwan Hall, the worship hall which contains the Sikh holy book, the Guru Granth Sahib. A lady was reciting verses from the holy book and we were told that on a day of celebration the scriptures will be recited continuously for the entire day. It was a really enjoyable visit which helped us understand more about the Sikh Community and their generosity in helping others.



Listening to the Voices of Young People

The SIFW event on 11th November at Glasgow University was jointly organised by the Council of Christians and Jews and Interfaith Scotland. It was entitled 'Listening to the Voices of Young People', and what an inspiring evening it was.

Introduced by Steve Innes from the Council of Christians and Jews, it took the form of two separate talks given by two young people of different faiths. The first talk was given by a second year medical student Rumaisa Zubairi. Rumaisa is a young Muslim, and having lived in three different countries growing up, mentioned that the topic and idea of identity was a very interesting one for her. She said that the young Muslim community is very diverse and that she would be speaking for herself and not on behalf of all young Muslims.



It was fascinating to hear Rumaisa talk about how she lives out her faith in her life. This included everyday actions such as how she eats, dresses and treats others. For Muslim women there is the very visual aspect of their faith which is the hijab. It was very interesting to hear her take on the reasons for wearing it. Another aspect Rumaisa mentioned is what she called 'the battle against the ego'. God is the focus in her everyday actions and that battle against the ego meaning she needs to stay humble, not become self-obsessed and be always thinking of others.

Rumaisa mentioned how grateful she

was that the university provided a space for her to say her prayers. She mentioned the acceptance of others when appreciating for example that she wouldn't shake hands with a male outside her family. These were positive examples in a country where Islamophobia is unfortunately far too common. She also showed her huge appreciation for the Muslim community in the University and her friends who supported her. Mentioning the charity work that the Glasgow University Muslim Society does, she said 'as part of a community, you can do so much good.' You can read Rumaisa's speech in full at <http://scottishinterfaithweek.org/sifw-news>



Aparna Ramesh gave us the second inspiring talk of the evening. She is a young Hindu who moved to Glasgow from India two years ago, and since then has been working for Interfaith Scotland. In her introduction to Hinduism, she said that within the faith there are many varied ideas and how you take these ideas is a very personal thing. For her, God is 'energy everywhere in the universe' and every Hindu will pray differently. Aparna was brought up in a religious family where going to the temple was the norm. When she left home for university she had to decide whether she wanted to continue attending

temples, and after a short period of uncertainty she decided that she would do so as she found in it a solace, 'like a security blanket'. She encouraged her university friends to come along to the temple with her and it soon became a group activity.

As a Hindu, Aparna said she saw it as part of her faith to be sincere, charitable and try to live out her life as a good person. She also found that it challenged her ego, in particular when dealing with other people's views of her. Aparna has also found her faith to be very helpful, particularly with stress when she was at university. She found the move to Scotland a big adjustment, as obviously temples aren't as convenient as they are in India. Now she is part of a temple community and finds a real comfort in this, the community being like an extended family.

After these two amazing talks by two inspiring young ladies, we were invited to ask questions. There were many interesting questions ranging from how could more work be done in schools/with parents to teach them the importance of different people's faiths, to how to deal with people making assumptions about your faith that aren't always true and how people should act around customs of certain faiths that they may not be familiar with. Following this, we were given further questions to discuss in our groups. It made me think of the golden rule to treat other people the way we want to be treated. 'There is space for everyone.'

Heather MacIntyre, SIFW Ambassador



Going Green Together: Youth Event

I attended a youth event 'Going Green Together' at Interfaith Scotland's dialogue centre as part of Scottish Interfaith Week 2019. Ross Greer MSP gave a really inspirational talk outlining issues surrounding climate change.

Zarina Ahmed guided us in a game where we had to guess which fruits and vegetables had travelled the furthest to get to our supermarkets. The game demonstrated that the majority of fruits and vegetables that we import from abroad could actually be produced locally.

The following is what I took from the event. We are in a climate crisis, and although we cannot change the damage we have caused our planet, we can still recognise the urgency in a need for change. Issues include a shortage of essentials such as water



and people forced to leave their homes if they can no longer work and live off their land which can create climate refugees. Animal agriculture is the biggest net emitter of methane, a harmful gas destructive to the planet. Not only this, but if we continuously cut down the rainforests to make room for more land for produce, then we are eliminating the main source to help clear up these gases and protect the planet. Whilst individual changes are great, we also need systematic changes. Big corporations are a major force speeding up climate change when their goal is to make profit by creating product. This is exacerbated with an ever-increasing population and increase in demand.

But there is still hope. We need to push for laws to be made against trading that harms the rainforests. A reduction in the amount of meat we eat would be beneficial. Having vegetarian and vegan food options available should be mandatory. We should support locally grown food, whether that be supporting local farms or having more community gardens where people can grow food. All we need for this



is a small piece of land and as most faith communities do have premises it is ideal. It can help change a system of large corporations dealing with produce demand and it also directly tackles poverty.

Interestingly, as a person's income increases so does their impact on the environment through increased carbon consumption. This could include driving a car, frequently flying abroad for holidays, or expecting to eat food and veg that are out of season which are often air freighted from abroad

or grown in heated greenhouses in the UK. Therefore, eating seasonally could help this demand as we would be eating foods (preferably produced locally) that naturally exist at certain times of the year and not only would we notice health improvements, but it would improve the stress we put on our planet.

At the event we were given a live cooking demonstration by Frances Park who showed how easy and cheap it could be to make your own soups and sauces. She created a programme called 'Cook, Taste and Take Away' which is great as she shows people how to cook with what we have, and how to make it last by transforming a few simple ingredients into many

different meals. So, everyone, let's stop stressing our planet out! Instead let us protect the rainforests, those who work under slave like conditions to produce our food, and help the poorest in our own communities by eating locally and seasonally.

Zahra Krndic – SIFW Ambassador

Youth Strategy Consultation

The development officer ran a consultation at the dialogue centre on Monday 21st October to discuss the Scottish Government's Youth Strategy for 2020. 16 youth workers, young people and volunteers from the Christian, Muslim, Sikh, Hindu and Baha'i faiths discussed the rights and needs of young people from different faiths and cultural backgrounds and ways in which they could be supported through the national youth work strategy.

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Participants were asked to identify key ambitions for the future of youth work in Scotland. They said that youth workers and young people should be equipped to feel comfortable with all aspects of human diversity. This includes youth workers receiving appropriate diversity training and engagement; young people having opportunities to engage with other young people with a diverse range of faiths and backgrounds to join together to learn more about each other. Safe spaces should be created where young people can engage in deep, reflective thinking and can ask difficult questions without being judged. Young people, whatever their background, should feel included and listened to. They should all have a part to play and their contributions should be

valued and encouraged.

It was mentioned that young people are particularly engaged if they are consulted on the programme of activities and given leadership responsibility such as peer support, which can be an inspiration for others in the group. Making activities relevant to daily life, such as encouraging young people to contribute to their local community and society through service projects was useful for engagement, as was looking at positive qualities that are relevant to everyone such as kindness. An issue was raised that many faith-based youth workers are volunteers and do not receive any youth work training even though they may be running activities for large numbers of young people on a weekly basis.

Participants at the consultation offered the following recommendations. All youth workers should undertake diversity training to be equipped to be sensitive to the needs of young people from diverse religious and cultural backgrounds so that

they feel accepted, included and accommodated in youth work settings. Youth workers could spend time with faith groups as part of their training and be provided with contacts of local and national interfaith organisations. Wherever possible, youth centres, clubs and faith-based youth groups should be given the opportunity to engage with young people from diverse religious backgrounds, either by visiting places of worship or engaging with a national or local interfaith organisation.

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There was a request for state funding for faith-based youth work which provides inclusive youth work activities for young people, including free training for volunteer youth workers on good youth work practice. It would be beneficial to have a forum for youth leaders from different faiths which would provide a platform to raise their voices together and to support each other in their respective youth-work environments. The recommendations above were reported back to the Scottish Government after the consultation.

Side by Side: Christian and Muslim Women on Gender Justice

I attended one of the first meetings of Side by Side Scotland – an international movement of women of faith, coming together for gender justice. The key focus of the meeting was looking at faith groups and how they can use gender justice to move forward and empower both men and women, rather than oppressing either and understanding how it is a community issue that impacts everyone as well as generations to come, not just those fighting for it now.

In order to do this, it was agreed that systems needed to be changed. However, the way we make that change is something that perhaps needs to be looked at more closely and is not universal for all faith groups or for all areas around the world. As Valerie from Christian Aid explained, each country has its own identity, own needs as well as their own rights to strive for and change when it comes to gender justice, which is why each Side by Side chapter looks different. This applies to both the developed and developing countries, also recognising that the contemporary feminist approach to gender justice does not always work in faith communities, and that new approaches should seek to understand the cultures and traditions when enforcing change. After using diaries to document the work done by each family member, by partners in Sierra Leone, Christian Aid found that women as expected did a disproportionate amount of work and families would benefit if men did more. But what was interesting was the influence that faith leaders had to promote positive

change, as when they embraced roles such as child-care and cooking, they were positive role models for the whole community.

What can faith groups do? It is important for women to take some leadership positions in faith communities, because with just men in these positions we see not only an abuse of women but an overall abuse of power. Male dominance in faith institutions allow for the actual empowerment of women in religious texts to be hidden or interpreted differently. This keeps women oppressed and in poverty with a lack of resources and creates a barrier for them to question things or make decisions in society. One area targeted by the Church of Scotland is advertising means of support for women experiencing violence in local parishes. It also coordinates workshops on the way in which Christianity has played a role in shaping notions of masculinity and femininity. Working with transgender youth and looking at a pyramid of sexual violence and prevention are other key areas they are targeting. Another way that faiths can be active in gender justice is by tackling period poverty. So many girls are suffering from health problems after being unable to change sanitary products as often and some are missing out on education. They



are now often available in public bathrooms for free; however it may be useful for faith communities to extend this to making them available in places of worship or giving them out at charitable food banks.

Overall this was a great event and I left with the clear feeling that the aim of gender justice through faith is not to treat everyone the same, but to acknowledge the different paths people are on and tailor a change in attitudes of gender justice as so.

Zahra Krndic – SIFW Ambassador



Women of Faith and Community 'Open House'

On 11th November 2019, Women of Faith and Community held an 'open house' at the Napierhall Street Centre in Glasgow where the group meets each month, normally on the first Monday.

We are a group of ladies of a variety of ages, faiths and backgrounds and we love to meet and talk about things which unite us, go on trips or take part in various arts activities. It was 'bring a dish day', including food which reminded everyone of childhood memories.

After a healthy helping of a 'second breakfast' of home cooked porridge and freshly made waffles, we sat down for a sharing session where everyone went round in the circle sharing a happy childhood memory and passing the 'stone of love' to our neighbour when it was their turn to speak. Other users of the Centre were invited to attend on this occasion and 26



participants took part with a number of new people attending the event, many expressing the hope that they could join the group at future meetings.

The funds received from Interfaith Scotland enabled the group to give a small gift bag to each participant

containing homemade Indian sweets, Scottish tablet and a business card with the contact details of the group.



Edinburgh Women's Interfaith Group: Eat Share Love

Quaker, Sikh and Jewish representatives shared about their personal journeys of faith, and we all shared recipes, cooking and other creative endeavours, storytelling and more!

EWIG provided a delicious vegetarian finger buffet with traditional homemade Indian sweets. Over 30 ladies from various groups and individuals took part at this event which was really enjoyable and a great success.

EWIG 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. EWIG is very

grateful to Interfaith Scotland for their support for this event.

Holocaust Memorial Day 2020

Holocaust Memorial Day is the day for everyone to remember the millions of people murdered in the Holocaust, under Nazi Persecution, and in the genocides which followed in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia, and Darfur. Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) 2020 marks 75 years since the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau. The theme for HMD 2020 is 'Stand Together'. This theme explores how genocidal regimes throughout history have deliberately fractured societies by marginalising certain groups, and how these tactics can be challenged by individuals standing together with their neighbours and speaking out against oppression.

In the years leading up to the Holocaust, Nazi policies and propaganda deliberately encouraged divisions within German society – urging 'Aryan' Germans to keep themselves separate from their Jewish neighbours. The Holocaust, Nazi Persecution of other groups, and each subsequent genocide was enabled by ordinary citizens not standing with their targeted neighbours. HMD 2020 also marks the 25th anniversary of the Genocide in Bosnia. Today there is increasing division in communities across the UK and the world. Now more than ever, we need to stand together with others in our communities in order to stop division and the spread of identity-based hostility in our society.



To mark HMD 2020, Interfaith Scotland created a week long programme of events which began with Scotland's

National Commemoration on the evening on 27th January at the Scottish Parliament. Iain Gray and Daniel Johnson MSPs sponsored this year's event, where 300 guests were able to hear from the First Minister who has herself recently visited Auschwitz-Birkenau as well as listen to the powerful testimonies of two genocide survivors, Janine Webber BEM and Hasan Hasanovic.

Janine was born in Lwów in Poland (now L'viv, Ukraine) in 1932. Persecution of the Jews of Lwów began as soon as Germany invaded in June 1941 and Janine and her family had to move into a small room in a house on the edge of the city. During this time her father was shot. Janine and the surviving members of her family were forced into the ghetto where her mother died of typhus. Janine and her younger brother were hidden by Polish farmers. They were betrayed and her brother was shot. Janine ran away and was taken in by a Polish family until they discovered her Jewish identity and bought her a train ticket to return to Lwów. There Janine was forced to hide in an attic and then in an underground bunker for 10 months

before her aunt was able to arrange false papers for her. She was sent to a convent in Kraków to live with



an elderly couple, until Kraków was liberated in early 1945. Six months after the end of the war, Janine's aunt returned, and they left for Paris. In 1956, Janine came to the UK to improve her English, where she met and married her husband. She has two sons and two grandsons and lives in London.

Hasan Hasanovic was born on 7th December 1975 in Bajina Bašta, Serbia. The Bosnian War started in March 1992 and by May, Hasan's family had been forced to move to the Muslim-held enclave around the town of Srebrenica. There was no electricity, very little food, and people were being killed every day by Serb artillery fire. He was 19 when Srebrenica fell to Bosnian Serb forces in July 1995. After

the United Nations troops retreated, Hasan, along with his father Aziz and twin brother Husein, decided to flee. He endured a 100 kilometre march through hostile terrain to escape the massacre of around 8,000 Muslim men and boys that took place. During the march Hasan became separated from his father and brother and never saw them again. Having walked for



five days and six nights, Hasan made it to Tuzla. He was one of only 3,500 who survived the march. After the war, Hasan worked as an interpreter for the US army then gained a degree in Criminal Sciences and returned to live in Srebrenica in 2009. He is married and has a daughter and works as a Curator at the Memorial Centre, where he shares his story with visitors from all over the world.

Further speakers were Mamie Philp, representing Survivors fund, who spoke about the charity's work following the genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda and Nikita Stevenson and Caitlin Woodhead from Carlisle High School who spoke about their visit to Auschwitz which was organised by the Holocaust Educational Trust. One of the highlights of the evening

in Parliament was the playing of the specially commissioned music 'Unforgotten' written and composed by Oleg Ponomarev, a Russian Jewish Gypsy and world-famous musician and Lev Atlas from the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. The music was performed by the pupils from the Glasgow strings orchestra and included a young Armenian musician playing the traditional Armenian Duden.

To close the event, Rabbi David Rose sung Ani Ma'amin, a song of hope that was sung during the Holocaust, memorial candles were lit, and the audiences were asked to take a minute to reflect on the evening's powerful message. Finally, guests were also able to view a digital exhibition of the children of Buchenwald, created collaboratively by the

pupils of Bellahouston Academy and two schools in Rostov on Don in Russia.

The 2020 memorial was held in partnership with the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust and the Scottish Government. Other sponsors were Remembering Srebrenica, The Educational Institute of Scotland, The Consulate General of the Federal Republic of Germany and The Consulate General of the Republic of Poland.



Additional HMD events across the week

This year, our speakers visited primary and secondary schools in Edinburgh, Falkirk, Linlithgow, Glasgow, Clackmannanshire and East Renfrewshire.

A school's conference was held at St Mungo Museum of Religious Life and

Art which has now been running since 2015. This powerful and invaluable day allows Secondary school pupils in Glasgow to share six months of learning about genocide with children from local Primary schools. Our speakers also spoke at a wonderful yearly event in the

Glasgow City Chambers, where pupils recited poetry, sang, played music and performed a powerful drama piece. There were over 400 pupils in attendance from nine Glasgow schools.

Local Interfaith Groups Commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day

To commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day in 2020, the Scottish Government provided funding for local interfaith groups to organise events in their local areas.

INVERNESS

Inverness Interfaith Group held a remembrance service for Holocaust Memorial Day on 27th January. Approximately 80 people attended the event in the beautiful Town Hall of Inverness. After a welcome by the Depute Provost Graham Ross, the Chairman of Inverness Interfaith group Rolf Schmidt reflected on the worrying parallels between current world events and the years leading up to the Holocaust in 1930s Europe. He stressed the importance of letting reason, wisdom, and compassion prevail over tribal instinct; by standing together as faith communities, as people of all nationalities and races, and as true citizens of one world that we all share.

The main guest speaker was Judy Russel, a second generation Holocaust survivor who talked about the experiences of her family. Both of Judy's parents spent time in Nazi camps and suffered family loss. She also focused on her step-father Ernest Levy who arrived in Scotland in 1961 and has talked and written about his wartime experiences. In 1944 Ernest was among some of the first Jews to be deported from Budapest itself and he was taken to Auschwitz. From there he spent the next year in a number of concentration camps. He experienced



the infamous Death March and was liberated from Bergen Belsen in 1945.

This very solemn and moving evening concluded with the reading of the Statements of Commitment of the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust and the lighting of candles by pupils from Cradlehall Primary School.

SHETLAND



Shetland's commemoration to mark Holocaust Memorial Day 2020 was held in Lerwick Town Hall, where a large and diverse group gathered to reflect and remember with the help

of music, poetry, and a presentation from pupils of Bells Brae primary school. After the lighting of a candle of remembrance, we listened to a piece of music composed especially for the

occasion, which was accompanied by images to help us reflect on the tragedy of genocide and yet the possibilities of hope demonstrated by survivors across the generations. The pupils had been studying the story of Anne Frank, and other Jewish children of that period, and shared with us some of their creative writing inspired by thinking about their hopes and dreams for the future, which were never realised. We also listened to the poem 'They want us to be afraid' by Kamand Kojouri, heard a personal account of the aftermath of ethnic violence in Zimbabwe in the 1980s, and sang together the spiritual 'We shall overcome', before laying wreaths of remembrance at the county war memorial.

AYRSHIRE

On Sunday 2nd February, Ayrshire Interfaith Group held an event to commemorate the Holocaust at St Kentigern's Church in Kilmarnock. Four young people gave presentations and spoke about the importance of 'Standing Together', highlighting the Holocaust in Europe during World War 2, and reminding us also of genocides in Cambodia, Bosnia, Rwanda and Darfur. There were also

presentations by leaders of the Muslim, Jewish, Catholic and Protestant faith groups expressing their thoughts and perspectives and adding personal experiences related to the Holocaust and Standing Together.

The presentations were followed by a Q&A panel discussion and dialogue. Stuart Lang, Chairman of Ayrshire Interfaith Group, said "Standing up and



standing together in our faith groups and communities is vital to ensure that genocide never happens again. We need to celebrate what we have in common and build our communities to be safe and welcoming places for all people."

CENTRAL SCOTLAND

Central Scotland Interfaith were among the organisations who brought together around 50 people in Falkirk Library on Wednesday 29th January. Central Scotland Regional Equality Council were the main organisers and they invited Kindertransport member Bob McKenzie and Rwanda genocide survivor Umutesi Stewart to deliver keynote addresses. Six candles were then lit in commemoration by the speakers, plus representatives of the local Muslim Forum, Police Scotland, Andrew Sarle of Central Scotland Interfaith and Lord Julian Goodman of the Scottish Council of Jewish Communities and the Association of Jewish Refugees. After the candles were lit, Lord Julian Goodman led those gathered in the Jewish Memorial prayer. Cllr Laura Murtagh from Falkirk Council addressed those gathered, after which kosher refreshments were shared.

EDINBURGH

Listening is the first step to tackling hate!

During the last week in January I had the honour of working with three survivors at various Holocaust Memorial events in Edinburgh and Falkirk: Janine Webber (the Holocaust), Hasan Hasanovic (Srebrenica) and Marie Jeanne Umutesi (Rwanda). These survivors had endured unimaginable suffering, had feared for their lives, and endured the killing of close loved ones, murdered for no reason other than their ethnicity or religion. All survivors made a request to young people to stop 'othering,' to stop hating people because of the different groups they were perceived to belong to. The young people listened attentively and clearly empathised with the speakers, shown by the fact that you could have heard a pin drop in each room, and by the queues of students who surrounded the speakers to show their appreciation. The students left with a motivation to do what they could to prevent others around them in their schools and communities to become

the victims of hate.

When we listen closely to the experiences of others who have been the victims of hate crimes we too are motivated to try and prevent these crimes from occurring again. Hate can take place in any country and society, and if the seeds of hate are allowed to be sown they can grow and spread like a dangerous virus. History has taught us that there are no easy or quick solutions to tackling hate crime or hate ideology. We have to listen to groups who are directly affected by hate crime and ask them how they feel hate crimes could both be prevented and how the process of reporting and responding to hate crimes could be improved.

At the Edinburgh Interfaith Association our primary concern is with how we tackle and prevent hate crimes directed against religious communities but we are concerned to stop hate



crimes directed against people of all protected characteristics. For that reason, we have designed a hate crime awareness course currently being piloted in schools around Edinburgh and Glasgow. The course is designed for use in the RME curriculum and can also be used in a youth work setting. It aims to raise awareness of hate crime, encourage empathy with the victims and to encourage the reporting of hate crimes. It can be found at www.thegroundweshare.com/awareness-course

We hope that all schools across Scotland will join others in running this course as part of their commitment to tackling hate and fostering welcoming inclusive learning communities.

**Iain Stewart, Executive Director,
Edinburgh Interfaith Association**

World Interfaith Harmony Week



WORLD INTERFAITH HARMONY WEEK

Muslim & Jewish Participants embrace

In Scotland and across the world there is a growing rise in Anti-Semitism, Islamophobia and religious sectarianism. As part of as part of World Interfaith Harmony Week Holocaust Remembrance, Interfaith Scotland hosted an event ‘Tackling Hate Together’ in the Jewish Archives centre in Glasgow and were supported by representatives from diverse faith communities, Remembering Srebrenica and Police Scotland.



This open public interfaith event explored how we as a society could ‘tackle hate together’ and begin to stem the tide of growing division and hatred. Over 65 people attended the event, held in Garnethill Synagogue, the oldest Synagogue in Glasgow. Those present came from diverse religious and non-religious traditions including, Jewish, Muslim, Christian, Buddhist, Sikh, Hindu, Baha’i, Unitarian and Humanist.

The evening opened with two guest presentations from a Jewish Holocaust



survivor and a Muslim survivor of the Bosnian Genocide. The focus of their presentations was on how the extreme hatred had evolved that led to mass murder and what they as individuals had done, over many years, to transform the hatred they initially felt into constructive energy to work for peace education and human rights.

Immediately after the presentations the audience engaged with the speakers in an open question and answer session which included hard-hitting questions such as ‘what happens to children that are born as a result of sexual violence?’ and ‘how can faith communities work together to help build peace and promote the spiritual values at the heart of their traditions?’

Immediately after the Q & A those present paired with someone from a religious tradition other than their own and explored the following questions: What could I do when I hear hateful words? What could I do when I see hateful actions? What could I do when I witness a hate incident or crime? The participants were invited to write their answers on cards which were gathered at the end of the evening. Interfaith Scotland is using these answers to prepare a ‘Tackling Hate Together’ guide. This guide will be

a complement to the ‘transforming hate speech guide’ that Interfaith Scotland published in partnership with diverse youth organisations: <https://interfaithscotland.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Transforming-Hate-in-Youth-Settings-Practical-Manual.pdf>

The evening ended with a short summary from Chief Inspector, Colleen Wylie (Safer Communities, Equality and Diversity Unit). The Chief Inspector highlighted how Police Scotland is working with communities to end hatred and violence and she



emphasised the critical importance of the support of the faith communities of Scotland to the work of Police Scotland. She highlighted the unique contribution each faith community with their distinct teachings could bring to tackling hate. The power of working together was also emphasised.



We will not be Prisoners of Hate

On 3rd February, as part of World Interfaith Harmony Week, a delegation of faith community representatives from the Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Sikh and Baha'i religions visited Barlinnie prison to engage with the prisoners on an interfaith programme entitled 'We will not be prisoners of hate'.

The planning for the day had begun some months before when Interfaith Scotland was contacted by Barlinnie Prison who asked for help to engage with prisoners, some of whom had violent backgrounds and others who had the potential to commit crimes motivated by racial or religious hatred.

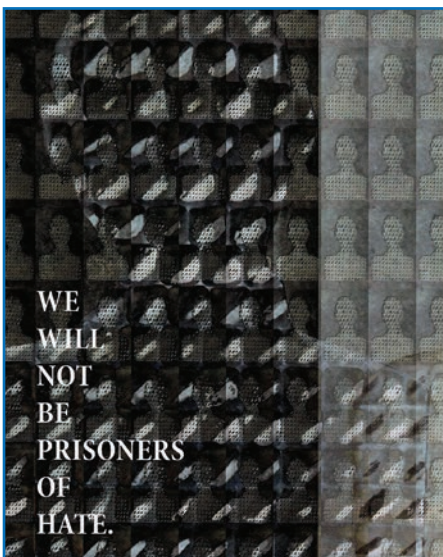
The men had begun an educational journey, supported by the incredible staff of the Education Centre based in Barlinnie, that explored the root cause of hatred and climaxed in them learning about the genocides that had resulted from deep division and hatred

of what is perceived as 'the other'. The men produced artwork and poetry that had been inspired by their learning. Based on the theme of the interfaith engagement the book of poetry was entitled 'we will not be prisoners of hate'.

On the 3rd of February visit, Interfaith Scotland facilitated a programme which included a testimony from a Muslim survivor of the Bosnian Genocide (Hasan Hasonovic); a testimony from an ex-prisoner who had used his religion to transform his negative life experiences; a moving

Q & A session with the prisoners; a viewing of the creative work of the prisoners; and an opportunity for dialogue and engagement with the diverse faiths that had entered the prison. Over the course of the day over 100 prisoners engaged in the World Interfaith Harmony Week Programme - 'We will not be prisoners of Hate'.

The image at the start of the report was of the delegation who visited the prison, for security purposes no photographs of the actual prisoners could be taken.



Excerpt From A Prisoner's Poem:

Stand Together

...Turn off the news it's too hard to watch
I don't want to see that, burns my mind like a torch.
Let's take the distraction, it's not us that suffer.
It's happening again. Is it any wonder?

We can't walk away from their faces,
Even if they're far away. Those places.
We must acknowledge the horror – do what we can.
I see you. I remember you. With you I stand.



Unforgotten

On 28th January 2020, as part of World Interfaith Harmony Week Holocaust Remembrance, Interfaith Scotland commissioned a piece of music to be written in memory of all the children who suffer as a result of hatred, prejudice and discrimination. The beautiful piece of music was called 'Unforgotten' and was composed by a Russian Gypsy and a Russian Jew (Oleg Pomonerev and Lev Atlas).

The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland agreed to put on a free and open to the public concert where not only was 'Unforgotten' played for the first time by a full orchestra but young people from diverse faiths and cultural backgrounds provided a full concert of music from around the world on instruments which included classical and folk instruments. The Duduk from Armenia was a definite favourite.

On the evening of the concert an Interfaith delegation which included people from Christian, Buddhist, Jewish, Hindu, Muslim, Sikh and Baha'i backgrounds met with the Principal of the Conservatoire and the Lord Provost of Glasgow for a small reception and this was followed by over 200 people cramming the auditorium to hear the concert dedicated to 'World Interfaith Harmony Week' and the suffering children of the world.

At the conclusion of the concert six children from the Russian Community held candles and stood with a Holocaust and Bosnian genocide survivor in a moving ceremony that remembered not only the 75th anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi death camps but also the 25th anniversary of the Bosnian Genocide.



Scottish Ahlul Bayt Society



Interfaith Dinner

The Scottish Ahlul Bayt Society held its annual Eid al-Adha Dinner to celebrate the Sacrifice of the Prophet Abraham and the end of the Hajj pilgrimage. This annual dinner aims to sustain and strengthen the bonds of friendship and fellowship between our Muslim community and esteemed members

of Scotland's faith families by sharing in a meal together. The keynote speech was given via recording by Mother Audrey Kitagawa, Chair of the Parliament of the World's Religions. We were honoured to have heard from the following esteemed guests of the evening: Ash Denham MSP, on behalf

of the First Minister; the Rt Rev Colin Sinclair, Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland; His Grace Archbishop Leo Cushley; the Most Reverend Mark Strange Primus of the Scottish Episcopal Church; and Rev David Pickering, Moderator of the National Synod of Scotland.

Celebration of the 550th Anniversary of the Birth of Guru Nanak

The Scottish Ahlul Bayt Society, led by its Director-General Imam Razawi, with Frank Ross, The Rt. Hon Lord Provost of the City of Edinburgh, convened a reception in celebration of the 550th Anniversary of the Birth of Guru Nanak, the Founder of Sikhism on Friday 6th December at Edinburgh City Chambers. Imam Razawi said, "In the current climate of populism, xenophobia, Islamophobia and Antisemitism, it is important to reassure our communities that hope, goodness and compassion still exists. In the prophetic way, we must do for thy neighbour what we would like to be done for us. Support each other to remove hatred and suffering. An act of kindness can open the doors of mercy".

The event was held in partnership with the Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak



Jatha, the Hindu Forum Britain, and the Lord Provost of Edinburgh. The event's Chief Guest was Bhai Sahib Bhai Mohinder Singh Ji, of the Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha. In attendance were leaders across the Scottish and British Christian, Sikh, Jewish, Hindu, and Muslim communities. The reception was the first time a Muslim organisation has held such an event for the founder of the Sikh faith in the United Kingdom and Europe.

Given the macro-political climate, we believe that this is an important gesture of fellowship showcasing the nature of our diverse faith-bases, and, crucially, a coming together of people who value high human ideals. Our special thanks to the Guru Nanak Gurdwara Edinburgh for their support and inviting us there in the evening. Azhar Hussnain, General Secretary, Scottish Ahlul Bayt Society



Interfaith
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Making a Difference
through Dialogue

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