

Interfaith Scotland

Magazine Autumn 2025: Issue 44

Making a Difference through Dialogue



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www.interfaithscotland.org

Message From The Director

As I write this short message for our magazine I am filled with pride tinged with a little sorrow. I am very proud to say that Interfaith Scotland was voted Charity of the Year 2025 and I am sad as this will be the last message I, as Director of Interfaith Scotland, will be writing.

On 30th November 2025 I will be retiring from my position as Director and handing over to Frances Hume who will be holding the reigns as Interim Director of Interfaith Scotland. Frances is well known by faith communities and interfaith groups across Scotland and I am sure everyone will be delighted to give Frances their wholehearted support.

I can honestly say that the almost 25 years I have been working for Interfaith Scotland have been full of rich engagement, joyful friendships and one or two challenges along the way. As I step down, I know that the organisation is in the capable hands of our amazing staff team and board and although retiring I will not be disappearing! The world needs dialogue now more than ever and it was a privilege to be a small part of the Scottish Interfaith journey.

Dr Maureen Sier, Director



Interfaith Scotland



Dr Maureen Sier, Director



Frances Hume, Interim Director
as of December 2025

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Interfaith Scotland: Scottish Charity of the Year 2025

It is with gratitude and joy that we are able to announce that on 19 June this year we were selected as Charity of the Year in our category.

At a prestigious event in the Radisson Blu hosted by The Scottish Council of Voluntary Organisations our small staff team were thrilled when our name was called. Sally Magnusson presented the beautiful award and the Director was able to share with the audience the focus of our work. We want to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has supported us over so many years, interfaith engagement, dialogue and action is more important than ever in our polarised world.



Scottish Religious Leaders Forum

In May representatives of the Scottish Religious Leaders Forum enjoyed hosting a meeting at Calderwood Lodge & St Clare's Joint Campus Jewish and Catholic Primary School where they had the opportunity to discuss key issues affecting faith communities in Scotland and also had time to view the beautiful campus and engage with the teachers.

The school is the world's first Catholic-Jewish school campus and was opened in Scotland in 2017 by Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis and Bishop John Keenan.

The joint faith campus in Eastwood's Newton Mearns, seven miles south-west of Glasgow, comprises St Clare's Primary School and Calderwood

Lodge, respectively providing Catholic and Jewish denominational schooling, alongside a non-denominational nursery class.

It was particularly heartening to see all the work pupils had undertaken to celebrate Scottish Interfaith Week and the atmosphere at the school was one of inclusivity and joy.



Scottish Interfaith Week 20th Anniversary Short Film Premiere: Our Future

In May, Interfaith Scotland was delighted to host the premier launch of the short film celebrating 20 years of Scottish Interfaith Week (SIFW). The film captures beautifully the colourful diversity of the festival and it left the audience feeling uplifted and positive about interfaith relations in Scotland.

On arrival at the Board Walk in Glasgow, the guests were able to view our beautiful Faces of Faith exhibition, and also the women's interfaith embroidery quilt (from Dundee) and to enjoy light refreshments. To open the launch a message of support was received from the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, Ms Jennifer Gilruth and guest speakers included Sonia Chand and Haikal Adzmir (representatives of our Interfaith Youth Advisory Board); Ravinder Kaur Nijjar (co-founder of SIFW); Joseph Sikora (Catholic Bishops Committee for Inter-religious Dialogue); and Claire

Butler (principal teacher of religious education at St. Roch's Secondary School). The presentations were thought provoking and engaging.

Jill Stevens, the Scottish Interfaith Week Marketing Manager, then shared the theme for SIFW 2025 'Our Future'. This was followed by an opportunity for dialogue around the key issues young people identified as of concern to them; mental health, poverty, climate, education and discrimination. The evening was a huge success and augurs well for Scottish Interfaith Week 2025.



Volunteers Training Days

The National Development Officer Frances Hume facilitated two volunteer training days, one online on 16 April and one in person at the dialogue centre on 23rd April.

The turnout was positive with 12 people signing up to volunteer from the Jewish, Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Buddhist, Quaker, Family Federation and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Interfaith Conversation Cafés

Interfaith Scotland aims to host Interfaith Conversation Cafés on different chosen topics throughout the year to encourage interfaith dialogue, awareness, and understanding by uniting people from different religious traditions, spiritual, or humanist beliefs in conversation over light refreshments. The conversation café will be a space where participants feel safe, fully engaged, and open to listening to and learning from each other.

Pilgrimage and Retreat

On 10 February we hosted a conversation café on the theme of pilgrimage and retreat as part of the Interfaith Inverclyde Gathering. During the event, various speakers shared about their transformational experiences in Mecca, India, and various Scottish pilgrimage sites. Participants later took part in small-group discussions and shared information about holy places or sacred sites that inspired them.



Religious Diets and Fasting

On 27 May we hosted a conversation café in Kirkcaldy, in partnership with Fife Centre for Equalities and Fife Common Grounds Network. Participants took part in discussions about religious diets and fasting in an informal setting. We received a heartfelt comment from a participant (anonymous) who took part for the first time: 'I really enjoyed the session... it was great to have these conversations with others of a different faith in a safe and relaxed setting. I look forward to participating in more conversation café sessions!'

Objects of Faith or Spiritual Significance

On 10 August over 25 participants took part in the conversation café as part of our Interfaith Retreat at the Holy Isle Centre for World Peace and Health. We invited participants to bring along an object of faith or spiritual significance that inspired them, and each participant shared a story about their connection with the objects they brought through interactive conversations.



Youth and Schools

Online Session for Young People and Youth Workers

On 1 April the National Development Officer Frances Hume hosted a free online session via 'Young Scot' for young adults to find out about the work of Interfaith Scotland and how they might like to be involved in its activities, as well as highlighting Interfaith Scotland's latest publication on supporting the needs of people of different religions and beliefs.



Scottish Teachers Association of Religious and Moral Education (STARME) Festival of Learning

We were delighted to be invited to the Scottish Teachers Association of RME's Festival of Learning on 2 May. Over 100 students and educators attended the event in the University of Edinburgh's stunning New College on the Mound.

Holy Family Primary School

The National Development Officer Frances Hume delivered a session to Primary 4 pupils at Holy Family Primary School in Winchburgh on 4 June.

She gave a presentation about the importance of interfaith, Nicola Maule, Assistant Development Officer gave a presentation about Buddhism and one of Interfaith Scotland's newly trained volunteers, Jack Gold, gave a presentation about the Jewish faith.

Our Communications and Marketing Manager Jill Stevens gave a presentation about this year's Scottish Interfaith Week and the 'Our Future' competition for schools. The presentation was well received and many teachers signed up to receive further information about the competition. Our National Development Officer Frances Hume enjoyed speaking on a panel about why RME is such an important subject in schools to tackle prejudice and to appreciate diversity. She also discussed ways in which RME could be enhanced, including outlining Interfaith Scotland's Faces of Faith schools programme that brings volunteers from

different faiths to speak in schools. These positive face to face encounters help to break down barriers and stereotypes and 'normalise' people of faith for pupils.

In between exciting workshops and interactive activities, we hosted a stall and talked with attendees about engaging young people in interfaith dialogue. The Festival of Learning was an excellent opportunity to engage with those directly educating and supporting young people in Scotland, and we hope many of them will get involved with Interfaith Scotland and this year's Scottish Interfaith Week.



Young People and the Scottish Advisory Committee on Religion and Ethics

BBC Scotland invited members of our National Interfaith Youth Advisory Board and staff team to attend a fantastic engagement on 7 May. Dozens of young people were in attendance at the event held at Pacific Quay, the BBC's headquarters in Glasgow.

The aim of the event was for the BBC to meet youth from various faith and belief backgrounds and to directly hear their views on the BBC's coverage of religion, faith and ethics in Scotland.

BBC staff began the event by playing footage and audio recordings of recent content they had made about religion and ethics then asked for the young people's feedback. Some said the BBC created a lot of content about Christianity but not enough coverage of other faiths and beliefs. Some young people said it would be good to have more programming about the daily lives of people from a variety of faiths, and to spread greater awareness about festivals, rituals and beliefs to dispel myths and challenge discrimination.

The youth in the audience were asked how often they watched or listened to BBC religious programmes, of which most said they rarely did. They were asked how they used BBC services; whether they watched or listened to programmes live or on-demand, and if they engaged with live content, what else did they do at the same time. Some enjoyed listening to the radio while others preferred to watch shows on BBC iPlayer. Our National Interfaith Youth Advisory Board members Haikal and Felix were among those engaging in the discussions and feedback to the BBC team.

The ultimate question was posed near the end of the insightful event: What do younger audiences want from the BBC today?



A mix of responses came from the young people, some expressed a desire to watch discussion and debate between people of different faiths, like in popular podcast formats. Others wanted to see a reflection of how people of faith live out their beliefs within the context of Scotland today.

From the bubbling conversations and eagerness to take a group photo at the end, it was clear the young people enjoyed being able to engage with the BBC on the topic of religion and ethics programming.

The young people certainly gave the BBC team a lot of feedback to work with, and as members of the Scottish Advisory Committee on Religion and Ethics we look forward to working with the BBC on ways to encourage youth engagement in the coming years.



Training on Supporting the Needs of People of Diverse Religions and Beliefs

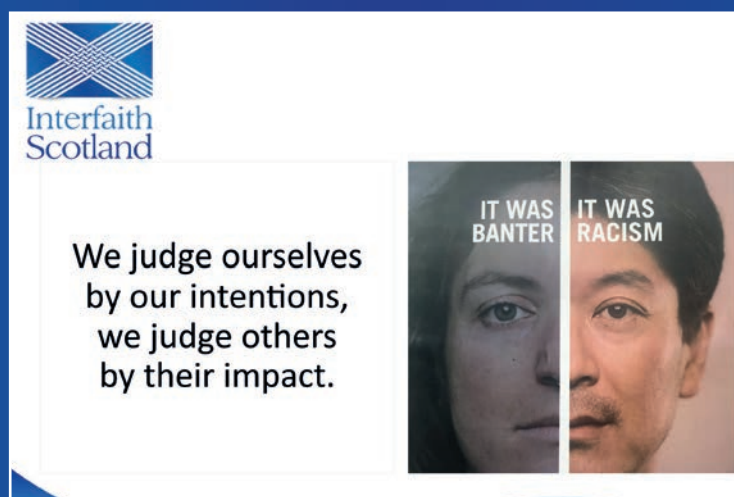
Interfaith Scotland continues to offer training on their latest publication 'Understanding and Supporting the Needs of People of Diverse Religions and Beliefs in Scotland'.

A session was delivered for youth and community workers on 1 April. A session was also held for Maggie's Centre staff throughout the UK on 18 June, adding a section on 'death and dying' in different religious traditions. The feedback was very positive on how useful the training had been in informing their work. Another session was hosted via Borders Care Voice on 13 August with a variety of attendees from voluntary and statutory agencies.



Training sessions are still available. Please contact frances@interfaithscotland.org for more details.

Workshops on Holding Challenging Conversations for Community Learning and Development Standards Council



In February, and then again in May, we provided a series of two workshops for those involved in community development, including ESOL teachers and youth workers.

Responding to the interests of the group, our first session focused on Islamophobia and some of the more subtle ways it can show up. We began by sharing information about the core beliefs and cultural practices of Muslim communities, before going on to discuss patterns of discrimination against Muslim people in the workplace, and the portrayal of Muslim communities in the media. There had been a recent and very critical report into Islamophobia on GB News, which provided stark examples of the issue. In small groups the participants

explored some of the impacts of these experiences on those affected.

In the second session we picked up the discussion by considering the differences between intention and impact in communication – and the very stubborn pattern of people 'judging ourselves by our intentions, and others by their impact'. We then discussed approaches for responding to hate speech and other offensive language when it shows up in youth work, ESOL classes or other contexts. Many of the group described finding

the distinction between 'calling in' and 'calling out' especially helpful. Finally, we explored tools for 'disagreeing well' and how to stay in dialogue even with those we passionately disagree with. Recognising that the topic was too big to fully cover in the time we had together, we also shared the guide we helped produce through the OutsideIn project on 'Transforming Hate in Youth Settings'. The guide can be found on the Interfaith Scotland website: www.interfaithscotland.org/resources/publications



A Glimpse into Our New Office

In August, we settled into our new offices in Bridgeton, in the heart of Glasgow's east end. After nine years at Flemington House in Glasgow's Springburn, we were given short notice from the landlord to move due to their renovation plans. After a long search, we decided that the new office space at Brook Street Business Hub in Bridgeton would be a great new home for the team at Interfaith Scotland. In the midst of all the hard work involved in planning an office move, it can sometimes be hard to imagine an office move as exciting. However, we certainly did our best to make the process of packing and unpacking fun.

This move represents an exciting milestone for our organisation. The new office features modern and accessible amenities, a welcoming atmosphere, and expanded breakout spaces that will enhance our productivity and collaboration. The Interfaith Dialogue and Training Centre, which many community groups use as an affordable meeting place, has also moved with us. A big thank you to those who sent us a donation to make it possible.

The hub is based just one mile from Glasgow city centre. A number of excellent bus routes operate in the

immediate vicinity, linking Bridgeton to the city centre. Bridgeton train station is just a few hundred yards away, Bellgrove station is also nearby with a 10-minute walk. Bridgeton also has well-serviced cycle routes, and we would love to encourage staff and visitors to cycle to our office on a sunny day.

Bridgeton is one of Glasgow's most historic districts that has a diverse community with a rich history that reflects various cultural influences. Like many small towns along the River Clyde, Bridgeton started out as a small weaving village in 1705, and has evolved into a district with a mix

of residential and commercial areas. Bridgeton earned its name through the construction of the Rutherglen bridge which was put in place in 1776, making the area become known as 'Bridge Town', or Brig town in Scots, eventually becoming Bridgeton as we know it today.

Our new address is Brook Street Business Hub, Unit 1-9 (First Floor), 117 Brook Street, Glasgow G40 3AP. We look forward to welcoming you in the coming months.

Our meeting room is now available for hire. Please see page 34 for details.



Holy Isle Interfaith Retreat

There was much anticipation and excitement among the staff here at Interfaith Scotland for this year's Interfaith Retreat. Three nights and a full programme of dialogue, activities and a good measure of relaxation on beautiful Holy Isle – off the Isle of Arran.

They say that the environment is essential to the benefits of retreat and none so perfect as an unspoiled natural landscape, with wild horses roaming free and the elements of the air and sea so present. The moment we stepped off the boat there was a deep breath of anticipation among the group - we had arrived!

This was one of our busiest retreats yet, 29 people travelled from all over the UK, some had attended a previous retreat, for some it was a new experience of Interfaith and visiting the island. For all our different life experiences and expectations of the weekend together there was a deeply shared appreciation of gifting ourselves some time away from our daily life and there was a deep level of engagement in what was a full weekend programme of activities.

On arrival we enjoyed some warming soup and then a welcome to all our retreatants in the Peace Hall followed by a dialogue session. Each day began with an invitation to join in with some gentle yoga. Over the weekend we engaged together in some very lively discussions at our Conversation café led by Else, music and dance at our cultural night with Jamie and a joyful, singing workshop with Frances.





There was plenty of time for relaxation with more meditative sessions, from a Tara Rokpa Relaxation, an evening sound bath, the creation of an earth mandala in the beautiful garden and a walking pilgrimage where we learned a little history of the island. The walk took in St Molaise's cave, where the Celtic Christian saint lived on the island at the end of the 6th century and the healing waters that flowed from the spring, close to the cave, known as the Healing Well which is thought to cure ills and bring blessings. Nicola also shared a little of some of the Tibetan Buddhist deities painted on large rocks along the shoreline.

Beautiful food was prepared and sustained us, often with fresh, organic food from the kitchen gardens on the island and there were some wonderful moments to connect with each other and share our personal stories. On leaving the island we were left with a feeling of really having that much needed space away from our daily lives to connect with the 'work' of Interfaith on a deeper level. In what has now become an annual gathering, friendships were formed and deepened and the many different faiths of people and those interested in faith and spirituality but holding no particular religious tradition, were better understood and appreciated. Until our next retreat in 2026!



Solas Festival

The Solas Festival, Scotland's midsummer gathering at Errol Park in Perthshire took place from 20 -22 June. A weekend long annual celebration of music, workshops and conversations – a creative space for people of all ages to come together in a welcoming, inclusive environment.

The theme of the weekend was 'Rest and be Thankful' and Interfaith Scotland were invited to be part of the Sunday programme. The morning began with an Interfaith worship service with over 70 people in attendance. Three Interfaith Scotland volunteers of Christian, Muslim, and Druid (Pagan) faith backgrounds were invited to share readings, reflections and prayers during the service.

Rev Linda Haggerstone offers a Druid's perspective on the gathering. "As with many church services, there were sets of Christian prayers (gathering, confession and forgiveness, concerns, and closing), well-known hymns and reflective music. After the gathering prayer, we sang Come and Find the Quiet Centre, led by Dr Jane Bentley (the organiser of the service).

The reflection on rest included the spreading of small "Joy of Missing Out" (JOMO) blankets to create a mosaic for people to sit or lie on. During the prayers of concern, volunteers named their gratitudes. People hung small flags (squares of cloth decorated with their thoughts) around the tent space.

During this time of prayer, I read the

section about labourers and working people "who keep the world turning", reflecting on my own thankfulness to them and my gratitude for rest in retirement. Perhaps the best part for me was the chanting of Thulu'lalele while placing small stones on a makeshift altar to create a cairn. It melded with my Druid beliefs and highlighted the interconnectedness of all things."

At the same time, in the yurt there was a Relaxation session led by Tibetan Buddhist, Nicola Riddick. The aim of this one hour fully guided session was for those participating to connect mind and body through 'The Feeling Exercise' - an opportunity for deep relaxation, a gift and opportunity to be present with ourselves in a compassionate way.

As the afternoon arrived, the rain continued and under a welcome shelter of the Hearth, Frances Hume, National Development Officer at Interfaith Scotland, hosted

a Q & A with a panel of speakers from different faiths, posing the question, 'What does it mean to rest and be thankful from the perspective of your faith tradition?' It was a very personal reflection by each of the panel speakers, Durdani Oz (Sufi Muslim), Linda Haggerstone (Druid), Nicola Riddick (Tibetan Buddhist) and Vanessa Stark (Quaker) who each shared their reflections before answering a number of questions and engaging with the audience.





Scottish
Interfaith
Week

Our Future
2-9 November

Scottish Interfaith Week 2025

Scottish Interfaith Week will take place across Scotland from Sunday 2 to Sunday 9 November

Through our work at Interfaith Scotland we are keenly aware that as we look to what's next for Scotland's diverse communities we must listen to the voices of today's young people for guidance. This year's festival theme of **Our Future** encourages communities to explore issues close to the hearts and minds of Scotland's youth: education, climate, mental health, poverty and discrimination. These are the key priorities identified by thousands of young people in a recent survey by Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People. Exploring these issues in an interfaith context provides opportunities for different generations to talk and collectively envision how the future could be.

We encourage those hosting events for Scottish Interfaith Week to actively engage young people in events, whether by inviting young people to attend, volunteer, speak or perform. These issues are vital to the collective future of faith and belief communities in Scotland and young people are keen to be a part of exploring and addressing these issues.

The Scottish Interfaith Week website offers resources to support festival engagement, including step-by-step guidance on planning an event, digital toolkit for promoting events, five printable posters, and guidance for creating a library book display. Resources for the 'Our Future' school competition are also available online including lesson plans for teachers,

and details about prizes, deadlines and submission formats.

We are now welcoming event submissions which can be added to the programme through the festival website. We look forward to seeing all the exciting events coming in!

Find out more at www.scottishinterfaithweek.org

Local Interfaith Groups News

Edinburgh Interfaith News

Celebrating Edinburgh's faith and belief communities!

This year the Edinburgh Interfaith Association (EIFA) has spearheaded several initiatives celebrating and raising awareness of Edinburgh's faith and belief communities and encouraging greater collaboration between our communities and public services.

EIFA has built a very strong partnership with Police Edinburgh and has developed a learning programme including learning resources and an in-person and online training programme. The resources include a practical guide to policing together with our faith communities including introductions to eight faith and belief communities along with practical considerations. The in-person training was delivered in March and July 2025 through an Interfaith Panel and Roadshow at St Leonard's Police Station to police probationers and the feedback was fantastic.

"This was a fantastic event and very worthwhile. The guidance document is also brilliant and will be of significant benefit to officers. Other areas and divisions are envious of this partnership and this is groundbreaking in terms of transformative partnership and training direct with officers and faith reps. I cannot speak more highly of this work. From understanding key beliefs and cultural traditions

to operational considerations—like attending places of worship, religious customs, and responding to incidents—our officers gained valuable insights to better serve all communities." Chief Inspector Kieran Dougal

Such was the success of the training at St Leonard's that it is hoped this model will be a staple of future police training that would be rolled out nationally. It was a valuable opportunity for officers to get to know and appreciate some of the faith and belief communities of Edinburgh.

On 30 April EIFA held an 'Interfaith Youth Conference' at the Edinburgh University Chaplaincy titled, 'Stand Up Speak Out. Be An Ally.' This powerful youth-led conference focused on tackling hate, racism, and gender-based violence — and exploring what real allyship looks like in 2025. There was input from Misbah Malik, 'HopenotHate', and an interfaith panel on misogyny and gender-based violence with Sally Donald and Poppy Gerrard-Abbot.

On 17 May the signing took place of the 'Edinburgh 900 City Council and Faith and Belief Community Accords'.

These Accords, the signing of which was witnessed by Lady Elish Angiolini, reaffirmed the commitment between the Council and faith and belief communities towards engagement and towards continuing to foster a community that is welcoming, inclusive and respectful for all.

On 25 May we held a conference for our Jewish/ Muslim 'Dispelling Divides' group with input from Mohammed Ali from 'Solutions Not Sides', and Israeli/ Palestinian peace makers.

On 22 June we held our 'Annual Interfaith Walk of Peace and Friendship' as over 30 committed peace builders braved the rain to join us on a very memorable peace walk. This year we had more time to spend with and enjoy the hospitality of our different faith community hosts.



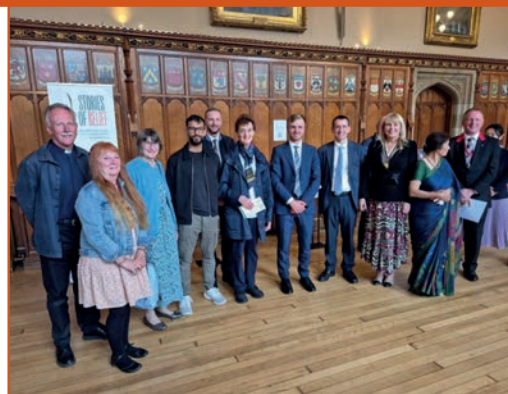
900 year anniversary of our great capital city

Edinburgh is marking the 900 year anniversary of our great capital city through many projects including ELFA's 'Stories of Belief Exhibition' curated by Dr Roderick Howlett. This is an engaging travelling audio-visual exhibition which celebrates the faith communities which have been part of Edinburgh for over 900 years and celebrates the way in which they still enrich and contribute to the life of our city from psychotherapy, meditation, homework clubs and even blood donation drives.

As the title suggests, the main feature of the exhibition is story based and

highlights some of the most engaging and inspiring stories from our communities over the 900-year period. In addition to this, the exhibition celebrates the ways in which our communities continue to enrich and contribute to the city and invites visitors to add their own stories.

By telling the stories of Edinburgh's vibrant and diverse faith communities in their own words, the exhibition leaves visitors with an entirely new perspective on the lives and the histories of the people who make up Edinburgh's tartan tapestry in the 21st century.



In August we also took our 'Fringe Cares Fest' programme into 14 different care homes. In 2024 over 700 residents in eight Edinburgh care homes enjoyed live performances and this year it reached even more people, in over 14 care homes.

Iain Stewart, Executive Director, ELFA

Interfaith Glasgow News

Glasgow Celebrates 850 years!

Glasgow's story is one of diversity, resilience, and shared traditions. To celebrate the city's 850th anniversary, Interfaith Glasgow have been commissioned by the 850 Team at Glasgow City Council to deliver a series of community events inspired by the Taste the Place Glasgow Campaign—events reflecting our shared history, celebrating our city's diversity, and strengthening interfaith connections through an exploration of the rich cultural and religious significance of food!



We kicked off in May with a special interfaith dialogue event entitled 'A Taste of Traditions' at St Mungo Museum of Religious Life and Art. Participants sat down with volunteers from diverse faiths who invited them to try significant foods including dates (used by Muslims to break their

Ramadan fast), modaks (sweet dumplings offered in Hindu devotion), matzos (the unleavened bread of Jewish Pesach), hot crossed buns (eaten by some Christians to remember Jesus' crucifixion), and a range of foods from a typical Sikh langar (communal meal). Participants praised "the chats, the sharing, the food and all the connections made"!

Later in May we delivered an Interfaith Summer Picnic in partnership with The Hidden Gardens, at which families from diverse backgrounds—refugees and locals—came together to share delicious vegetarian food from local vendors of different cultures and enjoy activities celebrating migration and exploring Glasgow's religious diversity in one of the city's most beautiful outdoor settings. Participant comments included: "Very fulfilling, enriching and really enjoyable ... a wonderful lesson in community"; "Brilliant event! Delicious food and great atmosphere" and "You are truly wonderful for the difference you make to the soul and vibrance of



the community with such generosity. Thank you Interfaith Glasgow and all the wonderful volunteers who make such beauty possible."

Later in the year we'll be inviting members of the Interfaith Food Justice Network to a community feast celebrating the collaborative efforts of groups tackling food poverty across the city; and this year's ever-popular Interfaith Family Fun Day at Hillhead Primary School will include a 'Taste the World' food experience featuring dishes from Africa, the Middle East, South Asia, and Europe.

Through these events, we will honour Glasgow's past and build connections for the future—ensuring Glasgow continues to deserve its reputation as a city of welcome, inclusion, and friendship for years to come!

**Dr. Magdalen Lambkin,
Interfaith Glasgow**

Interfaith Day at Robert Gordon's College

Members of Aberdeen Interfaith Group joined Robert Gordon's College's Interfaith Society for its annual Interfaith Day in February, part of the school's broader Diversity Week initiative, a multifaceted celebration that highlighted neurodiversity, inclusion, and cultural expression. Central to this year's focus was the interfaith exhibition and dialogue session. Over two bustling hours, senior pupils, staff, and visitors from the Aberdeen Interfaith Group gathered around an engaging display of "Faces of Faith": colourful exhibits featuring religious artefacts, personal narratives, and thought-provoking visual storytelling.



Ramadan Council Iftar

Aberdeen City Council and the Aberdeen Mosque and Islamic Centre arranged an iftar meal on Friday 28 March at the Town House marking the end of the fast for that day during Ramadan. Representatives from many different organisations, from many parts of the North East of Scotland, came together to take part. Aberdeen Interfaith Group was privileged to be invited to attend, which provided us with the opportunity to speak on the theme, "The Importance of Faith in the Community."

Community is not only important for humanity but for every aspect of our physical and spiritual wellbeing. Through community we support each other so that we can achieve our everyday needs, draw together our resources and build our lives into something which we can all participate in and be encouraged by, paving a way for a peaceful and happy environment where we all can flourish to the best of our ability.



Meeting together like this is where we share a common goal of being seen and heard, not only by each other but also by the communities within the area. There are opportunities to support each other through active engagement and sharing in each other's culture, food and stories as well as beliefs. In this way of being together and fostering understanding, we allow each one of us to flourish in our own faith paths. We have to accept that we are all important, no one is less than or more than another, we are equal in terms of our connection to one another.

Aberdeen Interfaith Joins Eid Celebration in Peterhead

In a celebration rich with faith, food, and fellowship, our representative from Aberdeen Interfaith joined the Peterhead Muslim community for a joyful Eid dinner this past June, marking the end of the holy month of Ramadan.

For Muslims, Eid al-Fitr is a time to express gratitude after a month of fasting, prayer, and self-discipline. It's also a time to reach out, share food, and strengthen ties with the wider community. That spirit was alive and well in Peterhead, as local Muslim families warmly welcomed Aberdeen Interfaith Group among many other visitors, groups and organisations with open arms and open hearts for an

evening of celebration, storytelling, and connection.

The visit was more than symbolic, it was deeply spiritual, profoundly human, and a powerful reminder of the shared values that unite us across faith traditions. Peterhead's Muslim community, though small in number, has become a quiet yet vibrant force for positive engagement in the region. This Eid celebration was part of a larger effort to foster understanding and combat isolation, particularly in rural areas where interfaith contact is less frequent.

Guests enjoyed a vibrant and generous meal featuring traditional

dishes such as biryani, samosas, sweet dates, and desserts. But beyond the flavours, it was the conversations at each table that left a lasting impression. Over dinner, guests exchanged reflections on fasting practices across faiths, shared personal stories, and laughed together like old friends. The evening underscored the importance of interfaith solidarity, especially in a time when global tensions often seek to divide. In Peterhead this Eid, it wasn't just about ending the fast—it was about opening doors, sharing hearts, and reaffirming the beauty of human solidarity. One plate, one prayer, one story at a time.

Joining Hands for the Homeless at Easter

In the heart of Aberdeen, the spirit of Easter was made real through an act of service that transcended denomination, doctrine, and difference. On Easter Sunday, Aberdeen Interfaith partnered with St Mary's Cathedral to co-host a warm, welcoming meal for the homeless and vulnerable, embodying the season's message of hope, compassion, and renewal. The event brought together volunteers from a range of faith traditions working side by side in the Cathedral Hall. Over 60 guests were welcomed with hot food, kind conversation, and the dignity of shared fellowship. The power of the event lay not just in the food, but in the relationships it nurtured. Guests were seated alongside volunteers, creating moments of authentic dialogue and shared humanity.

"When we eat together, we remember that we belong to one human family."

Mindfulness day at the Varapunya Meditation Centre



The Varapunya Meditation Centre played host to a heartwarming gathering that resonated deeply with the spirit of community. On Mindfulness Day, approximately 50 people came together to reflect, connect, and nourish both body and soul under the day's guiding theme: Community.

The tranquil grounds of The Varapunya Meditation Centre were abuzz with a calm yet joyful energy as attendees from all walks of life arrived, bringing with them not just food, but stories, ideas, and open hearts. The air was filled with the aroma of homemade dishes, as participants shared lovingly prepared meals that reflected their cultures, families, and personal histories. But beyond the food, it was the conversations that truly fed the spirit. Individuals exchanged reflections on what community means to them—some spoke of family, others of shared values, and many of the silent, healing power of being present together. Ideas flowed freely, on what community means.

There were quiet walks in nature, guided meditations and gentle moments of stillness interspersed with laughter and heartfelt storytelling. We were gently reminded of the essence of mindfulness—not just as a solitary practice, but as a way to deepen our connections with those around us. By the end of the day, the group sat in a closing circle, holding the shared silence that had become almost sacred.

In a world that often rushes by, the Mindfulness Day at The Varapunya Meditation Centre was a gentle pause. It served as a quiet testament to the strength and solace found in coming together—with presence, purpose, and compassion.

Poem on Community: The heart of us all

*Community is not just a location on a map.
It is the quiet nod between neighbours.
The pot of tea shared between two people
who do not speak the same language,
but understand warmth.*

*It is built in the spaces where people gather,
sometimes by choice,
sometimes by fate.*

*A schoolyard, a prayer room,
a food bank, a WhatsApp group.*

*It is carried in voices
raised in protest,
whispered in comfort,
offered in laughter.*

*Community holds pain too.
It absorbs silence,
it listens to those who have been unheard
for too long.*

*It asks questions,
and sometimes, it disagrees.
But it keeps showing up.*

*It is a garden planted with many seeds,
growing at different speeds,
but sharing the same soil.*

*It does not ask you to be the same.
Only to care.
Only to see.
Only to stand beside each other
in whatever way you can.*

Abdullah Jabban



A Blessing for the Tall Ships Race

The Tall Ships came to Aberdeen from July 19 - 22 with around 50 tall ships from around the globe. At the end of the Tall Ships Race on 22nd July, a unique and heartfelt ceremony was held by Aberdeen Interfaith Group, offering a blessing for every vessel that graced the port. Representatives from Aberdeen's diverse faith communities gathered at the harbourfront to offer words of peace, protection, and safe passage for the international crews. With participants from many different traditions, the ceremony blended prayers, readings, and music in a reflective gathering open to the public. Each vessel received its individual blessing from the harbourfront as it passed by on its way. Spoken in many voices, but with one heart, the blessings followed each tall ship on its journey across the waves.

Gary Dean, Aberdeen Interfaith



Edinburgh Women's Interfaith Group



Summer Outing

EWIG organised their annual summer trip to the Kirk of the Holy Rood in Grangemouth, where we received a very warm welcome from Rev Ronald and his team. There was a sharing of the history of the church, which was followed by blessings from the faiths of Hinduism, Sikhism, Judaism, Buddhism, Islam and Quakers. Ladies in the hall prepared light refreshments

for us and we had an opportunity to build a bridge of friendship with local community members.

In the afternoon we visited the Kelpies, where we enjoyed the afternoon walk. All in all it was a wonderfully memorable trip.

Nicola Joshi, Chair, EWIG





Interfaith Moray News

Interfaith Peace Vigil held at Pluscarden Abbey in Morayshire

On 30 August around 50 people from the Morayshire area (and beyond) came together to hold a vigil for peace. The event was a partnership event hosted by Moray Interfaith Group and Interfaith Scotland.

Those who gathered were warmly welcomed by Rev Wilfred Masih (Moray Interfaith) and the format of the event was introduced by Dr Maureen Sier (Interfaith Scotland).

Each participant was given a small candle and in silence and reverence they wound their way into the stunningly beautiful Pluscarden Abbey and placed their lit candle on a small altar. Thereafter everyone proceeded into the side chapels and seated themselves. A meditation bell was rung and participants sat in silent prayer and meditation, focussing their love and energy on their desire for a peaceful world, free from the hatred

and destruction of war and tyranny. A closing bell was rung and warm thanks were offered by the Vice Lieutenant of Morayshire, Mrs Lucy Mackenzie. Immediately after the vigil a picnic was held offering an opportunity for friends to explore what further interfaith action could be taken locally. It is hoped that this peace vigil could become an annual event.

Dr Maureen Sier, Interfaith Scotland

Shetland Interfaith Group News

Faith, Food and Friendship

Following on from a very successful and enjoyable event in Scottish Interfaith Week last November, Shetland Interfaith hosted an event entitled, 'Faith, Food and Friendship' on Wednesday 18th June in Islesburgh Community Centre in Lerwick.

This offered folk another opportunity to share and discover more about the variety of faiths and beliefs held

by people in Shetland and we were delighted that just over a dozen folk came together to learn more about one another's ways of viewing the world we share.

People were invited to bring along something which relates to their life and faith, or just to come and listen to what others wish to share, and so together we enjoyed music,

poetry, tales of life in Jerusalem, and reflections on thirty years of helping to support tiger conservation. We concluded our time together with light refreshments to help feed the body as well as the soul, and headed for our homes enlightened and refreshed.

David Marsh, Shetland Interfaith

Fife Common Grounds Network Summer Gathering



We started our Summer Gathering with a session envisioning the design of our Beveridge Park Peace Garden. It was a great experience listening to participants' views on features that they would like to see in the garden, how it can be a safe and accessible community space, and ideas on how to keep the space clean and long-lasting. After the morning workshop, participants walked to the Peace Garden to have a look at the space. They discussed community safety and integration and had an opportunity to

get to know each other better. A special thank you to the Greener Kirkcaldy team, who had brought along their smoothie bike and other interesting materials for all to try! Another special thank you to Bring Together, who hosted a very insightful cultural mediation workshop with attendees at the Peace Garden. Overall the day was a positive session that has kickstarted our work on developing the Peace Garden further. If you live in or around Fife and are interested in topics such as interfaith,



community integration and cultural mediation, our Common Grounds Network may be for you!

Learn more about the network at <https://www.centreforequalities.org.uk/fife-common-grounds-network> or get in touch at info@centreforequalities.org.uk, call 01592 645310 or text 07800 005834.

Lewis Bainbridge,
Fife Centre for Equalities

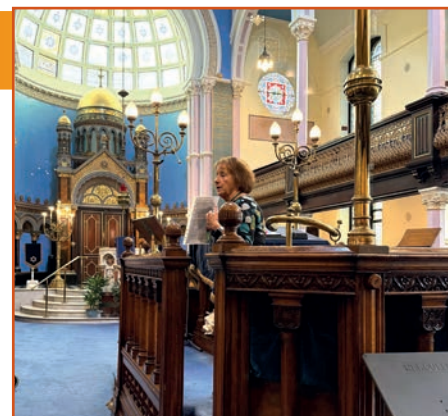
Women of Faith and Community Glasgow

This group has grown in size and in energy over the last few months. Meetings are now planned in advance whereas earlier in our history, they tended to be a bit "spontaneous".

In April the group met at the Ahmadiyya Mosque where they were welcomed by the women of that community. The focus of the meeting was the role and rights of women in Islam. It was a most successful event enhanced by delicious food! May brought an opportunity to welcome the Spring under the leadership of Linda Haggerstone of the Pagan community, who led us on a tour of specific trees in the Glasgow Botanic Gardens, sharing Druid stories and connecting the event with the festival of Beltane.



We were again on the move in June, when we visited Garnethill, the first purpose-built synagogue in Scotland and now a listed building of architectural interest. Our guide for the event emphasised how welcoming the people of Glasgow were to the many Jewish refugees arriving in the 1930s. It was also very moving to see women from the Islamic tradition and those from the Jewish tradition comparing the many similarities and commonalities between the faiths in regard to diet, worshipping God as one and also not depicting living animals or people in the architecture of the Synagogue. In a world increasingly divided, women showed the importance of respect for each other and the recognition of how much we share.



Our women-only dialogue group meets each month in Glasgow's West End, and welcomes women of all faiths and none to come together to discuss what connects them, and to work towards better understanding of each other's faith and beliefs.

We usually meet on the first Monday of the month at the Unitarian Church on Berkeley Street in Glasgow from 10.30am - 12.30pm. For further information, to confirm dates or to join our mailing list please email: womenoffaith@hotmail.co.uk

Alison Spurway



Meeting the Lord High Commissioner, the Right Honourable Lady Elish Angiolini LT DBE KC FRSE

Members of Faith and Belief Dundee were honoured to attend a reception to meet the Lord High Commissioner Lady Elish Angiolini at Dundee City Chambers on 20 May. The reception was organised by Faith in Community Dundee and hosted by Dundee City Council. Dundee is the first (and the only) local authority in Scotland which two years ago signed a Faith Covenant. This means they recognise and support the work done by faith communities in the city, and also the faith communities work alongside the Council. Faith and Belief Dundee have benefitted from several grants from Dundee City Council.

Lady Elish Angiolini was visiting in her official capacity during the General

Assembly of the Church of Scotland. It is interesting to note that her appointment as the Lord High Commissioner, attending the General Assembly, led to the creation of a new Act of Parliament, that would allow her, as a Roman Catholic, to serve in that capacity, the first time ever since the Reformation.

Lord Provost Bill Campbell gave a speech to formally welcome her, mentioning he hailed from a neighbouring part of Scotland (Paisley), and shared the same experiences of religious bigotry. Lady Elish was born in Govan. During her speech, she mentioned how the deplorable words and acts of those professing to be Catholic or professing to be Protestant were not religious.

It made her very happy to see the different religions represented here. Members of Faith and Belief Dundee had brought a special gift for Lady Elish, a bag that had been printed with a picture of the Discovery Embroidery. The original embroidery was made by 70 women of different faiths to commemorate the launch of Scottish Interfaith Week in Dundee in November 2024 where it had been unveiled in the City Chambers. It was presented to Lady Elish by Vanessa Stark which was very fitting as she has been involved in interfaith for many years. Lady Elish said it was beautiful and I think she really appreciated the gesture.

Carrie Varjavandi

East Renfrewshire Faith Forum

East Renfrewshire Faith Forum members attended three sessions with Outside the Box, led by Ingrid, which helped us gain a renewed focus. Following on from Covid we have been less active than we would have liked and required somewhat of a reset. Since these sessions we have certainly had that impetus.

Moving forward we have a number of events and projects in the planning stages: an event with faith groups highlighting the health and wellbeing benefits of fasting, assisting unaccompanied young refugees and

asylum seekers with their English, arranging our annual joint Peace event which will take place on Remembrance Sunday in Barshaw Park, Paisley with guest speakers from all faiths. We have prepared a letter to be sent to head teachers in East Renfrewshire informing them of our expertise around diversity and offering any assistance they deem appropriate and proud to have Susan Siegel, who will be speaking at the International Conference of Christians



and Jews in Warsaw as a member of our forum.

In short we are certainly moving on. A big thank you to Ingrid for her valuable input and offer of future help.

Grace Brookmyre,
East Renfrewshire Faith Forum

Inverclyde Interfaith

The National Development Officer Frances Hume was approached by Catherine Murray, a local member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Greenock, who was keen to set up a local interfaith group in Inverclyde. Catherine had gathered a list of contact details for all the places of worship in Inverclyde, and Frances sent out invitations to all the places of worship inviting them to an introductory meeting for those who would be interested in connecting with other places of worship in their local area for friendship building with the possibility of establishing a local interfaith group. Frances facilitated two introductory meetings for those interested at Inverkip Community

Centre and St Mary's Catholic Church in Greenock where those gathered envisioned what the aims and objectives of such a group might be and what sort of activities they would like to organise in their local community.

We were delighted to have support from the Provost of Inverclyde Council who offered the Greenock Municipal Buildings for the group's inaugural event which took place in February. This was a 'Conversation Cafe' on the theme of

Pilgrimage. There were 30 attendees from across the faith communities in Inverclyde who generously brought along food for a pot luck buffet and engaged in meaningful dialogue.



The Provost offered his office for the next planning meeting which took place in April. The meeting was very positive with 12 people in attendance from a variety of faiths. A programme for the rest of the year was created, visiting different places of worship in Greenock on a two-monthly basis. The group had a wonderful visit to St Mary's Catholic Church in Greenock on 28 May followed by a visit to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on 30 July. The final visit of the year was to Inverclyde Muslim Centre on 29 October.



Faith Community News

Scottish Ahlul Bayt Society: Stories of Faith, Unity, and Compassion

Continuing Our Pitch-to-Plate Journey: Faith, Sport, and Community Wellbeing in Action

The Scottish Ahlul Bayt Society (SABS), in partnership with the Hibernian Community Foundation, continues its monthly Pitch-to-Plate Multicultural Meal initiative - a growing series of gatherings that bring together people of all backgrounds to celebrate shared values through food, faith, and football.

At the heart of these events lies a deep commitment to community cohesion and wellbeing, with the support of key partners such as Prostate Scotland, SNBTS, and Diabetes Scotland. These organisations provided vital services — including

health checks, energy advice, and awareness on organ and blood donation, helping to make a real difference to the lives of attendees. We hosted our first Ramadhan Iftar Special Meal, attended by over 150 guests - a powerful moment of

reflection and shared humanity. Pitch-to-Plate is more than a meal, it is a movement rooted in togetherness, dialogue, and a shared hope for a healthier, more compassionate Scotland.



Road Shows - Inspiring Scotland's Youth Through Interfaith Dialogue

SABS representatives participated in impactful interfaith events at Dollar Academy, Liberton High School, Morningside Primary School, Ardnamurchan High School and Pilmeny School engaging pupils. Through discussions young Scots explored the richness of faith, diversity, and shared values. We are grateful to the Edinburgh Interfaith Association and the revered Duncan Peters of the Free Church of Scotland, for fostering unity and understanding among Scotland's youth.

Ramadhan Gifts for New Scots: A Gesture of Faith and Belonging

This Ramadhan, the Scottish Ahlul Bayt Society (SABS), in partnership with the Al Gilani Foundation and generous sisters from Edinburgh, distributed over 300 Qurans and 300 prayer mats to New Scots across the country. These gifts are more than items - they are lifelines of faith, offering comfort and dignity to those beginning a new chapter in Scotland. For many, they mark the first Ramadhan observed in safety, surrounded by compassion.

The First Minister of Scotland receives The Voice of Human Justice

The First Minister of Scotland was presented with a copy of *The Voice of Human Justice* by Moulana Dr Sayed Ali Abbas Razawi.



Authored by George Jordac, a Christian scholar from Lebanon, this remarkable work explores the timeless legacy of Imam Ali (Peace be Upon Him) - celebrated across faiths as a symbol of justice, compassion, and moral leadership. The book stands as a powerful reminder of the values that unite humanity beyond religious boundaries: fairness, truth, and dignity for all.

A Gathering of Faith and Friendship on a Blessed Night

For over a decade, the Scottish Ahlul Bayt Society (SABS) has cherished the tradition of visiting the magnificent St Mary's Cathedral in Edinburgh during the Holy Month of Ramadhan - a gesture of interfaith friendship and mutual respect that continues to grow in meaning each year.



This year's gathering held special significance. Taking place around the 23rd Night of Ramadhan, believed to be Laylatul Qadr - the Night of Decree - it is one of the holiest nights in the Islamic calendar, marked by divine mercy, answered prayers, and spiritual reflection. It also coincided with the Christian season of Lent, a time of fasting, prayer, and renewal - deepening the spiritual resonance for all who were present.

In a moving expression of solidarity,

SABS community members sat alongside the Cathedral's congregation in prayer and reflection. Together, we honoured the shared values of fasting, faith, and compassion, offering prayers for global peace, for those facing hardship and oppression, and for the wellbeing of all communities. We were especially honoured by the presence of Sheikh Mohamed Ashoor, whose reflections enriched the evening. It was a joy to reconnect with our dear friends: Provost the Very Rev John

Conway, Vice-Provost the Rev Canon Marion Chatterley, and Chaplain Janet Spence, whose continued commitment to interfaith harmony has been a guiding light over the years.

This longstanding tradition is a testament to the strength of our interfaith bonds - rooted in friendship, mutual understanding, and a shared commitment to peace. May this spirit continue to flourish, and may all those working for unity and compassion be blessed.

Interfaith Leadership in Times of Crisis

Moulana Dr Sayed Ali Abbas Razawi was honoured to participate in the Wilton Park conference on 'The Role and Responsibility of Religious Leaders in Times of War, Atrocities, and Polarisation' (17-19 February 2025). The gathering brought together faith leaders and scholars from diverse traditions and backgrounds, united in

their shared commitment to promoting peace, understanding, and moral courage in the face of global crises. At a time marked by conflict and division, the conference highlighted the collective responsibility of religious leaders to stand against violence, foster dialogue, and build bridges across faiths and communities.



SABS' Community, Compassion, and Health: Diabetes Awareness at Augustine United Church

The Scottish Ahlul Bayt Society (SABS) extends heartfelt thanks to all who attended our Community Diabetes Awareness Day at Augustine United Church in Edinburgh.

In a spirit of shared learning and solidarity, guests from across the community gathered to hear from Diabetes Scotland's Peer Support Champions, Br Syed and Sr Sophia, who offered valuable insights drawn from lived experience.

We were also grateful to Sr Masooma Zehra for highlighting the crucial link between oral health and diabetes, and to Dr Mehdiya Haider for her dedicated support behind the scenes. The evening was a warm reminder of how faith, health, and community can come together to support healthier, more informed lives - for everyone.

SABS' Know Your Heart: Faith-Inspired Care for Community Health

On Sunday 15 June, the Scottish Ahlul Bayt Society (SABS) hosted its first ever 'Know Your Heart' Community Health Day at The Dean Parish Church in Edinburgh - a landmark interfaith event focused on heart health and wellbeing. In partnership with healthcare professionals from across disciplines, the day offered free health checks, consultations, and practical advice in a warm, welcoming space.

Attendees from diverse faiths and backgrounds - including South Asian, Arab, and Eastern European communities - came together in a spirit of trust, healing, and shared humanity. This initiative showed the power of faith-led collaboration in making healthcare more accessible, especially for those traditionally underserved.

Azhar Hussnain, General Secretary of Scottish Ahlul Bayt Society

Honouring Scotland's Diverse Faiths at Bute House

Scottish Ahlul Bayt Society (SABS) Members at the Eid Reception hosted by First Minister John Swinney. We warmly welcomed the First Minister's recognition of the role Muslim communities and diverse Islamic traditions play in enriching Scotland.



Celebrating Vaisakhi with Friends

The Moderator of the Church of Scotland Glasgow Presbytery Rev Jan Mathieson, Joseph Sikora Interfaith Officer from the Roman Catholic community, and Frances Hume from Interfaith Scotland joined Sikhs at the Nagar Keertan (religious procession) in Glasgow on the first Sunday in April. The Sikh festival of Vaisakhi



commemorates the anniversary of the birth of the Khalsa, the community of initiated Sikhs. In 1699 Guru Gobind

Singh ji, the tenth Sikh Guru created the Khalsa and gave Sikhs a distinctive physical and spiritual identity.



Commemorating the Forgotten South Asian Soldiers on Victory in Europe 80 Day in May

The Glasgow Sikh community in partnership with Colourful Heritage commemorated VE 80 Day with a Multifaith event remembering the Forgotten soldiers of the British Indian Army who were central in securing victory in Europe.

Hindus, Sikhs, Muslims, MSPs, members of the armed forces, and the wider community gathered at Central Gurdwara. Little is known of the 2.5 million soldiers of the British Indian Army who during World War II came to the aid of Britain in its hour of need. Many soldiers from Hindu,

Muslim and Sikh communities won medals for their courage and bravery including Gian Singh whose Victoria Cross is displayed in an exhibition at Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum.

Dr Saqib Razzaq spoke about Force K6, a contingent of mainly Muslim

soldiers sent to the Highlands of Scotland with some buried in Kingussie cemetery. She also gave information on the first British Indian Army memorial in Scotland to be built in the grounds of Kelvingrove Museum.

Launch of Multi-Faith Declaration at UNOC3: A call to protect our oceans

Faith communities worldwide are uniting to protect our shared ocean, a source of life, wisdom, and balance. On 9 June a Multi-Faith Declaration to protect the Oceans was launched at the United Nations Oceans Conference in Nice. The Declaration spearheaded by Faiths for UNOC3 represents a landmark interfaith commitment to

marine conservation and ocean protection.

The faith leaders and representatives present were able to handover the Multi-Faith Declaration to the UN Environment Programme Executive Director Inger Anderson and UN Ambassador Peter Thomson,



United Nations Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Ocean on 11 June. You can sign the declaration and the call to action and protect our oceans at

<https://www.oceans.faith/sign>



Edinburgh Gurdwara Commemorates the Contribution of the British Indian Army leading up to the 80th Anniversary of Victory in Japan Day

Edinburgh Gurdwara in partnership with Edinburgh Interfaith Association and Colourful Heritage on Sunday 20 July held an event to raise awareness that although victory in Europe was achieved in May 1945, World War II continued in the Far East. Victory in Japan was achieved on 15 August 1945.

Wege Singh welcomed the participants and read out a message from the First Minister as well as the Pakistani Consulate General. The Consul General Siddharth Malik, Indian Consulate, Edinburgh spoke on the importance of the British Indian Army's contribution during both the World Wars followed by Professor Joe Goldblatt Co-Chair of Edinburgh Interfaith Association on the importance of collaboration. Ravinder Kaur Nijjar the Sikh Representative on the Scottish Religious Leaders Forum spoke of the Indian Divisions involved

in the Burma Campaign and gave details of individual soldiers who for their courage and bravery were awarded the Victoria Cross.

Dr Saqib Razzaq - Project Officer and Head of Research for Colourful Heritage gave a presentation on the work of Colourful Heritage including Digital resources for schools and the progress on the first British Indian Army memorial in Scotland and MSP Foysol Choudhury spoke on Scotland's connection to Muslim Force K6 soldiers from the British Indian Army.

Brigadier Ian Gardiner from Royal Marines spoke of his personal connection to Burma remembering the Contribution of the Multifaith Soldiers of the British Indian Army and Major Gen (Rtd) Bob Bruce CBE, Governor of Edinburgh Castle the importance of building Scotland's first memorial for the multifaith British Indian Army.

The event concluded with a message read out by Dr Abdul Hayee from the Caliph of the Ahmadiyya community and reflections from the participants and personal stories.

First Peace Festival in Kericho, Kenya

The first-ever Peace Festival was held on 15–16 August at Kericho, Kenya.

The festival brought together hundreds of children from primary and Sunday schools, celebrating shared values through songs, poems, dances, and skits filling the town with joy, colour, and hope as children, families, faith leaders, and civic representatives to celebrate peace, forgiveness, and cultural pride. During the festival



thousands of children were given langar, a vegetarian meal and gifted backpacks and water bottles to use when going to school.

It was an experience of a lifetime travelling with 300 Sikh volunteers from six continents on a historic month-long mission of peace, service, and prayer

in Botswana, Kenya, Zambia, and South Africa, combining acts of selfless service with interfaith dialogue and community regeneration. I hope that in Scotland we can also initiate Peace festivals allowing communities to work together for peace.

Ravinder Kaur Nijjar

Jewish Community News

Sharing Jewish Traditions

At the Jewish Council of Scotland (formerly the Scottish Council of Jewish Communities - SCoJeC), we're always happy to work with different groups to share about Judaism and help create a deeper understanding and celebration of diversity in our communities.

This past year we worked with a number of schools to provide Jewish content, both at assemblies that focussed on learning about Judaism, and Interfaith assemblies which brought together religious leaders from a variety of faith backgrounds. These have been wonderful learning opportunities, both for the students, and for our team, who are constantly amazed at all that we learn from the other facilitators, and the students themselves.

We launched a new programme this year in partnership with Giffnock Library in East Renfrewshire. We've been hosting open sessions for children and their families to come and explore Jewish festivals. Giffnock is the neighbourhood in all of Scotland

with the highest concentration of Jewish life, and so it felt fitting to share these celebrations with our community. Our first session focussed on the holiday of Passover (Pesach), which we learnt about in a hands-on way by tasting Matza and grape juice, acting out the Ten Plagues of Passover, learning the story of the Exodus, and teaching some fun Passover songs. Our second session looked at the holiday of Shavuot, which celebrated the giving of the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai.

These sessions were small and intimate, which meant that there was a lot of space for discussion amongst the participants, and especially the parents, who got involved with sharing traditions from their own faith and

cultural backgrounds. It was lovely to be able to provide a space for people to come together and share in such an open and positive way.

In the coming 2025-26 programming year, we hope to expand both our library and schools programmes to even more groups across the country. Interested schools or other groups should get in touch with our community worker Sydney at sydney@scojec.org. The sessions are free and open to all, but booking is required, please reach out to Sydney at the above email for more information.

Sydney Switzer,
Senior Community Worker - Jewish Education & Young Adult Engagement

Celebrating the Nature-Based Aspects of Judaism

Shabbaton on the Isle of Arran

The Jewish Council of Scotland took part in a series of events focussing on celebrating the nature-based aspects of Judaism. From 13 - 15 June, the Jewish Council of Scotland were delighted to welcome people from throughout Scotland to a Shabbaton in the village of Lochranza on the Isle of Arran.



As Friday evening approached we headed to the beach to begin preparing our Shabbat meal together. We gathered wood from the beach and built a campfire to cook our meal in the heat of the flames. We sang the songs of Kabbalat Shabbat (welcoming Shabbat) together, surrounded by the rolling green hills of Lochranza and the lapping waves of the sea. As we saw the sun dipping lower towards the horizon, we lit our

Shabbat candles, made Kiddush and enjoyed our homemade challah and Shabbat meal, celebrating in the beautiful surroundings.

Shabbat morning began with restorative yoga, led by Nicki from Edinburgh. After breakfast, we headed to the beach for a short musical shacharit (morning prayer) service, followed by a cleansing dip in the sea. Later we enjoyed a tasty

seudah shlishit (the traditional third meal on Shabbat afternoon). Just before midnight, we came together for a musical Havdalah (ceremony at the end of Shabbat), when we said goodbye to Shabbat and reflected on our time together. It was an incredible weekend, providing a much-needed space for adults to come together, celebrate being Jewish, and engage in immersive Jewish experiences.



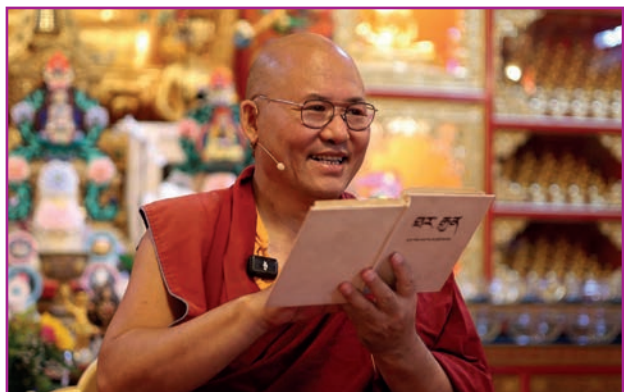
Woodland Shabbat

The latest sunset of this year was on Friday June 20 at 10.07pm in Glasgow. Sunset marks the start of Shabbat and some members of the Jewish community gathered together in a woodland in Giffnock to celebrate the Summer Solstice, at an outdoor Shabbat dinner organised by the Jewish Council of Scotland.

We started our preparations by building a campfire over which to cook our Friday night dinner. Senior Community Worker Sydney Switzer facilitated a discussion around the role of seasonal change in Jewish practice, including discussion of a Talmudic text about the solstice. There was singing during and after the meal, as we

celebrated the height of summer and the bounty of Shabbat together. It marked the finale of our 2024-2025 programming year, which included over 50 programmes, engaging over 2300 participants across Scotland, and felt a timely way to relax and wind down before the summer break.

Tibetan Buddhist Community News



Teachings with Drupon Khen Rinpoche

In May of this year we were very grateful that Drupon Khen Rinpoche Karma Lhabu once again accepted the invitation to teach at some of our centres, here in Scotland and the rest of the UK.

Rinpoche is based in Thrangu Sekhar Retreat Center, in the hills forming the eastern rim of the Kathmandu Valley, just below a cave where the revered Tibetan yogi, Milarepa, practised. He visited Kagyu Samye Dzong Glasgow and offered a teaching on 'The Measure of Authentic Practice' before travelling to Samye Ling Monastery for the fifth UK Kagyu Monlam from May 30 to June 5, where he gave two Dharma teachings each day.

Rinpoche once again returned to the UK in August and visited Kagyu Samye Dzong Edinburgh and then onwards to Samye Ling for a week long retreat

where the topic was, a chapter from Gampopa's the 'Precious Ornament of Liberation,' an important text of the Kagyu lineage. Lord Gampopa (1079-1153), also called Dakpo Lhaje, meaning the doctor from Dakpo, was born in Nyal, in eastern Tibet and was the disciple of Milarepa.

This has been a wonderful opportunity to listen to Buddhist teaching from such a great master and we are very grateful to Drupon Rinpoche for returning to lead us year after year.



The Abbot of Kagyu Samye Ling, Lama Yeshe Losal Rinpoche welcomed Drupon Khen Rinpoche Karma Lhabu to the monastery in August.

Kagyu Samye Ling, Tibetan Buddhist Monastery and Centre for World Peace and Health

On Sunday 24 August Samye Ling's annual tea party and open day took place with the Abbot, Lama Yeshe Losal Rinpoche and two esteemed visiting Khenpos (Buddhist Teachers) presiding. It was a wonderful gathering with beautiful refreshments and a chance to connect with friends, spend time in the temple and wander through the grounds to see all the changes and improvements that have taken place over the past year.

Nicola Riddick, KSD Glasgow



Scottish Hindu Foundation News

At the Scottish Hindu Foundation, we take immense pride in championing initiatives that nurture leadership and uphold the authentic spirit of Hindu heritage in Scotland. This year, our journey led us to two landmark events that echo our core values of community, learning, and cultural celebration.

The Future Leaders Forum, held at the Aberdeen Maritime Museum, was a remarkable gathering of tomorrow's trailblazers. We were honoured to witness Sachin Nandha, Director of the International Centre for Sustainability and a valued voice in the country, deliver a resonant keynote. Mr Nandha illuminated the indispensable role of social capital—those vital networks of trust and cooperation that sustain vibrant, resilient communities. Importantly, his message encouraged all present, especially those rooted in Hindu traditions, to embrace their identities, push themselves beyond fear of failure, and see each setback as a lesson in growth. "What makes a leader trustworthy? Not just charisma. Not just competence. But social capital, the invisible threads of influence", he urged the young leaders, which beautifully aligns with our community's ethos.

Our sense of collective purpose was further strengthened at Scotland's International Yoga Day, now in its impressive fourth year. Organised as a pan-Scotland initiative, this event drew participants from every corner of the country, embodying unity in



diversity. What makes this celebration truly special is its unwavering commitment to offering authentic yoga, deeply rooted in Hindu philosophy and practice.

Today, yoga stands as a testament to how traditional wisdom can address modern challenges, offering a holistic approach to health that benefits people of all ages and backgrounds. The inclusive nature of yoga is one of its greatest strengths, allowing it to serve as a unifying force in an often divided world. Today, even the NHS has begun recognising yoga's potential as a cost-effective, preventive, and complementary treatment for numerous conditions. This integration is happening through several pathways. The Yoga4Health is one such programme. Developed by the Yoga In Healthcare Alliance it offers a 10-week course designed for patients who are at risk of cardiovascular disease or Type 2

diabetes, experiencing stress, anxiety, or depression and socially isolated. This evidence-based programme equips participants with skills for daily yoga practice, supporting long-term health improvements and lifestyle changes.

We are delighted that each year, more people come together to experience yoga's transformative power as it was originally intended—honouring its sacred Hindu origins.

Looking ahead, the Scottish Hindu Foundation is committed to building on this momentum. We envision even larger gatherings, greater participation, and deeper connections—ensuring these events continue to grow as beacons of cultural pride and personal empowerment throughout Scotland.

**Ravi Ladva and
Dr Deepali K Agarwal PhD**

Zoroastrianism in Britain

Anthony MacIsaac, former member of Interfaith Scotland's Youth Advisory Board, attended a Zoroastrian festival and Summer School in London and shares about the faith.



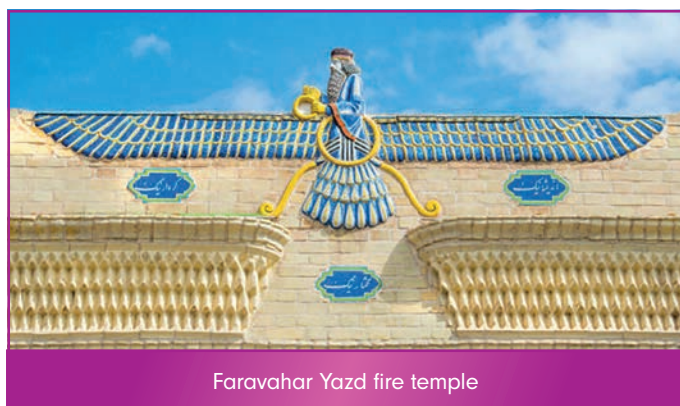
Zoroastrianism is thought to have its origins in ancient Iran. It may be the oldest monotheistic faith, and some also consider it to be the oldest living religion in the world. According to the Zoroastrian faith, Zarathustra, for whom the religion is named, helped the people around him come into proper relationship with the various spiritual forces at work in the world, to honour them properly, and to especially venerate the one God supreme above them all – Ahura Mazda. The core tenets of Zoroastrianism are positive, and are often encapsulated in the axiom of “Good Thoughts, Good Words, Good Deeds”.

The period of the Sasanian Empire (224-651 CE) might be considered as a “golden age” for the religion. At this stage in time, Iran hosted one of the

most cosmopolitan societies in the world. It was here that the Babylonian Talmud took shape, which became so influential to Rabbinical Judaism, and delegations of Nestorian Christians were able to travel alongside their Zoroastrian compatriots as far as China. However, it wasn't until towards the end of the Sasanian period that the oral revelation known as the Avesta was written down in its present form. In addition to the Avesta, which composes various hymns and recitations, there was the growth of quite a vast secondary literature which testify to a

developing Zoroastrian theology, and to a dialogue with the surrounding religions of the post-Sasanian period. Islam, Judaism and Christianity are all mentioned within these texts.

According to tradition (the Story of Sanjan) the faith first arrived in the Gujarat region of India during the 8th



Faravahar Yazd fire temple

Century. India now has the largest group of Zoroastrians worldwide – they are often known, in India, as the Parsis. In the modern period, Zoroastrianism began to spread to new countries too. London is effectively the centre of the European community today. On March 21, the Zoroastrian community celebrated the festival of NowRuz, otherwise known as the Persian New Year. NowRuz literally translates as “New Day”, and indicates the victory of good over evil. During the events for NowRuz in London, there was a Jashan. This ritual designates a liturgical celebration occurring outside the setting of a temple. In London, there are no temples, but there are two centres – one at Rayners Lane, the Zoroastrian Centre, managed by the ZTFE, and another near Luton airport, associated with the World Zoroastrian Organisation. Since there are no temples, the Jashan is the greatest Zoroastrian ritual that can be performed in London today.

Many visitors to the Zoroastrian Centre will pray themselves, or with their families, in a specially dedicated room housing a fire. The sacred fire is an essential component of Zoroastrian ritual, but is only occasionally found in its fully consecrated state – i.e.



Prophet Zarathustra



5th Zoroastrianism Summer School

in such cases the fire may never go out, but must be kept burning in perpetuity. In London, the fire is only semi-consecrated, but still acts as a sort of focal point for the Zoroastrian Centre. When people enter the room where it rests, they must have removed their shoes and washed their hands. The Jashan itself also involves a sacred fire, in which sandalwood, and other elements are offered to it, while the mowbeds (priests) recite prayers from the Avesta. The fire can be seen as a living being which mediates the power and goodness of Ahura Mazda. It is the principal conduit by which Zoroastrians may feel close to the Divine. The Jashan at the Zoroastrian Centre was followed by a special dinner with several hundred people present. There were also representatives from His Majesty the King, and from the Prime Minister. This coincided with the awarding of honours to some members of the community.

Later in the year, there was the 5th Zoroastrianism Summer School, organised by the SOAS University of London, in conjunction and dialogue with the ZTFE. It ran from 30 June - 4 July. This was an excellent opportunity to learn more about the Zoroastrian tradition, and half of the students were practicing Zoroastrians. We were especially fortunate to have two mowbeds (priests) join us on the course. We also had an outing to the British Museum, which houses an impressive collection of ancient Iranian artifacts. The course materials ranged from an historical overview of Zoroastrianism, to an analysis of sociological realities in the communities of today, particularly in Iran and in India.

When we begin to examine Zoroastrianism from the interreligious angle, it is surprising how little it seems to figure in mainstream discussions on dialogue, and interfaith. In the Scottish context, the only reference to it which could be found, was on the logo of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Scotland page for the Committee for Interreligious Dialogue. If we look at this logo, we will see the Faravahar, a spiritual symbol which has defined Zoroastrianism for some centuries, and which harks back to ancient Persia. It is good that this has been included, but more recognition seems to be in order.

There are only a very few Zoroastrians living in Scotland, and this may make dialogue seem relatively difficult to organise – it is true that Scottish people hoping to learn more about Zoroastrianism may be best to visit the community in London. However, it is also important to consider the historical impact of this ancient religion, and its deep significance for the story of religion in general. We often hear people speak of the “three monotheisms”, despite the fact that the monotheism of Zoroastrianism may have predated all three. Zoroastrianism may also help us understand the dharmic religions of India, given the close association of the Avesta and the Vedas. In fact, it seems to have a relevance to both the Abrahamic religions and the dharmic religions. More importantly, however, our dialogue with Zoroastrians in Britain today should surely be motivated by the fact that they are here. They are making this ancient religion present in British society today, and this representation shouldn't go unnoticed.



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Become a Friend

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

Scottish Interfaith Week

We can provide you with ideas and advice for setting up an event in your area to celebrate Scottish Interfaith Week. We can advertise your event on our Scottish Interfaith Week website at www.scottishinterfaithweek.org. Small amounts of funding are also available for local interfaith groups to assist with events. Email info@scottishinterfaithweek.org for more details.

Local Interfaith Groups

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

Schools and Youth Groups

We have volunteers from different faiths who are available to speak in schools and youth groups about their faith and/or the importance of interfaith dialogue. We have also created interfaith resources for schools and youth groups available at the office and on the website. Email frances@interfaithscotland.org for more details.

Women's Interfaith Dialogue

We host women's interfaith dialogue events in different towns and cities in Scotland throughout the year. Get in touch if you would be interested in us hosting a women's dialogue in your area. Email frances@interfaithscotland.org for more details.

Training

Our Religion and Belief Training Programme trains organisations from the statutory, voluntary and public sector to develop their understanding of the diversity of faiths in Scotland; conform to the Religion and Belief Equality legislation; and to be sensitive to the needs of the religion and belief communities they serve. Email jamie@interfaithscotland.org for more details.

Resources

We have produced a number of useful publications and resources which are available at the office or can be downloaded from our website.

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