

Interfaith Scotland

Magazine Spring 2026: Issue 45
www.interfaithscotland.org



**Interfaith
 Scotland**

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Making a Difference through Dialogue

Message from the Interim Director

After 17 years as the editor of this magazine that captures the wonderful interfaith work taking place across Scotland, it feels strange to be writing the opening message for the first time, and as your recently appointed Interim Director.



As always the magazine is full to the brim with interfaith activities taking place over the last six months. We hosted Scottish Interfaith Week in November on the theme of 'Our Future', encouraging communities to explore issues close to the hearts and minds of Scotland's young people. With funding from the Scottish Government we hosted a conference with young people, MSPs and religious leaders and we were truly inspired by their visions for the future. Our beautiful Faces of Faith exhibition has been reprinted and is ready to head around Scotland to a gallery near you! We also hosted our first ever Interfaith Burns Supper with Ayrshire Interfaith Group.

It is very interesting to note that in 2026 the Christian period of Lent and the month of Ramadan in the Muslim faith started on the same day, which considering that the dates change for both Lent and Ramadan every year

must be pretty unique! Both periods have an emphasis on fasting and prayer, which have great spiritual significance in terms of focusing on self-discipline, connection to God and developing greater empathy for those less fortunate. It is great to see the number of Interfaith Iftar dinners taking place throughout Scotland, breaking the Ramadan fast with members of local communities.



Interfaith Scotland

Frances Hume
Interim Director

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Annual Networking Seminar for Local Interfaith Groups

We hosted the annual networking seminar for local interfaith groups on 22 September at our new dialogue and training centre in Glasgow. We heard inspiring updates from many of the local interfaith groups across Scotland outlining their activities over the last year. It was a great opportunity to share good practice and ideas with one another.

The seminar also provided an opportunity for those gathered to discuss activities that their groups might like to organise for Scottish Interfaith Week. The theme of the week chosen for 2025 was 'Our Future' and we looked at ways to engage more young people in interfaith activities during Scottish Interfaith Week, whether by inviting them to attend, volunteer, speak at or perform at an event.

Participants then split into groups to discuss what events they could plan on the key themes of education, discrimination, mental health, poverty and climate action. These themes were chosen as they were the key priorities identified by thousands of young people in a survey by Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People.

Our Development Officer Nicola Maule led a creative arts session. Through the meditative act of origami, we were invited to write our thoughts and aspirations on beautiful, colourful paper before folding them into butterflies.

The seminar was concluded with a time of reflection based on Central Scotland Interfaith Group's monthly 'Soul Space' meetings in Stirling. These involve each person having an opportunity to share a poem, reading, story or piece of music on a theme selected in advance. The theme chosen was 'New Beginnings' recognising the new beginnings at Interfaith Scotland with our lovely new office space and our Director retiring.



Interfaith Burns Supper



On Sunday 25 January, Interfaith Scotland hosted our first-ever Interfaith Burns Supper Celebration in collaboration with Ayrshire Interfaith Group and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Over 40 guests from the diverse faith and belief communities in Scotland joined our celebration in Ayr to celebrate the life and legacy of Scotland's National Bard, Robert Burns. A traditional Scottish prayer, 'The Selkirk Grace' was recited by the attendees to give thanks for the food. The haggis was ceremonially led into the room by our piper, accompanied by the recitation of 'Address to a Haggis'.

After enjoying a hearty meal that included vegetarian haggis pies, attendees enjoyed a live musical performance, poetry, and the Immortal Memory speech that pays tribute to Robert Burns, followed by toasts and the finale with Auld Lang Syne. These elements created a lively and communal atmosphere, allowing attendees to enjoy the rich cultural heritage of Scotland.



Annual Lecture and AGM

The annual interfaith lecture was delivered by Dr Maureen Sier, our retiring Director, at the Red Tree Business Suites in Bridgeton, Glasgow. Maureen shares: "I was delighted to deliver the Annual Interfaith Lecture on 4 December 2025. The theme of the 'Ghosts of Interfaith, Past, Present and Future' was a nod to the Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol (as we were approaching the Christmas season) and it was fun to explore my personal experience of Interfaith (past and

present) and the possible challenges and opportunities facing interfaith in the future.

"The complete lecture can be found on our YouTube Channel and I hope that it captures the joy and privilege of serving as both National Development Officer and Director of Interfaith Scotland over the past 24 years."

Maureen's lecture was followed by Interfaith Scotland's AGM. At the end of the AGM we had a special presentation for Maureen thanking her for her



years of dedicated service to Interfaith Scotland and wishing her all the very best in her retirement.

Interfaith Scotland Bookclub

What began as a pilot event during Scottish Interfaith Week has grown into a flourishing interfaith book club that now meets every two months at Waterstones Bookshop on Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow. Surrounded by shelves of stories and ideas, members from different faiths and worldviews gather to continue the dialogue first sparked during that initial week of encounter and understanding.

Our first book was *Sacred Nature* by Karen Armstrong. Armstrong's reflections on how the world's religious traditions have understood humanity's relationship with the natural world prompted thoughtful discussion about stewardship, spirituality and our shared responsibility for the planet. Participants found common ground in the call to recover a sense of reverence for creation, while also appreciating the distinctive teachings within their own traditions.



In light of Holocaust Memorial Day in January, we turned to *Man's Search for Meaning* by Viktor E. Frankl. Frankl's profound account of survival in Nazi concentration camps and his exploration of the human search for meaning led to a deeply reflective and moving session. Themes of resilience, memory, moral courage and the freedom to choose one's response to suffering resonated across faith boundaries.

Meeting in the heart of Glasgow, our book club has become more than a

discussion group - it is a space of trust, friendship and ongoing learning. As we look ahead, we hope to continue building understanding, choosing books that challenge and inspire us and moving forward together - one conversation and one chapter, at a time.

Email: nicola@interfaithscotland.org if you would like to be kept up to date with future book club meetups or keep an eye on our news and events posts on our social media.

Training News



Over the years we have been providing training for organisations and Skills Development Scotland has been a frequent audience. They work with an impressive range of businesses and organisations - each themselves training providers for people going through apprenticeships. The training providers' areas of focus are enormously varied, with training providers focusing on catering skills to construction to horse training! As their apprentices come from many cultural and religious backgrounds there is a real need for their trainers to be confident and competent in responding to how religious and cultural differences impact on their work.

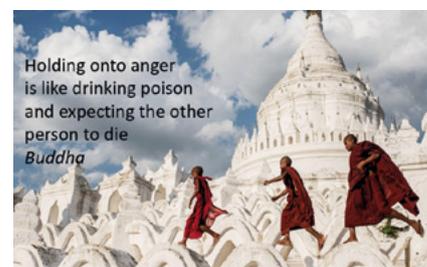
As 2025 was coming to a close we worked with three groups of their training providers, and the phrase 'what is becomes what ought' provided a foundation for our discussions each time. In just five words David Hume's phrase describes a pattern that shows up in many contexts, but is especially helpful in understanding how we are shaped by our cultural backgrounds.

Throughout our lives we observe certain patterns of behaviour, often repeated so often that we no longer notice them - they just feel 'normal'. Often, they create an expectation of how others will behave, an expectation which, when disrupted, can create discomfort, or even offence. An example is in the practice of people shaking hands when they meet - a practice very common in the UK but not in all cultural or religious contexts, especially between men and women. Becoming more aware of the patterns we are used to, and the emotional response we experience when the patterns are not followed,

is an enormously helpful element for supporting cross-cultural working.

We continue to deliver training to nursery staff at Experiential Play in Glasgow, most recently on 6 October, looking at ways that they can be inclusive of children and their parents from different religious and cultural backgrounds.

On 6 November we also delivered online training for teachers on supporting the needs of pupils from diverse religions and beliefs. The training was very well received and there was a lot of constructive dialogue with the teachers during the session on ways in which they can support their young people of different faiths.



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.

The Future of Interfaith Engagement

On Monday, 3 November 2025, we hosted our first Interfaith Conversation Café at the AK Bell Library in Perth as part of the Scottish Interfaith Week 2025. Participants from the local faith and belief communities joined to discuss the future of interfaith engagement in

Perth and Kinross. One of the positive outcomes from the conversation includes a potential development of the new local interfaith group.

We received a heartfelt comment from one of the participants, Revd Bonnie Evans-Hills: "I was excited to be able to attend this gathering in Perth,

a city I visit often, as my cathedral, St Ninian's, is based there.

"I can't thank Interfaith Scotland enough for initiating this group in coming together. Hopefully more will come of it in the future!"



Religious Calendars and Festivals

On Wednesday, 4 February 2026, we hosted an Interfaith Conversation Café on the theme of religious calendars and festivals, as part of the World Interfaith Harmony Week. Participants from diverse faith and belief backgrounds engaged in interactive dialogue and discussions about religious calendars and festivals. Urzula Glienecke, our special guest from the Interfaith Alignment, also shared an inspiring video from the Calendar of Light.

A closing Metta meditation gently brought participants' awareness back to the present moment, reflecting on the feelings of compassion and love.



Supporting Refugees and Asylum Seekers

Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees 10th Anniversary Celebrations

Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees (SFAR) is a multi-faith project committed to ensuring that Scotland's faith communities work together in their support for refugees. The vision of SFAR is that Scotland is a safe place where refugees and people seeking sanctuary feel welcomed and included and faith groups have

played an integral part in enabling this. The project is staffed by the joint co-ordinators Esther Moodie and Sabine Chalmers (currently on maternity leave) from the Church of Scotland and Interfaith Scotland is honoured to have been an active part of SFAR since its inception.

During Scottish Interfaith Week 2025,

SFAR celebrated its 10th Anniversary in the Interfaith Scotland Dialogue and Training Centre. The event was well attended and speakers included international guests and an informative presentation by David Bradwell on the history of SFAR over the past 10 years. A delicious lunch preceded the presentations.



2025 Christmas Gift Appeal: A Heartfelt Thank you

Interfaith Scotland worked with the Springburn Unity Network, a charity that provides community support to refugees and asylum seekers, to collect gift donations from the diverse faith and belief communities we work with.

We are overjoyed to share that last year's Christmas Gift Appeal was a wonderful success. Every gift, donation, and act of support made a real difference - turning what could have been an ordinary day into a magical Christmas for countless families and children. Thank you for your incredible support.



Scottish Interfaith Week

Scottish Interfaith Week 2025 was a special celebration of the vibrant faiths and cultures present in Scotland today and an important look to the future of our collective community. We launched the festival's theme of Our Future with a premiere of our 20th Anniversary short film in Glasgow in May. Supporters and friends joined us to watch the film and to brainstorm ideas for events that local communities could host for Scottish Interfaith Week.

We chose the theme of Our Future to encourage communities to explore issues close to the hearts and minds of Scotland's youth: education, climate, mental health, poverty and discrimination. Exploring these issues in an interfaith context provided opportunities for different generations to talk and collectively envision how the future could be.

Our team at Interfaith Scotland organised a collection of events including the Our Future Conference with Young People (featuring First Minister John Swinney and Minister for Equalities Kaukab Stewart), an interfaith conversation café in Perth, an open day at our new office in Bridgeton, an online workshop for teachers, and the first interfaith book club meetup.

The youth conference was the highlight of the festival. Dozens of university students and members of faith-based youth groups, a member of the Scottish Youth Parliament, The High School of Glasgow and Jordanhill School joined us at St Mungo Museum of Religious Life and Art to share in a day of interfaith dialogue and collective envisioning.



With our focus on engaging young people, we were thrilled to see many schools getting involved in the festival. West Coates Primary School held a week-long programme of visits to places of worship for students of all ages. Elgin Academy hosted talks from members of different faiths and beliefs, henna painting and a tree planting for peace which was open to the public. We also received nearly 60 entries for the Our Future school competition and awarded students from Giffnock Primary School in Glasgow and Bucksburn Academy in Aberdeen.

15 of our local interfaith groups hosted events across Scotland. Glasgow LGBT+ Interfaith Network hosted an interfaith ritual of protection and healing for Transgender Day of Remembrance alongside the Glasgow Theosophical Society. Aberdeen Interfaith hosted a family gathering to plant trees and bulbs. Borders Interfaith hosted an afternoon of stories and dancing at Borders General Hospital, and an event for international students at Heriot Watt University.

Edinburgh Interfaith Association hosted a friendship and peace service. Interfaith Glasgow hosted their annual Civic Reception with the signing of the Glasgow 850 Interfaith Declaration, and their popular Interfaith Family Fun Day. Intimate gatherings were also hosted in Central Scotland, Edinburgh, Dundee, Dumfries, Inverclyde, Renfrewshire and East Renfrewshire, Stirling, Glasgow, Shetland and Orkney.

We were enthused to see numerous organisations hosting events for the festival including the Centre for Autism and Theology, Climate Hebrides, East Renfrewshire Equality Forum, Glasgow Theosophical Society, Interfaith Liaison Committee to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, Net Zero Scotland, Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees and YouthLink Scotland. It is always special when organisations from other areas of public life support the festival and embrace it as an opportunity to connect with Scotland's diverse faith communities.

We hope one day to look back on all we imagined for our collective future during Scottish Interfaith Week 2025 and see those ideas come to fruition. We all deserve a Scotland that celebrates its religious and cultural diversity, and embraces our differences. Next November we will be back with another festival to remember: stay tuned!



Conference with Young People

We were delighted to receive funding from the Scottish Government to host a conference with young people during Scottish Interfaith Week. The event was organised and hosted by Interfaith Scotland's staff and youth board, the Scottish Government's Faith and Belief Team and YouthLink Scotland. The conference took place at St Mungo Museum of Religious Life and Art in Glasgow and we were delighted that the First Minister, the Minister for Equalities and 80 young people, youth leaders, religious leaders and civil servants were in attendance.

First Minister John Swinney gave an excellent opening address at the conference about his own faith and appreciation of interfaith dialogue. The young people were delighted that he engaged with them after the speech individually. In an Instagram post on the same day, he said "The better we understand each other, the better we understand ourselves. Great to meet with Scotland's young faith leaders at the interfaith conference in Glasgow today." Minister for Equalities Ms Kaukab Stewart also commended the young people for bringing bold energy, fresh ideas and a deep sense of justice.

The theme chosen for the conference was 'Our Future' and included the subthemes of education, discrimination, mental health, climate change and poverty, the key priorities identified by thousands of young people in a survey by Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People. There were speakers on each of the themes followed by dialogue at the tables on each theme in turn. Simran Kaur from Sikh Sanjog and Shawn Fernandez



from Springburn Unity Network spoke on education and discrimination. Maleeha Malik from the Urban Youth Project shared on mental health from an Islamic perspective and Ben Wilson from SCIAF (Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund) spoke on climate change and poverty from a Catholic perspective.

After lunch, those gathered participated in an uplifting music-making experience with Dr Jane Bentley, a former member of Interfaith Scotland's Youth Committee, who incidentally introduced our Interim Director to interfaith dialogue over 20 years ago! Jane is a specialist in using music in healthcare, creating accessible participative music experiences as a resource for social inclusion and community integration.

The religious leaders who participated in the event spoke movingly about their visions for the future of Scotland. This was followed by a dialogue at tables with the religious leaders and young people sharing their visions together. Baha'i representative Isadora Quay said: "I think if we all act in unity then we will have a better Scotland, and a better tomorrow."

Exploring these issues in an interfaith context with the religious leaders and Scottish Government representatives provided a unique opportunity for different generations to talk and collectively envision how the future could be. From the dialogue at the tables on key issues affecting our world today it was clear that with these young people at the helm the world could be a much better place.



Scottish Religious Leaders Forum Meeting

The autumn 2025 meeting of the Scottish Religious Leaders' Forum took place during the Scottish Interfaith Week Youth Conference. The

conference was designed to ensure maximum engagement between young people, civil society and religious leadership and the Forum Members

rose to the challenge. For the first part of the morning they gathered with young people from across Scotland to hear the address of the First Minister and Minister for Equalities and joined in with the accompanying workshop. This was followed by moving into the Cathedral Room at St Mungo Museum of Religious Life and Art where they held a two hour meeting focussing on their own agenda.

The agenda covered many critical issues including the upcoming COP30 in Brazil, the anti-immigration/asylum seeker riots taking place in Scotland, and the 'Turning the Tide' declaration (2025) signed by religious leaders, including Ravinder Kaur Nijjar from Scotland at the third UN Ocean Conference (UNOC3).



Faces of Faith Exhibition

We received funding from the Scottish Government to renew and refresh our beautiful Faces of Faith exhibition which we displayed at the conference with young people. This lovely exhibition was originally created for Scottish Interfaith Week 2022. Through the stories of 16 people of diverse faiths, the exhibition explores the joys, challenges, and complexities of living as a person of faith in Scotland, and the positive impact these communities have on a local, national, and international level. We are planning to display the exhibition across Scotland and use it as a tool for workshops with local school children.

We were also delighted that the exhibition was displayed at the start of 2026 for a month at the University of Edinburgh Chaplaincy Centre as part of their Interreligious Encounters and Creative Practice event exploring how creative practices shape, challenge, and reimagine encounters and forms of coexistence between different faiths.

The stories and photos can be



viewed at: scottishinterfaithweek.org/faces-of-faith-exhibition

We welcome requests to host the exhibition in your locality so do get in

touch with our Development Officer, Nicola if you are interested at nicola@interfaithscotland.org

Scottish Interfaith Week Ambassador Training

In 2025 we re-established the Scottish Interfaith Week Ambassadors programme. Scottish Interfaith Week Ambassadors are volunteers who attend events during Scottish Interfaith Week as representatives of Interfaith Scotland.

The Ambassadors participate in the events and write a blog post for our Scottish Interfaith Week website 'News' section and our Interfaith Scotland magazine about their experience.

We held a training session for our

Ambassadors on 15 October at our new dialogue and training centre where each Ambassador received a SIFW t-shirt and badge to identify themselves. 11 people attended the training, either in person or online, and we are delighted to share some of their stories in the magazine.

Warmth & Reflection in Stirling During Scottish Interfaith Week

Our festival ambassador Keith Tanner reflects on the Soul Space gathering in Stirling during Scottish Interfaith Week...

Interfaith Week in Scotland got off to a wonderful start this year with Soul Space, an evening of collective contemplation and sharing held at the Methodist Church in Stirling. The in-person gathering, hosted and facilitated by Andrew Sarle, drew around 20 people from a wide range of backgrounds (people of faith, and of no faith) coming together in an atmosphere of genuine warmth and curiosity.

The evening began with a shared meal, with attendees bringing homemade and shop bought contributions, symbolising the generosity and diversity of the group. Conversation flowed easily, setting the tone for what followed: a deeply human exchange through poetry, music and story. Readings came from both religious and secular texts, including reflection on the theme of discrimination and belonging

and personal testimonies.

One moving poem, a reinterpretation of the Good Samaritan story, written by a participant's father in the late 1950s, sat beautifully alongside other contributions including music from UB40 and their song One in Ten - proof that art and spirit often meet in the same space.

Faith traditions represented included Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, the Bahá'í faith and Quakerism, with reflections reaching across continents and communities. The themes were wide-ranging (religion, race, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and disability) but a shared spirit of compassion and understanding ran through every contribution.

As the evening closed with a short candlelit meditation, there was a true sense of unity and peace. The collective message that emerged - of openness,



non-judgement, and love, felt both timeless and timely.

Thanks were warmly offered to Andrew Sarle and the Methodist Church, Stirling, for hosting a night that truly embodied the heart of Scottish Interfaith Week.



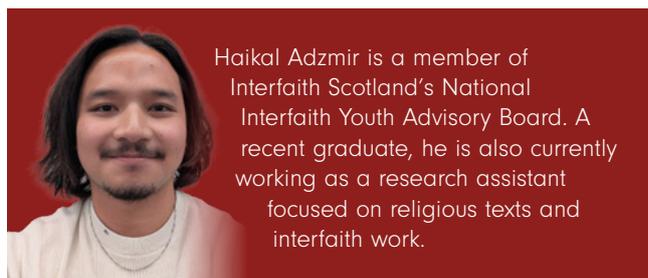
Dr Keith Tanner, a Quaker based in Fife, is a passionate advocate for interfaith understanding and spiritual connection. He serves as a Board member with the Bield Christian Retreat Centre in Perth and volunteers with NHS Fife's Spiritual Care Team.

A coach, educator and consultant by background, he is currently studying Spiritual Experiences as a Master's student at the University of Wales Trinity St David.

Keith has volunteered with Interfaith Scotland for five years, bringing warmth and insight to every encounter.

Understanding the Impact of Interfaith Work: EIFA's AGM

Our festival ambassador Haikal Adzmir reflects on Edinburgh Interfaith Association's AGM and key note lecture during Scottish Interfaith Week...



Haikal Adzmir is a member of Interfaith Scotland's National Interfaith Youth Advisory Board. A recent graduate, he is also currently working as a research assistant focused on religious texts and interfaith work.

On 28 October, I had the wonderful opportunity to attend the Edinburgh Interfaith Association (EIFA) Annual General Meeting held in the City Chambers of Edinburgh. One of the highlights of the meeting was a keynote speech by Adrian Cristea from Dublin City Interfaith Forum who is also pursuing a PhD focused on understanding the impact of interfaith work. Here were a few important lessons and insights I have taken from his work:

Seeds take time

Adrian compares interfaith work as akin to growing plants. They take patience and

consistent effort to bear fruit. He clearly stresses on the importance of youth, who not only take on the mantle left by the previous generation, but also revitalise the landscape of interfaith dialogue as it ventures into a new era.

Hope and action

Neither one is sufficient to inspire change. Rather, both must work hand in hand to create impact. One can start by envisioning a future and implementing

actionable steps towards that vision. Communities who work together towards a shared vision are capable of advancing further than one person can.

There is no way to Peace. Peace is the Way

An important distinction to make as people often confuse Peace as an end itself. Nor is it a means to an end. It is the continuous path one partakes in the face of conflict and violence. He stresses the importance of standing up to hate and discrimination through building bridges between communities.

We must be the change we wish to see in the world

Polarising narratives and far-right discourse have made their way into mainstream discourse and seek to divide peoples amongst themselves. Interfaith dialogue plays an important role in questioning these narratives, deconstructing their ideas and putting forth alternatives. Interfaith dialogue serves as a platform for people of different faiths (or none) to come together and get to know one another. Everyone who is participating in this platform is already taking the first step: to be the change they wish to see in the world.

At the AGM I was also able to get an overview of all the activities that EIFA has done throughout the year. This event ultimately gave me excitement about the future that interfaith dialogue can bring.



Meeting West Coates Primary School Interfaith Ambassadors

Festival ambassador Dr Susan Siegel reflects on her visit to West Coates Primary School during Scottish Interfaith Week...



Having a special interest in Interfaith work and diversity, Dr Susan Siegel is Vice-Chair of Interfaith Scotland and BEMIS and Honorary Secretary of the Council of Christians and Jews UK. She is currently the Chairman of Garnethill Hebrew Congregation and the Garnethill Synagogue Preservation Trust and is Vice-Chair of the Jewish Council of Scotland.

It was wonderful to spend the afternoon with the West Coates Primary School Interfaith Ambassadors, along with teachers, parents and representatives of diverse faith communities. Members of the

Hindu, Christian, Jewish and Baha'i faiths were all present at the event and the pupils shared their interfaith year with us including visits to places of worship including Glasgow Central Mosque, the Synagogue in Giffnock /

Newton Mearns, the Hindu Temple, and various Christian Churches. St Mungo Museum of Religious Life and Art was also visited.

The parents who attended said they were so pleased their children were learning about different faiths, traditions and festivals. The Chaplaincy group were on hand to chat about their experiences in supporting the students and faculty.

Throughout the year they have done so much more. Another great Scottish Interfaith Week engagement!



Reflection on Inverclyde's Interfaith Gathering

Our festival ambassador Imam Muhammad Bilal reflects on the Inverclyde Interfaith Gathering during Scottish Interfaith Week...



As part of Scottish Interfaith Week, Inverclyde Muslim Centre hosted a vibrant interfaith gathering on 29 October 2025, welcoming over 50 participants from diverse backgrounds. The event encouraged meaningful dialogue, mutual respect, and shared understanding between local faith communities.

Provost Drew McKenzie attended as Chief Guest, praising the commitment to unity and cooperation across Inverclyde. Speakers reflected on faith, diversity and common values that unite the people of Scotland.

Imam Muhammad Bilal highlighted the importance of respecting all religions, emphasising that peaceful

coexistence is built upon listening, learning, and valuing each other's traditions. He reminded the audience: "Diversity is not for division - it is for understanding and peace."

Frances Hume from Interfaith Scotland spoke about how such gatherings strengthen community bonds and promote harmony across the nation, encouraging continued collaboration and dialogue.

Closing the evening, Chairman Mr Akhter thanked attendees for supporting interfaith friendship and goodwill. The event truly reflected the spirit of Scottish Interfaith Week – learning from one another, standing together in respect, and fostering a community where every voice and faith is valued.



Muhammad Bilal serves as a community leader and Imam at the Inverclyde Muslim Centre in Greenock where he offers spiritual guidance and counsel to individuals and families. His leadership reflects a dedication to peacebuilding and community wellbeing. Deeply committed to promoting understanding between faiths, he volunteers with Interfaith Scotland to strengthen dialogue and cooperation among diverse communities.

Edinburgh Interfaith Association Uniting for Peace and Friendship Service



On 12 November, Edinburgh Interfaith Association (EIFA) held its third annual Uniting for Peace and Friendship service. Whereas the previous services had been held in two of the city's cathedrals, this year's event took place in the University of Edinburgh.

A group of students of different faiths from the University Chaplaincy decorated the lecture theatre for the occasion, and everyone was welcomed as they arrived by some beautiful sitar playing. At the heart of the service was a series of inspiring presentations by representatives of nine faith and belief traditions: Bahá'í, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Humanist, Jewish, Muslim, Pagan/Heathen and Sikh. From the

Karan ya Mett Sutta (the Buddha's Discourse on Loving-Kindness) to a Humanist prayer for peace; from a Sikh Shabad recited by two young members of the Sikh community to a rousing song by the Mountain of Fire & Miracles Ministry Choir; from a reading from the Palestinian / Israeli Parents' Circle Families Forum to music inspired by the Bahá'í writings – all nine presentations left us deeply moved, inspired and uplifted.

The opening remarks were given by the Lord Provost of Edinburgh and a great supporter of EIFA, The Rt Hon. Cllr Robert Aldridge. Later in the service, a Peace Candle was lit, accompanied by a blessing from members of the Brahma Kumaris and followed by

an extended moment of silence. All those present joined together in reciting a Pledge for Peace. And as the culmination of the evening, there was a special presentation by Jayboi, a wonderful Nigerian singer, music writer and rapper, who with his wife Natalie had travelled from Redcar to be with us for the service. Jayboi and Natalie had sadly been targets of racism in the UK, and it was a powerful experience to have Jayboi leading us in the conclusion of the service with his message of love and unity. A message that had shone out throughout the evening.

Revd Gareth Jones



Shetland Interfaith Celebrates Scottish Interfaith Week

As part of Scottish Interfaith Week 2025, Shetland Inter Faith hosted an event entitled Our Future which offered folk an opportunity to share and explore hopes and priorities at the heart of our community, with perspectives from some of the rich variety of faiths and beliefs held by people in Shetland. A small but eclectic group of members and friends enjoyed an informal evening of conversation together, with light refreshments to help feed our bodies as well as our souls.

Edinburgh Women's Interfaith Group Celebrates Scottish Interfaith Week

Edinburgh Women's Interfaith Group celebrated Scottish Interfaith Week on 8 November at the Southside Community Centre, based in the heart of Newington.

Fariha, originally from Libya, shared her story and faith journey. Fariha spoke about her connection with the Bridgend Community Allotments, a story of faith in action. She talked about community, nature, the opportunities they provided, the people she met and valued, people who helped her care for her disabled son and how they supported mental health.

The afternoon continued with a talk from Frances Hume from Interfaith Scotland about events taking place across Scotland to celebrate Scottish Interfaith Week. The last speaker of the afternoon was Parul Ben from the Edinburgh Brahma Kumaris Centre who



shared a short peace meditation and left the group feeling very calm and peaceful.

Nila Joshi then invited the group to each say a few words about themselves

and it proved to be an inspiring moment of connection where people's identities and barriers came down and the focus was on what we had in common rather than our individuality.

Scottish Interfaith Week at Aberdeen Gurudwara

The final day of Interfaith Week in Aberdeen was marked by shared purpose as members of the Aberdeen Interfaith Group gathered at the Gurudwara for a day of connection, care, and community action.

The event began in true Sikh spirit, with a warm welcome and a wonderful spread of food prepared by members of the Gurudwara community. After the meal, participants rolled up their sleeves for an afternoon of meaningful environmental activities. The group took to the surrounding area for a litter-picking session, embodying the principle of seva, selfless service, while caring for the local environment. This was followed by tree and bulb planting:

a hopeful gesture for the future and a living symbol of growth and renewal.

A highlight of the day was a talk by Bruce Gilliland, who spoke passionately about the importance of trees, not only for our planet's ecological health but also for our spiritual and physical well-being. As the day drew to a close, participants gathered to share tea, coffee, and conversation, rounding off a beautiful day of fellowship.

This year's closing event at Aberdeen Gurudwara was more than just a celebration, it was a testament to what can happen when people of all backgrounds come together in service and harmony.



Interfaith Glasgow Launch the Glasgow 850 Interfaith Declaration



In a powerful show of unity amid rising global and local tensions, faith and belief leaders from across Glasgow's diverse communities gathered to launch the Glasgow 850 Interfaith Declaration - a unifying statement of shared values and commitments to build a more just, inclusive and compassionate Glasgow.

Signed by senior representatives from Glasgow's diverse faith and belief

communities at a special Scottish Interfaith Week Civic Reception in the City Chambers to mark the city's 850th anniversary, the Declaration sets out a shared vision for the city's future - committing its supporters to nurture understanding across faiths and worldviews; work together for equality, peace, and climate justice; welcome refugees; and challenge prejudice

in all its forms. The Declaration's signatories are its first supporters and ambassadors - a symbolic coalition.

At a special Scottish Interfaith Week Civic Reception to mark the city's 850th anniversary we also celebrated 50 years of interfaith engagement in Glasgow. In partnership with the Lord Provost's Office, Glasgow 850 Interfaith Lifetime Achievement Awards were presented to three remarkable women whose pioneering work has helped shape interfaith relations in this city over many decades: Sr Isabel Smyth SND OBE, Dianna Wolfson, Brij Lata Gandhi MBE.

The tireless efforts of these individuals - Christian, Jewish, and Hindu - have laid the foundations for the city's thriving interfaith movement. Each recipient received a certificate and a Glasgow 850 commemorative plate, commissioned by the Lord Provost to mark this special anniversary. The design of the plate is rich with meaning - from the Tree, the Fish, the Bird and the Bell that symbolise Glasgow's story, to the Mackintosh Rose and Thistle, representing faith, hope, love, charity, and courage, kindness, and justice.



SCOTTISH INTERFAITH WEEK

The Lord Provost, Councillor Jacqueline McLaren, said: "The recipients of the Lifetime Achievement awards exemplify this Declaration by showing sustained commitment to uniting Glasgow.

"Their work encourages others to follow in their footsteps and reminds our communities that interfaith engagement nurtures compassion and promotes humanity, understanding and respect among people of all faiths and beliefs, to benefit our city."

The evening included a shared meal, bringing together civic and community leaders, activists, and faith representatives in a spirit of fellowship which Segun Oladipo, a Scottish Interfaith Week Ambassador said brought 'a unity we must embrace' - a fitting reflection of Glasgow's motto for its 850th anniversary: 'Let Glasgow Flourish'.



Meeting Room For Hire

Are you looking for a suitable venue to hold your meetings and events?

Interfaith Scotland's Dialogue and Training Centre is now available for hire. The venue is situated on the first floor of a modern four-storey office building, which is well-lit, spacious, and accessible. Strategically located only 1 mile from Glasgow City Centre, our Dialogue and Training Centre is near several busy bus routes and within a 5-minute walk of Bridgeton train station. The maximum room capacity is 30, and we can accommodate custom layouts of chairs and tables. We offer a reduced rate to our Members, Local Interfaith Groups and Friends.

Features

The venue has free on-street parking and excellent transport links. The room includes:

- Wi-Fi broadband
- 58-inch wall mounted large monitor with built-in speaker
- Electric Catering Urn
- Fridge & microwave
- Coat rack

Cost of venue hire

- Members rate: £15 per hour.
- Third and Public Sector rate: £20 per hour
- Standard rate: £25 per hour



For more information

Email: dialoguecentre@interfaithscotland.org
for room booking enquiries.

Address

Dialogue and Training Centre, Brook Street Business Hub,
First Floor, 1-10, 117 Brook Street, Glasgow G40 3AP

Work, Wealth & Wellbeing: A Collective Reimagining of Social Cohesion

At the beginning of November last year, the UK Bahá'í Office of Public Affairs (OPA), in collaboration with Interfaith Scotland, hosted a dialogue as part of its national roundtable series on the theme 'Work, Wealth and Wellbeing: A Collective Reimagining of Social Cohesion'.

Held during Scottish Interfaith Week, the roundtable formed part of a wider programme of consultations designed to bring together voices from across society. In total, eight roundtables were held across Glasgow, Belfast, Cambridge, Nottingham, London and Manchester, involving around 120 participants. A particular emphasis was placed on engaging young people and ensuring a balanced representation of genders across all sessions.

The aim of the initiative was to foster a rich and inclusive consultation that genuinely reflected lived experience, particularly within the communities hosting each roundtable. To ensure a diversity of voices, participants included representatives from civil society, healthcare, charities, youth organisations, interfaith and faith



communities, academia and local government.

A particular effort was made to ground the conversation in grassroots realities while situating it within a broader national context. It was structured around these overarching questions:

■ What are the current perceptions of work, wealth and wellbeing? How have these been shaped by the UK's history, and what do they reveal about our understanding of human nature?

■ In what ways does work shape our identities? Does work help us fulfil our purpose in society, and how is that sense of purpose influenced by prevailing ideas of wealth and wellbeing?

■ What role do communities (both geographical and relational) and institutions, public and private, play in reshaping the culture surrounding work, wealth and wellbeing?



SCOTTISH INTERFAITH WEEK

UK Bahá'í Office of Public Affairs (OPA), stated that in Glasgow (during SIFW) 'they were very touched by the vibrant and thoughtful spirit cultivated by the participants' generous and prepared contributions. One came ready to share educational resources developed for children, sparking a meaningful discussion on the importance of moral education. Another offered a beautifully written personal reflection on work that deeply moved those present and helped shape the collective vision guiding the consultation'.

The discussion stood as a testament to the belief that everyone can participate meaningfully in the life of society. The above questions were

explored through the lens of life in Glasgow and Scotland more widely, with particular attention given to healthcare, sustainability, refugee inclusion within Scottish society, and the contribution of faith communities.

As the conversation developed, a shared understanding began to emerge: if we aspire to a united, peaceful and sustainable society, we must begin by creating spaces in which everyone can tap into their innate value and see it used for the betterment of their communities.

One participant shared a powerful experience from her professional life as a healthcare practitioner: "I've had grown men crying to me

because they got injured on the job and didn't know who they were anymore without their careers... we have to find a way to move beyond identity and value being defined solely by what we do for work."

When value is no longer tied narrowly to economic productivity or status there is space for people to view themselves and others as being able to make meaningful contributions in all areas of life (excerpt of an article written by the UK Bahá'í Office of Public Affairs).

The final extended report of the round-table conversations will be made available on completion.

Our Future: Learning Through Reflection

As part of Scottish Interfaith Week, InnerSpace Glasgow, run by the Brahma Kumaris at Red Tree Bridgeton hosted an uplifting gathering, bringing people from diverse faiths and backgrounds to explore how reflection, learning, and self-knowledge can shape a more compassionate and peaceful future.

Marilyn opened the event by welcoming everyone warmly and highlighting the importance of Interfaith Week in building understanding and connection among communities. The speakers shared heartfelt and inspiring insights that deeply resonated with those gathered:

■ Rifat Akhtar (Al-Meezan) reflected that 'reflection is a precious gift from God which we treasure and practice'.

■ Rev. John Purves (Church of Scotland)

spoke of 'that moment of stillness as a space to lift us beyond limitations'.

■ Manjit Kaur Jheeta (Glasgow Gurdwara) reminded us that 'trees mirror the beautiful reality that all are unique but share a common system of life'.

■ Acharya Abhishek Joshi Ji (Mother Earth Hindu Temple) spoke about the importance of character and living values as guiding principles in life.

■ Sister Rose Goodenough (Brahma Kumaris UK) highlighted that each of us is responsible for our own energy and for sharing peace with the world.

After each talk, a few minutes of silent reflection allowed everyone to pause, absorb, and deepen what had touched their hearts. These quiet intervals brought a sense of stillness and depth that enhanced the morning's flow.

The session concluded with a group



dialogue, where participants shared their own reflections in an atmosphere of openness and care. The discussion was rich, nourishing, and full of hope – leaving a feeling of unity and shared purpose.

The gathering was a gentle reminder that sometimes the simplest themes, explored in a safe and welcoming space, can have a profound impact.



Aberdeen Interfaith Group News

By the Fireside

On 16 December 2025, the Aberdeen Interfaith Group hosted a gathering titled By the Fireside at the Brahma Kumaris Meditation Centre in Aberdeen. Focusing on the theme of Forgiveness, the evening brought together people from a wide range of spiritual and faith backgrounds in a spirit of openness, reflection, and mutual respect.

Participants shared stories, chants, poems, and readings, each offering a unique perspective on forgiveness, its challenges, its healing power and its ability to deepen understanding between individuals and communities. The diversity of voices created a rich and reflective atmosphere, where listening was as meaningful as speaking, and where common values shone through different traditions.

The evening was further enriched by the loving sharing of refreshments and home-cooked food, creating a



relaxed and welcoming space for conversation. Many new connections were made, friendships kindled, and a strong sense of community was felt by all who attended. By the Fireside

was a heartfelt reminder of the power of coming together across faiths to reflect, share, and build understanding, especially during the reflective season of December.

Honouring Together: Remembrance Service in Aberdeen

This year marked a significant moment for interfaith cooperation in Aberdeen as two members of Aberdeen Interfaith Group participated for the first time in the city's Remembrance Sunday service.

Representatives from the group, including Rev. Gary Dean and Pastor Joe Ochei, came together with civic leaders, veterans, and faith communities to lay wreaths in tribute to those who had served and sacrificed in times of war and peace.

The presence of interfaith representatives at the service symbolised the shared values of peace and compassion that unite people of all faiths and backgrounds.

As the group's members placed the wreath, they were aware that the gathered crowd stood in quiet reflection, honouring not only those who gave their lives in conflict but also the enduring hope for peace that binds the community together.



Dumfries & Galloway Interfaith Group Community Carol Service

As part of a network of 15 Community Carol Services being held across the country, I had a golden opportunity, as one of the readers to share what lies at the core of all interfaith work - the Golden Rule, which demonstrates that at the heart of all faiths and beliefs lies a desire to recognise the shared humanity of us all. To break down barriers of discrimination and prejudice and to promote togetherness, love and care for each other - this is our mission. There is more that unites us, than divides us.

Janet Lethbridge,
Dumfries & Galloway Interfaith Group



Edinburgh Interfaith Association: Faith Leaders and Belief Representatives Conference

20 religious, faith, and belief leaders, representatives and their civic champions gathered within the Edinburgh City Chambers European Room on 11 November 2025 to work together to activate the principles within the Edinburgh Interfaith Association and Edinburgh 900 Faith and Belief Accords. These historic accords were

co-signed on 17 May 2025 by the Lord Provost of Edinburgh and the Lord High Commissioner of the Church of Scotland, and the co-chair emeritus of EIFA Professor Joe Goldblatt.

The purpose of the accords is to best align the future of the City of Edinburgh as a place where the 'rich colours, faiths, and communities weave together

like a tartan making a rich cultural tapestry'.

The outcomes of this discussion concluded that the programme initiatives for EIFA for the next year should focus more on activities created and cultivated by both young people and women. The faith and belief leaders believed that these two groups required more strategic focus in order to make our faith tartan even stronger for future generations to come.

At the conclusion of the programme, EIFA co-chair Reverend Gareth Jones commended the participants for their hard and important work and stated that EIFA staff would review their recommendations and reply with an action plan to further advance the Accords in the new year.



Joe Goldblatt, Emeritus Professor,
Queen Margaret University

Holocaust Memorial Day

Every January 27 we observe Holocaust Memorial Day to remember all those who were persecuted and murdered in the Holocaust, and subsequent genocides including Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur.

The theme of Holocaust Memorial Day 2026 was Bridging Generations: a call-to-action and 'a reminder that the responsibility of remembrance doesn't end with the survivors - it lives on through their children, their grandchildren and through all of us'.

Interfaith Scotland co-hosted a moving commemorative concert with the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and the Lord Provost of Glasgow. This event marked the partnership's sixth annual concert. The audience was guided in reflection through the exceptional musical performances of students of the Conservatoire, Nuremberg High School of Music and Verdi Conservatoire of Turin - two of Glasgow's twin partner cities. The night concluded with the lighting of the Holocaust Memorial Day candles led by Interfaith Scotland's former Director Dr Maureen Sier.

Local interfaith groups across Scotland marked the day with a variety of reflective events. In Glasgow, Garnethill Hebrew Congregation hosted a tour of their Scottish Archive

Centre, including the Holocaust Resource Centre. The Glasgow Reform Synagogue, Garnethill Synagogue and dRC Productions organised performances of Dr Korczak's Example, a play by David Greig.

Personal stories were shared in Edinburgh and Dundee. Edinburgh Women's Interfaith Group invited Andrea Torres from Edinburgh Liberal Jewish Community to share her family story and emotional journey of the Holocaust. Faith and Belief Dundee and Tayside welcomed guest speakers Pat and Les Mackay who shared the story of Les' mother, a Jewess who escaped Germany and fled to Palestine before World War II.

In the Borders and Shetland local interfaith groups found their own ways to mark the day. Borders Interfaith Group paid their respects with a reflective evening at Borders General Hospital Chaplaincy Centre. Wreath-laying took place outside Lerwick Town Hall with participation from Shetland Inter Faith, Lord Lieutenant Lindsay Tulloch and pupils of Bell's Brae Primary School.

The importance of books in remembering the Holocaust was also a theme in Aberdeen and Glasgow. Aberdeen Interfaith held an online book review of The Book of Forgiving by Desmond & Mpho Tutu. Interfaith



Scotland hosted a book club discussion on Man's Search for Meaning, a heart-breaking Holocaust survival story, written by Viktor E Frankl.

The Holocaust Memorial Day Trust continued to offer guidance and resources on how to remember the lives lost in the Holocaust and subsequent genocides, and the theme of Bridging Generations was a poignant choice for this year's Holocaust Memorial Day as less and less survivors remain to tell their stories.

Aberdeen Interfaith Group

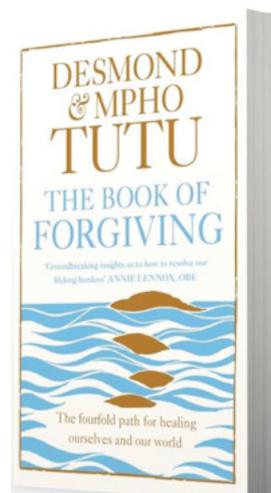
Aberdeen Interfaith Group chose The Book of Forgiving to read and discuss online for Holocaust Memorial. The book outlines the 'Fourfold Path to Forgiveness', developed by Archbishop Desmond Tutu and his daughter Mpho Tutu. This path involves Telling the Story, Naming the Hurt, Granting Forgiveness and Renewing or Releasing the relationship.

Having listened to a short summary of the book from Mpho found on YouTube we split into two groups online to reflect on what we had read and what we felt about this seemingly simple thing of forgiveness which is not as easy as it seems. It was especially poignant that we had Simone with us, who

had been born and grew up and lived in South Africa as we spoke about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the need for both sides to tell their story.

To conclude we read the Litany of Reconciliation from Coventry Cathedral together. We also pointed people to The Forgiveness Project. The website theforgivenessproject.com contains many amazing stories of forgiveness including genocide survivors from Bosnia, Cambodia, Rwanda and the Holocaust.

Rev. Gary Dean,
Chair of Aberdeen Interfaith Group



HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY

Shetland Interfaith Group

Members and friends of Shetland Interfaith were delighted to be joined at Lerwick Town Hall by pupils from Bells Brae Primary School, the Lerwick branch club of the Royal British Legion Scotland, representatives of Shetland Islands Council, and Lord Lieutenant Lindsay Tulloch, along with others from our local community to mark Holocaust Memorial Day.

Lord Lieutenant Lindsay Tulloch lit our candle of remembrance while we listened to Aleks McKay's specially composed piano music for Holocaust Memorial Day entitled 'For a Better Future'. Some of the pupils then read poems of reflection. We used the story of Sir Nicholas Winton's work to help children escape from Czechoslovakia in 1939 to focus our thoughts on this year's theme of 'Bridging Generations'

and to remind us that the responsibility of remembrance doesn't end with the survivors - it lives on through their children, their grandchildren and through all of us, to build a bridge between memory and action, between history and hope for the future.

Our commemoration concluded with the laying of wreaths at the County War Memorial by the Lord Lieutenant, Shetland Islands Council, the Lerwick branch club of the Royal British Legion Scotland, Bells Brae Primary School pupils Darci and Georgie, and Shetland Inter Faith, and in the evening the Town Hall was lit up in purple to help Light the Darkness.

David Marsh,
Shetland Interfaith Group



Images: Shetland Islands Council

Women of Faith & Community

The first meeting of 2026 was held on 2 February in the Unitarian Church, Berkeley Street, Glasgow. There were 18 present including two men - Tom Serb an American who had decided to escape Trump's America and Mohammed Ouras from Algeria who is currently looking for a research post in Glasgow after escaping from Ukraine.

Being so close to Holocaust Memorial Day, Abida Farid had invited Sandra Silverdale to share with us the moving stories of two survivors: Lia Lesser, a Kindertransportees child refugee originally from Prague who was fostered by a Christian woman in Wales, and Steven Frank BEM who was the son of a leading Dutch lawyer who sacrificed the opportunity to escape the Nazis in order to assist other Jews. He was a member of the Dutch resistance and Steven with his mother and siblings remained in the Netherlands until his father was betrayed.

After these inspirational stories, Mohammed explained to us that he had chosen to study in Kiev which was an international centre of scholarship



particularly in the field of human rights. So he left Algeria and moved to Ukraine as a student. It was during his studies that Russia invaded Ukraine and came very close to entering Kiev. He described the way in which war totally disrupts lives. People were fleeing with their possessions but there were no trains running or buses. He reached the border with Poland after many frightening encounters when he did not know whether he was being challenged by a Ukrainian or a Russian soldier. He did escape but his life and his academic work were thrown into disarray. He understands the cost of

war and wants to continue his research but must find some form of funding for himself and now a wife and child. He said that he was greatly honoured to meet us.

We concluded this memorable meeting by an exercise facilitated by Dr Susan Siegel, Hon Secretary of the Glasgow Jewish Representative Council. She thanked us for the safe place we had created and asked us in turn, to state what our hope was for the future. This was a moving way in which to conclude a special time together.

Alison Spurway

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY

Edinburgh Women's Interfaith Group



On Saturday 31 January 2026, Edinburgh Women's Interfaith Group organised a Holocaust Memorial service at Southside Community Centre in Edinburgh.

It was a spiritually uplifting afternoon, which began with a peaceful meditation session, to provide a conversation with our souls. This

was followed by our guest speaker, Andrea Torres, chair of the Edinburgh Liberal Jewish community and our sister, Miriam Vickers who read a very powerful poem by Paul Clean, 'Death Fugue'.

We received a blessing and peace message from the Sikh, Jewish, Hindu, Baha'i, Christian, Muslim and Quaker

faiths, before lighting a candle for the occasion and ending our time together by sharing in conversation and connecting to the hearts, reaffirming the beauty of human solidarity over some delicious food and warming tea.

Nila Joshi



Jewish Community News

The Jewish Community celebrates the 850th Anniversary of the City of Glasgow

Over 200 participants celebrated the 850th Anniversary of the City of Glasgow at Garnethill Synagogue. Speakers included Dr Susan Siegel, Chair of the Synagogue and Vice Chair of Interfaith Scotland; Dr Maureen Sier, former Director of Interfaith Scotland; and Rabbi Moshe Rubin, Senior Rabbi of Scotland. Musical interludes were provided by renowned musicians Lev Atlas and Michael Barnett.

Susan Siegel



Council of Christians & Jews (CCJ) West of Scotland Annual Board Dinner



In November 2025, CCJ West of Scotland held their Annual Board Dinner at L'Chaims Restaurant. The topic was the 60th Anniversary of Nostra Aetate, a document which focuses on the Catholic Church and its relationship to other religions.

The evening began with an introduction by Chapter Chair,

Dr Susan Siegel and the discussion was led by Rabbi Moshe Rubin and Monsignor Denis Carlin. Discussions then took place on the relationship between the Catholic Church and the Jewish religion and the interfaith dialogue which continues between both faith traditions.

Susan Siegel

Sikh Community News

In November, Sikhs from across Scotland gathered at Edinburgh's Gurdwara to view a rare scripture for the first time. The event was made possible thanks to the efforts of Honorary Sikh Chaplain to the University, Trishna Singh. Thought to be the oldest of its kind in the UK, the Guru Granth Sahib is one of three Sikh scriptures at the University of Edinburgh. Formerly in the possession of Kharak Singh, the second Maharaja of the Sikh Empire, it was taken from the fort at Dullewalla in India during its capture in 1848. The scriptures were given to the University by Sir John Spencer Login, who also brought the Koh-I-Noor to Queen Victoria.

While the scriptures have likely been at the University for more than 175 years, efforts to learn more about them began in 2020. Trishna Singh explains: "Sikh Researchers from England were looking for Sikh artefacts and found the entries to the scriptures on the University's website."

The University holds more than a million items in its vast, historic collections. Following the researchers' enquiry, University Archivist and Research Collections Manager Rachel Hosker sought to consult with the Sikh community and so connected with the chaplaincy.

Trishna says seeing the scriptures for the first time was a mind-blowing

experience. Her first visit quickly led to changes in the way the scriptures are stored. "I advised Rachel that they need to be wrapped in a certain way with specific cloths and stored at a higher level." All guidance was taken on board, including ensuring that anyone viewing the scriptures had their head covered, shoes removed and hands washed.

"Trishna explained to us that these weren't just manuscripts but are living embodiments of what it means to be Sikh," explains Rachel. "So, it's important that we made these considerations and were able to observe, where we could, the traditions of the Sikh community."

Around 400 people attended the event at Edinburgh Gurdwara, which took many months to prepare for. People travelled hundreds of miles to see this sacred handwritten Sri Guru Granth Sahib. "For me it was important to show it to the whole community and not just to a chosen few", explained Trishna. "I've had so much feedback. Younger generations, people with young families, telling me how grateful they were to be able to view this Sacred Guru Granth Sahib."

The University's Heritage Collections team is continuing its conservation work



on the three scriptures. They will also continue ongoing dialogue with the Sikh community on future opportunities. "There's also the element of what we do next with items in our collections from other faiths," says Rachel. "How can we understand more about them while also balancing research and showing respect to them."

Trishna hopes it will also lead to more ways to make Sikhism accessible to people through research and learning opportunities. But for Trishna, a key component of this will be to ensure the books remain in Scotland. "We have to work together to make sure that this amazing part of our written history is accessible to the future generations," says Trishna. "So for me, it's really important that artefacts that belong to the Sikh community through the colonial past remain here."

Gerri Dick, University of Edinburgh
(abridged)

Brahma Kumaris Community News

One Light, Many Paths: Inner Peace and Shared Humanity

On Friday 4 October, One Light, Many Paths took place at InnerSpace Meditation, Glasgow, bringing together people from diverse backgrounds for an evening of reflection, dialogue, and meditation focused on shared humanity and inner peace.

The evening opened with a guided meditation led by Maureen Sier, Programme Director of the Brahma Kumaris UK, a long-time teacher of meditation with deep involvement in interfaith dialogue. She was joined

in conversation by Maureen Sier, former Director of Interfaith Scotland, who has spent many years fostering understanding and cooperation across faiths and beliefs.

Their dialogue explored how inner peace can be cultivated through spiritual practice, how different traditions speak about unity and oneness, and why shared human values such as kindness, respect, and compassion are essential in today's world. They reflected on moments when people from different

backgrounds have come together in meaningful ways, discussed sources of hope within Scotland and beyond, and highlighted simple, everyday actions that can help build more peaceful and connected communities.

Small group discussions allowed participants to deepen these reflections through personal sharing. The evening closed with shared silence, leaving a sense of calm, connection, and renewed hope.

Ahmadiyya Muslim Community News

New Year Lunch

We hosted a New Year Lunch at the James Centre, Dunfermline and were honoured to welcome over 25 guests, including friends, local community neighbours and several distinguished guests.

After recitation of the Holy Quran Dr Jamil Sanauri, President of Edinburgh & Fife branch of Ahmadiyya Muslim Community Scotland delivered a welcome address and Cllr Julie MacDougall, Cllr Gordon Pryde,

Cllr Gavin Ellis each gave a brief address, which was followed by valuable speech by Rev. Norman Grant.

All the guests enjoyed delicious food and were presented with gifts from the local branch.

Dr Abdul Hayee,
Regional President Ahmadiyya
Muslim Community Scotland



Glasgow New Year Dinner Promotes Peace, Inclusion and Community Safety

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community (AMC) Glasgow hosted its annual New Year Dinner on Sunday 18 January 2026 at the Bait-ur-Rahman Mosque in Glasgow. Chaired by Mr Ahmed Owusu-Konadu, the event brought together more than 150 attendees, including faith and non-faith leaders, elected representatives, police officials and members of charitable and civic organisations.

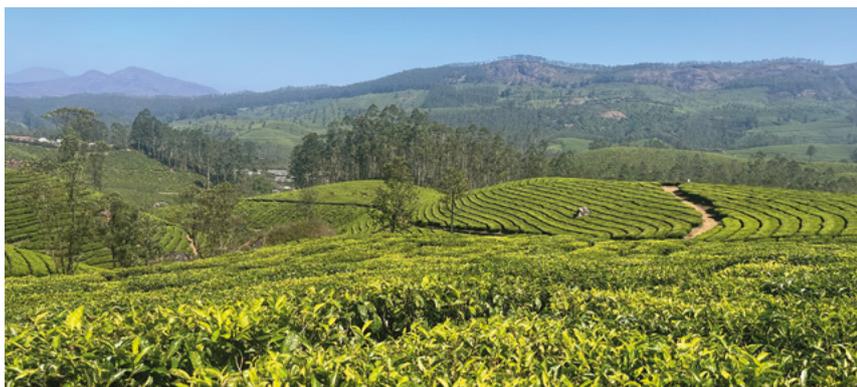
The dinner was held under the theme "New Year, New Hope" and the evening provided a platform to discuss some of the most pressing challenges facing Scotland and the wider world. Rana Mubasher Ahmed, President of AMC Glasgow North, welcomed guests and reaffirmed the community's guiding principle of "Love for All, Hatred for None." Discussions focused on the impact of war and poor governance on children, the importance of ethnic minority representation in public life, and the need for collaborative approaches to making communities across Scotland safer and more inclusive.

The event once again highlighted the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community Glasgow's commitment to building bridges across communities and ensuring that diverse voices come



together in pursuit of the common good. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community in Glasgow is dedicated to promoting peace, understanding and mutual respect. Through its annual New

Year Dinner and year-round outreach initiatives, the community works to foster dialogue, cooperation and unity across all sections of society.



A Pilgrimage to India

A personal reflection from Interfaith Scotland's Interim Director, Frances Hume, on nearly three decades of connection with India, exploring faith, community and compassion through life changing work with children in Pune and a recent return to the spiritually rich landscapes of Kerala...

Stepping out of the plane at Mumbai airport was like jumping into an oven. That was my first impression of India when I first arrived in 1998 and I was hit by the searing heat! I was part of a voluntary scheme to spend six months in India working with children in the slums in Pune. I was keen to put my faith into practice to care for others less fortunate while I was also fascinated to discover what I could learn from different cultures and religions.

That was to be the most incredible six months of my life which framed my life and worldview forever. Mother Theresa used to say that people living in poverty in India might be physically poor but can be spiritually rich, while people living in the West can be physically rich but spiritually poor. I had an expectation of what poverty would

look like in India, and while people lived in difficult circumstances there was an incredible resilience and an ability to celebrate life and find joy in it. Spirituality pervaded every aspect of life. There was always a festival to celebrate which was invariably vibrant and colourful and everyone was able to participate in some way whether singing, dancing, making art, beautiful food or dressing in colourful clothes.

I had a fantastic time working with the children in the slums. Their energy and enthusiasm was infectious. I was touched by their warmth and openness and sense of gratitude for the smallest act of kindness. I enjoyed their beautiful times of prayer and meditation together and I was touched by their sincerity. I had come with a desire to help, but really they had given me so much more than I could ever repay.

Thus started an almost 30 year love for India, returning whenever I could. My most recent visit to India was in January 2026. I started with a two-week tour of Kerala, visiting the cities, beaches, backwaters and tea plantations. It was stunningly beautiful and I can see why Kerala is known as 'God's Own Country' with its lush, tropical and serene landscape.

With my love of all things interfaith related, I made sure to visit as many places of worship and take part in

as many festivals as I could. Our taxi driver who drove us the long journey into the hills was somewhat bemused that we kept asking him to stop for us to visit places of worship along the way. He asked me if I was an architect as I seemed to take such an interest in buildings!

Kerala has a fascinating history of trade and migration which has resulted in a wonderful culture that appears to accept people from all faiths. As a couple of our guides shared, 'In Kerala we do not ask what religion you are, we all live together as humans first'.

On our first day we discovered an ancient church, St Mary's Syro-Malabar Church in Chowara, which had celebrated its 1000th anniversary a week before our arrival. According to historical accounts, the Apostle Thomas brought Christianity to India, arriving in Kerala coast in 52 AD.

In Kochi we visited St George Orthodox Church, a revered place of pilgrimage said to house the holy remains of St George. It was fascinating to see that it had been rebuilt in a Nubian style. In Kochi we also visited the Paradesi Synagogue built in 1568 by Sephardic Jewish traders. In Pune we visited and enjoyed langar at the Sikh Gurdwara. In addition to serving langar, they also had a museum, free hospital and a pharmacy onsite!



FEATURE ARTICLES



“ In Kerala we do not ask what religion you are, we all live together as humans first... ”

While staying on Willingdon Island near Kochi we passed by the Ayyappa Hindu Temple. We were beckoned in and they served us a lovely dinner. I asked if they were celebrating a festival and they said yes and invited us back the next day to join in the lunch and the evening festivities. I came along in my sari and suddenly found myself as ‘guest of honour’, carrying a lamp in a procession through the streets to the temple. It was such an incredible honour, and the local chief of police was so excited that the media were called and we ended up at the front of the Kerala Times the next day!

Although we loved our time in Kerala, a real highlight was revisiting the

projects that I had worked at in 1998 in Pune. We stayed at St Michael’s Hostel, one of the projects of the Society of St Mary the Virgin in India, a charity that cares for children living in poverty. St Michael’s Hostel is a home for girls coming from difficult circumstances. Some are orphans and others are the children of sex workers in the city. They are provided with free food, accommodation and an education, but most importantly love and care as each individual is treated as a ‘Child of God’, irrespective of caste or religion.

The girls were so welcoming and loving and we really felt like a part of their large family so I was shocked and saddened to discover that the project

had recently lost its funding for 100 girls having been funded by a foreign charity for 40 years. The foreign charity had decided that a children’s home should be a ‘last resort’ measure, but having seen how settled and happy these children were I couldn’t imagine the decision that would have to be taken to return them to potentially dangerous environments.

You can find out more about the project at ssmvi.org. Anyone who is interested in donating to the hostel for girls, or volunteering at the project, can contact me for more details at frances@interfaithscotland.org

Frances Hume



Interfaith in Motion

Durdane Oz, a member of Interfaith Scotland's National Interfaith Youth Advisory Board, reflects on the global perspective on interfaith while attending the young leaders union conference in Paris...



I attended the Young Leaders Union conference in Paris during Scottish Interfaith Week this year, and the timing felt deeply significant. While interfaith conversations were taking place across Scotland, I was engaging in dialogue with young people from across the globe. Exploring questions of leadership, peace, and climate wellbeing during Interfaith Week sharpened my understanding of how I recognise interfaith dialogue less as a formal space, and more grounded in listening, openness to others, and a shared sense of responsibility.

The conference created a space where difference was not something to be managed, but something to be curious about. What stayed with me was how often people spoke from values shaped by faith or belief. Ideas around sustainable responsibility, and the impact we leave on future generations highlighted how interfaith principles are within everyday thinking and action

when it comes to leadership.

During the conference, workshops on Global Leadership and Sustainable Change, Community Representation, and Leadership for Peace and Sustainable Development pushed me to rethink leadership as a shared ethical responsibility rather than an individual achievement. We spoke openly about those voices that are traditionally included or those that are still unheard particularly when representing communities shaped by faith, migration, conflict, and marginalisation. Peace was framed not as the absence of conflict, but as an ongoing practice rooted in justice, inclusion, and relationship-building, closely tied to wellbeing. These conversations reinforced for me that sustainable change is inseparable from values and that interfaith engagement offers a vital framework for youth leadership in an interconnected world. Interfaith practice demands humanity in recognising that

representing others requires deep listening rather than speaking over or simplifying lived experiences.

Scottish Interfaith Week's focus this year on education, climate, and mental wellbeing gave language to what I was experiencing in Paris. Education, I realised, is as much about unlearning assumptions as it is about gaining knowledge and listening across difference. When people feel respected and safe to bring their whole selves into conversation, mental wellbeing is strengthened; in the same way, climate action is most effective when grounded in shared values and collective responsibility.

Experiencing Scottish Interfaith Week alongside an international youth conference reminded me that interfaith is not confined to a single week or place. It is something we carry with us shaping how we listen, lead, and imagine a more just, compassionate, and connected future.

Hate Crime Strategy Delivery Plan

(November 2023-April 2026)

In January 2026 the Hate Crime Strategy Group met to discuss the report of the overview of the implementation of the first Hate Crime Strategy Delivery Plan. The strategy set out a vision for Scotland where everyone lives free from hatred and prejudice and where our communities are empowered, inclusive and safe.

The delivery plan was developed in partnership with the Hate Crime

Strategic Partnership Group, and informed by lived experience. The Hate Crime Strategic Partnership Group comprises a range of organisations, including third-sector, justice partners and public sector bodies: Age Scotland, BEMIS Scotland, Council for Ethnic Minority Voluntary Organisations (CEMVO), Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS), Education Scotland, Equality Network, Equality

and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), Glasgow Disability Alliance, Interfaith Scotland, Police Scotland, Respectme and YouthLink Scotland. All those present stated how important it continues to be for organisations to work in partnership to tackle hatred in all its ugly forms.

The Hate Crime Strategy Delivery Plan's lifetime is from November 2023 to April 2026 and so far, a range of

Meeting His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama

One World, One Humanity

In Mundgod Karnataka, India, I experienced a moment that will remain etched in my heart for the rest of my life. As Vice President of the Glasgow Theosophical Society and the interfaith representative of Scottish Hindu Foundation, meeting His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama felt like the convergence of purpose, service, and spiritual responsibility. The atmosphere was charged with reverence, yet deeply human. Surrounded by layers of military and security, symbols of a world driven by fear and protection, something extraordinary happened – all barriers seemed to dissolve.

As I gazed into the Dalai Lama's eyes, I felt an overwhelming sense of active compassion – not just as an idea, but as a living force. In a world where many feel hopeless, this was a direct reminder that hope is not given to us externally; it is awakened within us. In that moment, I saw clearly that we are truly one family, one world, with no real separation except the ones we create.

Everything felt transient – titles, divisions, fears. What remained was presence and shared humanity. His



sweet, simple words, 'Be yourself', carried immense depth. They were an invitation to live authentically, serve selflessly, and actively embody compassion. I left Mundgod with renewed purpose: to help remove the barriers that divide us and to live as a reminder that unity begins within each of us.

May the message of hope be carried in each word, each prayer or chant of the mantras for the highest good. May we carry the Light forth for many generations as we honour the karma shared between us all as one family, one humanity.

Avi Lago

actions have been undertaken to support the three aims highlighted in the initial publication of the Hate Crime Strategy, which are:

- Aim 1: Victims of hate crime are treated with fairness, compassion and in a trauma informed manner in which their safety and recovery is a priority.
- Aim 2: The nature, characteristics and extent of hate crime are more fully understood, and effectively inform appropriate interventions and policy development.
- Aim 3: Communities are empowered, inclusive and safe, and the underlying causes of hate crime are challenged.

All those present felt that significant progress had been made towards these aims but that there is still much to do. The final report will be available on the Scottish Government Website.

The Hate Crime Toolkit

The Hate Crime Toolkit has been co-produced by COSLA and Scottish Government and was informed by engagement with local authority representatives. It is designed to support local authorities in fostering safer, more inclusive communities by enhancing awareness and understanding of hate crime. The toolkit

can serve as a practical resource to help identify, respond to, and prevent hate-motivated incidents within the workforce. It aims to help local authorities promote a culture of respect and zero tolerance for discrimination, equipping professionals with guidance on legislation and reporting mechanisms.

The toolkit can be found on COSLA's website at the link below:

cosla.gov.uk/news/2025/november/new-hate-crime-toolkit-published



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Making a Difference through Dialogue

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