



BIRMINGHAM

Listen with Respect – Speak with Pride

Annual Report 2018-2019

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A. Introduction

The last year has been a very active one for BCF (Birmingham Council of Faiths), during which we have forged new relationships and developed new activities. As well as organising our own events, Birmingham Council of Faiths conducts much of its work through its partnerships with other organisations and individuals. These include formal relationships, collaborative arrangements and groups working as part of BCF.

B. Partnerships

1. Formal Relationships

Birmingham City Council was the first Local Authority to sign the covenant recognising the importance of faith organisations to the life of the City and pledging its intention to work together. Our intention to work closely with the appropriate cabinet member is constrained by frequent changes of cabinet member, so we were disappointed to learn that Cllr Tristan Chatfield was moving from his role as Cabinet Member for Diversity, Quality and Safety. However, we were pleased to welcome Cllr John Cotton back into the role to succeed Cllr Chatfield.

We now have quarterly meetings with Cllr Cotton. These are attended by the Secretary, accompanied by other members, depending on the items to be discussed.

Cooperation between the City Council and BCf

Interfaith Week

Street preaching

Antisemitism and Islamophobia

City Board

Climate change emergency – more about this in the Footsteps for a Low Carbon Future report

Faiths Promoting Health and Wellbeing – more about this in the BCF: Faiths Promoting Health and Wellbeing report.

Hate Crime

The Lord Mayor is invited each year to be Honorary President of BCF, and we are delighted to welcome the current Lord Mayor, Councillor Mohammed Azim as Honorary President, to our AGM. We hope to see him again at some of our future events.

2. Collaborative Arrangements

Birmingham Interfaith Week Programme – National Interfaith Week takes place throughout the UK in November each year and is an opportunity for us to celebrate our faith and cultural diversity in Birmingham. The 2018 programme built on the experience of previous years with a total of 13 events in a slightly extended week, most of which were organised by different faith bodies in membership or association with the Birmingham Council of Faiths. An estimated 400 people

attended the wide variety of events which took place in different locations around the city and on its margins. These included spiritual, artistic, remembrance, environmental and health and wellbeing events. We are grateful for the support of the City Council, which hosted the Launch Event, and to everyone who organised and participated in events.

The 2019 Interfaith Week will take place during week commencing 10th November with the Launch Event in the Council House during the afternoon of Wed 6th November. If you have an idea for an event please contact the BCF Secretary.

Faiths for Fun – This was the 11th year that Birmingham Council of Faiths has organised this event at Hamstead Academy, in cooperation with the Scout Association. There were 62 young people participating in the event, of which there were 37 girls and 25 boys. For the first time in 11 years, there were more Muslim children than from any other faith. We were delighted to see youngsters and leaders from the Girl Guides. The event was officially opened by the then Lord Mayor, Cllr Yvonne Mosquito, and comprised the parachute game; faith bases; indoor campfire and refreshments.

Faiths, Health and Wellbeing Seminars - BCF has been organising twice-yearly Faiths, Health & Wellbeing Seminars for 6 years. We have covered a wide range of topics including mental health, dementia, domestic violence, primary care, self-care, end of life care, public health & safeguarding. The seminar held in November 2018 covered Complementary Therapies and Social Prescribing.

Participants at the seminars include chaplains, faith organisations, charities, health workers, patients & carers. The seminars are held in cooperation with the Queen Elizabeth Hospital Chaplaincy at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital Education Centre, without payment, and all presenters willingly give their time free of charge, which enables us to organise the seminars free of charge. The next seminar is planned for November 7th, and will be on the topic of 'The First 1000 Days (of life)'

3rd Sector - BCF continues to develop relationships between faith organisations and other parts of the voluntary and community sector. Dr Peter Rookes, with others, have continued to represent BCF in a range of 3rd sector and civic organisations and activities including the BVSC Board, Health and Social Care networks including Healthwatch and the Community Health Trust, and West Midlands Police.

We are particularly concerned about the increase in hate crime and we have developed a close working relationship with Hope not Hate and the Crown Prosecution Service Hate Crime Scrutiny Panel of which Peter is now Independent Community Facilitator.

Roger Hooker Memorial Event is organised annually by Birmingham Council of Faiths and the Council of Christians and Jews. Shaunaka Rsi Das came to Woodbrooke College in February to give a presentation on 'Religion and Belief in public life: a Hindu perspective'. Shaunaka is the Director of the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies.

3.Groups working as part of BCF

Footsteps: Faiths for a Low Carbon Future

See separate report

Faiths Promoting Health and Wellbeing. This initiative was established earlier this year to build on the twice yearly seminars – see separate report

Sacred Space

The Sacred Space Project aims to provide a meeting place for people of many faiths; a place to enjoy good food and drink, listen to an interesting speaker, ask questions, make new friends, share experiences and concerns, and find ways of working together to build a more informed and inclusive society. Regular events are held, approximately half-yearly.

In March 2019 we held an event hosted at The Purple Rooms Restaurant, Hall Green, Birmingham where proprietor Mr Choudhury has been a kind supporter of Sacred Space events since its inception over 11 years ago. After enjoying an excellent meal, Kamran Shezad of the Sultan Bahu Trust and Footsteps gave an interesting presentation on 'Faith and Sustainable Consumption.

Management Committee Meetings -The Management Committee continues to meet monthly at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital Chaplaincy, thanks to the kind hospitality of Rev Richard Wharton, Chaplaincy Coordinator. In line with our policy to have meetings at different places of worship once a quarter, meetings have been held at the Buddhist Pagoda in Ladywood, the Progressive Synagogue off Broad Street, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in Harborne.

Faith and Reflection – In July we held our first Faith and Reflection session organised and led by Dan Griffiths (LDS Church) and Gill Hatley (Christian Science). This was an opportunity to explore the spiritual dimension of our faiths. The session was preceded by a shortened Management Committee. The next session will be held at Clifton Road Mosque on Mon 18th Nov.

Website and Social Media - BCF has both a website and Facebook page, which is managed by Sabir Elias

Newsletter – Andy Salmon has been managing our quarterly newsletter to keep members up to date with news & events.

Finance

We are grateful to our Treasurer, David Wills, for producing the attached Income and Expenditure report showing a healthy balance of £5,773

Events organised by BCF Member Groups

Three particular events this year were:-

1. Columban Interreligious Dialogue Summer School

50 People from across the Archdiocese of Birmingham attended the training event. The first evening was held at the Birmingham Progressive Synagogue; the second at the Khoja Shia Ithna-Asheri Muslim Community of Birmingham; the third evening at the Guru Nanak Gurdwara in Sparkhill.

Each evening the participants were welcomed by members of the local faith community and then were led by a Faith Guide who showed and explained the main features of their place of worship. The second part of each evening was dedicated to exploring the main aspects of the Church's teaching about dialogue with other religious traditions. This allowed participants to reflect on their own faith and personal motivation for engaging in dialogue.

2. Mandaean Day at Birmingham Museum

A Sabian Mandaean Day was opened for the first time in the United Kingdom, at Birmingham Museum on Sat 6th July in the presence of Mandaean from Bradford, Manchester, Birmingham, Bristol, Plymouth and London.

Then two lectures were delivered: the first by a Mandaean friend Dr. Erica Hunter who specialised in the ancient religions of the University of SOAS in London, and the second by Sally Murrani, a PHD student at the University of Exeter.

3. Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji's 550 Birth Anniversary at Birmingham University

It is difficult to find words to describe the enormity and magnificence of this event, mainly organised by the Nishkam Centre. Many BCF members attended the Civic Reception on Wed 7th August. The whole area in front of the Aston Webb Building was covered in white marquees for prayer and serving langar. During the next few days there were symposia on a variety of topics including the relevance of Guru Nanak's message for us today, climate change, the Peace Charter for Forgiveness and Reconciliation, Parenthood and Mental Health.

Can I thank everyone who is supporting and promoting the work of BCF and Interfaith in Birmingham and beyond.

Peter

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