

## **2017 Annual General Meeting**

### **Minutes of the meeting held at 7.0pm on Thurs 14<sup>th</sup> Sept at the Jain Ashram**

1. Welcome - Arvinder Jain, President, Jain Ashram welcomed everyone to the meeting and to the Jain Ashram.
2. Tarang Shelat, Retiring Chair, gave a reflection and introduced the Lord Mayor.
3. The Lord Mayor, Councillor Anne Underwood, said that she was pleased to accept the position of Honorary President of the Birmingham Council of Faiths & to preside at this AGM. She spoke about:-
  - \* Birmingham Council of Faiths having a long history, of 43 years, promoting understanding and cooperation between people of different faiths in Birmingham and beyond.
  - \* An example of this cooperation is the practice of rotating the Chair between each of the faiths, and this year the Chair passes from Mr Tarang Shelat (Hindu) to Mr Jimmy Suratia (Zoratrian)
  - \* BCF is a signatory to the covenant to work together, between Birmingham City Council and faith organisations.
  - \* The Interesting annual programme including seminars for people to have a deeper understanding of each other's faiths; Faith, Health and Wellbeing seminars, Footsteps: Faiths for a Low Carbon Future, Faiths for Fun for children.
  - \* We are grateful to BCF for coordinating the Birmingham programme for National Interfaith Week
4. Apologies for Absence – There were 10 apologies for absence noted by the Secretary.
5. The Minutes of last AGM, held on Wed 14<sup>th</sup> Sept 2014 were read by the Secretary
6. Highlights from the Annual Report were read by the Secretary. These included Relations with the City Council, Interfaith Week, Faiths for Fun, Faiths, Health and Wellbeing Seminars, Roger Hooker Annual Lecture, Sacred Space, Exploring Faiths, and the Website and Social Media. (See full report at Appendix 1)
7. Report of Footsteps: Faiths for a Low Carbon Future were read by the coordinator, Ruth Tetlow. Highlights included
  - a) The main annual event is 'Tread Lightly on this Earth' held annually in National Interfaith Week. There will be a similar event this year on Sunday November 19<sup>th</sup> at the Birmingham Progressive Synagogue.
  - b) Our summer programme for young people, Small Footsteps, took place at Fircroft College in Selly Oak this year.
  - c) A tree planting day for young people in Balsall Heath Park and a forum at the University of Birmingham on 'Faith, Ethics and Climate Change'.
  - d) We are setting up a new Footsteps Supporters Group for individuals, groups, worshipping communities and others that share the Footsteps vision. (See full report at Appendix 2)
8. The Financial Report given by Mrs Ann Lovelock showed a carry forward balance from the previous financial year of £3,302 and income in the current financial year of £9,844. Expenditure was £5,869, leaving a final balance of £7,607

9.Election of Officers was chaired by the Lord Mayor & guided by the Retiring Chair.  
The following officers were elected:-

Secretary (co-ordinator)	Dr Peter Rookes
Minutes Secretary	Kathryn Azarpay
Membership Secretary	vacant
Treasurer	David Wills
Funding Officer	Jane Bailey
3 <sup>rd</sup> Sector (Voluntary) Liaison	Dr Peter Rookes
Communications/ Web site manager	Sabir Elias
Events Co-ordinator	Ruth Tetlow
Publicity Officer	Andy Salmon

10. The Chair for the next year was handed over to, Jimmy Suratia (Zoroastrian, Mr Andy Salmon (Baha'i) as Vice Chair

11.The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints as admitted to Full Membership by Lord Mayor, following a citation by Yann Lovelock

Life Member Certificates were awarded to Yann Lovelock BEM and Ann Lovelock by the Lord Mayor, following a citation by Ruth Tetlow

12. A challenging address on 'Religion & Marketing' was given by Dr Zubin Sethna, Associate Professor of Marketing at Regent Business School, London.

13. The Incoming Chair outlined his expectations of the Year Ahead.

14. Any Other Business

Violet Owen informed the meeting of the 200<sup>th</sup> Celebration Anniversary of Baha'u'llah.

15. A Vote of Thanks was given by the Incoming Vice Chair

The meeting was followed by refreshments

# Appendix 1 Annual Report 2016-2017

## A. Introduction

The last year has been a very active one for BCF (Birmingham Council of Faiths), during which we have forged new relationships, developed new activities and reviewed our governance arrangements. As well as organising our own events, Birmingham Council of Faiths increasingly 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 a 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 Cabinet Member for Transparency, Openness and Equality, is constrained by the frequent changes in Cabinet Member. After an initial meeting between the Secretary and Advisory Chair with Councillor Tristram Chatfield, a fuller meeting is due to take place later this month to discuss our future collaborative arrangements. Particular initiatives on which we collaborate with the City Council are the Birmingham Faiths' Map, coordination of the Birmingham programme for Interfaith Week, and supporting Diversity events and initiatives.

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

### 2. Collaborative Arrangements

**Birmingham Interfaith Week Programme** - Interfaith Week now 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 2016 programme built on the experience of the previous year with a total of 21 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. Over 500 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, 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.

**Faiths for Fun** – This was the 9<sup>th</sup> year that Birmingham Council of Faiths has organised this event in cooperation with the Scout Association. 60 Scouts, Cubs, Beavers, Guides, Brownies, and youngsters from 6 different faith groups participated. There were also over 40 baseholders and other adult helpers, including those involved in the parachute game, registration, refreshments, timekeepers, team leaders, team movers, campfire, setting up and clearing up.

**Faiths, Health and Wellbeing Seminars** - BCF has been organising twice-yearly Faiths, Health & Wellbeing Seminars for 5 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. 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 Postgraduate 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 16<sup>th</sup>.

**3<sup>rd</sup> Sector** - BCF created the post of 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector Liaison Officer several years ago with the express purpose of developing 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 3<sup>rd</sup> sector and civic organisations and activities including the BVSC Board, 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector Assembly, Health and Social Care networks, Later Life Forum, West Midlands Police and Ageing Better programmes

**Roger Hooker Memorial Event** is organised annually by Birmingham Council of Faiths and the Council of Christians and Jews. At the 2016 event there were 6 speakers from different faiths who spoke about an artefact of their faith in the Faiths Gallery.

### **3. Groups working as part of BCF**

#### **Footsteps for a Low Carbon Future**

In November 2015, at the time of the UN conference on Climate Change in Paris, a new interfaith group was formed, called 'Footsteps: Faiths for a Low Carbon Future'. A number of events were held during the year and the BCF Committee agreed to make Footsteps a subgroup of BCF. For the second year the events included a 5 day summer programme called Small Footsteps in which 20 young people of different faiths took part.

#### **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 December 2016 Mandy Ross, Writer in Residence, spoke on 'Using Poetry and the Arts to Explore Interfaith Relations' over a meal shared at The Purple Rooms Restaurant, Hall Green. In June 2017 Angus McCabe, Senior Research Fellow, Third Sector Research Centre, University of Birmingham, spoke on 'Belief in Social Action: Exploring faith groups' responses to local needs' at Edgbaston Community Centre where participants enjoyed a vegetarian meal and discussion on the topic presented.

## **B. Activities Organised Directly by BCF**

### **Exploring Faiths**

An event in our series on 'Understanding Faiths' was held on March 15<sup>th</sup>, at the Birmingham Progressive Synagogue on 'Understanding Judaism'. The speakers were Rabbi Dr Margaret Jacobi and Mr Brian Cooper. The evening included an opportunity for questions and a visit to the beautiful sanctuary at the synagogue.

## **C. Governance**

**Faith Group Affiliation** - Currently we have ten faiths affiliated to BCF and, while membership is open to all in Birmingham, representation on the Executive is limited to affiliates. We are now working towards closer contact with the many other faiths in the city as a matter of policy. We have also begun discussing with some a description of their faith to be added to our standardised faith brochures, to which we have been adding over the years. At present our leaflets cover Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jain, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh, Zoroastrian and Mormon faiths, and have been found to be very useful at interfaith and other educative events. Yann Lovelock, one of our Senior Advisors, has been leading this work.

**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 three times a year, The February meeting was held at the Sikh Nishkam Centre and the June meeting at the Mormon Regional Centre.

There was a special meeting and dinner with the Muslim Manarat Foundation at their headquarters in Small Heath in January.

Dan Griffiths (Mormon) and Shenaz Sajan (Muslim) were welcomed to the Committee.

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

**Newsletter** – A newsletter is in the process of preparation. It is envisaged that this will be distributed quarterly and will be an additional way in which BCF will keep members up to date with news & events. This will be managed by Andy Salmon.

**National** - We have continued to take an active role in the work of the IFN (Interfaith Network) and Faith Action. Dr Peter Rookes (Secretary) and Mr Tarang Shelat (Chair) attended the Annual Meeting in London.

**Tribute** – In November a message was read from Jean Rookes to BCF members thanking them for their love and blessings, not just through her current illness but over the years she has been involved with BCF. She had much appreciated the prayers of friends of different faith traditions. Tarang and Yann visited Jean at home and presented her with a wooden cross in recognition of her contribution to BCF. She died on Dec 15<sup>th</sup>. Members of all faiths attended her funeral service in January.

*Peter*

Dr Peter Rookes Ph.D. MPH. DHSA. FETC. RCNT. RGN. RNMH  
Secretary & 3rd Sector Liaison Officer  
Birmingham Council of Faiths

## **Appendix 2 - Report from Footsteps: Faiths for a Low Carbon Future**

Footsteps has continued to benefit from being a project of BCF. It was founded in autumn 2015 around the time of the Paris conference on Climate change and is based on the interfaith Lambeth declaration. Footsteps has active Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Arya Samaj and Pagan members on the Planning Group, and we hope to have Sikhs and Buddhists engaged as well in future, as people of all faiths share a common concern for the future of our planet.

The main annual event is 'Tread Lightly on this Earth' held annually in National Interfaith Week. Last year it was held at the Birmingham Central Mosque and was attended by about 80 people of all faiths. There were a range of speakers, stalls and round table discussions. There will be a similar event this year on Sunday November 19<sup>th</sup> at the Birmingham Progressive Synagogue and we hope to see you there – leaflets are available here. We also supported the inspiring Eco Church Weekend held at Streetly Methodist Church, and, later, the Environmental Workshop held by the Bahu Trust for Muslim Imams. Our summer programme for young people, Small Footsteps, took place at Fircroft College in Selly Oak this year and has built up a strong team of volunteers. About 20 children aged 11 – 14 attended for the 5 days 31<sup>st</sup> July – 4<sup>th</sup> August, and enjoyed a range of well presented sessions, with a lot of hands on experiences. A video of the week is available.

Other events during the year included a tree planting day for young people in Balsall Heath Park and a forum at the University of Birmingham on 'Faith, Ethics and Climate Change', which included a buffet supper. We were invited to make a presentation for the Moseley Interfaith Forum in July and in the following discussion were encouraged to provide more written and website resources for churches and other places of worship. In August a number of our members were joined by newcomers for the Foraging Walk along the River Cole, led by our Pagan member Rob Stacey. It was so fascinating that we hope to have another one next year.

In March the planning group spent a half day considering the future direction for Footsteps and we also ran two evenings of presentation skills training.

We are setting up a new Footsteps Supporters Group for individuals, groups, worshipping communities and others that share the Footsteps vision. Regular donations from supporters will help fund future events, our website and materials to support faith groups in taking action. Information on how to join the Footsteps Supporters Group will be available on our website and leaflets are available here and from members of the planning group.

Ruth Tetlow