

## Annual Report 2017-2018

### 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 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 has previously been constrained by frequent changes of cabinet member. Following a communication with Councillor Ian Ward after the 2018 Local Authority elections, we were pleased that Councillor Tristan Chatfield had been reappointed as Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion, Community Safety and Equalities.

We had 2 particular issues referred to us for consideration:-

1. The UN Statement on Antisemitism was endorsed by our management committee, which we agreed to promote. Parveen Hassan from the Crown Prosecution Service also met with us to discuss how we could collaborate in dealing with antisemitic hate crime.
2. We have also endorsed the City Council statement on street speakers following public complaints that these were becoming intrusive to shoppers.

We also had discussion on the future of the Faiths Map, which was lost when the City Council changed its website. We have looked carefully at reinstating it, but decided that the time and cost in doing so is not justified because the improvements in technology enable most of the information provided on the Faiths Map, to be accessed through Google and other providers.

Other initiatives on which we collaborate with the City Council are 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 Yvonne Mosquito 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 2017 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, 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 2018 Interfaith Week will take place during week commencing 11<sup>th</sup> November with the Launch Event in the Council House during the afternoon of Fri 9<sup>th</sup> November. If you have an idea for an event please contact the BCF Secretary.

**Faiths for Fun** – This was the 10<sup>th</sup> year that Birmingham Council of Faiths has organised this event at Hamstead Academy, in cooperation with the Scout Association. 50 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 15<sup>th</sup>, and will be on the topic of Complementary Therapies and Social Prescribing.

**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, Health and Social Care networks including Healthwatch and the Community Health Trust, Later Life Forum, West Midlands Police and the Crown Prosecution Service Hate Crime Scrutiny Panel.

**Roger Hooker Memorial Event** is organised annually by Birmingham Council of Faiths and the Council of Christians and Jews. Shaunaka Rsi Das, the Director of the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies delivered the most recent lecture on ‘Religion and Belief in Public Life’ at Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre in February.

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

#### **Footsteps: Faiths 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 in the city, 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 BCF project. Please see separate report from Ruth Tetlow.

#### **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 2017 .....

## 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 Management Committee 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 the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints 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, meetings have been held at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, the Ramgarhia Sikh Temple and Clifton Road Mosque.

**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.

**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 (Advisory Chair) attended the Annual Meeting in Derby.

### **Tribute**

It was with great sadness that we learnt of the death of Bhai Sewa Singh Mandla. Several members of the management committee attended his funeral at the Nishkam Gurdwara in Handsworth. He was a member of the Management Committee of BCF and the Faith Leaders Group. It was through his hard work and determination and the wider Sikh community that the House of Lords reversed a decision of the Court of Appeal and held that Sikhs were entitled to the protection of the Race Relations Act 1976. Mandla v Dowell-Lee (1983) case set a precedent, brought about by the refusal of the school to allow his son to wear his turban to school.

### **Finance**

We are grateful to our Treasurer, David Wills, for producing the attached Income and Expenditure report showing a healthy balance of £6,298.

*Peter*

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Secretary & 3rd Sector Liaison Officer  
Birmingham Council of Faiths

