

IFW NEWS



Interfaith Wolverhampton's vision

is to promote mutual respect and shared commitment to the common good by the City's diverse communities.

We aim to dispel hatred and misunderstanding through dialogue and friendship.

February 2015: Issue no. 56

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In this Issue

The 40th Anniversary celebrations of our work gave us an opportunity to showcase some of the work we have undertaken to pursue our dreams. Unity in face of Hatred by Bhajan Devsi describes the rally organised in the city centre to respond to the current milieu of fragmentation and barbaric violence witnessed abroad.

Enriching Interfaith Engagement by Harriet Crabtree underscores the paramount need for taking a creative and innovative approach in our activities to include all faith communities in order to encourage them to have an equal stake in our society.

A fascinating account of what interfaith work can do for you is given by John Barnett. It shows how interfaith engagement can whet your appetite for self-



analysis, deepen your understanding of your own faith and nurture empathy for others.

Archbishop Langley's extract from his speech centres on dialogue and outreach work – ideals that resonate with what Interfaith Wolverhampton had been striving to achieve for over four decades.

There are many other articles in this issue, which you will find absorbing and thought – provoking.

Editor

Sehdev Bismal MBE

Editorial Board

Sehdev Bismal

The Reverend David Wright

Erik Pearse

The Royal Visit

The culmination of celebrations to mark the 40th anniversary of Interfaith Wolverhampton happened in a spectacular manner on 25 November 2014. The Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall agreed to grace us with their presence even though they had a hectic schedule of commitments in Birmingham and elsewhere in Wolverhampton.

Their motorcade was preceded by the arrival of Dr Tim Watts, the High Sherriff of West Midlands and his consort Julia Watts, soon followed by Mr Paul Sabapathy, the Lord Lieutenant of West Midlands and some members of the royal retinue. Excitement on the faces of the large number of school children waving hand-crafted flags was tangible as they lined up the route from the front of the Royal School to the theatre which, after the arrival of the royal party, witnessed some talented performances by children on stage!

The theatre was full to capacity with people of all faiths, denominations and ethnicities, all eager to catch a closer glimpse of the Royal visitors. As they approached the door of the theatre, the beaming Royal Highnesses were greeted by a rousing rendition by Azad Dhol players. The Royal couple chatted enthusiastically with the children lining their route.



A brief introduction to some of the inviolable principles driving much of the work of Interfaith Wolverhampton was given by its chairman Harun Rashid. He gave a thumbnail sketch of the circumstances that gave birth

to the group and outlined some of the initiatives being undertaken in the near future.

Entertainment was then provided by a number of performers from diverse cultures and traditions. Azad Group, once again, briefly played Dhol to trigger a surge



of adrenaline through the audience for the ensuing session. They were followed by members of the Serenity Group who sang an Arabic song interspersed with some English words to aid understanding. Shantel Hyatt, a Youth Probation Officer, regaled the audience with gospel singing and Pete Hepworth entertained with an English folk song. The rousing finale captivated the audience with a Bollywood dance performed by children from the Gujarati Association.

After the performances, the Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall, accompanied by Mark Heywood, head teacher at the Royal School, Harun Rashid and

Parveen Brigue proceeded through to the Great Hall for a reception. In the meantime, the Rt. Rev. Clive Gregory, President of IFW, presented the performers with certificates.

In the Great Hall, the Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall met members, staff and supporters of Interfaith Wolverhampton, community groups and School Staff. The Royal visitors showed a sound understanding of issues around interfaith dialogue and community cohesion and had a brief conversation with

The theatre was full to capacity with people of all faiths, denominations and ethnicities, all eager to catch a closer glimpse of the Royal visitors.

most people gathered there in a relaxed way.

The Royal Highnesses departed by car and before he left the Lord Lieutenant Sabapathy gave a stirring speech exhorting those present to be engaged with mainstream issues and to nominate people who have rendered outstanding service to society above and beyond their routine work.

The generous hospitality of the headteacher of the Royal School Mark Heywood, his staff and pupils was meticulously organised and delivered with warmth.

Sehdev Bismal

Enriching Interfaith Engagement

Last November I had the pleasure of being present at Interfaith Wolverhampton's special event and reception to mark the visit of HRH the Prince of Wales and HRH the Duchess of Cornwall. It was particularly fitting that Interfaith Wolverhampton should have had the honour of this visit: it is a body whose name is synonymous with hands-on, committed and effective inter faith engagement.

For 40 years, through various transformations, Interfaith Wolverhampton's work has helped people of different faiths – and none – come to know each other better, stand up together against prejudice and those who would spread distrust and discord; make common cause on issues of shared interest and concern; and enable public agencies and others to involve faith communities in their work with practical social outcomes,

Where it is successful, inter faith engagement adds to people's awareness and appreciation of each other's beliefs and practices and helps dispel misunderstandings. It does so alongside other important factors such as legislation and Government policy and guidance from bodies such as the Equality and Human Rights Commission; good quality Religious Education; religiously literate media; opportunities for social mixing; and programmes such as the Near Neighbours

and Together in Service programmes which support development of inter faith learning and cooperation, including through social action.

Inter faith engagement is, of course, not a magic wand which, when waved, dispels all tensions and difficulties and creates instant harmony and cohesion. It is the totality of many different conversations, actions, and meetings over many years which creates a web of trust

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and friendship which enriches our lives and also provides strong enough connections to enable us to cope and move forward productively if problems face us.

This positive effect has been seen in Wolverhampton and we can see it in many other towns, cities – and also rural areas. Take Bolton, for example, with an active Council of Faiths and a Faith Leaders' Forum as well as a lively Inter Faith Youth Ambassadors Programme. Or the less religiously diverse city of York where York Interfaith runs an active programme of activities – holding, with the City Council and others, a high profile week-long programme of activities for Inter Faith Week each year. Then there are groups such as the Devon Faith and Belief Forum which connect people of different faiths and none right across a heavily rural county. Many examples could be given – some multi faith and some focussing on particular faiths, such as the branches of the longstanding Council of Christians and Jews. Each is distinct and yet all share a passionate commitment to deepening understanding and building connection – ever more critical in our often divided world.

At national and UK level, as well as the important inter faith engagement by national faith community bodies, there are an increasing number of inter faith organisations making a contribution to understanding and cooperation. As at local level, some, such as Religions for Peace UK, work with many faiths whereas others, such as the Hindu Christian Forum and the Joseph Interfaith Foundation, work with particular faith communities. Some, such as the St Ethelburga's Centre for Peace and Reconciliation provide training and a

chance to discuss topics including the processes of inter faith engagement, yet others have a particular focus such as 3FF with its pioneering work with young people. As well as inter faith bodies, there are inter faith initiatives within an increasing number of schools, colleges and universities and inter faith and multi faith dimensions to the programmes of work of many single faith bodies such as Khalsa Aid and the Mitzvah Day Trust.



The same is true of an increasing number of secular initiatives such as the Scouts and Girlguiding or the Safe Network of NSPCC and Children England, whose Multi Faith Safeguarding Hub I helped launch during Inter Faith Week recently.

Today's inter faith landscape is very different from that of even 15 years ago: more than double the number of local inter faith groups and national inter faith bodies; a burgeoning of inter faith discussion and debate in the media; ever more academic studies of the field; multi faith chaplaincies; some workplaces establishing faiths forums; consultation with faith communities by policy makers, and so forth. However, there is no room for complacency. Good relations and mutual understanding are work for every generation: creating trust and cooperation is not a one-off matter - there is no inexorable journey towards sun lit uplands of understanding. So many variables - from the impact of global and domestic events, to the peddling of viciously prejudiced caricatures on the internet and the rise of extreme voices - can combine to drive wedges of distrust. So Inter faith engagement has to continue and continue apace, and to be refreshed and renewed, to continue to create solid ground for our shared lives where we can make common purpose for good outcomes – be fellow citizens, good neighbours and friends.

To end, however, where I began. Interfaith Wolverhampton is rightly proud of its record of inter

faith engagement. May it continue to be so and to be a beacon of local inter faith good practice: to encourage, to educate, to innovate, to contest the forces of prejudice and increase understanding and mutual respect; and to

extend the links of friendship and cooperation for the benefit of all in Wolverhampton and beyond.

Harriet Crabtree
Director Inter Faith Network for the UK

Unity in the Face of Hatred

Mr Alan Haines and Mr David Hennings two great humanitarians were horrendously beheaded by Islamic State (IS), their only crime was that they went out of their way to help fellow human beings thousands of miles away.

In publishing our unity against these barbaric acts of IS Interfaith Wolverhampton produced a 'banner of unity' which was taken to different places of worship (Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, Christian, Jewish and Buddhist etc.) from 27 November to 30 November



and it was finally Unfurled by faith representatives in Queen Square late afternoon on 30 November 2014. Our President (Bishop of Wolverhampton) welcomed everybody and asked the faith representatives and other dignitaries to unfurl the banner. This was followed by the short speeches from Bhajan Singh Devsi (Sikh), Khalid Akhtar (Muslim), Satya Pal Sharma (Hindu) and the Mayor Cllr Heap. The mayor praised community cohesion that one can perceive in the City and wished for it to flourish.

Speeches strongly condemned these acts and gave examples of tackling hatred and promoting peace and unity in the face of adversity. Human beings are the only

species on this planet that kill their own kind on a mass scale based on hatred by using hand held weapons like knives and guns to nuclear bombs. Animals do not do that ironically, humans claim to be more intelligent than them.

Every religion teaches us to love one another as children of one God and not to kill each other.

Every religion teaches us to love one another as children of one God and not to kill each other. However some misguided people like IS behead fellow human beings using religion as an excuse. The Sikh Guru Shri Teg Bahadur ji was martyred 339 years ago for defending human rights and said, "I may not agree with but you say or do but will defend to the death your right to say and do so." And he did.

Similarly, Muslim and Hindu speakers condemned the barbaric acts of IS in the name of Islam. They asked the people of Wolverhampton to continue living in peace and respect each other. After all underneath this paint work and religions we are similar and can save each other by sharing our blood and organs etc. So let us unite together and send a strong message to these bullies who are trying to divide us. Sadly as a result the racial hatred has increased against Muslims because the way they dress.

My brothers and sisters we must join together and be counted against this hatred and be part of the solution otherwise we will be part of the problem.

Bhajan Devsi

Liberating Exploration with Interfaith

Half of my time is spent as a joint Anglican/Methodist minister on an estate on the outskirts of Walsall, but the other half, with which your readers are more familiar, is as Inter Faith Officer for the Wolverhampton Episcopal Area. This is the area for which Bishop Clive has day to day responsibility, which includes Wolverhampton, Walsall, North Sandwell, and the country and smaller towns round about, across to Lichfield and Tamworth. I am also line manager for Ruth Burgess, the co-ordinator of Black Country Near Neighbours, which as well as Wolverhampton and Walsall covers the Dudley and all Sandwell.

I advise the Church of England people in that area in interfaith matters, which may include simple things like “some Hindu neighbours have asked if they can hire the hall for a funeral. Is that all right, and what can I expect to happen?” to complex negotiations between the cathedral, the Mercian regiment, and the Anglo-Sikh heritage trail over the future of some standards captured in the Anglo-Sikh Wars. I also try to support community cohesion, responding when there were the attempted bombings of Mosques in Walsall, Tipton and Wolverhampton in 2013, or in the more recent “Together we can Conquer Hatred” activity. I support interfaith organisations where they exist; and I do some study of interfaith practice at Birmingham University and through the national network of advisers. The central activity is making and renewing contacts with

people of non-Christian faiths, and visiting people in their places of worship.

I find there is a lot of mutual good will, but this is only likely to be expressed when something pushes it up the agenda. Sadly our recent experience is that this is likely to be bad news, like the peace rally in Walsall after the attack on the school in Peshawar, but it can be good events too like Wolverhampton’s royal visit. In between it is a few key visionaries who keep things going, and they are vital for getting the rest of us together when that needs to happen. Could it be otherwise, with many more people fully engaged with each other? I rather doubt it, but whether that is realism or pessimism I leave the reader to decide. I wish the Express and Star were more interested in interfaith matters; the Leicester



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Mercury makes a really positive contribution to life there and broadens its own readership too! I would love to see that in the Black Country.

A whole spectrum of folk is to be found in most religions, from the holy and humble to –well – the opposite! Once I move beyond judging people by the labels they wear I need to sharpen my own discernment and try to understand each individual I meet. Forced back on my own judgement I have to look at myself too, trying to identify my own blind spots and weaknesses. It is a humbling but liberating exploration undertaken in lovely company.

John Barnett

Two Poems

Peace

May the world have peace.

Flowers should flourish in the sun.

No one should be glum, as they should be calm as the sea.

No violence, no fighting. And definitely no abusive sightings.

The world contains many things, but violence is not one of them.

Wars and crusades are part of history, but if this happens for eternity our future is doomed.

But hopefully peace and serenity will overcome all.

The Earth

Please treat the Earth with respect.

Everyone has the right to be equal and respected.

A violent bloodbath is not required, but equal rights and humanity is.

Can't everybody be friends, as the world is not at its end.

Exquisite is a word that describes the Earth, but we truly can't possibly imagine how special the Earth really is.

Navin and Shiv

Graiseley Primary School Pupils

Need for Community Cohesion

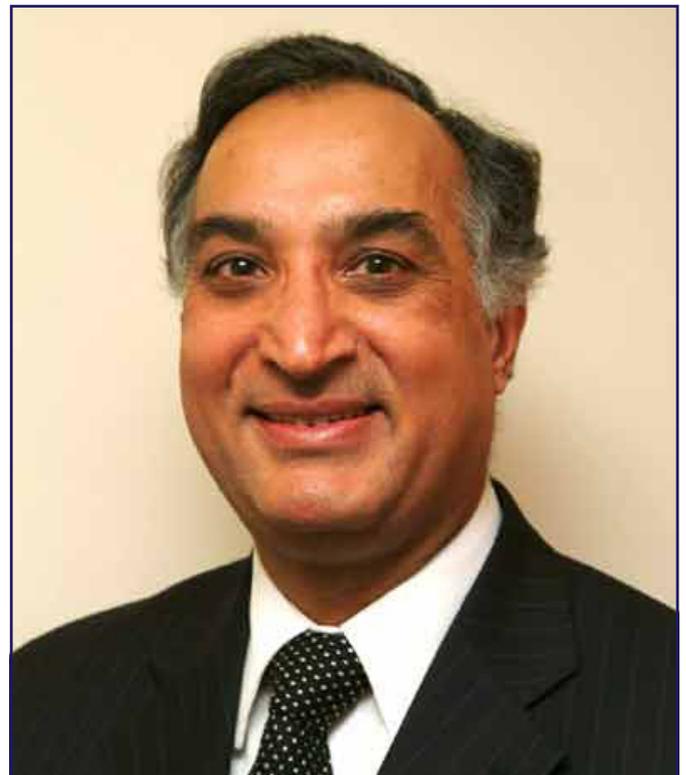
Deputy Lieutenants are chosen from a wide variety of backgrounds and provide specialist knowledge to the Lord-Lieutenant and assist him in his duties. The letters 'DL' appear after their names.

■ was appointed deputy lieutenant, West Midlands by Lord Lieutenant (LL) Mr Paul Sabapathy CBE in April 2014. The appointment was approved by Her Majesty the Queen. Each county has a Lieutenancy representing HM the Queen. LL is the head and appoints deputies. Each office arranges Royal visits to the region. LL receives, welcomes and helps with the arrangements of Royal visits. If unavailable due to holidays, sickness or any other reason, a deputy will usually be requested to represent LL.

The duties of the Deputy Lieutenants additionally include:

- To suggest people who might be invited to a Royal Garden Party;
- To suggest suitable businesses and voluntary groups for whom it may be relevant for a Royal visit to be organised;
- To comment on honours nominations at the request of the Lord-Lieutenant;
- To assess nominations for The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service at the request of the Lord-Lieutenant.
- To be the eyes and ears of the Lord-Lieutenant within the County and report on local issues

- To promote honours, Queen's Awards for Voluntary Service and Queen's Awards for Enterprise within the County.



Although for many years I have felt the need for social cohesion, my new role has added to my sense of urgency to achieve, maintain and further develop it. All communities need to live in harmony and this requires

It is only through a collaborative approach that we can have joined up thinking and work for the good of all communities.

positive actions. Recently I was invited to a lunch for old people organised by a voluntary organisation in West Bromwich. It was great to see Council and voluntary sector working jointly to make an impact. It is only through a collaborative approach that we can have joined up thinking and work for the good of all communities.

Different faith communities need to feel at ease and the time old question of isolation/segregation or

assimilation/amalgamation is now coming to a close with the second generation veering more towards amalgamation with mainstream society. This will create a “win win” situation where the identity of faith communities can be nurtured and maintained and yet harmony achieved.

The first generation of new faith communities, in view of the special circumstances they found themselves in through migration, in the main, found themselves treading the path of isolation, with consequent segregation in their quest for maintaining their religious beliefs and cultural values. Continuation of this under the now changed circumstances will obviously be most unhelpful. Interfaith in Wolverhampton is very active in promoting cohesion and understanding based on dialogue but increased positive efforts are required to reach out to more communities and make its presence known and felt.

Dr Satya Sharma MBE
Deputy Lieutenant

Dialogue and Outreach Work

From time to time TV programmes open up the issue of scandal and hypocrisy within the Church and the damage done to the Gospel and the Church’s mission when we fail to speak and act with integrity.

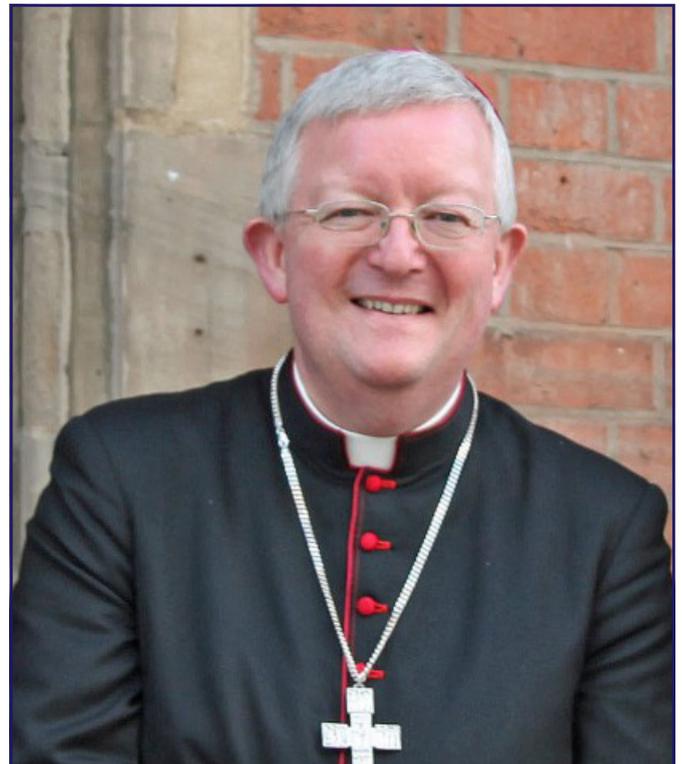
I would like to suggest that part of the cost of our discipleship of Christ must be the attention and energy we devote to being disciples after his own heart – and that his own ministry is always expressed in relationship to others, reflecting a deep interior commitment to dialogue and to outreach.

DIALOGUE

I would like to refer to a conference I attended at Liverpool Hope University last September.

The focus of the Liverpool conference was practical collaboration between the different Christian traditions (and to some extent the other faith communities) to work together for the transformation of society. The method of the conference was the way of dialogue. It drew its inspiration from the commitment to dialogue and common witness that became one of Liverpool’s ecumenical gifts in the collaborative ministries of Bishop David Sheppard and Archbishop Derek Warlock.

The shared vocation of the two bishops bore fruit in a practical discipleship for the common good and they



offered the insights of their experience in the 1988 publication *Better Together*. There they wrote: The sharing of minds is at least as important as the sharing of resources. That will come only through knowledge and trust, which result from habitual sharing. We do believe that... we do it better together.

This conviction comes as the fruit of dialogue and common witness and it encourages us to seek the same pathway today. How can we introduce, foster and develop the way of dialogue and common witness in our local situations, influencing our local policy-makers, encouraging the other church and faith leaders to see that dialogue and collaboration improve outcomes.

How can we introduce, foster and develop the way of dialogue and common witness in our local situations, influencing our local policy-makers, encouraging the other church and faith leaders to see that dialogue and collaboration improve outcomes

Blessed Pope Paul describes four characteristics of dialogue. We can also see them as characteristics of our discipleship:

- i. Clearness above all; the dialogue supposes and demands comprehensibility. It is an outpouring of thought; it is an invitation to the exercise of the highest powers which man possesses. This very claim would be enough to classify the dialogue among the best manifestations of human activity and culture.
- ii. A second characteristic of the dialogue is its meekness, the virtue which Christ sets before us to be learned from Him: "Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart." The dialogue is not proud, it is not bitter, it is not offensive. Its authority is intrinsic to the truth it explains, to the charity it communicates, to the example it proposes; it is not a command, it is not an imposition. It is peaceful; it avoids violent methods; it is patient; it is generous.
- iii. Trust, not only in the power of one's words, but also in an attitude of welcoming the trust of the interlocutor. Trust promotes confidence and friendship.

- iv. Finally, pedagogical prudence, which esteems highly the psychological and moral circumstances of the listener, whether he be a child, uneducated, unprepared, diffident, hostile. Prudence strives to learn the sensitivities of the hearer and requires that we adapt ourselves and the manner of our presentation in a reasonable way lest we be displeasing and incomprehensible to him.

OUTREACH

The second element of our discipleship is its capacity for outreach to others. In our own lives we value the infrastructure that guarantees personal safety, health and well-being are in place. But Christ asks us to be self-forgetful and to be concerned for those individuals and families for whom this kind of support and security are missing, for a variety of reasons.

As disciples we are charged to find practical ways of helping and encouraging each other in the support we can give, especially as Churches, to the homeless or those experiencing housing problems, to those lacking shelter, clothing and food – and to ask why these circumstances are tolerated today.

The parable of the Good Samaritan is such a story. It is set in the hill country on the road descending from Jerusalem to Jericho. This territory was (and still is) home to nomadic people, but also a place where the unwary traveller could be taken advantage of. Those who are already vulnerable are often open to further exploitation. At the centre of the parable is the man who is desperate because he has been attacked and robbed. The Christian response is to find him shelter and a place of safety where his wounds could be treated and his health restored. The parable also reminds us how easy it is for good people to walk by on the other side of the road, too scared to get involved, too preoccupied to respond, or simply ignorant about the need.

The Gospel underlines the intrinsic value of human life. For Catholic disciples this principle is expressed very comprehensively from the moment of conception until the moment of natural death. All our Christian traditions have a shared concern, based on the same principle of the value of life, for those who suffer or are vulnerable because of their acute need of a secure and permanent and sustainable home.

Similar work on behalf of the homeless has been undertaken since the mid-nineteenth century in the East End of London by the Providence Row charity. For the last seven years its Dellow Centre has provided a welcome and a place of hope for those most in need in and near the City of London. In recent years the Olallo

Project was established for the needs of migrant workers (especially from within the EU) near Euston Station.

One ecumenical cooperative venture that I witnessed in the Midlands offers a model that has been taken up elsewhere. The Nightshelter schemes in Coventry involves the use of seven church premises, one for each night of the week. Churches of all denominations spread across the city had space, equipment, facilities and trained volunteers to provide continuous overnight accommodation. They also have showers and some laundry facilities and provide supper and breakfast.

Here in Wolverhampton you will be aware of, and you may well be involved with the support offered to local families and individuals in Heath Town through the Hope Project

On Monday of Holy Week I visited the Fireside Centre not far from New Street Station with the Anglican Bishop of Birmingham, Bishop David Urquhart. More than 100 meals are served every day to the homeless and those with housing and other difficulties. Thousands of meals are served every week by the Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha gurdwara in Soho Road in Birmingham and that pattern is repeated in many Sikh communities.

Bernard Longley

There were four talks centred on spirituality within the Catholic Church given by different speakers at St Thomas' Catholic Church in November 2014. The above has been extracted from the talk given by Archbishop Longley. Archbishop Longley is the Catholic Archbishop for the Birmingham Archdiocese, which stretches from Oxford to Stoke on Trent.

Fair Trade and Wolverhampton

Fairtrade helps millions of farmers and producers in developing countries by offering them a fair price for the goods they produce. Fairtrade works to benefit the most marginalised in the global trade system. Our vision is to have justice and sustainable development at the heart of trade structures and practices so that everyone, through their work, can maintain a decent and dignified livelihood and develop their full potential.

In Wolverhampton in the mid-1980s a group came together to sell Fairtrade goods. By the 1990s, from Darlington Street Methodist Church, Wolverhampton Fair Trade was set up, initially supporting local churches in running stalls selling fairly traded goods. Over time Fair Trade stalls and promotional events were held at venues across the wide range of faith and

community groups and schools in Wolverhampton and its environs. The breakthrough in growing Fairtrade in Wolverhampton was getting the City Council behind Fairtrade, leading to a Council resolution in 2003 to apply for Fairtrade City status with the Fairtrade Foundation. This was awarded to the City in 2004. Dennis Turner (then MP for Bilston, later Lord Bilston) chaired the city's Fairtrade Partnership until January 2014.



There is much that the City's faith communities can do to support and extend the work for Fairtrade across the City and beyond and we go forward with this global movement for trade justice

Over the years there have been many highlights. In 2008 the University of Wolverhampton and the first school gained FT status. In 2010 BBC journalist George Alagiah visited City for World FT Day and Revolver

cotton was launched. In 2011 Wolverhampton Fairtraid became a Community Interest Company and in 2014 opened in shop premises in the City. In 2012 the City was awarded the FT Foundation prize for the best networking and outreach in FT fortnight and the first secondary school achieved FT status. Revolver coffee was launched and Revolver World is now the City's only 100% FT company. In 2013 The City hosted the first West Midlands Regional FT Forum and a member of W'ton City FT Partnership was elected as W.Midlands regional representative on FT Foundation National Campaign Committee. In 2014 the City proudly celebrated ten years of FT status.

Wolverhampton City Fairtrade Partnership has set out some ambitious plans for the next two years as part of its renewal of Fairtrade status with the Fairtrade Foundation. These include:

- making it easier for outlets to let us know about their Fairtrade offer
- supporting Wolverhampton Fairtraid Shop and their work
- Re-engaging our supporter base, especially Churches and community organization, for campaigning during FT Fortnight
- reaching new large and small employers in the City building on existing links and contacts



- having the first Fairtrade Gurdwara or Mandir or Mosque in City by engaging and re-engaging with minority faith communities
- widening the membership of WCFT Partnership with larger businesses and organisations represented; launching a hub for senior schools to apply for FT status and setting up a regional Fairtrade network

There is much that the City's faith communities can do to support and extend the work for Fairtrade across the City and beyond and we go forward with this global movement for trade justice.

Barbara Gwinnett
Vice-Chair

Wolverhampton City Fairtrade Partnership

Faith Communities Working Together

Individuals of all faiths should be proud of the cultural impact they have on Britain. They have helped to cement important values of tolerance, fairness, strong family unity and diversity into the fabric of Great Britain.

Interfaith Wolverhampton plays a vital role in promoting the rich diversity of religious beliefs and practices within the City. Upholding the freedom of worship is crucial to the British way of life, and what is key to this continuing long into the future is education. Work such as that done by Interfaith Wolverhampton, which works tirelessly to encourage understanding and cooperation between religions, will ensure that our nation remains a place where religious people can live and practice, free from persecution.

Cooperation between religious groups is one of the things that makes our great nation – working together in often difficult times to conquer challenges.

A great example of this from the last few years in Wolverhampton happened when we discovered that Springdale Methodist Church & Community Centre were looking for donations to complete their refurbishments. The trustees of the Sri Guru Teg Bahadur Ji Sikh temple in Wolverhampton donated £5,000 to the Church to help complete the works. What impressed me most was the community pulling together, with people from different faiths working together towards a common goal.

It is examples such as this that act as a counter to the frequent mutterings that we are a divided country, that it is impossible for peoples from different faiths to work



At the heart of the role of any effective MP is a focus on the community they represent. This can be easily forgotten by some who get wrapped up in the dealings in Westminster, but I relish any opportunity to meet with members of varying faiths, charities and communities. Through such interactions I continually improve my understanding how I can best represent the

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together. All too often we hear a negative narrative that reinforces stereotypes, creating dividing lines within our community. I hope that in the future we will see and hear more examples of these partnerships – they aid social cohesion and encourages more people from different faiths to come and work together.

communities within Wolverhampton from the green benches of Westminster. I encourage any individual, group or community who have an issue they wish to discuss to get in contact with me.

Paul Uppal MP

Interfaith Visits

A programme of shared worship with different faith communities at which IFW members will be specially welcome is being organised for 2015. The following can be confirmed:

- **Tues 17 Feb** 7.00pm - 11.00pm *Maha Shivratri*
Hindu Shiri Krishna Mandir 123 Penn Road
Wolverhampton West Midlands WV3 0DU
- **Sun 8 March** 11.00am - 1.00pm *Holi (festival of colours)* Hindu Shiri Krishna Mandir 123 Penn Road
Wolverhampton West Midlands WV3 0DU
- **Sat 28 March** from 11.00am - 12.00pm *Shri Ram Navmi* Hindu Shiri Krishna Mandir 123 Penn Road
Wolverhampton West Midlands WV3 0DU
- **Sun 29 March** 2.00pm - 4.00pm *open day*
Al Madina Mosque 213 Newhampton Road East
Wolverhampton WV1 4BB
- **Fri 3 April** 12.30pm - 1.15pm *Good Friday Service*
Darlington Street Methodist Church 24 School
Street Wolverhampton, West Midlands WV1 4LF
- **Sat 4 April** 5.00pm - 7.00pm *Hanuman Jayanti*
Hindu Shiri Krishna Mandir 123 Penn Road
Wolverhampton West Midlands WV3 0DU
- **Sun 5 April** 4.00pm - 6.00pm *Mahavira Jayanti (Mahavira's birthday)* Jain 322 Hamstead road,
Handsworth Wood Birmingham B20 2RA
- **Sun 19 April** (times to follow) *Vaisakhi*
Sikh Guru Ka Niwas Gurudwara, 1 Rothesay
Gardens, Wolverhampton WV4 6FD
- **Sun 26 April** 12.00pm - 3.30pm *celebration of Dr Ambedkar* Buddhist: Owen Road, Pennfields,
Wolverhampton WV3 0HG
- **Sun 24 May** 12.00 noon for 1.00pm - 3.30pm
Celebration of the birth of the Buddha Buddhist:
Owen Road, Pennfields, Wolverhampton WV3 0HG
- **Sun 7 June** 12.00 noon - 2.00pm *Murti Pranpratishta* Hindu Shiri Krishna Mandir 123 Penn
Road Wolverhampton West Midlands WV3 0DU
- **Sat 13 June** *Local pilgrimage*

Dates for your Diary

Tuesday March 17th
(12.45-2.00)

Bring and Share Lunch*

Monday April 20th
(5.30 for 6.00)

Film - *The Lunchbox* at the Lighthouse

Tuesday April 21st
(12.45-2.00)

Bring and Share Lunch*

Tuesday May 19th
(12.45-2.00)

Bring and Share Lunch*

Wednesday June 10th

Pilgrimage to Holocaust Memorial Centre, Nottingham

Tuesday June 16th
(12.45-2.00)

Bring and Share Lunch*

Tuesday July 21st
(12.45-2.00)

Bring and Share Lunch*

Tuesday August 19th
(12.45-2.00)

Bring and Share Lunch*

Saturday September 12th

Visit to Local Places of Worship

Tuesday September 15th
(12.45-2.00)

Bring and Share Lunch*

Wednesday September 23rd
(6.00pm)

Annual General Meeting

Monday October 19th Prayers for Peace
(1.30pm)

Tuesday October 20th Bring and Share Lunch*
(12.45-2.00)

Saturday November 14th Conference on Human Rights
(1.30pm)

Tuesday November 17th Bring and Share Lunch*
(12.45-2.00)

*Bring and Share Lunches will all be at 24 School Street, but the room used will depend on availability

Also of interest

Satsang meetings at Friends' Meeting House, 8b Summerfield Road, WV1

- **Saturday March 14th** (10.30-4.30) Day of reflection
- **Saturday May 9th** (1.30-4.30)
- **Saturday June 13th 2015** (10.30-4.30) Day of reflection

IFW Website

We are pleased to confirm that our website (www.ifwton.org.uk) is fully operational. Our thanks primarily to Arshang Jahedi (Arshi) for setting it up and to Paul Rayner for keeping it up to date.

Contact Us

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