

# IFW NEWS

Interfaith Wolverhampton



Interfaith Staff Devi and Mike at the Autumn Interfaith Conference



**Happy Retirement to our Mike!**

Interfaith Wolverhampton aims to work with the diverse communities living in and around Wolverhampton in order to foster and nurture mutual understanding and appreciation between the different faiths. It seeks to arrange, encourage and support dialogue between those of different faiths and no faith, communities and agencies so as to contribute to an inclusive environment of mutual respect and harmony.

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## **Editorial**

### **Happy 2020 to all!**

On behalf of IFW, may 2020 and the future bring readers every happiness, joy, success and may our prayers and wishes be granted.

This is our New Year Newsletter, and as always jam-packed with informative, exciting and hopefully really thought-provoking articles about faith groups in Wolverhampton and their activities. I follow our former (late) Vice President Sehdev Bismil in this Editors role. I am sure we all remember him with affection, and with gratitude for his great contribution to IFW over the years.

This edition begins with a special commendation to Mike Smith, who has given many years of service to IFW and has, to the loss of IFW, decided to retire as of Christmas 2019. Mike has been the backbone and anchor of InterFaith Wolverhampton, that has steadied us during troubled waters and provided a wealth of knowledge, experience and understanding in his work; and love and friendliness to all he met and worked with. Mike, you will be sincerely missed, and we all wish you the best for your long and no doubt fruitful retirement.

In the first article, I attempt to provide insight into the different way last year Wolverhampton Muslims celebrated Eid, to highlight the importance of how the Muslim community felt they needed to share their celebration with the wider community with an outdoor event.

This article is followed by commentary by our chair Cllr. Jas Dehar, on the amazing and highly successful conference that was held in 2019 on self-harm and suicide. If one sees the photos and were present, you would agree that these really shone the light on critically important issues for us all. The conference was a brilliant opportunity for us to promote our IFW mission; to facilitate InterFaith dialogue and promote understanding, peace and harmony between people of all Faiths and none.

We are grateful to Parveen Brigue who makes a focus and casts a light on the 550<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Guru Nanak, an event that was widely celebrated in 2019. The article elaborates on the features of Sikhism and its key teachings. A very well developed and substantial article indeed.

Two of our respected members, Lisa and Peter Stedman, have provided a really wonderful contribution in their article on the Bring and Share lunches that are regularly organised by IFW. The overview they provide, whilst being an account of the various speakers and their talks, also illustrates the diversity, depth, breadth and richness of the discussions that are held and the quality of our speakers. Thanks for this, and we really do encourage more members to please make similar contributions in future Newsletters.

The Interfaith Orange Event, again contributed by our chair Jas Dehar, is then covered in this

Newsletter- a key concern of many communities around the issue of Domestic Violence. The event was held at the Civic centre and the photos and speeches were fabulous to raise the profile of this issue. Again another key role of IFW and being particularly contemporary. Well done Jas for your efforts with the events and the articles.

We are privileged to learn about the Jewish Faith through an excellent and endearing article on Hannukah. In particular, I was very much impressed by the way that the Jewish Faith creates an occasion for remembrance of hard times but then a focus on hope for the future. This is really a very powerful idea which certainly needs to be shared in these times. Martin Gomberg writes an excellent article and we are grateful for this contribution.

I then attempt to bring some sobriety to proceedings with an account of the Environment and how various faiths have taught us to protect and sustain this. The lesson being that we are only here on a short-term lease --- so protecting the Environment is critical for future generations. It attempts to stoke debate around how Faith Communities locally can be active and collaborate around this theme, as it is a running thread we all share. A word search is inserted to create a focus on the key ideas and terms we should be aware of. And to provide some recreation for these cold winter nights.

I do wish to include jokes (clean), crosswords, possibly puzzles and limericks in future editions. So if you do have any such contributions or other articles, please do send these through to the office, for possible inclusion in the next Newsletter.

As this is the first Newsletter of the year, we end with a Calendar of Festivals for 2020, as well as the usual Diary of Events. Hopefully you will find these informative and interesting, and try to attend.

A massive vote of thanks to all contributors, Devi in the office and Paul Rayner for technical / online work associated with the Newsletter compilation. Sincere apologies from me for any inaccuracies, omissions or errors (Apprentice Editor - still learning on the job).

**Yusuf Shafi (Vice Chair)**  
**yusufshafi@live.co.uk**

# Eid Celebrations at Peace Green - 11<sup>th</sup> August 2019

Eid al Adha is the Muslim festival to commemorate and celebrate the test of sacrifice faced by Prophet Abraham to sacrifice his Son. This is a significant date in the Islamic calendar which this year was celebrated outdoors at Peace Green - Dunstall, with a unique and inclusive event.

The Jamia Masjid Al-Aqsa Wolverhampton Central Mosque hold a prayer event every year to celebrate Eid ul-Adha. This year, they decided to do something a bit different and, with support from the city council and the local community, the decision was made to do an outdoor prayer event, to open it out to all communities.

To put on such an event was a massive undertaking, with over 80 volunteers involved in everything from security to setting up marquees around the park, and an estimated cost of £6,000.

Worshippers from all over Wolverhampton arrived at the park, they were met with clear skies that stayed rain-free until after the service had ended.



Community figures such as the Deputy Mayor of Wolverhampton Greg Brackenridge and current MP Stuart Anderson were in attendance and gave speeches before the service, with over 3,000 people of all ages and cultural backgrounds participating.

Cllr Sohail Khan, a member of the mosque, had been involved in the organisation and spoke of his pride at so many people taking part.

He said; "If you look around and see the different people and the different communities and backgrounds who have all come together, it's a really proud moment and I'm just happy that I was able to have a small part in it."

As the service ended, worshippers greeted each other with Eid Mubarak, an Arabic term that means "Blessed Feast", and took refreshments before heading home to continue Eid ul-Adha celebrations with family and friends.



The event of Prophet Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his Son is shared, with some different interpretations, by Muslims, Jews and Christians. An opportunity to celebrate a shared heritage.



**Dr. Yusuf Shafi**  
**Vice Chair – InterFaith Wolverhampton**

# Conference on Suicide and Self-Harm

The Interfaith Conference, the prevention of self-harm / suicide, took place on Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> November 2019, at the Wolverhampton University. The conference was in partnership with Wolverhampton City Council, Wolverhampton University, the NHS Primary Care Trust, and the Mental Health Forum.



We had speakers from different faiths who talked about the perspectives of suicide in their faith. We also had personal stories from families who have had their loved one commit suicide, how they coped and what organisations are there to help.



The conference was a sell out. We had 100 people attend, and refreshments were provided free for everyone. Handouts were given. We also had a workshop.



Coping with self-harm, share your thoughts with people close to you and those you trust. “Never give up, there is no such thing as an ending, just a new beginning”. Attend support groups, be active, socialise and relieve stress, exercise and meditate.



**Cllr Jasbinder Dehar, InterFaith chairperson**

# Gurpurab 2019

Parveen Brigue attended an event at the Civic Centre to celebrate an important Gurpurab, the 550<sup>th</sup> Birthday of Sikh Guru Nanak Dev Ji, where she represented Wolverhampton Interfaith as the vice president. She wishes to mark the auspicious occasion by sharing key teachings from guru Nanak Dev ji.



Guru Nanak advocated religious coexistence through dialogue with spiritual masters of other traditions. He emphasised that in inter-faith dialogue it is important to listen to others before presenting one's perspective. Guru Nanak's God is One without a second, His name is Truth and He alone is the Creator of the Universe. As children of one God, all have to be treated as equal. The message of Guru Nanak Devji is as relevant today as it was at the time he lived. His emphasis on communal harmony, equal treatment for women and men and emphasis on protection of the environment are especially relevant in the world of today.

Kirat Karo. [This is an essential economic factor.](#)

It is very important for everybody to work honestly and earn their living. This will result to have a good comfortable life and provide for our families a roof over their heads, healthy food and decent clothes. It also provide opportunities to progress and make the world a happiest place for all.

Naam Japo. [Always remember God and His blessings.](#)

God has provided us all which we need to live on happily. We must always be thankful for His blessings. By always keeping His love and fear in mind we shall be fare, and kind to others and never harm or hurt anybody in anyway.

Wand Shako. [Share your good fortune with the needy.](#)

If we do this, there will be no hunger, poverty or ignorance in this world. God has provided everything for the survival of mankind on this earth. Our distribution is not fare. Some have too much others have none. This is the main cause of the sufferings of many nations. It does not mean just to share provisions of worldly things. It also mean to share good practices and ideas to make life better for each others.

Manas Kee Jaat Sabhe Ekay Pehchanbo. [Regard all the human race as equal.](#)

There must not be any difference on the basis of cast, creed, colour, race, or gender. We must respect all His human creation and help others in their timely needs.

Sarbat Da Bhala Mango. [Wish and Pray for the welfare of all the whole universe.](#)

This may be done by taking care of the climate change, clean water for all, controlling plastic goods. We should also help the poor to fulfil their basic needs of health and happiness, food, clothes and shelter.

Guru Granth Ji Manio pargat Guran Ki Deh. [Regard our holy scripture \(Guru Granth Sahib\) as the living Guru.](#)

This is the message by Guru Gobind Singh Ji specially for the Sikhs. There will not be any living guru in person after him. This was the fundamental idea of our first Guru Nanak Dev Ji which was fulfilled by the tenth and the last living Guru Gobind Singh Ji.

# Monthly Talks with 'Bring & Share' Lunch

For the last two years, my husband and I have enjoyed attending the Interfaith Wolverhampton 'Talk and Bring & Share Lunches' (held every third Tuesday in the month). We have always felt very welcomed by all the members, and especially by all those members who run the group.

Since Peter and I both retired in 2017, we have had time to visit different groups in Wolverhampton, and IFW has always been one we have felt drawn to. We were both brought up in the Christian faith, but in the 1970's we started on a path of Hindu based meditation which helped us to connect with people of different faiths. So years later, when we came across IFW we felt that it was a natural progression for our spiritual journey and also a very enlightened group to belong to.

During the last two years, we have listened to a wide variety of interesting and diverse talks. There have been too many to mention them all, but the ones who have had a deeper impact on us were from ~

Elaine Anderton ~ The Chaplain at Compton Care, who spoke about the support and care that Compton Care provides amongst the wider community.



Toban Ephram, from the Baitul Atta Mosque, described the many charities that his Mosque supports.



Debbie Smith ~ who deals with social cohesion in and around Wolverhampton. She informed us of the practical ways in which we can deal with 'Hate Crimes'.



The most recent speaker (Nov. 2019) was Phil Adeogun, a social worker and Bishop at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. He spoke very movingly about his personal faith and how he deals with bridging the gap between religious observance and social issues in the community.



Jeremy Watson spoke passionately about the Wolverhampton Night Shelter for the homeless and the positive and practical paths that people are guided along.

Finally, Pete and I would like to express our gratitude towards all the members of Interfaith Wolverhampton for their friendship and their open and respectful attitude towards all people of different faiths and none.

**Lisa and Peter Stedman**

# 'Stop Domestic Violence' - The Orange Event

Our Interfaith Orange Event for 2019 (stop Domestic Violence) was on Friday 29<sup>th</sup> November, 6pm to 8pm at the Council Chambers, Wolverhampton Civic Centre. The event was in partnership with Wolverhampton City Council.



I would like to thank all our speakers, Lavien Grindley (Domestic Violence Forum), Asha (The Haven) and Surwant Roshni. We also had speakers to represent the male organisations. I would also like to thank our admin staff, Devi and Mike, who are absolutely amazing.



Mr Toby and Tom Lane from St George's Hub deal with cases of domestic violence against men. Jat Suman talked about domestic violence and showed a short film about men who also suffer from domestic violence.

Our message to anyone who is going through domestic violence, women or men, is to get help straight away. You are not alone.

WOLVERHAMPTON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE FORUM, 01902-556643.  
ROSHNI, 0800 953 9666.  
THE HAVEN, 0800 194 400.  
MEN - ST GEORGE'S HUB, 01902-421904.



**Cllr Jasbinder Dehar (InterFaith chairperson)**

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## Celebrating Hanukkah

Hanukkah – a festival of lights – lasting eight days from the 25<sup>th</sup> day of Kislev (in December).

Some Jewish festivals can be summarised as follows: they tried to destroy us, we survived ... so let's eat. Hanukkah is no exception.

Lighting the Hanukkah candles at home



## **They tried to destroy us**

In the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE (Before Common Era) a Greek/Syrian king Antiochus IV Epiphanes occupied Judea, outlawed the Jewish religion and ordered the Jews to worship Greek gods. In 168 BCE, his soldiers descended upon Jerusalem, massacring thousands of people and desecrating the city's holy Second Temple by erecting an altar to Zeus and sacrificing pigs within its sacred walls.

## **We survived**

A large-scale rebellion was organised with Judah Maccabee ("the Hammer") at the helm; within two years the Jews had successfully driven the Syrians out of Jerusalem, relying largely on guerilla warfare tactics. Judah called on his followers to cleanse the Second Temple, rebuild its altar and light its menorah — the gold candelabrum whose seven branches represented knowledge and creation and were meant to be kept burning every night.

Judah Maccabee and the other Jews who took part in the rededication of the Second Temple witnessed what they believed to be a miracle. Even though there was only enough untainted olive oil to keep the menorah's candles burning for a single day, the flames continued flickering for eight nights, leaving them time to find a fresh

supply. This wondrous event inspired the Jewish sages to proclaim a yearly eight-day festival.

## **Let's eat**

Hanukkah is observed in the home over eight nights; each night one more candle is placed on the hanukkiah (9-branched candelabrum, the 9<sup>th</sup> candle used to light the others. Note: the 7-branched candelabrum is called a menorah.)

As Hanukkah celebrates the miracle of oil, it is traditional to eat fried foods such as sufganiyot – jam-filled doughnuts and potato pancakes, known as latkes in Yiddish. It is also traditional to give children gifts after lighting the candles each night.



**Martin Gomberg**

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## **Having Faith in a Sustainable Environment**

World religions are critical to the success of the global solidarity for an ethical, moral and spiritual commitment to protect the environment and God's creation. Many organizations promote their Faith and Sustainability. It is important we approach environmental protection from a stewardship perspective. The Earth is God's creation, and as humans, we have been entrusted to preserve it as we found. The responsibility of humanity is to protect and ensure the unity of the God's creation.

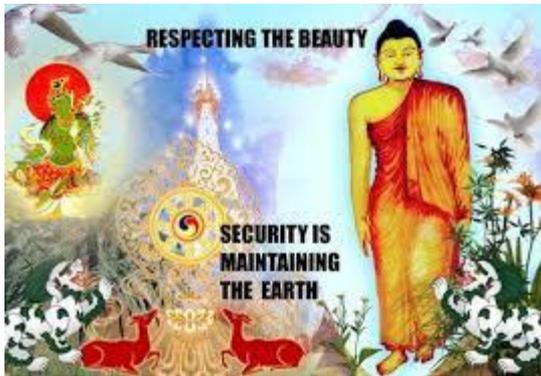
As a Faith organisation we must work collaboratively to ensure we protect the Environment and that Inter Faith Wolverhampton be the vehicle through which such activities are articulated.

The mission is to engage the next generation in Environmental Protection; This is a key

responsibility of the various Faith groups and we can make positive action to address the prevailing climate emergency.

The following is a reflection on how various religions have addressed religious commitments towards the environment.

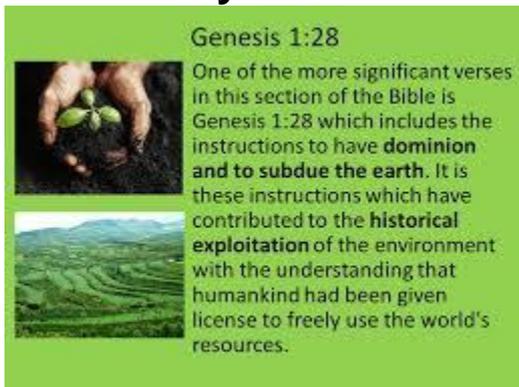
## Buddhism



The notion of karma being an important part of Buddha's lessons, conveys the values of conservation and responsibility for the future. It is said that the morality of our actions in the present will shape our character for the future, an idea close to sustainable development.

“Our ancestors viewed the earth as rich and bountiful, which it is. Many people in the past also saw nature as inexhaustibly sustainable, which we now know is the case only if we care for it.” (Dalai Lama, 1990)

## Christianity



There are many verses in the bible that talk about protection of the environment. Christians therefore have environmental responsibility and encourage behavioural change for the good of the future.

“Do not pollute the land where you are. Bloodshed pollutes the land, and atonement cannot be made for the land on which blood has been shed, except by the blood of the one who shed it.” (Verse 35:33)

“We must treat nature with the same awe and wonder that we reserve for human beings. And we

do not need this insight in order to believe in God or to prove his existence. We need it to breathe; we need it for us simply to be.” (Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, 2010)

## Hinduism



Hinduism is a religion deeply rooted in nature. The texts (Vedas, Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, Epics) have many references of divinity related to nature, such as rivers, mountains, trees, animals, and the earth. To protect them, Hinduism encourages environmental protection and there are organizations who promote sustainable development and support the protection of the environment through awareness campaigns and actions (GreenFaith, 2010).

“There is an inseparable bond between man and nature. For man, there cannot be an existence removed from nature.” (Amma, 2011)

## Islam

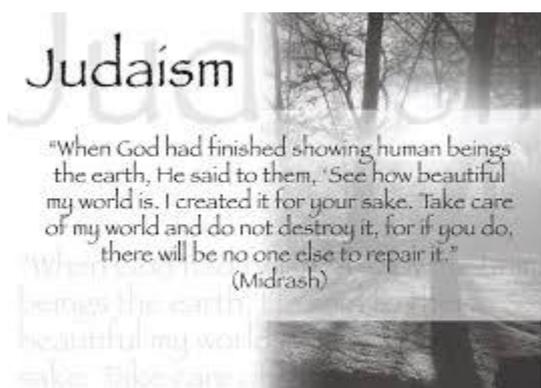


Hundreds of Qur'an verses support the protection of the environment. Islam prohibits the excessive consumption of resources the planet provides to humanity (Qur'an 7:31, 6:141, 17:26-27, 40:34). In fact, Qur'an mentions wasteful consumption (Isr?f) as the thirty-second greatest sin. In 2015, the Islamic Climate Change Symposium adopted the Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change.

“Devote thyself single-mindedly to the Faith, and thus follow the nature designed by Allah, the nature according to which He has fashioned mankind. There is no altering the creation of Allah.” (Qur’an 30:30)

“It is Allah who made for you the earth a place of settlement and the sky a ceiling and formed you and perfected your forms and provided you with good things. That is Allah, your Lord; then blessed is Allah, Lord of the worlds.” (Qur’an, 40:64)

## Judaism



In tradition, the land and environment are properties of God, and it is the duty of humankind to take care of it. The book of Genesis, as an example, proposes that the garden in Eden was initially the chosen territory, chosen by God, for humans to live.

“And God said: 'Behold, I have given you every herb yielding seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed--to you it shall be for food.'” (Gen 1:29)

“The Earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof” (Psalm 24)

“the Earth is Mine, you are My tenants” (Leviticus 25:23)

## Sikhism



Sikhism is a native Indian religion which appeared in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century, founded by the first guru, Guru Nanak. The sacred text is written by the foundational scripture Guru Granth Sahib where there are several teachings on environment.

“You, Yourself created the Universe, and You are pleased... You, Yourself the bumblebee, flower, fruit and the tree.” (Guru Granth Sahib, Maru Sohele)

“You, Yourself the water, desert, ocean and the pond. You, Yourself are the big fish, tortoise and the Cause of causes.” (Guru Granth Sahib, Maru Sohele)



**Dr. Yusuf Shafi**  
**Vice Chair – InterFaith Wolverhampton**

# WordSearch - Care about the Environment

## Care about the Environment!

R N R H H S E I C E P S D E R E G N A D N E J O  
J D G R E E N N O I T U L L O P L I V P K U B K  
I D L X X T I N V J E T M T Y N M A P C E X H X  
T M E K B K K R F A R F T G U Y T O A Q S K N M  
O L S R N O Y P Q U E L B A W E N E R A C Y K B  
Z N E D F G D T Q R Z E E O E O H K D Y G S E S  
Q F S V K R Q L U E Q U J N H V L W L V T R V I  
A E A Q H E Z N Y U R O E A S N E G Y X O N U P  
W V G J J C Y W B S B R T W K P S D Q C U K W H  
U Y E A V Y H H A E G E H A C I D R A I N C E K  
N T S M P C Y B I Y T S T N L I P H A T N D G Q  
R L U R O L G T I D P S R A U H D V L I I F N P  
D F O Z N E F K M H W Z A H M M D L W X I G I P  
D L H D N E K M T M G D A W G I U U O A D E M R  
Q T N E M N O R I V N E K R C W L I M O C O R G  
A B E C V M A G D S W F Z U K I D C P I I V A C  
G L E P V E U Y Q U X H L Q L N X X P N G D W L  
B Y R U Q M R G K A N B A N O L K O B F Y L L E  
Y R G I M C F T Q D T U A B Z R O K T S I A A G  
Z L S P E N A T U R A L R E S O U R C E S N B T  
T V L R M C C W G B N A G N W X X T O F H E O Y  
Q K P T D B A R U I C A S R V F T A D Z A H L Z  
D K V M A O I L S P I L L S Z T R S Y L Q Q G K  
V Q S S P Y C N R A V S D J V L V Z N N J L D O

Acid rain	Carbon dioxide	Climate	Earth
Endangered species	Energy	Environment	Global warming
Green	Greenhouse gases	Natural resources	Oil spills
Oxygen	Pollution	Recycle	Renewable
Reuse	Toxic waste		

# Faith Calendar 2020

Every attempt has been made to be as accurate as possible and try to incorporate the main events of each Faith. Apologies for any errors and omissions.

Date	Name of Celebration	Faith
2 Jan	Guru Gobind Singh Birthday	Sikh
6 Jan	Epiphany	Christian
14 Jan	Maghi - Lohri	Sikh
8 Feb	Nirvana Day	Buddhist
10 Feb	Tu B'Shevat (Arbor Day)	Jewish
21 Feb	Maha Shivaratri	Hindu
25 Feb	Carnival / Shrove Tuesday	Christian
26 Feb	Carnival / Ash Wednesday	Christian
9 Mar	Holi	Hindu / Sikh
9 Mar	Magha Puja Day	Buddhist
10 Mar	Purim	Jewish
22 Mar	Isra and Mi'raj	Muslim
5 Apr	Palm Sunday	Christian
9 Apr	Maundy Thursday	Christian
9 Apr	First day of Passover	Jewish
10 Apr	Good Friday	Christian
12 Apr	Easter Sunday	Christian
14 Apr	Vaisakhi	Sikh
16 Apr	Last day of Passover	Jewish
21 Apr	Yom HaShoah	Jewish
24 Apr	Ramadan Start	Muslim
29 Apr	Yom HaAtzmaut	Jewish
7 May	Vesak - Buddha Day	
19 May	Laylatul Qadr (Night of Power)	Muslim

Date	Name of Celebration	Faith
21 May	Ascension Day	Christian
24 May	Eid ul Fitr	Muslim
29 May	Shavuot	Jewish
31 May	Pentecost	Christian
11 Jun	Corpus Christi	Christian
5 Jul	Asala – Dharma Day	Buddhist
30 Jul	Tisha B'Av	Jewish
31 Jul	Eid ul Adha	Muslim
12 Aug	Janmashtami	Hindu
15 Aug	Obon	Buddhist
20 Aug	Muharram / Islamic New Year	Muslim
29 Aug	Ashura	Muslim
28 Sep	Yom Kippur	Jewish
3 Oct	First day of Sukkot	Jewish
9 Oct	Hoshana Rabbah	Jewish
17 Oct	Navaratri	Hindu
20 Oct	Birth of Guru Granth	Sikh
25 Oct	Dussehra	Hindu
29 Oct	Milad un Nabi (Mawlid)	Muslim
14 Nov	Diwali/Deepavali	Hindu / Sikh
29 Nov	First Sunday of Advent	Christian
30 Nov	Guru Nanak Birthday	Sikh
8 Dec	Bodhi Day	Buddhist
11 Dec	First Day of Hanukkah	Jewish
25 Dec	Christmas Day	Christian

# Diary of Events

## January 2020

- 21<sup>st</sup> (Tuesday)      "Bring and Share Lunch" 12.45 - 2.00, at "Darlington Street Methodist Centre", 24 School Street, WV1 4LF. Speaker: Navi Aulkh, who is an 'urban missionary' working for the 'All Nations Church'. He will talk about this and also about the associated 'Eden: Whitmore Reans'.
- 27<sup>th</sup> (Monday)      Holocaust Memorial Day Event 11 a.m. at the War Memorial in St. Peter's Square (between St.Peter's Church and the Civic Centre), Wolverhampton City Centre. Followed by light refreshments in the Mayor's Parlour (Please email [mayoral@wolverhampton.gov.uk](mailto:mayoral@wolverhampton.gov.uk) with your name, so they can prepare a Visitor Entry Pass for you).

## February

- 18<sup>th</sup> (Tuesday)      "Bring and Share Lunch" 12.45 - 2.00, at New Location (to be confirmed) - Wolverhampton Voluntary Sector Council offices (WVSC), 16 Temple Street, Wolverhampton City Centre, WV2 4AN (by the 'No Entry' signs at the Traffic Lights, opposite the big red casino, near the new Market). Toban Ephram (Toby) will speak about "Who are The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community and the persecution they face around the world".

For up-to-date details, see the Interfaith Wolverhampton website: <http://ifwton.org.uk/diary.html>

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**Reminder - Members' subscriptions were due from 1<sup>st</sup> April for 2019-2020 membership. If yours is overdue, please send your renewal as soon as possible.**

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Registered Charity no. 1114265  
Company Registered no. 3218967

The office is most likely to be staffed between 10 a.m. and 1 p.m.  
(Best to phone before you visit). The office is now only open on Tuesdays and Wednesdays.