

IFW NEWS

Interfaith Wolverhampton



Holocaust Memorial Service – “How can Life Go On?” – Friday 27th January 2017

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.

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www.interfaith.org.uk



In This Issue

The world has never experienced a displacement crisis so dire as witnessed in recent months and years. Over 65 million people around the globe have been forced to leave their homes and belongings to seek shelter elsewhere. That is like the entire British population having to flee for survival. The dreadful scenes still being witnessed in the Mediterranean and across Europe are symptoms of this wider global crisis. Who can forget the shocking image of the lifeless body of a young boy, Aylan Kurdi – one of at least 12 Syrians who drowned attempting to reach the Greek island of Kos in September 2015?

Although it is high time we had a sensible debate about the scale of immigration without any rhetoric or subtext of xenophobia, we cannot turn our face away when confronted with the unimaginable misery that most refugees and asylum seekers have to undergo for no fault of their own. Brexit, the rise of the far right, the recent Presidential elections in America and the surge of populism have created a climate of uncertainty and fear.

In the midst of all the rhetoric that is flying around, we need to be mindful of the words of the English historian Sir Arthur Bryant:

The legal and spiritual association of men of different creeds, callings, and classes in a nation, though often taken for granted, is a more wonderful miracle of cumulative human effort and wisdom than even the greatest achievement of science. For it enables millions who have never set eyes on one another to act together in peace and mutual trust. There can be no truer service than to preserve such a union, and prevent those millions from dissolving into antagonistic and destructive groups.

(Spirit of England, 1982)

In this issue, there are articles detailing the much-needed support available to newcomers to our city. We actively support the recent resolution for Wolverhampton to be a City of Sanctuary for people who have been forced to abandon their homelands.

There are accounts of some of the many activities undertaken by Interfaith Wolverhampton. The work of our organisation is going on and has a

renewed sense of urgency in the current troubling times.

In recent days, we have lost two people who were great supporters of interfaith work in the city. Geoff Spratling, who passed away a few weeks ago, was one of the founder members of Wolverhampton Inter Faith Group, later to become Interfaith Wolverhampton. Geoff was very much part of the formative years 1968 to 1974 and his insights and compassion are indeed two of the foundations that formed what we are today.

More recently Tony Kinch, former Superintendent Minister of Darlington Street Methodist Church, passed away. We will miss his unwavering support for our work, his sense of humour even during his illness.

The next issue will be devoted to thinking about the range of activities we should promote even with more vigour to underpin our priorities. We would be delighted if you were to share your thoughts and aspirations.



Sehdev Bismal MBE
Editor

City of Sanctuary - Update

Interfaith Wolverhampton is actively involved in the organisation of the City of Sanctuary Project in Wolverhampton. It also manages the grant funding for this much-needed initiative.

In the September 2015 issue of IFW News, I wrote that plans were being made to run a weekly drop-in meeting for Wolverhampton asylum seekers and refugees. I am delighted to report that the meeting now takes place every Wednesday (12.30 to 2.30) at Broad Street Baptist Church. Word is starting to spread and there are new faces appearing at most meetings. Our AGM was held in January with the Chair of IFW a very welcome guest.

A highlight of the year was a meeting held in the Council Chamber when many local organisations pledged to support our efforts. As a result of this meeting the Council passed a resolution of support, stating that Wolverhampton would become a City of Sanctuary. Thanks are due to Councillor Roger Lawrence for his continued support.

We continue to support asylum seekers and refugees in many ways. Travel expenses, clothing, furniture and household items are typical of the requests we receive.

However, lives can depend on our reaction to some requests. We have a young lady "I" who was injured as she escaped FGM. She was brought to UK to have her injuries treated. But whilst she was here her family was slaughtered by Boko Haram. Her solicitor washed his hands of the case and she received a letter instructing her to return to her country, saying that she could internally relocate away from her tribe that practises FGM and hide from Boko Haram. Obviously this young lady would have been killed if she carried out the Home Office instructions. We managed to obtain new legal representation for "I" and a fresh claim for asylum is being prepared – and she can sleep again, free from worry – for the time being.

Another young lady (F) was taken to Solihull reporting centre on a number of occasions by supporters. Imagine their horror when, just before Christmas, she was removed to Yarl's Wood detention centre from Solihull and our supporters had to return to Wolverhampton without her. The young lady concerned was a regular visitor at our drop-in, and had also been working with Wolverhampton street pastors. Following much contact with solicitors, MPs etc., she was released back to us in January. She has been given no

reasons for her detention, or for her release. Her fight goes on.

We are delighted that we now have connections with faith groups outside Wolverhampton. Groups in Codsall, Broseley (Shropshire) and Clun (Welsh Borders) have each hosted days out for our visitors. Transport is provided for them to travel to these areas where social activities and food is organised for them. One thing they all comment on is the fact that the English countryside is very green, and it starts very close to Wolverhampton.



John Catley

Perhaps you have contacts in other faith groups who could organise trips to their areas. If they can arrange social events, we can find people who will very much appreciate their efforts.

If you as individuals would like to help at the drop-in, just come along on Wednesday and have a chat.

More information on their website:
<https://wolverhampton.cityofsanctuary.org/>

The Refugee and Migrant Centre

The Refugee and Migrant Centre has been the only service of its kind in the Black Country for the past 17 years. In that time over 17,000 individuals and over 20,000 of their dependents have benefited from RMC's support in the areas of immigration, destitution and accommodation, health and welfare, education, training and employment and citizenship. No other organisation in the region can offer this expertise delivered in any of forty available client languages.

Our service is sought by newly arrived asylum seekers, refugees, EU individuals, other vulnerable migrants and members of more established BAME communities. Our mission is to assist them through crisis and disadvantage, by removing barriers to their integration and enabling them to become equal citizens.

An average of 150 such clients access our service every day in Wolverhampton and a further 50 access similar support at our newly opened Birmingham office. Our 31 staff are assisted by over 100 volunteers a year who, though they come from a wide range of backgrounds, are mostly drawn from our client base. This together with the fact that the majority of our staff have been through similar experiences to our clients means that our practice is well informed by our clients' perspective.

Besides benefiting from our face to face advice and support services, clients can also access a range of other services including: a range of health projects to support with physical and mental health, a rough sleeper project aimed at regularising the status of those who have no recourse to public funds, an employment project aimed at supporting people in moving closer to employment, and a programme which prepares people for becoming Wolverhampton Homes residents. We offer English language classes and training in the 'Life in the UK' test which is essential for those who wish to become UK citizens.

All our services are freely accessible irrespective of gender, religion, sexual orientation, nationality or ethnicity.

Typically we offer holistic support to some very vulnerable individuals with complex needs, typified by W's story.

W, a 29 year old Nigerian woman, came to the UK as a student in 2006. Whilst W was in the UK she became pregnant. W's family in Nigeria

demanded that she terminate the pregnancy and when she refused they broke off all contact with her. The father of W's child left her and has had no involvement in raising his child. W was left as a lone parent with no place to return to in Nigeria and no support or leave to remain in the UK.

In 2011, W was assessed by the Local Authority in London, and they decided that she was entitled to support under Section 17 of the Children's Act. W was then moved by the London Local Authority to Wolverhampton in order to reduce the costs of her accommodation and support. W was entitled to receive a subsistence payment of £50 per week to cover living costs for her and her son.

W first had contact with RMC in January 2015 when she came for advice on her immigration status. W was signposted to local solicitors to deal with the matter. The application made through a solicitor was unsuccessful and W returned to RMC in October 2015 to discuss what further action could be taken in relation to her immigration status.

RMC reviewed W's immigration case in October 2015 and began the process of making an application to the Home Office. As W was destitute and under Local Authority care RMC applied for a fee waiver for the application. This was refused in the first instance; however RMC made further representations regarding the case. In March 2016 W was granted leave to remain in the UK with her eight year old son, she is now able to work and decide what she plans to do next. Her ambition is to go to university to continue her studies.



(Andy has a volunteer role preparing clients for the Life in UK Test)



Andy Alsop

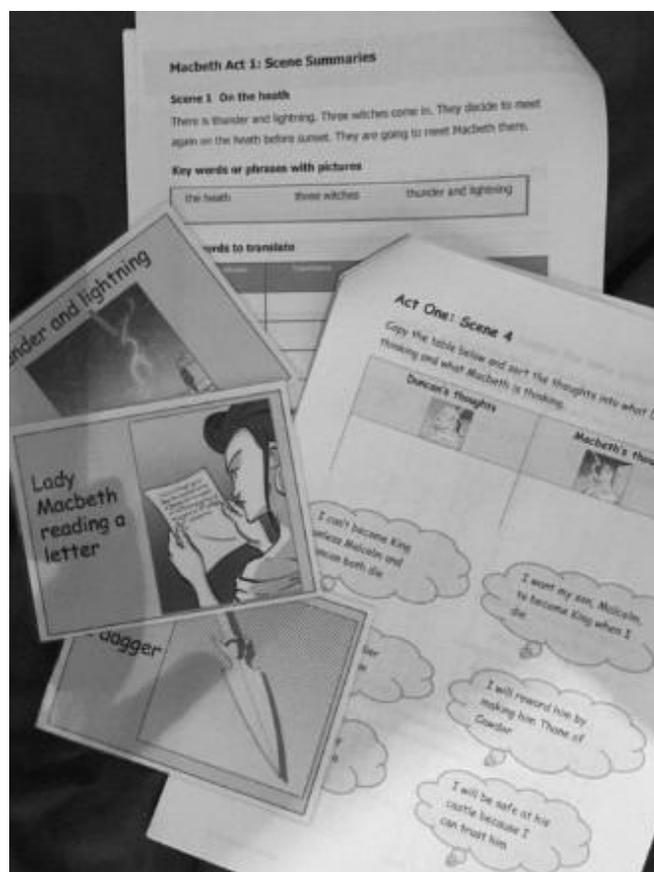
Helping schools teach children and young people who are new to English

In the 1990s and 2000s I was lucky enough to work for Wolverhampton Multi-Cultural Education Service, later the Equality and Diversity Service (EDS), at the time when it was led by Sehdev Bismal.

Initially I was given responsibility for the New Arrivals Support Team. This consisted of about 4 or 5 specialist teachers who worked in schools on a peripatetic basis with children who were newly arrived from abroad and at an early stage of learning English.

A new government policy at that time was to disperse asylum-seeking families to specific parts of the country, including Wolverhampton, so as to discourage people from settling in the South East, and try to direct them towards areas where there were existing services to meet their needs. This included support in schools for helping beginners learn English, something that many teachers find alarming, particularly at first, and especially when older learners join classes that are preparing for exams.

The New Arrivals Support Team had evolved into a close-knit and efficient service and used a model of one-to-one or small group support for individual learners, with staff time being allocated according to individual needs. However, the sudden rise in the number of asylum-seeking families meant that the team was being spread increasingly thinly. We also felt that although the individual support was valued both by the learners and the teachers, it would be better to think of a way to help the class and subject teachers develop their skills in supporting learners who were new to English. As a result, the team started to use their time to develop curriculum resources which would help learners access normal lessons, and which could be re-used in the school and in other schools in Wolverhampton.



For example, if the class were studying 'Macbeth', we would supply scene by scene summaries in simple English, accompanying pictures, and lists of key words and phrases for translation. So there would be pictures of 'three

witches', 'a cauldron' and 'a dagger', and more abstract terms like 'ambitious', 'murder', and 'treason', could be looked up in a bilingual dictionary. We would also devise simple activities based on the scene summaries. The impact of this approach is that a new arrival can get the gist of the plot and relate it to their own experience. This enables them to be included in a range of activities in the classroom, such as drama / role play and discussion work.

When I left the EDS in 2009 and became a freelance consultant, I thought it might be possible to develop more resources along these lines and sell them to schools. I always felt that this approach was very effective, so I was really excited when in January 2014 I saw that the British Council was setting up a national project called EAL Nexus. This ran for 18 months and included training for teachers and a new website with resources, advice and guidance for teachers in teaching English as an Additional Language (EAL). I worked as website and resources co-ordinator, sharing the role with my colleague Deborah Owen who is based in Brighton. We built up a team of more than 30 EAL teachers and consultants working part-time on top of their day jobs. When the project ended, responsibility for EAL Nexus website was taken over by The Bell Foundation, an educational charity for which Deborah and I now work a few days a month.

As well as lots of useful advice for teachers, parents, EAL learners and other interested parties such as researchers and teacher trainers, the website currently has more than 200 teaching resources which are all completely free to download and print out. There are resources for most subjects, although the majority are for

English, Science, History and Geography, and for all age-groups. About half of them are suitable for beginners and half for intermediate or advanced learners. All our resources come with full teaching notes suggesting how best to use them.

The feedback we have had suggests that teachers and schools have found these resources very helpful. We are very keen to publicise this resource, so if you are a teacher or you know teachers who would be interested, please spread the word!



Dr Ruth Wilson

ruth@equalitiesineducation.co.uk

Useful links:

EAL Nexus: <https://eal.britishcouncil.org>

The Bell Foundation: <https://www.bell-foundation.org.uk/>

Wolverhampton Citizenship Language and Learning team: 01902-552345

Newman Centre Talks & Discussions

Last year, as in the two previous years, there was a series of talks at the Newman Centre organised by Erik Pearse. The theme of the talks, and discussions that followed, was Pope Francis's encyclical: *Laudato Si* or, as it is subtitled: 'On Care for our Common Home'. It was published on the 18th June 2015 and is his second encyclical, the first being *Lumen fidei* ("Light of Faith"), which was largely the work of his predecessor Benedict XVI.

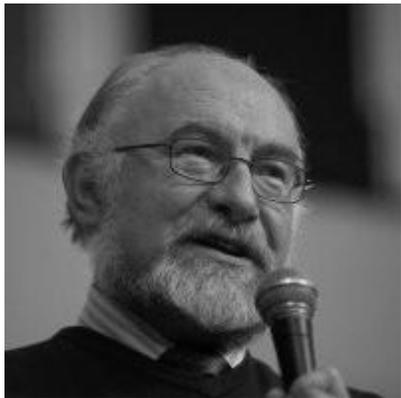
It is a long document and can be seen as a contemporary re-telling of the biblical parable cited in St. Matthew's gospel (19:16-30). It is the

story of the rich young man who asks Jesus how he is to attain salvation. He is a law-abiding individual who does all that is expected of him but

is challenged and disappointed when Jesus tells him he must do more: he must share his wealth to follow Jesus. This is something he feels he cannot do. Laudato Si is an encyclical which challenges us in a similar way. It invites us to think and act in new ways, yet it is different from all previous encyclicals in that not only does it invite the wealthy to share their wealth with the poor, it also invites us all of us to think differently about life and the world in which we live.

We live in a world of great opulence. Productivity is continually increasing; however, it is focused on satisfying wants rather than needs. Those who are rich can buy what they want whilst the vast majority do not have access to what they need. Furthermore, an obsessive focus on output and productivity means not only that the poor suffer but that God's creation, our common home, the environment in which we live, is rapidly being destroyed as economic targets drive production to increase profits.

Like the rich young man, mentioned above, the Pope's encyclical invites us all to re-think how we live. It is an invitation to challenge habits and evaluate options.



David McLoughlin, the first speaker, offered a Christian perspective on the encyclical. He spoke of the need for people to see themselves as part of creation not its masters. Care of the planet needs to become the basis of civic and political behaviour. One implication of his talk is that, as people, we need not only to meet our own needs and the needs of those we love but we must also explore the consequences of our behaviour and the effects it has on others and the environment in which we live.

The second speaker, Imam Ali Akbar, offered observations from an Islamic perspective. What was particularly interesting, and relevant, were the notions of the Zakat and the Sadqa. The former obliges wealthy Muslims to make annual charitable donations of 2.5% of their net wealth to specified causes whereas the latter are voluntary donations intended to gain God's favour.



Unlike other religions, Islam appears to draw a clear distinction between wealth redistribution as a moral obligation and giving as a way of letting people feel good about themselves. If income distribution were to become more equitable, the consequences could be that production would become focused on needs rather than the whims and wants of the rich. However, is 2.5% enough to stop the poor getting poorer and the rich getting richer? For example, 2.5% of £100 is £2.50 whilst 2.5% of £1000 is £25, so the person earning £100 is left with £97.50 whilst the latter is left with £975. The sacrifice of the poor, sadly, appears to be much greater than that of the rich.



The third speaker offered a Hindu perspective. Ram Aithal used a number of provocative anecdotes to remind us of the need to stay focused

and question beliefs. He ended with the observation that extracting gold involves much time and effort but the end product, gold bars, which are stored in vaults, are of no practical value to man nor beast. He prepared us for this conclusion with a story about a man who wanted to know how to get to London. When told how to get there by motorway, he expressed frustration: "Oh dear", he said, "I wanted to get there by boat because I enjoy travelling that way." This suggests that we all start our personal journey from different starting points, and routes tried and tested by others, need not necessarily meet the needs and wants of others. So how can we move on? By leaving behind unnecessary beliefs and habitual modes of thinking. He illustrated this with an observation about the stone outside Buddhist temples on which baggage is to be left before entering the temple to pray. On leaving the temple, the individual who has prepared him- or herself for the next stage of the journey is the individual who has left their excessive baggage on the temple stone.

The fourth speaker, Rabbi Margaret Jacobi, made some pertinent observations on how aspects of the Jewish faith can help us on our personal journey. She noted that Judaism does not assume that we are born in a state of sin. Sin is something for which individuals bear personal responsibility; however, there are ways in which individuals can atone for their sins. She spoke about the relevance of Yom Kippur- the Sabbath of Sabbaths-on which individuals can seek forgiveness of sins by asking forgiveness from others and giving to, or doing work for, charity. But what should we do or how much should we give? The answer varies from individual to individual. However, to decide what to do or how to do it, we need to step back, so to speak, from the traumas and demands of everyday life and this, she stated, is the purpose of the Sabbath: a day of rest and prayer.



However, she noted that there were some aspects of the encyclical which were not compatible with Jewish belief. Specifically, she noted the Catholic Church's policy on abortion and saw it as an obstacle to sexual equality. Although legalised abortion can increase the rights of women it does not necessarily do so. In India, for example, where abortion is legal, women have not yet attained equality.

Also, the papal encyclical is not a policy statement but an invitation to reconsider attitudes and beliefs. Indeed, it could be said that its aim is to open debates on wider issues. Because, as Martin Luther observed, there can be no peace without justice, and the Catholic Church may at some future date need to re-consider its views not only on abortion but gender politics, wealth distribution and the role of medicine in general as routes to social justice.

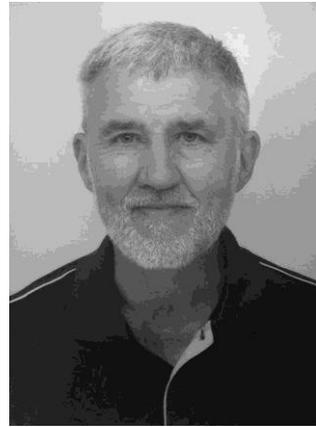
The final speaker was Bhajan Devsi who offered a Sikh perspective. He spoke generally about Sikhism and its relationship with the papal encyclical. When speaking about reincarnation, he offered a perceptive representation of sustainability as a never-ending circular rotation but, as resources are abused and destroyed, then the path changes its course and spirals inwardly towards oblivion, destroying a future for the living and the yet unborn.



So what conclusions can be drawn? In his book, entitled: 'Is there a Gospel for the Rich?', Richard Harries, former Bishop of Oxford, contrasts St. Luke's version of the Beatitudes with that of St. Matthew. Whereas Luke states: 'Woe to you that are full now, for you shall hunger' (Luke 6:25), Matthew states: 'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied' (Matthew 5:6). We live in an age of great opulence, yet social inequality persists at the expense of righteousness because production expands only to meet the wants of the rich, yet the

poor remain exploited and deprived. Laudato Si invites us, as the rich young man had been invited, to re-think our options and act righteously to achieve sustainability and social equality.

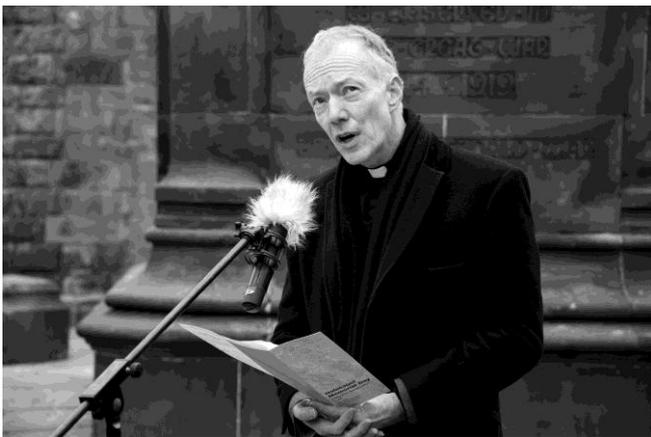
Unfortunately, this year's talks were the last in the series, as Erik feels he would like a break. Sad but true. However, if anybody is interested in organising future sessions, please contact Erik.



Janusz Sochacki

Holocaust Memorial Day

It never ceases to amaze me at just how quickly time passes by. It seems to be only a short time since the last Holocaust Memorial event at the beginning of 2016, and yet there I was at the memorial service in January 2017. This year's remembrance service was just as soul searching as those in the past. The order of service was well planned and executed by all those who participated. The theme for this year's remembrance was: How can life go on? In itself a soul searching question, especially when considered in the context of those who suffered so greatly, those that witnessed the awful events and had to learn to live with the memories.



Bishop Clive did the initial welcome and introduction using part of an address given by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rt Rev Justin Welby. The opening paragraph said this,

‘Life goes on but the end of killing does not mark the end of suffering. Liberation for the survivors is a two edged sword. It brings an end to appalling dehumanisation and suffering but starts the rest of life, often marked by memories of what has happened, memories that circle the psyche, looking for moments to recapture the personality, and which torture and humiliate again and again.

The restoration of individuals and communities is our responsibility as a society that rightly holds to biblical Judeo-Christian injunctions to welcome the stranger in our midst and to seek the flourishing of all within our land.’

The service moved on to the reading of a poem written by Gillian Clarke especially for this year's remembrance, called ‘Birdsong’. This was read to us by Sehdev Bismal MBE. It reflected upon a Blackbird singing his song on the lawn and how he might have sung the same song at Auschwitz knowing nothing of the horrors that lay within; The same sentiment was reflected in Srebrenica, and Cambodia's killing fields, Rwanda and Darfur.

A letter from 28 women of Darfur to the African Union and Arab League was read by Yusuf Shafi.

A cry for peace to come and an end to suffering, recognising that peace cannot come without accounting for what had been done. ‘The women and children deserve justice, they deserve the

chance to hold those responsible to account, and they deserve to be treated, at last, with dignity.'

How many of us can even begin to understand the misery and desolation that was not only inflicted but, worse still, in many instances, ignored.

Rani Gundhu, a Police Officer, read an extract from a survivor of the Holocaust.



It reminded me of just how self centred we can all be. Shut out what we don't want to hear or deal with.

“ *I don't want to talk about anything that happened to you. I don't want my girls upset* '. I was really, really angry, not only about what had happened, but also the reaction from other people.”

Erik Pearse read a short passage written by a survivor of the genocide in Rwanda.

“Sometimes there is nothing you can do about a particular individual, or the situation. Therefore retaining the anger in your heart continues to bring pain and bitterness to you and may affect your children in the future. Forgiveness is therefore not for the other person, but for you who are bitter. When you forgive, you heal yourself.”

When you forgive, you heal yourself !!!

In conclusion Martin Gomberg read to us the words of the Kaddish prayer in both English and Hebrew. Before he did however, he explained to those gathered the double meaning of the word 'Israel':



In past times 'Israel' meant the people, in today's world it is referred to as a nation. This was a significant explanation in that during the Kaddish prayer the word 'Israel' is mentioned several times; the prayer was intended for the people and not the nation state of Israel.

After a moving address and a firm commitment to continue to remember, given by the Mayor of the City of Wolverhampton, Councillor Barry Findlay, we were all invited to the Mayor's parlour for light refreshments and the chance to add our names to the 2017 remembrance document.

When you forgive, you heal yourself, you free yourself from the bondage that harbouring resentments and hate bring with it. In many ways this reflects the double-edged sword that the Rt Rev Justin Welby mentions in his address. I recall this vividly as I had to face this forgiveness issue when my brother was killed by the IRA in 1974.



Mike Shelley-Smith

Organ Donation - Myths and Facts

Repeated surveys have shown massive support (more than 90%) for organ donation(OD). The wave of enthusiasm is international. The main reason for organ donation is organ failure needing replacement.

Organ donation is of two types:

1. Live – mainly from friends and family members, sometimes totally altruistic when someone gets motivated to save the life of another human being. It is restricted to some organs only and everyone needs to go through various aspects with the help of professional support and counselling requiring time and careful consideration. It forms a small part of total OD.
2. The main resource is cadaver or deceased OD. Although the OD is most frequently for kidneys but many other organs can be transplanted successfully.

Current position

Currently 8000 persons are waiting to receive organs, and approximately 2000 (25%) are from BME communities, due to prevalent illness pattern. 8% of UK population are Asians. This means the need for Asians is 3 times higher. Diabetes is more common and compliance of treatment is poor increasing the chances of kidney failure. The success of OD encourages doctors to put more people on the list. The combined effect is that the waiting list is getting longer. Asians need more organs but the donors are only 1% on the register. This means they need more and give less!! The chances of acceptability for organs is slightly increased if the donors are of the same ethnicity. This results Asians generally waiting 12 months longer than their “white” friends.

What are the causes?

There are so many causes and the myths prevailing.

Will my care be compromised and ventilator switched off to get my organs for others if they find out I am a donor?

This is a common myth and totally inaccurate. The treating doctors are under Hippocratic oath to do their best. The loyalty of doctors is to the patient under their care. If the patient is declared “brain dead”, only then the other team of doctors is alerted for organ removal. This team is independent of the treating doctors, to comply with “duty of care”.

I am too old, what is good in me?

The oldest solid organ donor was 82 and the oldest recipient 103. There is no upper age limit. Children below 16 will need parental consent. If you have a car declared unfit for repair, good seats, doors, gear box, or mirrors may still be used for another vehicle.

I have diabetes so cannot be a donor?

Not true. Diabetic patients may have many good parts useful for others and let doctors decide.

Will removing organs disfigure my body?

The treating doctors would remove organs as if they were operating upon a live patient with minimum discomfort and disfigurement. After removal of eyes, prosthetic eyes are put in and people viewing the body are unable to tell. No one lifts the eyelids of a dead person to check.

My body needs to be buried in full?

We need to consider what happens if a faulty gall bladder, liver or kidney is removed? One may say that part is faulty. Here of course one has decided to donate by choice. If desired heart, kidney or liver is to live longer than your age, the only way is to let them survive in some other person. One kidney donated by 65-year-old after death is still keeping the recipient alive for 35 years.

Will it hurt?

Certainly not. There is no pain experienced by brain dead patient.

There are many more myths, but rather than burning or burying the organs after death would it not be best to let these be used for benefiting a fellow human being?

What can be donated?

The list is long: heart, heart valves, kidneys, liver, pancreas, small and large intestine, and liver are common organs.

Tissues that can be donated are skin, eyes, tendons, ligaments and bone (for bone cancer patients).

Recently uterus and hands were transplanted successfully. The list is getting longer.

Organ Donation – Some Facts

- What can be donated?
- Organs: Heart, Lungs, Liver, Pancreas, Kidneys, Small Bowel
- Tissues: Eyes (Cornea), Tendons, Skin, Heart Valves, Ligaments (48 hours after death)
- USA record 1 benefits 76, now 100
- Organ donation can save NHS millions of £££'s

What do the religions say?

In 1999, a conference of top religious leaders of the world involving Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists and other religions debated the subject. All agreed that OD is acceptable since the fundamental principle is to help others. There is more on this subject available on NHSBT website <https://www.organdonation.nhs.uk/faq/religion/>

Family matters

After registering you will receive a donor card, and if you do not, ring 0300 123 23 23, although the card is not essential.

You must talk to your family since they can overrule your wishes. 40% white families and 60% BME families do so, and many have to live with the guilt of denying others an opportunity to live.

Consent

In United Kingdom the registration has been on a voluntary basis and 19 million (32%) are registered as organ donors. This is called “Opting in”. However, in Wales the law has changed. Since December 2015, presumed consent was legalised. This means unless people have objected and “opted out” whilst alive, it will be presumed that they agree. This is called “soft” opt out system. Initial results have shown a reduction of waiting time in Wales, but it may be 2-3 years for firmed up analysed results to influence thinking of the rest of UK.

Conclusions

Organ donation is a priceless and selfless gift that will save lives and cost nothing

Organ donation is a most noble act and it helps others after our death.

If it is OK to receive, it is ok to donate.

Let us live and let live!!



Dr Satya Sharma MBE DL
Chair, Promoting Organ Donation

“Le Grand Voyage” - Journeying through Life

A Film Review by Mike Fox.

We are all journeying through life in our own way, perhaps following specific faith traditions, perhaps meeting and engaging with others on a significantly different path, perhaps learning from other spheres of wisdom distinct from our own favourite strand. Meeting with other members of Inter-faith Wolverhampton is particularly enriching because of the broad variety that we have present within the group.



On 16 February, our chair Parveen opened her house to us and, as is her custom, provided plentiful bowls of delicious food and great hospitality, going around and ensuring that we all had enough to eat. It was a productive time sharing with others as we had dinner together; no doubt many and varied topics were explored informally as we started the evening.

The main event though was to watch the 2004 film *Le Grand Voyage*, which brought us together with an older, devout Muslim who desired beyond anything else to go as simply as he could on his journey of Hajj to Mecca. Living in the south of France, he felt that the most practical way was to get his son Reda to drive him there. Although Reda was also a Muslim, he had adopted a more Western approach to the faith and was still in school waiting to re-sit his Baccalauréat – perhaps he had been distracted first time around by his relationship with his fellow student Lisa; she certainly occupied his thoughts during the journey, though he was also distracted by a variety of other things.

His father, on the other hand, was focussed rigidly on his journey to Mecca and the importance of getting out his prayer mat and continuing his obligatory cycle of prayer at the appropriate times. They met several people en route, one who they

asked to get them back on the right road for Belgrade, another who helped them through the Turkish border. The father was clear, too, about his obligations to support the poor even from their dwindling supply of cash and growing doubt that they would not have enough to get to their destination.



There is a tremendous amount of tension between the father and his son, and they have differing approaches to their various dilemmas. But their characters develop and they get to know each other more fully in the end. The film left many questions for us to work out for ourselves.



Mike Fox

PS: The Home film show at Parveen's made £300, twice what we'd budgeted!

Reception for Bishop Michael and Rachel Parkinson

On January 26th, the IFW Board, together with two of our Patrons – High Sheriff Keith Bradshaw and Dr Sharma, DL - and our vice-President Sehdev Bismal, were pleased to welcome two newly-appointed figureheads to an informal reception at Darlington Street. Bishop Michael Iprgrave, who is the new (99th !) Anglican Bishop of Lichfield, and Revd Rachel Parkinson, who succeeds John Howard as Chair of the Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury District of the Methodist Church.



There were short presentations on the varied activities of Interfaith Wolverhampton including its quarterly newsletter, the proposal to set up space for worship and contemplation in the Mander Centre, and visits by school pupils to different places of worship.



It was most encouraging to hear from both of them how keen they were to support our work and how they themselves have a long and positive involvement with inter-faith.

The evening ended with a buffet meal of foods from different cuisines showcasing the rich diversity of faith traditions in the city.



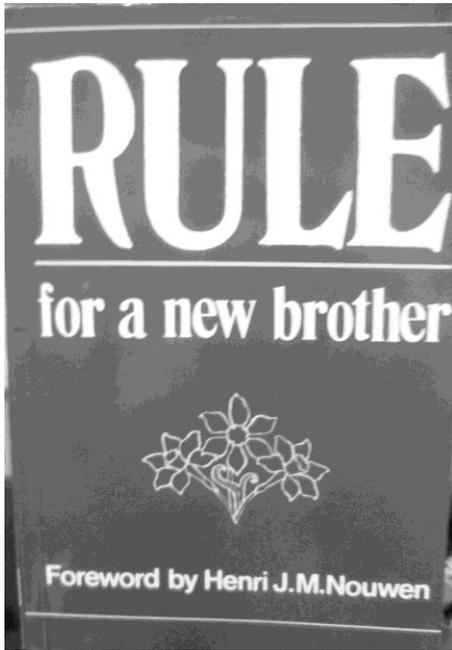
Erik Pearse

“Rule for a New Brother”

by Brakkenstein Community of Blessed Sacrament Fathers.

A Book Review by Dr Chris Walker.

Small in size, significant in influence! As Henri J.M. Nouwen says in his foreword, “Not a rule that restricts freedom but a rule that wants to offer freedom.”



The underlying tenet is that what is designed for a community of men with vows of chastity, obedience and poverty has relevance for today’s society which is subject to individualism, sexual liberalism, and materialism.

One of the challenges of modern life is the quest to discover a discipline within our lives to enable us to be open to knowing God and receiving his grace, mercy and forgiveness in a personal way; in the depths of our being. Each short chapter expresses the way we can grow closer to God through the experience of Jesus Christ, following his way, seeking his kingdom through the community of the brothers, enriched by prayer and the love and service of one another. Riches come through embracing poverty and recognising that Christ is that pearl of great price. Through the community a rhythm of prayer is developed and the Eucharist is the summit of communion with God. The Church despite its admitted failings is embraced and Mary is the epitome of one totally open to God and who said “yes” to her calling. “Behold, all generations shall call be blessed.”

So has this little book a message for the Lay people of today? The Lay Community of St Benedict is an ecumenical lay community whose members, although dispersed, try to live according to the Rule of St Benedict and support each other outside the cloister of the monastery. We find our community in those around us and this little book is full of helpful wisdom to remind us how to live in the world, “for the values for which Jesus lived and died”, and “to be a witness for love”. It gives advice about our attitudes to poverty, obedience, service, justice, peace and love as well as snobbery and materialism. Attention to our spiritual lives with interior discipline and regular prayer, together with the support of our brothers and sisters in God, will sustain us in our dealings with the world and in our life’s journey.

Although written for a Christian community, it has many insights that those of other faiths may find helpful. “Set out on the road together with

your brothers, together with numberless people of God, all pilgrims travelling to the Father’s house.”

Published by Darton, Longman and Todd.



Dr Chris Walker

Leader - Lay Community of St. Benedict.

Multifaith Social Event

The promotion of cohesion and community fellowship is at the heart of our work; we aim to achieve this by encouraging inter-faith dialogue and tolerance.

To this aim, Interfaith Wolverhampton held an extravaganza social event on 23rd February at Gujarati Association, Sitara Hall, Mander St., Wolverhampton. The event was organised to bring together people from different faiths and celebrate expression of their musical and cultural diversity. It was targeted for Interfaith members to celebrate a year of many successes and achievements and for members of the public as an opportunity for all to learn about the valuable work done by Interfaith Wolverhampton.

The opening entailed a moment of silence to pay respect to the young lady who recently died in Wolverhampton; following storm Doris we had earlier in the day.

Chair of IFW Parveen Brigue provided the welcome, and thanked all for attending and highlighted the importance of IFW, in the past, present and future.

Two speakers from the Muslim faith, Dr Asim and Mohammed Ayaan, then recited short verses from the Quran and relayed the relevance of scripture to interfaith dialogue.

That was followed by an excellent display of dhol music. Harjeet and Azad Group played drums; Music embedded in the life and culture of the Punjab region, proud of its many Faiths and agricultural heritage, from which the Bhangra music and songs originate.



The performances then came back to the European continent, where attendees were provided a rendition of mandolin music and song from Rob and Dave; two Irish performers. Their contribution represented the diversity of Irish Catholic traditional song and music.

This was followed by a short speech delivered by Iqbal Kaur who highlighted a recent campaign to ensure access for disabled worshippers at a local Sikh temple.



Gujarati Association then contributed to the evening with two sets of dance routines, one from a group of boys, Fresh Beat, and another from Dance Queens, young girls. The relevance of dance as an Asian Art form for Hindu worship was displayed, although the music was from a modern Bollywood film.

Dr. Asim then returned to the stage with his daughter Noor aged 1. He performed a song and she gave a reading from her book, both accounts in remembrance and praise of the holy prophet.

The entertainment was then concluded by a song by Varun Gupta again from a Bollywood movie, and a dance by his sisters.

Over 130 people attended the event and all thoroughly enjoyed the evening and commented on its success.



A vote of thanks was given to the Gujarati Association for the use of the hall, Mr. Mazeeruddin for his financial support, and Gulshan Radio for their media coverage earlier in the day.

Light refreshments and drinks were provided at the end.



Yusuf Shafi
Vice-Chair

Announcements and Notices

Your views on the future of IFW

The Board will be meeting in April to undertake a SWOT analysis (**S**trengths, **W**eaknesses, **O**pportunities, **T**hreats), with a view to deciding where IFW needs to be in 5 years' time. Your suggestions as members will be invaluable in helping us to carry out this exercise and in highlighting our current Strengths and Weaknesses, and the Opportunities and Threats which we face.

Please send in your views and comments to the Office by the end of March. **Thank you!**

Subscriptions for April 2017 - March 2018

A membership flier is attached/enclosed. Subscription levels remain unchanged. Please help our admin. by completing the form on the flier even if you pay by standing order, not forgetting to tick the Gift Aid box at the bottom if it applies to you (This ensures our database is up to date), and returning it to the Office with your subscription if you do not pay by standing order.

If you would like to pay by standing order, please contact the Office for a form. (Both Standing Order forms and Gift Aid forms are also available from the Interfaith website).



A full list of Board Members is available at <http://www.ifwton.org.uk/BoardMembership2016-17.pdf> or from the office.

Contact Details

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Website: ifwton.org.uk

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.

President:
Bishop Clive Gregory

Vice-President:
Sehdev Bismal MBE

Chair:
Parveen Brigue

Vice-Chair:
Yusuf Shafi

Secretary/Treasurer:
Erik Pearse

Other Officers: Bhajan Devsi, Rev. David Lavender and Dr. Harun Rashid.

Patrons:
The Mayor of Wolverhampton.
Dr. K. Bradshaw, DL.
Dr. S. Sharma, MBE, DL.

Editorial Board:
Sehdev Bismal
Revd David Wright
Erik Pearse

Diary of Events

March

- 12th (Sunday) **St Thomas of Canterbury Church** invite us to join them for Meditations on the events leading up to the execution of Jesus Christ (known as the "Stations of the Cross"). 5 p.m. Haywood Drive, Tettenhall, Wolverhampton, WV6 8RF. Poster available from the Office or from the Interfaith website.
- 21st (Tuesday) **Bring and Share Lunch** 12.45 - 2.00, "Darlington Street Methodist Centre", 24 School Street, WV1 4LF. Speaker: Revd Dr Mark Hathorne, Vicar of St.Chad's Church, Bilston.
- 22nd (Wednesday) - BRISTOL - Interfaith Network UK **"Sharing Good Practice"** Day. Further details will be available at <http://www.interfaith.org.uk/> or from ifnet@interfaith.org.uk .

April

- 18th (Tuesday) **Bring and Share Lunch** 12.45 - 2.00, "Darlington Street Methodist Centre", 24 School Street, WV1 4LF. Speaker: Dr.Yusuf Shafi.

Diary of Events (continued)

April (cont.)

- 24th (Monday) **"A Street Cat Named Bob"** - Film Show at the Lighthouse Media Centre, Chubb Building, Fryer Street, WV1 1HT, at 6 p.m. Adults £10, Children £5. Refreshments available from 5 p.m. Poster available from the Office or from the Interfaith website.



May

- 13th (Saturday) **Interfaith Wolverhampton visit to Birmingham Progressive Synagogue**, 1 Rose-land Way, Birmingham, B15 1HD. Arrive 10:45 a.m. During our visit, there will be a service from 11 a.m. to around 12:30 p.m., with another 20 minutes or so for Kiddush (refreshments). There is a car park on the corner of Bishopsgate Street and Tennant Street. Rabbi Margaret Jacobi was one of the speakers at our "Faith Perspectives" talks in Tettenhall last November, and is an active member of the Birmingham Faith Leaders Group. More details later.
- 16th (Tuesday) **Bring and Share Lunch** 12.45 - 2.00, "Darlington Street Methodist Centre", 24 School Street, WV1 4LF. Speaker: Rev. Brian Prentice.
- 27th-29th (Sat-Mon) **"Understanding Islam"** Three-Day Course in Harbourne, Birmingham. Details from <http://www.chrishever.org/> and chris@chrishever.org.

June

- 10th (Saturday) **Pilgrimage 2017** Visiting a temple in Milton Keynes, plus a newly-built Sikh Gurdwara. Proposed cost (coach) £15. More details to follow. (Please note change of date).

September

- 19th (Tuesday) **Bring and Share Lunch** 12.45 - 2.00, "Darlington Street Methodist Centre", 24 School Street, WV1 4LF. Speaker: Sehdev Bismal.
- 20th (Wednesday) **Interfaith Wolverhampton AGM**, with speaker Mick Duthie, Detective Chief Superintendent, and deputy director of the Santa Marta Group, which works worldwide to combat modern day slavery and human trafficking.

November

- 16th (Thursday) **"Prayers for Peace"** as part of Inter Faith Week 2017 (<https://www.interfaithweek.org/>).

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