



March 2026 Issue No. 71

## IFW NEWS

Newsletter of Interfaith Wolverhampton

### Editorial by Dr Hakeem Bakare

It is with great pleasure and a deep sense of responsibility that I present this first Interfaith Wolverhampton newsletter for 2026. After a short break, we return not simply to resume publication, but to renew our shared commitment to the values that bring us together — dialogue, understanding, and unity in diversity.

Interfaith Wolverhampton plays a vital role in nurturing these shared values. Through dialogue events, educational initiatives, community outreach, and joint celebrations, we demonstrate that mutual respect is not just an ideal, but a lived reality in our city.

This edition of the newsletter reflects that spirit. Inside, you will find updates on recent interfaith gatherings, reports from community projects, reflections from faith leaders, and information about upcoming events and opportunities for involvement. We also highlight stories of collaboration that show how working together strengthens not only our faith communities but Wolverhampton as a whole.

As we begin 2026, I warmly invite you to do more than simply read this newsletter. Be part of the community it represents. Attend an event, volunteer your time, share your story, or reach out to someone from a different tradition. Interfaith work thrives not because of institutions alone, but because of individuals willing to engage with openness and goodwill. With best wishes for a peaceful and hopeful year ahead.

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Upcoming Events

Interfaith Wolverhampton (IFW) has a long and important history, rooted in the city's determination to promote peace, understanding, and social cohesion in times of challenge and change. Its origins lie in events that profoundly shaped Wolverhampton more than fifty years ago and continue to influence its work today.

In 1968, Wolverhampton became the focus of national and international attention following the “Rivers of Blood” speech by the city's Member of Parliament at the time, Enoch Powell. The speech heightened fear and division and left many communities feeling uncertain about their place in the city they called home. At a moment when tensions could easily have escalated, local faith and community leaders chose a different path — one based on dialogue, cooperation, and shared responsibility for the future of Wolverhampton.

It was in this context that Interfaith Wolverhampton was formed. Its founding vision was simple but powerful: to bring together people of different faith traditions, alongside those of no faith, to build understanding, challenge prejudice, and strengthen relationships across communities.

*“IFW provided a safe and trusted space for conversation, enabling people to listen to one another, address concerns, and work together to maintain peace and harmony in the city.”*

IFW provided a safe and trusted space for conversation, enabling people to listen to one another, address concerns, and work together to maintain peace and harmony in the city.

Over the decades, IFW has made a lasting contribution to community cohesion. Through dialogue events, educational activities, public engagement, and quiet relationship-building, it has helped reduce mistrust and promote respect and mutual understanding. Central to this work has been the belief that diversity is not a problem to be managed, but a strength to be valued.

Today, while the city has changed in many ways, the need for interfaith and intercultural dialogue remains as urgent as ever. Social and economic pressures, misinformation, and polarising public debates continue to create tension locally, while global conflicts and international events can have a direct impact on relationships within our own communities.

In such an environment, spaces for calm discussion, empathy, and cooperation are vital. Looking ahead, Interfaith Wolverhampton remains committed to its core role as a facilitator of dialogue rather than a direct service provider.

By maintaining strong relationships with faith communities, civic bodies, and voluntary organisations, IFW acts as a bridge — offering advice, support, and opportunities for constructive engagement. Its work helps ensure that disagreements do not become divisions, and that difficult conversations can take place respectfully.

As Wolverhampton continues to evolve, IFW's mission is firmly focused on the future: nurturing understanding, supporting peaceful coexistence, and helping the city remain a place where people of all faiths and none can live together with dignity, respect, and a shared sense of belonging.

In this way, the work of Interfaith Wolverhampton is not only as important today as it was fifty years ago — it is essential for the years ahead.

*“Interfaith Wolverhampton is not only as important today as it was fifty years ago — it is essential for the years ahead.”*



**Devinder Kalhan, Chair IfW and Cllr Craig Collingswood (Mayor)**

## Interaction with schools by Jill Parker M.B.E. , J.P., M.C.S.P.

Interfaith Wolverhampton has for many years organised visits to places of worship or speakers to go into schools. By educating young people , who are our future, about different faiths we aim to promote understanding, increase knowledge & encourage tolerance.

We are indebted to all volunteers who give so freely of their time to go into schools, act as guides in places of worship and give information about their faith. Places of worship who open their doors again add another dimensions to understanding that pictures alone cannot.

This outreach continues to grow. Between April & December 2025 we engaged with 1,446 pupils most who are from Wolverhampton but some who cannot find this facility locally have been from as far away as Worcester and Herefordshire.

As can be imagined organising this takes a considerable amount of Administration time as schools are provided for example details of appropriate dress and full Terms & Conditions at the time of booking including recording pupils ages so that information can be relevant .

After each visit, we ask an evaluation form is completed which we monitor to see if any improvements can be made.

*“Between April & December 2025 we engaged with 1,446 pupils most who are from Wolverhampton but some who cannot find this facility locally have been from as far away as Worcester and Herefordshire”.*



Students from a college in Wolverhampton on a mosque visit

The revenue generated from these visits and presentations goes a long way to support the work of IFW which continues to require revenue to continue. The work done by this interaction is something as an organisation I think we can be justifiably proud but it can only continue with the support of our members.

By Martin Gomberg

The Holocaust is central to Holocaust Memorial Day and we remember the six million Jewish men, women and children murdered during the Holocaust. We also commemorate the millions more people murdered through the Nazi persecution of other groups and where persecution led in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur.

Prejudice still continues today within our communities and across the UK. The Holocaust Memorial Day Trust is the charity established by the government to promote and support Holocaust Memorial Day in the UK. It helps protect the legacy of the Holocaust against denial and distortion, and shape a future built on empathy, understanding and respect.

We bring the nation together to remember persecutions of the past and stand against hatred and prejudice in the present. Each year Interfaith Wolverhampton works with the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion team at the City of Wolverhampton Council to organise a commemoration based on the annual theme by bringing together people from a range of communities to remember the Holocaust and other genocides.

In recent years the themes have been: Fragility of Freedom (2025), For a Better Future (2024) , Ordinary People (2023), One Day (2022), Be the light in the darkness (2021) and Stand Together (2020). For 2026 the theme was Bridging Generations.

*“Each year Interfaith Wolverhampton works with the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion team at the City of Wolverhampton Council to organise a commemoration based on the annual theme by bringing together people from a range of communities to remember the Holocaust and other genocides.”*

## The theme - Bridging Generations.

‘Bridging Generations’ is a call-to-action. A reminder that the responsibility of remembrance doesn't end with the survivors - it lives on through their children, their grandchildren and through all of us. The survivors had every reason to despair of society; they did not. They opted to work for humankind, not against it. Elie Wiesel Holocaust survivor Nobel Peace Prize winner.

## The Commemoration at Wolverhampton: Civic Centre

The commemoration was held in the Civic Suite at the Civic Centre and included the Lord-Lieutenant of West Midlands Derrick Anderson CBE, The Mayor of Wolverhampton Councillor Craig Collingswood, Councillors and people from the diverse communities living in Wolverhampton. In the readings that follow we heard about the murdered generations and the first generation survivors from genocides.

### Reading 1 – The murdered generations

The murdered generations: The six million Jewish people murdered in the Holocaust, the non-Jewish people murdered because they were gay, disabled, Roma, Sinti or a member of another community targeted by the Nazis. We also learn and commemorate where persecution led in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur. The generation of people whose lives and voices were brutally taken away.

### Reading 2 – Holocaust 1941 – 1945

Peter Lantos BEM was born in Hungary 1939 and endured the horrors of Bergen-Belsen concentration camp in Germany where he lost most of his family. After the war he returned to Hungary and trained to be a doctor and went to UK as a medical researcher, eventually defecting to the UK. Having seen so much suffering he wanted to do something to help other people. There is an element of defiance. If I survived Belson I am going to survive everything else. If there is revenge, it is our survival'

*“The six million Jewish people murdered in the Holocaust, the non-Jewish people murdered because they were gay, disabled, Roma, Sinti or a member of another community targeted by the Nazis. We also learn and commemorate where persecution led in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur. The generation of people whose lives and voices were brutally taken away”*

### Reading 3 – Cambodia 1975 – 1979

Chanrithy Him - is a child survivor of the Genocide in Cambodia who lives in America. In 2000, her award-winning memoir, when Broken Glass Floats was published and she was inundated with requests to speak at events. Although Chanrithy has found some solace in telling her story, reliving the horrors of the genocide is hard for her and she plans to stop. ‘Telling my story gives me a sense of personal justice because I have exposed what the Khmer Rouge and other world leaders have done to Cambodia.’

## Reading 4 – Rwanda 1994

Marie Chantal didn't speak about her experiences for twenty years, until her daughters asked her about her life in Rwanda. Today, in the UK, she speaks to many different groups to help them understand the genocide, helping other survivors of genocide and raising awareness of the Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda.

She goes back regularly to Rwanda, because she says 'something has changed there now – it is more like home again.'

## Reading 5 – Bosnia 1995

Hatidža Mehmedović was a Bosnian Muslim. Her husband and sons were murdered alongside more than 8,000 men and boys at the genocidal massacre in Srebrenica in 1995. In 2002, she founded the Mothers of Srebrenica to ensure their killers were brought to justice.

Hatidža lived to see General Mladić, in 2017, sentenced to life imprisonment after being convicted of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes.

*No story can bring back our dearest ones, but by telling a story we can prevent new genocides, new crimes and future wars.'*

*"The six million Jewish people murdered in the Holocaust, the non-Jewish people murdered because they were gay, disabled, Roma, Sinti or a member of another community targeted by the Nazis. We also learn and commemorate where persecution led in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur. The generation of people whose lives and voices were brutally taken away"*

We then heard from Mindu Hornick MBE, born in 1929 in Czechoslovakia. Mindu is a Holocaust survivor who rebuilt her life in Birmingham after the war. She has become a leading educator and advocate for remembrance, sharing her story for more than two decades to promote tolerance and challenge prejudice. Her dedication to Holocaust education and community engagement was recognised with an MBE in the 2020 New Year Honours. This was followed by a presentation from the Anne Frank Ambassadors who spoke about prejudice based on age. These young people, supported by the Anne Frank Trust - UK, are committed to building a world free from prejudice, inspired by the life and work of Anne Frank. They work to challenge prejudice with regard to disability, gender, race, refugee status, religion or sexuality.

## The Kaddish prayer

In Wolverhampton the Jewish prayer for the dead - Kaddish - is read as part of the HMD commemoration. The Kaddish prayer is a hymn of praise. Kaddish is said at funerals and at other times to remember the dead. It makes no reference to death or mourning. For centuries it was used at the end of study sessions.

Some say, as it was recited by teachers while their pupils left it became associated with departing. Another view is that at the time of mourning, despite any personal sadness, one should always start by praising God. Jewish prayers often refer to Israel. For many centuries, this word was only used to refer to a group of people, also called Jews.

Since 1948 Israel is also the name of the country Israel; a democratic nation state whose government does things that not everyone agrees with. Hence the difficulty with the word Israel which is both the name of a group of people and also the name of a country. The Kaddish prayer, like much Jewish liturgy, is very old and was written centuries before the state of Israel existed. So, when the Kaddish refers to the whole House of Israel, or simply Israel, it is referring to the people not the country.

*"Since 1948 Israel is also the name of the country Israel; a democratic nation state whose government does things that not everyone agrees with. Hence the difficulty with the word Israel which is both the name of a group of people and also the name of a country."*



## Gaza - "Not in my name"

Following the 7 October 2023 attacks in Israel by Hamas and the subsequent response by the Israeli government in Gaza - it is even more important to distinguish between the state of Israel and the Jewish people. "Not in my name" is a rallying cry used by Jewish people around the world to express their opposition to the Israeli government's actions against Palestinians.

Some of the speakers - Back: Dev Suman, Martin Gomberg, Iqbal Kaur, Devinder Kalhan MBE (Chair IfW). Front Cllr Craig Collingswood (Mayor), Mindu Hornick MBE, Cllr Stephen Simkins (Leader of Council)

## Mosque Open Day Welcomes the Community by Khalid Akhtar

In October 2025, Madina Masjid & Islamic Centre proudly opened its doors for a special Open Day, welcoming people of all faiths and none to explore, learn, and connect. The event aimed to strengthen community ties and promote understanding, and we were delighted by the warm and diverse turnout.

In preparation for the day, we reached out widely across Wolverhampton, engaging with private and public sector workplaces as well as local voluntary organisations. We were also grateful for the opportunity to promote the event on a Wolverhampton's (WCR) community radio station, which helped extend our reach even further.

The Open Day attracted individuals and families from all walks of life. Many guests commented on how welcoming and informative the atmosphere was, and the feedback we received throughout the day was overwhelmingly positive. Visitors particularly enjoyed the exhibition, which showcased key aspects of Islamic history and culture. A popular highlight was the interactive fact-finding activity placed around the building, offering interesting insights into Islam that many had not encountered before.



Madina Masjid & Islamic Centre, Wolverhampton

*"The event aimed to strengthen community ties and promote understanding, and we were delighted by the warm and diverse turnout."*

Another standout feature of the day was the delicious food provided for visitors. Guests expressed how much they enjoyed the variety of dishes, which added to the warm and hospitable atmosphere of the event. Guided tours of the masjid ran throughout the afternoon, allowing guests to learn about the purpose and design of different areas within the mosque. Many also appreciated the chance to observe daily prayers, offering a meaningful glimpse into the spiritual life of the Muslim community.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone who attended, supported, and contributed to making the day such a success. Events like this reflect our ongoing commitment to openness, dialogue, and community engagement. We look forward to welcoming even more visitors in the future as we continue to build bridges of understanding across Wolverhampton and beyond.

The Interfaith Wolverhampton Annual Conference took place on Saturday 15th November during Interfaith Week, at The Royal School where we were once again warmly welcomed, and the day was introduced by the Chair of IfW, Devinder Kalhan.

The theme of the conference was IfW Past, Present and Future and it started with three long standing members, Paul Rayner, Ram Athall and Erik Pearse, talking about the Past and how they became involved with IfW.

This was followed up with presentations on IfW Present as we heard from Jill Parker regarding Schools, Martin Gomberg on Finances, Jas Dehar on her experiences of visiting and raising awareness as Past Chair, and Suffia Perveen on Partnerships.

The rest of the morning was spent in round table discussions on the Future of IfW. The discussions were facilitated by Mike Hardacre and the responses to the questions discussed are below.

It was felt that it was a successful event and that people were very much involved (Evaluation Form responses below). The Board will be taking all the discussion responses into consideration as we move forward.

Many thanks to all who contributed to the day and to all who enabled it to happen.

*“The theme of the conference was IfW Past, Present and Future and it started with three long standing members, Paul Rayner, Ram Athall and Erik Pearse, talking about the Past and how they became involved with IfW.”*



Devinder Kalhan, Chair, IfW Wolverhampton welcoming participants to the Conference



Dr. Mike Hardacre Facilitating discussions at the Conference

## IfW future in the views of Conference Participants

1 Having heard earlier in the 'IfW Present' section about current activity, could you suggest specific actions that you would like to see at IfW & how it could be done?

- Wolverhampton's Diversity
- Systemise interfaith services at a more individual level
- Faith Fair & Fairtrade – Civic, Community Shop – Mander Centre
- Campaign of media involvement
- School visits
- University more deeply involved
- Symbol – badging(?) –
- Positive voice – Express & Star, WCRFM, Gurshan WM
- The unrepresented – faith & wider

2 Raising funds to maintain IfW is vital? Do you have any suggestions how this can be done?

- The love of money is the root of all evil.
- Increase membership
- Increase school visits
- Grant applications – Paul Birch, Co-op, James Beattie, Hansons, Tesco
- Bereavement donations
- Use unwanted Christmas gifts for raffle (Faiths & raffles?)
- Direct debit - £5/£10 a month?
- Ward Funds - small moneys from Councillors
- MPs regarding National sponsorship/grant
- Closer work with EMC
- Be clear why funds are needed

3 With current social & political issues attracting publicity what do you think the 'Faith Sector' can do to maintain its resilience & receive or give any support that is required?

- In the present cultural and political climate how do we maintain our positivity – support each other?
- Be kind
- Be clear and CARE
- TALK to each other
- LISTEN TO EACH OTHER
- Think before speech
- Respect each's values and beliefs

4 How do we promote social cohesion?

- Press and Media
- Celebrate all faiths and non-faiths
- Promote understanding
- Action to destroy myths
- Use the WM Lieutenancy
- Council
- Avoid the material – concentrate on values

5 How do we promote the work of IfW and attract more members?

- Where are the less represented and what's the strategy?
- If each member gets one person to join – religious PONZI
- Speak to youth/schools/college/university

6 What does IfW mean to you ?

- Harmony
- Compassion
- Hope
- Tolerance
- Understanding
- Fellowship



Jill Parker and Linda Gilson, Conference organising team



# Membership of Interfaith Wolverhampton

April 2026 – March 2027

We exist to promote understanding, tolerance and the respect of differing faith traditions and to work towards a City where the rich diversity of faiths is celebrated and used for the common good of all City dwellers.

## Benefits of becoming a member

- An ongoing opportunity to share our vision of promoting understanding, respect and tolerance between people of different faiths
- Understanding that we do not promote faith or faith communities but we do promote the understanding of faith
- An opportunity to learn more about other faiths and none
- Advance notice of planned IFW events and responses to critical Issues
- Open invitation for your active involvement
- Receipt of our quarterly Newsletter
- Promotion of positive community cohesion

**MEMBERSHIP**

**1st April 2026 – 31st March 2027**

Please complete this form and post or Email to:

Interfaith Wolverhampton  
Beckminster Methodist Church,  
Birches Barn Road, Penn Fields,  
Wolverhampton, WV3 7BQ.

Name/s: .....

Address .....

..... Post Code.....

Tel No..... Email.....

**MEMBER DECLARATION**

**As a member I promise to adhere to IFW’s mission as spelt out overleaf and to support it in whatever way I can**

**Signed: .....**

**Date.....**



## Annual Membership: Please tick as appropriate

Individual Unwaged	£15	<input type="checkbox"/>
Individual Waged	£30	<input type="checkbox"/>
Couple Unwaged	£20	<input type="checkbox"/>
Couple Waged	£35	<input type="checkbox"/>
Schools/Voluntary/Community Group	£60	<input type="checkbox"/>

I wish to **Gift Aid** my/our membership/donations.

**Payment:** Please make cheques payable to: *Interfaith Wolverhampton*.

Details for payment by Standing Order/BACS:  
*Interfaith Wolverhampton Co-Operative Bank,*  
*Account no: 65604519 Sort Code: 08-92-99*

*Please tick here if you require a receipt*

## ORGANISED EVENTS 2026

Please contact the [Interfaith Office](#) for further details

- 17<sup>th</sup> Jan** "Bring & Share Lunchtime Meeting" \_on Zoom, 1 pm-2 pm.  
Speaker: Gilroy Brown
- 23<sup>rd</sup> Jan** IfW Social Meal at Penn Tandoori Wolverhampton, Time:6.00pm
- 27<sup>th</sup> Jan** Holocaust Memorial Day
- 17<sup>th</sup> Feb** "Bring & Share" \_1 pm-2 pm. On Zoom, Speaker Julia Farrell, Chairperson of the Fair Trade
- 17<sup>th</sup> March** "Bring & Share" 1 pm-2 pm on Zoom Speaker: Deacon Linda Gilson, Topic: The Easter story through Art.
- 21<sup>st</sup> April** "Bring & Share" \_1 pm-2 pm. Speaker: Deborah Smith, Pervert & Cohesion Co-Ordinator WCC, Venue: Beckminster Church, Wolverhampton.
- 19<sup>th</sup> May** "Bring & Share" \_1 pm-2 pm. Venue: Beckminster Church, Wolverhampton.
- 16<sup>th</sup> June** "Bring & Share" \_1 pm-2 pm. Venue: Beckminster Church, Wolverhampton.
- 21<sup>st</sup> July** "Bring & Share" \_ 1 pm-2 pm Venue: Beckminster Church, Wolverhampton,
- August** NO "Bring & Share" - Summer Vacation
- 15<sup>th</sup> September** IfW Annual General Meeting. Venue: TBC Time: 7 pm-8.30 pm.
- 22<sup>nd</sup> September** "Bring & Share" 1 pm-2 pm Venue: Beckminster Church, Wolverhampton.
- 20<sup>th</sup> October** "Bring & Share" \_1 pm-2 pm. Venue: Beckminster Church, Speaker: TBC
- November Remembrance Sunday** Date and time TBC
- 14<sup>th</sup> November** Annual Conference. Venue TBC, Time 10 am-1.00 pm
- 17<sup>th</sup> November** "Bring & Share" \_Venue: Beckminster Church, Wolverhampton
- 16<sup>th</sup> December** "Bring & Share" 12.30 pm-2.00 pm In person, Venue: Beckminster Church, Wolverhampton, No Speaker. Networking.

For up-to-date details, see the Interfaith Wolverhampton website: [ifwton.org.uk/diary.html](http://ifwton.org.uk/diary.html)



**Registered Charity no.1114265 Company Registered no. 3218967**

**Interfaith Wolverhampton**  
**President: The Rt Revd Dr Tim Wambunya, Bishop of Wolverhampton.**

**Contact us:**  
**Please note Interfaith Wolverhampton has moved to the following location:**  
**Beckminster Methodist Church,**  
**Birches Barn Road, Penn Fields,**  
**Wolverhampton, WV3 7BQ.**

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**Website: [www.ifwton.org.uk](http://www.ifwton.org.uk)**

