



Faiths engage

Monthly Newsletter—Issue 27—November 2021

Welcome to the latest edition of *Faiths Engage*.

Inside you can read about some of our Prevent work, the different sessions being run primarily for Christian groups as well as our continued corporate training. We at the Centre are busy getting ready for Interfaith Week, which this year features a mix of in-person and on-line events. Please see page three for further details of the different events and please book in to any you wish to attend. It was wonderful to be able to celebrate ten years of the Near Neighbours programme in-person at an event at St Philip's Church recently. It was very inspiring to hear stories both of projects started seven or more years ago that now have a significant impact across the city as well as accounts of new fledgling projects which I'm sure will make a big difference in the years to come. Thanks to DLUHC for funding this programme over the past decade; here's to the next ten years!

With every good wish,

Tom Wilson, Centre Director

Education Programme

Our new and updated Religion and Belief Programmes brochure for schools and colleges is now available, offering online workshops and some in-person programmes.

Click on the image to open the brochure. If your school/college would like to find out more about any of these programmes, please contact me—education@stphilipscentre.co.uk



Ramila Chauhan

Prevent Update

Prevent Services Officer Louise Cox recently visited one of our locally funded Prevent projects, The Somali Development Services (SDS) who were hosting a workshop, "Violence Solves Nothing" for members of the local community to explore how to build resilience to violent extremism in society. Participants expressed their anger at the murder of Sir David Amess MP.

The participants were well engaged and very keen to learn more about how young people can be vulnerable to radicalisation and in particular, expressed concern about online safety and protecting their children and young people from harm. As such, SDS will be looking to host some online safety training in the near future.

It was great to see first-hand the impact of the work that SDS are undertaking, and we are looking forward to further work as the year progresses, continuing to work with our communities to bring people together to help prevent incidences of terrorism.



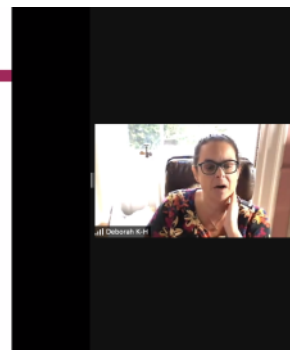
October Events

Reading with Rabbis

During October, we had the first four of six sessions in our series *Reading with Rabbis*. Rabbi Dr Deborah Kahn-Harris and Rabbi Mark Solomon of Leo Baeck College led the sessions for preachers from Anglican and Methodist Churches. So far we have had an introduction to Jewish perspectives on the Hebrew Bible, Second Temple Literature, Midrash and the medieval commentator Rashi. It has been an excellent opportunity to broaden participants' understandings of how the Hebrew Scriptures have been read and interpreted over the centuries. We are grateful to the Methodist Connexion for funding this work and to all those who have taken part and asked such excellent and thought-provoking questions, as well as to our two speakers for their wisdom and teaching.

Aggadic Midrash

Genesis Rabbah 3:7	Genesis 1: 5 וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהִים לְאֹר יוֹם וְלַחֹשֶׁךְ לַיְלָה וַיְהִי-בֹקֶר יוֹם אֶחָד. God called the light day and the darkness God called night. There was evening, there was morning, day one.
	אמר רבי יהודה בר סימון: 'יהי ערב אין כתיב כאן. אלא נתיי ערב. מתיא שניה סוד זמנים קדם לכן. אמר רבי אבהו מלמד שהיבורא עולמות ומסורבין. עד שבקרא את אלה, אמר דין כהן ל: 'יתחון לא סבן ל: אמר רבי פנחס טעמיה דרבי אבהו (רב פנחס: 27) 'נרא אלהים את כל אשר עשה והנה טוב מאד. דין כהן ל: 'יתחון לא סבן ל: 'This one pleases me; those did not please me.'
	Rabbi Judah bar Simon said: it does not say, 'It was evening,' but 'And it was evening.' Hence we derive that there was a time-system prior to this. Rabbi Abahu said: This teaches us that God created worlds and destroyed them, saying, 'This one pleases me; those did not please me.'
	Rabbi Pihos said, Rabbi Abahu derives this from the verse, 'And God saw all that God had made, and behold it was very good,' as if to say, 'This one pleases me, those others did not please me.'



God and Gender

In October we ran a three-part series of on-line discussions on the topic of "God and gender." In the first week, Angela Langrick shared a Pagan perspective and Uri Gordon gave a Jewish view. In week two, Liz Wilson talked from a Christian standpoint and Rabiha Hanan from the Islamic understanding. In week three, Kartar Singh Bring shared Sikh beliefs on the topic and Pradip Gajjar provided input on Hindu conceptions. This is the first stage of what we hope will be a bigger project, which will, Covid-restrictions permitting, take place in-person during Spring 2022.

Lecture with Dr Julian Hargreaves

The Centre was pleased to host a lecture from Dr Julian Hargreaves from the Woolf Institute on the evening of Thursday 7th October. He shared details of their research into difference, which was published at the end of 2020 as "How we get along: the diversity study of England and Wales."



The lecture included both the more hopeful as well as the more challenging aspects of the study and led to a lively question and answer section where the results were interrogated in depth.

Tom Wilson

Baby Krishna, Infant Christ

Nima Suchak and I virtually attended the Local Preachers' and Worship Leaders' Meeting of the Loughborough Methodist Circuit on the 20th September to lead a session on Baby Krishna, Infant Christ. This is a popular session exploring similarities and differences between the birth story of Krishna and that of Jesus. It was adapted slightly to make it applicable to preaching with questions such as "should preachers use apocryphal texts to discuss Jesus' childhood when leading worship?" It was a successful question with great discussions around how different Hindu groups understand scripture; what Christians do with stories in the Bible that they struggle with and how Christians can preach at Christmas with a greater understanding of their own story.

Exploring Eid

Yasmin Surti gave a fascinating talk at St Peter's Oadby exploring Eid and its significance for Muslims. Of particular interest was discussion about how the COVID pandemic had disrupted celebrations and the pain that that had caused—many could resonate, having had significant plans disrupted over the last 18 months. Many of the church members reflected on how this links to Harvest and their own celebrations. Participant feedback was around how much they had enjoyed the evening and wished to hear more about this in the future. If you would be interested in running a session on 'Baby Krishna, Infant Christ' or 'Exploring Eid' please email me at courses@stphilipscentre.co.uk or phone 07707 640885.



James Blackhall

Inter Faith Week 2021—14th—21st November

Inter Faith Week 2021 (www.interfaithweek.org) will take place in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland from **Sunday 14 to Sunday 21 November**.

Inter Faith Week



An ever-growing array of organisations participate, from faith groups and schools to sports organisations, local authorities, cultural institutions, hospitals, and hospices.

Inter Faith Week is a tremendous opportunity for every kind of organisation to highlight and strengthen their links with local faith and belief groups, support religious literacy amongst staff and patrons, and to encourage religious harmony and respect.



**Making War, Keeping Faith:
Poetic Reflections on
War and Religion**

7:30-9:00pm, Tues 16th Nov

with Dr Mary Brewer



This workshop will offer participants the chance to gain insight into how those who have experienced war (either in combat or on the home front) have used poetry to explore the role of religion and the place of faith in the context of war. We will discuss a selection of war poems that have emerged out of different modern Western conflicts, which reveal, among other things, how religion has been harnessed to the cause of war and the different ways in which faith may be impacted by the experience of war.

Email onlinetraining@stphilipscentre.co.uk for the Zoom link



**New relations of stigma & mutuality
during the covid-19 pandemic**

12:30-2:00pm, Weds 17th Nov

**St Philip's Church,
Evington Road, LE2 1HN**

with Dr Nikita Simpson
Postdoctoral Researcher
in Anthropology
London School of Economics

The covid pandemic has had an uneven impact across the UK; in many ways it has heightened and exacerbated existing structural inequalities and challenges. During 2020 Leicester suffered more prolonged and stricter lockdown conditions than any other English city. Drawing on extensive interviews and research conducted in Leicester and elsewhere in the UK, this workshop will explore the impact of covid on different communities.

To book a place, and reserve a vegetarian meal,
email admin@stphilipscentre.co.uk



**"Let your vision be
world-embracing"**

7:00-8:30pm, Weds 17th Nov

with George Merchant
Ballentyne



Faith communities have their distinctive views – as well as points of agreement – on the climate crisis: its origins, its impact and the future actions we might take to escape the worst of this worldwide emergency. In this session, George (a member of the Bahá'í community for over 40 years) will share something of his recent experience at COP26 in his home city of Glasgow: hosting activities, running events and taking part in the general goings-on at the fringe of that historic gathering.

This event will be at St Philip's Church
Evington Road, Leicester, LE2 1HN



Faith to Faith

Thursday 18th November, 9:30 am to 12:30pm

Visiting places of worship in the Clarendon Park area of Leicester

Email courses@stphilipscentre.co.uk to book a place



Corporate Work

This month our Deputy Director was busy as he continued with our 'Religion & Belief in the UK' training. It began with another Leicestershire Police new recruits cohort at Force HQ where we were joined by our new Trustee— Prof. Bob Allison. In addition, our series with Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service progressed with more firefighters engaging.



A particular highlight was the training of teachers of the future. We ran a course for PGCE students at the University of Leicester which is an annual fixture for us.



Ten Years of Near Neighbours

It was great to bring people together in person on 29th October to celebrate 10 years of Near Neighbours. Over the last 10 years we have funded 172 projects in Leicester, which equates to £462,346. Nationally Near Neighbours has given £7,703,290 in small grants to people passionate about bringing people together from different faiths and backgrounds. We heard from Salma Ravat from One Roof, Eric Waweru from The Centre Project and Sally Etheridge from Leicester Mammias to name a few. The speakers shared about how Near Neighbours has helped to establish the charity One Roof and has funded Leicester Mammias in piloting a range of projects that have gone on to be supported through larger pots of funding.

Here are a couple of quotes from attendees:

“Lovely to directly meet and speak to others who are focused on positive community change”

“Really enjoyed reflecting on the role Near Neighbours has played in our organisation and how this has been replicated across with city with other organisations.”

Beth Henwood



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Allchurches Trust

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The Baptist Union

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The Dunhill Medical Trust

Home Office

Leicester College

Leicestershire & Rutland Masonic

Charity Association (LRMCA)

Leicester City Council

Masonic Charitable Foundation

Methodist Connexion

N C Bellefontaine Trust

Near Neighbours—(DLUHC)

New Normal Fund (DCMS)

Northampton District of the Methodist Church



faiths engage is the newsletter of St Philip's Centre Ltd

2A Stoughton Drive North, Leicester LE5 5UB

Tel: 0116 273 3459

admin@stphilipscentre.co.uk

[Twitter](#) [Facebook](#) [Website](#)