



Faiths engage

Monthly Newsletter—Issue 64—December 2024

Welcome to the latest edition of Faiths Engage

November has been quite a hectic month. We've delivered training sessions all over the country, whether corporate, education, or church facing work. There's also an update on our oral history project. If you'd like us to record your memories do please get in touch. It was good to run another speed faithing session during interfaith week and to both visit schools and host visits in Leicester. I am always grateful to our dedicated team of volunteer faith practitioners who put so much time and energy into helping people learn how to live well together.

With every good wish,

Revd Dr Tom Wilson, Director of St Philip's Centre

Corporate Work

This month, we have run another successful 'Confidently Addressing Radicalisation and Extremism' (C.A.R.E.) course for a group made up of employees from schools, colleges, Local Authorities and the NHS. Although it is quite an intensive course, all the participants find it very helpful, hence the excellent evaluations received.

Future First!

In November, we continued to run more focus groups in sixth form colleges to hear the views of young adults about social cohesion. We have engaged the Eastern part of Leicester. In total, we have connected with over 60 people aged 16-19 years who have commented on how connected they feel in Leicester and they provided some ideas about how to help build positive community relationships. Over the coming months, we will continue to expand on this concept by working with many more young adults as well as reconnecting with those we have encountered.



Learning Objectives	1	2	3	4	5
Understand the concept of radicalisation and extremism	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Identify the signs and symptoms of radicalisation and extremism	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Understand the role of faith in radicalisation and extremism	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Identify the role of faith in radicalisation and extremism	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Understand the role of faith in radicalisation and extremism	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
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Understand the role of faith in radicalisation and extremism	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Identify the role of faith in radicalisation and extremism	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

most useful/interesting parts of the course
 discussing about the different extremist views /
 how they might make an impact on society of the
 present religious
 practices in help improve the course
 including

community education
 religiously organised and knowledgeable
 speakers

Safeguarding

The evaluation for our 'Safer Faiths, Safer Followers' project began in November. This will involve our external evaluators meeting some of the projects with whom we have been working for nearly four years to assess levels and standards of safeguarding as a result of the training and engagements which they have undertaken.

Recognition

We were very pleased to have been shortlisted as a 'finalist' by the East Midlands Chamber of Commerce for their Community Impact Award category. Our Chair, Deputy Director and one of our faith practitioners attended a ceremony at De Montfort University to represent us.

Eastern expansion!

Our Deputy Director met with stakeholders in the East of England to explore the expansion of our Religion and Belief based schools work. Our impactful Religion & Belief Roadshow was of particular interest and in the coming months, we will be looking at delivering engagements to schoolchildren in Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire.

Riaz Ravat

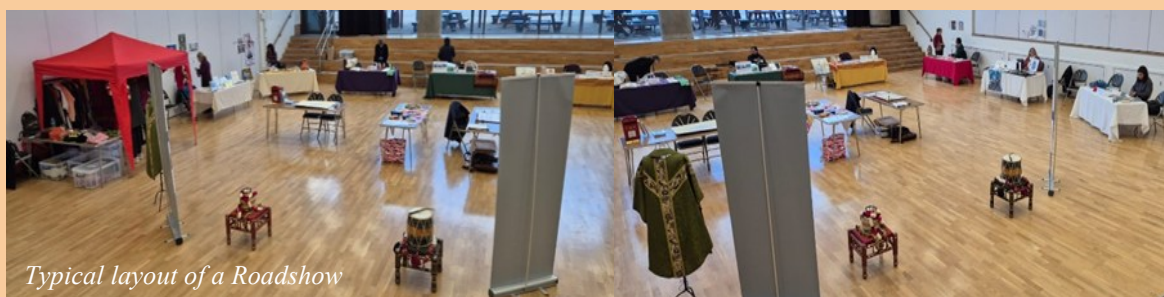
Education Work

At the end of October, we arranged a visit to a Mosque and some activities at St Philip's Church for Braunston CE Primary School. This is what the Assistant Headteacher said about the visit:

'The children (and adults!) had a fantastic time at the Mosque and the St Philip's Centre. They found it so interesting and the teachers all said that it was an amazing day ... we are so lucky to have the St Philip's Centre to arrange these valuable experiences for our children.'



In November we delivered three roadshows in one month, something that is quite rare. We started off with a Mini Roadshow in Kegworth Primary School where the whole school, comprising over 200 children from Year 1 to Year 6, had the opportunity to speak to people of various faiths. This was followed by a full Roadshow at Brockington College to Year 8 children with 8 different faiths, and finally a Roadshow at Fleckney Primary School.



Typical layout of a Roadshow



As part of our Places of Peace visits to places of worship, children from Sir William Robertson Academy, from Lincoln, visited a Mosque, Gurdwara and the Synagogue. A teacher mentioned how helpful it was that St Philip's Centre could make all the arrangement with places of worship and provide a place for children to have their lunch. Previously they would end up looking for a park and eating their lunch in the rain! They also commented: *"The students engaged really well in the Gurdwara and we all felt very welcomed."*

We also hosted Sherrier Church of England Primary School from Lutterworth. They visited a Mosque, Mandir and Synagogue. All the teachers on the day mentioned that it was important that the children get to see different places of worship as they gain so much more than they would from textbooks.

Ramila Chauhan

Church-facing Work

On Thursday 7th November I took a group of 9 Christians from St Peter's along with Surinder to the above exhibition. Surinder gave a talk about Sikhism and answered lots of questions before then showing us the exhibition which highlighted influential Sikh women from 1495 to present day, showing other influential women from around the world for the same centuries.



Everyone enjoyed the trip and found it enlightening.

*Cathryn Parsons
Churches Training Officer*

On 13th November, I learned a new word. "Unoffendable." I quite like it and will try and use it when I can. The person who described himself as unoffendable it is a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He was attending one of our speed-faithing events. The idea of these events is that people chat those who have a different religion or worldview from them. This sits neatly within the St Philip's centre's values of encounter and understanding. The risk of these sessions is that someone says the wrong thing, upsetting whoever they are talking with. When you're encountering someone for the first time, you might inadvertently say something racist or otherwise prejudiced. If someone does make this type of mistake, the aim, of course, is not to ignore the problem, but to treat it as a learning



opportunity. We all have different ways of viewing the world. As we learn to live well within our differences, maybe we should cultivate the virtue of unoffendability, of genuinely helping people understand each other and seeking the good of all.

At the end of October I took a small group of Methodist ministers to visit some other religious communities. Some of the ministers have been in post in Leicester for several years, but others only arrived in August. It gave them a good opportunity to meet and talk with colleagues from other religious groups. The purpose of the visits was to make those first steps in interfaith engagement, to get over the threshold of a different place of worship and to get to know people better.



I came away from the visits reflecting on hospitality and on the importance of eating and drinking together. The quality of conversation changes when it's over a cup of tea and a biscuit, or when you're eating a curry together.

Sometimes people belittle interfaith engagement as merely "tea and samosas." Now it's true that sometimes we default too easily to having a nice safe conversation where we don't discuss differences, and we don't ask challenging questions. But it's also the case that all relationships must start somewhere, and it's better to begin positively, through a meal or cup of coffee together. It might even catalyse a small change that goes on building cohesion through inter-religious encounters.

Tom Wilson

Memories of Living Well Together Project

We are now well under way with our Oral History project. We are developing our partnerships with the Leicester University, various heritage and communications experts in addition to getting to know our exhibition partners at Leicester Cathedral and the Leicester Museum. It's all very exciting - but the most exciting part of all is actually recording the stories of our participants. We have already been fortunate to engage with some fascinating people who have stories about growing up and living in Leicester as well as those who have moved to Leicester from other places. We are delighted that some interesting stories, thoughts and perspectives have emerged from the 15 or so people we have recorded and we're confident that the material for the exhibitions will be both informative and challenging.

Please do get in touch if you would like to know more.

Viv Froggatt

Safeguarding

Last week, I had a busy week talking with people about safeguarding. On Tuesday we hosted the always excellent The REIGN Collective for a session on abuse in faith communities. Their combination of lived experience of child sexual exploitation, and insightful analysis of the challenges of disclosure and getting statutory agencies to respond appropriately was, as always, very engaging and thought provoking.

Then on Wednesday I was at the Ann Craft Trust conference on safeguarding, listening to some great speakers, and sharing my own thoughts on the importance of safeguarding in faith contexts. Getting outside perspectives was helpful and thought provoking for me. I'm grateful for all the feedback I received on the presentation.

I've been writing a bit about the topic as well. I have a draft book, Safer Faith, Safer Followers, and on Thursday, a colleague came to the St Philips Centre and gave me some feedback. This was also helpful. As an author it's tempting to avoid showing your work to others until you think it's completed. But I find it more helpful to show people a rough draft and get their ideas before I go down any unnecessary rabbit holes. Hopefully I'll get the book to a publisher before the end of the year. Watch this space for publication details!

Tom Wilson

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