



Faiths engage

Monthly Newsletter—Issue 66—February 2025

Welcome to the latest edition of Faiths Engage

Welcome to the latest issue of Faiths Engage. You can read about some of our activities back in December, as well as a wide variety of engagements and courses that we have had in January. There are always plenty of opportunities for us to learn how to live well together.

With every good wish,

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

Training at Ridley Hall

On Tuesday 21st January, I ran the St Philip's Centre's bi-annual interfaith training session for ordinands at Ridley Hall.

In the morning, we heard from Sanatan Gopal Santonu about his life as a monk in Leicester's ISKCON Centre and from Shaimaa El Baz about her work running a madrassah and as a prison chaplain.

In the afternoon we reflected on interfaith engagement from a Christian perspective. Thanks to our two speakers and to Ridley Hall for hosting us.

Tom Wilson



World Religions Day

On Sunday 19th January, I was privileged to speak at an event held at the Centre for Oneness to mark World Religions Day. I talked about a recent visit to a place of worship in Leicester. One of the senior committee members welcomed me and said to someone who was helping run the event, "Could you please make a cup of tea for our guest." They looked to me and said, "That isn't a guest. That's Tom. He can make his own cup of tea."

This was, of course, a great compliment. It meant I was so much so part of the furniture I did not need to be given any special treatment. For me that was an embodiment of the St Philip's Centre's values of trust and cooperation. We know each other so well, our differences do not matter, we are simply learning to live well together.

Tom Wilson



Good News!



We are delighted that the Bishop of Leicester has announced that two of our staff have been appointed as Canons! Our Director Tom has been appointed Canon Theologian and our Oral History project lead - Viv Froggatt - is now a Lay Canon. Both will be installed in February at Leicester Cathedral. Congratulations to them both!

Riaz Ravat

Work with Churches

Christmas is Coming!

On Wednesday 18th December I held two 'Christmas is Coming' event sessions. Christmas crafts, and mince pies were used as vehicles to encourage talk sessions about how as people of different faiths, we celebrate Christmas in the U.K.

The first session was a group of 5 Sikhs discussing Christmas with myself and 2 other Christians – one Caribbean and one British. The Sikhs all said they wholeheartedly celebrated Christmas. They were all going to help distributing presents on Christmas Eve and serve a Christmas dinner to others less fortunate on Christmas Day. They were all planning to go home to a big family Christmas lunch afterwards with presents for the children. They all respected Christ and knew that Christmas celebrated Jesus being born. Some of the Sikhs involved in the discussion had received a blessing in Church the previous year. A good natured discussion followed as to what should be on a Christmas dinner.

The second session comprised people from many different backgrounds – myself, two Caribbean Christians, two Bulgarian Christians, one Indian Hindu, one Indian Muslim and five Bangladeshi Muslim's. One of the Caribbean ladies said that on Christmas Eve, her Island tradition was to leave out meats, cheeses and drinks for the Ancestors – even though she said that she would have better use of it than the ancestors! Christmas Eve was also the time to make and hang new curtains and paint all rooms in the house. Traditional drinks were made with sorrel and ginger.

The Bulgarians said Christmas Eve was also important to them with a big vegetarian feast being held. They told us that for Bulgarian Christians celebrating was much like in Britain with churches and homes being decorated and presents given. Christmas Day started with Mass followed by the rest of the day eating and celebrating with family.

The Hindu Indian lady told us that she usually celebrated Christmas with a meal with her family but little else. The Muslim Indian lady told us that she celebrated Christmas with lights around the house and a chance to gather with her family. She said that when growing up, Christmas lights had always been up around her village and although she was Muslim, there were Christians around and so she was aware of the meaning of the festival. The Muslim Bangladeshi women told us that they celebrated the festival time of Christmas as it was the only time of year they had off at the same time as the rest of their families. They had food, some had presents and a good get together but there was no religious element to it – it could have been any time of the year as far as they were concerned. I later spoke to a young Muslim woman who said that her family had celebrated Christmas as the birth of the prophet Jesus but that her married family did not celebrate Christmas in any way.

There were some good discussions between all the participants as to what Christmas meant to them, and all had an enjoyable time.

Cathryn Parsons



Work with Schools

At the end of last year, St Philip's Centre was delighted to engage over 200 children at Fleckney Church of England Primary School who hosted our interactive, exciting and fun packed 'Religion & Belief Roadshow'. The event takes the form of a festival with clothing, food, crafts, artefacts and music aplenty whilst a series of stalls are spread across the hall. These tables are overseen by our team of faith practitioners who inform children and answer their questions. The Roadshow worked with years 3-6 and was a highly successful occasion.



Feedback from Fleckney CofE School has been superb: *"This was an exceptional experience for our KS2 children. It offered a unique and engaging opportunity to explore nine different faiths in a hands-on, informative and interactive way. The children were fascinated by the artefacts, especially the clothes; they enjoyed asking questions and the older ones were able to make connections between different belief systems. The facilitators were knowledgeable and helped to make the learning experience fun and memorable. The roadshow deepened the children's understanding of diverse cultures and faiths as well as promoting our school Christian values of compassion, respect, responsibility, community, fairness and aspiration. Overall, it was an invaluable learning experience."*

In July 2024, BBC TV, BBC Radio Leicester and BBC Online featured our Religion & Belief Roadshow. In 2025, we will be taking the concept to South Yorkshire and to the East of England.

For more information contact: education@stphilipscentre.co.uk

Corporate Work

In January 2025, Riaz received the High Sheriff of Leicestershire and his Chaplain to St Philip's Centre. From there they visited the Leicester Hebrew Congregation and Masjid al Falah in the city as they had requested. It was an opportunity to learn about the histories of both venues as well as to learn more about the Jewish and Muslim communities respectively.



Riaz welcomed Steve Meadwell from the Centre for Social Justice to the Centre where they shared some of their organisational experiences of working in the charity and education sectors.



In January, we were delighted to welcome Revd Justin Meyers and Revd Canon Dr Andrew Thompson to the centre. Revd Justin is Director of the Al Amana Centre in Oman which works to advance interfaith relations in the Sultanate and Canon Andrew spent a considerable part of his ministry in the Middle East. The meeting was an opportunity to mutually share lessons about charity governance, running projects such as safeguarding and the impact of global issues upon local communities.

We are pleased to report that we have been approved as an RE Hubs accredited provider. This is very helpful to showcase our quality delivery and the standards which we work to.



Our research oversight group met in January to hear more about the study we are undertaking to hear about social action across the city of Leicester. This work involves Riaz, Viv and Tom mapping activities across Leicester which faith groups are undertaking. If your organisation meets the criteria and would like to contribute, please see: <https://forms.office.com/e/0HGSQfGeh9>





Dates for your Diary

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Your are invited to share an evening of experiences and conversations with 3 inspirational women on the theme #AccelerateAction

TUESDAY 25th February 2025
7.00pm until 9.00pm (doors 6.45pm)

Christchurch Clarendon Park
105a Clarendon Park Road, Leicester LE2 3AH

Three Women who have reimagined their destinies and inspired others to do the same

Our evening to celebrate International Women's Day will include the opportunity to hear interesting speakers share their experiences.



Vanessa Bardsley
Executive Principal
Avanti Fields School



Mezmin Malida
Rosmina's Outreach
Project

We'll also have a Q&A session with group chats and plenty of time for informal conversations, making new friends, and, of course, tea and cake.



Camille London-Miyo
Principal/ Co-Founder
Phoenix Agenda
Supplementary School

Everyone is welcome to attend this free event.



To confirm attendance and for more information:
Please contact Cathryn Parsons: courses@stphilipscentre.co.uk
www.internationalwomensday.com

Safeguarding:

Keeping people safe in a faith context

1.30—2.30 pm

Monday 10th March 2025

at St Philip's Centre

**2a Stoughton Drive North,
Leicester LE5 5UB**

**Email: admin@stphilipscentre.co.uk
to book a place**

**NEAR
NEIGHBOURS**
BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER



Funding Support

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AWARDS**

Finalist



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