



At the end of June our Muslim brothers and sisters began the Holy Month of Ramadan. The practice of self-control and abstinence that this Holy Month gives its participants can act as an example to us all. As people of faith, having it brought to our attention that God is more important than all material things can make us all stop and think. We all can renew our spiritual life by controlling our intake of food, and by abstaining from things which deflect our attention from God. Praying alongside people of other faiths and bringing appreciation of the treasures that are present in their tradition into our own observance, will help us deepen our understanding of both their faith and our own.

The end of Ramadan is marked on 29-31 July, by Eid al Fitr, a time of celebration in thanksgiving for the blessings that have been received through the Holy Month, and when charitable giving is especially encouraged to mark our thankfulness for what God has given us.

In many faith traditions the end of July and the beginning of August are marked by festivals based upon the harvest of first fruits. As the Apostle Paul reminds his readers 'all things come from God', and it is only right that we are thankful for them. The remembrance of 'the last things' is brought to mind in the Christian calendar through the Feasts of the beheading of John the Baptist and of the death of Mary, the mother of Jesus.

For many agrarian-based faiths September marks the beginning of a new year. The cycle of seedtime and harvest is marked in Judaism and Orthodox Christianity with September New Year celebrations. The birth of Mary remembered on 8 September, also points us to new beginnings.

Whatever our faith commitment, July and August mark the main holiday times for most people in England: let us hope that the fair weather we have as I write this will continue so that we are all refreshed and rested for the autumn and winter ahead.

Tim Frith had been the very active Chair of Horsham Interfaith Forum for many years, and it is with sadness that I pass on news of his death. He wanted his funeral (held on Thursday, 12 June at: St Peters' Church, Slinfold, Horsham, West Sussex) to be inclusive and it was agreed that it should be in the parish church in the village of Slinfold. An Anglican service it was in that context, an occasion when all aspects of Tim's life could be honoured, and include the friends and groups with whom he was involved. He is buried in the churchyard – a true country churchyard – at the service tributes and prayers were said by members of the local Muslim, Baha'i, Druid, Unitarian communities and by other friends.

Tim Firth was Chairman of the Horsham Interfaith Forum, with a life-long interest in interfaith work. He is a former lecturer in Roman Catholic theology, and was a Human Resources manager for a global accountancy firm. Tim recently published a book – *God's Favourite Colour is Tartan* - which is reviewed later in this newsletter.

Sussex Interfaith are planning an event in Brighton during October, keep watching their website or the SEEFF's website for more details of exact date and venue.

Further in the future, March 2015, will mark a SEEFF event jointly organized by the SEEFF Thames Valley sub-region and the Diocese of Oxford. Professionals from the health service and others involved with treatment are being invited, and also faith community members and mental health service recipients will also be involved. It will be a day event with talks and workshops as well as information stalls. Again, watch the SEEFF website for regular updates!

Bede Gerrard, Chair, SEEFF
seeffchair@gmail.com

The SEEFF website has now been 'brought back from Romania' and is now being managed from within the SEEFF membership. Please visit it at www.se-faithsforum.net let us know what would be helpful to have on it, and correct any of the mistakes that have crept into it during its 'sojourn abroad'. If you have a website we are more than pleased to include a link to your site from SEEFF's.

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EVENTS REPORTS

FAITH ACTION NATIONAL EVENT

EXPLORING THE ROLE OF FAITH IN SUPPORTING MENTAL HEALTH AND THE LAUNCH OF THE 'FRIENDLY PLACES PLEDGE'

On 4 March, FaithAction held a national event to celebrate the role of faith groups as communities that support and welcome those who are troubled with their mental health, and to encourage further practical steps to provide support and tackle mental health stigma and discrimination through the *Friendly Places Pledge*. Mental health problems are common and will affect 1 in 4 people in the UK during their lifetime. Faith groups and faith-based organisations have the capacity to provide **support** and **acceptance** for those struggling with mental health problems within their communities.

Speakers at the event, co-hosted by Livability and the Mental Health Providers Forum, included Baroness Jolly, a video message of support from Norman Lamb MP and Paul Farmer CEO of Mind. Other noted speakers highlighted work that is taking place in various faith communities across the country, including: **Daniel Singleton**, National Executive Director of FaithAction, **Raheel Mohammed**, Director of Maslaha, **Will van der Hart**, a Founding Director of Mind and Soul, and **Katharine Welby**, Community Mission Coordinator, Livability.

Norman Lamb MP '...We should be encouraging all faith communities to play their part in developing individual and collective understanding of mental health; building mental health friendly communities that are responsive to the needs of individuals, offering kindness, care and support to those most in need, and challenging the stigma so often associated with mental ill health. It's events like today which help us all take a step in the right direction.... I would urge all of you to sign up to the *Friendly Places Pledge* today.'

Baroness Jolly '...I belong to a faith group and I understand the value of community support that can be extended to someone with a mental health condition, and I've also understood the value of a faith in offering comfort to that person.... Events like today's launch of FaithAction's Friendly Places Initiative....allow us to shine a light on these issues and to stand shoulder to shoulder with men and women in need. We shouldn't underestimate the often profound and significant role that faith groups can play in supporting people with mental health conditions within congregations and in the wider community.'

Paul Farmer 'If we're going to change the way that we, as a society, think about mental health, we're going to have to embrace the whole of civil society. Networks of faith communities can play a huge role in having conversations about mental health.... I'd like to give you my personal support and congratulations on the pledge. I was really impressed with the intention, aspiration and ambition for what it's all about. This is about recognising that as communities we've all got a role to play, and there are things that many of us are already doing to welcome people into our faith communities who are experiencing mental health problems.'

During the event, Daniel Singleton, National Executive Director of FaithAction, launched the *Friendly Places Pledge*, highlighting how faith groups can take action to make their place of worship more welcoming, understanding and supportive of those who are troubled with their mental health.

'Through the pledge, we recognise that those suffering with their mental health should not be placed on the margins of the community. We recognise the small, intentional things that make a big difference to those struggling with mental health who are a part of your community, and encourage practical steps towards providing support and tackling mental health stigma and discrimination.'

FaithAction aims to get 100 faith groups signed up by Mental Health Day, 10 October 2014.

Download and sign the pledge - www.faithaction.net/friendlyplaces

Emel Soylu

PREVENTING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN - A CHALLENGE FOR ALL

A discussion held on Thursday, 6 March at the Europe House, London

It was held appropriately on the eve of International Women's Day, and as the UK government prepared to publish the 'modern slavery' bill. The panel of speakers from a wide range of perspectives (political, social, media...) debated how to fight against human trafficking, the roots of the problem and the measures in place to identify effective solutions at national and European

levels. The debate was chaired by **Bénédicte Paviot**, UK Correspondent of FRANCE 24. The speakers included:

Fiona Mactaggart MP, Co Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Human Trafficking and Modern Day Slavery; **Julie Bindel**, journalist, NAWO; **John O'Brien**, Detective Sergeant, Human Exploitation and Organised Crime Command, Metropolitan Police, **Mike Emberson**, Project Director, The Medaille Trust; **Huda Jawad**, Research Coordinator at Solace Women's Aid.

Special guest speakers were **Nicola Bell**, Manager of Reading-based *The Rahab Project* and **Lorraine Briffitt** – CEO, *The Mustard Tree*.

The event was organised in partnership with *Faiths Forum for London*.

Discussion focused on the need for changing legislation, continuing support for victims, supporting the NGOs who offer help to victims, better cooperation between the authorities of the involved countries as well as educating all parties.

Emel Soylu

OXFORD FRIENDSHIP WALK OF FAITHS

The annual Friendship Walk through the city of Oxford – from Synagogue to the Mosque via two of the city churches – took place on 12 June. Described in the local paper with the headline '**Faith communities come together for friendly city stroll**', the Walk (with four rickshaws for those who would find the Walk too long for them, but who were determined to join in) began with prayers from Rabbi Norman Solomon and a welcome from the Vice-president of the Jewish congregation. At the first 'staging post' in St Giles' churchyard the bells rang out to welcome us before a meditation from the Bishop of Dorchester and a song from the church choir.

At Radcliffe Square – *the halfway point* – there were refreshments to sustain us and prayers from the Hindu and Sikh communities and a meditation from a local Baptist minister. The final stop, at the Central Oxford Mosque, was where the walkers were greeted by the Imam with verses from the Qur'an and songs from the children of the Mosque. After a welcome from the President of the Mosque and prayers led by the many faith leaders, there was food for all: vegetable curry and rice cooked by members of the Mosque, and deserts cooked by members of the Jewish community.

With sunny weather and with many local dignitaries joining us including the Lord Lieutenant of Oxfordshire, the Lord Mayor, the Police and Crime Commissioner for Thames Valley, the Oxford Police Superintendent, and many others it was a happy time.

Read more and see some photos on the OxCoF website - www.oxcof.org.uk

Bede Gerrard

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

From the Hindu Network for London *Further details* info@cityhindusnetwork.org.uk

2 July, 12.00 noon Launch of the Asian Professional Awards *Attlee Suite, Portcullis House, London*

3 July, 2.00-5.00 pm The Elephant Speaks - NCHT *House of Commons, London*

5 July, 6.30-11.00 pm The Gatsby Boat Party-Fundraising by Wishful Smiles *Westminster Pier, London*

6 July, 12.30-2.00 pm Soul Sounds-monthly bhajans *The RCT Hall, Harrow Middlesex*

6 July, 1.00-5.00 pm OM DAY Conference 2014 for Unity and World Peace *London Buddhist Vihara Dharampala Building, London*

6 July, 6.30-8.00 pm Swara to Ishwara-Carnatic Classical Vocal Concert *Chinmaya Kirti, London*

14 July, 6.30-9.00 pm Spirituality for Success-Timeless Wisdom for Modern Challenges *The Hub, Westminster, London*

18-20 July, All Day Babaji's Kriya Yoga Level I Initiation *Yotopia, Covent Garden, London*

26-27 July, All Day The Winning Hand-Young Jains 10th International Convention *Canons High School, Edgware Middlesex*

26 July, 7.00-11.30 pm Asian Professionals Summer Networking Ball Grange City Hotel, London

**34th Congress of the International Association for Religious Freedom
Birmingham, August 2014 www.IARF.net**

You are invited to join over 300 delegates to the August 2014 IARF Events in Birmingham.
20-23 August We start with the **International Association of Liberal Religious Women.**

24 August Elgar Hall of the University of Birmingham

CHALLENGES FOR RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Karen Armstrong Keynote address to Congress

HG Bishop Angaelos, General Bishop of Coptic Orthodox Church in the United Kingdom

Plenary address HOW NOT TO LIBERATE THE WORLD

There will be a parallel young adult programme which will join us on visits to Religious Centres in Birmingham including the GURU NANAK NISHKAM SEWAK JATHA (which fed 5,000 at the Barcelona Parliament of the World's Religions).

Globalisation for the Common Good Initiative www.GCGI.info.org

1-4 September Waterperry House near Oxford

Including a dinner at Harris Manchester College honouring Bhai Sahib Bhai Mohinder Singh, Leader of the GURU NANAK NISHKAM.

Details Richard Boeke, IARF Congress Host Committee www.ialrw.org or www.iarf.net

To join British Chapter IARF, please send your cheque for £15 or more to IARF BRITISH CHAPTER, c/o Jeffery Teagle, Treasurer, 15 Lordsfield Gardens, Basingstoke, RG25 3EW

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

TOGETHER IN SERVICE FUND

The Together in Service Fund has funding opportunities listed on their website

http://ukcommunityfoundations.org/programmes/comic_relief/

BOOK REVIEW

***God's Favourite Colour is Tartan: Reconciling Religious Difference*, Tim Firth**

Books on religion and spirituality abound. What distinguishes Tim Firth's book from others, and explains why he had to publish it privately under his own imprint, is the daring way in which he confronts the cosy religion of many with the challenging spirituality of a few. Religion, he shows, often serves as a refuge from a hostile world, all the more comforting while yielding unthinking obedience to an absolute ecclesiastical authority. That kind of religion pales into insignificance against personal commitment to an unknowable God.

God's Favourite Colour is Tartan – a revered Scottish proverb-demands a daunting transformation both in feeling and thinking by its readers. Most of us, whether aware of it or not, are children of the Enlightenment. We search for truth in a binary way. Either an article of faith, such as 'transubstantiation', is true or false: it cannot be both. That is why we have different Churches, even if we sometimes refrain from persecuting one another, to impose our beliefs on others. Firth's answer to our myopia is what he calls 'both/and'. With delightful appropriateness Firth chooses his principal models from the Church's mystics, notably Meister Eckhart, whom the hierarchy reveres, while never daring to follow his advice, so much at variance with its own understanding. Firth cites Meister Eckhart's words: 'If the eyes of the heart were fully open and we had obtained complete knowledge, we would see that contraries are all contained finally in an all-embracing unity'. As Firth sees it, human minds set in the 'either/or' mould are incapable of understanding that opposites when seen from different viewpoints are perfectly compatible. More fundamentally, a mystery in the spiritual sense needs to be grasped by heart and mind acting in unison. The mind acting alone reduces the mysterious to arid propositions, which too often issue in the rules and dogma of de-spiritualised religions. Jesus Christ Himself spoke as a mystic, when instead of laying down precise rules; He exhorted His followers to love God and their

neighbour as themselves. And again in the less well-known passage, 'I have come to bring fire upon the earth and how I wish it were blazing already.' (Luke 12/49)

Religion, in the author's view, is a man-made framework to express mankind's spiritual yearnings. Imbedded in the human psyche, many feel there is an innate urge to reach outwards to something greater than the individual and which gives life meaning. Firth has no difficulty in demonstrating that religion is an expression of man's culture, and those beliefs, while often viewed as immutable by adherents, change frequently to fit new circumstances. In the case of Christianity Firth comments that with the sack of Rome in 410, much of the power of the Roman Emperors passed to the bishops of Rome, to Leo the Great, 440-61, to Gregory the Great, 590-614.

When the sixteenth-century Protestant reformers strove for a less showy and more interior religion, Counter-Reformation Catholicism with its Baroque churches adopted a monarchical style, while in the twentieth century there was an abortive attempt to follow much of the secular world into a more democratic style of government. Behind these changes lie what may be called the betrayals of human nature – the control of the Church by power-hungry clerics with the collusion of the laity, who too often prefer unquestioning obedience to authority more congenial than personal commitment to a challenging spirituality.

The recent bleak decline in the practice of spirituality is matched by the author's optimism about the immediate future. He sees globalisation as likely to lead to a world unity conducive to a shared spirituality. He points to growing concern about third-world poverty and the need for everyone to work together to preserve human life on the planet. Most heartening of all, Firth underlines the continuing growth in mankind's self-consciousness. In the quoted words of Julian Huxley, 'human beings are nothing less than evolution becoming conscious of itself.' That self-consciousness, as Firth has often emphasized, tends to lead to a yearning for spirituality, which gives meaning to life. Support for this view Firth shows in his chapter on the cosmos comes from scientists, who see some power greater than man at work in their field.

An optimist in the heavens, a pessimist about earthly Christianity, is how the author comes through to this reviewer. Yet the author's mystics and like-minded writers, whom he quotes so often, are already affecting attitudes within the established Churches. That is true, particularly within the Catholic Church. Some take their lead from Jesus Christ, Himself a rebel against the Jewish orthodoxy of His time. Following His words, 'I am there, whenever two or three are gathered together in my name', Eucharists or informal house Masses, are often presided over by a lay person, usually but not always a Catholic. Religion is the clergy's domain: spirituality is for true believers, as stated so often above.

God's Favourite Colour is Tartan will provoke much-needed heart-searching among readers. The amount of material covered is truly staggering. This is a book which the much less informed reviewer will need to digest at leisure. Re-reading will be a pleasure, not least because of Firth's many touching stories of his work while a priest. Particularly interesting is his insider's view of Cardinal Hume, whom he knew as abbot and with whom he worked closely as a vicar-general. It is good to know, unlike other members of the Church's hierarchy, Cardinal Hume had the courage to protest against the nauseous stream of denunciations by vigilante Catholics of clergy they branded as unorthodox, including some 400 letters fed to the voracious CDF, the Church's Stasi, against the blameless Archbishop Worlock.

John MacKrell

Tim Firth, God's Favourite Colour is Tartan: Reconciling Religious Difference, 2012, 343pp, £12.50 + £2.80 p&p, obtainable from www.godscolouristartan.co.uk Or Box 256, 33 Queen's St, Horsham, West Sussex, RH13 5AA

2014 INTERFAITH CALENDAR AND INFORMATION

JULY

- 23 July LALAT AL KADR** *Islam* Islamic Night of Destiny. First revelation of Qur'an to Prophet Mohammed. Observed during the last ten days of Ramadan. Prayers to Allah for a good destiny.
- 25 July BIRTHDAY OF EMPEROR HAILE SELASSI I** *Rastafari* Day commemorating the founder of their religion.
- 24 July PIONEER Day** *Church of the Latter-day Saints* (Mormon) Observation of the arrival of the first settlers at Great Salt Lake, USA, on July 24, 1847.

29-31 July EID AL FITR *Islam* Islamic event marking the close of Ramadan. It is a festival of thanksgiving to Allah for enjoying the month of Ramadan. It involves wearing the finest clothing, saying prayers, and fostering understanding with other religions.

AUGUST

1 August LAMMAS *Christian* First fruits celebration; Churches are encouraged to observe today by using bread baked with wheat from the first harvest at the service of Holy Communion.

Orthodox Christian Start of the Dormition Fast.

1 August LUGHANSSAD *Wicca/Pagan* Observance of the first harvest of the year involving agricultural festivals and prosperity rituals. The Christian name of Lammas is sometimes used.

5 August TISH'A B'AV *Jewish* A Jewish day of fasting in remembrance of the destructions of the Temple in 586 BC and 70 AD.

6 August TRANSFIGURATION OF THE LORD *Christian* Commemoration of the experience on Mt Tabor when Jesus' physical appearance became brilliant as His connection with Moses and Elijah became evident to the disciples. At **Orthodox Christian** services first fruits are blessed and distributed.

10 August RAKSHA BANDHAN *Hindu* Festival honouring the loving ties between brothers and sister in a family.

15 August ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY *Catholic Christian*

15 August DORMITION OF THE THEOTOKOS *Orthodox Christian*

This is the commemoration of the death of the Mother of Christ and the assurance that, through her entrance into Paradise, the same awaits all the faithful who place their trust in God.

17 August KRISHNA JANMASHTAMI-*Hindu* Commemoration of the birth of Krishna-the 8th incarnation of god Vishnu who took the form of Krishna to destroy the evil king Kansa.

29 August GANESH CHATURTHI-*Hindu* A festival honouring the god of prosperity, prudence and success. Images of Ganesha are worshipped.

29 August BEHEADING OF ST JOHN THE BAPTIST *Christian* Day that commemorates the beheading of John by King Herod at the request of his step-daughter Salome.

Orthodox Christian Observed as a strict fast.

30 August PARYUSHANA PARVA *Jains* 8-day festival signifying human emergence into a new world of spiritual and moral refinement. Marked by recitations from Jain sacred writings and family exchange of cards and letters. Celebration of the natural qualities of the soul. The eighth day (Samvatsari) is most important and is focused on forgiveness.

SEPTEMBER

1 September ECCLESIASTICAL YEAR BEGINS *Orthodox Christian* This day is observed as a day of prayer for the natural environment and the care that ought to be shown to all creation.

8 September NATIVITY OF MARY *Christian* Commemoration of the birthday of the Blessed Virgin Mary, presenting her holiness to the faithful but acknowledging the normality of her birth and life.

14 September ELEVATION OF THE LIFE-GIVING CROSS-HOLY CROSS DAY *Christian* Commemoration of the finding by the Empress Helena of the Cross on which Jesus Christ died.

Orthodox Christian Observed as a strict fast.

22 September EQUINOX-MABON *Wicca/Pagan* Northern hemisphere Wicca observance of the autumnal equinox when day and night are of equal length. A harvest festival time.

24-26 September (Sundown to Sundown) ROSH HASHANAH *Jewish* New Year: a time of introspection, abstinence, prayer and penitence. The story of Abraham is read, the ram's horn is sounded, and special foods are prepared and shared.

27 September MESKEL *Ethiopian Orthodox Christian* Ethiopian and Eritrean Orthodox Christian commemoration of the discovery of the True Cross by Queen Eleni (St Helena) in the 4th century AD

29 September ST MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS *Christian* Commemoration of the holy, spiritual, heavenly beings created to glorify and serve God. This feast remembers the dedication of the

Church of St Michael and all Angels, Mount Gargano in Apulia, Italy . Orthodox Christian celebrate this feast on 8 November

29 September-3 October NAVARATRI Hindu Festival of the divine mother honouring Durga, wife of Shiva, and seeking her blessings. Also observed as a celebration recalling the days of Lord Krishna.

OCTOBER

- 3 October WAQF AL ARAFA (HAJJ DAY) Islam** Day during Hajj when pilgrims pray for forgiveness and mercy.
- 4 October YOM KIPPUR Jewish** Day of Atonement. This holiest day of the Jewish year is observed with strict fasting and ceremonial repentance.
- 4 October ST FRANCIS Christian** Francis was the headstrong son of a rich family from Assisi, who after a period of remorse for his former way of life founded the order of friars which now bears his name. He died in 1226. He is remembered particularly for his love of the natural world.
- 4 October DASARA Hindu** Celebration of victory and valour. Lord Rama is remembered as winning a victory over evil.
- 4-7 October EID AL ADHA Islam** Festival of Sacrifice. Beginning on the day after Arafa, (the most important day in Hajj ritual), a 3-day festival recalling Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son in obedience to Allah.
- 9-15 SUKKOT Jewish** Feast of Tabernacles which celebrates the harvest and the protection of the people of Israel as they wandered in the wilderness dwelling in tents. Temporary dwelling places have leaves for a roof so the sky can be seen. In temperate climates, night is spent in the booth.
- 16 October SHEMINI ATZERET Jewish** Completion of the annual cycle of reading of the Torah (first 5 books of the Hebrew Scriptures, The Law).
- 17 October SIMCHAT TORAH Jewish** Day to celebrate the reading of the Law. Synagogue services involve readings, processions and blessing of the children.
- 20 October BIRTH OF THE BÁB Baha'i** Honouring of the founder of the Babi religion, forerunner to Baha'u'llah and the Baha'i faith.
- 20 October GRANTH SAHIB Sikh** Installation of Scriptures as Guru Granth Sahib remembrance of the eternal installation of the holy books.

TAIL NOTES

SEEFF CONFERENCE, WINCHESTER

A Full report of the AGM and day meeting in Winchester will appear in the next newsletter. The talks by the main speakers will be posted on the SEEFF website with pictures of the day. Reports and pictures of other events in the South East will be available there too.

INTERFAITH WEEK, 16-22 NOVEMBER

At their meeting on 25 June the Trustees of the Inter Faith Network for the UK launched *Inter Faith Week: Celebrating 2013 and Planning for 2014*. Inter Faith Week takes place in the third week of November and has now become a fixture in the local and national calendar, with events to: strengthen good inter faith relations at all levels; increase awareness of the different and distinct faith communities in the UK; celebrate and build on the contribution which their members make to their neighbourhoods and to wider society; increase understanding between people of religious and non-religious beliefs. The Inter Faith Network officer said: 'This is a Week that is firing the imagination of more and more people of all ages each year. In the UK we live side by side as neighbours with people of many different backgrounds. This is a Week for celebrating the positive aspects of how we coexist and for strengthening our common bonds. It encourages new links and friendship. It enables people to learn more about their neighbours' faiths and beliefs. It brings people together to volunteer in their local communities. It encourages discussion – including about areas of commonalities and shared values, areas of difference, and also some of the more difficult questions that face us today.'

Inter Faith Week 2014 It is expected that this year many different kinds of organisation will be holding events to mark the Week: faith groups; inter faith organisations; non-religious belief bodies; businesses; sports organisations; local authorities; Police and Fire and Rescue Services; schools and Standing

Advisory Councils on Religious Education (SACREs); universities and colleges; hospitals; businesses; voluntary organisations; chaplaincies; and others. Inter Faith Week 2014 will have a special focus on events involving young people or with an intergenerational dimension, and some ideas for events are included in the short report. Organisations in many areas are already planning their Inter Faith Week events for 2014. Just one local example is Dacorum Interfaith Network in Hertfordshire whose Co-Chairman David Lawson said 'The aim of Interfaith 14 in November is to bring all the different faiths in Dacorum together on one day, in one place, to share with others a little bit about their faith and so help us understand and accept each other and help build friendships between communities.'

The 2013 Week saw thousands participate through over 400 events which took place in England, Wales and Northern Ireland to mark the Week – nearly 30% more than the previous year. The number of local faith communities, local authorities and civic bodies involved with the Week more than doubled. The spread of activities was wide: from faiths volunteering together on social action projects and fundraising together for charity, to faith trails and open door days at places of worship; from debates and dialogues to multi faith sports matches; from exhibitions and festivals to hands-on workshops to learn more about different faiths.

TIPS AND IDEAS FOR INTER FAITH WEEK EVENTS

Many different kinds of events are organised for Inter Faith Week.

Here are some ideas to inspire those considering running an event

- **A church and a gurdwara arrange exchange visits** for their congregations
- A mandir hosts ***an inter faith dialogue event***, inviting members of other local communities
- A local inter faith organisation and local faith groups ***hire a coach for a 'faith trail'*** visiting five places of worship in their city
- **A restaurant features** for a week ***special dishes linked to*** each of the faiths in its area
- **A vihara or synagogue arranges a special open-day event**
- **A school works with its local SACRE and local inter faith group to host an 'inter faith day'** with opportunities to talk with local members of different faiths about why good inter faith relations are important
- **A national faith community representative body develops a short leaflet about** the basis for involvement by its members in inter faith activity
- **A student union works with all the student religious groups** in its university to put on a forum on ***'What our faiths say about the environment'***
- **A regional faith forum holds an event involving** faith groups across its region
- **A mosque hosts a Muslim-Christian dialogue event**
- A faith-based charity holds ***a joint fundraising event with a charity from a different faith tradition***
- A local inter faith group holds ***a joint event with a local Humanist group*** on 'What do I believe and why?'
- **A multi faith chaplaincy in a college** of Further Education works with students and staff to put on a ***special Inter Faith Week exhibition***
- **A 'dine at mine' event** people of different faiths coming together for a meal
- The ***local paper and radio station host daily slots*** during the Week for presenters of different faiths to talk about their faith and also what this teaches them about getting on well with people of other faiths
- An academic centre runs ***workshops on 'scriptural reasoning'***
- A national inter faith organisation runs ***a series of talks*** on university campuses
- **A gardening / horticultural workshop** in which older members teach younger members of the community on how to grow their own fruit and vegetables.
- **A skill-share week**, in which different skills-such as baking, ICT skills, jam making, gardening, mechanics, photography-are shared with different age groups in the community

WHAT ELSE MIGHT HAVE BEEN IN THIS SEEFF NEWSLETTER?

Who do you have who could

send in a report of an event your organisation has run in the last three months?

Do ask them to send it me at seeffchair@gmail.com

I look forward to seeing it in the next issue – and so could you!

Bede Gerrard