

Flourish

FRIENDSHIP • DIALOGUE • COOPERATION



ANNUAL UPDATE
JULY 2019 - JUNE 2020



Welcome to 'Flourish'!

Thinking back to the revelry of last year's One Big Picnic, who would have predicted that a year on we'd be in the midst of a global pandemic, unable to visit family and friends, let alone gather and share food with many hundreds of people in George Square?

Contents

- 1 Contents & Welcome
- 2 Who we are & What we do
- 3 COVID-19 Response
- 4 Faith and the Climate Crisis
- 5-6 World Interfaith Harmony Week
- 7 Faith to Faith / Faith and COVID-19
- 8 Scriptural Reasoning / Understanding Antisemitism Dialogue
- 9 Interfaith Food Justice Network
- 10 One Big Picnic
- 11-12 Weekend Club
- 13 Scottish Interfaith Week in Glasgow
- 14 Training

The last few months have been hard in multiple ways and many have lost loved ones. Interfaith Glasgow staff have been fortunate to be able to continue our work from home, while countless others have – at significant personal risk – staffed our hospitals, care homes, and shops; delivered supplies and collected refuse; and provided the many other essential services that have kept us going. From all of us at Interfaith Glasgow: we are profoundly grateful.

As restrictions begin to ease, we will go on seeking opportunities to bring people together in ways that respect the continued need for physical distancing and will turn our attention to facilitating interfaith dialogue on the question of what has been learnt and to what kind of 'normal' we wish to return. Do join our mailing list so as not to miss chances to be part of the conversation.

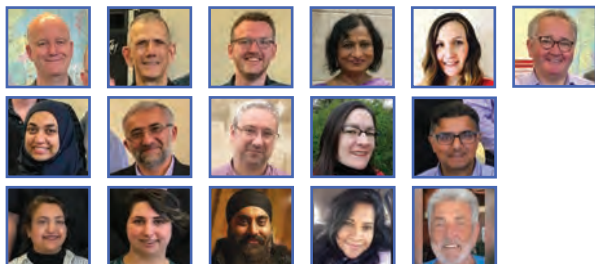
Reflecting on the year prior to lockdown, we are now all the more aware of what a privilege it has been to work with partners to facilitate so many wonderful occasions for face-to-face friendship-building, dialogue, and cooperation. We are also proud to have had those efforts recognised through our winning of the Community Development Award in CEMVO Scotland's Ethnic Minority Impact Awards 2019.

As ever, we could not do what we do without the support of our funders and our many amazing volunteers, whose dedication is truly humbling. The next year is not likely to be easy, but the outpouring of community spirit we have witnessed over the last few months leaves us in little doubt that we can get through this together and once again show that people make Glasgow.

Rose Drew, CEO
Philip Mendelsohn, Chair



Who we are



Interfaith Glasgow Board



Interfaith Glasgow Office Team

Interfaith Glasgow is an award-winning charity promoting positive engagement between people of different religions and beliefs in Glasgow.

Our small staff team is directed by our board of trustees and supported by a fantastic group of volunteers. Our focus is on grassroots community development. The board of trustees is predominantly comprised of members of Glasgow's diverse faith communities — individuals who are well-integrated within their communities and enthusiastic about promoting positive interfaith engagement.

INTERFAITH GLASGOW BOARD

BACK ROW: (from left to right) **Rev Roy Henderson** (Christian – Church of Scotland), **Philip Mendelsohn** (Jewish, Chair), **Anthony Allison** (Christian – Roman Catholic, Treasurer), **Manjula Math** (Hindu), **Emma Leighton** (outgoing 2019, Buddhist), **Gordon Matheson** (outgoing 2020, Co-opted Member)

MIDDLE ROW: **Safa Yousaf** (Muslim – Sunni), **Azzam Mohamad** (Muslim – Shia, Vice Chair), **Kleber Machado** (incoming 2020, Christian – Church of Scotland), **Maggie McTernan** (incoming 2020, Christian – Episcopal Church), **Abdul Aziz** (Muslim – Sunni)

FRONT ROW: **Ruby Bhopal** (outgoing 2019, Sikh), **Saba Forsyth** (outgoing 2020, Baha'i), **Rajpal Singh** (incoming 2019, Sikh), **Nelum Jayakody** (incoming 2020, Buddhist), **William Dereck Redfern** (incoming 2020, Baha'i),

INTERFAITH GLASGOW OFFICE TEAM

Front Row: (from left to right) **Katie Sproull** (Project Leader), **Sabah Aslam** (Events and Communications Volunteer), **Philip Mendelsohn** (Chair), **Magdalen Lambkin** (Development Director), **Lynnda Wardle** (Programme Manager), **Nate Lindgren** (Fundraising and Communications Volunteer [not pictured])

What we do

We aim to promote and facilitate constructive engagement between people of diverse faiths and beliefs — religious and non-religious — so as to help create a better-connected, safer, and more harmonious city for all.

Believing that interfaith is for everyone, we organise a wide range of events and activities so that we can bring people together in ways that appeal to their interests, allowing them to connect more deeply with other individuals and communities. Our work focuses on three (often overlapping) forms of engagement:

Friendship-building

Through social gatherings of various kinds we bring people of all ages together to meet their neighbours from diverse backgrounds, so that, through familiarity and shared experience, bonds of friendship are built that help to overcome fear and suspicion.

Practical cooperation

We create opportunities for people from different faith and belief traditions to connect with those from other communities around issues of common concern in order to work together to tackle shared problems.

Faith and belief dialogue

We seek to create spaces for people to be open with each other about values they cherish and to share their deepest held beliefs and practices, allowing mutual understanding and trust to deepen.

COVID-19 Response

To provide comfort and demonstrate interfaith solidarity, we produced two short films to be shared on social media. The first - 'We are Together' – was viewed thousands of times. It featured ten faith leaders from across Glasgow's diverse communities offering messages of comfort and support to people of all faiths and none (www.shorturl.at/dNTUX). The second film offers words of heartfelt thanks from a wide range of religious and community leaders across Glasgow to NHS staff and all frontline workers. www.shorturl.at/frvFM

Shifting our efforts online, we have continued to facilitate dialogue events. Due to the closure of St Mungo Museum of Religious Life and Art during lockdown, we suspended our 'Faith to Faith' series (see p. 7) and have instead developed an online dialogue series: 'Faith and COVID-19'. This series has sought to help people maintain a sense of connection with others,

The coronavirus pandemic has been a global tragedy and we are deeply saddened by the loss of life and the suffering it has caused. However, we have seen remarkable resilience among local communities and we have adjusted our efforts to help where we can. The promotion of friendship, dialogue, and cooperation has remained at the heart of our work as we respond to the **challenge of COVID-19.**

combatting loneliness and isolation, whilst tackling some of the particular challenges that the pandemic has presented (see p. 7).

We have also seen a greater need than ever before for the cooperation that the Interfaith Food Justice Network facilitates (see p. 9). During the crisis the network has grown and we have serviced more frequent online meetings for the sharing of information and support in relation to emergency food provision, helping groups across the city meet the challenges presented by the pandemic.

Our Weekend Club for refugees, asylum seekers, and

new migrants (see p. 11-12) has also moved online, thanks to our committed team of volunteers, with monthly virtual events that offer social connection, respite, and advice to families facing particular challenges as a result of the crisis.

We will continue to create opportunities for people from diverse communities to connect and cooperate, and to navigate a way through this difficult time.



Faith and the Climate Crisis

As the urgency of the climate crisis becomes increasingly apparent and the scale of impending suffering and loss more widely understood, and as Glasgow prepares to host the COP26 UN Climate Summit (now postponed till November 2021), we have made the climate crisis a priority.



Faith communities have valuable resources to bring to bear when it comes to addressing the climate crisis constructively. Religious narratives can articulate powerfully why we should care about the climate crisis and can offer helpful perspectives on the root causes of the crisis and the spiritual transformation necessary for us to live with greater wisdom and compassion with respect to the environment. Religions, moreover, have spiritual and pastoral resources to bring to bear when it comes to the potentially debilitating grief, anxiety, and despair many feel with respect to the climate crisis.

And, at a very practical level, faith traditions have the power to motivate and mobilise large social networks so as to bring about effective action.

With all this in mind, we have been engaging with wider civic society and with European partners and have been working closely with Eco Congregation Scotland, Interfaith Scotland, and other organisations to set up the COP26 Interfaith Working Group, which - as part of the COP26 Civil Society Coalition - aims to develop an interfaith response to the hosting of COP26 in Glasgow.

The scale of the climate crisis can seem overwhelming and it is easy to feel powerless, so, with two dialogue events in February (for World Interfaith Harmony Week - see p. 6) and March 2020 (as part of our Faith to Faith series – see p. 7) we have been honing in on what we can do and, in particular, what we can do together, by reaching out across religious and cultural boundaries. We will continue to work to ensure that faith community voices are heard in the search for the solutions we so badly need.

World Interfaith Harmony Week

Thinking Globally, Acting Locally

We marked World Interfaith Harmony Week (WIHW) 2020 with a trilogy of events that sought to address three pressing global challenges: rising levels of prejudice and hate crime; climate change; and the growing need to welcome and support people displaced by conflict and poverty.

WIHW provided a perfect opportunity to bring people from diverse faith and belief backgrounds together to recognise our interconnectedness with

those facing the same challenges elsewhere; to work together to address those challenges' locally; and to see our local efforts within the global context, standing in

solidarity with all those who seek to create a better world. Watch the short film documenting our WIHW trilogy here: www.shorturl.at/frjX1

1. Upstanders not Bystanders

Upstanders not Bystanders was a response to growing prejudice and hatred, here in the UK and abroad. The event sought to empower people to act effectively should they witness a hate crime. Fear of escalation and uncertainty about how to respond often result in people becoming bystanders. So this event sought to give people the tools to act. We wanted to create space for people to think

“every workplace/school/friend group should have a chance to go to this event”

through in advance – with people from other traditions – how they might respond under pressure. Participants heard from expert speakers and from those with lived experience of religiously motivated hate crime. Then, in groups, worked together to develop strategies for challenging hate speech as it is happening.



2. Together in a Crisis

Together in a Crisis: Faith and Climate Change invited people from diverse backgrounds to come together to discuss important aspects of the climate crisis and to explore what an effective interfaith response might look like. Topics included: lifestyle change, engagement with COP26 in Glasgow, coping with despair and grief, and

questions around what types of direct action are appropriate. Participants heard from four speakers and then had the opportunity to engage in dialogue in small groups. We look forward to supporting further interfaith engagement on the climate challenge as COP26 approaches (see p. 4).



“it was a pleasure to see all these people bringing amazing ideas together”

3. New Scots Welcome Gala



“It is very lovely to see...one place where everyone is together, everyone is equal and they respect everyone”

New Scots Welcome Gala highlighted the need to welcome and support the growing number of people displaced by conflict and poverty. More asylum seekers are dispersed in Glasgow than anywhere else in the UK.

We worked with our Weekend Club volunteers and hosts at Castlemilk Community

Church to offer a warm interfaith welcome to newcomers and to combat social isolation by creating a space where new friends and helpful connections could be made. This free, festive, family-orientated event brought together approximately 130 people to share a meal, find out about the community support available in Glasgow's South East, and engage in fun activities together.

We were delighted to have support from local elected officials for this series. Glasgow's Lord Provost, Philip Braat, praised the “range and depth of engagement”, while James Dornan MSP (Member of Scottish Parliament), said that he was

“deeply impressed” by our “innovative means of bringing different faiths together”. Councillor Graham Campbell said that Interfaith Glasgow “provides the only space I know where people from multiple faith perspectives have an open space

to address major issues that have an impact locally and globally”. We will continue to work to develop that “open space”, in faithfulness to our belief that “interfaith is for everyone”.

Faith to Faith

This monthly dialogue series, delivered in partnership with St Mungo Museum, has tackled themes relating to faith, belief, and society – many suggested by participants.

We explore a wide variety of topics, from light-hearted subjects such as faith and music, to more challenging topics such as faith and mental health,



LGBT+ people of faith, and sectarianism.

These events are an opportunity to learn more about these subjects through hearing from two or three speakers from different

“Very good, necessary conversations, thanks for providing this space!”

backgrounds who can offer particular insights, and by sharing views and experiences during group discussions. The atmosphere is friendly and relaxed (and there is always tea and cake!).

Faith and COVID-19 Dialogues

In response to the coronavirus pandemic, this online dialogue series has sought to help people maintain a sense of connection, combatting loneliness and isolation, whilst tackling some of the particular challenges the pandemic has presented.

Our first event - ‘Staying Connected at a Time of Physical Distancing’ - allowed people of all faiths to learn about some of the innovative ways different communities are connecting, practising, and praying during lockdown. Not only did we hear from local places of worship, but

the online format allowed us to connect with speakers in London and New York. The second event - ‘Sources of Solace’ - was more personal, as people from diverse traditions shared their sources of solace, from prayers and passages of scripture, through to art and photography. Our third

event in the series will use the format of Scriptural Reasoning (see p. 8), as we hear from three speakers – Jewish, Christian and Muslim – on the theme of ‘solitude’ as it relates to the experiences of Moses and Jesus in the wilderness.

Scriptural Reasoning



Scriptural Reasoning (SR) is a method of interfaith dialogue which facilitates a deeper understanding of others and their traditions through a focus on their scriptures.

Participants explore short sections of scripture in turn, giving equal time to each. First they listen to a speaker and then, in small groups, they share with one another how they 'reason' with the text, applying it to modern life. We hold two kinds of meetings using this method:

meetings limited to Christians, Muslims, and Jews, who share a common heritage and are able to explore themes and figures from these Abrahamic faiths together in some depth; and others that are open to everyone and include texts and speakers from diverse traditions. We have also

experimented this year with using the format of SR to explore the words of inspirational individuals rather than scriptures. There's a wonderful atmosphere of honesty and friendship at SR meetings and frequent laughter. People learn about differences as well as similarities, both between and within the traditions, and often comment on how much they have learnt about their own traditions as well as those of others.

Understanding Antisemitism

Difficult Questions in Jewish Christian Dialogue

This initiative has brought together a group of 16 Jews and Christians to explore together difficult questions that aren't often discussed in interfaith settings.

Working in partnership with the West of Scotland branch of the Council of Christians and Jews, we have delivered four dialogue sessions since May 2019. The initiative grew out of the recognition both of rising antisemitism and evident confusion, disagreement, and anxiety about what antisemitism consists in, particularly in

relation to criticism of the State of Israel. This is an area where feelings and tensions can run deep and where discussions are often polarised and hostile. We identified a need for carefully planned and facilitated dialogues where the primary aim is increased understanding (not consensus); where the emphasis is on listening; and where

space is made for nuance and ambivalence. The small and confidential nature of these dialogues has allowed the group to grow in mutual trust and honesty. They aim to meet again, when circumstances allow, to consider how their learning can be shared with others.

Interfaith Food Justice Network

The Interfaith Food Justice Network (IFJN) is coordinated by Interfaith Glasgow in partnership with Faith in Community Scotland's Community Development Team.

The network brings together local groups and diverse faith communities, on the basis of a shared belief that "access to food is a basic human right, and it is our duty and honour to do what we can to ensure everybody can access food with dignity" and a shared commitment to "work...together side by side for effective change" (Interfaith Food Justice Declaration: www.bit.do/foodjustice).

Normally, we host bi-annual IFJN networking meetings to allow people involved with community and emergency food initiatives from diverse backgrounds to come together to find out about each other's work, to gain an insight into the factors contributing to our unjust food system, and to consider where mutual support is possible. The



network's development group meet monthly to shape the focus of the work and to support the delivery of One Big Picnic (see overleaf).

With the onset of coronavirus, cooperation across the network has increased dramatically and provided a lifeline for many. The WhatsApp group has doubled in size during the pandemic and now brings together over 50 groups engaged in food provision. Daily shout outs for help are met with impressive alacrity and fewer resources are wasted because groups are sharing their surplus and avoiding duplication. Fortnightly Zoom meetings provide an opportunity for people to put faces to names, and to discuss the challenges they are facing.

“It opens new doors and gives hope”

Our work with the IFJN means we have been well-placed to direct people

to available support and we are currently working with a number of IFJN groups to produce a short film promoting the new 'Glasgow Helps' helpline and website, which is connecting people to the many groups working across the city to meet the variety of needs that the pandemic has exacerbated.

See: www.glasgowhelps.org

“The level of cooperation is fantastic”

As the city seeks to rebuild, we will work together to call for food justice

at the heart of the recovery. To find out more about the IFJN visit www.facebook.com/interfaithfoodjustice or get in touch!



One Big Picnic

One Big Community

One Big Picnic is an annual, volunteer-led, free community meal at the heart of the city in Glasgow's George Square. People from all walks of life, communities, and backgrounds are invited to come together to enjoy delicious food, diverse entertainment, and a wee blether.

This event is an initiative of the Interfaith Food Justice Network (see p.9). It is coordinated by Interfaith Glasgow and supported by numerous volunteers, community groups, funders, businesses, donors, faith communities and others in a huge team effort, driven by the shared desire to create a space



where everyone feels truly welcome. The event is open to all and aims to celebrate Glasgow's diversity and to emphasise unity, regardless of religion, culture, age, disability, sexual orientation, or economic status.

The 30th June 2019 saw the third and biggest One Big Picnic yet! 20 diverse faith and community groups came together to deliver 12 food stalls and wonderful activities - all united around the shared belief that everyone has the right to enjoy good food and feel part of one big community. The day began with heavy rainfall, but volunteers battled through it to set up and, just as it was time to start serving food to the public, the rain clouds miraculously cleared and a wee



ray of sunshine peeked through! The music tent showcased a steady stream of talented performers from different backgrounds and numerous

“
Food unites. Food brings us closer.”

craft activities, henna, and the chance to try on a turban or hijab meant there was something for everyone. The event ended with a fantastic Gatka (Sikh martial art) performance accompanied by dhol drummers. Watch a brilliant short film of the event here: shorturl.at/labkx

Though it may have to wait till we've bid good riddance to COVID-19, we're looking forward to the next One Big Picnic, when we can all be together again!



The Weekend Club

The Weekend Club is an interfaith response to the social isolation experienced by refugees, asylum seekers, and new migrants who arrive in Glasgow, often with little or no English or money, unable to work and struggling with the effects of trauma.

Over the past 12 months, we have hosted 10 Weekend Club events with approximately 260

“it brought back good memories of back home... thank you guys so much for this day”

newcomers attending from all over the world, including Syria,

Iran, Iraq, Nigeria, Egypt, Sri Lanka, Libya, China and Somalia. Family-friendly events provide a unique opportunity for 'New Scots' to get to know Glasgow and Scotland better, make new friends and improve their English.

Over the last year, our programme has included: a picnic at Bellahouston Park



with St Leo's RC Church; a Summer trip to Balmaha and Loch Lomond; nature trails and a BBQ in Mugdock Country Park; a dialogue and workshop on the climate emergency and refugee experiences; a climbing session for Weekend Club young people; an event with the Mental Health



Foundation encouraging refugee civic participation; participation in IG's annual Family Fun Day (see p. 13); a trip to see classical Christmas concert 'Santa's Grotto'; and our 'New Scots Welcome Gala' (see p. 6).

“It's a great way to meet other families, enjoying and having fun with each other”

In virtue of COVID-19 restrictions, the Weekend Club has ventured into virtual space, beginning

with a Lockdown 'Show and Tell' session on Zoom (complete with data top-ups to enable participants who do not have WiFi to engage in the event).

One of our volunteers reflected on the event: "I loved hearing the children talk about their toys and special things ... also hearing them sing and chat! Some very talented singers out there!"

Our fantastic interfaith team of dedicated volunteers work hard to plan and deliver our events, and this year, in addition to regular volunteer planning meetings, we enjoyed a team building away day at Loch Lomond and Luss and a volunteer appreciation 'Bring and Share' fundraising ideas session in January. We continue to involve refugee participants in planning our programme and to collaborate with other agencies and faith communities in delivering our events. If you would like your faith community to be involved in supporting the Weekend Club (by hosting, volunteering, providing food, making a donation, or in some other way), do get in touch: weekendclub@interfaithglasgow.org



Scottish Interfaith Week in Glasgow

Scottish Interfaith Week 2019 was brimming with exciting events across Scotland, 33 of which took place in Glasgow, many on the week's theme: 'Eat, Share, Love'.

We kickstarted the week with a special Faith to Faith event which took us 'on tour', away from our usual venue at St Mungo Museum. Participants visited places of worship where food plays a special role: Glasgow Mandir and Glasgow Central Gurdwara (and ate exceptionally well in both locations!). Midway through the week, we welcomed many familiar faces to our Interfaith Civic Reception at Glasgow City Chambers, where Bailie Elaine Ballantyne gave a warm welcome, stressing the City's support for interfaith engagement. We also delivered an interfaith dialogue event, hosted by National Rail, entitled 'What Calls us to Action?', where local activists talked about the great leaders who have inspired their activism.

The week's finale was, of course, our annual Interfaith Family

“What an incredibly special event, to have so many cultures and faiths together in this brilliant space.”

Fun Day, and with over 260 attendees and a further 44 people volunteering their time, it was our busiest yet! We had arts and crafts tables hosted by volunteers from eight faith traditions: the Baha'i faith, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Paganism and Sikhism. Children participated in activities from making dreidels and mala beads, to painting diya lamps and symbolic stones. Our popular 'Try it On' area gave people the opportunity to learn about and try on items of dress from Jewish kippahs, to Indian saris, Muslim hijabs, Sufi and Sikh turbans, and church altar vestments. Attendees also enjoyed classical and contemporary Indian dance performances



by children's dance group, Jhankar Beats. And to top it all off, everyone ate delicious curry for free!

Scottish Interfaith Week continues to be a highlight of our calendar and we look forward to SIFW 2020 (whether we're online or by then meeting again in person). Watch this space and keep up to date at:

www.scottishinterfaithweek.org



Training

Interested in improving your organisation's understanding of religious and cultural diversity or of working with refugees and asylum seekers but don't have much time available? Interfaith Glasgow can help! These 1-3 hour sessions can be tailored to your needs.

1. An Introduction to Working with Refugees and Asylum Seekers

- What do the labels 'refugee', 'asylum seeker' and 'migrant' mean? Definitions and rights explained
- Why do people flee and how do they claim asylum?
- What is integration?
- How can we help create a welcoming city?

2. Cultural Sensitivity: an Introduction to Working with People from Different Backgrounds

- Knowledge about other cultures
- Consideration - sensitivity regarding diet, customs, and traditions
- Understanding cultural stereotypes, bias, and power
- Valuing difference: an asset-based approach
- Adapting behaviour and effective communication

3. Religious Diversity and Interfaith Engagement

- Religion and Belief as a Protected Characteristic
- Religious demographics of Glasgow
- The necessity of interfaith engagement
- Creating a faith-friendly environment and space for dialogue
- Interfaith engagement in Glasgow

"Excellent session giving an insight into ... why interfaith engagement is necessary. Tips on creating a faith friendly environment and guidelines for promoting and supporting dialogue between people of different beliefs were useful as these could be put to practical use within the work environment."

Ashurst Law Firm



If you're interested,
drop us an enquiry at:
info@interfaithglasgow.org

Interfaith Glasgow would like to say a big thank you to all our funders:



We would also like to thank The Merchants House of Glasgow, St Margaret's Newlands, the Alma and Leslie Wolfson Charitable Foundation and all the other organisations and individuals who have made donations to support our work.

If you would like to donate, please visit our website to set up regular payments or make a one-off gift. Thank you!

Drop us an email to join our mailing list.

Interfaith Glasgow

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World Interfaith
Harmony Week
Bronze Medal
2018



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