



Golden Jubilee  
Young People's  
Faith Forum  
10th June 2002



Report





Golden Jubilee Young People's Faith Forum  
St. James's Palace, 10th June 2002

REPORT



## Introduction

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One of the official events to mark The Queen's Golden Jubilee was the Young People's Faith Forum. This all-day event took place, by permission of Her Majesty, in the State Apartments of St. James's Palace on Monday 10 June 2002. It was preceded by an evening session at the participants' London hotel on Sunday 9 June.

Eighty young people, aged between 16 and 24, came together from England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to explore what it is to be a young person of faith living in the United Kingdom at the beginning of the 21st Century. They also discussed how faith motivates service to the community.

The Forum was a unique occasion which generated considerable enthusiasm and goodwill among those who took part and the faith communities generally. Many have suggested further inter faith activities, particularly involving young people. We very much hope that more work will be undertaken in this crucial area, helping ensure that the Forum leaves a beneficial legacy.

This report is the official record of the Forum. We hope that it will be a useful first resource for those planning events which bring together young people from the different faith communities to learn about each other, explore common values and work on joint projects. Event organisers are welcome to discuss their plans in greater detail with those who worked on the Golden Jubilee Young People's Youth Forum and contact details are given at the end of the report.

Golden Jubilee Office,  
Department for Culture, Media and Sport  
October 2002

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<sup>1</sup> Reproduced from the official brochure distributed on the day

## Background

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During the planning of the Golden Jubilee celebrations Buckingham Palace and the Government were particularly keen that the diversity of faiths within UK society at the beginning of the 21st Century should be reflected in the celebrations. A consultative meeting was held at Buckingham Palace on 25th September 2001 to discuss how this could be brought about, and senior representatives of all nine historic faith communities present in the UK were invited. The Golden Jubilee Office (GJO), The Prince of Wales's Office, the Home Office, No.10, Lambeth Palace and the Inter Faith Network<sup>2</sup> were also represented at the meeting, which was chaired by The Queen's Private Secretary.

One idea that emerged was a special Reception for the faith communities at Buckingham Palace, to be given by The Queen and The Duke of Edinburgh. This unprecedented occasion duly took place on the evening of 10th June 2002, with a multi faith guest list of over 700, most of whom were nominated by the faith communities. At the end of the evening the Archbishop of Canterbury read out a message of Loyal Greetings on behalf of all the faith community leaders and presented this to Her Majesty. The occasion won highly favourable comment within the faith communities.

Another idea was that the faith communities should organise their own Golden Jubilee events, and reflect the significance of the occasion in their religious services at the time of the Jubilee Weekend (1st-4th June). A letter conveying this suggestion was therefore sent by the GJO to the faith communities, and a number of celebratory events and services took place hosted by all nine of the historic faiths. The Queen and other members of the Royal Family also visited places of worship or took part in celebratory events hosted by the different faiths.

At the 25th September meeting the faith community representatives also suggested that there should be an event especially for young people from all nine historic faith traditions, and that this should focus on faith and on the Jubilee themes of 'service' and 'community'. They envisaged this as a key part of the celebrations. The role of the GJO was to bring this proposal to fruition, and the Golden Jubilee Young People's Faith Forum was the culmination of this initiative.

<sup>2</sup> The Inter Faith Network for the UK (IFN), a body founded in 1987 to link inter faith initiatives and develop good relations between people of different faiths living in this country.

## Consultative arrangements

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Following the September 2001 meeting, a Core Planning Group was assembled comprising representatives of GJO, IFN, Buckingham Place, The Prince of Wales's Office, the Home Office, Lambeth Palace and No.10. This met five times to discuss and sign off key stages of the planning process. On a day to day basis the GJO liaised closely with the IFN and other bodies including the Department for Education and Skills, the devolved administrations, St.James's Palace, the COI (which provided the technical equipment for the Forum), the private companies responsible for printed materials, catering and photography, and the hotels where the participants were accommodated.

In January and February 2002 separate consultative meetings were held with the Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh faith communities, and a joint meeting with the Bahá'í, Buddhist, Jain and Zoroastrian communities, to ensure that the arrangements for the Forum, the proposed composition of the participants and the subjects for discussion met with their approval. These were also attended by IFN staff.<sup>3</sup>

The GJO also kept in regular touch with key contact individuals in each of the faith communities, listed below. The role of these consultants included helping identify the older participants from their communities, clearing their presentations and assisting with the selection of scriptural quotations. Their assistance was also valuable when a small number of participants identified through other routes (see page 15) withdrew and replacements had to be found quickly.

<sup>3</sup> Those who took part are listed among the acknowledgements on p.62-63

## Faith community contacts

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<b>Bahá'í:</b>	Hon Barney Leith Secretary General Bahá'í Community of the UK
<b>Buddhist:</b>	Mr Paul Seto Co-ordinator Network of Buddhist Organisations (UK)
<b>Christian:</b>	Dr David Goodbourn General Secretary Churches Together in Britain and Ireland
<b>Hindu:</b>	Bimal Krishna das Secretary National Council of Hindu Temples <sup>4</sup>
<b>Jain:</b>	Dr Natubhai Shah Founder President Jain Samaj Europe
<b>Jewish:</b>	Mrs Jo Wagerman OBE President Board of Deputies of British Jews
<b>Muslim:</b>	Mr Iqbal Sacranie OBE Secretary General The Muslim Council of Britain
<b>Sikh:</b>	Mr Indarjit Singh OBE Director Network of Sikh Organisations (UK)
<b>Zoroastrian:</b>	Mr Dorab Mistry President Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe

<sup>4</sup> On behalf of Mr Om Parkash Sharma MBE, President, National Council of Hindu Temples, who had attended the 25th September meeting

## Structure of the Forum

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### Sunday 9th June

The participants stayed at the Thistle Victoria hotel the night before the event in order to get to know each other, their facilitators and GJO/IFN staff before the Forum itself began. Accommodation consisted of twin rooms which were shared by participants of the same gender and age group but different faiths. Where possible each participant was paired with someone whom they did not know.

Before dinner there were talks from the Head of the GJO on the Golden Jubilee celebrations and from Indarjit Singh OBE, Director of the Network of Sikh Organisations, on the wider context of inter faith co-operation. Mr Singh's talk also explained the link between the Forum and the Shared Act of Reflection and Commitment by the Faith Communities of the UK which had taken place in January 2000 in the House of Lords as part of the Millennium celebrations.<sup>5</sup>

Following dinner the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport met some of the faith representatives involved in the consultation process. She then addressed the participants, thanking them for their involvement and wishing them well in their discussions, before taking questions and meeting some of them. Finally photographs were taken of the different faith groups, which served as a good ice-breaker.

The meeting room was decorated with ten special standing panels created especially for the Forum: one for each faith, with photographs originally commissioned for the New Millennium Experience, and one featuring the Act of Commitment by representatives of the faith communities of the United Kingdom at the House of Lords in January 2000. At the end of the evening the panels were moved to St.James's Palace for the next day's Forum.

### Monday 10th June

The programme for the day is reproduced on page 11. The Forum was held in the State Apartments of St.James's Palace, and was chaired by James Naughtie from the BBC. At the beginning of the morning session, the theme of which was Faith, there was a video message of support from The Prince of Wales, followed by words of welcome from the Rt Rev Tom Butler, Bishop of Southwark and IFN Co-Chair. These are on pages 12-14.

One older participant from each of the nine communities then spoke briefly about his or her experience of growing up as a young person of faith in the UK, and about aspects of his or her faith's perspectives

<sup>5</sup> See p.20 for further information about this event.

on service to the community. During these talks, quotations from the different faiths were projected onto the screen. The presentations and quotations are reproduced on pages 25-31 and 56-57.

The first session of syndicate discussions then took place, followed by a report-back session where one younger and one older participant from each group outlined their two or three key conclusions. There was then a buffet lunch, during which BBC and Christian Aid videos on religious and inter faith themes, and a PowerPoint presentation of scriptural quotations from the faiths (created for the occasion by RE Today), were shown in one of the rooms. These quotations are on pages 57-61.

At the beginning of the afternoon session, the theme of which was Service to Community, there were four talks from different individuals engaged in voluntary work with a faith dimension. These introduced the afternoon topic and encouraged the participants to think about the issues that they would be discussing in their groups. The presentations are reproduced on pages 32-40. They were followed by the afternoon syndicate discussions and report-back. A full transcript of the points made at both syndicate sessions is on pages 44-53.

At the end of the Forum there was a plenary discussion and an opportunity for participants to place ideas for inter faith activities in a special box for consideration by the GJO and IFN. This was followed by a pause for reflection before the participants were given refreshments and the opportunity to change their clothes. Finally they were presented to The Prince of Wales, who joined them for a group photograph, before proceeding to Buckingham Palace for The Queen's multi faith Reception.

## Programme for the day

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### *Coffee*

#### **Introduction:**

Welcome by James Naughtie, Chair

Video message from HRH The Prince of Wales

Words from Rt Revd Dr Tom Butler, Bishop of Southwark, Co-Chair, Inter Faith Network for the UK

#### **Faith:**

Contributions from a young person from each of the faith communities:

Danielle Pee (Bahá'í)

Ruth Cohen (Jewish)

Manil Subesinghe (Buddhist)

Hafiz Mohammed Naveed (Muslim)

Meryl Walters (Christian)

Munveen Kaur Dhariwal (Sikh)

Gaurav Prinja (Hindu)

Farmeen Sorab (Zoroastrian)

Viren Mehta (Jain)

Syndicate discussions on growing up as people of faith in 21st century Britain

Report back

### *Buffet Lunch*

#### **Service and Community:**

Presentations on faith and service to the community:

Priya Lukka (Institute for Volunteering Research)

Andrew Ball (The De Paul Trust, a Roman Catholic homelessness charity)

Khalid Al-Mulad (Islamic Relief)

Rosalind Preston OBE (Chair of Nightingale, a Jewish residential home, and IFN Co-Chair)

Syndicate discussions focused on faith-inspired service to community

### *Tea*

#### **Conclusion:**

Report back

Plenary discussion on hopes for the future

Summing up by the Chair

### *Close*

## The Prince of Wales's video message

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The text of His Royal Highness's message of welcome, shown at the beginning of the Forum, is reproduced below and on the next page. It is followed by the Bishop of Southwark's words of welcome.

It is a great pleasure to welcome you all to St James's Palace today for the Golden Jubilee Young People's Faith Forum. I am only sorry that I could not be with you in person and that you have to endure this disembodied form of communication!

In recent years a number of organisations and projects all over the country have brought different faith groups into dialogue with each other. But never has an event been held bringing together so many young people from all nine historic faiths. I would like to thank you all for agreeing to take part.

The Queen and I share the wish that the wide diversity of faith communities living in the United Kingdom should be reflected in the Golden Jubilee celebrations. The Carnival Pageant in the Mall last week brought together people from many different backgrounds and different parts of the country and was a highly enjoyable and colourful occasion.

But there is more to celebration than just a party. An occasion like the Jubilee can be an opportunity to address important issues in a new and interesting way – looking forward as well as back. What do we mean by community? What can we as people of faith do to serve the community? How can we work together? You are here today to tackle these important questions.

You have a whole day ahead of you to discuss ideas, share experiences, and make plans. And I hope that today's event will be just the start. Above all, I hope that you will go back to your different parts of the country and turn those plans into realities.

Meeting one another and working together on shared projects is vitally important. The Prince's Trust, of which I am President, is presently working with TimeBank on a major, two-year initiative called "Respect", and after today's event I would hope that you might wish to find out more about this and perhaps to get involved.

The objective of "Respect" is to encourage young people from one faith community to make a gift of their time to groups or individuals of a different faith, and in so doing to bring benefits to the community as a whole. Over the past year, we have seen internationally,

nationally and locally all too many examples of intolerance to others. Tolerance is an easy word to pronounce, but it seems very difficult to enact in our lives. And yet it is such a tragedy that when the various faith communities have so much in common, their members should so often be divided by the different ways we have of interpreting the inner meaning of our existence.

The founders of our ancient religions, after all, were those truly enlightened souls whose own lives were the most profound examples of how love and forgiveness, both on the inner and outer planes, are the only means of breaking the cycle of cause and effect – of hatred, vengeance and conflict – and of reconciling the opposites in our relations with each other.

So, when we give a gift of time, let's remember that we are in fact united by a common bond of faith – faith in a sacred dimension beyond ourselves; faith in, for want of a better description, a divine 'essence' to the meaning of our existence; faith in the integrity of life itself.

And this bond is something infinitely precious at a time in human history when we have already crossed the threshold into a world where faith itself is denigrated, where humanity is to be redesigned in Man's, not God's, image, and Nature is to be re-engineered for the purposes of our own convenience.

Faced with the ultimate consequences of such Promethean activities, I would have thought that all people of Faith – with a capital 'F' – have **every** reason to put their differences and intolerances to one side and to unite in defence of the Sacred.

The United Kingdom may look very different today compared to fifty years ago, in terms of the range of beliefs and faiths we see around us. "Respect" and today's Forum both look forward to a society where all are treated with dignity, and where difference is to be celebrated. That is the ideal. We still have some way to go, I fear, to reach that ideal – but it is people like you who can help point the way.

I am sure you will now want to get down to the practicalities, and begin your discussions. Needless to say, I look forward to meeting you all at the end of the day before you join in the special reception being held this evening in Buckingham Palace.

It only remains for me to wish you good luck and to encourage you to contribute forthrightly and honestly. This is an important event and I am sure you will make the most of it.

## Bishop of Southwark's words of welcome

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I am delighted to welcome you all here. I am a Co-Chair of the Inter Faith Network for the UK, which has been very pleased to be working with the Golden Jubilee Office, headed by Helen Bayne, and the faith communities on this exciting project. And may I note with gratitude at this point the immense amount of work that has been put into this event by GJO staff members Warwick Hawkins, Jane Robinson and Andrew Dent among others.

To my knowledge this is the first time that young people of the Bahá'í, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jain, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh and Zoroastrian faiths have come together from right across the UK to talk about their faith and about how it inspires service to the community. You will be hearing later today from a range of speakers, including my fellow Network Co-Chair Rosalind Preston, about the importance, for people of faith, of service to the community.

This theme is of immense importance. We are not true to our respective faiths if we do not put into action their profound teachings on compassion and justice. These islands have a long history of men and women whose religion has motivated them to make enormous contributions to the social welfare of their country.

It is particularly heartening that you are discussing this theme today as young people of different faiths together. Each of us belongs firmly within a single historic faith tradition and honours the integrity of this. At the same time, we are all citizens of England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, of the United Kingdom, and, indeed, members of one Commonwealth and one world. We have a tremendous opportunity today to show how people of the great faiths can talk together, can listen to each other with respect, and can share their hopes for the future.

I hope that you will go on to be key contributors to the life of your respective faith communities and also to society around you. As Co-Chair of the Inter Faith Network and as a person with a long commitment to inter faith relations in this country, I also hope that you will go on to be future inter faith bridge builders and that, secure in your own faith, you will also go on to play a significant part in dialogue and social co-operation between the faiths in this United Kingdom.

## Composition of participants

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Forty young men and forty young women were identified and agreed to participate in the Forum. 64 of these participants were lower-sixth formers aged between 16 and 18, nominated by state, independent and faith schools all over the UK (or, in the case of the four smallest faith communities, nominated directly). Sixteen were older, aged between 19 and 24, and also nominated by the faith communities. The lower-sixth age group was chosen because of their comparative maturity and willingness to engage.

The break-down of faith communities within this total, agreed with the communities, was as follows: two Bahá'í, three Buddhists, thirty Christians, ten Hindus, two Jains, seven Jews, fourteen Muslims, ten Sikhs and two Zoroastrians. Unfortunately two young men from the Sikh community were not able to attend on the day. Care was taken to ensure that all the main Christian denominations were represented, as was Shia Islam and both the Orthodox and Progressive Jewish traditions. Among the sixteen older participants, who had a mentoring role with their younger colleagues, the split was eight Christians of different denominations (including one each from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland) and one from each of the other eight faiths.

Of the 64 younger participants, seven came from Scotland, six from Wales and four from Northern Ireland. They were nominated by the educational authorities or inter faith bodies in these countries according to their own procedures. Of the 47 lower-sixth formers from England, thirty came from the state sector, eight from faith schools (both state-maintained and independent), five were nominated directly by the four smallest faith communities and four came from the non-faith based independent sector. This distribution was roughly proportional to the numbers of students attending schools in each of these sectors throughout England.

For the state school participants, sixteen key LEAs in areas with large non-Christian populations were each asked to identify a suitable school. The GJO then invited the head teacher of each school to nominate one or two pupils. The gender, faith background and geographical region of each nominee was specified in a template which the GJO developed in order to ensure an even geographical balance, an equal gender split and a suitable faith distribution. The Independent Schools Council nominated the four private schools that were each asked to provide a pupil; and Anglican, Roman Catholic, Methodist, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh faith schools were nominated by the faith communities and approached by the GJO for nominations.

A full list of participating schools is on pages 64-65.

## The syndicates

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For much of the morning, and again in the afternoon, the participants were split into syndicate groups, to give an opportunity for everyone to contribute to discussion of the issues. Each group had ten participants, including two older participants (one Christian and one from another faith), plus a facilitator and a note-taker. The facilitators were qualified RE teachers, identified with the assistance of Lat Blaylock of the Professional Council for Religious Education, employed by the GJO on a consultancy basis.

The faith, gender and geographical composition of the eight syndicates is shown on the following page. The main points they made are on pages 44-53.

### Syndicate split

Older participants are indicated in **bold**.

L = London	S = Scottish	W = Welsh	NI = Northern Ireland
SW = South West	SE = South East	EE = East of England	WM = West Midlands
EM = East Midlands	NW = North West	YH = Yorks & Humb	NE = North East

#### SYNDICATE 1 (Maroon)

**S Christian male**

**SW Bahá'í female**

NW Christian male

NW Christian female

W Hindu female

NW Hindu male

L Jewish male

EM Muslim male

L Muslim female

SE Sikh female

#### SYNDICATE 2 (Red)

**NW Christian female**

**NW Hindu male**

NI Christian male

EE Christian male

SE Christian female

NE Hindu female

S Muslim female

WM Sikh male

YH Sikh female

SE Zoroastrian male

## SYNDICATE 3 (Orange)

**W Christian female****L Buddhist male**

L Christian female

EM Christian female

YH Christian male

WM Hindu female

S Jewish male

NW Muslim male

SE Muslim female

W Sikh male

## SYNDICATE 5 (Dark Green)

**L Christian male****SE Jewish female**

NI Christian female

W Christian male

NE Christian female

L Hindu female

L Jain female

NW Muslim male

WM Muslim male

S Sikh male

## SYNDICATE 7 (Light Blue)

**EE Christian male****EM Sikh female**

SW Buddhist male

S Christian female

SW Christian female

EM Hindu male

NW Jewish male

WM Muslim female

L Muslim female

L Sikh male

## SYNDICATE 4 (Light Green)

**WM Christian female****EM Jain male**

NW Christian male

SE Christian female

SE Christian male

WM Hindu male

S Jewish female

NI Muslim male

YH Muslim female

S Sikh female

## SYNDICATE 6 (Dark Blue)

**SE Christian female****YH Muslim male**

WM Buddhist male

S Christian female

SW Christian male

L Christian male

L Hindu female

NW Jewish female

S Muslim male

WM Sikh female

## SYNDICATE 8 (Lilac)

**NI Christian male****L Zoroastrian female**

SE Bahá'í male

EE Christian male

W Christian female

WM Christian female

NW Hindu male

L Jewish female

W Muslim female

S Sikh male

## Advance materials

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Once the participants had been identified they were each sent a pack containing a background paper, joining instructions, a formal invitation to take part, an invitation to the Buckingham Palace Reception and other material. Also included was a paper containing some questions which the participants were required to consider as preparation for the Forum. This is reproduced below.

### PREPARATION PAPER

#### Introduction

1. The Golden Jubilee Young People's Faith Forum is a special event which forms part of the official Golden Jubilee celebrations. Its aims are:
  - To celebrate the Golden Jubilee of Her Majesty The Queen;
  - To enable a discussion by young people of different faiths to take place on key themes of the Golden Jubilee: faith, community and service;
  - Together with the other religious elements of the official Golden Jubilee celebrations, to highlight the importance of faith in national life in the United Kingdom and the value of inter faith co-operation between the different faith communities;
  - To offer inspiration, and a model, for other youth forums around the country.
  
2. What you have to say on the themes of faith, community and service will be important and of interest to other participants. As general preparation for the event, and to enable you to play an active part in the discussions, you will find, in the boxed sections below, a number of questions. Please reflect on these during the coming weeks, discussing them with friends of the same (and if possible other) religious traditions. You should write down your reflections and discuss these with a RE teacher in your school or college before coming to the Forum.

#### The United Kingdom – a place of many faiths

3. Christianity has been the main religion in these islands for many centuries and remains so today. However, the UK is also now home to people of many of the world's historic faith traditions. It has greater religious diversity than any other country in the European Union.<sup>6</sup> Some communities, such as the Jewish community, have made their

<sup>6</sup> Source: Religions in the UK, ed. Paul Weller, p.23

homes here for several hundred years. Others have settled or grown significantly in number more recently, particularly with migration since the 1950s. Most young people of the various faiths have been born here but some have arrived from other countries more recently. Coming to this special Golden Jubilee event will be participants from the Bahá'í, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jain, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh and Zoroastrian faiths.

### **World views**

4. The different religions have distinct understandings of the nature of the divine (or of ultimate reality – not all religions believe in a personal deity), of the origins and end of the cosmos, and of the purpose of human life.

**IN WHAT WAYS IS YOUR FAITH IMPORTANT TO YOU?**

**HOW EASY IS IT TO FOLLOW YOUR RELIGION IN THE UNITED KINGDOM IN THE 21ST CENTURY?**

### **Guidance for Life**

5. The teachings and traditions of the different religions give guidance to their followers on how to live an ethical life: how to be true to one's faith in the ways one deals with other people and in the ways one contributes to society. These are sometimes called their basic "values".

**PLEASE BRING WITH YOU TO THE FORUM A SHORT QUOTATION OR PASSAGE FROM YOUR RELIGION'S SCRIPTURES OR TEACHINGS WHICH INSPIRES ITS FOLLOWERS TO GIVE SERVICE TO THE COMMUNITY.**

6. The ideal of service to the community can be seen very clearly in the lives of key figures in a religion – both in past times and today.

**ARE THERE PEOPLE YOU ADMIRE IN YOUR FAITH COMMUNITY WHO WORK OR WORKED IN THE PAST FOR THE WHOLE COMMUNITY AND WHO INSPIRE YOU? BE PREPARED, IF ASKED, TO TALK BRIEFLY ABOUT ONE OF THESE.**

**WHAT KIND OF SOCIETY DOES YOUR FAITH ENCOURAGE ITS FOLLOWERS TO CREATE, AND WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP BRING IT ABOUT?**

## Common values

7. Although there are significant differences in the teachings of the different religions on the “big issues” such as the divine, ultimate reality, or the origin of the universe, some important “values” within their ethical teachings are held in common. At the time of the Millennium, on 3 January 2000, people of all the major faiths in the UK and the Prime Minister and others came together for a special event at the House of Lords as part of the official celebrations. This was the Shared Act of Reflection and Commitment. It ended with the following Act of Commitment led by the Archbishop of Canterbury and leaders of all the faiths:

In a world scarred by the evils of war, racism, injustice and poverty, we offer this joint Act of Commitment as we look to our shared future:

We commit ourselves,

as people of many faiths,  
to work together for the common good,  
uniting to build a better society,  
grounded in values and ideals we share:

community,  
personal integrity,  
a sense of right and wrong,  
learning, wisdom and love of truth,  
care and compassion,  
justice and peace,  
respect for one another,  
for the earth and its creatures.

We commit ourselves,

in a spirit of friendship and co-operation,  
to work together  
alongside all who share our values and ideals,  
to help bring about a better world  
now and for generations to come.

**WHAT WOULD YOU SAY ARE FIVE OF THE KEY VALUES  
OF YOUR RELIGION?**

**HOW DOES YOUR RELIGION ENCOURAGE YOU TO BE AN ACTIVE  
AND RESPONSIBLE CITIZEN?**

## **Inter faith understanding and co-operation**

8. The different faith communities in Britain are working hard to ensure good inter faith relations. Your religion will have an organisation or organisations that have a special responsibility for this.
9. The UK has a number of national inter faith organisations and initiatives. Sometimes they focus on relations between two or three faiths (for example, between Christians and Hindus or between Muslims and Jews) or, like the Inter Faith Network for the UK, they may involve all the main faiths.
10. You may have, in your local area, a council of faiths or an inter faith group that works to promote understanding between the different faiths.

**IT IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT THAT THE DIFFERENT FAITHS  
ARE ABLE TO COEXIST WITHOUT MISUNDERSTANDING,  
PREJUDICE OR CONFLICT.**

**WHAT ARE SOME POSSIBLE WAYS THAT YOU THINK  
UNDERSTANDING AND CO-OPERATION BETWEEN PEOPLE OF  
DIFFERENT FAITHS COULD BE INCREASED?**

**FIND OUT ABOUT AN INTER FAITH INITIATIVE (SUCH AS A LOCAL  
COUNCIL OF FAITHS) IN YOUR CITY, TOWN OR AREA OR ABOUT HOW  
YOUR FAITH COMMUNITY IS WORKING FOR GOOD INTER FAITH  
RELATIONS AT NATIONAL LEVEL.**

**BRING WITH YOU TO THE FORUM AN IDEA FOR A LOCAL PROJECT  
ON WHICH YOUNG PEOPLE OF DIFFERENT FAITHS COULD WORK  
TOGETHER OR A PROJECT WHICH COULD BE WORKED ON BY TWO  
OR MORE PLACES OF WORSHIP FROM DIFFERENT RELIGIONS.**

## **Community**

11. Reflecting the Jubilee themes, the Forum is focusing on "faith and service to community". Before you come to the forum, it would be helpful if you could think about the following questions about "community":

**WHAT MAKES A COMMUNITY – SHARED BELIEFS? SHARED  
LIFESTYLE? SHARED BACKGROUND?**

**WHAT CAN YOU DO AS A PERSON OF FAITH TO TACKLE PROBLEMS  
YOU SEE AROUND YOU?**

**HOW CAN WE IMPROVE CO-OPERATION WITH PEOPLE WHO HAVE  
NO RELIGIOUS FAITH, SO AS TO WORK FOR THE COMMON GOOD?**

**Books**

12. You may want to talk to your school or college's Head of Religious Education about some basic advance reading that you can do about any of the faiths which will be represented at the Forum that you feel you do not know much about.
13. One useful book which your local library may have is Religions in the UK: A Directory 2001-2003, edited by Paul Weller, University of Derby, 2001 (ISBN 0 901437 68 9). This has a chapter about each faith, written with the help of members of the relevant faith community.

**Contacts**

14. To get the details of organisations from your faith community that have been involved in advising on the Youth Forum and who can give further advice and support, ring The Inter Faith Network for the UK on 020 7388 0008, or email the Network at: [ifnet@interfaith.org.uk](mailto:ifnet@interfaith.org.uk). The Network may also be able to help you get in touch with local inter faith initiatives in your area.

May 2002

## Article by Inter Faith Network

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A printed brochure was produced for the Forum. Alongside a programme, background note and acknowledgements, this contained messages of support from HM The Queen and the Secretaries of State for Culture, Media and Sport and for Education and Skills, which are reproduced in the Summary Report. A piece by the IFN on inter faith co-operation also appeared, and this is reproduced below and on the next page.

### **INTER FAITH CO-OPERATION IN THE UNITED KINGDOM**

#### **A place where the world's great faith traditions meet**

Christianity has been a significant part of the life of these islands for nearly two thousand years. There has also been a Jewish community in Britain for many centuries. During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the picture became even more diverse and since the early 1950s many parts of Britain have become truly multi faith. During the first fifty years of the reign of Her Majesty The Queen, the United Kingdom has become home to people from most of the world's historic faith traditions.

#### **Inter faith encounters**

As the UK has become more religiously diverse, many inter faith initiatives have come into being at local and national level. Local organisations such as the Wolverhampton Inter Faith Group and the Cardiff Interfaith Association arrange events which bring people of different faiths together to meet and talk both about their faiths and local issues. Sometimes people work together on special projects: for example, in Leicester each faith chose a special environmental project as part of a multi faith initiative in the city. Nationally, organisations such as the Council of Christians and Jews or the World Conference on Religion and Peace work to bring about deeper understanding between different faiths. Some encourage joint responses on international and national issues.

#### **What is inter faith discussion or dialogue about?**

Sometimes people dismiss inter faith dialogue as "just people talking". To say "**just** talking" misses the point. Talking – and listening – is vital because it gets us a long way towards breaking down the kind of ignorant prejudice and intolerance that can, at its worst, lead to personal abuse or attacks or even, in some situations, to conflict. The more we talk together, the better. Without talking and listening, there can be little understanding. Without

understanding, little genuine respect. Today's Forum is a very special example of faiths coming together to talk: it is the first time in the UK that so many young people of all the major faiths from across the country have come together in this way to talk about faith issues. It is therefore a very significant first!

Work for inter faith understanding is sometimes criticised by those who think it means "selling out" or compromising your principles. But inter faith dialogue is **not** about compromising one's integrity. It is a chance to dispel the misconceptions we and others may have about each other's faith. Dialogue is both about identifying common ground and about finding ways to discuss genuine disagreements. Although there is a natural desire to share our most deeply held convictions, it is not right, in inter faith dialogue, to set out to convert people from one faith to another. Genuine dialogue requires us to respect the other person's faith perspective as well as the integrity of our own faith.

*It is often said by those who have talked with people of other faiths that it has led them to understand their own faith more deeply.*

## **What's next?**

You may feel inspired by today's event to do something to help increase inter faith understanding in your part of the country. This might be:

- writing a piece for your local paper about the Forum and about the importance of inter faith initiatives;
- arranging a mini "forum" in your own school or college or one also involving nearby schools or colleges;
- getting in touch with an organisation already running inter faith projects;
- a project of the kind that the *Respect* campaign is backing, where people of one faith give time to helping someone of a different faith in their area.

The Inter Faith Network for the UK links the UK's national inter faith organisations and local inter faith groups and councils of faith, as well as the representative bodies of the faith communities which have helped organise this Forum. You will find details about the Network on the next page and its office can put you in touch with inter faith initiatives that might be of interest to you.

*We hope you will be a future inter faith bridge-builder, and the Inter Faith Network looks forward to hearing from you about any inter faith initiatives you go on to be involved in!*

## Presentations by young faith representatives

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Transcripts of the presentations given by the young representatives of the nine faiths during the morning session now follow.

### **Bahá'í presentation** – Danielle Pee

At the age of 11, I was daunted by the prospect of starting secondary school. Not only would I have to make new friends, I would also probably be the only Bahá'í in school because there are so few of us in the UK.

However, despite my worries about my situation, I found growing up as a Bahá'í extremely revolutionary. In the world around us, all the time we are bombarded with bad news. But the Bahá'í message is one of hope not just for myself as a Bahá'í, but for the entire planet. "Our writings say let your vision be world embracing."

The empowerment and encouragement I get from this concept of the Bahá'í faith is helped by my belief that youth can move the world, that young people have played a central part in my faith right from its very origin.

The Bahá'í faith asserts that as youth we are blessed with enviable advantages of high energy, flexibility of mind, and freedom of movement. Bahá'í youth have a special responsibility to help re-energize the world and help it on its way to greater maturity.

We are encouraged to accept a "responsibility for moral leadership in the transformation of society." Leadership doesn't mean that we should dictate, or that we see ourselves better than anyone else, but rather that we should try to follow the teachings of Bahá'u'llah, the founder of the Bahá'í faith, by serving all people with complete freedom from prejudice.

It is said that to be a Bahá'í is to "serve mankind". To me this doesn't just mean to become a doctor, or a social worker, as admirable as that is. Bahá'ís believe that any work done in a spirit of service is worshipping God. Bahá'ís also believe that it is essential to work with people of other faiths, to associate with everyone in a spirit of friendliness and fellowship. This is why I am so pleased to be here today at this special event.

### **Buddhist presentation** – Manil Subasinghe

I have been a Buddhist all my life and attended my temple, the London Buddhist Vihara, since an early age. I regularly attended Sunday school during this time, and this experience has been influential in

moulding me into the person I am today. The temple provided me with a peaceful and tranquil environment. It taught me the basic concepts of Buddhism, its practices and its virtues and I came to learn about my cultural heritage too. I learnt to respect our elders, teachers and venerable monks.

Now, as a young adult, I am able to draw a great deal of inspiration, strength and confidence from my experiences, which enables me to cope with the variety of challenges that I may face from day to day. Quoting the Buddha, "To cease from all evil, to do what is good and to cleanse one's mind" is the essence of the Buddhist way of life. Personally, I would like to be known as a Buddhist because of my actions and conduct as opposed to any other quality.

Not only does religion form a major part of one's identity and lead one to serve others, but it also offers a refuge from the increasingly hectic and stressful lifestyle that most people lead today. I use meditation to achieve this, which is a practice in Buddhism that allows one to purify and calm the mind. I endeavour to use meditation as much as possible as, being a medical student, I am well aware of the stresses and difficulties that lie ahead of me.

People of many faiths and backgrounds live side by side in Britain today. This has given me the opportunity to meet people and have friends who belong to several different faiths. I have been able to appreciate and learn about the various religions we have in Britain today and so have come to respect and value others' beliefs, though still continuing to have the utmost faith in my own belief. This kind of understanding I feel is central to achieving a peaceful and harmonious, multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society in 21st century Britain.

In a world plagued by war and conflict, we must learn to respect and have compassion, understand and be tolerant about other people's beliefs and practices. Quoting the Buddha, "Hatreds never cease through hatred in this world; through loving-kindness alone they cease. This is the eternal law".

### **Christian presentation – Meryl Walters**

*Dwi'n sefyll fan hyn fel Cristion o Gymru!* As the language suggests I stand here today as a Christian from Wales. As a young person growing up in the town of Carmarthen, Sunday meant one thing to me – going with my family to my Welsh Baptist Chapel. Attending a place of worship was an accepted part of my life and for many more in my community. But it wasn't until my late teens that faith became personal to me and I began to experience for myself a relationship with God. I was 17 when I discovered what lies at the heart of the Christian faith: the cross of Jesus Christ. I came to realise that his death had been for me, so that I could know God for myself.

Jesus himself said that he 'did not come to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many,' and so it's this example of Jesus serving others by dying for them that ultimately motivates the Christian to live a life of service to others. Christians have responded to this example of self-sacrifice and self-giving throughout the centuries, and today that response continues. Care For The Family

who work to support family life, Teen Challenge who help alcohol and drug addicts and Prospects who support people with learning difficulties are just three examples of Christian community projects in Wales.

My experience today as a follower of Jesus Christ is of a life with direction, a sense of purpose, destiny and hope. And it's because of this continuing experience of God that I now work for a Welsh language church in Aberystwyth, visiting the elderly, hospitalised and dying and working alongside families and young people. I choose to serve because Jesus first served me. As a result, I'm always ready to join hands with others of all religions and none who are also working for good within the community.

### **Hindu presentation – Gaurav Prinja**

Growing up is often considered a challenge. Growing up as a young person of faith is an even harder challenge – particularly at a time when spirituality is no longer the norm, and many people are abandoning their traditional faiths. For this reason I believe we are all very special.

I am sure that people of all faiths face many common obstacles, such as going to places of worship where there may be very few school friends, or continually explaining to peers why you can't meet up on Sunday, or go out on Friday night, or have a drink, or eat meat. I expect most of you have, at some point, been questioned about your faith. As a Hindu, I get asked numerous questions – especially around the time of *Diwali*, the Hindu Festival of Lights, or when there has been something in the news about the Hindu faith. Thanks to the fact that Religious Education in schools now includes proper space for teaching about Hinduism, I hope that younger Hindus will have less explaining to do! In my view, teaching about the different faiths is very important for helping create a harmonious multi faith community in modern Britain.

Shri Ramakrishna Paramhansa said that 'Service to Humanity is Service to God'. I have found great pleasure in serving the community, Hindu and others. Hindus believe strongly that we have a duty to respect and care for our parents and grandparents, our local community, our nation, and the wider world, including animals and this is one reason why many Hindus are vegetarian.

In the Hindu faith there is a saying that the whole world is one family. Our tradition realised long before the arrival of global networks that the whole of the human race needs to work together, for its own well being. In the Vedas, some of the oldest writings known to mankind, there is the following verse:

**AUM SAMGACCHADHVAM SAM VADADHVAM SAM VO MANAMSI JAANATAAM**

*(Rig Veda 10.191.2)*

This means: "O citizens of the world, live in harmony and concord. Be organised and co-operative. Speak with one voice and make your resolutions with one mind." I hope that we can all contribute to making this true of our world today.

## **Jain presentation – Viren Mehta**

When I was approached to do this talk, I was asked to talk about what it is like to grow up as a young person of faith in modern day Britain. I found this quite a strange question because I have no idea what I would be like **without** my beliefs. My faith has provided me with strength when I've needed it, helped me to tell right from wrong, and given me a way of sorting out what really matters in life from what doesn't.

I was born and brought up as a Jain in Leicester. Jainism is a religion that you may or may not have heard of. It has its origins in India and is one of the oldest religions in the world. The cornerstone of Jain belief is *Ahimsa*, or 'non-violence and reverence for all life'. This means trying not to harm any living thing through action, speech and even thought, and also friendship to all – which I assure you is not as easy as it sounds. This means that Jains are strict vegetarians. Whilst many non-Jains see this as limiting and often ask how I can possibly survive without meat, I see it as a strength offered by my faith.

However, the principle of *Ahimsa* is a much more powerful notion than just non-violence. Rather than just not destroying life, Jainism encourages its active preservation. Charity plays a major role in every Jain's life – charity not only with your wealth, but also with your time, actions and feelings.

Tolerance is also important to Jains – tolerance and acceptance of all people of all races and all beliefs. It amazes me how many disputes in the world today claim to be about religion because all religions share remarkably similar themes. Spiritual guidance, love, compassion, tolerance and peace are at the centre of all faiths. I believe there is far more that links us than divides us. And I think it is this that has brought us all here today. We're here to share what our faith has brought to each of us, and to move forward by building bonds of friendship and understanding between members of different faiths to build a strong, dynamic and peaceful society that is proud of its diversity.

Thank you.

## **Jewish presentation – Ruth Cohen**

Jewish people love to explain things in terms of stories. Well, are you sitting comfortably? Then I'll begin.

There is a story that a famous rabbi called Hillel was challenged to explain the Torah (the five books of Moses) while standing on one foot. Hillel replied simply, "Whatever is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbour: this is the whole Law; the rest is mere commentary". For me, this value is at the heart of my religion. To love and care for others as you would expect to be treated by them. Jewish values, such as charity, welcoming strangers and not gossiping, have influenced me throughout my life as a Jew growing up in Britain, surrounded by others different to myself.

I grew up in Guildford, near London, where I was one of only two Jews at my school. I was fortunate in that my group of friends treated me no differently from anyone else. They were genuinely interested, albeit a little jealous, when I had a day off school each year for Yom Kippur, our Day of Atonement, where we fast for 25 hours, attend synagogue, admit to our sins and ask G-d to be put in the Book of Life for the coming year.

I feel that I have been a diplomat for Judaism. I have had the opportunity time after time to educate those who have never met a Jew before in the values of Judaism so that they can understand and become tolerant of a faith that is different from their own. However, being one of very few Jews in an area can sometimes be a lonely experience. There are times when it can be frustrating to have to explain 'why' and tempting to answer 'just because'. This is why the Jewish community, one of warmth and hospitality, is so special to me.

Now, I work for a Jewish youth group, providing educational tools and support for Jewish teenagers. Like me, and like a number of you, they are learning what it means to be proud of their own religious and cultural identity while appreciating the diversity of those around them.

I have learnt that there is a balance to be struck between being a part of a community, feeling safe, welcomed and understood, and being a part of a wider society, full of a spectrum of cultures and beliefs, each as valuable as each other.

### **Muslim presentation** – Hafiz Mohammed Naveed

I remember as a child waking up before dawn, feeling the "slap" of the crisp Yorkshire weather on my face, heading for the mosque, running back home, catching the bus for school, performing the noon prayer in class, returning home briefly and then back to the mosque. Looking back, I never felt out of place or uncomfortable moving about as a Muslim in this society.

I remember, too, praying in the workplace, in town centres, on bridges, in parks – I didn't miss a single prayer. I took this for granted, but on reflection this state of affairs has been encouraged by the tradition of tolerance and respect for others which underpins this society.

I have never felt self-conscious about my faith. Nor has my faith hindered me from taking part fully in the life of my community. I completed my A levels in a school where there were only a handful of other Muslims. I recall the visits I organised and led to the mosque for the Head of RE. Building on this experience, I today engage with members of all faith communities in local educational circles.

On a personal level my faith has given me the confidence and motivation to succeed in all aspects of my life. It has encouraged me to treat others with respect and understanding, as they too are part of God's

creation. The *Qur'an* commands its readers to “speak and engage with mankind in a beautiful manner”. Every action, no matter how small becomes sacred if done with the view to seek the pleasure of *Allah*, the Arabic name of God. Harming or despising others is impossible as we all come from God and are His creatures. The *Qur'an* also says “Do good and forbid evil” and that means we must help our fellow beings in every way we can.

I went on to university and after studying Law, I decided to go into teaching to give back to the community what they did for me. The smile on a child's face when they have achieved a task reminds me of the personal debt of gratitude I owe to this society. I cannot describe the joy I feel in my heart.

### **Sikh presentation – Dr Munveen Kaur Dhariwal**

Growing up as a young Sikh in the UK is a challenging and rewarding experience, and I am proud of the way that I have used it to my advantage. My upbringing was as English as any other, and until University I had almost only English friends. But I have an extra dimension and depth, which adds richness to my life. I feel lucky to have had a strong yet liberal family influence allowing me to draw the best from both cultures. There are certain things ingrained in me as a Sikh: my religion and language, our ways of hospitality, the importance of the family unit, the significance of marriage, and the respect due to elders. I quite often visit the *gurdwara*, just to say a little prayer and get some respite from the pressures of life!

I have made no compromises, which allows me to participate fully in both the Sikh and British culture. It would have been easy to compromise either my Sikh or my British heritage for the sake of a straighter path – as indeed some young people of faith do, but the challenge lies in knowing where your roots are, and how far you can stray before they wither.

Sikhs have a great tradition of serving the community and our history has many examples of helping those in need. We are taught from an early age to remember God's name, work hard and share what we can. This is called *vandshakna*. Another important aspect is *seva*, meaning voluntary service. The *gurdwara* is a wonderful example of this spirit in practice. Advice, accommodation and food are provided for anyone who comes – this vegetarian food is called *langar*, meaning anchor. *Seva* also extends further than the *gurdwara*, as demonstrated by the humanitarian work of Pingalwara in India which helps destitute children, and Khalsa Aid, a British Sikh overseas aid charity.

Our religion exemplifies co-operation with other faiths. Guru Nanak, our first Sikh Guru, taught us that religious labels aren't important. What counts is doing God's will as best we can. The tenth guru, Guru Gobind Singh, emphasised the importance of one human race; and our holy book, the Guru Granth Sahib, also includes compositions by Hindu, Muslim and other holy people. We are taught to respect all faiths and encouraged to work with members of all communities for the good of our society.

## Zoroastrian presentation – Farmeen Sorab

*Humakta, Hukta, Hurvesta*: Good Thoughts, Good Words, Good Deeds. These three words are the backbone of the Zoroastrian faith. I find these tenets of my religion perfectly fit in with British culture.

Zoroastrianism is not the majority religion in any country. The community is used to flourishing in an environment where they are a minority faith. Therefore, for me, growing up and integrating with all communities has not been difficult – especially because I have grown up in Wembley, London, which is a very multi faith, multi cultural area. However, the greatest challenge for me growing up in Britain has been making people aware of my faith, the issues of who I am, where I come from and what I believe in.

I have been brought up with the phrase “Parsee thy name is charity”. Parsees are a religious community of India, practising Zoroastrianism and are known for their charitable nature. Charity is one of the highest virtues and is commanded by Ahura Mazda the creator God. One of our important prayers tells us that Ahura Mazda’s kingdom is for the person who nourishes the poor. Hence Parsees have built homes, hospitals, schools, housing complexes and places of worship and it is the sacred duty of every person to preserve such institutions.

God gives to us in the same measure we give. If we do not empty ourselves, God cannot fill us up. Nobody has become poorer by being charitable. By serving the community in this way, we adhere to Zarathustra’s three eternal truths of Good Thoughts, Good Words and Good Deeds and will be rewarded in the spiritual world with “prosperity and everlasting happiness.”

The prophet Zarathustra emphatically teaches us to worship only one God, Ahura Mazda. However this does not in the least mean that another religion is bad or that one should show disrespect to or hurt the feelings people of different beliefs or look down on any person for his method of worship. A Zoroastrian tries not to show conceit or regard himself superior or better than any other human being. “Happiness to him who makes others happy” is Zarathustra’s formula and as Zoroastrians this shapes our outlook on how we coexist with others. I think it is very important that people of different faiths find ways to live together respectfully and co operate whenever we can on projects that make a difference to society around us.

## Presentations by representatives of faith-based charities

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Transcripts of the presentations given by the guest speakers during the afternoon session now follow.

### Priya Lukka, Institute for Volunteering Research

#### Faith – The Root Identity

Hi. My name is Priya Lukka and I work as a researcher for the Institute for Volunteering Research in London. Thank you for inviting me here today to talk at your Youth Forum on Faith and Service to the Community in the 21st century. I'd also like to thank The Golden Jubilee Office for hosting such an exciting event – the first time that so many young people of different faith origins have been brought together to discuss this important topic.

So, what does it mean to be of faith, serving the community and growing up in the UK today?

I'm looking forward to hearing your views on this through the afternoon. But before we begin, I would like to offer something from my own experiences of growing up as a Hindu in Leicester and to talk about the work that I have been doing at the Institute on faith-based volunteering.

At first, growing up and going to a school in the mid-1980s in a majority white community, I felt like I was a little strange – a girl whose home and faith life revolved around things like worshipping gods with elephant heads and celebrating epic Bollywood-like fables like the story of Ram and Sita. I was scared to reveal any of this to my classmates as it was not the norm in their lives, and their Christian faith beliefs seemed so much easier to understand. In fact I tried to keep most of this side hidden because at that age I couldn't easily explain the Hindu religion to them: the Gandhi philosophies of love, truth and non-violence; the importance of *Diwali* and the *diya* light that my grandmother lights every morning, symbolic of our faith in light over darkness; or the fact that all Hindu deities are manifestations of one God, but they teach us about different values in life; and of course the importance of *seva*, helping others, as a duty of faith.

At that time inter faith understanding was only just developing in Leicester – led by the fact that many minority communities were migrating here from the Asian sub-continent and Africa. There was such little understanding that many of my friends thought that all Indian people must be of the same group and in fact confused all cultural practices of Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs and Jains as being part of one Asian religion. Also, our parents – I mean my own and those of my cousins – were fearful of letting us integrate fully into British society, as they wanted to protect us from the racism that they were experiencing at work and in other areas then.

As I mentioned, at this time in the mid-1980s the ethnic make-up of Britain was rapidly changing as many minority communities were coming to settle in the UK. As a result, in the 70s and 80s many places of worship for minority communities were being built by collective communities coming together and wanting to provide a focal point for practising their faith.

So what was the result of this? Well, families like my own – through the temple – were able to establish links with fellow settlers from their communities of origin. It was through their faith community that they had supportive people around them that shared language, food, culture, ethnicity, and faith. It was here that I've seen volunteering – or as we knew it the natural desire to help each other – as a really vibrant force in the community. It was the way in which people could provide for social needs in the community; meals for elderly people; language classes; advice on immigration cases; help with job applications and housing needs.

However it is in the last couple of years that I have really been able to learn about how similar faith communities are in some of the services that they provide to the local community. Although the cultures around faiths are different I think that some of the faith values across different religions are strikingly similar. I have learnt about this through the research on faith-based volunteering that we are doing at the Institute.

The Institute for Volunteering Research is an agency specialising in looking at volunteering and community participation. The reason we started looking at faith and volunteering was that we recognised that although we were a lead organisation for volunteering in the UK, we knew very little about volunteering that takes place in faith settings – and this is really where our project came from.

We are just completing some research that has explored faith community life and service to the community in most of the main faiths across England, including Christianity, Sikhism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Judaism. Of course the issue is deeper than just volunteering, it's about how much any of us know about what takes place in a community of a faith that is different to our own, and what routes we have to finding this out. Therefore the idea behind the project was really to promote understanding between different faiths and in the voluntary sector on how people help out and help each other in these settings. Maybe in the future this could lead to charities and faith groups working together more in serving community needs.

Through talking to faith leaders and groups, we decided to look at how faith can and does inspire a kind of belonging that can lead community members to help out. We are still learning about how this motivation works, but we can see its impact through a number of examples:

- Firstly through having beliefs that can shape some people's lives, which are a kind of moral inclination to make the community/world that you live in a better place

- Through belonging to a community in which it is natural to help each other and support each other through struggle
- Through faith inspiring a concern for social justice
- Through members of faiths contributing free time to help the needy – which research from America has shown that faith groups are more likely to do.

So to find out the reality of these experiences we have been interviewing faith leaders in Luton, Liverpool and Leicester to find out about what kinds of volunteering take place in their communities. We have found examples of how people serve others in many different ways, in their own faith community or maybe in the wider local community. Many groups are also driven to help the international community of their faith or even to respond to or target wider social problems like disaster situations.

For example:

- In the Muslim community in Luton the Head Imam spoke about how people had donated money through *Zakat*, the contributory charity tax which Muslim people are called on by their faith to donate. This money helped the community to establish a free law and rights centre run by volunteers in the community for any Muslim person that was experiencing legal problems. This was particularly useful for help with immigration cases.
- At a Sikh centre in Leicester some volunteers showed us how they were running a range of services in the local community, from football clubs to a kids crèche and a food kitchen (known as *Langar*) which was open to anyone who needed a meal. They wanted these services to be open to anyone in the local community, regardless of their faith and were keen for people to see them as a community centre, not a centre just for Sikh people. They wanted to help as many people as possible and felt that ultimately they were working towards local community development.
- In another congregation, a Christian community based in a highly deprived area, the Vicar spoke to me about how many refugees and asylum seekers were being sent there. They were being placed in the many houses that no-one wanted to stay in because of social problems on the estate. Arriving with few belongings from war-torn or poverty-ridden countries, they needed some kind of support. The Vicar tried to help them through a group of volunteers in his congregation giving the refugees as much as they could, from food and advice to just simply making them feel part of the community. It was felt that what the congregation was providing was vital, especially at times when the official system failed them.
- In another community, a representative spoke about how they encouraged young people who had graduated and become professionals to use their work skills and apply them back in the community. For example, a qualified teacher could lead cultural classes for young people or an accountant could

take care of accounts as a treasurer for his/her place of worship. So we see how a person's professional skills gained through their career can then be applied back in their own community to help make the faith community stronger.

Coming back to my own experience, it amazed me that what I had seen in my own faith community – people helping each other out, people coming together to resolve problems, getting resources together to tackle issues – also took place in similar and different ways in many of the communities that I had visited. I think that if the volunteers weren't there, many of these services would not exist and needs would go unmet.

Perhaps most importantly, through the research and my own experiences I am struck by the reality that although different faith communities are working in different areas and situations, the values that uphold and inspire their participation are so similar: values of service, human kindness in society of strangers, helping your neighbour, acting on your sense of duty to help the community. Also I can see that the kinds of service that faith communities are providing are often very similar or have the aim of meeting the same social need. I would argue that there is still little understanding of this commonality. The only way that this can be understood is if there can be more ways in which people can communicate freely about the culture of their faith and the values that shape their lives. Faith can be your root identity, so why should we be scared to show it?

The danger is that if we continue to see faith community life as a kind of hidden identity, which people are scared to understand or discuss then this can lead to continued ignorance. Our research was carried out at a very interesting time, about six weeks after September 11th. The interviews that I did showed me how vulnerable some communities were because of the perceptions that people had of them or, in the worst cases, because of the real physical and verbal abuse that stemmed from these misguided and prejudiced perceptions.

So how can we bring about more inter faith understanding to challenge stereotypes and prejudice and make minority faiths feel that they have an equal place alongside the more established faiths in Britain today? There are ways in which this can be worked on, and I'm sure that you have your own ideas which I'd like to hear about. I think that having high profile people talk openly about their faith life, articles in newspapers, more television programmes depicting faith life, more films showing minority faith cultures – all of these can help. But what about at our local community level? Well, one of the volunteers that I interviewed said to me, "All our faith communities have shared visions, but different approaches because they are working in their own segmented communities. I think they want to work together more, but are not sure how to."

Hearing this and other similar comments, I have hope that people will see that the potential benefits of faith groups working together in serving the community are huge – less segregation, more

understanding, better local relations. When I have seen examples of joint faith social projects, the energy that comes from this kind of shared compassion is amazing. Idealistic, I know, but with the kind of conflicts that are escalating around the world in which some dangerous antagonisms exist between different worldwide faith communities, I think it is crucial that we seize the chance to do something at the local level in the UK, between and across communities. We are living examples of co-operation and understanding in the way that we have come together for this day – carrying this ethos on and letting it thrive is the challenge for all of us now.

### **Andrew Ball, De Paul Trust**

Good afternoon everyone, my name is Andrew Ball and I am the Sports Development Officer for the De Paul Trust. The De Paul Trust works with the homeless and young people on the margins of society. I decided to enter this line of work after seeing the work that the De Paul Trust and my local churches do with the homeless.

As well as my love of sport I have always been brought up to help people who are less fortunate than I have been in life. Working with the De Paul Trust has given me the opportunity to fulfil my role in the community and give young homeless young people, no matter what faith or background, the opportunity to fulfil their own potential.

There have been two stories that have been quite inspirational to me from a very early age. The Good Samaritan was one of these stories. The Good Samaritan showed us how many people will step over someone who is homeless or in need of help. The Good Samaritan didn't let this happen, he helped them, whether that was by giving them food or finding them a bed. This really told me that we shouldn't just step over people and over-look them just because they are different to us. We should help in any way we can and my way of helping is by setting up projects and trying to motivate them and give them a chance in life.

The second story is about a rich man who holds a big banquet and invites all of his rich friends. However none of these friends turn up so he invites everyone from the street, whether they are rich or poor. I have adapted this to include myself and sport. If I am running a sports course it would be easy to pick 20 educated 16 year olds who don't need motivating and would pass the course easily. Instead I pick 20 young people from a varied background, who may be homeless, have no motivation and may not pass the course. This means that I have gone that extra mile and given the chance to 20 young people who have never been given that chance before in their lives.

When it comes to working with the homeless it is important for every faith to work side by side and help each other. The Vincentian Millennium Partnership is one example of this. The partnership networks with ten different communities and one of their mission statements is to speak with one voice against the injustices that surround it.

Anyway I would like to finish by saying that sport is fast becoming accessible to everyone, no matter what faith, background or position in life. In the past year I have managed to involve around 350 young people from various backgrounds and faiths in some form of sporting activity. This has also encouraged them to enter football leagues, join various sports clubs and even go to college. Hopefully as more young people finish courses such as mine they can then go into the community and show their skills to others and act as role models to other young people who are in a similar situation to what they were.

Thank you for listening and enjoy the rest of the day.

### **Khalid Al-Mulad, Islamic Relief**

Islam is a religion which teaches Muslims the importance of giving. We are taught to help others, regardless of race, religion or colour.

18 years ago, I was a ten year old child attending the local mosque with my father. One Friday, Dr Hany El Banna, the founder of Islamic Relief, came to the mosque soliciting donations for the famine in Africa. Seeing Islamic Relief's work as I grew up, I was inspired to join the organisation. However, I never dreamt that one day I would be standing here as an ambassador for that same organisation. Speaking to you today I feel immense pride at representing Islamic Relief. That the organisation has become so respected as to warrant its inclusion on such an important occasion as this, is testament to the good work it has done in the last 18 years.

Islamic Relief programmes help non-Muslims as well as Muslims. As a newcomer to the organisation this was refreshing evidence of its commitment to help alleviate the poverty and suffering of the world's poorest people, regardless of race, creed or colour.

Islam teaches the importance of helping others, a message made particularly potent during the Holy month of *Ramadan* when Muslims fast to empathise, more acutely, with those who regularly go to bed hungry. The principles of *Sadaqah* and *Zakat* are two of the most important Islamic precepts. They involve giving a portion of one's own savings to those in need, in order to create a more just and equitable world. As the Prophet of Islam, Muhammed (SAW), said, "He is not one with us who sleeps with a full stomach when he knows that his neighbour goes hungry."

The very pillars of Islam also make it incumbent on every Muslim to help others. This principle is so strong that it is mentioned time and time again in the *Qur'an*, the Muslim holy book. Indeed, God said, "I only accept prayer from he who has mercy upon the poor, the wayfarer, the widow and the injured."

When I joined Islamic Relief, I quickly saw that its efforts encapsulated all of these ideals. For the first six years, it focused on providing emergency relief to victims of conflict and natural disaster. However, it was soon realised that providing short term relief was not enough. People needed to be given the

means to support themselves in the future. So, in the following years, the emphasis broadened to include long-term projects such as the provision of clean water, health services, education, orphan programmes and income generating projects.

Today, Islamic Relief works with communities around the world by helping them to recognise and use their skills in order to develop their potential. We currently work as far afield as Afghanistan, Bosnia, Chechnya and Mali and have previously worked in other areas such as El Salvador, Rwanda, Ethiopia and India. We also run seasonal food distributions during the Muslim festivals of *Ramadan* and *Eid*.

Muslims strive to gain the blessings and goodwill of God and are required to use the earth's resources responsibly. This stewardship plays a key part in the lives of Muslims. It is their mission as humans to show respect and appreciation for others by working for a better future. In a world where so many suffer, it is our duty to redress, as far as possible, the unjust balance of the world.

Islam is also a religion founded on common traditions and we are taught to respect the beliefs of all faiths. We believe in Moses, Jesus and Muhammed and all the prophets of the Old Testament. We have much in common with other Abrahamic faiths, just as we also share core humanitarian values with all other world faiths. This enhances our ability to work so closely with other aid agencies.

There are many aid organisations doing similar work throughout the world. Christian Aid, CAFOD and Sewa International are just some of the faith-inspired overseas aid agencies. Islamic Relief has worked in close and successful collaboration with many of these organisations, proving once again that in the aid world there is no concept of them and us.

I believe that faith, unity and co-operation are the driving factors behind our successes in this field. To help others is the ultimate goal. The need for tolerance and respect for our brothers and sisters of different faiths is made more relevant when we consider that disunity in the field will only prevent us from carrying out the work which is so desperately needed. I now wish to make an appeal to all the young people here today. Whatever you do when you leave school or college, no matter what your chosen career path, it is important never to lose sight of the fact that we are all members of a common family. We must always strive to work together – we are partners, not competitors.

Working together and helping others strengthen our morals whilst helping those less fortunate and this, ultimately, benefits the whole community. Strong, individual communities, working towards a common goal, make for a stronger Britain. Into the new Millennium, this strength is reflected in our multi faith, multi-cultural diversity. Britain is the sum of all its parts. We, as individuals, make this nation into the great and tolerant society that it is. We all owe a duty to strengthen our ties with the country that has nurtured our hopes, our dreams and our visions.

Everyone can play a part, without necessarily making grand gestures. As the Prophet Muhammed said, "Spread the greeting of peace. Even a smile is charity; even a good word is charity."

## Rosalind Preston OBE, Nightingale and Inter Faith Network

I describe myself as a professional volunteer – and after forty years activity in the voluntary sector I think I can claim to be truly that!

One vital thing to say about being a volunteer is that the rewards are great and I have always considered myself fortunate to be able to choose, throughout my life, where to concentrate my energies and where to involve myself in issues I consider of vital importance.

My faith, my Judaism, has shaped my life. I was brought up in a house-hold where my parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles, were all involved in day-to-day community activity – and this was never restricted to the Jewish community. Judaism teaches us that service to others is service to the Almighty and I know this beautiful concept is shared by other faiths.

Another basic teaching is to honour, respect and care for the vulnerable in our society and most particularly the elderly. That is why I am presently chairing the Board of the largest Nursing and Residential Care home in our community – a charity serving the needs of 300 elderly Jewish men and women.

Nightingale House is situated in South London, close to Clapham Common, and provides physical and emotional support for people who are reaching the end of their lives. Most are still able to enjoy life but many are very frail and sick, some are suffering forms of dementia, but they are all looked after in a loving environment and given the respect they deserve.

Life in the Home allows the residents to continue in the Jewish tradition – we have a strictly kosher kitchen which I'm sure you know is another basic principle of the Jewish faith – and there is a small and beautiful synagogue where services are conducted by our visiting Rabbi on Festivals and each Sabbath. Our Rabbi is also available to have private conversations with residents if requested and spends quite a lot of time teaching our professional staff about all aspects of Judaism.

There is a great effort made to provide a wide range of activities – to offer mental and physical stimulation – and we are greatly aided in this by over one hundred local volunteers, young and old, who spend time in the Home leading discussion groups, playing music, coming in with their dogs, taking residents out to the shops or for a drive, or helping the Care staff, at meal times, to feed those who need some assistance.

Besides my current involvement in care of the elderly I continue to devote time to my other major passions: the status of women and inter faith dialogue. It was through my work as a representative of an international women's N.G.O. to the United Nations Decade of Women conferences, back in 1975-1985, that I was first able to establish personal relationships with women from every corner of the

globe – women of all nationalities, every ethnic and religious tradition – and so began to learn the true meaning of dialogue.

This experience continues to help me to-day in my role as Co-Chair of the Inter Faith Network of the UK. The faith communities you have the honour to represent here to-day are striving to get to know each other better, to consider each other's views on vital issues affecting the lives of every citizen in this country and above all, to learn how to over-come ignorance and prejudice and replace it with respect for those of different cultures and traditions.

I do hope that many of you will find time in your busy lives to serve your own faith community with enthusiasm and joy, either professionally or in a voluntary capacity, but at the same time will give something of yourselves to the wider society and, in so doing, learn more about other faith communities, and the people who make up those communities, who together with you and me shape and share life in this wonderful country.

## Guidance notes for facilitators

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The advance materials (pp.18-22) were complemented on the day of the Forum by a briefing paper for the facilitators which set out in more detail the issues which the syndicate groups were to discuss and suggested how the discussions might best be structured. This is reproduced below.

### **SYNDICATE GROUPS**

#### **The discussions**

The facilitator's role is tremendously important and the Golden Jubilee Office is most grateful to you for contributing your skills and expertise in this way. Each syndicate group will be made up of ten young people of different faiths. These eight lower sixth formers and two "older young" participants will have met over supper on Sunday evening but will not all have had a chance to talk to each other in any depth before the group meets for the first time in the morning.

Participants come from a range of religious traditions, and may be more or less at ease with the dialogue of the day. They may include those who speak up easily, those who are slow to join in, the confident and the diffident. Good facilitation will be warm, welcoming, sensitive, good humoured, neither bland nor aggressive, and will manage limited time effectively.

#### **The facilitator's role includes:**

- Introducing oneself
- welcoming each member (at the first session asking each to say their name, faith and where they come from)
- putting members of the group at their ease, so that each one can express their perspectives clearly and with suitable confidence
- introducing the topics for each session
- asking probing questions
- drawing in all members of the group and promoting a full and significant dialogue
- moving discussion on at appropriate points
- enabling insights to be considered and shared and summing up what the young people have said.

- helping the rapporteur and the group identify and summarise 2 key points to be reported back to the plenary session.
- guiding with a light touch and avoiding contributing one's own perspectives.

### Note taking and reporting back

Discussions are being held according to Chatham House rules. This means that in the final note of the discussions, comments will not be attributed to named individuals, although it may be relevant to note the faith of the contributor in some cases.

The final note of each session, for the official record of the event, will consist of 15 summarised key points. These will be identified and written up by young civil servants who will be acting as rapporteurs for the sessions.

### The facilitator is asked to:

- speak with their two “older young” participants in advance of the first session to agree which will do the report back in the morning and which will do the report back in the afternoon.
- use the last five minutes of each session to invite the rapporteur to select and recapitulate 3 particularly important points that have come up.
- Then ask the group to choose which **two** points they would particularly like to have reported back to the plenary session (reassuring them that other points will be picked up in the note of the day).
- Explain that the report back will be done by one “older younger” participant and one sixth former of a different faith and gender. Ask for a volunteer who meets the criteria.
- Reports back should last no longer than **two minutes**. Each of the two reporters back for each group will have one minute to put their key point across. The reports back will be filmed on video and may be used for educational purposes.

### Themes of the two syndicate sessions

**The morning session** focuses on growing up as a young person of faith today in Britain.

Goals for this session include:

- In the introductions, each young person having a chance to introduce themselves, say where they are from and say to what faith they belong.

- In subsequent discussion, each young person having a chance to talk about their experiences of growing up as a young person of faith in Britain today, including addressing the questions in the advance materials:

*In what ways is your faith important to you?*

*How easy is it to follow your religion in the United Kingdom in the 21st century?*

- The young people all belong both to faith communities and to the wider community. If time permits they might also be asked to reflect on the question in the advance material:  
*What makes a community – shared beliefs? shared lifestyle? shared background?*
- The young people might also be asked, if time permits, about what they understand as the key values of their religions, but it is not necessary to cover this territory in the session.

**The afternoon session** focuses on faith and service to the community. The participants will have done a significant amount of advance preparation for this discussion (see their advance materials). The goals for this session include:

- Each participant having a chance to offer their own perspective on how their faith encourages them to serve both their own community and the wider community and *encourages them to be active and responsible citizens.*
- Each participant offering, if they so wish, the quotations from their tradition that they have been asked to identify in advance.
- Participants being invited to talk, if they wish, about a key figure in their tradition who is an inspiring example of service to the community.
- Opening up the area of how important it is for faiths to co-operate for the common good.

### **The plenary discussion on hopes for the future**

These discussions take place in the main room but the participants will be asked to move to be in their syndicate groups and to brainstorm about ideas for local inter faith projects where people of one faith can get to know and help people of another faith by working together on a project. The young people will be asked to write their ideas for inter faith projects on sheets to be provided. These will be brought and placed in a special box and fed via the Inter Faith Network into national and local inter faith organisations.

## Main points made in syndicate discussions and plenary session

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Notes were taken of the syndicate discussions and plenary discussion by non-speaking note-takers, all of whom were GJO, IFN or DCMS staff. The theme of the morning session was Faith; that of the afternoon session, Service to the Community. The topics for discussion are shown in bold. A summary of the main points made in the syndicates' discussions now follows. The opinions expressed are solely those of the young participants: they are not intended to represent the views of the Forum organisers, the Government or the faith communities.

### MORNING SYNDICATE SESSION: FAITH

#### 1) In what ways is your faith important to you?

Participants thought that faith offers the following benefits:

- Strength and support, especially in times of need.
- A meaning to individuals' lives. Rites of passage give a structure to life.
- A sense of something beyond the self.
- Commitment and conviction. There is an intrinsic human need to have a sense of purpose in all aspects of life.
- A sense of background and future – where we have come from and where we are going.
- Discipline. This need not be oppressive: faith is a complete way of life and does not restrict freedom.
- The familiarity of ritual. Everyday things can remind us of values and greater principles, and provide a structure to our lives.
- Morality. Faith and worship can teach us a way of life and embody a framework of right and wrong. Many values and principles such as compassion and tolerance are shared by different faiths.
- Guidance. Scriptural teachings and the advice of leaders/other followers of our faiths are important in helping to inform life decisions.
- The promise of an afterlife (though some came from traditions that do not believe in this).
- A sense of identity as an active member of a faith group. The bringing together of family members and the whole faith community at special ceremonial events increases respect for our faiths. Clothing and certain actions physically identify one's faith, showing strength and solidarity.
- Greater commitment at work. Doing a job well is a way of living out one's faith.

- Fellowship with other faiths. All people of faith are unified by the fact that they have faith, and we can learn and gain strength from other faiths.
- A sense of stability and personal security. There are always people who can support you wherever you are.
- A sense of local community. Having something in common with people living locally.
- A sense of culture and tradition. Much culture comes from religion, though it is possible to have many cultures within the same religion.
- A setting for education and personal development.
- A way of changing society for the better and serving the community.

## 2) **How easy is it to follow your religion in the United Kingdom in the 21st century?**

The following **challenges** to the practice of religion in the UK today were noted:

- Secular society's values and beliefs, some of which can challenge faith-based values. For example, abortion might be condemned by your religion, but society has decided that people should be able to choose.
- Homosexuality was raised as a particular instance where there could be conflict between secular views and teachings in some religious traditions, though widely differing views were expressed on this issue.
- Being religious can be isolating in the UK's increasingly materialistic society. Misconceptions are rife, for example a Muslim mentioned the perception that the headscarf oppresses Muslim women, whereas the speaker said it actually empowers them.
- Portrayal of religion in the media, especially TV, is largely negative. Newspapers are willing to give religion a bad name in order to sell their paper at the expense of responsible reporting.
- Foreign conflicts have had a detrimental effect on attitudes to, and between, certain faiths here in the UK. Mosques and a Hindu temple have been vandalised and anti-Semitism is increasing.
- Muslims have encountered particular ignorance and intolerance since September 11, although some had been asked questions by people genuinely wanting to know about their faith. This had given them the opportunity to explain the true nature of Islam.
- People who use faith as an excuse for violence scar the whole religion by causing prejudice about it.
- A young person who grows up surrounded by violence rooted in prejudice and hatred can end up becoming part of the cycle of violence.
- Some people who are not committed believers go to services just for the ceremonies or public show. Such attitudes get in the way of true belief.

- Disagreement with some of the teachings of one's faith. Doctrine can be a stumbling block if it is not understood.
- The internal struggle with the "flesh": laziness and the temptation to indulge in harmful habits. The ability to resist depends on the strength of the individual's faith and the community support available.
- Worrying about what other people think of you.
- Some religions have more practical rules than others, and the difficulty of abiding by all of these can lead to pressure to compromise or to break them.
- The older generation, especially if they migrated to this country, do not always understand the peer pressures young people face.
- Some faiths are missionary faiths, and there can be conflict between the requirement to spread one's faith and the wish to respect other faiths.
- Lack of facilities sometimes makes it difficult to follow your faith.
- There are certain historic legal restrictions affecting religious equality in Britain.
- People are sometimes asked to compromise their faiths, e.g. by not taking days off from school/work to celebrate religious festivals, working on the Sabbath. Although most participants had never been put in this position, most agreed that they would not compromise.
- Growing up in a homogenous community can lead to complacency. You could attend the festivals but still know little about your faith.

However, the following factors were widely viewed as making it **easier** to follow a religious faith.

- Religious freedom. In the UK everyone can follow the faith of their choosing.
- Outsiders can be interested in your religion and impressed by your commitment. At times of disaster, people look to any religion to help them understand.
- We live in a multi-cultural society where community strength and inter-generational bridges exist.
- Different faiths generally sympathise with and understand each other.
- Getting involved in responding to society's problems and serving the community enriches your faith.
- You can have problems or doubts initially but the challenges can strengthen your faith. As you understand your faith more, you want to share and explain it.
- Interpreting some aspects of your faith flexibly can help allow a community including people of different faiths to be built.

- Whilst there is greater diversity and tolerance of different beliefs in big cities, it can be easier to follow a faith in a rural area where only one culture dominates, since you choose simply to be religious or not.

### 3) **What makes a community – shared beliefs? shared lifestyle? shared background?**

- A community is a group of people of different faiths interacting independently but with a sense of belonging and of responsibilities, like a family. There is unity for a common purpose.
- There can be overlapping communities, e.g. school, geographical, shared beliefs and value systems. These all function as a larger community through co-operation, respect and understanding.
- Most feel part of one or more communities. It's easier to feel this way when you have a role to play, e.g. in services. Being valued as an individual within the community gives you a sense of belonging.
- Community means more than co-existence, it means friendship and honesty. Most people follow moral codes even if they are not religious.

### 4) **Other issues**

#### *Education*

- Education is very important for faith. Education in schools can help people to live together in a diverse society, break down barriers and tackle ignorance. Young people can learn tolerance and respect for difference.
- A dominant religion at school has a big impact on pupils' experience of religion. Religion and education issues therefore need to be managed sensitively.
- RE lessons can be divisive if they only focus on two or three religions, where there are pupils of other faiths.
- RE benefits from an interactive approach, e.g. visiting places of worship, bringing religion visually into the classroom and encouraging faith communities to come in and talk about their faith.
- The wearing of traditional dress can create difficulties with school uniforms.
- Joining in Christian prayers is problematic for some pupils of other faiths. Solutions that already exist are withdrawing from worship or, in some schools, separate assemblies. But these can make members of small minorities in a school feel isolated. Other solutions could include inclusive prayers, or themed assemblies which educate everyone about other issues and faiths.

- Schools should work at being inclusive. A school of mixed faiths promotes understanding, tolerance and respect.
- Single faith schools are sometimes not conducive to inter faith communication. They can inhibit interaction with other groups in society and isolate faiths from one another, making the interaction that is needed when one is older more difficult.
- However, faith-based schools can encourage spiritual thinking which can lead to a better understanding of faith in general.

#### *Inter faith dialogue*

- Inter faith dialogue is vital. It is so much easier to understand different religions if you meet their followers. Knowing people of different faiths helps dispel negative media images.
- It is important to work with other faiths, but not in ways which compromise religious principles. Inter faith worship can be very difficult if people are expected to join in the same prayers and these express or imply beliefs which they do not share.
- Co-operation should therefore be moral and ethical but not doctrinal or ritual.
- Differences between the faiths should be viewed as a positive rather than a negative, and make for richness and diversity in the country.
- People of faith need to learn to disagree on certain fundamental issues but to still be open minded with each other. If you have strong and good roots you do not need to put up fences.

#### *Other points*

- Community and cultural upbringing influence an individual's religious choice, and support is available as you develop your beliefs. However, ultimately you have to make a personal choice.
- Having diverse groups or denominations within one faith creates difficulties, though it is usually people, not doctrine, that cause problems.
- Can national and religious identities co-exist? Participants described themselves as, for example, British Muslim or British Hindu. Some thought that their religious identity was deeper. A Sikh said that it is possible to live without compromise – e.g. to be fully Sikh and fully British.
- Many participants felt that their own religion was the supreme religion which is why they practised it. They still, however respected others' choices, and thought that it is up to each individual to find their own spiritual path.
- Should religion be there primarily to serve people, and thus adapt to a changing society, or should it remain constant as a rock?

- Religions are still relevant in today's society. The principles of faith are rooted in human nature which does not change. However, by being able to evolve a religion is able to survive.
- A Hindu said that in the UK, parents actively try to instil the faith's values, with a lot more emphasis on practising one's faith, whereas in India parents assume their children will naturally absorb the religion.
- A Christian said that a religion should not be judged by its followers (with reference to sectarian discrimination in certain areas in Belfast and Glasgow).

## **AFTERNOON SYNDICATE SESSION: SERVICE TO COMMUNITY**

### **1) Why do people of faith serve others?**

- Service to the community is a key part of all faiths. Examples of how this is illustrated in each faith include the Good Samaritan for Christians, 'Good thoughts, Good words, Good deeds' for Zoroastrians and 'In the joy of others rests our own' from the Hindu Scriptures.
- Religious duty. Volunteering and charity are ways of serving God. Many faiths encourage their members to give a portion of their earnings. Faith gives you more practical options for service. Charitable deeds should be done in the name of God, not for personal benefit.
- Personal satisfaction and a sense of achievement, especially if there is some personal hardship involved. Improving self-respect.
- Rewards in the afterlife (or new life, for those faiths that believe in reincarnation).
- The concept of citizenship. Today society emphasises rights over obligations but in most religions we emphasise obligations.

### **2) What is service to the community; and in what ways can people of faith, especially young people, serve the community?**

- Service means giving of all of your resources, time and effort as well as money.
- It means putting other people before yourself. A powerful way to engender service to others is to put yourself through empathetic experiences, e.g. fasting can make you empathise with those that are short of food.
- Getting involved in small local projects, for example cleaning up the environment. These have a great impact at grass-roots level as the wider community sees religion taking action to help make things better.
- Helping within your community, for example by teaching children at the church or mosque, or helping in the temple kitchen.

- Being part of a voluntary organisation such as St. John Ambulance.
- Co-operating with other faiths on charitable and humanitarian work, e.g. disaster relief, medical research, environmental campaigning. This avoids the problem of doctrinal disagreement.
- Being a good citizen: though this is not actively 'doing' anything, you are serving your community
- Using space in places of worship for performing arts, bands etc. This could encourage people from different groups to come together, thereby fostering communication and a sense of community.

### 3) **What are the barriers to greater service to the community?**

- Some people could feel they were being 'invaded' if their place of worship were used for community events. An alternative would be to hold such events in community centres.
- In most religions there are some people who, because of the way they interpret or misinterpret their religion or for political reasons, oppose working with other faiths.
- It can be difficult to find time to volunteer but charity can range from a smile to financial support.

### 4) **General points**

- Volunteering and charity need to be heartfelt and genuine to be meaningful.
- It is important that contributing to the community is tailored to local needs.
- Local faith-based institutions often provide practical help for others, no matter what their faith is.
- Religion is not a necessary component of humanitarianism. Although it can be a motivating force, there are many altruistic people who are not religious.
- The different faith communities have similar social goals such as eradicating poverty and homelessness.

### 5) **Other issues**

#### *Faith-based aid organisations*

- Aid organisations based in individual religions can offer spiritual help as well as economic assistance. They can also be a mobilising force in encouraging charitable giving.
- They have local knowledge on the ground and greater resources.
- Organisations like Christian Aid and Islamic Relief are also recognisable to people receiving the aid.

- There is a danger of faith-based social projects taking advantage of people in a weak position or those who need charity by imposing their faith on them.
- Could single faith-based aid organisations be divisive? Might it be better to have inter/multi faith aid organisations?

#### *The environment*

- Environmentalism is about serving the planet and humanity. Humanity does not have the right to make decisions that damage the earth.
- We are inhabitants of the earth and have the duty to use natural resources wisely as God's gift. We are stewards not owners.
- Does stewardship imply conservation of resources or their use? All faiths have a tradition of "treading lightly": although you can use the earth's resources you should try to replenish them.

#### *What does it mean to be an active and responsible citizen?*

- Understanding that your responsibilities are as important as your rights.
- Belonging to a community, and the sense of service and responsibility that entails.
- Citizenship is not just about helping people, it is also about being aware of the effect of your actions.
- Being not only aware of your responsibilities but actively carrying them out.
- Abiding by the law.
- Standing up for what you believe in.
- Speaking out against injustice and persecution. Most of the faiths agree that evils such as racism should be condemned.
- Respecting and protecting the environment.

#### *Inter faith dialogue*

- We should explain our faiths to each other. This will help break down barriers of misunderstanding, prejudice and fear. Acknowledging our differences and so eliminating the fear of them is vital. We should also push our communities and elders to explain our faith to others.
- Other faiths could be invited to visit one's place of worship. Some people might find it inspirational and spiritually enriching to share in other faiths' worship. However, it causes problems for some others.
- Local activities are more valuable than national meetings which are more formal and less open.

- Practical suggestions to bring together faiths: further conferences, team building, outdoor pursuits e.g. football matches between people of different faiths (such as have taken place in Northern Ireland and between Jewish and Muslim teams).
- It is important to work with people with no faith for the common good. Atheists and agnostics should therefore have been invited to the Forum.
- Learning about other religions may cause some people to feel that they could doubt their own.
- Participants were generally aware of inter faith dialogue, usually on a local level. Examples included youth councils, film-making, museum exhibitions. Some had previously been involved in inter faith projects.

## 6) People, actions and quotations that had inspired participants

### *People and actions*

- Mahatma Ghandi, whose principle of non-violence was an inspiration to Hindus and others.
- Mr Herman, who set up a Jewish school in his home and housed Jewish refugees during the War.
- Yusuf Islam (formerly Cat Stevens), who has been inspirational because he is so well known.
- Those who give medical treatment to enemy soldiers. Links with the idea of the Good Samaritan.
- Griffith Jones, who set up schools in North Wales in the 18th Century to help local people read the Bible in their own language. By the end of his life half the population of Wales had learnt to read through his efforts.
- Martin Luther King, for his faith-inspired work for equality of all people.
- Judge Henry Lachs in Liverpool, who never compromised his religious beliefs for his career.
- Nelson Mandela, an inspirational leader for everyone but who does not promote himself as a religious man.
- John Miller, a vicar from Castlemilk in Glasgow who lived on a council estate to be among those he looked after and set up projects to help single mothers and heroin addicts.
- Mona, a Bahá'í girl who was unwilling to renounce her faith.
- Oscar Romero, a Bishop in Central America who gave up his home to live amongst the poor.
- Lord Soper, an open air speaker at Tower Hill every Wednesday and Hyde Park every Sunday for 70 years. He worked until he was 95 for what he believed in.
- Mother Teresa, for her work among the poor.
- Desmond Tutu, for his "peaceful passion".
- A local Youth Officer in a Christian church, who encourages inter-generational communication in the church and has been willing to stand up for young people.

- The founders and key figures of all the world's great religious traditions, such as Jesus, the Prophet Muhammad and the ten Sikh Gurus.
- A priest of any religion who leads by example, i.e. putting others before themselves.
- Anyone who sticks their neck out for what is right.

### *Quotations*

- Buddhist: "Even if someone tries to cut off your head...out of compassion take his misdeeds upon yourself" (Togmesaingpo)
- Christian: "Judge not lest ye be judged"; "Love thine enemy as thy neighbour" (The Bible)  
 "Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can drive out darkness" (Martin Luther King)
- Hindu: "From the unreal lead me to the real. From darkness lead me to light. From mortality lead me to immortality."  
 "An eye for an eye and the world will soon be blind" (Gandhi)
- Muslim: "This is the House of God" (The Prophet Muhammed in Medina)

## PLENARY DISCUSSION

**Speaker 1** raised the issue of how we get on with people who we think are fundamentally wrong (and said that he understood his tradition to teach that people who did not subscribe to it would not have eternal life). There can be a tendency to wallpaper over the cracks. We assume it is better to agree, but perhaps it would be better to disagree, but with respect.

**Speaker 2** read out a poem about community.

**Speaker 3** felt that new ways to resolve differences should be explored that do not involve debate over central beliefs.

**Speaker 4** spoke about the real need to break down exclusivity.

**Speaker 5** felt that it was difficult to have a fixed vision or aspiration to aspire to. Sometimes the only thing we can do is to let our faiths lead us on and hope that we get somewhere.

**Speaker 6** recognised the difficulty of organising inter faith events when each tradition has different days of the week set aside for worship.

**Speaker 7** felt that a vision for humanity could help overcome practical hindrances.

**Speaker 8** noted that it is up to young people to take the initiative in society.

**Speaker 9** felt that another event similar to the Forum should occur again.

## Messages of support

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Prominent members of the faith communities and inter faith bodies for Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales offered messages of encouragement to those taking part in the Forum. These were printed in the official brochure, and are reproduced on the following pages.

“You as young people of faith are not just a future waiting to happen. You are very much of the present and your passion and commitment will make the earth one country and all people its citizens.”

*Hon Barnabas Leith, Secretary General, Báha'í Community of the UK*

“All the great teachers of humanity show the way to unselfishness and loving-kindness towards all. This is the foundation of civilisation, and in an increasingly inter-dependent world, it is also the only sane way to behave. With increasing anger becoming one of today's most serious problems, developing a calm, clear heart and mind filled with compassion and wisdom is the course to heal every division successfully.”

*Paul Seto, Co-ordinator, Network of Buddhist Organisations*

“There is strength in belonging to a community of faith, for it gives a sense of identity with past and future. Today the challenge is to find a sense of belonging within the rich diversity of faith and culture that makes up our society. I wish you great joy in your day of conversation and meeting, and hope it encourages a continuing commitment to the search for mutual understanding and common values.”

*The Revd Baroness Kathleen Richardson, Moderator, Churches' Commission on Inter Faith Relations*

“Living in the 21st century we must commit ourselves to a culture of non-violence, respect, justice and peace. This Forum is therefore an important Jubilee event and we offer all the participants our warm encouragement.”

*Ratilal Chohan, Chairman, Hindu Council UK*

“Conduct based on ‘non-violence and reverence for all life’ is the key to happiness and peace for an individual, for the community, for the nation and for the world. It brings relative pluralism in one's thinking and leads to harmony in the community, and is thus a positive legacy of the Golden Jubilee celebrations.”

*Dr Natubhai Shah, Founder President, Jain Samaj Europe*

“We are delighted that Her Majesty's Golden Jubilee is being celebrated by a gathering which serves to promote understanding and co-operation among young people from our various faith traditions. By learning about one another and sharing experiences we can all help to bring about a better society in a world so much in need of the spiritual values which each of our faiths espouses.”

*Neville Nagler, Director General, Board of Deputies of British Jews*

“It is with great pleasure that the Muslim community of Britain celebrates HM Queen Elizabeth’s Golden Jubilee. The presence at the Youth Forum of young people from so many faith communities reflects the flourishing multicultural and religiously pluralistic nation that is Britain today. We applaud all the participants and hope that your discussions will result in many interesting new inter faith projects.”

*Dr Manazir Ahsan, Chair, Community Affairs Committee, Muslim Council of Britain*

“Today’s meeting of young people from different faith backgrounds takes place against the backdrop of continuing conflict in many parts of the world. The Forum provides a real opportunity to show that our different religions, far from being a cause of conflict, contain important guidance for true peace and justice in the world of the 21st century.”

*Indarjit Singh OBE, Director, Network of Sikh Organisations (UK)*

“It is a great joy, on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee, to learn of the young of different faiths being united in their celebrations. This first step towards working together for the common good, with respect for the “other” while maintaining one’s own identity and integrity, offers us the promise of tomorrow, today. The Zoroastrian Community is proud of all the young persons and will do its utmost to support them in the realisation of their good actions and initiatives.”

*Jehangir Sarosh, Zoroastrian Community*

“The Northern Ireland Inter Faith Forum sends warmest greetings and encouragement to all young people of faith on the occasion of Her Majesty The Queen’s Golden Jubilee. We wish you wisdom to know and believe the truths of your faith, courage to live it out in your communities and the joy of knowing that faith can make a difference in your lives.”

*Regina O’Callaghan, Chair, Northern Ireland Inter Faith Forum*

“The Scottish Inter Faith Council commends this valuable initiative to encourage young people to develop skills in expressing their understanding of their religious faith and to cultivate their ability to share this understanding sympathetically yet effectively with young people of other faiths. These abilities are at the heart of inter faith dialogue and are the foundations for its continuing development in future generations, upon which peace within communities and throughout the world largely depends.”

*Rawdon Goodier, Chair, Scottish Inter Faith Council*

“The Inter Faith Council for Wales (Cyngor Cyd-ffydd Cymru) is pleased to support the work of young people in advancing the welfare and understanding of all faiths in the UK. The encounter of youth from many parts of the country, with different experiences and backgrounds, bodes well for the future of multicultural and multi faith Britain.”

*Alan Schwartz on behalf of the Inter Faith Council for Wales*

## Scriptural quotations

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The following 'Golden Rule' quotations from the sacred texts of the nine faiths were successively projected onto the screen during the presentations given by young people during the morning session. These are followed by further quotations which featured in a PowerPoint presentation prepared by RE Today and shown during the lunch break. Both sets of quotations were approved by the faith community representatives consulted during the planning process.

### **Bahá'í**

Again, is there any deed in the world that would be nobler than service to the common good? Is there any greater blessing conceivable for a man, than that he should become the cause of the education, the development, the prosperity and honour of his fellow- creatures? No, by the Lord God!  
*Abdu'l-Bahá, Secret of Divine Civilisation, 103*

### **Buddhism**

As a mother with her own life guards the life of her own child, let all-embracing thoughts for all that lives be yours.  
*Khuddaka Patha from the Metta Sutta*

### **Christianity**

Love your enemies,  
do good to those who hate you,  
bless those who curse you,  
pray for those who ill-treat you ...  
Do to others as you would  
have them do to you.  
*Luke, 6:28 & 6:31*

### **Hinduism**

O Supreme Personality of Godhead, make me strong  
May all beings look on me with the eye of a friend  
May I look on all beings with the eye of a friend  
May we look on one another with the eye of a friend  
*Yajur Veda, 36.18*

### **Islam**

Have compassion on those who live on earth and He Who is in Heaven will have compassion on you ...  
God will show no compassion on the one who has no compassion for all humankind.  
*The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him)*

**Jainism**

Destroy anger through calmness, overcome ego by modesty, discard deceit by straightforwardness and defeat greed by contentment.

*Dasavaikalika, 8: 38*

**Judaism**

What is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow man.

*Talmud: Shabbat 31a*

**Sikhism**

One who performs selfless service, without thought of reward, shall attain his Lord and Master.

He himself grants His Grace;

O Nanak, that the selfless servant lives the Guru's teachings.

*Guru Granth Sahib, p.286*

**Zoroastrianism**

That nature only is good when it shall not do unto another whatever is not good for its own self.

*Dadistan-I-Dinik, 94.5*

**Quotations from RE Today PowerPoint presentation****Bahá'í**

Lay not on any soul a load which ye would not wish to be laid upon you, and desire not for any one the things ye would not desire for yourselves.

This is My best counsel unto you, did ye but deserve it.

*Baha 'u'llah, Gleanings, 128*

Again, is there any deed in the world that would be nobler than service to the common good? Is there any greater blessing conceivable for a man than that he should become the cause of the education, the development, the prosperity and honour of his fellow-creatures? No, by the Lord God!

*Abdu'l-Baha, Secret of Divine Civilisation, 103*

It is permitted that the peoples and kindreds of the world associate with one another with joy and radiance. O people! Consort with the followers of all religions in a spirit of friendliness and fellowship.

*Baha'u'llah, Tablets of Baha'u'llah, 22*

**Buddhism**

May all beings live in safety with hearts full of joy,

Whether weak or strong, great or small, seen or unseen,

Far or near, born or to be born,

May all beings be full of Joy.  
 Let none deceive another, or despise any being.  
 Let none by anger or ill will wish harm to another.

*Theravadin Mettasutta*

As a mother with her own life guards the life of her own child, let all-embracing thoughts for all that lives be yours.

*Khuddaka Patha, from the Metta Sutta*

By knowing the mind's true nature to be the clear light  
 And the nature of the stains to be adventitious  
 May equal love for self and others effortlessly arise.

*Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso (Contemporary Tibetan Lama)*

### **Christianity**

Love is patient, love is kind.  
 It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.  
 It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.  
 Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.  
 It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.  
 Love never fails.

*1 Corinthians 13: 4 – 8*

Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who ill-treat you ...

Do to others as you would have them do to you.

*Luke 6:28 & 6:31*

Grant that we may not so much seek to be consoled,  
 as to console  
 To be understood as to understand,  
 To be loved as to love.

*St Francis of Assisi (1181 – 1226)*

### **Hinduism**

O Supreme Personality of Godhead, make me strong.  
 May all beings look on me with the eye of a friend.  
 May I look on all beings with the eye of a friend.  
 May we look on one another with the eye of a friend.

*Yajur Veda, 36.18*

Abandon all varieties of religion and just surrender unto me.

I shall deliver you all sinful reactions.

Do not fear.

*Lord Krishna, Bhagavad Gita, 18.66.*

Non violence is an active force of the highest order. It is soul force or the power of God within us.

Imperfect man cannot grasp the whole of that Essence. He would not be able to bear its full blaze, but even an infinitesimal fraction of it, when it becomes active within us, can work wonders.

*Mahatma Gandhi, The Wisdom of Hinduism, 1932*

### **Islam**

O human beings!

We created you from (a single pair of) a male and a female, and have made you into nations and tribes that you may know one another.

Indeed, the most honoured of you in the sight of God is the one who is the most deeply conscious of Him.

Indeed, God is all-Knowing, all-Aware.

*The Qur'an 49:13*

Consider time.

The human being is indeed in a state of loss, except those who believe in God, do righteous deeds, encourage one another in patience and steadfastness.

*The Qur'an 103:1 – 3*

Have compassion on those who live on earth

and He Who is in Heaven will have compassion on you ...

God will show no compassion on the one who has no compassion for all humankind.

*The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him)*

### **Jainism**

All living beings love their life.

For them happiness is desirable; unhappiness is not desirable.

No living being likes to be killed;

it has a desire to live and not be harmed or killed.

*Acaaranga 1:2:3*

All those who are totally attached to the body, complexion and beauty in thought, words and deeds are ultimately creating miseries for themselves.

*Uttataadhyayana 6:11*

Destroy anger through calmness, overcome ego by modesty,  
discard deceit by straightforwardness, defeat greed by contentment.

*Dasavaikalika 8:38*

### **Judaism**

It hath been told thee, O man, what is good and what the Lord doth require of thee: only to do justly,  
and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.

*Micah, 6:8*

Hillel used to say:

If I am not for myself, who will be for me?

And if I am only for myself, what am I?

And if not now, when?

*Ethics of the Fathers, 1:14*

What is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow man.

*Talmud: Shabbat 31a*

### **Sikhism**

The Lord first created Light;

From the Lord's play all living creatures came,

And from the Divine Light the whole creation sprang.

Why then should we divide human creatures into the high and the low?

Brother, be not in error:

Out of the Creator the creation comes:

Everywhere in the creation the Creator is:

The Lord's Spirit is all-pervading!

The Lord, the Maker, hath moulded one mass of clay into vessels of diverse shapes.

Free from taint are all the vessels of clay.

Since free from taint is the Divine Potter.

*Guru Granth Sahib p.1349*

One who performs selfless service, without thought of reward, shall attain his Lord and Master. He  
Himself grants His Grace; O Nanak, that the selfless servant lives the Guru's teachings.

*Guru Granth Sahib p.286*

**Zoroastrianism**

In this world may obedience triumph over disobedience,  
May peace triumph over discord,  
May generosity triumph over niggardliness,  
May love triumph over contempt,  
May the true-spoken word triumph over the false-spoken word,  
May truth triumph over falsehood.

*Yasna 60.4*

O Ahura Mazda,  
and O Spirit of Truth,  
Do grant me and my followers  
Such strength and ruling power  
That with the help of the Benevolent Mind  
We may bring to the world  
Restful joy and happiness  
Of which thou, O lord, art indeed  
The first possessor.

*The words of the Prophet Zarathustra, Yasna 29.10*

That nature only is good when it shall not do unto another whatever is not good for its own self.

*Dadistan-I-Dinik 94.5*

## Acknowledgements

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The following acknowledgements page appeared in the official brochure for the Forum.

Thanks are also due to the following individuals and bodies.

<i>Bahá'í Community</i>	Hon Barney Leith, Secretary General, Bahá'í Community of the UK Carmel Momen, National Public Information Officer, Bahá'í Community of the UK
<i>Buddhist Community</i>	Paul Seto, Co-ordinator, Network of Buddhist Organisations
<i>Christian Churches</i>	The Revd Gethin Abraham-Williams, General Secretary, Cŷtun (Churches Together in Wales) The Very Revd Kevin Franz, General Secretary, Action for Churches Together in Scotland Dr David Goodbourn, General Secretary, Churches Together in Britain and Ireland Jeremy Harris, Archbishop of Canterbury's Secretary for Public Affairs The Revd Bill Snelson, General Secretary, Churches Together in England Dr David Stevens, General Secretary, Irish Council of Churches
<i>Hindu Community</i>	Ramesh Kallidai, Secretary, Hindu Council UK Bimal Krishna das, Secretary, National Council of Hindu Temples Nitin Palan, Swaminaryan Hindu Mission (UK) Kishor Ruparelia, European Secretary, Vishwa Hindu Parishad (UK) Om Parkash Sharma MBE, President, National Council of Hindu Temples Venilal Vaghela, Chair, Hindu Council of Brent
<i>Jain Community</i>	Dr Natubhai Shah, Founder President, Jain Samaj Europe
<i>Jewish Community</i>	Henry Grunwald QC, Vice President, Board of Deputies of British Jews Marlena Schmool, Director of Community Issues, Board of Deputies of British Jews Jo Wagerman OBE, President, Board of Deputies of British Jews

<i>Muslim Community</i>	<p>Yousuf Bhailok, former Secretary General, the Muslim Council of Britain</p> <p>Shahid Kazi, Administrative Officer, the Muslim Council of Britain</p> <p>Clr Mohammed Afzal Khan, Chief Executive, Asian Community Development Trust</p> <p>Shafique Nazerali, Office Manager, the Muslim Council of Britain</p> <p>Iqbal Sacranie OBE, present Secretary General, the Muslim Council of Britain</p>
<i>Sikh Community</i>	<p>Indarjit Singh OBE, Director, Network of Sikh Organisations (UK)</p> <p>Mohan Singh Nayyar, Secretary, Network of Sikh Organisations (UK)</p>
<i>Zoroastrian Community</i>	<p>Dorab Mistry, President, Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe</p>
<i>Facilitators</i>	<p>Marian Agombar</p> <p>Meinir Evans</p> <p>Vanessa Hanson</p> <p>Debbie Lewis</p> <p>Butta Singh</p> <p>Aisha Tasneen</p> <p>Andrew Thelwell</p> <p>Neera Vyas</p>
<i>Others</i>	<p>Lat Blaylock, Professional Council for Religious Education</p> <p>John Keast, Qualifications and Curriculum Authority</p> <p>Iain Sankey, Lilian Baylis School</p> <p>Scottish Executive</p> <p>Welsh Assembly</p> <p>Northern Ireland Inter Faith Forum</p> <p>10 Downing Street</p> <p>Home Office</p> <p>Department for Education and Skills</p> <p>Department for Culture, Media and Sport Promotions and Publicity Unit</p> <p>Constructive Video</p> <p>Mosimann's</p> <p>Tim Gardom Associates Ltd</p> <p>Typetechnique Ltd.</p> <p>Spencer Landor Ltd</p>

## Participating schools

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The following schools nominated one or more pupils from Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim or Sikh backgrounds to attend the Forum. The role of headteachers and RE teachers in identifying suitable participants was much appreciated by the GJO, as was the assistance of local authorities and the Independent Schools Council in suggesting suitable schools in the first place. The younger participants from the smaller faith communities (one Bahá'í, two Buddhists, one Jain and one Zoroastrian) were nominated directly by the faith communities but their schools are also shown below.

<i>Town or city</i>	<i>School</i>
Aberystwyth, Wales	Ysgol Gyfun Penweddig
Amersham, Bucks	Dr Challoner's Grammar School
Bath, Somerset	Downside Abbey
Belfast	Methodist College St Joseph's College Victoria College
Birmingham	Cadbury Sixth Form College King Edward School King Edward VI Camp Hill Boys School Moseley Springhill College
Blackburn, Lancs	St. Wilfrid's Church of England High School
Bolton, Lancs	Al-Jameah Al-Islamiyah Bolton Sixth Form College
Bradford	Yorkshire Martyrs Catholic College
Bushey, Herts	Immanuel College
Callington, Cornwall	Callington Community College
Cambridge	The Leys School
Cardiff	Cathays High School Whitchurch High School
Coventry	President Kennedy School & College

Glasgow	Bellahouston Academy Hyndland Secondary School Mearns Castle High School William Wood High School
Gravesend, Kent	Northfleet School for Girls
Guildford, Surrey	Royal Grammar School
Haverfordwest, Wales	Tusker Milward School
Hayes, Middx	Mellow Lane School
High Wycombe, Bucks	Royal Grammar School
Leeds	Allerton High School
Leicester	Gateway Sixth Form College
London	Drayton Manor High School, Hanwell John Kelly Girls Technology College, Brent North London Collegiate School, Stanmore Sir John Cass Foundation & Redcoat C of E Secondary, Stepney Swaminaryan College, Neasden
Luton, Beds	Luton Sixth Form College
Liverpool	King David High School
Manchester	Abraham Moss School King David High School
Menai Bridge, Wales	Ysgol David Hughes
Newcastle	Gosforth High School Sacred Heart High School
Northampton	Northampton High School
Preston, Lancs	Cardinal Newman College
Stornoway, Isle of Lewis	The Nicolson Institute
Street, Somerset	Millfield School
Watford, Herts	Watford Grammar Girls School
Wolverhampton	The King's School

## Whys, wherefores and lessons learnt

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The Golden Jubilee Young People's Faith Forum was a very significant initiative and we hope that it will be the first of many such events. This section sets out the GJO's rationale for doing things the way it did, as this may be helpful to those planning to arrange similar discussions between young people of different faiths. Some of the lessons learnt in the course of the event are also recorded here. Whether or not organisers choose to develop events in the same way as we did will depend on local circumstances and on the scale and nature of their planned event.

- a) **Consultation** – The 10 June event had a high profile, and was organised following consultation between Buckingham Palace and the faith communities. The GJO consulted senior members of the communities closely to ensure that they were at ease with the basic framework for the day and with the presentations. They were also consulted on practical matters such as dietary requirements. The 16 older participants were directly nominated by the faith communities, resulting in high calibre participants who were actively involved in their communities.
- b) **Assistance from Government and educational bodies** – Consultation with relevant Government departments, and with devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, was important to ensure wide geographical coverage and a good range of participants from different types of school. The mix proved successful and students were interested to meet with those from other parts of the UK and different types of school backgrounds. Selected Local Education Authorities suggested suitable state-maintained schools to nominate participants, and the Independent Schools Information Service was a good “way in” to private schools. Faith communities themselves were best placed to suggest suitable faith schools (and, in the case of the smallest faith communities, to nominate individuals directly).
- c) **Faiths** – The faiths involved were the nine historic world faith traditions linked by the Inter Faith Network for the UK, which assisted with the event. Some of the young participants in the event felt strongly that some young people without religious beliefs should also have been involved in the discussions, as this would have allowed a more open-ended exchange of views.
- d) **Timing** – The importance of timing events so that they do not clash with school exams was recognised by the GJO, although in the case of the 10 June Forum the date was dictated by the wider programme of Golden Jubilee events and there was therefore less room for manoeuvre than would be the case in most other situations.

- e) **Age of participants** – Involving participants mostly of a similar age (around 17) helped them feel at ease and probably made them more forthcoming in discussions. However, it was also valuable to have a small number of older participants to act as mentors for their younger colleagues, for instance introducing them to each other and kicking off the discussions.
- f) **GSCE Religious Education** – Students nominated for the event were not obliged to have taken GCSE RE but it was suggested to the nominating schools that it would be helpful if they had, since discussion would be more to the point if participants began with some understanding of other faiths.
- g) **Gender** – An equal gender balance among the participants was important to reflect the overall population. It was therefore made clear to all nominating institutions that they needed to send students of the gender specified. A few schools and faith community bodies expressed a strong wish to send a pupil of a different gender, but after the GJO had explained carefully the reasons for this request only one school declined to nominate a pupil of the requested gender and therefore did not send a student.
- h) **Reflecting real life** – The letters to schools seeking nominations stressed that ideal participants would be “ordinary” and open-minded students who happened to be active within their faiths, rather than especially devout or high-achieving students. Faith communities asked that individuals chosen to represent them should be well-versed in their faiths and wear appropriate dress in accordance with their faiths. These hopes were communicated in conversations with schools but it was recognised that this could not be a mandatory requirement.
- i) **Parents' consent and health of students** – As required by law, parental consent in writing was obtained for the participation of all individuals under 18, and arrangements were made for a appropriate number of responsible adults to be present throughout the event. A nurse/first-aider was on hand. This was particularly important in an event to which the young people had travelled some distance from home.
- j) **Materials and literature** – Advance materials were sent to participants to help them prepare for the discussions. It might also have been helpful to have been able to suggest one short book covering key aspects of all the faiths. However, agreement among the faith communities and educationalists on the one most appropriate book was unlikely. Therefore the text suggested was *Religions in the UK: A Directory 2001-2003*, which contains chapters on all the UK's faiths written in consultation with the faith communities themselves. Inter faith initiatives displayed leaflets at the event itself, but except for the display boards (see p.9), materials about individual religions were not on display.

- k) **Ice breaking** – The GJO ensured that participants had the evening before the Forum to meet each other and “bond”. They also had supper with members of the syndicate groups they were going to be in the next day so that they were more relaxed when it came to the main day’s discussions.
- l) **The programme** – Although the guest speakers did not formally represent their personal religious traditions, in the interests of balance one speaker was chosen with a background in each of the five larger faiths (Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh). All nine faiths were represented in the presentations given at the start of the Forum by the older participants. All speakers had agreed their texts in advance with the organisers, to ensure a good fit with the age and interests of the audience. Transcripts of the presentations were made available for the report.
- m) **A chance to talk** – The day was, above all, a chance for young people of different faiths to talk together. The syndicate groups each comprised ten participants (five male and five female) from different faith and educational backgrounds and from different parts of the UK, creating a rich mix of perspectives.
- n) **Limits to dialogue?** – The 10 June Forum was set up as part of the official celebrations to mark the Golden Jubilee, and its focus was faith and the Jubilee themes of Service and Community. These themes engaged the participants and many of them felt passionately about them. As with inter faith dialogue more generally, however, there was a tendency for discussion to move into other areas about which individuals felt strongly: for example, the position of faith schools, sexual morality and the effects of 11 September on perceptions of Muslims. There were also energetic debates about religious issues such as the afterlife. The chair for the day skilfully allowed a wide ranging discussion while not losing sight of the key theme. The presence of RE teachers, who were familiar with the issues, was also very helpful.
- o) **Diversity of activities** – To retain participants’ interest, discussions were punctuated by presentations and video presentations. However, there could have been still greater variety.
- p) **Technology** – The 10 June Forum was relatively “low tech”, particularly since the beautiful historic rooms in which the Forum took place meant that light levels had to be kept very low. Power point presentations and video presentations were used, and participants were invited to write their hopes and ideas for the coming period of The Queen’s reign on an electronic white board. Few used this, with an old fashioned suggestions box proving more inviting!

- q) **Food** – In any multi faith event careful attention to meeting different dietary needs is obviously of great importance. Arrangements were made for the provision of kosher, halal, vegan and vegetarian food. The lunchtime buffet was fully vegetarian to enable the highest level possible of sharing of food. Participants were required in advance to fill in a form indicating their dietary preference and any allergies or special needs that they had.
- r) **Evaluation** – It was decided not to use an evaluation form for the event, partly because the GJO itself would not be holding another such event. However, the older young participants who had given presentations were asked afterwards what impact the Forum had had on them, and some of their responses will be found on the back of the Summary Report.

## Organising similar events

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It is hoped that schools, colleges or local communities will be interested in arranging similar forums around the country. Each will be unique in its mix of faiths and traditions. Each forum can be a different but exciting opportunity to bring together various perspectives, debate tough issues and seek out the common values that underpin shared citizenship in this multi faith United Kingdom. These events could also generate ideas which will make a practical and very significant contribution to local inter faith relations.

If you are planning a youth faith forum, organisations that may be able to offer advice include the Inter Faith Network for the UK (020 7388 0008; [ifnet@interfaith.org.uk](mailto:ifnet@interfaith.org.uk)); the National Association of SACREs (Secretary Geoffrey Teece, 0121 415 2258, [g.m.teece@bham.ac.uk](mailto:g.m.teece@bham.ac.uk)); the Scottish Inter Faith Council (Secretary Sister Isabel Smyth, 0141 429 4012, [sifc@interfaithscotland.org](mailto:sifc@interfaithscotland.org)); the Inter Faith Council for Wales (Secretary David Rich, 029 2089 8462, [david.rich@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:david.rich@wales.gsi.gov.uk)); and the Northern Ireland Inter Faith Forum (Secretary Norman Richardson, 028 9038 4328, [n.richardson@stran.ac.uk](mailto:n.richardson@stran.ac.uk)).

Respect is a national TimeBank initiative, with The Prince's Trust. Its objective is to inspire and engage people of different faiths and none to give time to one another, encouraging tolerance and understanding. You may wish to register your initiative with Respect to make it better known (call Carmel Heaney on 0845 601 4008).

You can also contact the Alma Royalton-Kisch Trust (020 7359 3084) for information on applying for small grants to help with youth inter faith projects.

To enquire about use of the faith community panels for events (see p.9), write to Warwick Hawkins at the Home Office Race Equality Unit, Allington Towers, 19 Allington Street, London SW1E 5EB or email [warwick.hawkins@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:warwick.hawkins@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk).

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