

Interfaith Wolverhampton

TRUSTEES' REPORT

1. The Trustees of Interfaith Wolverhampton (IFW) present their report, which is also the Directors' Report, and financial statements for the year ending 31st March 2016.

IFW is a registered charity (114265) incorporated as a company limited by guarantee (3218967).

The registered office is at The Methodist Centre, 24 School Street, Wolverhampton WV1 4LF.

2. The **Directors of the Charity** during the year to 31st March 2016 were:

Suffiea Ahmed (<i>to December 1st</i>)	Jim McManus (<i>to September 23rd</i>)
Khalid Akhtar (<i>from December 1st</i>)	Vidya K. Midha (<i>to September 23rd</i>)
Geoff Boswell	Jill Parker
Parveen Brigue	Gurdev Rai
Jaswinder S. Chaggar	Mohammad Rashad
Harjinder S. Chatha	Harun Rashid
Ganesh De	Yusuf Shafi (<i>from December 1st</i>)
Bhajan Devsi	Rinder Salan (<i>tp September 23rd</i>)
Navin Foolchand (<i>to December 3rd</i>)	Pinki Sharma
Martin Gomberg	Satya P Sharma
John Howard	Suki Sunner (<i>to September 23rd</i>)
Rajesh Jain	Opinderjit K. Takhar
Devinder Kalhan	Mazir Uddin
Mohammad Khalil (<i>to December 1st</i>)	Janette Watson
David Lavender	David Wright

Secretary:	Erik Pearse
Assistant Secretary:	John Barnett
Principal Bankers:	Cooperative Bank
Independent Examiner:	George Tonks

3. **The Charity's Objects** are specifically restricted to the following:

- a. The advancement of education aimed specifically at knowledge and understanding of the beliefs and practices of religious faiths with the purpose of the enhancement of religious and racial harmony within the City of Wolverhampton and its environs.
- b. To develop the capacity and skills of the members of the socially and economically disadvantaged community of Wolverhampton and its environs in such a way that they are better able to identify and help meet their needs and to participate more fully in society by:
 - a) providing advice and support on how they identify and evidence needs or priorities of their community; how they plan projects; how they source appropriate funding, implementation and sustainability;
 - b) supporting specific projects that are of benefit to the community helping people to take a full role in and participate more fully in society.
- c. The promotion of sustainable development for the benefit of the public by increasing awareness and knowledge in the area of energy conservation and the protection of the environment through prudent use of natural resources, thereby assisting in the relief of poverty and the improvement of the conditions of life in socially and economically disadvantaged communities.

4. Performance and Achievements

- a. In fulfilling the objects of the IFW, we have organized a number of activities which have been attended by the diverse communities of Wolverhampton. Some of the events, such as Prayers for Peace, Holocaust Memorial Service, a visit to local places of worship as well as a coach trip to external places of interest, are held annually and attract many non-interfaith members to them. We have also continued to hold our very popular monthly bring and share lunches, at which a member of IFW shares their faith journey and how it affects their lives.
- b. We have greatly improved our outreach during the year. Thanks to the freely-given professional expertise of three of our members, we have updated our website, which is regularly maintained by Paul Rayner, and, under the editorship of Sehdev Bismal, produced quarterly newsletters of high quality, both in their form, thanks to Julian Gwinnett, and content.
- c. On the financial side, we have met our objective to reverse the trend in the past few years to eat into our reserves and achieved a modest growth in these, despite the loss of our major collaborative funding from the Anglican and Methodist Churches. We are pleased that both the current and the prospective Mayors have decided to adopt us as one of their charities, thereby assuring us of an inflow of funds for two years of a few thousand pounds.
- d. In July, a well-attended service of Remembrance to mark the 20th anniversary of the massacre of Srebrenica was organized at St Peter's Collegiate Church. Some of our members, including Erik Pearse, our Secretary, had had the opportunity of visiting Sarajevo and Srebrenica earlier in the year. Detailing one of his gruesome experiences of the visit to the 'Identification Project', Erik expressed his shock at the '*collective failure to respond adequately to such dreadful acts of inhumanity.*' He and the other co-visitors had however been inspired to see 'how survivors and relatives of those who died continue to proclaim a message of peace and reconciliation based on justice.'
- e. During Ramadan this year, some of our members had the opportunity to visit the Central Mosque in Birmingham and to enjoy Iftar (breaking the fast) with the congregation. Writing about the visit for the IFW Newsletter, Will Wright, the son of our Board member Rev. David Wright, commented that '*the experience of visiting a Mosque during Ramadan and witnessing the practice of another faith was eye-opening to me. Everybody there made us thoroughly welcome as if we were regular visitors and I could not describe a more peaceful and inviting atmosphere than the one my family and I experienced at the Birmingham Central Mosque.*'
- f. In November, a series of five talks on Spirituality in different faith traditions was hosted by the Roman Catholic Newman Centre. Reflecting on these in an article for the IFW Newsletter, Jan Sochacki states that '*Spirituality concerns life's 'why' questions.... Spiritual development is the way in which we let God be God in our lives and the lives of the communities in which we live.*'

5. Future plans

Our plans for the forthcoming year include the following:

- To continue to carry out our regular activities as summarized in 4a above.
- To pursue our effort in seeking to establish a Spirit/Faith Centre within the Mander/Wulfrun Centre where people with different faiths or no faith can

pray, meditate, grieve or observe silence, as well as access resources on interfaith issues.

- To organize a Conference on 'Dying well' in collaboration with Compton Hospice and the University of Wolverhampton with Baroness Finlay of Llandaff as the keynote speaker
- To run another series of November sessions at the Newman Centre on interfaith perspectives, on Care for our Common World.
- To further develop and expand our successful educational programme, both with schools and with statutory and voluntary organisations.
- To explore how we can encourage a greater involvement of young people, through the innovative use of social media.
- To extend our outreach further by developing our contacts with the media, notably the Express and Star.
- To organize more social/cultural functions to attract more people for coming together to foster fellowship and mutual understanding.
- To maintain close control of our finances and ensure we keep to our target of a balanced budget.

6. Conclusion

In my final report before I stand down as Chair, I should like to take the opportunity to thank the members of the Board and the membership as a whole for their continued help and support. Our two part-time members of staff, Mike Shelley-Smith and Gurdev (Devi) Bansal must be particularly mentioned for their continued enthusiasm, commitment and professionalism to the work which ensures the success of our efforts. They have continued to give far more of their time than they are required to. I wish also to give Erik Pearse, our Secretary, my sincere thanks and gratitude for his commitment and dedication as well as the support he has offered me over the years.

The world continues to be beset with turbulent situations and hate crimes continue to rise, causing the loss of many innocent lives and a massive exodus of helpless people. In this respect, we are deeply committed to maintaining our significant involvement in the initiative to develop Wolverhampton as a City of Sanctuary. We must continue to pray for peace and urge our leaders to tackle the root causes of the crisis and strive their utmost to bring about lasting peace throughout the world..

We, in our great City of diversity, continue to live in peace and harmony but we must not be complacent as we have a long way to go yet to achieve justice and fairness for all; the work of Interfaith Wolverhampton must continue with renewed vigour and determination involving everyone of us.

This Report has been prepared in accordance with the Small Companies Regime for Directors' Reports.

Dr. Harun Rashid
Chairman

September 6th 2016