

WIFRN NEWS

Wolverhampton Inter-Faith and Regeneration Network

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"It's not a hopeless situation"

Wolverhampton South-East MP, Pat McFadden, performed the opening ceremony of the St Chad's Job Club



Left-Right Usha Patel (Job Club and Centre Administrator)

Middle Cllr Phil Page Head of Education and Pat McFadden MP.

"It's not a hopeless situation" said Wolverhampton South-East MP, Pat McFadden, who performed the opening ceremony of the St Chad's Job Club on Friday 20th September.

"By giving people help we really can make a difference and get them into work. It's a good testament to the church's keenness to get outside the doors of the church and into the community and say 'what are the needs of the community?'"

Wolverhampton Inter-Faith & Regeneration Network has supported the Parish Centre for many years in its efforts to serve the community of Bilston. Earlier this year it was felt that, with the welfare reforms starting to be implemented and the impact these reforms will have upon people's income, the need for job skills and training will be essential to help people build their self-confidence and find employment to lift them out of poverty.

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St. Chad's Job Club (contd.)

So in the spring the WIFRN, as part of its regeneration work, started to contact potentially interested parties. The City Council's Adult Education department agreed to fund the job club and *SiteLearn* to provide the skills training and resources. The Job Club officially started on 19th July and is an excellent example of a church, WIFRN and other organisations working together to make a difference to their community.

Revd. Mark Hathorne, the vicar of St Chad's said that St Chad's Church is making the most of its position at the centre of the neighbourhood. The St Chad's Job club is a new and important extension of the church's mission in the area.

"Over the years we've developed a sense of mission that isn't just about church

Bilston is one of many areas in the Lichfield diocese that suffers from particularly bad unemployment which is over 50% higher than the national average.

services but about providing a wider range of services in the community".

"Pat McFadden went on to add that "It's a great credit to the church that it's getting its sleeves rolled up like this and getting involved and making a difference to people in the community who may - or may not - walk in the doors of a church but nevertheless will benefit from that Christian helping hand" .

The St. Chad's Job Club is open to all every Friday from 10am to 1pm at

The Parish Centre at St Chad's, Connaught Road, Bilston, WV14 6NY.

For more information call 01902 494776 or email theparishcentre@hotmail.co.uk

John Waterfield

Congratulations to Parveen and Kamaljit

Parveen cycled the Wolverhampton half marathon and Kamaljit ran the half marathon, both for charity.

So far they have raised over £200 each for the WIFRN and the money is still coming in.

Well Done and a Big Thank You!



Parveen (left) with Grandson Rahul Raj and Daughter Alka



Wolverhampton

CITY OF SANCTUARY

Proud to be a City of Welcome and Safety

The Chat and Mingle event in August provided an excellent opportunity to meet and talk to Asylum Seekers and Refugees to help us to understand the difficulties they experience and how they positively contribute to the life of the City. It was the first event organised by the City of Sanctuary organising group and it proved to be a very successful evening. Over the course of the 2 hours, around 60 people came and, as it was a bring and share event, lots of food was available.



The event certainly helped in bringing people and other groups together with a shared desire to help Asylum

Seekers and Refugees. People happily mingled and networked and lots of new contacts were made.

A few of the Asylum Seekers that turned up had particular issues and concerns and conveniently we were able to introduce them to other people there who could help them in their situation.



A special thank you to the Light House who hosted the event, to Councillor Elias Mattu for his generous contribution in funding the event and the Refugee and Migrant Centre for their support.

John Waterfield



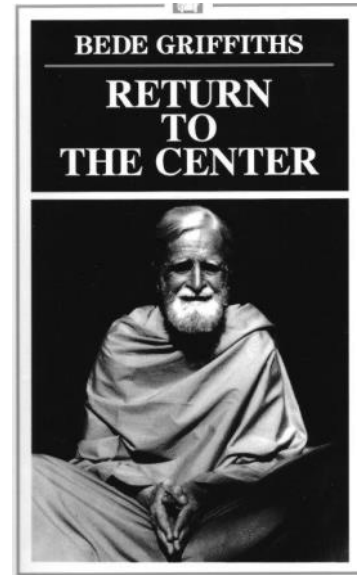
The Next City of Sanctuary Group meeting is on Monday 28th October at 2 p.m. at the WIFRN Office.. Our special guest will be Colleen Molloy who has just started as City of Sanctuary Regional Development Officer. You are welcome to join us.

Treasures of the Ivy Gutridge Collection

(Located in the Faith Section in the Central Library)

RETURN TO THE CENTRE

By Bede Griffiths



I had barely begun reading *Return to the Center* when Francis Bacon's words echoed through my mind: "Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested." This is a book that cannot be read only in parts, or read quickly in a day; it has to be read, savoured slowly with diligence and concentration.

Bede Griffiths was a British-born Benedictine monk who lived in ashrams in South India for 35 years and became a noted yogi. Through his astonishingly thorough research and complete immersion in the Indian mystical tradition, he has become a pioneering thinker in the development of the dialogue between Christianity and Hinduism.

His aim when he went over to India in 1955 was "to discover the other half of my soul.' He developed a form of monastic life based on the Indian tradition, took the Sanskrit name "Dayananda" (bliss of compassion), and set up the Saccidananda Ashram in Tamil Nadu. He wrote 12 books on Hindu-Christian dialogue, which were emblematic of his profound reflections based on his experiences and his vast erudition and knowledge of other faiths and religions.

Return to the Center is a book suffused with pure love and humility; it is a heady mixture of deeply felt emotion and egolessness; its pages are brimming over with energy which forces the reader to pause and reflect, stop and contemplate and marvel at many of Bede Griffiths's observations and insights.

The very first chapter when the reader is invited in the cell on the verandah of which the author is sitting, watching the sun set behind the trees and as he is watching the trees make dark patterns against the sky as the light fades, he makes some profound statements about the minimal material environment of a sannyasi. He elucidates the significance of renunciation of all 'property' and eventually renunciation of 'I' and 'mine'. The one thing, he says, which you have to abandon unconditionally is your 'self'.

While reading the thoughts that underpin his whole being, one marvels at their simplicity. Even more so as they underscore the truth that we are constantly trying to mask through our promotion of 'self or selfish attachment.' We often call it our 'service to the world' or 'commitment!' Reading his insights derived from living experience and open-minded study of other religions, one cannot but wonder, as

did John Keats on first looking into Chapman's Homer:

***Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
When a new planet swims into his ken;
Or like stout Cortez, when with eagle eyes
He stared at the Pacific—and all his men
Look'd at each other with a wild surmise—
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.***

Bede Griffiths encapsulates the ultimate truth that can be reached only through poverty, chastity and obedience – the renunciation of the world, the flesh and the ego. We cannot, he rightly postulates, enjoy anything until we have learned to be detached from it. Perfect harmony is achieved when body and soul are 'sacrificed' to the spirit. In the modern world we seem to have lost the principle of balance and harmony. Matter is separated from spirit, body from soul, and man from nature. Goethe's vision of a new kind of science when physical, psychic and spiritual worlds are integrated has yet to be realized.

Another striking feature of Return to the Center is its receptivity to other ways found in religions searching for meaning and purpose in our lives. It is not uncommon to come across entrenched beliefs, guidance etched on stone and a conspicuous lack of willingness to acknowledge that followers of other religions may be striving to reach the same goal but in a different way. Bede Griffiths throws open the windows of his cell, his mind and lets the breeze of ideas reinvigorate his whole being. He does not limit God's inspiration to the Bible only. He gets to the core of truth, the process may be very complex but what he has to say is imbued with authority and rare wisdom.



Sehdev Bismal MBE

An Iftar meal at the Wolverhampton Mosque

Several members of WIFRN accepted the gracious invitation from the Wolverhampton Mosque to share their Iftar meal on July 31st.



This year's Mayoral theme – the Family

Wolverhampton is a city where I have lived for 48 years.

Wolverhampton has a rich history. It is the 12th largest city in England outside London. And to live, work and enjoy – Wolverhampton for me is the best place. Over 1.2 billion pounds is being invested here on some of the biggest regeneration schemes. Which will change the outlook of the city and as time moves on – we as the city need to move with it. A parent wants the best for their children, they want their children to achieve and do better than they did. We need to apply the same principle to the development and the growth of the city.



Wolverhampton has a very bright future, it has a present and it has a past – which is full of history and some interesting facts.

For example, the city grew initially as a market town with specialism within the woollen trade. During and after the Industrial Revolution, the city became a major industrial centre, with :- Mining - Coal, Limestone and Iron Ore - along with Steel, Japanning.

Locks, Motorcycles and cars.

We also had a bicycle industry from 1868 to 1975, during which time a total of more than 200 bicycle manufacturing companies existed there. This shows that the people of Wolverhampton are no strangers to heavy and hard work

Wolverhampton appears in the history books holding some quite interesting records. For example:

- In Wolverhampton trolleybuses appeared in 1923 and the Wolverhampton trolleybus system was the world's largest trolleybus system.
- In 1924 Malcolm Campbell driving a Sunbeam made in Wolverhampton had the first land speed record at over 200 mph.
- Wolverhampton provided England's first automatic traffic lights at Princes Square in 1927.
- Princes Square was also the location of the United Kingdom's first pedestrian safety barriers, which were erected in 1934.
- Wolverhampton's first railway opened in 1837, with the opening of the Grand Junction Railway, this was the first long-distance line in Great Britain. The main station for the city was, however, not located in the city centre, but at Wednesfield Heath, now Heath Town.

The Mayoral theme for the year I have picked is the family. The reason for picking 'family' as the theme is that more than ever before I feel that that we need the family by us. In the current economic climate, life is very difficult. We need to have the family by our side.

It's not easy, in society we have many problems and many issues.

I believe that it is very important for the family to have core beliefs and values that you want your family to live by; making these family rules a part of the very fibre of your family life. This would help determine the outcome of the way our young children grow up and their behaviour in

society. Family values will help our children - at the heart of the parent's thinking and feelings about what is most important to them and their family. It needs to be an honest reflection of how they deeply view life and the way to properly live within that view of life.

Families need to give to give direction, hope, confidence, need to make the children self aware, of who they are, where they come from, their background, identify their strengths and weaknesses.

Only then can we improve the quality of life and raise the aspirations of our future generations.

We have the teachers to teach and schools where children can learn.

Yes we have the local council to provide services - but they can only do so much, it really is up to the family how far they want the children to go. What direction they want the children to take.

Most of the time your children will become what you want them to become. The environment you put them in, the friendships you allow them to have, the language you use around them and at home will determine the way they speak, think and act.

The success or the failure is down to the family. Hence the theme for the year.

Councillor Milkinder Jaspal

Mayor of Wolverhampton

Annual General Meeting Report

At our AGM on September 25th, members approved revised Articles of Association.

George Tonks has been re-appointed as our Independent Examiner, a service he undertakes voluntarily, providing, in the words of our treasurer Ganesh De, 'an excellent service, well beyond the standard requirements.'



The following changes were made to the Board:

- ◆ Our President, Bishop Clive Gregory and our vice-President, Sehdev Bismal, both re-elected, are now Honorary Officers but cease to be Directors
- ◆ Mr. Mazir Uddin was elected as a Board member.
- ◆ Janette Watson has stood down from the Board for personal reasons.
- ◆ Revd John Howard was elected as the third of our vice-chairs.

We were indebted to Kamaljit Kaur and Prem Lal for the excellent refreshments which they provided.

Looking Forward to the **Forgiveness Conference** on 23rd November

The half-day conference on Forgiveness will take place in St. Peter's Collegiate Church, in the centre of Wolverhampton, with contributions from the six main faith traditions, chaired by Bishop Clive Gregory, the Bishop of Wolverhampton and President of Wolverhampton Inter-Faith and Regeneration Network. This will be followed up by a

week-long display of the Forgiveness Project,

also in St Peter's Collegiate Church.

As an appetiser for the conference here is a brief introduction to our contributors on the day.

Rabbi Harry Jacobi

Rabbi Harry Jacobi, MBE, came to Britain as a refugee in 1940. Now retired, he is Emeritus Rabbi of Southgate Progressive Synagogue.



Ven. Tejwant

Ven. Tejwant is a Resident monk at Punjab Buddhist Society UK and teaches meditation and Buddhism at Wolverhampton Buddhist Maha Vihara.



Ram Aithal

Ram Aithal's father and forefathers were Hindu priests. He is an architect and has been very active as a volunteer in Hindu temples.



Barry and Margaret Mizen

Barry and Margaret Mizen's son Jimmy was murdered in London in 2008. The Jimmy Mizen Foundation, which they have since established, helps young people play a positive role within their communities.



Tariq Jahan

Tariq Jahan's son, Haroon, was killed in the violence during the August 2011 riots in Birmingham. His intervention in publicly pleading for peace was decisive in averting further communal violence in Birmingham.



Bhai Sahib Mohinder Singh

Bhai Sahib Mohinder Singh is the Chairman of Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha - a Sikh registered charity based in Handsworth, Birmingham. He is internationally respected as a Sikh leader.



Policing Wolverhampton's multi-faith community



Working in today's police service is increasingly challenging and there is an awareness of the effects of prolonged exposure to stressful situations. The days of suffering in silence or even worse an environment where colleagues are not able to feel comfortable in discussing the effects of policing without fear of taint are long gone. By supporting colleagues' values and beliefs in the workplace puts the police service in a much stronger position to be able to tailor the service we provide to communities in a way which demonstrates respect.

Our inter-faith work with communities is varied and below are a few examples:

The Chaplaincy Service.

It is recognised too that everyone is a complete person – body, mind and spirit. Police work can affect the physical and mental well being of officers and staff as well as, perhaps, their deeply held beliefs. To be able to better care for staff in a holistic way the West Midlands Police has appointed chaplains and chaplaincy advisors to work alongside the other supporting agencies.

Although a number of our chaplains are Christian they are aware that many members of the police are of a different faith – or have no faith at all. The chaplain's main concern is to provide care for the individual, and matters of faith are treated with sensitivity.

Street Pastors

A safe and secure night time economy is important part of the local economy, however, alcohol often changes the way in which we interact with each other. The role of police officers and community support officers is to prevent disorder and to facilitate, with our partners, a safe and enjoyable night out. A key partner in achieving this aim is the street pastor.

Security

As part of the PREVENT programme police officers continue to deliver training and awareness raising inputs to communities to challenge those who would seek to cause harm in the name of religion. Within Wolverhampton Police we have a security and partnerships officer who together with WCC colleagues delivers a range of targeted interventions that look at individuals, institutions and ideologies as part of the preventing violent extremism agenda.

The need for this was brought in to sharp focus recently after a series of devices were detonated in the West Midlands Police area. One of these was near to Wolverhampton Central Mosque and caused disruption to those who wished to worship. The response from the faith community in support of the police investigation and of Islam reflected well on the communities of Wolverhampton.

Faith Watch

Faith Watch is as the name suggests a scheme similar to other watch schemes but utilises street pastors conducting patrols on behalf of the community, together with the police to tackle low level issues that impact upon that community. The aims of the scheme are to increase feelings of safety, raise levels of security and community cohesion and as a result reduce crime and make people feel safer. One of these schemes exists in Birmingham and it is an idea that over the coming months we will be taking forward locally.

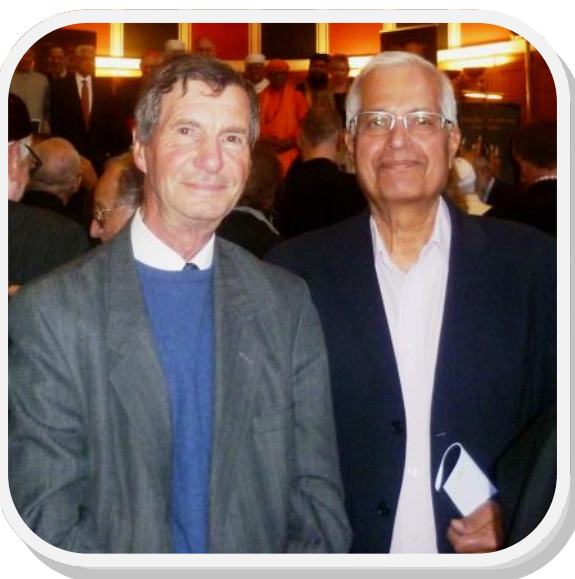
Darren Walsh, Chief Inspector 8904

Local Policing, Wolverhampton LPU , External: 101 7871 6351 Internal: 7871 6351

Mobile: 07795333674

Together in Prayer for Peace – with Cardinal Tauran

Many countries are going through a turbulent time as the world is being increasingly divided along ethnic, religious and class lines. Lasting salvation from recurring hostilities can be within reach only when people of all faiths and none come together to firmly reject violence and to commit their beliefs as instruments of dialogue and peace. One of the landmark moments of the journey towards peace was when Pope John Paul II invited representatives of the world's religions to gather at the Church of Saint Francis of Assisi, Italy on October 27, 1986 to pray together for the first time in history. I witnessed the same inspiration manifesting itself in a recent event in London.



Erik and Sehdev

The President of the Holy See's Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran was on a short visit to this country to encourage all religions to come together to articulate their longing for a more just and peaceful world. The terrible events in Woolwich in which an innocent off-duty soldier was brutally killed and the tsunami of revulsion in the public reaction that ensued provided a powerful context for the cardinal's visit. His five-day stay in this country included a visit to the Guru Nanak Nishkam Jatha Gurdwara Birmingham, the Jain Derasar at the Oswal Centre near Potters' Bar and the Shri Swaminarayan Mandir in Neasdon. The purpose of his visit was to affirm and strengthen the good interreligious relations in this country and to find ways in which we can work together for the common good and for a more peaceful world.

Cardinal Tauran's visit also included a 'Together in Prayer for Peace' event at Westminster Cathedral Hall on 13 June and I was privileged to attend it in the (well-informed) company of Erik Pearse.

Prior to the Prayer event, Erik took me around inside the majestic cathedral. This great edifice was opened in 1903 and this year celebrates the centenary of its consecration. Different sections of the cathedral, some breath-taking magnificent, were inspired by the early Byzantine architecture of the Mediterranean. After a brief visit to the Cathedral's well-stocked bookshop, we proceeded to the Cathedral Hall for the main event.

Over 200 people of all hues, some in resplendent religious robes, arrived for the prayer event, with a good sprinkling of school children. The enormous diversity of people, the presence of myriad backgrounds, faith and cultural traditions in that hall epitomised the richness that our society in this country is blessed with.

There was a brief introduction to the event by Archbishop Kevin MacDonald who is chairman of the Office for interreligious Relations at the Catholic Bishops' Conference England and Wales. He talked about the gathering of faith leaders that took place in Woolwich soon after the horrific incident and how later on they all went to the mosque there to reflect together on the heinous crime that had taken place there. He added: "All of us came away convinced of the importance of deeper friendship and solidarity between the religions in our society."

It was that conviction that inspired Pope John Paul II to convene the first Day of Prayer for Peace in Assisi some 27 years ago. On that momentous occasion, he rightly said, “Although religious leaders cannot make political decisions in favour of peace, they can, nevertheless, come together in search of gift of peace.”

After the introduction, prayers were offered by leaders of nine different faith traditions. There were prayers from Baha’i, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jain, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh and Zoroastrian traditions. The majority of the prayers were in different languages but a brief elaboration of the context was given in English. What struck a chord with me was the prayers offered were not generic, each one was specific to the concept of peace and justice and reconciliation. As the prayers were being offered, I could see an unruffled sense of peace cascading throughout the hall. The cadence and music of the prayers seemed to be casting a spell on all of us and making us to pause, leave our frenetic thoughts for a while, and feel the cool breeze of prayers touch our faces, minds and hearts.

As the prayers were being offered, it was interesting to bear witness to the enormous power of religion for good. It was obvious that in spite of politically motivated schisms and warped versions of religions causing mayhem in many parts of the world, all religions, true religions, were united in their common commitment to building peace, to reconciling those in conflict and to bringing people back into harmony with creation. All religions at their core are instrumental at dispelling fear and suspicion, at eliminating ‘defensive hostility’ to others, at making the world a better place for everyone.

The prayers were followed by 11 pledges by everyone present in the hall. The pledges were clearly indicative of our conviction to work tirelessly in the great enterprise of building peace. All members of the audience stood up, speaking in one voice, in unison, that in order to ensure peace in our strife-torn world, we must commit ourselves to fostering a culture of dialogue, increase understanding and mutual trust between individuals and among communities. That alone can usher in authentic, lasting peace.

At the conclusion of the prayers and reflections, there was a homily from Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran. He alluded to the words of Pope Francis that Christians and people of other faiths must be exhorted “to promote interreligious dialogue as a catalyst for efforts to build peace ... to build bridges connecting all people, in such a way that everyone can see in the other not an enemy, not a rival but a brother or sister.”

Cardinal Tauran added that only a minority of people live by violence, it therefore is imperative to champion prayer and unity as twin pillars of a more peaceful world.

We left the building with a feeling that we, as individuals and communities, have to refuse to consider our differences an insurmountable barrier.

Sehdev Bismal MBE

BATTLE OF SARAGARHI

A heroic action fought by a small detachment of Sikh soldiers against heavy odds, took place on 12 September 1897 in the Tirah region of the North-West Frontier Province (now in Pakistan). The heroes of Saragarhi, barely 22 in number,

belonged to the 36th Sikhs, since re-designated as 4th Battalion of the Sikh Regiment of the Indian Army.

During a general uprising of the turbulent Pathan tribes of Tirah in 1897, the battalion was deployed to defend Samana Ridge, a hill feature 8 km in length separating the Kurram and the Khanki valleys. The headquarters and four

companies were located in Fort Lockhart at the eastern end of the ridge and the other four companies in Fort Cavagnari, commonly known as Gulistan, at its western end, with several smaller outposts at different strategic points.

Saragarhi was a small picket perched on a rocky rib cropping up transversely across Samana Ridge halfway between Fort Lockhart and Gulistan preventing direct communication between the two bases. Overlooking both the wings, Saragarhi, manned by only 20 sepoys (riflemen) and one non-combatant sweeper under the command of Havildar (sergeant) Ishar Singh, was tactically a vital post for communication which in those days was possible only through visual signalling. The Orakzai and Afridi tribesmen, several thousand strong, attacked Gulistan twice on 3 and 9 September but were repulsed with heavy losses on both occasions. Chagrined at the reverses, they looked for a smaller target to ensure easy success.

On the morning of 12 September 1897, they fell upon Saragarhi, a small square, stone block house,



Burnt-out interior of Saragarhi as it looked on 14th September, 1897

and surrounded it making any reinforcement to the besieged impossible. Havildar



Ishar Singh and his men, undaunted by the hopeless situation they were in, fought back with grim determination. The incessant fire from the besiegers took its toll, and after a 6 hour long battle, the only soldier left alive was the signaller, Sepoy Gurmukh Singh, who had meanwhile kept the battalion headquarters informed about the situation through messages flashed by

flag. At last asking for permission to stop signalling he took up his rifle to join combat.

He fell fighting single handed. The valour and tenaciousness of the Saragarhi soldiers won wide acclaim. Each of them was posthumously awarded the Indian Order of Merit (I.O.M.). Their next of kin were each granted Rs 500 in cash and two squares (50 acres) of land. Their battalion, 36th Sikhs, also received Battle Honours.

A memorial in the form of an obelisk standing on a base built with stones from the Saragarhi post was raised at the site by the government while memorial Gurdwaras were built with public contributions at Amritsar and Firozpur. The Sikh Regiment celebrates the 12th of September every year as Saragarhi day.

Saragarhi Memorial Gurudwara at Firozpur (left) was built in memory of the 21 Sikh soldiers of the 36 Sikh Regiment, and cost of Rs, 27,118 borne by the Army Authorities to honour these brave soldiers. The Gurudwara was declared open in 1904 by Sir Charles Pevz, the then Lieutenant Governor of Punjab. Every year on September, 12 a religious congregation is held in the morning while the reunion of Ex-servicemen is in the evening.

Jaswinder Singh Chaggar

ANAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

Wolverhampton's First Free School Opens its doors to Reception-aged pupils

Wolverhampton's first Free School, Anand Primary School, opened its doors to its first intake of pupils on 3rd September 2013. Anand Primary School, located on Great Brickklin Street, is a Free School inspired by the Sikh ethos. The term *Anand* is an ancient Indian term meaning happiness and contentment. Hence the name is indicative of the Team's vision of a school in



which the child's learning experience is both fulfilling and enjoyable.

The first intake of pupils this year has been with the reception class. Anand Primary School will have its intake of pupils from Reception class

through to Year Six by September 2019. The aspiration that has borne fruition through the opening of Anand Primary School is to deliver an excellent and outstanding level of education and achievement so that its pupils are able to reach their full potential and look to a future full of exciting opportunities. The ethos of Anand Primary School is based on core Sikh values. The Sikh faith promotes equality, tolerance and respect for all. These are universal values which will guide pupils and staff alike. The Sikh faith encourages hard work in order to make the most of the opportunities in life, each pupil at Anand Primary School will be nurtured to take responsibility for oneself, as well as care for others. The importance of personal integrity is therefore essential in the vision of setting up Anand Primary School.

Kulbinder Pouni, the Head Teacher of Anand Primary School, brings years of outstanding experience in school leadership. She will provide her educational expertise in ensuring that every pupil is fully supported and equipped to overcome all challenges in the pursuit of excellence. The statutory school day at Anand Primary School starts at 8.45am and finishes at 4.30pm. The longer school day will provide greater scope for teachers, parents, the community and school partners to create a net of support and encouragement through which no pupil will fall.

Anand Primary School is a safe, happy and eco-friendly place dedicated to giving children the best start in life. The highest standards of teaching are complemented by a wide range of extra-curricular activities to enable all children to fulfil their academic, creative and sporting potential.

Anand Primary School has a few spaces left for this year's intake into the Reception Class. Please contact Kulbinder Pouni on 01902 554890 should you be interested in finding out more about Anand Primary School and the opportunities it offers for your child's education.

Further details about Anand Primary School can be accessed at:

<http://www.anandprimary.org/>

Or via the School Office on 01902 554900

*Dr Opinderjit Kaur Takhar, Vice-Chair,
Wolverhampton Sangat Education Trust*



Grand Opening of Wolverhampton Buddhist Maha Vihara.

We were happy to be invited by the PunjabBuddhist Society to the grand opening of the new Buddhist Maha Vihara based in Owen Road Pennfields on the 15th September, in the presence of Buddhist personalities from different parts of the world. Dr. Harun Rashid, our Chair, was one of the speakers who welcomed this impressive new development.



Vivekananda Exhibition at Sri Krishan Temple

A two-day exhibition to mark the 150th Anniversary of the birth of Swami Vivekananda and to portray India's amazing cultural and historical heritage. The 70 display posters not only celebrated the life of Vivekananda, a deservedly revered model of inter-faith understanding, but also illustrated the key role India has played in the development of most fields of science and culture.



What it means to be a dementia-friendly church.

By David Primrose Director of Transforming Communities



Currently in Wolverhampton there are over 3,000 people with dementia, and this number is set to rise as we all live longer. Many of us will have direct experience amongst family and friends of the changes that this brings, both for the person with dementia and for the immediate family caring for them. I have been meeting with members from twenty churches around the Diocese of Lichfield to explore together what it means to be a dementia-friendly church.

We live in a culture which is obsessed with materialism. People are valued for what they can produce. Our communities are fragmented, with individualism limiting care for others to immediate family, and even that is challenged with the increase in family breakdown. We prioritise independence and find it difficult to cope when people need help from others. We are frightened of vulnerability and the end of life, and hence distance ourselves from illness and death. All these factors have a negative impact on the manner in which we care for those with dementia, yet from with our religious tradition we have a wealth of material to draw upon.

Respect for our elders has been a fundamental component of the cultures which have shaped most major religions. We have valued the wisdom possessed by many older people, and have recognised the importance of presence as much as activity. Relationships and mutual care are of great importance. Yet even these aspects of old age are challenged by the onset of dementia which can seem to diminish the very person whom we know and love. It is because we love them for who they are, however that may change, that as faith communities we need to work at becoming dementia-friendly. In this we reflect the love that God has for each of us, a love that continues to the very end of our lives, and beyond.

As churches we have been looking at how our churches can make a difference for those suffering from dementia and their carers. There is much that we can do to ensure that the practical environment of our churches is conducive for those with dementia and their carers. This includes all the usual accessibility features of warmth, comfort, good lighting, PA and loop systems, toilets and ramps. It also includes clear and pictorial signage, so that people can easily recognise the facilities available. It is reassuring if churches look like churches, either through traditional architecture or through symbols such as the cross. People with dementia and their carers will vary in their preferences regarding church services, some finding traditional communion services most helpful, whilst others valuing hymn-singing or informality. Familiarity is good. Music, movement and visual images can all aid concentration. As people with dementia can become dis-inhibited, it is sensible for people to be ready for spontaneous contributions. Raising awareness of dementia is an important task, within the church and within the wider congregation. There is an excellent national programme to train “dementia friends” which we would recommend that several church members attend, some going on to become “dementia champions”. And pastoral care for those with dementia takes place within the reality of a long-term commitment. Care is both for the person with dementia and for the person who carers for them. Alzheimer’s is the most common form of dementia, and the Alzheimer’s Society’s website is full of excellent resources. I would be delighted to talk with anyone about how your faith community can become dementia-friendly.

Visit to Lichfield

As a typical example of WIFRN's efficiency our latest pilgrimage was three-in-one, with one ancient and two modern destinations. On Tuesday 3 September our nearly full coach set off promptly from Faulkland Street at 9-00 a.m. and we headed first to Lichfield Cathedral. There we were greeted by the Canon Chancellor, Dr Anthony



Moore who put us in the hands of a team of experienced guides so that we could go round in smaller groups. The guide who took our group round was knowledgeable and enthusiastic and managed to tell stories with which he must have been very familiar as though they were fresh. We can away with bonds to the cathedral strengthened, and, for those who hadn't visited before, a sense of somewhere welcoming to people of all faiths and none.

Next, a short journey to Lichfield Islamic Centre where we were met by officers of the mosque and two imams and received more gracious hospitality. The mosque has been opened quite recently in an old school which had previously been a convent, so has a history of holiness. They gave us refreshments (very tasty pastries as well as some savouries) and told us a little about the mosque and about Islam itself, before answering plenty of questions, not least from our enthusiastic coach-driver. They also told us of the dream of a young man that the Prophet Isa (Jesus) had appeared to him there and given him a blessing. In the dream Jesus had been seen standing by a window from which a church and the cathedral could be seen, so it was felt that this was a blessing for the whole community, including Christians as well as Muslims. We were invited to attend prayer-time and were each presented with an English version of the Qur'an.



Then all aboard again for a short trip up the A 38 to the National Memorial Arboretum at Alrewas, by which time we had been blessed with a lovely sunny afternoon. Here we had time to wander round a peaceful space, meeting up to pass the time of day then separating to go about our different quests, and popping in at the café too. At the centre is the memorial to all service personnel who have lost their lives in service since 1945, imposing but poignant, and with so many names. The guide book to the arboretum is now on its fourth edition and there was still a sizeable supplement, so rapidly are further memorials being added. Most people found something important to them or their families, and I spent some time in reflection in the war widow's woodland, remembering that my mother's first husband was lost in World War II.

We were back home by 5-30, having had a day to enjoy and remember. Thanks to those in the office who arranged it and to our various hosts.

John Barnett

40th Anniversary Appeal

You should have received a letter from our Chairman, setting out our desperate need or funding. We are enclosing the Standing Order Form, together with an addressed envelope, which should have gone out with the Chairman's letter. If you have already responded, a very warm thank you. Please do help if you possibly can.

Dates for Your Diary

Sunday 20th October at 3pm *Prayers For Peace* - At St. Peter's Church

Theme : Spreading of Peace

Friday October 25th at 7.30 p.m. at URC Church, Lea Road

Enough Food for Everyone if...

Chris Bain, Director of CAFOD and John Cooper, Regional Director of Christian Aid

Saturday November 23rd 10.00-1.00 - At St. Peter's Church

***Conference on Forgiveness* (chaired by Bishop Clive Gregory)**

(Tickets (free) from Office by E-Mail or with sae)

Monday November 25th-Thursday November 28th -10.00-3.00

Forgiveness Project Display at St. Peter's Church

Tuesday January 21st 1.00-2.00 *Bring and Share lunch at the Office*

Why I am a Muslim. How does this affect my life? Harun Rashid

(This is the first of a monthly series on the third Tuesday of the month)

Monday January 27th - 11.a.m Cenotaph, St. Peter's Square

Holocaust Memorial Service

Thursday February 13th 6.15.-9 pm

Film show (Earth Pilgrim) and meal at Mr. Devsi's home (Tickets—£10 from office)



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