



# Annual Report

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2017 - 2018



BLACKBURN WITH DARWEN INTERFAITH FORUM | COMMUNITY CVS



## An Overview

Blackburn with Darwen Interfaith Forum (IFF) continues to work as a forum where members from all major faiths can work together to raise awareness promoting better understanding between people of faith or no faith within our community. This work we believe continues to be of critical importance to our increasingly multi-cultural and multi-faith society.

What we all see in the media about culture clash, mistrust and suspicion amongst people from different backgrounds, I believe is born out of ignorance of the “other” and sows the seeds of fear and hatred. We all know that ignorance only breeds ignorance and it is therefore very important to have a meaningful dialogue and to encourage people to be open about their way of life while also respecting other people's way of life.

As a current Chair of the Interfaith Forum, I would like to give you a resume of what we have been able to do over the past 12 months.

Firstly, I would like to thank all the members of Interfaith Forum, particularly Derek Estill who has devoted a lot of his time to set up and organise various talks and events and with the help of Sadiq Patel who again has been a very good administrator ensuring that all events, talks are conducted smoothly and as planned. I would also like to thank the Community and Voluntary Service (CVS) who have been very kind to allow Sadiq to help us in his voluntary capacity and to continue to support us in so many ways.

The following are the bullet points of our work during the past year.

- Marketed our services at the Blackburn College student enrolment day.
- A panel of six members each from a different faith taking part in questions and answers for the children of both Primary and Secondary schools in Blackburn & Darwen.
- Participating in the Remembrance Day parade at the Corporation Park Cenotaph.
- Holocaust Memorial Remembrance in Partnership with BwD Borough Council.
- Held a Faith and the Environment lecture/ discussion in Blackburn College. This has led on to a group of students talking up this faith-based challenge by taking on an environmental project in the borough.
- Work has been done to establish a North Blackburn Faith Leaders Forum between three local churches and a mosque.
- Delivered a workshop to encourage interfaith dialogue and activities in Darwen.
- Annual Remembrance Day for local people, a new project in partnership with BwD Borough Council and the Blackburn Cathedral.
- Worked closely with the national interfaith body, Inter Faith UK, to support interfaith work with young people nationally and facilitated a speech and workshops at the Inter Faith National Meeting 2018.
- Working with Lancashire Forum of Faiths and the Lancashire Council of Mosques

Again, my sincere thanks to all who have supported the work of the Interfaith Forum and hope this continues in the future.

*M T Sidat*

Mohammed T Sidat  
Chair of Interfaith Forum

## **Our Internal Structures**

The Interfaith Forum holds regular committee meetings to review activities and plan future work. It is supported in doing this by CVS and we are grateful for their support and their expertise which are very much appreciated. The Interfaith Forum is aware of the need to adopt a strategic overview and make plans for the future of the organisation and as a charity complies with requirements of the Charity Commission.

### **Faith Representation**

The Interfaith Forum provides faith representation to other bodies and to the Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council as required

### **Interfaith Forum's 2018/19 Programme Topics**

- 1 Continue to participate in civic occasions as needed and to speak out on local and national issues related to interfaith work such as Hate Crime etc.
- 2 Continue to work with all schools and colleges in the Borough
- 3 Support and arrange occasions that enable discussion and dialogue on faith and other related matters
- 4 Continue to arrange visits to different places of worship in aid of breaking down barriers and building trust and understanding
- 5 Work in cooperation with Blackburn Youth Zone to help establish a Youth Interfaith Forum through recruitment from the Faith In Youth programme.
- 6 Support and enable the East and North Blackburn Faith Leaders Forums to flourish and to facilitate the formation of Darwen Faith Leaders Forum

# Aims of Blackburn with Darwen Interfaith Forum

## 1) Harmony, Trust and Shared Respect:

To work together to foster understanding and cooperation between the Faith communities in Blackburn with Darwen.

## 2) Engagement, Participation and Commitment:

To increase understanding of the positive role that the Faith communities can play in society.

## 3) Community Cohesion:

To improve the quality of life of local people by working together on agreed projects in order to demonstrate our commitment to working in partnership between people of different Faiths

## Charity Trustees and Advisory Committee

Members 2017/18

Officers	Members	
Chair	Mohammed Tayyab Sidat	Islam
Treasurer	Sadiq Patel	Islam
Secretary	* Derek Estill	Christianity
	*Abdul Kheratker	Islam
	Ismail Satia	Islam
	Rev'd John Howard-Norman	Christianity
	Josephine Hartley	Christianity
	Canon Dr. Arun John	Christianity
	Revd. Canon Dr. Rowena Pailing	Christianity
	* Renee Black	Judaism
	*Joginder Singh Bhamrah	Sikhism
	Baldeep Khungin	Sikhism
	Bharat Parmar	Hinduism
	* Ashok Chudasama	Hinduism
	* Madhubala Pandya	Hinduism
	*Richard Foster	Buddhism
	Aftab Mughal	Web Master
	Parhin Begum	Support Officer

\* = Trustee Members

# Memorable Occasions During the Year

## Promotion of Secretary to Moderator, Derek Estill

The moderators of General Assembly are the national figureheads for the denomination, representing the United Reformed Church both internally and within the wider world; they chair major meetings, visit churches at home and abroad, and seek to provide worship, teaching and pastoral care.

In 2008, General Assembly agreed to move from a single moderator appointed for one year to two moderators, a minister and an elder, serving for two years alongside one another. From Assembly 2018 our moderators are the Revd. Nigel Uden and Mr. Derek Estill, the Interfaith Forum's secretary..



Members of the Interfaith Forum from the six different faiths travelled to Nottingham to support Derek at the inauguration ceremony. As Derek has an interest in interfaith work his term of office will look to recognise this by promoting opportunities to develop dialogue and action between people of different faiths.

## Nomination for Awards

### Fusion Awards 2018

The Interfaith Forum was very pleased to discover that they were shortlisted as finalists for the Community Cohesion Awards at the Fusion Award 2018 event.

### National Diversity Awards 2018

The Interfaith Forum were equally pleased to be informed that they were nominated for the Community Organisation Award at the National Diversity Awards 2018.

Thank you to all those who supported and nominated Interfaith Forum on these occasions.



Source: Asian Image

# Our Years Work

## Paying tribute to the victims of Manchester Attack in May 2017



In solidarity and togetherness, members of the Interfaith Forum from Blackburn travelled together to Manchester and prayed for the victims of the Manchester attack. It touched many hearts when a Jewish woman, Renee Rachel Black, and a Muslim man, Sadiq Patel, visited the Albert Square in Manchester.

## Remembrance Sunday

A key element of the Interfaith Forum's work relates to our civic duty as faith communities to remember those who have fought and died in wars and conflicts. As part of this, the IFF has participated in Remembrance Sunday commemorations.



## Holocaust Memorial Day

The IFF has also played a vital part in remembering the suffering of communities on the grounds of religion. As part of this, Holocaust Memorial Day, remembering the atrocities committed against the Jews and others, is a key date in the IFF calendar.

## Srebrenica Remembrance Day

On 12 July, Srebrenica Memorial Day was held at Blackburn Cathedral as a remembrance of Srebrenica genocide. Chris Seddon was the chair of the event while The Rev Canon Dr Rowena Pailing welcomed the guests.

Three representatives (a woman from Afghanistan, a man from Ivory Coast, and a girl from Sudan) of the City of Sanctuary (YMCA) spoke about their journeys. Few other members from the refugee community were also present there.



At the end, Interfaith Forum representative Derek Estill read Srebrenica Prayer in first instance and then invited audience to stand and repeat the prayer as a group.

## Annual Memorial Day

The Interfaith Forum has worked with others, to establish a Memorial Day for Blackburn with Darwen when all those who have died during the previous year can be remembered. They also continue to work with others to build on the success of the first Memorial Days to ensure that this annual memorial occasion becomes embedded in the life of the town enabling local people to regularly mark their loving memories for those that have died during the previous 12 months. We are very pleased to be able to make our contribution to what we hope is going to be a significant annual event for all people in the Borough of any faith or no faith.



These events are in partnership with Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council.

## Visits to Places of Worship

These have continued to be arranged so that pupils from local schools are able to visit a Church, Sikh Gurdwara, Buddhist Centre, Jewish Synagogue, Hindu Temple and a Mosque. Reports from schools that have been on these visits illustrate that they have also valued these trips very much.

## Working with Young People

To raise awareness and understanding of other faiths and supporting school curriculum needs through dialogue, discussion, talks and visits to places of worship across all of the six Major World Faiths as well as facilitating and helping with interschool projects.

## Primary Schools

The Interfaith Forum has and is working with Primary Schools in the Borough and is keen to work with more of our local primary schools within the Borough. Work has continued with Primary Schools across the Borough with the Interfaith Forum's Panel of people from six different faiths visiting schools and spending the whole morning there engaging with the pupils at different school asking many different questions of all six different faiths.

The Interfaith Forum has received appreciative comments from the schools that have taken part as it is believed that such interaction between adult members of the six main world faiths with the pupils of our local schools makes an important contribution

to the community cohesion dialogue within and across the Borough.

## Secondary Schools



The Interfaith Forum continues to work with the Secondary Schools in the Borough.

This work has also included working with the schools on marking the towns remembering of the Holocaust Memorial Day. Over recent years this has been particularly powerful as young people have deeply engaged in thinking about what happened and is

still happening in our world today and have significantly contributed to the event on Holocaust Memorial Day.

## Blackburn College

The Interfaith Forum has continued to be involved in the college's Further Education student Induction Week' making contact with college students to bring the work of the Interfaith Forum to their notice and to try and establish a connection with students that are interested in this work.

## The Open Space Project

The Open Space is a project supported by the 'Building A Stronger Britain Together' (BSBT) programme, as part of the UK Home Office's counter-extremism strategy.

This project was initiated in February 2018 by the Interfaith Forum to reach the wider community and encourage an increase participation in interfaith dialogue and engagement.



The key themes that this project focuses on are addressing the challenges of interfaith dialogue and engagement in our community, defining the concepts of religion and identity, understanding the tools and skills for effective dialogue and interaction and learning suitable methods to implement change in our society.

## The Inter Faith UK

Interfaith Forum supported the national interfaith body, Inter Faith UK with a focused group discussion in April 2018, addressing how to encourage youth participation in interfaith work. Further, they facilitated discussions and workshops with Inter Faith UK at their national meeting in July 2018.

