



*The Interfaith Forum would like to thank all our funders for their support over the year.*

For more information or to become involved with the work of the Interfaith Forum, please contact:-

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## An Overview

Blackburn with Darwen Interfaith Forum 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 in our local schools, colleges, places of worship and elsewhere. This work we believe continues to be of critical importance to our increasingly multicultural multi faith community.

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 and to respect other people’s way of life.

This year has been difficult as there was no funding available from anywhere to expand our services by staging joint conferences and events for the benefit of the community.

As a current Chair of the Interfaith Forum, I would like to give you a resume of what we have been able to do in these difficult financial conditions 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 junior 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 3 local Churches and Mosque
- Delivered a talk describing the basics of Christian Worship.
- Annual Remembrance Day for local people, a new project in partnership with BwD Borough Council and the Blackburn Cathedral.
- Established and facilitated a Christian/Muslim Ladies group in East Blackburn. The group used the East Blackburn Faith Trail during the year and invited a group of Christian and Muslim ladies from Burnley to come and tell them about their joint visit to Jerusalem.
- 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.



Ashok Chudasama  
Chair of Interfaith Forum.

## Delivered faith talks on Symbols and Artefacts



What is Hinduism event held at Chester Street Mosque



What is Christianity event held at Revidge Fold

## 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, their skills and knowledge which is 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 and is willing to assist other such bodies as needed.

## Interfaith Forum's 2012/13 Programme Topics

- 1) Build on work with Secondary Schools.
- 2) Build on work with Primary and Junior Schools
- 3) Build on Faith and the Environment Work with Blackburn College Students
- 4) Continue to facilitate the use of the Multi-Faith Room in Kingsway Extra Care Village.
- 5) Continue to arrange lecture/talks/tours covering aspects of faith across all 6 major world faiths represented in the Interfaith Forum.
- 6) Build on and facilitate the East Blackburn Faith Leaders' Forum
- 7) Establish and facilitate the North Blackburn Faith Leaders' Forum and create an Interfaith Trail.
- 8) Seek to establish and facilitate a youth Interfaith Forum in Blackburn with Darwen.

## East Blackburn Faith Leaders' Forum

The Interfaith Forum has continued to be instrumental in supporting and facilitating the work of the Faith Leaders' Forum in the East part of Blackburn between local Mosques and Churches. As part of the work of this Forum has supported and promoted the events and talks that this local Faith Leaders Forum has arranged such as a Talk and visit to a local Madrasah, a talk and explanation of Christian Worship, sharing in the opening of the Ramadan Fast and an event explaining the 5 Pillars of Islam.

## North Blackburn Faith Leaders' Forum

Initial work has begun to establish a Faith Leaders Forum in the north part of Blackburn similar to the one already established in the East part of the town. This group has held a talk on the work of a Madrasah which included visiting the students whilst they were studying. Work is also in hand to establish an Interfaith Trail between the churches and Mosques that make up this group.

## Faith and the Environment

The Interfaith Forum has built on the seminar held over a year ago by working in partnership with Blackburn College and their Chaplaincy Service, Blackburn Council, Faiths 4 Change, Action Factory and the North West Environment Agency to establish a student group within the college that is inspired by Faith to take action to address environmental issues being faced by the town. In this regard they are undertaking work to address a local flooding issue and related matters. The student group supported by the Interfaith Forum and the other agencies listed above are looking to build the group of students to include members from different faiths which is allied to the Interfaith Forum. This work it is in line with one of our stated aims to involve young people in Interfaith work. It is hoped that this will be an iterative process which continues over the next year or so engaging with the students within the college to explore the issues of faith and the environment, as well as other interfaith topics.

The Interfaith Forum has also been involved in both 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.

## Kingsway Multi Faith/ Interfaith Room

We would like to take this opportunity to express our thanks and appreciation for the co-operation of Housing 21 who run the Kingsway Extra Care Village and therefore provide this facility for their residents facilitated by the Interfaith Forum.



## 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. The first Memorial Day occasion was in March 2013 and was well attended. The Interfaith Forum has continued to work with others to build on this success 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.



## 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 2012/13

Officers	Members	
Chair	* Ashok Chudasama	Hinduism
Treasurer	* Vidusi	Buddhism
Secretary	* Derek Estill	Christianity
	Abdul Kheratker	Muslim
	Mohammed Khaliq	Muslim
	* Salim Mulla	Muslim
	Mohammed Tayyab Sidat	Muslim
	Joe Brandon	Buddhism
	The V. Rev'd Christopher Armstrong	Christianity
	The Rev'd Terry Young	Christianity
	Canon Dr. Arun John	Christianity
	* Renee Black	Judaism
	Harry Swalbe	Judaism
	Amrit Kaur Bamrah	Sikhism
	Baldeep Hungin	Sikhism
	* Joginder Singh Bhamrah	Sikhism
	Ashok Dayal	Hinduism
	Ashwin Kara	Hinduism
	* Madhubala Pandya	Hinduism

\* = Trustee Members





Interfaith Forum Support Officer – Sadiq Patel

Sadiq Patel has, since February 2006, been supporting and facilitating the work of the Interfaith Form (IFF).

He would like to take this opportunity to express his grateful thanks for the support he has received from both IFF members and his CVS colleagues in carrying out his work.

Please contact Sadiq if you want to learn more about the work of the Interfaith Forum.  
(Please refer to back page)

Our Years Work

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 Interfaith Forum 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.



Both these events are in partnership with Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council

Visits to Places of Worship

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



Working with Young People

Secondary Schools

The Interfaith Forum has continued to work with Secondary Schools on Interfaith related matters. However the change in grant funding availability has however meant that it has not been possible to continue 2 day out of school intensive sessions where students from different schools across Blackburn interact with each other and explore their perception or misperception about each other and their different faiths of no faith background. Looking back on previous years work it is clear that these sessions were of value and made an important contribution to those young people’s lives that took part. It is hoped that it might be possible to run similar sessions in the future.

We have however been able to work with Tauheedul Islamic Girls High School visiting their A level student class to explain and answer questions about the work of the Interfaith Forum which was well received. This has lead on to us working with the school to develop an Interfaith Club. Arrangements have already been made to deliver a series of sessions focusing on each of the faiths that are part of the Interfaith Forum, visit to churches and a full panel discussion to debate an ‘A’ level exam question that the school will provide.

The Interfaith Forum has worked with Action Factory delivering a community cohesion project at the new Blackburn Central High School during which we were able to help students explore questions of faith and good relations as part of their preparation work leading up to a public drama/Rap performance on this topic.

Blackburn College

The Interfaith Forum has taken part in Blackburn Colleges International Interfaith student exchange with colleges in South Africa by arranging for the visiting students to visit a Church, Sikh Gurdwara, Buddhist Centre, Jewish Synagogue, Hindu Temple and Mosque. It is hope that a connection to an Interfaith Forum in South Africa might be possible in the future.

Primary Schools

Work has continued with Primary Schools across the Borough with the Interfaith Forum’s Panel of people from 6 different faiths visiting schools and spending the whole morning there engaging with the pupils at the school. These sessions have proved to be both interesting and challenging with the pupils asking many different questions of all 6 different faiths. The Interfaith Forum has received appreciative comments from the schools that have taken part. It is believed that such interaction between adult members of the 6 main world faiths with the pupils of our local schools makes an important contribution to the community cohesion dialogue within and across the Borough.

