WATFORD
INTERFAITH ASSOCIATION



Newsletter Winter 2025/26

Contents

3. From the Chair
4. From our Patron
5. Week of Prayer for World Peace
6. Watford Interfaith Pilgrimage for Interfaith Week
8. Watford Peace Garden
9. WIFA Statements
10. Prayer / Discussion Meetings
11. Remembrance Sunday
12. Mayor's Faith Forums
14. Watford Civic Service, Watford Friends Social
15. Annual Gathering of Bushey Interfaith Forum
16. Watford FC celebrates its fifth Chanukah Party
18. Watford does Diwali!
19. Institution, Installation and Induction of Revd Kudzayi Bvekerwa
20. Green Heart of Watford,
    Menorah and Christmas Tree
21. Interfaith Week Walk,
    Hare Krishna School visit to Al-Zahra Centre
22. Carol Service brings festive cheer
23. Holocaust Memorial Event at Anne Frank Memorial Tree
24. Interfaith Week at Bhaktivedanta Manor
25. World Meditation Day with the Brahma Kumaris
26. Interfaith Week Gathering at St Albans Cathedral
27. The Faith Covenant One Year On
28. Faiths in Hertfordshire
30. Faiths in Hertfordshire Statement,
    Holocaust Memorial Day Event
31. Election of First Female Archbishop of Canterbury
32. Chanukah with Nisa-Nisham,
    New Commission on Interfaith Relations
33. King Charles and Pope Leo XVI Pray Together
    Installation of new Archbishop of Westminster
34. Walk for Peace
35. Every Human is Born Free
    Coming Interfaith Events

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Please contact **www.wifa.org.uk** for general enquiries and information. The usual contact emails for WIFA, Brunijh@aol.com and Wifasec@aol.com will soon be changing so please look out for the new email address.



WATFORD INTERFAITH ASSOCIATION

From the Chair

During what, for personal reasons, has been the hardest year of my life, when I reflect upon what WIFA has achieved and is achieving, I realise just how important the interfaith movement is.

In the joint activities we take part in, whether it be one of our monthly peace gatherings, or joining with an iftar by invitation from the Muslim community, or the annual interfaith pilgrimage to six places of worship, we meet people of many different backgrounds on equal and often celebratory terms.

Through our work in the Peace Garden the various groups and volunteers come together to work and to solve problems in making the garden beautiful and welcoming. Recently the Rotary Club donated a Peace Pole to the garden, something we had considered long ago but was thought too expensive: out of the blue it was offered, and installed on 18th October, a beacon to diversity with a message of peace in eight languages. This is to be ceremonially installed on March 25th at 12.30 pm with Mayor Peter Taylor and others in attendance.

I have been watching the progress of the 19 Buddhist monks who took to the road to walk for peace in America, walking 2,300miles in 120 days from Fort Worth to reach Washington DC on 10th February. They walked in a line, sometimes barefoot, disciplined, mindfully and with a message of peace for these times of sometimes chaos and unrest, stating that peace is within ourselves and is available at any time. It has given people hope, and it is so simple, we can all be at peace no matter what is happening in our lives, and we can spread that peace to others just by being peaceful.

Jeffrey Bateman

From our Patron



At the end of 2025 I received a letter from the government asking me if I'd like to cancel the council and mayoral elections scheduled to take place in Watford in May this year. With local councils in Hertfordshire currently being restructured, these are likely to be the last elections for Watford Council before the council is merged into one of the new unitary councils which will be up and running in 2028. The new council will provide all local government services and cover a larger area than Watford Council, although the exact details have not yet been confirmed.

I replied to the government to say that I believe these elections should happen and the government has now confirmed that they will. Democracy is a core value of our society. It is worrying that the government appears to believe that elections are sometimes a bureaucratic inconvenience that can be cancelled. It might have been easier for me to serve as mayor for another two years without facing an election, but that would have been the wrong thing to do.

Many members of the public feel deeply cynical about politics. I do worry that episodes such as this only add to this distrust of the entire political process. From my perspective, politics is about serving the residents you represent, listening to different voices and bringing people together to get things done.

Over the last few months, I have been really pleased to have worked with the Watford Interfaith Association to host two Faith Forums. Together we have discussed community safety and youth provision in the town. It is really valuable to hear the perspectives of faith leaders in the town, to share ideas and develop even closer relationships. Please do get in touch if you would like to know the details of our next meeting.

Although we don't know what our future council structures will be, the need to bring our town together remains an ever-present priority.

Peter Taylor

Week of Prayer for World Peace

'Continuing to pray with hope in a troubled world'.



It was a rainy day. We didn't know how many would come. WIFA had organized its annual gathering for the Week of Prayer for World Peace (WPWP) on Sunday 19th October. The theme of this year's WPWP was "Continuing to pray with hope in a troubled world," People from all faith communities of Watford and beyond had been invited to the Watford Peace Garden. It would be a time for planting and a time for reflection and prayer for peace and healing for our society, our world.

That Sunday afternoon, it was still raining when we arrived at the Peace Garden. Despite the weather a few came from different faith communities. We started by planting some daffodil bulbs and then took shelter underneath the two large horse chestnut trees. Jeffrey Bateman, Chair of WIFA welcomed everyone and invited us to offer our contributions for the day. Lead Town Centre Chaplain, Revd Geert Tap had sent his apology, and we read his inspirational message for the day, about tulips and people and how they grow. Then Sharifa stood up and sang in Arabic, a beautiful song about God's immense mercy. There were also readings from the Bhagavad Gita and the Bible; the prayer of St Francis was sung as well as other prayers and reflections on the world's situation. I was standing next to Abdool, I knew him from listening to his call for prayer at the Mosque and for him attending some of our interfaith meetings. Showing me his mobile phone, he whispered: 'Françoise would it be ok for us to sing this song' and I answered: 'Yes, if you like, please, let's go ahead' You wouldn't believe what song he had chosen. With a hesitating voice he started singing: 'What a wonderful world!' by Louis Armstrong and we all joined in. Watching everyone from such diverse backgrounds singing this uplifting song together made me really think. After all it may be well possible to see a peaceful world one day.

The rain had gradually stopped and now the sun was shining. We concluded our gathering by reciting together the international prayer for peace. But that was not the end. There were still Sharifa's delicious samosas to enjoy and our friendly conversations to continue. And I said to myself, 'What a wonderful day, a day of hope for a better future'

On the following Wednesday, as part of the WPWP people came once more to the Peace Garden for planting. All kinds of plants and bulbs were put in the ground that day: daffodil bulbs, muscari, allium, and a donation of 500 purple crocus bulbs from the Rotary Club. We are looking forward to seeing them all bloom this year.

Françoise Murphy

Watford Interfaith Pilgrimage 2025

Celebrating faith, friendship, and community



Pilgrims gather at the Quaker Meeting House

On National Interfaith Week, Watford Interfaith Association hosted its annual Interfaith Pilgrimage visiting 6 places of worship around Watford. It was an inspiring and uplifting event bringing our Watford residents on a journey of discovery of the different faith communities of our town.

It was Sunday 16th November mid-day, when we started our Pilgrimage at the Friends Meeting House. We were welcomed with hot drinks and snacks followed by a talk on the amazing contributions of Quakerism to our society, promoting peace instead of war, initiating Lloyds and Barclays banks, and Cadbury's hot chocolate and more. We then visited the Watford & District Synagogue where we were privileged to admire the beautiful and precious Torah scrolls and many questions were asked about Jewish faith and traditions. Our Watford Elected Mayor Peter Taylor spoke about his appreciation for our annual interfaith pilgrimage allowing Watford residents to learn about the various communities of our town, making Watford a most welcoming town for all.

After the Synagogue, we had quite a long walk until we reached the Al-Zahra Centre, a Shi'a Mosque. There we learnt about the similarities and differences between Shi'a and Sunni Muslims. They told us that those conflicts between the two were mostly due to politics: here in Watford both communities enjoy a good relationship with each other. Once again lots of questions were raised especially coming from our Jewish friends. It was wonderful that this year quite a few members of the Synagogue followed the pilgrimage and actively participated in the conversations.

At the Central Mosque, the Imam and the members of the Mosque welcomed us warmly. After a short introduction to Islam and a resounding call for prayer we were invited to enjoy delicious samosas and pakoras. Then it was time to visit Holy Rood Roman Catholic Church, a beautiful church building which was designed by the same architect who later built Westminster Cathedral. After answering a few questions, Deacon Neville Dyckhof offered a beautiful prayer about bringing all faiths together under the love of God. It was then time to reach St Mary's Parish Church, the last stop of our pilgrimage. We had a bit of a break enjoying some warm drinks and delicious home-made biscuits before the presentation. Reverend Richard Banham, the new Vicar of St Mary's introduced us to his church, a church which had known Christian worship for over 800 years. He spoke about his faith and the vibrant community of St Mary's which also hosts the Watford Town Centre Chaplaincy.

Our Pilgrimage came to an end around 5.30pm. Yogesh Joshi, Vice Chair of WIFA thanked everyone for coming including our Watford Elected Mayor, Deputy Mayor Aga Dychton as well as some Councillors who followed us all the way. He also thanked all the places of worship for their kind hospitality. Quite tired but uplifted and enriched by the experience of the day we left each other with a feeling of oneness and friendship, one town together.

F.M.



L-R: Torah scrolls in the Synagogue, Mayor Peter Taylor, In the Al-Zahra Centre Central Mosque, Holy Rood Roman Catholic Church, St Mary's Parish Church

Watford Peace Garden



After another very dry summer, the garden suffered somewhat under drought conditions with parched grass and flower beds. Watering was not always easy, as there were often not enough volunteers to complete all the tasks, especially as the Peace Garden Team now helps with the beds around the pond, along with other groups. A new water system was installed which would enable several sources of water in the garden, but so far it does not work. With hotter summers now it might be worth considering turning some of the beds to prairie style planting, which can thrive with very little water.

On November 28th, the High Sheriff of Hertfordshire Nicholas Buxton came to the Peace Garden along with Chair of Watford Council Favour Ezeifedi and Isabel Crozier, the Park Manager. They toured the garden and Green Gym's allotments, where Mr Buxton planted some seeds with Eva Mbiru who runs Spiced in Watford, a cooking charity.

A Peace Pole was installed on November 2nd, across the labyrinth from the Peace Arch. It was donated by the Rotary Club, facilitated by Emmanuel Akinbinu and Cllr Rabi Martins and has a peace message in eight languages on its four sides. It was installed by Jeffrey Bateman and Sri Mohan, and we are delighted with this precious gift for the garden.



The third Sunday Peace Gatherings have continued, with one in October which took place on the fourth Sunday due to the Week of Prayer for World Peace happening on the third Sunday. Four people came along for that, and though just a small gathering the spiritual sharing together was very uplifting indeed. In November the third Sunday was taken up by WIFA's Interfaith Pilgrimage and on December 21st it was way too cold to stand around outside in the garden. Some instead attended a World Meditation Day event which was held in Watford Central Library, and a Christmas carol service at St Mary's Parish Church.

The area around the chestnut trees which were supposed to have been partially felled a few months ago due to the danger from damaged branches in the canopy has now been fenced off until such time as the tree men can do the work (the ground is too soft at the moment). As always, we are indebted to our volunteers, both regular and from Emerging Futures, their hard work has kept the garden looking very good.

As the days grow longer we look forward to gradually seeing the spring flowers emerge and bloom, and the garden burst into life once more. ***JB***

Statement from Watford Interfaith Association

We at Watford Interfaith Association are deeply saddened by the recent mindless attack on the Jewish community in Manchester. Our hearts and prayers go out to all those affected, and to our Jewish sisters and brothers at this difficult time.
WIFA's vision and commitment is always to bring our community closer together in peace and harmony. Violence and hatred have no place in our country. Together, through compassion and solidarity, we will continue to stand for unity and understanding.

Yogesh Joshi, Vice Chair, on behalf of Jeffrey Bateman, Chair
3rd October, 2025

Statement from Watford Interfaith Association

We are deeply saddened and disturbed to learn about the graffiti defacing the North Watford and North Approach Mosques. Such acts of vandalism are not only offensive but cause real hurt and distress to our Muslim brothers and sisters and to all who value peace and mutual respect in our community.
Watford Interfaith Association stands in full solidarity with the Muslim community. We firmly condemn all forms of hate and intolerance. Acts like these have no place in our town, which has always been proud of its harmony, diversity, and spirit of togetherness.
We urge everyone to respond with unity, compassion, and calm, and to continue building the strong bonds that make Watford a welcoming home for people of all faiths and backgrounds.

Yogesh Joshi, Vice Chair, on behalf of Jeffrey Bateman, Chair,
7th October, 2025

Prayer/discussion meetings

Held online every fourth Tuesday of the month

Our last discussion, in January, was reflecting on the Holocaust which is remembered on the 27th of January. This date is chosen by the UN because it marks the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, the largest Nazi concentration and death camp, by Soviet troops in 1945, a pivotal moment symbolising the end of the Holocaust and the freeing of many prisoners.

During World War II, the organized mass murder of some six million European Jews became known as “The Holocaust,” with a capital H. The Nazis also killed millions of others, including Roma, Catholics, Baha’is, homosexuals, Communists, the physically and mentally challenged, Slavs, political opponents and anyone who defied the Nazi regime. However, the Jews were the only group targeted with a calculated plan for total annihilation. Similarly, we now label the genocides that took place in Rwanda, Darfur, Bosnia, Armenia and other locales as holocausts.

Yes, Hitler considered the Jews to be an inferior race, an alien threat to German racial integrity. But he thought that of many other groups, too, including just about everyone with darker skin. He wanted them all eradicated. But for the Jews, Hitler and his cohorts developed a specific plan of humiliation, persecution, and eventual extermination, which they called the “final solution”.

Why did it happen? How did it happen? Prejudice: Scapegoating: Discrimination: Persecution: Nationalism.

Some say God caused the Holocaust, some say Satan, but really it is man that causes it by acts of injustice and apathy. It is man who must and can prevent future holocausts. Man must act individually and collectively, acts according to God’s principles of justice, as revealed in the holy books. "Men, however, have wittingly broken His law. Is such a behaviour to be attributed to God, or to their proper selves? Be fair in your judgment. Every good thing is of God, and every evil thing is from yourselves. Will ye not comprehend? This same truth hath been revealed in all the Scriptures, if ye be of them that understand." Baha’u’llah

To prevent future holocausts, the will of man must be merged with the will of God. Each and every victim of the Holocaust was a martyr—a “witness” against injustice. The intelligent and effective righting of our racial wrongs and handicaps involves pleading and righting the cause of any and all oppressed minorities. In making common cause with all such broader issues, we shall find that we strengthen, both morally and practically.

Owrang Moshtael

*To join these discussion groups, which take place every fourth Tuesday, please contact the WIFA website, **www.wifa.org.uk** for details. The link is sent via email, so if you usually receive WIFA emails you will receive the link anyway. If you are a new subscriber you can leave your email address on the web site. Many different topics are covered in these evenings, which start at 8.00 until 9.00pm.*

Remembrance Sunday, 9th November



The Civic Remembrance Service had a more confined space to settle into after the procession because of the hoarding around the town hall, but it did not diminish the spirit of solemn remembrance of the service of those who suffered and gave their lives for a free and peaceful life in our country.

WIFA's wreath bearers this time were Azhar Shah, president of the Al-Zahra Centre and Jeremy Taffel, Chair of the Watford and District Synagogue, seen here with Cllr Rabi Martins.

This time the procession started from the Parade area led by the bagpipe lament 'Flowers of the Forest' and Lord Lieutenant Robert Voss. The Armed Forces, Veterans and Cadets followed, and community and volunteer personnel brought up the rear.

After the Last Post, two minutes' silence and the Reveille the wreaths were solemnly laid. The new Vicar of St Mary's Parish Church, Revd Richard Banham, led the spiritual side of the proceedings while Chair of Watford Council, Cllr Favour Ezeifedi and Elected Mayor Peter Taylor led the civic side. Rabbi Mordechai Chalk led children to the laying of a wreath at the Anne Frank Tree (picture below) The poem 'In Flanders Field' by John McRae was read by pupils from Willow Tree Primary School, and the National Anthem was sung by Milly Forest. The International Prayer for Peace was said by all.

As the dignitaries left, the crowd dispersed and headed for the library where hot drinks were available for those who had stood so long in the cold





MAYOR'S FAITH FORUM

After recent incidents including the Manchester bombings and graffiti on Watford Mosques, the Mayor, Peter Taylor set up a faith forum and invited faith and community leaders to attend, from all backgrounds.

The first one, on 14th October, held at the Town Hall Annexe had a strong police presence, with Chief Superintendent Diane Whiteside and Chief Inspector Dan Rainbird. The Assistant Chief Constable Nick Caveney said a lot of work had taken place since these incidents, the perpetrator of the graffiti had been apprehended and would appear in court in December. The local police had delivered reassurance to the faith communities with 500 visits to places of worship that week. Two officers visited twice a day visibly for 15 minutes, chatted to people there and discussed any problems or fears and moved to the next place. Only one incident was recorded during those weeks. All thought it would be helpful to have hate and race crime statistics. If reporting a hate crime either dial 999 or report to a third party online, and the relevant officer will deal with it.

Around the table Peter Taylor asked if there had been any problems. Revd Geert Tap reported that eight chaplains and Street Angels had been out on the streets and apart from some young men trying to disrupt the Diwali celebrations all was positive. Some of the Muslims were scared to attend the mosque at night, and the Jewish community had had no problems but realised their permanent synagogue security was not strong enough and are looking into it, especially as the Rabbi and his family live there. There were also no problems with refugees. The raise flags movement had caused much consternation for some, as it seems to be an expression of anger and frustration. It is illegal to tie flags to street furniture and takes a lot of maintenance to get them down, but it is fine to put them up on one's own property.

At the second meeting of the forum on 20th January, community safety was again addressed, with the showing of a map of all the areas in Watford where hate and race crimes had been reported. Clusters of crimes could be seen around supermarkets, where if a person was apprehended for stealing, they turned on the person arresting them. Other areas were petrol stations, North Watford Mosque, road rage, the Harlequin, McDonalds, and other nighttime economies, but by far the worst area was Watford General Hospital A&E, where people who were ill, in pain, drunk, or had dementia lashed out. There were 249 cases in the past year compared to 298 last year. Religiously aggravated cases numbered 32, transgender 4, and sexual 25.

Youth Issues were next on the agenda and boredom was one issue highlighted: children came out of school and started up fights, with mates photographing the scrap, even girls were fighting. Many wondered, where are the youth clubs? They lost their funding some years back, along with community centres and now young people have nowhere engaging to go. Langley Road Mosque, which is presently under construction will have a community centre which all can use. The Imam said he had loved going to a youth club at a local church and he was happy to offer this for all youngsters.

Toxic masculinity, vaping, drugs and mental health were all seen as issues. Often, teenagers hide in their bedrooms and rarely experience real activities and friendship outside school. They need help to get them talking. The Green Heart of Watford at St Mary's has an active environment group which some young people are keen on, and football is another area where youngsters can come along and play, Meriden Community Centre offers this, with no trials. It is very successful and well organised.

Helen Roberts' Dignify movement, now run by the YMCA, addresses porn and how it affects young boys and their attitudes to women. Other recommendations include Soul Survivor as a young organisation run by young people, being very friendly and having music, another feature which would attract young people. Children aged 12-18 can find activities through ASCAT at the Catholic School.

At the North Watford Mosque the Big Iftar was recommended as a place for all people to attend, falling in the middle of Ramadan. All felt that mobile phones take up far too much time, and young people should be out and about involved in interesting activities.

Another meeting was convened for three months' time. ***J.B.***



As a mark of respect and condolence, following the Sydney shootings of Jewish people celebrating Hanukkah on Bondi Beach in December members of the WIFA committee Françoise Murphy and Judith Bruni attended a Saturday Shul service at Watford and District Synagogue where they were warmly welcomed and engaged in conversation. The photo was kindly taken by one of the guards outside the synagogue.

Watford Civic Service Unites Community at Wellspring Church



On Sunday 7 December 2025, Wellspring Church in Watford welcomed residents, civic leaders and community groups for the **Watford Civic Service**, a heartfelt ceremony that celebrated local life, service, and shared values. The event brought together people from across the town to reflect on the year past and express gratitude for the work of community volunteers, public servants and civic organisations.

Held in the welcoming and inclusive space of Wellspring Church Centre, the service featured readings, prayers, and musical contributions that highlighted themes of unity, compassion and civic pride.

Attendees included Cllr Favour Ezeifedi, Chairman of Watford Council, Peter Taylor, Elected Mayor of Watford and Matt Turmaine, Watford MP, representatives from Watford Borough Council, local charities, faith communities and civic organisations — all joined by members of the wider public who came to take part in this longstanding but newly revived community tradition.

Speakers at the service reflected on the importance of coming together across backgrounds and sectors to support one another and strengthen the fabric of local life. The gathering fostered a sense of shared purpose and encouraged continued cooperation between civic institutions, voluntary groups and individuals working for the benefit of Watford's diverse neighbourhoods.

Yogesh Joshi

Had a lovely time on 21 December at **Watford Friends 'social'** with lots of people doing their 'party piece' or leading an activity. We concluded with a nativity play that no-one had organised, and apparently no-one had realised it was their job to do so (we asked the children's committee (there's a baby), the premises committee (accommodation was needed), the pastoral care team (there are sheep), the treasurer (wasn't there something about raising taxes).

A unique improvisation, featuring a three year old with newspaper wings in the role of all the angels required. She delighted us all telling the 91 year old Friend playing Mary that she was going to have a baby - we all shared Mary's surprise at the news! The one Friend joining on zoom played the star, and everybody else had a least one role. The chaos was seasoned with discussion about what the story actually said and lots of 'dad jokes' and quite a lot of tinsel! At least one participant went away and read up what the Gospel stories actually say - so there was learning as well as fun. *Stephanie Grant, Watford Quakers*

Annual Gathering of Bushey Interfaith Forum



On Thursday 27th November at 7:30pm, the annual gathering of the Bushey Interfaith Forum was held at the Jain temple, also known as the Shrimad Rajchandra Mission Dharampur London Spiritual Centre, in Falconer Road Bushey.

Many tens of people attended the event, having taken their shoes off at the foyer, with the main guest being the Chairman of Hertfordshire County Council, Laurence Brass. The veteran Liberal Democrat councillor, retired judge, interfaith advocate and active member of the Bushey United Synagogue was a founding member of the Bushey Interfaith Forum some 23 years ago.

The meeting which was entitled "How can our faiths help the poor and vulnerable?" was opened by the Chair of the Jain Centre, Rohan Sheth who showed us a short film outlining the humanitarian work the Jain mission does all around the world.

Then the panel of speakers in turn outlined their faith's approach to the question of help towards the poor and the vulnerable.

The speakers were: Catholic David Furber, Protestant Fr Andrew, Jewish Linda Yaffe, Hare Krishna Radha Mohan Das, Muslim Dr Makbul Rahim and Jain Kajal Sheth.

During the break everyone was invited to take refreshments which included hot chocolate and chai.

After the interval there was a Q&A between the speakers and the audience and the main themes outlined were how to encourage the young people to take part in Interfaith Forums and also how to bring together different local Interfaith groups. This gave me the opportunity to mention the weekly gatherings at the Peace Garden and the wonderfully active Watford Interfaith Association!

After a concluding message from Chairman Laurence Brass, the congregation was encouraged to offer a monetary contribution towards the Centre's Hot Meals for the Homeless Campaign.

Panos Fellas

Watford FC celebrates its fifth Chanukah Party



On the 18th of December 2025, Watford FC, together with its Jewish Hornets Supporters Group, hosted the fifth ever Chanukah Party to be held at Vicarage Road. It is almost certain that Watford were the first professional football club, in either the Premier League or the Championship to host a Chanukah Party. Chanukah parties were held last year as well, at Arsenal, Chelsea, Fulham, Leeds United, Leyton Orient, Manchester United, Liverpool, Queens Park Rangers and at the Football Association.



The Watford FC Chanukah Party was a most joyful occasion with 150 people in attendance, including Watford goalkeeper Nathan Baxter. Attendees went home uplifted with smiles on their faces.

Singer Ilana Lorraine, who has sung in front of the legendary, the late Amy Winehouse, performed on the night. There was a Watford FC quiz with the wining prize, a Watford FC shirt signed by both the men and women's first teams. There was the lighting of the Chanukah candles, including by the Vice Chair of the Watford Interfaith Association, Yogesh Joshi, and the traditional singing of Chanukah songs. There was a raffle which raised money for the Watford FC Community Sports and Education Trust, and the Jewish supporters group.

A minute's silence was held in memory of the victims of the recent terrorist attacks at Bondi Beach in Sydney and at Heaton Park synagogue in Manchester.

The highlight of the evening was a presentation made to Stanley Stollar by Nathan Baxter, in appreciation of his incredible 81 years loyal support of Watford FC.

Stanley Stoller said: “It was extremely moving and was very nice to be recognised for supporting the club for so many years. I am now intrigued to know if there is anyone who has supported the club, even longer than me!”

Regular attendee and Watford fan Juliette Woolf said: “We have been attending this wonderful community event since 2021 and it has always been such a joyous occasion. A big thank you to Watford FC, the Jewish Hornets Group and to Dave Messenger, EDI lead at the club, for once again, organising and hosting such a fantastic Chanukah Party.”

Stephen Nelken, Founder of the Chelsea FC Jewish Supporters Group said: “Thank you for inviting me again to Watford FC’s Chanukah Party. It is an event that I look forward to each year! Even though I represent and support a different football club I am always made to feel very welcome. It was a truly enjoyable evening.”

Ze’ev Portner





Photos: page 16, lighting Chanukah candles, Carol Robinson WFC, Juliette Woolf, an avid fan, Rabbi Alex Goldberg: Harry the Hornet, Nathan Baxter, keeper, with fan.
This page, Harry the Hornet, Stanley Stollar and Nathan Baxter: Compère Ze’ev Portner and Club members.

Yogesh Joshi who was also there said this:



The celebration featured the lighting of the Hanukkah menorah, with candles lit each night to commemorate the Festival of Lights and the miracle of the oil in the ancient Temple. Attendees gathered to sing traditional songs, share stories about the significance of Chanukah, and join in communal reflections on themes of hope, resilience, and light overcoming darkness.

Organisers emphasised that the event was not just a religious celebration, but also a chance to build understanding and strengthen bonds across Watford’s diverse communities, combining tradition with community spirit.

Watford Does Diwali !









On October 11th in the Pump House Theatre there were workshops and in the Harlequin Centre cultural activities of Diwali Arts, followed by a procession up Watford High Street to the Pond, where Mayor Peter Taylor switched on the Diwali lights.





On 12th October at the Diwali Show at Watford Palace Theatre, dancers performed traditional Gujarati folk dances. Both days of celebration were organised by the Watford Indian Association.

Institution, Installation and Induction of the Revd Kudzayi Bverkewa



A few of us were honoured to attend the ceremony of installing the new vicar of St Michael and All Angels Church, the Revd Kudzayi Bverkawa on Wednesday 11th February. It is not every day that you step inside a church and are enveloped in the joyful infectious singing of a Zimbabwean choir...and this was before the event began!

The church has waited a year and a half for the proceedings of electing a new vicar to replace Fr Geoff, who was also Chair of WIFA for many years, as well as of Watford Celebration, to be completed.

The Bishop of Hertford, the Rt Revd Dr Jane Mainwaring officiated, along with the Archdeacon of St Albans, the Venerable Charles Hudson. The congregation was asked to join with the welcoming ceremony: the church choir and the Zimbabwean choir praised God to the rafters and the congregation and local schools, churches, health and social groups including WIFA welcomed the new vicar and his wife and three children, two daughters and a son who was unable to attend, (the service was streamed to him where he is studying in Poland) alongside the Chair of Watford, Deputy Mayor, Deputy Lord Lieutenant. MP Matt Turmaine and councillors.



It was altogether a joyful celebration and a great beginning of a new era for St Michael's. ***JB***

Photos: Steve Birch

Green Heart of Watford



Members of the Green Heart of Watford at St Mary's Parish Church are planting purple crocus bulbs donated by the Rotary Club, as part of their Purple4polio campaign, which will give a welcome splash of colour in the spring.

St Mary's Watford has taken an important step in caring for God's creation by switching its buildings to green gas. This makes the parish one of the first in the area to run on renewable energy rather than traditional fossil fuels. The move cuts emissions immediately and supports the Church of England's shared journey to net zero.



Read the full story here: **https://www.stalbansdiocese.org/.../st-marys-watford.../**, including how you can register your church energy use from 2025 in the Energy Footprint Tool (EFT) which opened this week.
The Diocese of St Albans.



I was at Watford General Hospital for a routine appointment and saw the splendid menorah alongside the Christmas tree. A delightful image of our gloriously diverse community in Watford.

Stephanie Grant



Interfaith Week walk to various places of worship in Hertsmere culminates at the Hertsmere Civic Offices.

The Hare Krishna Primary School visit to Al Zahra Mosque/Centre

On Tuesday 2nd December 2024 – sixteen schoolchildren from class 5 & 6 and three teachers from The Hare Krishna Primary School visited the Al -Zahra mosque & centre.

They were welcomed by Azhar Shah (President), Sheikh Ali Hadi (Imam/Priest) & Azhar Abedi (Interfaith Manager)

Short presentations were made by each of the above individuals on Islam including a brief history, its scripture, teachings on religious diversity as being divinely ordained, for Muslims to respect all faiths and to engage in dialogue with members of other faiths with the best of etiquette and manners.



This was followed by a Q & A session where the children had many interesting questions on Islamic beliefs and the writings and symbols depicted within the mosque. The session ended with some refreshments for the children and the teachers.

Azhar Abedi

Carol Service Brings Festive Cheer to St Mary's Church, Watford



On 21st December 2025, St Mary's Church Watford opened its doors to the local community for a heart -warming **Carol Service**, a cherished highlight of the church's Christmas season.

The service led by The Rev. Canon Richard Banham brought together families, neighbours, and visitors for an evening of traditional carols, hymns, and reflections on the meaning of Christmas. With voices raised in song, the congregation celebrated well-loved festive favourites that echoed through the historic church building, creating a joyful and reflective atmosphere.

Led by the church choir and supported by musicians, the service blended moments of congregational singing with seasonal readings — inviting attendees of all ages to reflect on themes of hope, peace and goodwill.



After the final carols, the church community lingered to share **mulled wine and mince pies**, offering a chance for fellowship and festive conversation. For many, this gathering was more than a musical celebration — it was an opportunity to strengthen community bonds and welcome the Christmas season together.

The annual Carol Service continues to be a favourite in Watford's festive calendar, exemplifying the warm hospitality and shared joy that characterises the season.

Y.J.

Silence increases the quality and the level of our ability to discern, allowing us to use our time, thoughts and qualities effectively and thus benefit all. In the silence of inner quietness, the intellect makes everything clear and then we just know how to act for the best. Too much analysis and mental processing pollute the clarity of discernment; an overload of details makes us miss the essence. Brahma Kumaris



Holocaust Memorial Event at Anne Frank Memorial, - 27 January 2026



A moving **Holocaust Memorial event** was held at the **Anne Frank memorial in Watford**, on Tuesday, 27th January 2026 bringing together local residents, civic leaders, faith representatives, and community groups to remember the victims of the Holocaust and all subsequent genocides.

The gathering provided a quiet and reflective space to honour the memory of the six million Jewish men, women, and children murdered during the Holocaust, and to reaffirm a collective commitment to stand against hatred, antisemitism, racism, and persecution in all its forms. Wreaths were laid at the memorial as a mark of respect and remembrance.

Speakers reflected on the enduring relevance of Anne Frank's story and the importance of education, remembrance, and dialogue in building a more compassionate and inclusive society. The event highlighted how remembrance is not only about the past, but also about the responsibility we carry today to challenge prejudice and injustice wherever it appears.

The ceremony also included a shared moment of silence, reinforcing Watford's commitment to remembrance, learning, and unity across communities.

Y.J.

Interfaith Week at Bhaktivedanta Manor

National Interfaith Week provided a wonderful opportunity for the children of Gurukula, the Hare Krishna primary School, to deepen their appreciation of other faith traditions while grounding their learning in Vaishnava values of respect, empathy and unity. Across the school, students took part in meaningful visits, thoughtful discussions and inspiring encounters that broadened their perspectives and strengthened their commitment to harmonious living.



Mr Barry Shooter, a practising member of the Jewish community and leading member of the Bushey Interfaith Forum came to talk to the children, as did Imam Zafar Ahmad, who shared insights into Ramadan and answered the children's many thoughtful questions.



Finally, Radha Mohan das led a special session on the true purpose of Interfaith Week. He emphasised that understanding other faiths is not only informative but essential for cultivating peace—both within the school community and in the wider world. His message beautifully reinforced the Vaishnava principle of seeing unity within diversity.

The Baladeva Class travelled to the SRMD spiritual Jain Centre in Bushey where the children listened to inspiring stories about their Jain guru, took part in yoga and meditation, made delicious vegetarian sweets and observed a beautifully performed arati ceremony.



They also examined how major religious observances share core principles. Although each tradition has unique practices, the students saw clearly that there are far more similarities than differences.

The Jagannatha Class visited the Borehamwood Baptist Church, where the children showed exemplary respect and inquisitiveness. Building on their prior research into Christianity they explored the key principles of the Baptist tradition and reflected on the similarities and differences with their own Vaishnava practice. Guided by the priest, the students then performed a lively dramatization of the parable of the Good Samaritan, complete with Biblical-style costumes and even a wooden horse.

Radha Mohan Das

World Meditation Day with the Brahma Kumaris



Hosted by the Brahma Kumaris, World Meditation Day on 21st December at Watford Central Library opened with a warm welcome from Mr. Yogesh Joshi, Vice Chair of the Watford Interfaith Association. The afternoon took on a solemn tone as the group addressed the recent tragedy at Bondi Beach. In a powerful display of solidarity, attendees joined in a collective prayer, sending vibrations of peace and comfort to the victims and their families.

Following the opening, a short film was screened highlighting the significance of the Winter Solstice—the astronomical turning point from darkness toward the light. The video emphasized how this day has become a global focal point for meditation, aligned with the UN's recognition of meditation as a vital tool for global well-being and human endeavour.

The keynote guest, Sister Kanan, was invited to share her profound experiences with meditation. She guided the capacity audience on a "journey of light and healing," helping participants tap into their inner stillness. Her insights reflected the sentiment shared by Sister Jayanti, Administrative Head of the Brahma Kumaris at the House of Lords earlier this month: that meditation is no longer on the periphery but is a fundamental practice for peace in all walks of life.

The highlight of the event was a moving candle-lit reflection, in which each guest was handed a tea light to switch on, symbolising the ignition of the 'inner light'. In a period of quiet reflection, participants held their lights before gently processing to a central table to place them together. This collective 'sea of light' served as a powerful visual representation of our shared commitment to a more peaceful world.

The session concluded in the traditional Brahma Kumaris style with the sharing of toli (a blessed snack) and a blessing card. Sister Bini who organised the event said, "The atmosphere was filled with an overwhelming sense of love and gratitude. The event successfully demonstrated that Watford's peaceful thoughts truly matter in the global movement towards peace and unity." ***Sr Bini***



Interfaith Week gathering at St Albans Cathedral Unites Diverse Communities

On Monday 17 November 2025, St Albans Cathedral hosted a vibrant interfaith event as part of **Inter Faith Week 2025**, drawing around 150 attendees from across Hertfordshire and beyond. The evening brought together people of different beliefs and backgrounds to celebrate diversity, build understanding, and highlight how various faith communities serve the wider local area.

The Cathedral's nave and cloisters buzzed with activity as 18 stall holders from a wide range of traditions, including Christianity, Islam, Sikhism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, and the Bahá'í faith, showcased projects addressing issues such as environmental stewardship, refugee support, food banks, children's programmes, and peace gardens.

Among the guests were dignitaries from across the region, including the Lord Lieutenants of Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire, local mayors, and community leaders. This broad civic support mirrored the event's ethos of fostering unity and promoting mutual respect across faith lines.



The Revd Dr Alec Corio (left) and Ulrike Hunt, diocesan interfaith advisers, described the event as a space not just for dialogue, but for meaningful connection and collaboration, with participants exchanging stories of service and discussing real-world cooperation. Highlights included talks from Jewish and Muslim community members on joint work in local schools, and cultural contributions from students at St Albans School, who performed songs and poetry reflecting themes of peace and shared humanity.

In opening remarks, the Dean of St Albans Cathedral reflected on the legacy of St Alban, Britain's first saint, whose act of hospitality and courage continues to inspire the Cathedral's mission of welcome and bridge-building. Organisers and participants alike emphasised the importance of such gatherings in countering division and strengthening social cohesion through respect, curiosity and friendship.

Yogesh Joshi



Revd Geert Tap with Watford Town Centre Chaplaincy stall

The Faith Covenant One Year On

A survey was sent out to all those who signed the Faith Covenant in January 2024. The covenant is a joint commitment between the faith communities and public services which aims to foster collaboration, mutual respect and community cohesion across Hertfordshire. 22 organisations signed the covenant.

In May 2025 a survey was distributed to all the signatories of the covenant to assess understanding of engagement, perceived benefits and glean suggestions of future development. The covenant is not legally binding; it is built on trust and collaboration.

Eight responses were received, offering valuable insights into the current state of the impact of the covenant, and areas of growth.

The survey questions were:

Do you know what are the main aims?

Do you feel your organisation has benefitted from the existence of the covenant?

Have you participated in any of the meetings which have taken place?

Do you have any suggestions for future work on projects which the covenant could adopt?

Have you any ideas how we can improve communication with these faiths that have not yet got involved?

Most respondents were familiar with the aims of the covenant but were often unclear about practical applications.

Respect had increased visibly with stronger interfaith relations, and a sense of inclusion, though some questioned tangible outcomes.

Many have attended meetings but there were barriers with unclear strategies and scheduling conflicts which were noted.

More participation in Interfaith Week was one way of encouraging faiths to participate.

Key findings were collaboration with councils and community events. Initiatives like peace gardens and county wide events were suggested as means of joining together.

One achievement was the Faith Covenant steering group, Faith Leaders' Forum and Herts Interfaith Forum merging into one group under the banner of Faiths in Hertfordshire.

In 2024 there was Faith Places – Shared Spaces, Working Together Across Hertfordshire, Better Health Bus, Cost of Living and Warm Spaces initiatives, Families First partnerships and Safeguarding Adults awareness sessions.

In conclusion, the essential question is, what do the faiths want? What are the problems and hopes and needs of the different communities and how can we work together to turn those into meaningful collaborative action?

For those who would like to watch the Interfaith Week webinar:

Watch the webinar recording here: Inter Faith Week 2025 – Faith Through Young Eyes: Youth Voices in Interfaith Dialogue

Faiths in Hertfordshire

Incorporating
The Herts Interfaith Forum
The Hertfordshire Faith Leaders' Forum
The Faith Covenant for Hertfordshire

At the meeting on 2nd December Cllr Laurence Brass, Chairman of Herts County Council warmly welcomed attendees and reaffirmed his commitment to interfaith work while he is Chair. He reflected on a successful Bushey Interfaith Forum event at the Jain Temple in Bushey where five faiths shared how they support the poor and underprivileged.

He raised three concerns:

1. Fragmentation of faith groups and needing better co-ordination:
2. Lack of youth involvement:
3. Limited Muslim participation, highlighting the importance of involving the Muslim community.

Where youth is concerned, Reynold Rosenberg highlighted the successful Faith Through Young Eyes: Youth Voices in Interfaith Dialogue webinar during Interfaith Week. It was recorded: ***Inter Faith Week 2025 – Faith Through Young Eyes: Youth Voices in Interfaith Dialogue***.

It was decided to explore the creation of a Hertfordshire Youth Interfaith Group in early 2026, and it was hoped that Hertfordshire police would be able to supply an extended distribution list across the county, and that more Muslims could be encouraged to join the group.

Healthwatch training for faith leaders. (Miriam Blom-Smith) During a Healthwatch meeting on addiction and mental health it was noted that faith groups often provide the first point of contact for those in crisis. 14% of any group may experience mental health or addiction issues and the challenge lies in encouraging open discussion. Some clergy receive addiction training, so maybe it could be rolled out to all faith leaders to take on.

Rennie Grove Peace Hospice Care: supporting communities through compassionate care. David Kelly, Community Engagement Coordinator pointed out that hospice care is not limited to cancer patients but includes motor neurone disease, multiple sclerosis and heart failure.

The service offers Early Support, Living Well Centres, End-of-Life care and bereavement support, along with Compassionate Cafes and Art Cafes. All these services are free of charge, funded mainly from donations and charity shops with 14% from statutory funding. He invited faith groups to collaborate on creating a faith and spiritual care guide for hospice staff: WIFA is helping with this. He would also like to visit places of worship to strengthen understanding.

Temi Fawehinmi suggested hosting an event where different faiths share practices around birth, celebrations and death. Both agreed on the importance of breaking taboos around discussing death, and encouraging early conversations about end-of-life wishes.

https://renniegrovepeace.org/our-care-and-support/living-well-with-illness/living-well/

Hertfordshire Health Walks Programme. Claire Pullen spoke about a free programme run by Hertfordshire County Council and funded by Public Health Hertfordshire. The scheme has been operating for over 20 years and offers 70+ weekly walks led by 300 volunteers across the county.

The walks encourage physical activity, improve health outcomes and reduce isolation, especially for people with long-term health conditions. 3,731 walks were delivered in the first half of the year with 28,00 attendances.22% of these were from minority ethnic groups. The walks are short, regular and graded by ability, the priority areas being Watford, Broxbourne and Stevenage. Faith groups could promote Health Walks within communities, or host taster walks during National Walking month (May 2026).

Temi said she had joined the Interfaith Week Walk in Stevenage. It fostered conversations and connections and discovering cultural links and would encourage others to take part. **See more in postcards below.**

Exploring religions Series: Baha'i: Tradition, Challenges and Community, with speaker Barney Leith.

The core teachings emphasise unity, peace and service to humanity. The historical context is that the forerunner and spiritual teacher was The Bab, 1819-1850, martyred in Tabriz, followed by Bah'u'llah, 1817-1892. Founder of the Baha'i Faith and exiled from Iran he eventually settled in Akko in Israel. His shrine is the holiest site for Baha'is. His son, Abdu'l-Baha spread the faith to the west and exemplified humanitarian service. Baha'is have elected bodies at local, national and international levels, with a nine member council, the Universal House of Justice, elected every five years at a convention in Haifa.

Hertfordshire has about 125 members, with links to Letchworth early in the 20th century where talks took place and Wellesley Tudor-Pole helped secure Abdu'l-Baha's safety during WWI. Watford hosted one of the earliest local assemblies in the 1950s.

Baha'is work together across faiths and Barney suggested working with multi faith hospital chaplaincy teams.

Herts Together: The Lord-Lieutenant of Hertfordshire, Robert Voss will lead the launch of Herts Together on the 10th February at 6.30pm at St Albans Cathedral. It's a year-long programme celebrating Hertfordshire's Unity and Diversity under the theme 'One County, Many Voices, Shared Future'. See more on **www.hertstogether.org.uk, or email info@hertstogether.org.uk.**





Faiths in Hertfordshire Statement on Flag Raising and Community Unity

As representatives of diverse faith communities across Hertfordshire, we stand in solidarity with Hertfordshire County Council's position on the responsible and respectful use of national symbols in public spaces.

We recognise the Union Flag and the St George's Cross as symbols of national pride and shared heritage. These flags can represent unity, courage, and the values that bind us together as a society. However, we are deeply concerned by the recent misuse of these symbols by groups promoting division, exclusion, and intolerance.

We support the Council's policy of not allowing unauthorised items to be attached to public infrastructure, such as lampposts and roundabouts, in the interest of public safety and community cohesion. We also affirm the right of individuals to fly national flags respectfully on their own property.

As faith communities, we:

- Reject all forms of hate, intimidation, and persecution of minority groups.
- Condemn the hijacking of patriotic symbols to promote extremist ideologies.
- Call for unity, respect, and inclusion in all public expressions of identity.

Support the Council, police, and emergency services in their efforts to uphold safety and harmony across Hertfordshire.
We urge all residents to reflect on the true meaning of British values — fairness, freedom, respect, and compassion — and to ensure that our public spaces reflect these principles.

Let us raise our voices, not just our flags, in support of a Hertfordshire where everyone belongs.

Holocaust Memorial Day event

Holocaust Memorial Day is observed each year on 27th January. It is a time to remember the millions of people murdered during the Holocaust, under Nazi persecution and in the genocides that followed in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur.

This year's theme, Bridging Generations, explores how sharing stories and experiences across generations helps keep memory alive and strengthen our collective resolve to build a safer future.

Herts Interfaith Forum ran an online event on 26th January with several Jewish survivors of the Holocaust. **Panos Fellas**, who attended said, "There were videos played of survivors with some very distressing accounts. A history of accounts of inhumanity were outlined not just against the Jewish people for over 2000 years but also in other parts of the world, some like in Sudan happening today. It doesn't appear that we have learnt from history, but we owe it to the next generation to strive for peace and never forget."

Election of the first female Archbishop of Canterbury



On 28th January the Most Revd Sarah Elisabeth Mulally became the 106th Archbishop of Canterbury, and the first woman, taking office at the confirmation in St Paul's Cathedral. As Primate of All England, she holds the highest spiritual office in the Church of England: the head of the Church being King Charles. In the photo above she is being addressed by the Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell.

The ceremony was both legal and liturgical, with lawyers ready with necessary papers, and a service which led Archbishop Mulally to reaffirm her consecration vows. The New Testament reading was read firstly in Portuguese, due to links with London and the Anglican Church in Mozambique and Angola. The ceremony was disrupted as Fr Paul Williamson, a known objector to the consecration of women shouted his dissent and was escorted from the cathedral.

Archbishop Mulally has been Bishop of London since 2018. She was initially trained as a nurse at St Thomas' Hospital, becoming a senior civil servant in the Department of Health. She was the youngest ever Chief Nursing Officer, serving from 1999 to 2024, was ordained in 2001, and was made a Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire in 2005, thence serving in various churches until ordination as Bishop of London. She is 63, married to an architect and has two children.

In her first address at Canterbury Cathedral on October 3rd she said, "The role of the Church should be a healing presence in our nation, bringing people together at times of often intense division, caring deeply for those who need our help." She also promised to address safeguarding issues immediately, saying, '"This will not be easy. We must all be wiling to have lights shone on our actions, regardless of our role within the Church."

Chanukah with Nisa-Nashim

In December, just before the festival of Chanukah began, an email arrived in my inbox forwarded by Judith (WIFA secretary). While it was too late for one of the events it was just in time for the Chanukah event on Sunday 14 December. It was online and organised by Nisa-Nashim, the Jewish Muslim Women's Network.

I was immediately interested, especially having learnt so much from Jewish and Muslim women I have met and with a particular liking for this very open festival. I was moved to ask for the link. Following the events in Australia I was really glad to be able to join this group in prayers for those affected as well as celebrating the festival. Most of the attendees were Jewish and Muslim women but there were also several of us from other traditions and a couple of men (including my spouse Jim). People shared stories of how they came to own their menorah. Many are family heirlooms. Then prayers were shared before we lit the candles (those without a menorah just used a candle) and ate our sweet foodstuffs (doughnuts are traditional, one woman and her young son had been eating doughnuts all day!). It's good to share across our traditions.

If you would like to know more about Nisa-Nashim visit https://www.nisanashim.com

Stephanie Grant

New Commission on Interfaith Relations launched



On 27th January a new Commission on Interfaith Relations was launched, with a remit to identify and defuse potential areas of conflicts. Bishop of Willesden, Rt Revd Lusa Nsega-Ngoy, vice chair of the Commission, said that "It matters because we are living through a moment when global events are being felt deeply in local communities, often in ways that strain relationships and fuel misunderstanding."

The chair of the Commission, Dr Ed Kessler, who founded the Woolf Institute said that riots in Leicester in 2022 and across the country in 2024, "indicate that faith-tied tensions are intensifying, not easing, and it is vital we understand how current and emerging conflicts overseas become points of tension within the UK. We will not address every global conflict but will examine the most relevant global conflicts and their direct impact on UK faith relations."

The new Commission will meet six times this year to discuss evidence from public-participation sessions around the UK. A total of fourteen commissioners have been appointed.

King Charles III and Pope Leo XIV pray together publicly in the Sistine Chapel



In October the King became the first Supreme Governor of the Church of England to pray in public with a Pope. The King and Queen attended a midday ecumenical service of prayer in the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican with Pope Leo XIV, cardinals and other church leaders. The Pope and the Archbishop of York presided.

The choirs of the Chapel Royal and St George's Chapel, Windsor and the Sistine Chapel Choir sang psalms and hymns. The Foreign Secretary, Yvette Cooper, then read from Romans.

Earlier, the King and Queen had had a private audience with the Pope, where they exchanged gifts, and in the afternoon they visited the Papal Basilica and Abbey of St Paul Outside the Walls, where the King was granted the title of Royal Confrater of St Paul

At the Vatican press briefing, Sister Alessandra Smerilli FMA said, 'This meeting underscores the strong relationship between the Catholic and Anglican churches on environmental issues...Pope Francis often reminds us that everything is connected, and that environmental and social crises must be addressed together. Pope Leo has continued this approach with further action'.

Installation of New Archbishop of Westminster



At Westminster Cathedral on Saturday 14th February at 12 noon, Catholic Archbishop Richard Moth was installed to a fanfare specially composed by Simon Johnson, Master of Music, as he entered by the west door to be greeted by the Provost, Canon Shaun Lennard. The rite of reception draws on an ancient Pontifical used at Canterbury in the 15th century. The moment of Installation followed the reading of Pope Leo XIV's Apostolic Letter.

The retiring Archbishop, Cardinal Vincent Nichols presented Archbishop Moth with the crozier, the symbol of his office as Archbishop. Archbishop of Canterbury Dame Sarah Mulally greeted Archbishop Moth on behalf of Churches Together in England, and he was led around the Cathedral to bless the people.

In his homily he said, 'The work of evangelisation is vital, but it is fragile and adversely impacted by our failures in love, power and self control.' He promises to address the church's failures as soon as possible. Caritas Westminster will be key in helping those at risk of exclusion due to poverty, disability, isolation and exploitation.



Walk for Peace

Buddhist Monks walked from Fort Worth to arrive at Washington DC on February 10th after 120 days and 2,300 miles. This is one of Venerable Bhikku Pannakara's talks along the way.

Coming Home to Peace - Our suffering mostly comes from our wandering minds. With our chasing thoughts, we get lost elsewhere—in the past we cannot change, in the future we cannot control—drifting so far from the peace of this present moment.

And we ache. We feel lost. We wonder why peace seems so hard to find.

But dear hearts, this here and now, this present moment, is our home. It is our treasure of peace that has been with us all along, quietly waiting with infinite patience, never leaving us even when we wander far away.

We thought we had to chase peace somewhere else, so we kept running to find it. We searched in accomplishments, in possessions, in destinations we believed would finally bring us rest. We exhausted ourselves looking everywhere except the one place it has always lived—right here, in this very moment.

Just relax. Just pause for a gentle moment. We can stop running now.



Peace is right here. It has always been right here, waiting for us like a warm home with the door open. We can come back to it simply by returning to our breath—breathing in, breathing out, feeling the gentle rhythm that has been quietly holding us this whole time.

We can find it in the mindfulness of our daily actions—washing dishes with presence, walking with awareness, speaking with care. In these simple moments, peace whispers: "I never left. I've been here all along, waiting for you to come home."

Peace and stopping the chase does not mean we don't grow our lives. When we are at peace and flow with the real life right here and now, struggle shifts. We flow with clarity in whatever wholesome plans we have. Growth continues, but without the exhausting chase. Goals unfold, but without the anxious grasping. Life moves forward, but now rooted in peace rather than driven by restlessness.

We don't need to chase anymore. We don't need to search in distant places for what lives so close. This present moment is home. Peace is here, patiently, lovingly waiting for our wandering minds to finally come back and rest.

May you and all beings be well, happy, and at peace.

#WalkforPeace #BuddhistMonks #PeaceWalk **Thanks to Don de Silva**

Every Human is Born Free

Every human is born free
Regardless of colour caste ideologies
Religion or creed.
As well thoughts words deeds.

We owe nothing to nobody
And vice versa

We come naked we go naked
Taking nothing with us
Not even the clothes on our backs
Reminding us we are here on earth
As born to serve humanity

We pass this way only once
So whatever good we can do
Let's do it now
Cause we never pass this way again.

I am not trying to preach nor be
Philosophical

But, humanity is in a turmoil: we
Should strip ourselves of negative
Ideologies & try build a better humanity
And live in peace as well harmony
Cause innocent children are getting the
End of the stick
As they are Innocent
Their only crime is being an innocent
child.

So before one opens one's mouth
And professes to be a Zoroastrian
Keep the Pristine Message in mind:
"Hear with your ears and ponder
With a good mind"

Ego and Pride have no place in
Zoroastrianism

Farida Bamji

Coming Interfaith Events

Wednesday 25th March: Installation of Peace Pole donated to the Peace Garden by the Rotary Club. 12.30 pm in the Peace Garden. *All welcome.*

Wednesday 22nd April: WIFA AGM, 7.00pm. Watford Football Club Players' Lounge. *All welcome*, with guest speaker and refreshments.

In May, date TBC: Harold Meyer Memorial Lecture. Speaker Temi Fawahinme will deliver a lecture on **Faith and the Future: Empowering Young Voices for Inclusive Communities.** *All welcome,* refreshments.

Third Sunday Peace Gatherings in the Peace Garden. *All are welcome* to attend these gatherings at 3.00pm, online in very bad weather, please see web site for details, **www.wifa.org.uk**


May Peace Prevail On Earth
Fie pace pe Pământ