

World Congress of Faiths News and Views

June 2019



Refugees and Religious Responses: A presentation given at the WCF Annual General Meeting

REVD BONNIE EVANS-HILLS

COORDINATOR OF UK COALITION –
RELIGIONS WORKING TOGETHER TO
COUNTER HATE CRIME AND PREVENT
GENOCIDE

The keynote address at the 2019 Annual General Meeting of WCF (for a summary of the AGM see over) was given by Revd Bonnie Evans-Hills. She presented a report based on personal experience, which was compelling, revealing and ultimately very disturbing for all who care about the rights and wellbeing of the most vulnerable people: those who are dispossessed, fleeing persecution, and have the courage to seek a new life.

Revd Evans-Hills (pictured above) is the Co-ordinator of the UK Coalition on Genocide Risks established by the UN in consultation with religious leaders 'on the ground' around the world. In 2015, they identified flashpoints in Europe as being primarily: far right extremism; religious extremism; and the severe lack of humanitarian response to displaced people.

Insofar as the UK is concerned, in 2016 after the EU Referendum, hate crime doubled in the country.
(Continued...)



World Congress of Faiths

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What is the WCF?

We are a community of individuals from different religious and ethical traditions, committed to learning from one another in a spirit of fellowship and trust. We work to increase spiritual understanding through co-operation and dialogue for the needs of society as a whole.

Join us by completing the membership form on pages 14-15
www.worldfaiths.org
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Refugees and Religious Responses continued...

In comparison to our country accepting some 70,000 Jewish refugees in the late 1930s, in the UK today an undertaking to resettle just 3,000 refugees has not been honoured even though some have a legal right to be here. Instead, because the British government pays France to conduct border security in Calais and elsewhere, we are in effect funding the abuses of human rights observed by the UN there: tents torn down, shoes slashed to prevent movement of people, mobile phones smashed, passports taken away. In detention centres in Libya and Morocco, paid for by the UK, children are trafficked as slaves.

However, Revd Evans-Hills also pointed to evidence of humanity and hope, much provided by people of faith. In Iraq, religious leaders have set up refugee camps – ‘oases’ – for Syrians trekking away from danger. While the conditions in these are by no means ideal, they are considerably better than the official camps, particularly in terms of medical care. They act as an example of what can be done by those who have far less resource than Western Europe. Another example is the ‘Save and Serve Foundation’ in Bangladesh assisting Rohingya refugees from Myanmar.

In the UK, churches and other faith groups have shown the way, being a main place of welcome for refugees. After the Serbian/Bosnian conflict in the early 1990s, they worked with the Red Cross to help newcomers learn English and UK laws, and acclimatise to their new country: an excellent example of practical help. Now much more effort is needed in this positive direction, as demonising refugees can only result in increased hate and division.

The WCF AGM 2019 - a brief report

The Annual General Meeting of the World Congress of Faiths was held on Wednesday 15 May at the Buddhist Society, Eccleston Square, London. It comprised reports from the Chair, the Treasurer, the Strategy and Development Officer and the Editor of the Congress’ journal *Interreligious Insight*. The event was organised by Tony Reese, WCF’s administrator, who was thanked for all he had done over the year.

Joint President Revd Dr Marcus Braybrooke, who has recently published a book on the history of WCF (see page 13) opened the meeting by welcoming all attending.

The Chair, Revd Dr Alan Race, added his welcome and said that in 2018/19 the organisation had enjoyed another year of varied activities, all designed to take forward its intention to explore and promote interfaith relations in the context of spiritual life. He expressed his gratitude to Trustees, Patrons, officers and members for all their input. (Continued...)

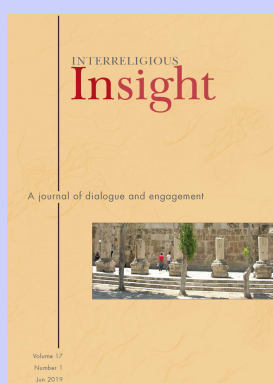
AGM - a brief report: Continued...

Jenny Kartupelis, who had led on the design and implementation of activities, reported on the nature of these, which included a student essay award, full day conference, lecture, and a day of practical workshops and discussion. She also noted that an evaluation of WCF had been undertaken, based on a survey and feedback from events.

One result of its findings was the production of a quarterly newsletter, the first issue appearing in March 2019. Jenny particularly noted the continuing appetite for networking opportunities, and the high respect for the Journal. Her report on 2018/19 work was given to all attending (available on request).

The Treasurer, Pejman Khojasteh, gave a report on WCF's finances, explaining its income and expenditure for the year, which had resulted in a reduction of £19,130 in its overall assets, in line with its intention to use previous legacies to take forward its vision.

The Editor of *Interreligious Insight*, Revd Dr Alan Race, reported that the variety and calibre of articles in the journal over the last year had been more than maintained, and it enjoyed an international readership. He then concluded the meeting by thanking all those who had contributed to the work of WCF over the year.



Our latest Journal - Interreligious Insight Vol 17 Issue 1 is now available

Available online and in print - see page 14
To apply for an online version or to subscribe to the printed copy, go to our website at www.worldfaiths.org/journal

NEW RESEARCH

MULTIFAITH CHAPLAINS ON CAMPUS

**Jenny Kartupelis, Development Manager,
WCF reports on research that documents
the changing role of chaplains at UK universities**

New research on chaplaincy at UK universities highlights its increasingly multifaith character over the last 10 years, as well as a much more welcoming attitude on the part of university management.

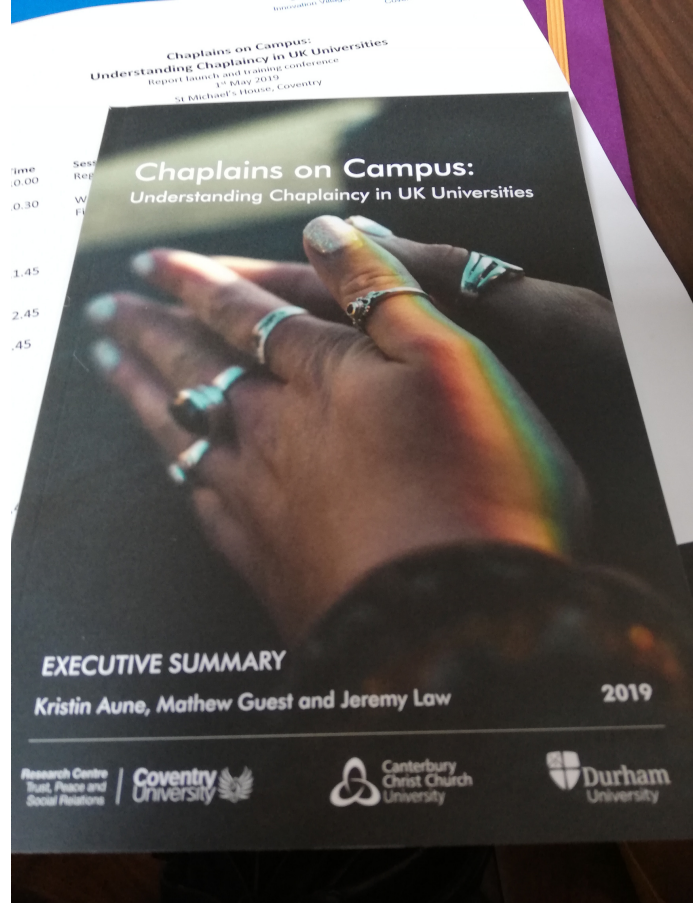
'Chaplains on Campus', launched in early May at the University of Coventry, considers critical factors in the development, variation and effectiveness of the chaplaincy offering. The research team of Professors Kristin Aune, Mathew Guest and Revd Dr Jeremy Law undertook a broad survey of universities by telephone, with in-depth investigation of a representative organisation from each higher education category, ranging from 'traditional elite' to 'post-1992'.

The proportion of chaplains from the Christian faith remains by far the highest, but between 2007 and 2017 has fallen from 70% to 63%, with other faiths growing in representation, particularly Muslim and Buddhist. Christian chaplains are much more likely to be paid and to work full time, although Jewish ones are also better supported than others.

The researchers raise the question of whether chaplaincies should be multifaith or single religion. On the one hand, secular managers tend to favour the first of these terms, as signalling inclusivity and equality; on the other hand, chaplains usually see themselves as rooted in their own faith. Interestingly, the students whom they are serving view the chaplains' own integrity of faith as important to being able to serve others, which strengthens the argument for chaplains to be supported in all senses by their own religious groups and traditions.

One conclusion of the report is that 'The Church of England should use its influence to uphold voices of religion and belief across the higher education sector, and its resources to build partnerships of trust and mutual respect. This will enable others to speak and be heard, enhancing university chaplaincy for the good of all.' (Summary, p44).

Chaplains on Campus: Understanding Chaplaincy in UK Universities, Aune, K, Guest, M, Law, J, Universities of Coventry, Canterbury Christ Church and Durham, 2019



WOMEN OF FAITH

WORKING FOR PEACE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Religions for Peace UK Women of Faith Network (RFPWFN) and Interfaith Scotland marked world interfaith harmony together by celebrating the contribution of women of faith working for peace and human rights. Below we share some of what was covered at this event to mark their contribution to both the suffragette and peace movement. Thanks to Ravinder Kaur Nijjar, Chair of RFPWFN (pictured) for sharing this with us.



We recommend watching a short video in relation to this subject called 'These Dangerous Women' as labelled by Sir Winston Churchill the then Prime Minister. These women were fighting for the vote in Britain but were also peace activists who tried to stop the First World War.

In 1915 women all over Europe were trying to get the vote. They had formed an international women's suffrage alliance (IWSA) and felt they had a lot in common with other women regardless of national boundaries. When the war broke out, the international meeting planned for 1915 in Berlin was cancelled. Aletta Jacobs, the first woman to qualify as a doctor in the Netherlands, invited individual women to come to a Women's Congress in The Hague on 28th April 1915.

180 women from the British suffrage movement wanted to go to the Congress but only 24 were granted passports by the Home Office. However, the shipping lanes were closed for the entire time of the Congress and the 24 women were prevented from going. The meeting formulated 20 resolutions proposing continuous mediation as an alternative to armed conflict, women should be a part of all international discussions and that post war settlements should be fair.

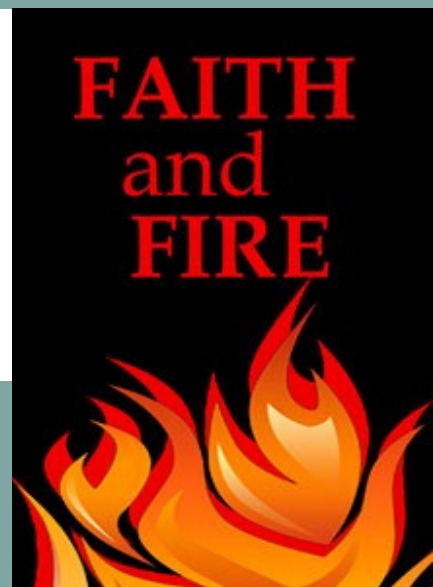
Moving to the present day, what percentage of women are part of the peace process in conflict areas?

In October 2012 in a UN document 'Women's Participation in Peace Negotiations: Connections between Presence and Influence' it was noted that only 2 per cent of chief mediators and 9 per cent of negotiators in peace processes were women. However the Geneva Graduate Institute's Broadening Participation project shows that when women's groups were able to effectively influence a peace process, an agreement was almost always reached and more likely to be implemented as evidenced from 40 peace and transition processes.

Why not consider the questions delegates discussed at the event by RFPWFN: What are the barriers to women participating as peace mediators? Why are peace processes more effective when women participate? How does your faith tradition encourage women's involvement in society and is there a link between women using their right to vote and creating more peaceful societies?

FAITH AND FIRE

**An independent partnership to develop mutual respect
between faith communities and the Fire and Rescue Service**



Faith and Fire is an independent partnership, established in 2013, to develop mutual respect between faith communities and the Fire and Rescue Service (FRS), and to increase awareness of faith diversity among staff and volunteers. Faith and Fire includes participants from a range of faiths, and supports the growth of Multifaith Fire Chaplaincy.

The partnership has links with the World Congress of Faiths, and is grateful to its Chair Revd Dr Alan Race and its Joint President Revd Dr Marcus Braybrooke, for serving on its Steering Group. WCF members Garry Collins (Lead) and Jacquetta Gomes are also on the Steering Group. In 2013 Faith and Fire made presentations at the WCF AGM and WCF/IARF Horsham Conference.

The guide *Religion, Belief and Culture in our Community: Understanding, respecting and valuing the diverse cultures of the United Kingdom* includes Faith and Fire and WCF Joint President Rev Dr Marcus Braybrooke in the acknowledgments page.

<https://www.nationalfirechiefs.org.uk/News/focus-on-faith-during-inter-faith-week/216009>

Faith and Fire has received encouragement and praise for its pioneering work. Faith Action describes its member Faith and Fire as “a fantastic organisation”.

<https://www.faithaction.net/blog/2016/01/06/meeting-members-faith-fire/>

Those involved would like to be in touch with others undertaking similar work; please contact Nicola.Thurston@kent.fire-uk.org

For further information about the organisation see:

<https://www.buddhistdoor.net/features/buddhism-in-the-uk-fire-and-rescue-services>

Interfaith Unity

a Deeper Recognition of Relationship

By Hilary Canto of TLF, a leading resource recognising the innate oneness of love

For those of faith, there can be a conflict between the need for personal identity and the divisiveness that may arise as a result: this is a conflict we see playing out in the world today.

We depend on sacred pathways to help us relate to the world, as we seek a deeper knowledge of the sacred beyond and within us, and this dependence leads to a belief we can identify with. We have a strong desire for recognition: to be known, to know who we are, where we come from, where we are going and why we are here.

Yet in a world of chaos, confusion and struggle, clinging to identity becomes divisive. The deep-seated desire for recognition can lead to disunity and violence. If we can see the world as a place of learning where we reclaim sacred union within, the conflicts arising from individual identity can be overcome and peaceful harmonious living realised.

In sacred relationship we can honour and experience a greater spirituality and a greater religion. By recognising the sacred Knowledge in all humanity, interfaith understanding takes us beyond independent identity towards an interdependent spiritual relationship, united in one human family.

Upcoming WCF events 2019

- **Visits to places of worship, summer 2019:** WCF aims to offer a variety of events and will be offering two summer visits for members and friends to places of worship (see page 11). If you would like to suggest somewhere or host a visit (that is easily accessible by public transport) please contact us.
- **Interfaith conference, 10th September, St Michael's House, Coventry:** A full day conference is planned. We are seeking papers and presenters, full information on this and about registering to attend on pages 9-10 and at
- **wcf-meetingsofminds-conference.eventbrite.co.uk**

Hear our latest news:



www.twitter.com/WoCoFaiths



www.facebook.com/worldfaiths

Our next newsletter will come out in early September 2019.
Do you have a suggestion for our newsletter? Please contact Jane Thompson
01223 781781 or email via: jenny@worldfaiths.org

ESSAY AWARD 2019

IS INTERFAITH
WORSHIP A
DESIRABLE
PRACTICE?

- Open to undergraduates & postgraduates studying in the UK
- Write a maximum of 3000 words
- Win £300 & your essay published in *Interreligious Insight*
- All entrants get free WCF membership

www.worldfaiths.org/2019-essay-award

Closes: 27 August 2019



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World Congress of Faiths

World Congress of Faiths Conference
10th September 2019
10am-4pm



**Meetings of Minds: Conflict,
Reconciliation and Interfaith Relations**



World Congress of Faiths



Keynote speaker: Dr Kristin Aune
Professor of Sociology of Religion, Coventry University

Topics to Include:

- Education for reconciliation and interfaith encounter: mutual benefits
- Preparing young people for faith diversity
- Polarised societies and interfaith relations
- What faith communities can learn from studies in reconciliation: some lived examples

Members: £15
Students: £15
Non Members: £20

St Michael's House, Coventry CV1 5EX

wcf-meetingsofminds-conference.eventbrite.co.uk

CALL FOR PAPERS FOR: Meeting of Minds: Conflict, Reconciliation and Interfaith Relations



We will consider papers on the following and similar themes:

- What can faith communities learn from studies in reconciliation?
- Can there be mutual benefit between education for reconciliation and spiritual encounter between faiths?
- What might a polarised society expect from inter faith relations?
- Preparing young people for faith diversity
- Navigating prejudice, toleration, and reconciliation in the global context of inter faith relations and thought

You will be asked to present your own paper and take questions and will have a total of 45 minutes allocated, of which 15 minutes will be for questions.

Papers should reflect original work, which may or may not have been published, and we encourage students to participate. Papers will normally be published in the WCF journal *Interreligious Insight* after the event.

Reasonable travel expenses will be paid to speakers.

HOW TO SEND IN YOUR SYNOPSIS:

Please send a synopsis of your paper in no more than 200 words together with your affiliation and contact details (term time and home) **by Friday 21 June 2019** to:

Jenny Kartupelis, jenny@worldfaiths.org

If you have any queries, use this email or call on 01223 781781.

WCF visits to places of worship: Two summer outings planned

Tour of the London Fo Guang Shan Buddhist Temple

**Proposed date: Tuesday 30 July,
afternoon**

Back by popular demand: a repeat visit to this fascinating temple in Margaret Street, central London, who also hope to be able to invite WCF visitors to participate in their tea ceremony at the same time.

Contact Jenny on 01223 781781 to register your interest, and we will inform you of the details as soon as possible.



Morning visit to the new Cambridge Central Mosque with optional afternoon activities

**Date: Wednesday 21 August,
starting at 11.00am**



A wonderful chance to visit this nationally-acclaimed building, opened only last month and see its unique architectural design featuring advanced technology that gives it a near-zero carbon footprint and honours natural forms and materials.

You can then join in a hosted discussion about Islam in the modern world. We are planning to arrange lunch together after the visit, then a chance to see one or more of the lesser-known College Chapels, followed by a boat trip and tea at the Brahma Kumaris Centre. Contact Jenny on 01223 781781 to register your interest.

**Both outings are free of charge to members and non-members,
but it is essential to book in advance.**

JULY EVENTS

1-3 July: Religious Experience Research Centre 50th Anniversary Conference Lampeter, University of Wales Trinity Saint David. The conference will look back at the work of the research centre during the past five decades and also look forward to the future
More information 020 7828 7777

4 July Faith and Belief on Campus: Division and Cohesion, SOAS, Russell Square, London WC1H 0XG. This conference considers the roles that faith and belief can play in promoting cohesion in universities, and launches research in this area. **More information 020 7828 7777**

8-11 July Roots, Shoots and Fruits: The Past, Present and Future of British and Irish Practical Theology (BIAPT), Liverpool Hope University. Marking 25 years since BIAPT was founded, this conference invites us to consider our roots, but also areas of growth and fruitful developments in British and Irish practical theology within wider, international issues and developments. Aimed at all with an interest in British and Irish practical theology. **More information BIAPT 2019, c/o 1 Church Meadow, Milton under Wychwood, Chipping Norton, OX7 6JG**

11 July Promoting excellence and inclusive pastoral, spiritual and religious support for all without exception Summit, Horizons Leeds, 2 Brewery Wharf Kendell Street, Leeds LS10 1JR. This event will gather together leaders and active participants in the provision of pastoral, spiritual and religious support from the NHS, ambulance, fire, police and prison services to explore the challenges of meeting those needs in 2019 and beyond.
Booking is required. To request a booking form, please email: eventsjsa@gmail.com
Further information 0845 094 6350

DISCUSSION, BOOK LAUNCH, AND REFRESHMENTS TO CELEBRATE THE PUBLICATION BY JESSICA KINGSLEY OF **INTERFAITH WORSHIP AND PRAYER** at ST MARY ABBOTS PARISH CHURCH KENSINGTON, LONDON W8 4LA (Near High Street Kensington Underground Station)
ON TUESDAY, 15 OCTOBER, 2019, 6-7:30 PM

‘I welcome their contributions to a more peaceful and harmonious world and to the wellbeing of all humanity.’ The Dalai Lama

RSVP to cohnsherbok@gmail.com

The meeting is open to all members of WCF, but please book in advance

The book explores the possibilities, options and scope for interfaith worship from a number of different religious traditions. It is the first comprehensive book on this theme and WCF members will find it very enlightening indeed. Different models of interfaith worship have been supported by WCF in the past and these are discussed in the book. There are 5 WCF authors in the book:

Marcus Braybrooke
Vinod Kaspashi
Feargus O'Connor
Alan Race
Jehangir Sarosh

Do you have an event you would like us to advertise to our members and friends? Our next issue will come out in early September so please send us contributions in good time. Get in touch with Jane Thompson 01223 781781 or email via: jenny@worldfaiths.org

**THE STORY OF THE WORLD CONGRESS OF FAITHS AND
THE GROWING GLOBAL INTERFAITH MOVEMENT****BY REVD MARCUS BRAYBROOKE**

In Marcus Braybrooke's new book, he explores the story of the WCF and its place in the interfaith movement. Extracts of the review below are taken from The Church of England Newspaper review, 18.4.19, written by Brian Cooper.

Initiator, exemplar and inspiration for 80 years, World Congress of Faiths (WCF) has played a very significant role - one not always fully acknowledged. Revd Marcus Braybrooke, retired Anglican priest and current WCF Joint-President, devoted to interfaith for over 50 years, gives a richly informative account of WCF's history and achievements, and the broader British (and global) experience.

He acknowledges Church leaders' suspicions and caution in early decades, and describes the increasing ecumenical support for the interfaith movement, although this remains controversial for some evangelicals. This is an inspiring narrative of farsightedness with devotees of different faiths strongly believing mutual understanding and respect. Blossoming into spiritual enrichment and cooperation for the common good, nurtured world fellowship and peace. The movement is an invaluable source of ideas for interfaith action today, as current rising intolerance warns of the dangers of religious conflict and the need for redoubled efforts to seek harmony and understanding.



**Marcus and
Mary Braybrooke**

***Faiths Together for the Future* is available from Braybrooke Press, £12.00
Contact: Revd Marcus Braybrooke marcusbraybrooke4@gmail.com**

Membership application and subscription to Interreligious Insight



Name:

Address:

Telephone:

Email:

Faith (optional):

Please tick as appropriate:

- ☐ I wish to join the World Congress of Faiths and subscribe to the Journal Interreligious Insight (postal version) and enclose payment for £45.
- ☐ I wish to join the World Congress of Faiths with online access to the Journal Interreligious Insight and enclose payment for £25 (or £10 if a student in full time education).
- ☐ I only wish to subscribe to the Journal Interreligious Insight (postal version) and enclose payment of £40.

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**For further information about membership or our journal please contact:
Tony Reese, Administrator T: 01935 864055 E: tony.reese@worldfaiths.org**

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