Members and guests enjoyed another excellent visit to a place of worship on 11 February, when they visited the National Bahá’í Centre in London. This building is a ‘Hazirat’ul-Quds’, which means ‘Sacred Fold’ in Arabic, and encompasses worship space, archives, library and council chamber, as well as being the UK offices serving the faith. The building itself is a beautiful town house built in the 1850s, which prior to being purchased by the National Spiritual Assembly in 1954 was an orphanage for the children of actors. Since then it has been completely renovated.

Guests were welcomed by Barney Leith OBE, and after refreshments they first visited the Parvine Room and the council chamber, to see and hear about a wonderful collection of documents and photographs tracing the history of the Bahá’í faith, and its introduction to the UK. (Continued over...)
The first Bahá’ís in this country were two American women living in London, and women have played key roles in the community ever since. Bahá'u'lláh, the faith's founder, addressed letters to statesmen and royalty in the mid-nineteenth century, including Queen Victoria. ‘Abdu'l-Bahá, Bahá'u'lláh's eldest son and head of the Bahá'í community visited the UK in 1911 and 1913. Bahá'ís have long played a role in the life of the UK, in particular promoting community service and interfaith work.

Following the tour, everyone gathered to hear a short presentation by Barney about the faith. He explained one of the key tenets, that throughout history God has sent Manifestations or messengers to humankind in the form of prophets and teachers, each a way to truth and compassion. The two Manifestations of God who founded the Bahá'í faith are the ‘Báb' (the Gate, Bahá'u'lláh's forerunner), born in 1819 and martyred when he was only 31 in 1850; and Baha'u'llah, who was born in 1817 and who lived much of his life as an exile and prisoner until he died in 1892 in Ottoman Palestine (now Israel).

Baha'u'llah wrote a great number of books covering rules for living, prayers, contemplation and principles of social justice. One of his most important commands was ‘Let your vision be world-embracing’, which encompasses the key Bahá'í principles of unity, peace, love, fellowship, equality (especially of genders) and service to humanity. Promoting these principles has led to past and current persecution in some parts of the world, including Bahá'u'lláh's native land of Iran.

After this presentation two young Bahá'ís, Sophie, who works in the UK Bahá'í Office of Public Affairs, and Carmel, a university student, took a whole range of questions from guests, who were clearly very interested by all they had learnt and wanted to explore it further.
Save the Date: 4th June 2020
WCF Conference with The Faith and Belief Forum: Faith Diversity, Young People and Education

We are pleased to say that our next event will be a day conference on Thursday 4th June, at West Bromwich Albion Football Club Conference Centre, close to Birmingham and will be co-hosted with the Faith & Belief Forum.

The theme will be ‘Faith Diversity, Young People and Education’, with presenters in the morning session speaking about new research and project ideas, and an afternoon of interactive sessions. This promises to be an exciting event embracing a topical theme and looking to the future.

We will be sending out more information about venue and agenda soon. If you have any queries, do please contact jenny@worldfaiths.org

To register go to:

https://faithdiversity-youngpeople-education.eventbrite.co.uk
Community Roots

Our Executive Committee member Warwick Hawkins has told us about a project he recently led for the Faiths Forum for London, funded by the Mayor of London's Team London initiative. “Community Roots – Better green spaces through inter-generational and inter-faith mentoring” was a gardening project in eight different sites around London between November 2018 and January 2020. The project brought young people who had never gardened before with older mentors of a different faith who taught them basic gardening skills.

Hard at work in Hounslow

The project:

• Attracted 93 Londoners to volunteer who had never volunteered before;
• Taught basic gardening skills to 88 young people;
• Promoted better understanding between ethnic and nationality groups as diverse as Somalis, Afghans and Latin Americans, and involved people of Muslim, Christian, Jewish and Sikh faith;
• Brought together people of different generations in a joint endeavour – the youngest aged 3 and the oldest 91!
• Created or improved gardens across London to be community assets for the future.

The gardens included a woodland path with fruit bushes; a flower garden with a bench for elderly people to relax on; a large allotment with vegetables, herbs and a dedicated artwork; a church garden with plantings on the theme of peace; flower beds outside a listed building; a flower border in a Muslim cemetery; a mosque garden with a dedicated area for multi-faith activities; and a raised garden in the middle of a carpark. Many of the projects included the planting of an olive tree to symbolise peace and reconciliation.

Warwick says he hopes to get further funding from the Mayor to run another round of projects in 2020. In the meantime he is available for digging, weeding and planting duties – a WCF garden perhaps?
New book release by WCF Member Nadia Duvall
This book, *Islamist Occidentalism: Sayyid Qutb and the Western Other* (Gerlach Press, 2019), focuses on illuminating modern-day Islamist Occidentalism and puts in question the underlying assumptions of some of the post-9-11 scholarship which fails to understand the non-West on its own terms, by basically depicting Occidentalism as a mere ‘programme of revenge’ by the Orientals, as Varisco puts it, in response to Edward Said’s Orientalism. Read more at: [https://www.soas.ac.uk/lmei/events/24feb2020-islamist-occidentalism-sayyid-qub-and-the-western-other.html](https://www.soas.ac.uk/lmei/events/24feb2020-islamist-occidentalism-sayyid-qub-and-the-western-other.html)

**Calendar of Religious Festivals: July 2019 to December 2020**

The Shap e-Calendar of Religious Festivals is an invaluable resource for the teaching profession, students, businesses, chaplaincies, those in health sector and public services, to name but a few. It is recognised as the most accurate and most informative calendar. Clients include the NHS, Ministry of Justice, prisons, universities, chaplaincies, Lambeth Palace, Local Authorities as well as secondary and primary schools.

This calendar is used extensively in the UK but also across Europe. The Shap Calendar Group has produced the renowned festivals WallChart for September 2019 - December 2020. Available in two versions the eCal (£4) or the A2 printed wallchart (£6) with prices held a 6th year. As well as the calendar a 300+ page festivals booklet, 12 beautiful image downloads and a printable calendar are also available on the website.

For more details see [http://www.shapcalendar.org.uk/calendar.html](http://www.shapcalendar.org.uk/calendar.html) or contact admin@calendar.org.uk
Climate Crisis: the spiritual and interfaith issues

By Hilary Canto, WCF Member

The extent of the climate crisis unfolding is creating anxiety for many. At the core of this crisis the solution is a spiritual one. Understanding the relationship with our planet and each other is about our relationship with God (however we view or name God) and the greater universe of which we are a part. It is therefore an interfaith issue as well.

When I moved to the small town of Wem in North Shropshire, and was proposed as Chair of the new local climate forum, I reluctantly accepted, but the community spirit engulfing this has amazed me, and I decided to talk to our local churches to gain their perspective on the climate crisis and how they could be involved.

Hilary Canto, WCF Member and Chair of Wem Area Climate Forum

They do seem to be focussed on ‘doing’, which is good, but the spiritual aspect of the climate crisis is equally important, so we have created a group website which is comprehensive on all aspects of the climate crisis where the town can learn more and become involved. Our aim is to create awareness, inform and inspire action:

Wem Area Climate Forum website: https://wemclimateforum.wixsite.com/wacf

It would be wonderful to see the interfaith movement getting involved at a local level everywhere. All churches, temples, mosques and synagogues can include references to the personal relationship with God giving strength and unity for the climate crisis in their services and community groups. This helps move people together and not in separation. As we unite in faith we adress our separation from God and the earth we are a part of and go beyond our separate beliefs to embrace the whole. We are in unprecedented times facing a crisis of ALL life on earth.

Interfaith unity through community action combined with strength gained from prayer and stillness allows the experience of a personal relationship with God to occur to help us from the inside out. We then move where God wants us to be in the climate crisis and where our unique help will be most effective. Technology (which needs ever more resources) cannot be our only salvation and in fact may sometimes cause greater harm. It is through community that our solutions will come if we enable people to let God work through them for our planet's physical and spiritual future. Now more than ever our coming together through interfaith prayer and activity is a call to service to help us through the crisis we face.
Wednesday 18th March 4pm-5pm
Inter faith work - Westminster Cathedral Interfaith Group
Hinsley Room, Morpeth Terrace SW1P 1EP. Westminster Cathedral Interfaith Group will meet when the Revd Alan Gadd will be speaking about his inter faith work. For more information, contact John Woodhouse on 0790 8888 586 (by text) or email woodhousesopten@btinternet.com

Wednesday 18th March
University of Suffolk: 2020 Faith Lecture
'The Changing Landscape of Religion and Belief: Standing at the Crossroads'.
Waterfront Building, University of Suffolk, IPSWICH, IP4 1QJ
Organised by Ipswich Faith and Community Forum (IFCF), Mid-Essex Mind and Spirit, Suffolk Theology Forum (STF) and the East of England Faiths Agency (EEFA
For more info contact Cynthia (c.capey@eefa.net  - 07931 562827) or see http://www.eefa.net/index_k.htm

Monday 9th March - evening event
Women Making a Difference
UCL Great Ormond Street Institute of Child Health 30 Guilford Street London WC1N 1EH
To celebrate International Women’s Day 2020, Women’s Interfaith Network (WIN) invites you to an evening of dynamic discussion and debate focusing on the remarkable contributions of women in making a difference, both in today’s world and historically. Find out more and register at http://tiny.cc/xs43jz

Thursday 12th March 6pm-8pm
Introduction to the Universal Peace Federation
43 Lancaster Gate London W2 3NA
An opportunity to speak about your or your organisation’s activities and aspirations for peace so that we can explore opportunities for collaboration (we work both internationally and in the UK). Find out more and register at http://tiny.cc/r243jz

Tuesday 3rd March 2:30pm-4pm
Seminar: Questioning the Promotion of Friendship in Interfaith Dialogue: interfaith friendship in light of the emphasis on particularity in scriptural reasoning
Seminar by Jennifer Fields, Ph.D. Candidate, University of Cambridge. The seminar will take place at The Centre for Muslim-Christian Studies 109A Iffley Road, Oxford
https://tinyurl.com/umxu9fk

Wednesday 4th March 2pm
Faith and Disability
Woolf Institute, Madingley Road, Cambridge, CB3 0UB.
Woolf Institute and CRASSH will be holding a seminar focusing on Faith and Disability. For more information, email Farrah Raza at Farrah.raza@pmb.ox.ac.uk.

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Saturday 21st March 11am-3pm
Sacred Music around the World with Stefan Freedman
The Multifaith Centre in Ipswich at 47 St Helen’s Street IP4 2JL
EEFA event. For more info contact Cynthia (c.capey@eefa.net - 07931 562827)

2nd April 2020 7pm-9pm
Unbelievers: An Emotional History of Doubt
Theos, 77 Great Peter Street, London SW1P 2EZ
Drawing on his new book, Unbelievers: An Emotional History of Doubt, Alec Ryrie looks at how the West came to lose its faith. Rather than an attempt to debunk atheism, or to explain its rise ‘scientifically’, he argues that we can’t understand belief, unbelief or the ‘secular’ world around us without understanding the role of the heart as well as the head. For more information: shorturl.at/qwEX5
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Address:

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- 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.

Please complete the standing order mandate on the following page and return your form to: World Congress of Faiths, 21 Maple Street, London W1T 4BE

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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