

Northern Ireland Inter-Faith Forum


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About Us

Wednesday, 15 July 2009 13:56 | | |

About the Northern Ireland Inter-Faith Forum

Origin

The Northern Ireland Inter-Faith Forum (NIIFF) was formed in May 1993, following extensive discussions with members of the ethnic and religious communities in Northern Ireland. It is still the only fully operational multi-faith association in that functions across Northern Ireland.

Aims

The essential aims of the Forum are to promote mutual understanding between different faith traditions and to educate people in Northern Ireland in awareness that we are not a country of two traditions only, but a vibrant community of many faiths whose people come from varied religious and ethnic backgrounds.

Membership

Membership currently stands at over a hundred drawn from many religious backgrounds: Jewish, Bahá'í, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Pagan and Sikh, as well as Christians from different traditions. Forum members are not necessarily official delegates of their respective communities, but represent a balanced cross-section of people desirous of sharing and fostering mutual appreciation of each other's beliefs and cultural diversity. New members from whatever background, who can accept the Forum's aims, are most welcome.

Activities

The Forum hosts public meetings four times a year. Activities include social interaction; talks and discussion; special presentations; visits to community centres and places of worship; etc.

From small beginnings the Forum enjoyed a period of rapid growth and expansion into areas of inter-faith activity which were unparalleled in Northern Ireland and were to prove ground breaking in terms of the forging of new friendships and the recognition of the rich diversity of our community and cultural life.

The Forum continues to be proactive in a number of important ways, including:

- ← maintaining a high standard of quarterly meetings;
- ← campaigning for the liberalisation of Religious Education;
- ← networking with other inter-faith organisations; and
- ← pursuing the inter-faith ideal within the developing pluralism of Northern Ireland.

Over the years, the Inter-Faith Forum has also been engaged in many educational projects, including:

- ← Interfaith courses and conferences;
- ← Provision of training and training materials to the public and private sectors in awareness of religious diversity (as required by section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998);
- ← Provision of resource materials for hospitals and health trusts;
- ← A major exhibition, In Good Faith, travelling around Northern Ireland, which demonstrated the rich variety of religious life which exists here;
- ← A series of annual Multi-Faith Calendars – a valuable resource distributed to schools, hospitals, libraries and government offices
- ← Facilitating visits to schools, colleges and faith communities to talk about various faith traditions; and
- ← The Forum also established and maintains The Quiet Room at Belfast International Airport, which provides a space for reflection and prayer for all.

Affiliation with U.K. Inter-Faith Network

The Forum is affiliated with the Inter-Faith Network for the United Kingdom, which links together above one hundred inter-faith organisations throughout Britain. The Forum is also represented on the Network's Executive Committee.

Inter-Faith Challenge

Setting up and maintaining inter-faith organisations can be extremely hard work and carries tensions and potential pitfalls which can be daunting. While some relationships are deep and lasting, others seem precarious and have to be nurtured. Committed inter-faith supporters often have leadership roles in their own communities which can mean divided loyalties. Many suffer too from being a minority within their own faith community and can find it difficult to persuade their own people to see the importance of their work. Some factions may actively oppose efforts to establish dialogue. In spite of such constraints, NIIFF looks forward to continuing its work as a pioneering inter-faith fellowship, and to giving urgent consideration to re-invigorating its endeavours with fresh ideas and newly appointed Executive personnel, as well as to increasing its representative membership and lowering its age profile. The challenge of interfaith remains as strong as ever in Northern Ireland. It is surely time for people of faith to embark together on more imaginative perceptions of the human condition, to defy the gravitational pull of received assumptions, and to reach out in faith to one another on the basis of our common humanity as well as our distinctive spiritualities.

Northern Ireland Inter-Faith Forum

Members of the Executive Committee elected on 5th April 2011:

Shoshana Appleton

Edwin Graham

Dr Ahmed Helmy

Stewart Lecky

Sheila McMichael

Patricia Norrington

Rev Scott Peddie

Tilakraj Puri

Norman Richardson

Ugur Tok

Co-opted members:

Lobsang Wenchuk

Patrons:

Rev Maurice Ryan,

Lady Shruti Rana,

Dr Mamoun Mobayed,

Rev Tom Banham

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