



Success of 'Faith and the City' celebrated

The remarkable success of 'Faith and the City,' featuring speakers of international reputation, is being celebrated by its co-organisers, Bradford District Faiths Forum and the University of Bradford's School of Lifelong Education and Development.

Since the programme was launched in 2009 'Faith and the City' has attracted numerous high profile speakers, none more so than the three most recent events.

The university's JSB Lecture Theatre was filled to capacity on three separate evenings to hear presentations by:

- **Author and journalist Fatima Bhutto;**
- **Award winning broadcaster Dr Indarjit Singh;**
- **Documentary maker, biographer and journalist Peter Osborne.**

In creating the 'Faith and the City' programme, the Faiths Forum and University set out to offer thought provoking and challenging discussions, dialogues and discourses led by speakers renowned in the broad field of religion and politics. "The purpose of the programme," says Nasar Fiaz, Development Co-ordinator of the Faiths Forum, "is to raise the level of debate amongst all communities and to encourage people to think collectively about difficult issues around cohesion, faith, politics and values."

Global expert

Previous speakers have included Baroness Sayeeda Warsi, now a Member of the Cabinet and Chairman of the Conservative Party; Shami Chakrabarti, Director of Liberty; Dr Edward Kessler, a global expert in Jewish Muslim relations and scholar and writer Ziauddin Sardar.

"We are delighted with the success of the 'Faith in the City' programme, which we lead in partnership with the Faiths Forum," says Nadira Mirza, Dean of the School of Lifelong Education and Development.

"Consistently high levels of attendance have demonstrated that many people in the Bradford District seek to benefit from the knowledge, experience and views of internationally renowned experts in their respective fields."

The Rt. Rev. David Ison, a Director of the Faiths Forum, added: "Our ability to

attract such high profile speakers to Bradford has strengthened the city's international reputation as an enlightened place, one where some of the most challenging and controversial topics can be discussed candidly and constructively in open forum."

• *More stories and pictures inside.*



Fatima Bhutto pictured during her visit to Bradford with (left to right) Nasar Fiaz, Development Co-ordinator of Bradford District Faiths Forum; Nadira Mirza, Dean of the University of Bradford's School of Lifelong Education and Development and Professor Mark Cleary, Vice Chancellor of the University of Bradford.



Bradford District Faiths Forum aims to:

Promote understanding, communication, co-operation and good relations by encouraging faith communities to meet and work together to address issues of shared concern • Advance public knowledge and understanding of the District's different faith communities, including awareness of their distinctive teachings, traditions, practices and of the common ground between them, to promote good community relations • Promote social inclusion and combat religious discrimination by encouraging communication, understanding and partnership between faith communities and with public, voluntary and private sector bodies.

Manningham's Anglican Vicar now chairs the Faiths Forum



Bradford District Faiths Forum has a new Chair, Canon Dr Arun John, who represents the Anglican Diocese of Bradford on the Forum's management board. Dr John, who is Team Vicar at St. Paul's Church, Manningham, was formerly the Forum's Secretary. He succeeds Kashmir Singh Rajput in chairing the Forum, which shares information about good practice, ideas, developments and projects within the District's faith communities. The Forum has successfully encouraged and developed positive relationships and friendships between all faith communities. It also provides opportunities for young people of different faiths to meet and work together. Dr John has just returned to Bradford following a three month sabbatical in India, where in 1977 he was ordained within the Ministry of the Church of North India. During the following 20 years he held numerous appointments in the Diocese of Delhi.

In 1996 he was appointed to an international post by the Church of North India, spending the next eight years in Johannesburg where he developed links between South Africa and churches in India and Pakistan. In 2007 he was awarded a Doctorate in Theology by the University of South Africa. Since taking up his ministry in the Anglican Diocese of Bradford, Dr John has been appointed Chief Executive Officer of Bradford's Inner Ring Group and is a Trustee and Tutor within Bradford Churches for Diversity and Dialogue. He was a Commissioner for the Churches' Regional Commission from 2008-10. Dr John is also a Member of the Archbishop of Canterbury's task group on Presence and Engagement in the UK.



With Bradford Council funding for the District's Faiths Forum coming to an end, a Director of the group, the Rt. Rev. David Ison, Dean of Bradford Cathedral, reflects on the Forum's....

Past, Present and Future

Bradford District Faiths Forum has developed considerably over the last few years, in pursuing its vision of enabling awareness and religious literacy among young and not-so-young people from the different communities in the city.

Here's a selection of the things we've done:

- Organise events to bring people together, usually around food, looking at how we work together, at different religious festivals, and at culture and music events shared together, raising awareness
- Support meetings of faith groups to discuss matters of common concern
- Make representations on behalf of the major faith groups present in the Bradford District when they want to work together
- Support local interfaith based projects such as Sharakat in Manningham and the Goodwill Gathering in BD3
- Liaise with statutory bodies, e.g. local authority and police
- Get together cross sector partnership to promote and develop bilateral relationships, e.g. in Jewish/Muslim relations
- Develop a Memorandum of Understanding with the University of Bradford, including the Faith and the City lecture series which has invited many inspiring speakers to Bradford including Shami Chakrabarti, Baroness Sayeeda Warsi, Ziauddin Sardar, William Dalrymple, Fatima Bhutto and Peter Osborne.
- Organise and deliver young people's events, including cricket and interfaith youth leader training
- Set up the website including a database of all of the places of worship in Bradford
- Publish a regular newsletter with information about activities and events
- Engage at a strategic level with education including SACRE for religious education, Police Advisory Committee etc
- Support a network of people representing different faith groups in Bradford, able to consult together on matters of common interest
- Work with other agencies to support and develop inter faith projects, e.g. the Treasures Revealed project visiting different faith buildings
- Give advice and guidance to statutory agencies about faith issues (EDL visit, Dispatches programme etc.) including drafting and dissemination of agreed faiths views on community cohesion issues

- Disseminate a wide range of information about different faith events in Bradford District to a wide range of individuals and faith organisations through the Newsletter and our weekly email Bulletin.

We're very grateful to all those who have worked hard for the Forum: the paid staff who have often shown commitment and energy over and above the terms of their contract, including first Cath Bromwich and then Nasar Fiaz our executive officers; Rory MacLeod and then Julia Chantrell as administrators; and Marya Afsar as our youth worker who has done considerable work in a short period of time.

Nasar in particular has done a great job in working through a difficult situation for the Forum a few years ago and putting its work and finances onto a solid footing, as well as developing its profile considerably in the city. But they couldn't have done that without the support of a large number of volunteers who have given their time and expertise as directors, advisors and members of the Forum: and indeed of you as people of faith in Bradford who have supported the Forum's work and activities.

Thank you one and all! In common with other voluntary organisations our funding has been cut by the Council as from the end of March. We will keep going until September, at which point our funds will run out. We are working at the moment on plans to continue the work of the Faiths Forum in a different way: keep an eye on the website, and we'll do our best to let you know what the future holds for us, when we find out ourselves!

If you can help with ideas, resources or commitment, do get in touch.



Julia Chantrell



Marya Afsar

Dynasty member Fatima Bhutto visits Bradford

A Bradford audience was enthralled by a young woman who was born into one of Pakistan's best known political dynasties and experienced numerous family tragedies.

Fatima Bhutto, a niece of Benazir Bhutto, a former Prime Minister of Pakistan who was assassinated in 2007, addressed a 'Faith and the City' meeting and signed copies of her latest book, Songs of Blood and Sword. She recalled the horrifying experience of shielding her baby brother in a windowless room of the family home in Karachi while hearing shots from the street outside. That evening, in September 1996, her father Murtaza, son of Pakistan's former President and Prime Minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, was murdered along with six associates. Fatima was just 14 at the time. Eleven years later, in December 2007, her aunt Benazir, who Fatima has publicly accused of ordering her father's murder, was assassinated during a procession in Rawalpindi.

Remarkable

Despite the tragedies within her family Fatima graduated from Columbia University in 2004 with a degree in Middle Eastern languages and culture. The following year she gained a Masters in South Asian Government and Politics from the School of Oriental and African Studies. Fatima still lives in the Bhutto family home in Clifton, Karachi, with her mother Ghinwa Bhutto and brother Zulfikar Bhutto Jr. Her remarkable collection of first hand accounts given by survivors of the Pakistan earthquake, simply entitled 8.50am 8 October 2005, was published in 2006.

As well as writing books and poetry, Fatima is now a well-known journalist and foreign correspondent in Pakistan. She writes a weekly column for Jang, the country's largest Urdu newspaper and for its English language sister title The News. The University of Bradford's lecture theatre was packed for her presentation, in which she graphically related the long line of tragedies which have afflicted one of the world's best known political dynasties. Songs of Blood and Sword, published by Jonathan Cape, is available in hardback at £20. A softback version is due out in April this year.

'Thank you for a superb evening. Fatima Bhutto was spellbinding. Her lecture was informative, eloquent, compelling and delivered with incredible strength.'

Comment from a member of the Bradford audience.



Award for 'outstanding contribution'

Ashok Nair, Secretary of Bradford District Faiths Forum, has won an award for his outstanding contribution to the community.

The accolade came from COEMO, the Consortium of Ethnic Minority Organisations, an umbrella body for the BME voluntary and community sector across the District.

Celebrating its ten successful years, the organisation wished to recognise individuals and groups whose voluntary work was contributing to the wellbeing of communities. Ashok, a leading figure within the Hindu community in Bradford, received his award at a celebratory dinner held by COEMO at the Carlisle Business Centre.



Ashok Nair receives an award for his 'outstanding contribution to the community' from the Deputy Lord Mayor of Bradford, COUN Mohammed Jameel.

Young people bid to improve race relations in Keighley

Forty young people from different faith backgrounds, including Christians and Muslims, did not allow bad weather to deter them from attending 'Race Matters,' an event held in Keighley on Saturday, February 19.

It proved so successful that all those present said they enjoyed the event, would attend similar meetings in future and would act upon the discussion points raised. Around 60 per cent said they didn't think young people were given the chance to be involved in community decision making in their area of Keighley.

And 80 per cent of the young people said they would like to take part in future debates on race relations and similar issues. 'Race Matters' was organised by Marya Afsar, Interfaith Youth Worker at Bradford District Faiths Forum, in association with AKCT, All Keighley Communities Together.

The event was supported by the Faiths Forum. Held at the town's Central Hall, its key objective was to create 'an open and

safe space for young people from diverse faith and ethnic backgrounds to engage and explore their perceptions of race relations in their local communities within Keighley.'

Dialogue

This was achieved through open dialogue between the young people, along with arts, crafts and music. Central Hall is a newly refurbished community space in Keighley and is now used as a base by members of AKCT. During the event 40 pieces of art were created to form part of a display within the hall. Original musical materials were produced and three area mapping exercises completed.

These spotlighted ways to improve positive race relations in Keighley among young people of diverse faith and ethnic backgrounds.

It was agreed that information and opinions gained from the lively discussions enjoyed by the young people should be sent to Bradford Council, health organisations and youth agencies.

Says Marya: "Event objectives included exploring, from a young person's perspective, practical and realistic solutions to increase positive race relations among young people and their peers.

"We also sought to increase levels of understanding and awareness among young people of diverse ethnic backgrounds and faiths."

A montage of images from 'Race Matters,' held at Central Hall, Keighley.





'Voice of Sikhism' in the UK speaks in Bradford

Dr Indarjit Singh, a popular broadcaster widely regarded as both the secular and religious voice of the British Sikh community, spoke about 'The Relevance of Sikhism Today' when he gave a 'Faith and the City' lecture at the University of Bradford.

Organised jointly by Bradford District Faiths Forum and the University's School of Lifelong Education and Development, his presentation was very well attended. Among his audience was Ramindar Singh, a Deputy Lord Lieutenant for West Yorkshire and one of the Queen's personal representatives in the county. After tracing the origins of Sikhism and outlining the beliefs which guide Sikhs' daily lives, Dr Singh suggested how these beliefs could help people to meet some of the social and political challenges they are facing today. He said these resulted in particular from globalisation and the free flow of communication created by rolling news coverage, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Dr Singh edits the widely respected Sikh Messenger and is Director of the Network of Sikh Organisations, the principal Sikh organisation in the UK. In a poll of BBC listeners in 2005 he came a close second to Sir Bob Geldof as the person they would most like

to see elevated to the House of Lords. The following year he was included in a 'Good List,' compiled by The Independent newspaper, of 50 people who had made a major contribution to world peace.



Dr Singh, who was invested as a Commander of the British Empire in 2009, is a popular contributor to 'Thought for the Day' on BBC Radio 4's flagship Today programme. He also became a regular contributor to 'Pause for Thought' on Terry Wogan's Radio 2 breakfast show.

He is Patron of the World Congress of Faiths and a founder member of Inter Faith Network UK. In 1989 Dr Singh became the first non-Christian to be awarded the UK Templeton Prize 'for the furtherance of spiritual and ethical understanding.'

Journalist and broadcaster Dr Indarjit Singh (second from left) pictured at the University of Bradford with (left to right) Kashmir Singh Rajput, Chairman of Bradford District Faiths Forum at the time of the event; Nadira Mirza, Dean of the University's School of Lifelong Learning and Development and the Deputy Lord Lieutenant of West Yorkshire, Ramindar Singh .

Forum members learn about the Baha'i Faith

During Interfaith Week in the UK, members of Bradford District Faiths Forum met members of Bradford's Baha'i community at the home of Chris and Bob Hallam.

They summarised the history of the Baha'i Faith, whose forerunner, the Bab, brought a message to people in Persia, telling his followers of one greater than himself 'whom God would make Manifest.' However, the Bab was seen as a threat to the leaders of Persia and its clerics and was imprisoned, brutally beaten and finally executed by firing squad.

Baha'u'llah , the Founder of the Baha'i Faith, to whom the Bab had referred, was banished to a life in exile and eventually imprisoned, with his young son Abdu'l-Baha, for 40 years. After learning more about the Faith, Forum members joined with their Baha'i hosts in a celebration of one of the Baha'i Holy days, Booklets about the Baha'i Faith, its World Community and World Peace Programme were given to the Faiths Forum for future reference.



Faiths Forum members are pictured during their meeting with members of Bradford's Baha'i community.



'Troubled relationship' explored by leading journalist

One of Britain's top political journalists, Peter Osborne, explored 'the troubled relationship between the Coalition Government and British Islam' during a visit to Bradford.

Speaking at a 'Faith and the City' meeting organised by the University of Bradford, in association with Bradford District Faiths Forum, he examined the rift between members of the government who favour a full dialogue with Muslims and those who believe so-called 'Islamist' groups should be cut off from mainstream discourse. He argued that the coalition government being led by David Cameron 'is in danger of repeating the mistake made by Tony Blair in treating Muslims as pariahs.'

Mr Osborne is the Chief Political Commentator for The Daily Telegraph and Contributing Editor to The Spectator. He also presents documentaries for Channel Four. His films include Waiting for the Taliban (2009), Darfur: Into the Death Zone (2006) and Iraq: On the Front Line (2005). Last year he turned a film spotlight on Nigeria's Killing Fields, looking at the violence in Jos.

A regular presenter on BBC Radio Four's The Week in Westminster he has also written several books, including Alastair Campbell: New Labour and the Rise of the Media Class, plus an award-winning biography of the cricketer Basil D'Oliveira.

Pictured (left to right) are Peter Lassey, Associate Dean, School of Lifelong Education and Development, University of Bradford; Peter Osborne, Journalist and Broadcaster; Ashok Nair, Secretary, Bradford District Faiths Forum.



Faith Watch will help to prevent crime

West Yorkshire Police in Bradford District have formed Faith Watch, a partnership bringing faith communities together to help prevent crime and anti-social behaviour in and around faith buildings.

The move follows six months in which there were 103 thefts of metal from religious buildings in West Yorkshire. In the UK as a whole, insurance claims resulting from faith building metal thefts were estimated to have cost more than £9.4million. By joining Faith Watch people agree to be alert to any suspicious behaviour or activity in their local area, especially around places of worship. They will report information to the scheme co-ordinator or to the police, implement basic crime prevention techniques and distribute information to fellow worshippers in their community. Faith Watch hopes to cut levels of crime and anti-social behaviour in and around religious buildings, while reducing the fear of crime and developing safer neighbourhoods.

By helping the police to apprehend criminals as a result of information they provide, Faith Watch members will improve the lives of local residents and help to build confident and cohesive communities. Advice on developing a crime prevention strategy for places of worship can be found on-line by visiting: www.westyorkshire.police.uk or by calling Howard Buckley, the force's Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator, tel: (01274) 376228.

The police urge anyone with information about a crime to call Yorkshire and Humber Crimestoppers, tel: 0800 555 111.

Illuminating visit



Bradfordians from the Christian, Hindu, Muslim and Sikh faiths enjoyed a successful visit to Blackpool to see the resort's famous lights display.

Those taking part were from Bradford Council for Mosques, the district's Hindu and Sikh communities and from St Paul's Church in Manningham. The trip was organised by the Faiths Forum to promote inter-faith and community relations.



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Contributions to the Forum's newsletter are welcome in the form of letters, stories and high-resolution photographs.

The Forum reserves the right to decide the content of the newsletter and contributions may be reduced in length in view of space restrictions.