

Harrow Interfaith

Nominee Blogs – Annual General Meeting – Tuesday March 13th 2018

Chair: Varsha Dodhia

For the year 2017, I have been the Chair of Harrow Interfaith and an active participant in the Civic life in Harrow as a Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Representative. My portfolio is Health and Wellbeing. As a VCS Representative, I meet Leaders of the Council every quarter and have worked with key Council Officers for an in-depth review of the Harrow Voluntary and Community Sector. The report will be launched on 22 March. All community organisations are invited to take part in how the recommendations will be taken forward. I am a reserve member for the Harrow Health and Wellbeing Board, where I champion the contribution made by faith communities and voluntary organisations towards the wellbeing of Harrow residents. I am a member of Harrow SACRE, which recently launched a revised Agreed syllabus for Religious Education. Harrow Interfaith members made a big contribution towards this endeavour.

My hope is that as Harrow Interfaith we continue our excellent work in bringing communities together and sharing good relations across Harrow.

Vice-Chair: John Albin

Language teaching is a wonderful and bridge-building profession. Fresh, holistic insights all waiting to be discovered. In a similar vein I wish, as Vice Chair, through pastoral and community engagement in Harrow and beyond, to consolidate and build solid bridges of empathy and understanding between our respective faiths, as well as to provide accurate news and comment on Harrow Interfaith activities.

Vice-Chair: Sonoo Malkani

I have been interested in matters spiritual since a very early age having lived with English nuns in a boarding school in India for seven formative years of my life. I have great faith in the common love and in the beauty of the diverse religions we so proudly boast in this beautiful borough. I have been a former Vice Chair of HIF, Chair of Harrow Police & Community Consultative Group (HPCCG), Vice Chair Harrow Carers and TELL MAMA Board member fighting hate crime and racism.

As a resident volunteer in Harrow for 40 years, including with the NHS, I have worked very closely in many aspects of policing for the past 20 years with New Scotland Yard and City Hall (London Mayor's Office). I am a former Non-Executive Director & Member of London Communities Policing Partnership made up of Chairs of all 32 London Boroughs working

against racism, counter-terrorism, domestic violence, hate crime and stop & search. As the Independent Advisory Group (IAG) Chair, I help to prevent crime and boost safety of our citizens. I was recently awarded a commendation from the Harrow Police Borough Commander.

I am also part of London Inter Faiths Network, a certified founder member for Safe Secure Resilient Network and a great believer in the power of love which brings people together in the face of all odds to work as one united team for the greater good. Community cohesion is at the core of a peaceful society, hence working closely with our local police, helping to boost community engagement, harmony and good communication is invaluable. I am inspired by many, so hope to emulate some of their wonderful traits to achieve optimal benefit for our public.

Secretary: Pat Stevens

I have been involved with Harrow Interfaith since 1987, when I was appointed to the Harrow Education Advisory Service with a brief for religious education across the borough. Over the years I have served as Chair and Secretary, being closely involved with events, developments and networks. I look forward to using my experience to enhance the work of Harrow Interfaith in 2018, through building a strong secretariat and supporting the work of our sub-committees, all the while appreciating and developing the wonderful tapestry of faith, philosophy and spirituality, which we enjoy in Harrow.

Treasurer: Gopaljeet Singh Bhachu

Harrow Interfaith has seen some positive changes since my time on the Executive. However there is a lot more to be done:

- Enhance our role within Harrow and nationally;
- Increase our finances through corporate and individual membership;
- Use vast interfaith contacts to encourage more groups to join us;
- Increase contacts through interfaith dialogue and co-operative, constructive and positive interaction between faiths;
- Organise events to raise our finances.

Membership Secretary: Abraham Mathews

My passion to unite people to bring about harmonious co-existence has been my life's mission, which is motivated by my observance of human nature and my values. Change needs to commence from within before one tries to change society. There is much prejudice and misunderstanding in mankind due to ignorance and lack of education. I want a world where I can make everybody see God's face on others. This is my prayer.

Executive Members

Lydia Nazerian

As one of the two representatives of the Baha'i Faith community of Harrow I am absolutely delighted and honoured to be nominated as a member of the Interfaith Executive body in Harrow. I have always admired the passion and determination of the Interfaith groups in various areas of the country in creating strong links between faith communities everywhere. For my part I look forward to doing my utmost in further strengthening these precious bonds of friendship and understanding between various communities across Harrow.

Jack Lynes

Dear Voter,

Are you looking to vote for a quiet dignified, tolerant, well-behaved, knowledgeable, representative to be a member of the new HIF Executive? Somebody who will talk before and after the meetings about their hopes, their aspirations and their disappointments? Well, that is not me. It has not been 'me' before and it is not 'me' now and so far as I can foresee the future, is not 'me' to be.

As immediate past Chair of HIF and someone who has 'lived' multi-Faith for very many years, I am aware, not just of how important HIF might be but so much more of how important it should be. I can see its potential in reaching out to the people it seeks to serve andbut with all this, please do NOT vote for me unless you feel the same way.

I do hope that you will think carefully before admitting me to the often quiet and cosy meetings of our conscientious, well-meaning, sincere, Executive. I will quite understand if you want to keep it that way!

Alison Johnson

I am happy to remain on the Harrow Interfaith Executive as otherwise, I should miss you all so much.

Dilip Chabal

I will be happy to promote Harrow Interfaith activities in 2018, such as spreading the word and engaging in dialogue to invite new members to join our organisation. I will be glad to help with any events that are organised and will be flexible in my approach and work with Officers and the Executive. I always have and always will respect all faiths and oppose prejudice and will do all in my power to maintain friendship and understanding between our various groups.

I want to promote educational projects and events, enabling HIF members to appreciate our religious and philosophical traditions. In the next year I would like to support the Inter Faith Network of the UK and the Harrow Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) and make a contribution to religious education and collective worship in schools.

Punitha Perinparaja

Harrow Interfaith has potential to promote inter-cultural understanding. As Race and Gender Equality Co-ordinator for schools in the 80s, I joined the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education, raising awareness on religions in schools and community. Teaching in Harrow schools from 1990, with Pat Stevens, Adviser for Religious Education, I facilitated in-service training for teachers, providing original resources for schools on religious celebrations. My publication, 'Indian Music, Song and Dance for Schools', provides access to songs from religious celebrations in English with western notation and is promoted by Harrow Music Service for in-service training. As Trustee of the Race Equality Team in Harrow, I reported back to the Executive. I was Vice-Chair, then Chair of HIF from 2012 – 2014 and helped to organise an exhibition of the 9 faiths of Harrow for our 30th Anniversary. Edited slides of this were shared with the public in November 2017 at the Civic Centre at HIF's Inter Faith Week event, which I introduced as archives. In 2017 as an Events Sub-Committee member I mooted the idea of consolidating resources to produce a publication. My aim is to leave a lasting legacy of original resources for schools and community and will continue to use my knowledge, expertise and experience to strengthen Harrow Interfaith as a member of the Executive.

David Cryer

This is my second year with Harrow Interfaith. I am happy to participate alongside members of all faiths and none as Harrow Interfaith is really a model of how best to build and maintain a diverse community. As a humanist I am happy to have been involved in the organisation of several HIF events, and I hope to do so again this year. I also hope to contribute to the 'digital' presence of HIF and its publicity. Common endeavours engender trust and friendship

Azmat Ali

I am a retired Financial Director of MedChoice Holidays and have been Trustee and Head of Finance at Harrow Central Mosque from 2004 until recently. I have now moved on to an administrative position in the Mosque.

Ummulbanin Merali

Born to Muslim parents, I was educated in a Roman Catholic School. Our neighbours and best friends were Hindus and my favourite teacher a Jew. I was brought up to accept diversity of

faith as that which strengthens the bond of humanity. It is this outlook that I bring to the Executive and I believe that inter faith is the only way forward to peace in this troubled world of ours.

Asad Omar

I have been a member of Harrow Interfaith for 20 years and strongly believe in working with all faiths. As Mayor of Harrow I celebrated all faiths in the Mayor's Parlour and that was the first time it was done in Harrow.

Ervad Yazad Bhadha

I am a full-time priest at the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe. I enjoy representing the Zoroastrian faith at events and generally serving the community as my family have done. Through my experiences as an active member of the young Zoroastrian Committee, I bring a youth perspective to inter faith activities and help organise events. I can also provide an insight into Zoroastrianism through my personal experiences and my university studies of Zoroastrianism.

Phiroza Gan-Kotwal

I am a long-standing member of the HIF Executive and a former chair. I maintain great interest in the Inter Faith Network for the UK and regularly attend its AGMs and meetings for local inter faith groups. As a great believer in networks, I also liaise and attend meetings of Faiths in London, The Christian Muslim Forum, NHS London Multi-Faith Forum and Patients' Research Group and AGE UK. As a member of the Harrow Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE), I much enjoy and learn a great deal from visiting schools to give pupils a glimpse of Zoroastrianism, when I am amazed at the knowledge exhibited by the young people of today.