



# INTERFAITH PLANNING GROUP NEWSLETTER

## MARCH 2019

As the Inter Faith Planning Group look forward to a new year full of promise and activity we welcome back our regular readers and, hopefully, some new ones too!.



### FUTURE EVENTS.

- The next meeting of the Inter Faith Planning Group will be held on Tuesday, 26<sup>th</sup> March, at 7.0pm at Bill's and Jennie's house, 39, Green Lane (**NOT** at the Friend's Meeting House as previously notified).
- On the 23<sup>rd</sup> April another **SEDER MEAL** at the Friends' Meeting House will be held and all Friends are invited to attend. It would be helpful if Friends interested in attending to notify Bill McMellon of their initial interest. Further details will be provided when the arrangements have been finalised.
- A visit is proposed to a Buddhist Monastery in early summer. Cittaviveka, popularly known as **CHITHURST BUDDHIST MONASTERY**, is a Theravada Buddhist Monastery in the Thai Forest Tradition. It is situated in West Sussex, England in the hamlet of Chithurst between Midhurst and Petersfield.  
Friends will be invited once arrangements have been finalised.
- **INTER FAITH WEEK -2019.**  
Building on the success of the event organised last year the Planning Group would like to organise another for this year.  
Inter Faith Week 2019 will take place between Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> November. The Week begins each year on Remembrance Sunday to enable people of different backgrounds to remember together the service of soldiers and civilians of all faiths and beliefs and to reflect on peace.

**IDEAS FOR A THEME FOR THE FRIENDS' CONTRIBUTION TO THIS EVENT WILL BE WELCOMED.**

Please contact Bill McMellon.



VISIT TO THE CRAWLEY SIKH TEMPLE.

## QUAKER VISIT TO THE CRAWLEY SIKH GURDWARA.

Propitious blue skies and sun dawned and accompanied our journey to the Crawley Sikhs.

Thirteen Quakers presented themselves at the Gurdwara and were welcomed by Baljit Kang and Satinder Kaur, both of whom led the Sikh visit to Friends House and the end of last year. They ensured that we conformed to the tradition of covered head, the washing of hands, and the placing of our shoes in the rack provided; all in order to show respect.

We were led into the temple in order to observe the service. The priest sat under a covered dais and read continuously from a huge book to softly performed music from a sitar, harmonium, and drums.



This book contained the fundamental beliefs of Sikhism, the sacred scripture called the Guru Granth Sahib, written by 10 messengers (or Gurus). The Guru Granth Sahib is like

the bible - it will not change - it is the culmination of the teachings of the Gurus. The text includes:

- hymns and teachings of the first 5 gurus of Sikhism, including those of the founder Nanak
- some writings of Kabir, a poet
- the writings of 20 selected Hindu and Muslims saints/mystics who affirmed the oneness of God and were deemed to know and practice true spirituality.

During the ceremony worshipers are traditionally allowed to come and go, but despite this the Guru Granth Sahib is treated with the greatest of respect and, indeed, it is regarded as a living thing not as a book.

On special occasions there is the Akhand Path which is the continuous, front to back, reading of the Siri Guru Granth Sahib for 3 days and two night. This reading is an important and extremely meaningful meditative practice for Sikhs. Akhand Paths are read in honour of major life events like marriages, funerals, and births. They are important community events and conducted either by a team of granthis who take

turns reading for long periods of time or by community members who take turns reading in hour-long reading slots.

After hours, or if no attendant is present during the day, the Guru Granth is ceremonially closed. A prayer is said and the Guru Granth is put into sukhasan, or peaceful repose. A soft light is kept on in the presence of the Guru Granth all night.

We were given breakfast and then treated to a reading by one of the young people from one of the teachings from the Guru Granth. This was followed by a tour of the kitchen, and a demonstration and some hands-on experience of, making chapatis; much fun was had with this!

Appropriately enough, our kitchen experience was followed with a treat for which the Sikh hospitality is famous for, the Langar - the free kitchen. Traditionally, guests all sit together - rich, poor, all faiths and none; eating the same meal means you are all friends. I hasten to add that we quickly joined the ever-increasing queue and all ate at tables! Such hospitality and equality is extended to the community – the Gurdwara is the venue for the community who will use it for their social life; it is open from 5.0am – 7.0pm and outside of these hours for those in need.

Fittingly, this enlightening day was completed with a talk by the Granthi –the equivalent to a priest -although there is no ordained priesthood in Sikhism (*the Sikh Missionary Society UK*). This related to the humanity and inclusiveness of Sikhism and the worship and glorification of God through music. “Whatever God does to us is Ok! We graciously accept”.

Chichester Quakers heartfully thank the Crawley Sikh community for welcoming us to their Gurdwara, and our special thanks to Baljit Kang and Satinder Kaur for their guidance and support.



## Year of Beliefs

**BBC strengthens commitment to Religion & Ethics, shining a light on faith, belief and values in modern Britain**

**Across the next 12 months the BBC will shine a light on faith, belief and values in modern Britain.**

At a time when society is more diverse, more complex and more divided than ever before, the Year of Beliefs will explore the multiple expressions of faith and belief in Britain, and look at how our ethics and values shape our everyday life and personal choices.

The Year of Beliefs 2019 will bring Religion and Ethics programming to as wide an audience as possible, airing ambitious landmark series with privileged access, powerful documentaries highlighting big moral questions, spiritual journeys of self-discovery and thought-provoking discussions and debates.

In addition, a major new survey will be launched, exploring attitudes to contentious issues and responses to ethical dilemmas, providing insight into what we really think about the rights and wrongs of the most pressing issues of our time. We'll also look at differences in attitude according to age, gender and broad geographical region of the UK, to get a unique snapshot of what unites and divides us.

Charlotte Moore, Director, BBC Content, says: "With the Year of Beliefs we want to capture the complex variety of faiths and beliefs in modern Britain. Not only do we continue to offer our audiences a place they can celebrate and share their own personal beliefs, but we also want to help them understand better the meaning of other faiths and beliefs as well as exploring important ethical issues that impact so many people's lives. I am excited at the breadth of content across 2019 and I hope it inspires all our audiences and brings them a fresh insight into the fast changing world we live in."

James Purnell, Director of Radio & Education, says: "Twelve months ago we reaffirmed the BBC's commitment to religion and ethics programming in our wide-ranging review, and Year of Beliefs is part of our overall efforts to make our content relevant to all audiences.

"We'll be shining a light on what Britain believes in today through new commissions, appointing a Youth Panel to work with well-established programmes across radio, and exploring a complex range of issues affecting people's lives - from IVF to being single. With radio's unique ability to bring stories alive, our audiences will hear Jeremy Irons read The Psalms on Radio 4 at Easter, and I hope that throughout the year we'll offer a place for people to pause and reflect on the world around them, with our content."

For more information click on to:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/mediapacks/yearofbeliefs>