



Hosting a Festivals Exchange Event

The following guidelines may be useful when hosting people from diverse faith backgrounds at a religious festival in your place of worship. These guidelines were compiled by volunteers from three places of worship (Christian, Muslim, and Sikh) who participated in Interfaith Glasgow's 2015-16 Festivals Exchange Programme. They reflect the points this group felt important, based on their experiences, and are in no way intended to be exhaustive.

- Help guests feel welcome by assigning volunteers to welcome them and take care of their needs.
- Don't assume that any protocols (such as hand-washing) will be obvious—show people, explain, give a chance to ask questions.
- Keep the guests informed about the programme - if you have a long service (especially where large chunks are in a language guests are unlikely to understand) think carefully about whether the guests should be invited to observe the whole or part of it. Find a suitable way of ushering guests in and out with minimal disturbance to the festival devotees.
- Communicate to guests which part of the service they are witnessing so they do not feel excluded or confused
- Make clear that simple observation is ok and indicate the degree to which guests may participate if they wish to do so, e.g. singing hymns, chanting etc. Guests are there primarily to observe rather than participate and may not feel comfortable participating in the observances of a religious tradition other than their own. Make it clear that no invited participation is compulsory.
- If guests are invited to partake in refreshments, be aware that various religious dietary restrictions may apply (information about religious dietary restrictions can be found in the 'chart for caterers' linked to below). If it is possible to avoid meat and alcohol, this will help ensure inclusivity. Labelling ingredients is also very helpful.
- Dress Code - make sure guests know in advance whether or not there is a particular dress code for your place of worship and have volunteers at the event to help the guests with head coverings, removal of shoes etc, if required.
- Seating Arrangements: inform guests if they will be required to sit on the floor and make sure people with disabilities are given alternative seating.
- Speakers, service - make sure speakers are sensitive to the diversity of the audience.
- This is an occasion for mutual learning, not proselytisation. Respect the fact that visitors believe and practice differently, yet have been willing to step outside their comfort zone to learn more about your tradition.

The following resources contain further information which might be useful when hosting an interfaith event:

Threads of Compassion - Multi faith and Interfaith event guidelines

<http://niinterfaithforum.org/images/stories/Articles/Northern%20Ireland%20Interfaith%20Forum%20-%20A4%20Booklet%20Phase%205.pdf>

Faith Based Dietary Practice - A chart for caterers

http://www.fbrn.org.uk/sites/default/files/catering_and_faith_based_dietary_practice_0.pdf

Celebrating Festivals

<http://www.dialoguesociety.org/publications/community/Celebrating-Festivals.pdf>