



Office DEPOT

What could  
we achieve  
through  
interfaith  
dialogue?

**Our  
work  
so far**

# Contents

- P01 Welcome from the Project Manager
- P02 What is Interfaith?
- P03 Interfaith in Glasgow
- P04 First Annual Networking Seminar
- P05 Interfaith Week
- P06 Interfaith Week 2013  
Other groups' activities
- P08 Stepping Into Diversity:  
Youth Filmmaking Project
- P08 Youth Work
- P09 Talking Books

## Welcome from the Project Manager

Since we began work in October 2012, staff at Interfaith Glasgow have been heartened by the goodwill and positive sentiment we have received in our efforts to progress interfaith relations in Glasgow. In our 18 months we have worked with faith and belief communities across Glasgow, delivered two successful interfaith weeks, engaged with public service providers, built partnerships and brought young people from diverse faith backgrounds together. Throughout all of this the commitment of Glasgow's faith and belief communities to creating and maintaining good relations and having real dialogue has been unwavering. As we move into the next phase of our development, we thank those individuals, communities and organisations who have supported us and look forward to working with them and other new faces in the next year. In particular we thank the management of Interfaith Scotland for their continuous support and to the Scottish Government and Voluntary Action Fund for their funding and guidance.

Michael Wilson  
*Project Manager, Maternity Cover*

## What is Interfaith?



### What is Interfaith?

At its most basic, interfaith engagement is about approaching religious diversity as an opportunity rather than a threat.

Interfaith initiatives invite us to move beyond our prejudices (yes we all have them!) to make a conscious effort to get to know others who are different from ourselves and to understand what makes them tick. At the same time, interfaith engagement is about learning to share our civic space with each other, about working more constructively together to tackle joint problems, and, so, hopefully, about creating a better society.

### What we do

Our work focuses on 3 (often overlapping) forms of interfaith engagement:

- 1. friendship-building:** through social gatherings of various kinds we bring people of all ages together to meet their neighbours from diverse backgrounds, encouraging mutual suspicion to be replaced by mutual curiosity.
- 2. faith and belief dialogue:** we seek to make space for people to be open with each other about the values they cherish and their deepest held beliefs, allowing mutual understanding and trust to deepen.

**3. practical dialogue and co-operation:** we aim to create contexts where people can connect with those from other communities around issues of common concern so they can work together to tackle shared problems.

We hope that by organising different kinds of events and activities we can bring people together in a way that appeals to their interests, allowing them connect more deeply with diverse individuals and communities so as to add value to their lives – and the lives of others.

# Interfaith in Glasgow



“[our] collective power to create a more just, more loving, more cohesive society within Glasgow is immense.”

# First Annual Networking Seminar



“a sense of a fresh start and a broader mix than in the past.”

## Research Findings

Interfaith Glasgow commissioned research that would develop a sense of the ‘landscape’ of interfaith engagement in Glasgow, so we could assess where and how our efforts should be focussed.

The first phase of the research identified 5 priorities which we have used to direct our work:

1. To build a communication structure that connects people
2. To revisit the purpose and values of interfaith work
3. To develop a shared strategic vision for those involved in interfaith engagement

4. To nurture fuller relationships with faith communities
5. To engage a much broader audience in interfaith dialogues and events within the city.

The second phase of research explored which groups in the city are bringing together people of different faiths and beliefs, either through intentional interfaith work, or through intercultural engagement. This non-exhaustive, qualitative study identifies 59 such groups, giving a short profile of each. The profiles are categorised according to geographical location and highlight the kind of engagement fostered

– be it friendship building, practical co-operation, faith and belief dialogue or a combination of these. We hope this resource will help to facilitate the development of networks and collaborative ventures amongst groups with common concerns.

**“We need to find ways in which we can appreciate what each other is bringing to the table, bringing to the community...it’s about actively appreciating what faith and belief communities can contribute to our civic life” (Study participant).**

Both reports are now available to download at [www.interfaithglasgow.org](http://www.interfaithglasgow.org)

In June 2013 we held our first Annual Networking Seminar. This brought together over 50 delegates from faith communities and organisations concerned with good community relations to reflect collectively on how interfaith dialogue and co-operation could help create a better Glasgow for all. The aim was to link up people with a stake in this work, so that interfaith connections can be extended and deepened in ways which have a practical impact on people’s lives.

Participants discussed the findings of our recent research on interfaith engagement in Glasgow which highlights both a range of encouraging initiatives and a number of significant challenges, including an over-reliance on a small pool of committed interfaith supporters. To this end we were delighted to hear that the networking seminar had brought together a “broader mix than in the past”.

One participant commented on what “huge potential” there is for positive interfaith engagement in Glasgow;

and, asked to choose one word to describe the afternoon, participants chose words such as “encouraging”, “inspiring”, “useful”, “informative”, “thought-provoking”, “stimulating”, “valuable”, and “energising”.

The event very much confirmed that there is tremendous goodwill in Glasgow and a commitment to taking this work forward. We hope Interfaith Glasgow will play a key role in facilitating this and look forward to welcoming an even broader range of people at our next Annual Networking Seminar in mid 2014.

## Interfaith Week



“it affirmed the need for a more collaborative and coordinated approach”

## Interfaith Week 2013



“I felt the whole event was wonderful, with great interaction among everyone”



### Interfaith Week 2012

During Interfaith Glasgow's first Interfaith Week in 2012, we were fortunate to be hosted by the Lord Provost for a civic reception in City Chambers. This event brought together many of Glasgow's Interfaith activists, thanking them for their enthusiasm and commitment which has ensured Glasgow's proud history of interfaith engagement and without which our work would be impossible.

### Faith and Poverty

In 2013 the Lord Provost's hospitality was renewed, and this time we sought to reach a broader audience, attracting over 60 delegates from a wide range of faith communities

and anti-poverty organisations to discuss the nature of poverty and how it can be tackled. The idea was initiated by St Mary's Episcopal Cathedral's Justice and Aid Network and supported by members of the local Muslim community who together assisted in the planning.

Guests were warmly welcomed by representatives of the Lord Provost and Hanzala Malik MSP. We heard an introduction to the extent of poverty in Glasgow from Morag Gillespie of the Scottish Poverty Information Unit. This was followed by reflections on poverty by Rev Kathy Galloway (Christian Aid Scotland), Ven Rewatha (Theravada Buddhist Vihara), Dr Rizzi Mohammed,

Ravinder Kaur Nijjar and Charandeep Singh (Glasgow Gurdwara). Participants then broke off into ten workshops, each hosted by a local group involved in tackling poverty, both from faith and non-faith backgrounds. A follow-up event was held in Al-Fur'qan Mosque community hall. Our heartfelt thanks goes to all who lent their support.

These events provided valuable opportunities to begin seek avenues for collaboration, a process which we will continue to support. If you are interested in working with a community or group in your area in tackling poverty or any other issue, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

### Interfaith Family Fair

Over 150 people came together at this colourful celebration of Glasgow's religious and cultural diversity, held in St Mungo Museum of Religious Life and Art. Members from 10 traditions hosted stalls on their faith, with objects to look at and food to taste, and most importantly a chance to have a chat, be curious and ask questions. Representatives from the Scottish Football Association and Glasgow 2014 were also present along with the Forestry Commission Scotland whose woodland themed activities were a big hit! Children and adults alike enjoyed henna, face-painting, Arabic art, making their own mini Zen gardens,

and a specially designed Treasure Trail that took them around the Museum. The event was brought to a joyful close by the Maryhill Integration Network dancers with an exciting mix of costumes, music and dance styles from Glasgow's diverse communities.

Bringing together so many different groups and individuals would not have been possible without the hard work of an interfaith group of six volunteers who helped plan, advertise and deliver the event.

Their enthusiasm and creativity was priceless! Our thanks goes to all volunteers and stallholders who supported this event and to the Forestry Commission for providing sponsorship.

To get a flavour of the day check out "Interfaith Family Fair" on You Tube.



# Interfaith Week 2013

Images by Monique Campbell



## Stepping into Diversity: Youth Filmmaking Project



### Other groups' activities

We try to encourage and support groups to deliver their own events and activities during Interfaith Week and beyond. Here is a taste of what went on in Glasgow in Interfaith Week 2013.

### Conversations in Faith

As part of a monthly series organised by The Ignatian Spirituality Centre, in partnership with the Bishop's Committee for Interreligious Dialogue, Sr Isabel Smyth interviewed Fariha Thomas, Labour Councillor for Govan and a Muslim. There was time for reflection in groups before opening to a wider conversation with Fariha,

a format which was found to encourage good participation and honesty.

### Bring a non Jew over (Banjo) Shabbat dinner

The Glasgow Jewish Students Society invited non-Jewish guests to join them in a traditional Shabbat dinner. It was a new and positive experience for regulars and visitors alike providing an opportunity to build friendships and share insights.

### Interfaith Dialogue at Deaf Connections

Deaf, Hearing and Hard of Hearing people from Christian, Muslim,

Jewish and Hindu backgrounds came together to have a dialogue about what it is like to be Deaf or Hard of Hearing, the barriers that exist to becoming a fully engaged member of your faith community and examples of good practice.

### Volunteer Led Heritage Walks, West of Scotland Regional Equality Council (WSREC)

During Interfaith Week WSREC organised two heritage walks to various places of worship around the city. The diverse group of volunteers leading the walks had participated in training to learn about the places of worship in preparation for these tours.

Since September 2013, our youth worker has been leading on a Youth Filmmaking Project run in partnership with West of Scotland Regional Equality Council (WSREC).

This was a bold new venture for us and we've certainly learnt a lot along the way. The project gathered a group of young people of diverse faiths, so that they could build new friendships whilst working towards a final project together, learning filmmaking & teamwork skills as they went along. By bringing the same young people together over an extended period of time, it has been possible to create spaces for them to talk increasingly

openly about their faith and religious lives and to learn more deeply and empathetically about other people's faiths.

Showing how working and discovering the religious diversity of the city together has benefitted the participants, this is what two of the young people involved have said about the project:

**"It has helped me understand other faiths, and also talk about my own faith. It has made me feel like I have a part to play and can relate to other people who understand me, even though they come from a different religious tradition."**

**"It has helped me see how life is intertwined with faith for other people"**

The group have been working hard to create two films, one giving an insight into the faith experiences of young people in Glasgow titled "We Belong to Glasgow", and another showcasing positive examples of interfaith work. There are some short videos giving an insight into their progress on our Youtube channel and the finished products will follow soon!

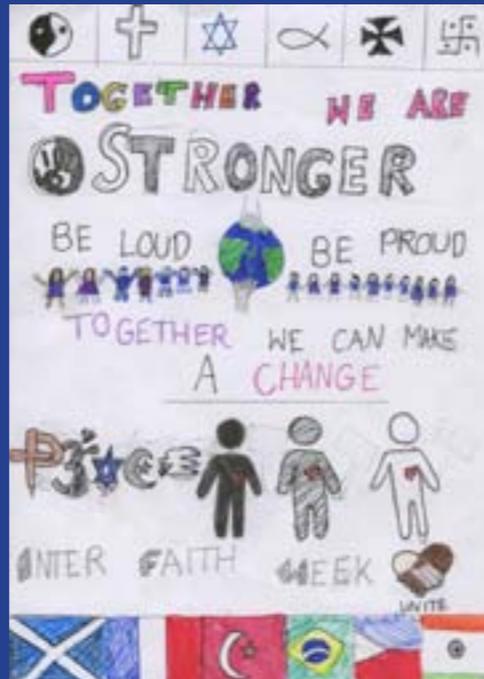


## Youth Work

2nd prize:  
"Wee Glasgow Girls,"  
Garnetbank Primary  
School.



1st prize: Annie Scott,  
Calderwood Lodge  
Primary School.



## Schools Work

Glasgow has over 300 schools over 70,000 young people and we know that reaching young people from both faith and non-faith backgrounds is key to promoting good relations in our city. As part of Interfaith Week 2012 we brought together pupils and teachers in St Mungo Museum for a 'blether' about the value of interfaith dialogue. We have also had the pleasure of facilitating a series of workshops for pupils at St Oswald's and Abercorn secondary schools during interfaith Week 2013.

### "What Does Interfaith Look Like"?

When we asked this question to young people across Glasgow as part of our art competition to celebrate World Interfaith Harmony Week (February 2014) we did not know what to expect and we were delighted with the quality of entries received. Our winner was Annie Scott from Calderwood Lodge Primary School with 2nd place going to the "Wee Glasgow Girls" of Garnetbank Primary School and joint 3rd place going to Nikki Cowan from Calderwood Lodge and the Bearsden Baha'i youth group.

## Talking Books

### Do you judge a book by its cover?



This pilot project introduced an innovative approach to interfaith dialogue, inspired by the "Human Library" initiative. In February and March 2014 we brought together a group of volunteers to compose a story about their experience of being part of a faith community or about their spirituality and/or beliefs.

In composing their stories, the volunteers were invited to think about questions such as: how important is faith to you?; how do your beliefs influence your decisions?; do decisions like wearing certain clothes, eating certain foods or praying at certain times of the day

influence your life?; or to what extent does not being of faith shape your perspective and the way you live your life? Over 4 sessions our 13 volunteers listened to each others' stories and through a dialogue fuelled by mutual interest they helped one another to hone and develop those stories in preparation for sharing them with members of Police Scotland at Stewart Street Police Station. The volunteers found this process very valuable with one participant commenting:

**"It was great to gain an insight into what diversity exists out there. There was one faith which I wasn't aware existed."**

Our volunteers came from Muslim, Baha'i, Jewish, Christian, Hindu, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and Sikh and non-faith backgrounds, and so by listening to them and asking questions, Police Scotland staff had an opportunity to increase their understanding of the diversity of belief and practice here in Glasgow. Feedback from Police Scotland was very positive with participants saying that learning through such face-to-face dialogue is invaluable.

The volunteers enjoyed sharing their stories and will hopefully be doing this again over the coming year. Our thanks goes to our wonderful volunteers and the staff at Police Scotland who supported and participated in this initiative.



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# Find out more. Keep in touch

[www.interfaithglasgow.org](http://www.interfaithglasgow.org)

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 Check us out on You Tube



## Our Team

Rose Drew *Project Manager*  
Michael Wilson *Project Manager*  
*(maternity cover)*  
Magdalen Lambkin *Project Worker*  
Clare McCormack *Youth Worker*  
Jamie Spurway *Project Worker*  
Dilmeet Sangha *Student Placement*  
Hans Lucas *Sessional Film Worker*

*Thank you to all of our volunteers who have provided support throughout this period.*

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