

**Leicester Council of Faiths**  
**AGM, Open Meeting-Women & Faith and**  
**Inter Faith Food Sharing Festival**  
**16 November 2023**

[www.lcof.org.uk](http://www.lcof.org.uk)

[info@leicestercounciloffaiths.org.uk](mailto:info@leicestercounciloffaiths.org.uk)

07512893613

# **Leicester Council of Faiths**

## **AGM Report**

### **Chair's Remarks**

Dear friends,

I would like to convey my thanks to all of you that are present today, the speakers, the hosts and all other faith representatives across Leicestershire that couldn't be here but support the work of the Leicester Council of Faiths.

I would also would like to welcome new members of staff that have joined us Jarina Shaikh and Mushtaq Abdullahi who are helping us to deliver the Cancer and Faith project for which we received some funding from Macmillan Cancer Support and for which we are very grateful. They will be working with our Manager Emma Buckler to connect with many of you in the next few weeks and months.

As you know, the Leicester Council of Faiths is the only grassroots inter-faith organisation working accross Leicestershire that has membership and participation of places of worship, faith groups and representatives from across the diverse communities of Leicestershire.

We have, with the great team of board members and our Manager, made great strides in undertaking a multitude of projects, activities and events that has increased the reach and impact of the LCOF like never before. I would also like to thank Macmillan Cancer Support and all other stakeholders for their partnership and support, such as the city's MPs, the Lord Lieutenant of Leicestershire, civic leaders, the Police and Crime Commissioner Office and the Police for their continued support.

There have been a lot of positives as shown in the highlights of the report with you today. From workshops on financial scams, on cancer, on domestic abuse, on women in faith, to Coronation events for His Majesty King Charles the third. From interfaith talks delivered to various bodies to dialogue meetings to ease tensions between communities. We are the only organisation that uniquely undertakes this level of community engagement and dialogue to be responsive to issues but also to pro-actively work to benefit faith communities across Leicestershire. I would like to highlight faith groups' response to the appeal for the victims of the Syrian/Turkey Earthquake, as we raised £1,750, with contributions coming from the Jalaram Mandir, Jain Centre, BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir and others.

I am ably supported by our Vice Chair Narendra Waghela, Secretary Yasmin Surti, all other officers and Life Member Smita Shah, as well as Emma and the rest of the Board. I am proud to have such a committed and resourceful team to make a difference and take the LCOF to new heights.

Of course, we still face challenges and the events in the Middle East and the impact on communities in the UK and here, shows that we need to continue to work with a common platform of humanity and peace, and promoting the values and peace of our faith's teachings. That is why we have

consistently spoken out against violence and injustice. The devastation of over 1,200 lives in Israel and of over 11,000 lives in Palestine should all be condemned because no faith justifies these war crimes and crimes against humanity. Also there is no place in our society for Anti-Semitism or Islamophobia or indeed any form of hatred. We should stand together and not let these events divide our friendship and common sense of purpose to make Leicestershire and UK a better place.

Locally, we have maintained dialogue and continue to support each other at these difficult times. But let us not get complacent as there are triggers which impact cohesion, which I have been stating publicly over the last few years. We have a lot of work we have to do to keep cohesion and peace here. We have developed proposals which focus our work in the next year or so and have the support of the likes of the Police and Crime Commissioners Office to deliver these proposals. We thank the Commissioner Mr Rupert Mathews and all our supporting partner organisations.

As mentioned, there is a lot of work that we need to do to connect with young people and help them strengthen unity and cohesion.

We need to empower and support key influencers in our community, who people look up to, so that we can all play a part in making Leicester and Leicestershire a place that is truly tolerant and cohesive, which it isn't entirely at present. This means that everyone here today has a role to play and each of you are equally responsible for our past achievements and future successes.

I want to finish by saying that the LCOF is all of you. It is not owned by any one person or community and it is independent. We want everyone to feel that they can share their views or ideas or ask for support at any time. We will continue to help in whatever way we can, be it writing letters, doing campaigns, undertaking projects, making statements and so on. So please join us in our journey and let us build the success of this important organisation together and in friendship. I look forward to working with you all.

Thank you and God Bless

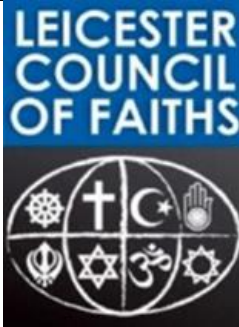


Fayyaz Suleman





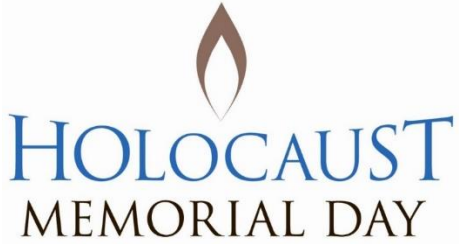
Chairman - LCOF


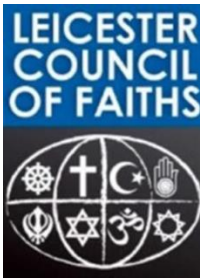

# **Leicester Council of Faiths Activities and Highlights**


## **November 2022- November 2023**

- Supporting Community Cohesion in Leicester
- Remembrance Sundays, 2022 and 2023
- Online Talk Interfaith Talk for Zoro UK
- AGM and Interfaith Food Sharing Festival 2023
- Meeting with Leicester City Council's Cemeteries Team
- Workshop on Financial Scams
- Fond Farewell to Father Paskal
- Holocaust Memorial Day
- Leicestershire County Council Interfaith visits
- Response to Turkey-Syrian earthquake disaster
- Meeting with Bishop Martyn Snow
- Open Meeting: Cancer and Faith
- Inter Faith Iftars
- Leicestershire County Cricket Club Multi Faith Blessing
- The Big Help Out Initiative and Faith Volunteers Videos
- King Charles' Coronation and Interfaith events
- NHS Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Alliance
- Multi Faith Day at Granby Primary School, Leicester
- Faith Therapy Focus Group Session
- Open Meeting: Domestic Abuse and Faith
- Funding from Macmillan Cancer Support
- Chief Constable's Cultural Day
- BBC Radio Leicester Make a Difference Awards
- Response to Home Secretary's Comments
- Government and Independent Commission (SOAS) inquiries into Leicester Civil Unrest
- Birth of the Bab celebrations
- Royal British Legion Service of Remembrance
- Inauguration of the Gurdwara Sahib, Hamilton
- North Memorial Homes Representation
- Peace, Unity and Condolence Statements
- Faith and Community Partner Site Visits
- LCOF Board Meetings

	Event/Meeting	Summary
	<p>Community Cohesion in Leicester – throughout 2022-23</p>	<p>Throughout the year the LCOF has been actively engaging with faith communities across the city to support the furthering of community cohesion. We have attended Community Gold Meetings, undertaken consultation with young people and faith leaders on the activities, programmes they would like to see to support community engagement, met regularly with the Police and Police and Crime Commissioner, grass roots communities and key stakeholders and funders to support community cohesion. This includes work between leaders of Sikh and Muslim communities to ease potential tensions surrounding local incidents and work between Hindu and Muslim communities to maintain dialogue and move on from the unrest last year. Work on projects to bring people together will be a key area of focus for our work in 2023-24.</p>
	<p>Remembrance Day 2022</p> <p>13<sup>th</sup> November 2022</p>	<p>The LCOF Chair and other members of the LCOF attended the Leicester City Service of Remembrance and laid a wreath, on behalf of all the City and County faiths.</p>
	<p>Online Interfaith Talk</p> <p>16<sup>th</sup> November 2023</p>	<p>Smita Shah (Life Member LCOF) gave an online talk about interfaith and the LCOF to Zoro UK, who have offices in Wigston.</p>



	<p>AGM 2022, 16th November 2022</p>	<p>We held our 2022 Inter Faith Food Sharing Festival and AGM at the MKA Venue, Dashwood Road, Evington and online. Over 30 people attended. We were honoured that the High Sheriff of Leicestershire, Mehmooda Duke MBE DL, Cllr. Neil Bannister Bannister (Chair of Harborough District Council) and Cllr. Rani Mahal (Vice-Chair of Harborough District Council) were able to join us. The venue and hospitality was kindly provided by Muslim Khatri Association (MKA)</p>
 Leicester City Council	<p>Leicester City Council Burial Strategy Online Meeting 5th January 2023</p>	<p>Members of the LCOF board attended an online meeting with Leicester City Council's Cemeteries team to discuss and input into the city council's burial strategy for the city's cemeteries.</p>
	<p>FCA Workshop 11th January 2023</p>	<p>Working in partnership with the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) we hosted a discussion group on financial scams. The work and connectivity of LCOF was acknowledged. The workshop was kindly hosted by the Shree Jalaram Prarthana Mandir.</p>
	<p>Goodbye to Father Paskal 11<sup>th</sup> January 2023</p>	<p>We bid a fond farewell to Father Paskal and wished him well in his new parish in Birmingham. Fayyaz presented Father Paskal with a certificate of appreciation from all the faith communities in Leicester/shire thanking him for all his hard work over the years supporting inter faith activity and as a LCOF board member.</p>
	<p>28<sup>th</sup> January 2023</p>	<p>LCOF members participated in the Leicester's Holocaust Memorial Day event which is a collaboration between the Leicester Council of Faiths, Leicester City Council, Leicestershire County Council and the University of Leicester's Stanley Burton Centre for Holocaust &amp; Genocide Studies.</p>

	<p>Leicestershire County Council (LCC) Early Years Inclusion and Childcare Team Interfaith visits and online interfaith talk</p> <p>January and February 2023</p>	<p>The LCOF co-ordinated visits for the LCC Early Years Inclusion and Childcare Team to Shree Hindu Temple, Leicester Hebrew Congregation and Masjid Umar Mosque and Smita Shah (LCOF Life Member) gave an online talk to the team on interfaith principles.</p>
	<p>Turkish – Syrian Earthquake response</p> <p>February 2023</p>	<p>The LCOF issued a statement of condolence recognising those affected by the earthquake and collected donations from LCOF members totalling £1,750 for the international disaster relief fund. Fayyaz spoke on BBC Radio Leicester about the amazing response Leicester's faith communities were undertaking to help those affected in Turkey and Syria.</p>
	<p>LCOF Board meeting with Bishop Martyn Snow</p> <p>20th February 2023</p>	<p>Members of the LCOF board met with Bishop Martyn Snow and discussed community cohesion and inter faith activity across the city.</p>
	<p>LCOF Open Meeting: Cancer and Faith</p> <p>15th March 2023</p>	<p>Over 65 people attended our Open Meeting to hear speakers, Dr Khazeh Fananapazir, Dr Bhavyang Acharya, Robert Sherratt, Allia Amjad, Deacon Andrew Martin, Kartar Singh Bring, the event was held in partnership with Macmillan Cancer Support and kindly hosted by the Scared Heart Parish.</p>


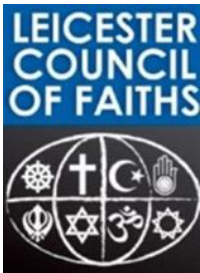
	<p>Inter Faith Iftars</p> <p>April 2023</p>	<p>Board members attended and represented the LCOF at the following Iftars:</p> <p>Oadby and Wigston Muslim Association, Majid Al Ameen Inter Faith Iftar, Darul Arqam Trust Inter Faith Iftar, Cllr Alli's Inter Faith Iftar.</p>
	<p>Leicestershire County Cricket Club Multi Faith Blessing</p> <p>13th April 2023</p>	<p>Board members represented the LCOF at the Leicestershire County Cricket Club Multi Faith Blessing, they gave blessings from their own faith culture, to celebrate and bless the start of the new cricket season.</p>
<div data-bbox="352 987 528 1193" data-label="Image"> </div> <div data-bbox="188 1435 601 1684" data-label="Image"> </div> <div data-bbox="196 1702 542 1780" data-label="Caption"> <p><b>Volunteers at the Geeta Bhavan Mandir, Leicester.</b></p> </div>	<p>The Big Help Out Initiative</p> <p>March 2023</p> <p>The Big Help Out Faith Volunteers Videos</p> <p>May 2023</p>	<p>LCOF members and the board supported the Big Help Out initiative. This was the volunteering element for the King's Coronation. The Board attended initial meetings with the Lord Lieutenant.</p> <p>LCOF members and friends created videos of their volunteers' undertaking events and activities, supporting their local communities. The videos were shared with the Lord Lieutenant and put on our social media platforms and our YouTube channel. Videos were submitted by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bishop Street Methodist Church</li> <li>Geeta Bhavan Mandir</li> <li>Gurdwara Sahib</li> <li>Leicester Islamic Relief Volunteers</li> <li>Jain Centre</li> <li>Jalaram Mandir</li> <li>Minou Cortazzi</li> <li>Shantidham Manavta Day Care Centre</li> <li>South Wigston Methodist Church</li> </ul>

	<p>Multi Faith Musical Event at De Montford University</p> <p>6th May 2023</p>	<p>Fayyaz and Sulakhan represented the LCOF at the inter faith musical celebration at De Montfort University, hosted by the Lord Lieutenant of Leicestershire Michael Kapur.</p>
	<p>Multi Faith Coronation Service at Leicester Cathedral</p> <p>11th May 2023</p>	<p>The Chair and Board members represented the LCOF at the multi faith Coronation Service, celebrating and blessing the coronation of our King Charles the third.</p>
	<p>Shree Sanatan Mandir Coronation Dinner</p> <p>14th May 2023</p>	<p>The Chair and Board members represented the LCOF at the Shree Sanatan Mandir Coronation Dinner, hosted by the Lord Lieutenant of Leicestershire, Michael Kapur.</p>
	<p>VCSE Alliance General Meeting</p> <p>21st June 2023</p>	<p>The LCOF are members of the local NHS Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Alliance. The LCOF Manager attended the general meeting at the Grace Road Cricket Ground and continues to maintain regular contact with the alliance.</p>
	<p>Multi Faith Day at Granby Primary School, Leicester</p> <p>29th June 2023</p>	<p>Board members delivered a multi faith session to pupils at Granby Primary School as part of the school's multi faith activity day.</p>

	<p>LCOF and De Montfort University Faith Therapy Focus Group Session</p> <p>5th July 2023</p>	<p>The LCOF was commissioned by De Montfort University to host a workshop focussing on faith healing and therapy. Over 15 faith representatives attended the workshop which was kindly hosted by the Neve Shalom Synagogue.</p>
	<p>Open Meeting Domestic Abuse and Faith</p> <p>11th July 2023</p>	<p>Kindly hosted by Our Lady of Good Counsel Church, members and friends came to hear our inspiring speakers:          Imam Shafi Chowdhury          Meena Kumari          Tina Kenworthy</p> <p>We also discussed together the issues around domestic abuse and faith. As a direct result of this meeting, the LCOF published a poster detailing all relevant contacts for organisations who can offer support and advice which was sent to all our members and posted on our social media channels.</p>
<p><b>Funded by</b></p> 	<p>Funding from Macmillan Cancer Support</p> <p>August 2023</p>	<p>We received funding from Macmillan Cancer Support to deliver a Cancer and Faith engagement project exploring the barriers our faith communities face in respect of cancer. The project will include engagement activities with our faith members and developing a cancer and faith network and video testimonies. The grant has enabled us to appoint two sessional workers to help us deliver the project which will be taking place for approximately a year. Our Manager Emma was interviewed about the project on Jo Bostock's BCC Radio Leicester show.</p>

	<p>Chief Constable's Cultural Day</p> <p>1st September 2023</p>	<p>Fayyaz and Narendra represented the LCOF at the Leicestershire Police Cultural Day, hosted by the Chief Constable, Rob Nixon.</p>
	<p>BBC Radio Leicester Make a Difference Awards</p> <p>2nd September 2023</p>	<p>The Chair represented the LCOF at this prestigious award ceremony, which recognised volunteer's contributions to their local communities across Leicester and Leicestershire.</p>
	<p>Response to Home Secretary's Comments</p> <p>30th September 2023</p>	<p>Fayyaz was invited by BCC Radio Leicester to respond to public comments made by the Home Secretary, Suella Braverman in respect of multiculturalism in Leicester.</p>
	<p>Government and Independent Commission (SOAS) inquiries into Leicester Civil Unrest</p> <p>October 2023</p>	<p>The LCOF Chair, Vice Chair and Treasurer have had initial meetings with Lord Austin (Chair of the Government-led inquiry) and Juan Méndez Chair of the independent inquiry from the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.</p>
	<p>Birth of the Bab celebrations</p> <p>17th October 2023</p>	<p>Board members and our Manager, Emma Buckler, attended the Birth of the Bab celebrations with our friends, the Leicester Bahá'í Spiritual Assembly.</p>
	<p>Royal British Legion Service of Remembrance</p> <p>28th October 2023</p>	<p>Father David Cain (LCOF Board Member) represented the LCOF at the Royal British Legion Service of Remembrance at De Montfort Hall.</p>

 	<p>Inauguration of the Ramgharia Gurdwara Sahib, Hamilton</p> <p>28th October 2023</p>	<p>The chair, Smita Shah ( Life member), Board members and LCOF members attended the inauguration ceremony for the Gurwara Shaib in Hamilton and participated in the inter faith tree planting ceremony.</p>
	<p>Remembrance Day</p> <p>12<sup>th</sup> November 2023</p>	<p>The LCOF Vice Chair, Secretary attended the Leicester City Services of Remembrance together with Faith Leaders and laid a wreath, on behalf of all the City and County faiths.</p>
	<p>Throughout the year</p>	<p>Tony Nelson (representative of the LCOF) continued to support the North Memorial Homes charitable trust in the capacity of the Chairman. This trust is set up to provide independent living for ex-service personnel in possession of some sort of disability pension</p>
	<p>Peace, unity and condolence statements.</p> <p>Throughout the year.</p>	<p>The LCOF issued the following peace/unity statements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Response to Turkish/Syrian Earthquake</li> <li>• Attacks on Al Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem</li> <li>• Statement of Commitment for unity</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multiculturalism and Migration and Home Secretary comments</li> <li>• Ganesh Festival Incidents</li> <li>• Israel – Palestine Conflict</li> </ul>
	<p>Faith Centre and Community Stakeholder visits by LCOF Manager</p> <p>Throughout the year</p>	<p>During the year our Manager, has visited faith centres and community partners, to find out more about how the LCOF can support them, to represent the LCOF at events and to undertake consultation with young people informing the development of our community cohesion project plans. The visits were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brahma Kumaris Centre, 17th January 2023</li> <li>• Madani Schools Federation, 16th February 2023</li> <li>• Sacred Heart Church Youth Group 20th March 2023</li> <li>• Centre (Youth) Project 4th April 2023</li> <li>• Shree Shakti Mandir Summer Play Scheme Closing Party, 8th August 2023</li> </ul>
	<p>LCOF Board Meetings</p> <p>Throughout the year.</p>	<p>We held four board meetings, which were kindly hosted by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Central Mosque</li> <li>• Guru Tegh Bahadur Gurdwara</li> <li>• MKA Venue Dashwood Road</li> <li>• Jain Centre</li> </ul>

Please contact us to be added to our mailing list and to be part of our journey to build better unity and cohesion.

[www.lcof.org.uk](http://www.lcof.org.uk)

[info@leicestercounciloffaiths.org.uk](mailto:info@leicestercounciloffaiths.org.uk)

07512893613