

Inter Faith Week

Our time of prayer for peace and reconciliation falls today within Inter Faith Week which began on Remembrance Sunday and ends this coming Sunday. This special week began in 2009 and is led by the Inter Faith Network for the UK. The following is a helpful statement by the co-chairs of the Network:

“Inter Faith Week highlights ways in which people around the country are working for inter faith understanding and cooperation, encourages new initiatives, and shines a light on the major contribution that faith communities make to society through volunteering and their social action programmes. In our ever more diverse society this could not be more important.

The Week helps people get to know their neighbours of different faiths and beliefs through local events and activities. It's a time to mix, to meet, to ask questions, to talk and listen, and to enjoy coming together in a range of activities: discussions, sport, volunteering, cultural events and much more. In our often troubling times, when prejudice and hate crime are unwelcome features of the landscape, the Week also offers a high profile platform to speak out against that and to highlight the powerful message that we ‘stand together’ as people of all faiths and none, united in our commitment to a just and harmonious society, rooted in values that we share.”

For peace and reconciliation to succeed within communities, within nations and globally there needs increasingly to be dialogue between the different faiths. There are of course significant differences between the beliefs of the various faith systems in our world. Many are mutually incompatible. Yet we can learn to live with our differences, and even learn from them.

More importantly we can build on what we do share in common: a striving for peace and justice, a duty of respect and service towards others, in short a common humanity and affirmation of what is good in our world. In that way we can better together combat the distorted understanding of different faiths that some people sadly espouse.

For there is a common agreement amongst good people of faith that violence, persecution and cruelty are totally unacceptable and contrary to the true demands of their religion.

For us as Christians the essence of our faith is the command to love God and to love our neighbour, our fellow human beings, as Jesus himself proclaimed in our Bible reading just now (Matthew 22.34-40).

On that many of other faiths would agree. And so we give thanks for the opportunities for dialogue, conversation and indeed friendship between those of different faiths. That is surely the best way to dispel the perception, not always unfounded, that religion is the cause of many violent conflicts. May others see instead love.

17th November 2017
Kingsley Boulton