



## Mosque-Church conversations pilot - National Inter Faith Week, November 2020

Thank you for agreeing to be part of this pilot. The programme is designed to underline the aims of National Inter Faith Week\*, by initiating conversations between local mosques and churches. It is hoped that small groups of leaders and members from the paired churches and mosques will use this opportunity to learn more about each other's communities. It is not about engaging in deep theological discussions. The intention is to encourage friendships between people of different faiths and in so doing bring greater understanding.

Although the initiative has been championed initially by the Muslim Council of Britain, the Baptist Interfaith Working Group, the Methodist Church, the Salvation Army and the United Reformed Church, with the support of the Christian Muslim Forum, the hope is that in future years this pilot project could become a template for other faith communities to adopt and refine.

\*The three aims of Inter Faith Week

- Strengthening good inter faith relations at all levels
- Increasing awareness of the different and distinct faith communities in the UK, in particular celebrating and building on the contribution which their members make to their neighbourhoods and to wider society
- Increasing understanding between people of religious and non-religious beliefs

What does the Pilot involve?

1. An initial Zoom meeting for all the participating churches and mosques, to take place at the beginning of October. This will introduce the suggested outline of the pilot project, offer practical guidance and cover some possible topics for discussions such as fasting, mercy, prayer, social outreach and blessing.
2. The mosque-church pairings are asked to hold a minimum of two conversations in advance of the start of National Inter Faith Week (Sunday 8 November). Given current restrictions, it is likely that these encounters will need to be online, using a Zoom platform or similar. However, we don't rule out the possibility that some pairings may feel able to meet physically, providing these arrangements comply with the latest local and national guidelines with regard to social distancing.
3. We are looking into whether we may be able to allocate facilitators to guide the local conversations. Please inform your church denomination, or the Muslim Council of Britain if you feel this would be helpful (see contact list below).
4. During National Inter Faith Week (8 – 15 November), all the participating mosques and churches are asked to take part in a consultation by Zoom, in which they will have the opportunity to share their collective experiences of holding these conversations.

5. It may be that churches and mosques wish to hold further conversations, perhaps even with a view to establishing a formal twinning arrangement. This is not a requirement of participating in the pilot, but for those faith centres who wish to continue, help and guidance will be provided.

Resources to assist your participation

If you intend to hold your conversations using Zoom technology, you can find helpful guidance [here](#).

With reference to Zoom (or equivalent), please pay particular regard to Safeguarding. Ensure the meeting invitation is password protected and we suggest you employ the 'waiting room' facility. The link to the meeting should only be provided to the agreed participants of the meeting. We suggest you disable the 'chat' facility and of course you should not allow any unaccompanied minors (under 18's) into the virtual meeting room.

The Christian Muslim Forum provides some excellent [pointers](#) in terms of the ethics which should guide your conversations. Please take the time to read this advice before the initial Zoom meeting at the beginning of October. [Here](#) are some highlights from the 2019-20 church-mosque twinning programme, provided by the Christian Muslim Forum.

The Inter Faith Network has suggested a '[buddy programme](#)' for Interfaith Week 2020. Whilst this is aimed at conversations between a couple of individuals, the premise of how the dialogue might take place is relevant to your mosque-church conversations.

In particular, the following questions could be particularly relevant for your group discussions:

- How does your faith/belief shape your daily life – including at this time of COVID-19?
- What, in your faith, encourages service to others in society?
- Has COVID-19 brought any lessons about common values and action?
- Why are interfaith conversations such as these important?

Before starting the discussion itself, allow time for short introductions. These could include individuals' role in the mosque or church and their reasons for wanting to be part of the conversation.

Be clear about the proposed length of the planned conversations, particularly if it takes place online. Generally, 90 minutes should be seen as a maximum for a Zoom meeting. Having a minimum of two meetings should allow the space to enable a meaningful discussions to take place.

For further advice, please consult the relevant contact from the list below.

Thank you for wanting to be part of something that we hope will help you to get to know your neighbour.

Relevant Contacts for the Mosque-Church Pilot

Hassan Joudi – [mosques@mcb.org.uk](mailto:mosques@mcb.org.uk)

Philip Brooks – [philip.brooks@urc.org.uk](mailto:philip.brooks@urc.org.uk)

Andy Williams – [andy.williams@blackleycentre.co.uk](mailto:andy.williams@blackleycentre.co.uk)

Leão Neto – [leao@methodistchurch.co.uk](mailto:leao@methodistchurch.co.uk)

David Evans – [David.Evans@salvationarmy.org.uk](mailto:David.Evans@salvationarmy.org.uk)

The Muslim Council of Britain

The United Reformed Church

The Baptist Union of Great Britain

The Methodist Church

The Salvation Army