

# and LEEDS CITY COUNCIL PEACELINK GROUP



# The Annual Inter-Faith Peace Service

Wednesday 19th October 2022 in the Banquet Room, Leeds Civic Hall, and on Zoom

Welcome to the Annual Inter-Faith Peace Service, which has been organised by Concord in conjunction with Peacelink.

We are very grateful to the Lord Mayor (Councillor Bob Gettings MBE JP) and the Lady Mayoress (his wife, Councillor Lesley Gettings) for their support. Thank you for your attendance.

We hope you will show your appreciation by giving a donation to the Lord's Mayor's Charity Appeal,

which this year is for four charities: Martin House Children's Hospice, St George's Crypt, Simon on the Streets and St Anne's Community Services.

There will be buckets at the exit for donations, or you can donate online to the Lord Mayor's Charity at **www.justgiving.com/lmca**, or send a cheque payable to 'The Lord Mayor's Charity Appeal' to:

The Lord Mayor's Office, 1st Floor West, Civic Hall, Leeds, LST TUR

### **Order of Service**

Music will be played and images projected by Leeds Brahma Kumaris before the service begins.

- 1. Welcome by John Summerwill, Co-Chair of Concord, and silence.
- 2. John Summerwill introduces the Lord Mayor, Cllr Bob Gettings
- 3. Brief address by the Lord Mayor,

Since becoming Lord Mayor, I have had the privilege of attending 150 events in four months including visiting Leeds Minster, Leeds Cathedral, a synagogue, the Grand Mosque, a Methodist church and a Quaker house. I have also visited many diverse community groups.

It has been amazing to see the diverse community cohesion across the city and different cultural groups coming together enjoying each other's company.

This is so different than was the case 30 years ago and I am proud that our city is a shining example of community cohesion. And a wonderful place in which to live.

The world doesn't seem to learn. Who would have thought that after the war crimes of the Second World War that history would continue to repeat itself?

Who would have thought that the war crimes we see every day in Ukraine could happen in Europe in 2022?

It is so important that we work and pray for a peaceful world.

In the next few weeks, I will join the Garforth School Peace Walk and in June we lit the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Beacon on Millennium Square from the World Peace Flame.

Last month saw a multi faith vigil in Millennium Square attended by many different faith groups.

Tonight's Peace Service is supported by Leeds City Council Peace link group and I am delighted to see representatives from different religions in the city lighting candles for peace on behalf of their faith communities.

As Lord Mayor I welcome the opportunity to join you at this evening's Peace Service as we continue to pray for a more peaceful world.

# Thank you

I invite you now to join with me in saying a prayer of thanksgiving. It is on page 3 of your booklet. Please say the words that are in bold print.

# 4. PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING (Join in the words in **bold print**, if you like.)

For the good in us, which calls us to a better life,

# We give thanks.

For the strength to improve the world with our hearts and our hand,

### We offer praise.

For the desire in us which leads us to work for peace,

# We are grateful.

For life and nature, harmony and beauty, for the hope of tomorrow,

# All praise to the Source of Being.

(Adapted from the words of Chaim Stern and Abraham Rothberg, Gates of Prayer, 1975 p. 271)

5. Presentation by Breaking Down Barriers Ambassadors, a youth group from Harehills: Ava Mason, Kiran Hussain, Anam Hussain, Faheem Khan, Zhainab Suleman

Hello all and thank you for giving us a platform to share with you tonight. We are a group of young people, a steering group to young ambassadors for a project called Breaking Down Barriers that is engaged in challenging racism, breaking misconceptions, fostering new friendships and community activity. And yes, we are of and from Harehills, a microcosm of international flavours, languages and cultural exchanges.

Harehills is a busy area in East Leeds, set upon proud old hills with 4 major roads connecting diverse groups of people and business together, lined with may shops; windows into the world beyond.

Whether you are down on Shepherds Lane, along the Harehills Lane, or up top at Sandhurst road, or in the heart of Harehills Road, you only have to look around and you will see the proud Edwardian red bricked terraces holding one another together beyond their Smokey past and into their Rich social present.

People come and go, the cycle of

Irish, then Jewish, Caribbean, south Asian, Kurdish, Arab, and then Eastern European migrations have often made their home in the city of sanctuary by resting and rebuilding their lives from the safety and security of a place like Harehills.

Harehills fuelled the Burtons factory with workers to produce internationally acclaimed suits, residents in the area supported the earliest carnival in the country in 1960, the producer of the first video recorder resided here for a time and several Un peace activists a lived here when they were students at Leeds university. This was also home to Mel B too. This is an area with a rich past.

The story we tell is one of peace and prosperity, pain and mixed narratives, hate and its antidote. Our story is one of a people, forced together by war, disaster, and the human desire for freedom and prosperity, plastered with hate and dagger like words of disappointment from negative headlines to social media.

"It's the worst place to live in I bet", they say.

"You're not safe to walk around those streets", they say.

"You'll get robbed or beaten up there", they say.

"If you go to Harehills you will die!" Words are a wonder and poison if not used to paint more than one perspective and narrative.

Peaceful coexistence and compassionate community existence is often judged and damaged by such rhetoric and assumption.

It's true to say the area has its challenges and problems from street drinkers to drug dealing, problematic rented accommodation to littering and fly tipping; we must start from a place of honesty.

But is this unique to us.? And what are the reasons behind the headlines/image/reputation? Why is it particularly highlighted for us in this part of LS8? Why play unaware of all the positives? How can people feel included, accepted

and welcomed, if, where they live is often labelled with prejudice and undermined. Opportunities are many here but sometimes go unheard of. Often those who shout the loudest or gossip the most can be taken as gospel. These words can ruin livelihoods and drain confidence of those who work so hard to create unity and peace in the area.

Let's not generalise and fall into stereotyping.

It is said by our elders, 'You don't know a person till you know their circle and you don't know their circle until you know where they meet and that you don't know a place until you meet those who live there!'

Is not Harehills that beacon of hope, homeliness away from home, resource centres and community hubs, mosques, churches, restaurants and cafes galore.

There's chai wala, cha cha chai, Aishas and the Meeting Point Cafe with its pay it forward service if you want a tea of several colours or flavours from afar, good music playing and the warmth of welcomed custom.

Proudly on the Road, the Irish built Catholic Church sits with many sat in deep conversation and laughter on the grand old stairs, weddings and funerals fill the Conways as the green domes of the Bilal mosque sit glistening in the sun.

People are ever growing, finding their feet, learning to communicate love and life through classes and coaching, resourcing their pantries and telling their stories through the hard work and love of charities like Retas, Give a Gift, Advonet, Pafras, MEMEC, Getaway Girls, Catch and at St Aidan's church; the list is as long as the lane and roads itself.

Morrisons and Asda with their people -focused community champions, restaurants of all food persuasions connected by a shared etiquette of honouring the guest no matter who you may be, with a full stomach and fresh smile as you leave. There are few places you can work and be transported to Iran, the souks of Afghanistan or a village in Kashmir, the delights of Eritrean fine dining and the Kurdish tea houses within minutes .

This fusion of culture side by side, where some once loathed, or was were told to loath "the other" in another time and place, compete healthily for custom and end the day looking out for each other.

That shared sense of how we got here, missing the homeland and need to survive can drive desperation, or foster human courtesy and appreciation for each other.

This is the united—(maybe leave out as it's not always united but we're working to make it so) —culture of Harehills

we have been raised in United by our love of spices, colours and smells, calligraphed shop names, shop signs and the sounds of laughter and diverse tongues as you walk past the sakis, shabans or CJs; the barber shop has always been a free space for friendships and reminiscing.

For the many streams of light we call our youth, our tomorrow, there are many places you will find them managing and advocating, empowering or engaging whether it be the beautiful reclaimed green paradise at Catch, the timeless sport and games at the Junior sports Hub, Empowered young people leading from the front from the Bayswaters at Getaway Girls, ping pong at the Compton centre or plotting and planning campaigns at the resource centre; young people are driving change and encouraging communities to come together.

Why, because the many activities, youth workers, creatives and volunteers believe in them and in return that belief within us pushes us to stretch out our hands across the veins of Harehills.

Generation after generation those who came with less than five pounds in their pockets rested their life's belongings beside the pavements and then in time converted the end homes into shops and brought life to the main roads, renovated old cinema halls and factories and formed social spaces, food stores and sports hub like the old Harehills Middle School, the Clock, the Dock Green and the Ford Greene.

That's the Harehills we know, a Harehills which has stood the test of times, hardships, trials, poverty and over crowdedness.

When you give people hope, resources and community spaces and feed their self-worth they can do amazing things. Blow life into a collective, bind them through friendships and you blow life back into old run down, neglected neighbourhoods.

That peace within is strongly connected with who we are, the environment we have grown up in and the values and visions that give us a sense of determination to bring betterment to others, feeling the selfless return within.

When we have a greater sense of self-worth and self-hope, we find our inner strength. When we want the best for others, we have to also challenge the negativity within us. We need to challenge our own assumptions of others, challenge our subconscious biases and micro aggressions and see others more compassionately and sincerely if we wish to survive harmoniously.

Harehills is one area of Leeds, our city of sanctuary. If you want to know it truly, come visit it. For often the greatest fear is fear itself. When we dehumanise an area or community, we open the door to hate and harm. Go beyond what you hear and see the area and its people as we are.

You are welcome any time. Thank you for listening to us.



### 6. Sue Owen briefly speaks about The World Peace Flame ®

### **World Peace Flame**

Good evening everyone and thank you once again to Concord for organising this very special and much treasured annual service for peace, we appreciate all the dedicated hard work by you all, bless you.

As always we are delighted to be here with the World Peace Flame and its simple message, for all, "one flame uniting people worldwide in peace."

It was a great honour in June for Leeds, when our Lord Mayor lit the Platinum Jubilee Beacon in Millennium Square from the Garforth Peace Flame, the only beacon in the Commonwealth to become a peace flame in dedication of our, now sadly late, beautiful Queen.

We were very honoured a couple of years ago when H.M. Queen Elizabeth II received a small WPF sent by two of our children, and replied from Balmoral Castle. Our children and community were truly thrilled by her kind words.

This year we engaged with all our six schools with another very special peace project—the creation of the Garforth Schools' Peace Flag, with the intention to dedicate it to our incredible Queen in herPlatinum Jubilee Year in recognition of her unwavering dedicated life service to peace, kindness and unity for all.

Our children produced over 700 images as flags of what a peace and their school meant

to them and following a public voting day, at which we also had two very special guests, the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress, six flags were chosen to represent our six schools.

On 31st July the Garforth Schools' Peace Flag was unveiled at the Schools' Peace Trail by the Queen's Representative for West Yorkshire and our local Councillor. In November our school children will present the flag to the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress, hopefully to take pride of place here in the Civic Hall, as a beautiful statement for peace from our young peacemakers of the the future.

One of the images on the flag has a very profound and moving statement from one of our young peacemakers:

"Peace is the barrier between Love and Hate, if broken hate will disturb the world. Humans are the guardians of this barrier by deciding if violence and discrimination are worth it, CHOOSE LOVE" by D.P. Judge, aged 12 years.

We honour each and every one of you and your beliefs with the simple universal message of Peace.

We can all aspire to be the peace we wish to see in the world.

Thank you.

Om Shante

7. The lighting of candles by representatives of the Faith Communities in Leeds:

Bahá'í Ling Fung Shek
Brahma Kumaris Chhavi Bhutiyani
Buddhist David Midgley
Christian Anne-Marie Granger

Hindu Hema Yadav Jewish Suzanne Korn Muslim Kiran Hussain Pagan Ash Newton

Sikh Ikjot Kaur Khokhar

 The Lady Mayoress lights a candle on behalf of all of the people of Leeds

- 8. Moment of quietness, with lights turned down
- 9. All join together in saying these affirmations, led by John Summerwill.

### MILLENIUM ACT OF REFLECTION AND COMMITMENT

At the start of the new millennium leaders and members of different faith communities came together in the Houses of Parliament for a special millennium act of reflection and commitment.

In a world scarred by the evils of war, racism, injustice and poverty, we offer this joint act of commitment as we look to our shared future. We commit ourselves, as people of many faiths, to work together for the common good, uniting to build a better society grounded in values and ideals we share

- community
- personal integrity
- a sense of right and wrong
- learning, wisdom and love of truth
- care and compassion
- justice and peace
- respect for one another, for the earth and its creatures.

We commit ourselves in a spirit of friendship and cooperation

to work together alongside all who share our values and ideals

to help bring about a better world now and for generations to come.



# 10. Readings by representatives of Faith Communities:

### Bahá'í - Jumeirah Akbar

O Thou kind Lord!

Thou hast created all humanity from the same stock. Thou hast decreed that all shall belong to the same household. In Thy Holy Presence they are all Thy servants, and all mankind are sheltered beneath Thy Tabernacle; all have gathered together at Thy Table of Bounty; all are illumined through the light of Thy Providence.

O God! Thou art kind to all, Thou hast provided for all, dost shelter all, conferrest life upon all. Thou hast endowed each and all with talents and faculties, and all are submerged in the Ocean of Thy Mercy.

O Thou kind Lord! Unite all. Let the religions agree and make the nations one, so that they may see each other as one family and the whole earth as one home. May they all live together in perfect harmony.

O God! Raise aloft the banner of the oneness of mankind.

O God! Establish the Most Great Peace. Cement Thou, O God, the hearts together.

O Thou kind Father, God! Gladden our hearts through the fragrance of Thy love. Brighten our eyes through the Light of Thy Guidance. Delight our ears with the melody of Thy Word, and shelter us all in the Stronghold of Thy Providence.

Thou art the Mighty and Powerful, Thou art the Forgiving and Thou art the One Who overlooketh the shortcomings of all mankind.

Baha'i Prayer

# **Brahma Kumaris** - Valerie Bowker **A Meditation on Peace**

I bring myself to this present moment. I relax completely.

I relax this body, my legs, my shoulders, my face

And I begin to breathe gently.

I become quiet.

I become still.

And I make this journey inside, to meet myself.

Who am I?

In silence; in the purity of this silence

I begin to remember ...

I remember the eternity of the self.

I remember my original, spiritual qualities

Love, wisdom and Peace

Who am I?

I am a spiritual being

I am the consciousness within.

I am the essence of Peace

Peace is harmony

Peace is balance.

Peace is freedom.

I am this.

I am free; free to be my true self.

I am in balance with myself, and with others.

I am in harmony.

Let me remain in this consciousness.... I feel the serenity and a sense of balance flow through my whole being.

Om - I am, Shanti - Peace.

Peace.... Harmony.... Balance.... Silence. ... Complete inner silence

Then with one thought, I connect with the Supreme Being. The Highest Source of Peace... of Silence. I connect with that Benevolent One and I absorb the current of light, of love, of Peace. I feel whole.

Let me remain in this awareness, in this connection.

Peace ... Love ... Harmony ... Silence And these vibrations radiate out to Mother Earth and to all my sisters and brothers across the Globe.

Om Shanti ... I the Soul am Peace

### **Buddhist** – David Midgley

My generation has witnessed so much violence — some historians estimate that more than 200 million people were killed in conflicts in the 20th century. Today, there is no end in sight to the horrific violence in the Middle East; appalling terrorist attacks have created deepseated fear. While it would be easy to feel a sense of hopelessness and despair, it is all the more necessary in the early years of the 21st century to be realistic and optimistic.

There are many reasons for us to be hopeful. Recognition of universal human rights, has expanded beyond anything imagined a century ago. There is growing consensus in support of gender equality and respect for women. Particularly among the younger generation, there is a widespread rejection of war as a means of solving problems. Across the world, many are doing valuable work to prevent terrorism, recognizing the depths of misunderstanding and the divisive idea of "us" and "them" that is so dangerous.

The notion of absolute victory for one side and defeat of another is thoroughly outdated; violence inevitably incurs further violence, and history has shown that nonviolent resistance ushers in more durable and peaceful democracies and is more successful in removing authoritarian regimes than violent struggle.

It is encouraging that we have seen many ordinary people across the world displaying great compassion toward the plight of refugees; as a refugee myself, I feel a strong empathy for their situation, and when we see their anguish, we should do all we can to help them. The combination of circumstances draws attention to the vital importance of collective action toward restoring genuine peace to the lands these refugees are fleeing.

It is not enough simply to pray. To find solutions to the environmental crisis and violent conflicts that confront us in the 21st century, we need to seek new

answers. Even though I am a Buddhist monk, I believe that these solutions lie beyond religion in the promotion of a concept I call secular ethics. This is an approach to educating ourselves based on scientific findings, common experience and common sense — a more universal approach to the promotion of our shared human values.

It is our collective responsibility to ensure that the 21st century does not repeat the pain and bloodshed of the past. Because human nature is basically compassionate, I believe it is possible that decades from now we will see an era of peace — but we must work together as global citizens of a shared planet.

By His Holiness the Dalai Lama

### Christian - John Moreton

Who is wise and understanding among you? Show by your good life that your works are done with gentleness born of wisdom. But if you have bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not be boastful and false to the truth. Such wisdom does not come down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, devilish. For where there is envy and selfish ambition, there will also be disorder and wickedness of every kind. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace for those who make peace. (Letter of James 3:13-18 NRSV)

Hindu - Hema Yadav Asatoma Sad-Gamaya Tamaso Maa Jyotir-Gamaya Mrytyor-Maa Amritam Gamaya Aum. Shanti Shanti Shanti. (Aum Peace, peace, peace)

### Dear God

Lead us from illusion to reality. Lead us from darkness to light. Lead us from death to immortality.

(Ancient universal prayer, Brihadaranyaka Upanishads, 1.3.28)

Hari aum dyouhou shānti-rantarikshagushāntihi prethivī,

Shantir āpaha shānti rokhadhayaha shāntihi;

Vanaspatayaha shāntir, vishve devāhā, shāntir Brahma

shānti sarvagun, shāntihi shāntirev shāntihi sāmā,

### shāntiredhi

May the heavens be peaceful. May space and the sky be peaceful. May peace spread over the entire Earth and pervade the waters. May peace glow in all herbs and vegetation.

May there be peace in the Absolute. May there be peace everywhere and always –

Peace and nothing but peace.

May peace grow within in us. Aum. Shanti Shanti Shanti. (Aum Peace, peace, peace)

(Peace Prayer from The Yajur Veda, an ancient Vedic Sanskrit mantras and verses)

### Jewish - .Helen Michael

Eternal God, whose presence is over all of us, help us through our prayers and our deeds to be able to build trust in our world. We ask You to spread Your shelter of peace over all dwellers on Earth, over all lands and peoples affected by war or fear of war, bringing calm to conflict and peace of mind to all who live in fear. We ask You to grant safety to those who guard and those who watch, and skill to those who must take difficult decisions, so that they be always

guided by the need to avoid harm to the innocent. May we in our days learn to overcome prejudice and anger, hatred and fear, so that we may learn to live side by side in peace and harmony. May Your Divine presence, Your light and Your love shine down upon our troubled world, comforting the bereaved, helping the wounded, soothing all pain, enabling us to raise our spirits of hope and understanding, so that in our lifetime we shall be able to know how good and pleasant it is for brothers and sister to dwell together.

### Amen

From the Movement for Reform Judaism 'Forms of Prayer' (2008) p372

**Muslim** - Kiran Hussain Great writers and reflectors inspired by the creation of the divine have thus remarked:

### Said Moulana jalaludeen:

This being human is a guest house. Every morning is a new arrival. A joy, a depression, a meanness, some momentary awareness comes as an unexpected visitor... Welcome and entertain them all. Treat each guest honorably. The dark thought, the shame, the malice, meet them at the door laughing, and invite them in. Be grateful for whoever comes, because each has been sent as a guide from beyond.

### Said Sadi Shirazi:

"Human beings are body parts of each other. In creation they are indeed of one essence. If a body part is afflicted with pain, oOther body parts uneasy will remain. If you have no sympathy for human pain, the name of human you shall not retain."

Said Allamah Iqbal: 'Rise above sectional interests and private ambitions... Pass from matter to spirit. Matter is diversity; spirit is light, life and unity. For Allah has revealed to all. Verily, Allaah will not change the (good) condition of a

people as long as they do not change their state (of goodness) themselves (by committing sins and by being ungrateful and disobedient to Allaah)" [al-Ra'd 13:11] Ameen

Pagan - Victoria Newton
The Goddess Brigid, or Saint Bridget,
holds a special place for Pagans and
Christians alike, with her being venerated
by both communities, her saint's day is on
or close to the Pagan festival of Imbolc, at
the start of February, each year. She can
be seen as embodying the principles of
peace and hope for all and can be called
upon in times of trouble.

Prayer to Brigid
Brigid,
You were a woman of peace.
You brought harmony where there was conflict.
You brought light to the darkness.
You brought hope to the downcast.
May the mantle of your peace cover those who are troubled and anxious, and may peace be firmly rooted in our hearts and in our world.

Brigid,

reverence to all.

You were a voice for the wounded and the weary.

Inspire us to act justly and to pay

Strengthen what is weak within us. Calm us into a quietness that heals and listens

May we grow each day into greater wholeness of mind, body and spirit. So mote it be.

(Adapted from: https://godspacelight. com/2016/07/28/a-prayer-and-a-poem-inthe-spirit-of-st-brigid/) **Sikh** - Gurmukh Singh Deagon Gauree Sukhmani, Fifth Mehl,

Shalok:

One Universal Creator God. By The Grace Of The True Guru:
I bow to the Primal Guru.
I bow to the Guru of the ages.
I bow to the True Guru.
I bow to the Great, Divine Guru.

### Ashtapadee:

Meditate, meditate, meditate in remembrance of Him, and find peace. Worry and anguish shall be dispelled from your body. Remember in praise the One who pervades the whole Universe. His Name is chanted by countless people, in so many ways. The Vedas, the Puraanas and the Simritees, the purest of utterances, were created from the One Word of the Name of the Lord. That one, in whose soul the One Lord dwells the praises of his glory cannot be recounted. Those who yearn only for the blessing of Your Darshan Nanak: save me along with them!

11. Musical interlude by Lillia Tariket. Her song is 'Rise Up'.

Special thanks to Jay Anderson and Alan George for hosting the Zoom meeting; to Manish Patel, Susan Balmforth and Valerie Bowker of the Brahma Kumaris for background music and images and the setting up of the candles; and to David Goodman for photography.

### 12. Prayers

Kerry Prest reads a Buddhist prayer from The Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life by Acharya Shantideva (8th Century A.D.)

May all beings everywhere Plagued by sufferings of body and mind Obtain an ocean of happiness and joy By virtue of my actions May the blind see forms, May the deaf hear sounds, And may pregnant women give birth without any pain. May the naked find clothing, The hungry find food; May the thirsty find water And delicious drinks. May the poor find wealth, Those weak with sorrow find joy; May the forlorn find hope, Constant happiness and prosperity. May all who are sick and ill

Quickly be freed from their illness, And may every disease in the world Never occur again. May the frightened cease to be afraid, And those bound be freed; May the powerless find power, And may people think of benefitting each other. May no living creature ever suffer Commit wrong or ever fall ill. May no one be afraid or belittled, Or their minds ever be depressed. For as long as space endures And for as long as living beings remain, Until then may I too remain To dispel the misery of the world.

### 13. Chair's final comments

### 14. Chair reads a prayer of blessing. Please join in the words in bold print.

Go not to the temple to put flowers upon the feet of God;
First fill your own house with the fragrance of love.
Go not to the temple to light candles before the altar of God;
First remove the darkness of sin from your heart.
Go not to the temple to bow down your head in prayer;
First learn to bow in humility before your fellow humans.
Go not to the temple to pray on bended knees;
First bend down to lift someone who is down trodden.
Go not to the temple to ask for forgiveness for your sins;
First forgive from your heart those who have sinned against you.

(Rabindranath Tagore, First Asian Nobel Laureate in literature)

And as you go - may the road rise to meet you; may the wind be always at your back; may the Sun shine warm upon your face, the rain fall soft upon your fields. And until we meet again, may God hold you in the hollow of his hand.

(A Traditional Irish Blessing)

Blessings for everyone.

Please greet those around you with words of peace: Shalom, salaam, shanti, peace be with you.

Please donate to the Lord Mayor's Charities on your way out.

Would all who have spoken, sung or lit candles please wait at the end until we've taken a group photo.