

The Lord-Lieutenant's Council on Faith March Newsletter

Her Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Greater London's Council on Faith has had a successful first year of activity. Its members have worked hard to promote and to enact Her Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Greater London's strategy: Building bridges for a fairer London.

Evening of Faith Recognition and Celebration

The highlight of the year has been the Council's participation in the Evening of Faith Recognition and Celebration, which took place on Monday 27th November. The event, which was hosted by the interfaith charity 3FF, would not have been possible without the guidance of the event sub-committee Bushra Nasir CBE DL, Sheila Gewolb DL, Babulal Sethia DL and Rev Nims Obunge DL; and Mustafa Abu Lisan DL, who sat on the judging panel.

At the event Her Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Greater London, Sir Ken Olisa, gave a dynamic keynote address. He shared his belief that 'living life according to a strong set of positive values is an antidote to exclusion' and that 'we all have something to learn from each other, whatever our faith background'.



The event displayed the idea of London as a place of belonging for people of all faiths and beliefs. Nominations for many qualified projects were made by Representative Deputy Lieutenants, faith organisations and community partners. At the event 40 community faith-based projects were awarded with grants of £500 and 32 projects were recognised for services to faith communities. These projects represent the great spread of people from all faiths and beliefs who create a sense of belonging and inclusion in London. [A list of award winners can be found here.](#)





The event was accompanied by a briefing paper entitled *Faith, Belief and Belonging in London: Extending the Coverage*, which gave further insight into award winning projects and their contribution to and for faith communities in London. [The full report can be found here.](#)

Amplify, an arts-based youth-led programme for Sixth Formers at Westminster Academy, showcased their Manifesto during the event. Capturing the voice of youth, a focus of the Greater London Lieutenancy. [The manifesto can be viewed here.](#)

Council on Faith visit Bevis Marks Synagogue

On Monday 31st January, the Council met at Bevis Marks Synagogue. The management of the Synagogue were delighted to host the Council. Rabbi Shalom Morris welcomed the Council on Faith, provided a tour for Deputy Lieutenants and explained the history of the Synagogue and its significance today.

Introducing the Council: Colleen Harris MVO DL



Colleen is a communications professional and writer who has spent thirty years developing and managing strategies for Government Ministers, the UK Royal Family and multilateral organisations.

Colleen currently serves on the not-for-profit boards of the YMCA (Central) and Dulwich Picture Gallery. She studied as a teacher and supports projects that support young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to achieve their potential, such as Ebony Horse Club in Brixton and the Tutu Foundation.

We interviewed her to find out more about her work and background.

Colleen, you have had a fascinating career. Please tell me a bit more about your background.

My career, which began as a teacher some time ago, has covered a wide spectrum of communications work, but I guess the jobs that have given me a little notoriety are being a Senior Press Officer in the Prime Minister's Office and as Press Secretary to HRH The Prince of Wales. I suppose working with Trevor Phillips at the Commission for Racial Equality also put me in the spotlight as we kicked off a public debate about multiculturalism and integration which continues to this day.

The first and most obvious conclusion I draw from my experience is that you never know your luck.

There I was enjoying myself in the Department of Transport, trying to persuade the British public that rail privatisation was the answer to transport delays and leaves on the line when I was asked if I would like to meet the Prime Minister. This meeting turned into a two-year stint at Downing Street handling some

of the most dramatic crises of the time. Spycatcher, Zeebrugge ferry disaster, Westland scandal, Clapham junction rail crash, the tragic Hungerford child murders and more dominated my days. It was a strange time as we seemed to lurch from crisis to crisis. Hardly surprising then, that I specialised in crisis PR for years.

Again I was happily working with John Prescott, the then Deputy Prime Minister when a chance conversation about a seat belt campaign led to a meeting with the then Press Secretary to the Prince of Wales and then an interview with HRH himself. Four tough years at the helm of PR for the Prince and two young Princes then followed – an experience I will never forget.

Speaking of luck, in fact my career in communications began by me failing to impress at an interview to become a conservator at the British Museum. The HR woman doing the interview felt I was much better suited to PR and suggested I apply for an upcoming post in the new PR office.

The rest as they say is history.

After reading this you may join me in concluding that the Government and Royal Palaces move like God, in a most mysterious way!

On a personal note I'm married to Wayne, a director of an optical company and we have two grown up sons. I enjoy the theatre and playing the piano.

You sit on Boards and are involved with the Tutu Foundation, the YMCA and Chineke! Foundation (the orchestra created to give ethnic minority musicians and opportunity to showcase their skills).

What is the importance of community work?

As the first Black Senior Press Officer in 10 Downing Street and the first Black member of the Royal Household and one of very few Black people in Government communications for years, I'm used to being seen as different in the workplace. I have a few stories to tell on this, some very amusing and some not quite so funny. I'll save those for another time. I appreciate that I have enjoyed a fabulously interesting career, but I also know something of being on the outside and not feeling part of the national story because of my difference. Most of the time I swallow it, but for many difference, be it race, faith or another minority characteristic can be a barrier to playing a full part in our society. Supporting minority groups and those feeling on the outside, in whatever way I can to have the opportunity to actively participate in our wider society will benefit not only the individuals and their communities, but society at large. We cannot afford to have large numbers of people feeling that they don't belong and have no part to play. It does not make sense economically or socially. That's why I feel community work has an important role to play in Britain today.

What are your aspirations for the Council on Faith?

We've got off to a good start with the community awards. Giving credit and support to small community projects that do so much to support individuals to find their place in society is important and sits nicely with my belief that community work is vital to creating a fair and open society.

Events attended by Council Members

- On 10th November, Tariq Abbasi DL attended a wreath-laying ceremony in Bexley. He is pictured with the Mayor of Royal Borough of Greenwich and Mayor and Mayoress of The Borough of Bexley.

