

COUNCIL ON FAITH NEWSLETTER

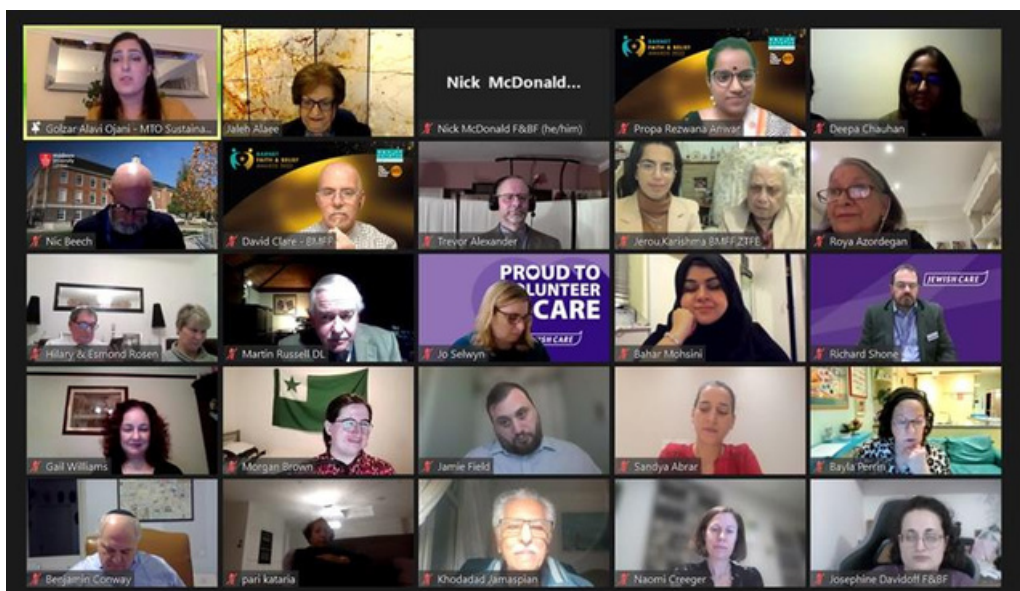
The official newsletter of the Lord-Lieutenant of Greater London's Council on Faith

Celebrating Faith and Belief Communities in Barnet

A key objective of the Council on Faith in 2022 is to expand the Faith & Belief Awards scheme by encouraging London boroughs to host local events. A recent report, [Keeping the Faith](#), found that two-thirds of local authorities surveyed had increased partnership working with faith groups since the start of the pandemic, therefore showing an appetite to recognise the contributions these important players in civic society.

[The Barnet Faith & Belief Awards](#) was an fantastic example of this mission. The event was hosted by the Barnet Multi Faith Forum, in partnership with Middlesex University and the Faith & Belief Forum, and with the support of Barnet Council and the Council on Faith.

At the inaugural awards ceremony on 26th January, five amazing projects were awarded grants of £250 at an online ceremony that also featured performances and speeches from local key figures. President for the Barnet Multi Faith Forum Esmond Rosen said it was ***“an amazing evening of high drama from beginning to end showcasing what the faith sector has achieved for the benefit of all who live, work, learn, study, play and pray in Barnet.”***



The winners of the evening were:

- Environmental Sustainability: **MTO Sustainability (MTO Shahmaghsoudi, School of Islamic Sufism)** won by demonstrating their commitment to environmental sustainability in the operation of their buildings. (Shown speaking above)
- Health and Wellbeing: **Burnt Oak Community Food Bank** who with a steady group of 17 volunteers provide a range of items for those locally in need.
- Inspiring Youth: **The Baha'i Community of Barnet** channelled their youthful energy into supporting the local community with spiritual, physical and practical needs, including English classes for asylum seekers.
- Outstanding Initiative in Response to COVID-19: **The Paperweight Trust** provides multi-generational support to those in the Jewish Community struggling with financial hardship.
- Interfaith Relations: **Together in Barnet** a night shelter that has been successfully supporting people experiencing homelessness for over 17 years.

There was also a special commendation for Shree Swaminarayan Mandir Kingsbury, the first mandir to open a Covid Vaccination Centre, which vaccinated over 20,000 people from January to May 2021.

The Council on Faith are keen to expand the Faith & Belief Community Awards Scheme across London, with the goal of hosting three per year. Having successfully seen similar events hosted in Bexley, Barking and Dagenham and Barnet, we are seeking the support of Representative Deputy Lieutenants who can offer introductions to Local Authority teams or local faith forums.

Martin Russell, Representative Deputy Lieutenant of Barnet, has kindly provided some reflections on the recent Barnet Awards which we hope will inform and inspire others.

The success of Barnet's Faith and Belief Awards held in late January 2022 was in part due to the fact that the event quickly followed the re-signing by the Council of the Multi-faith Covenant in mid-November. The other signatory to the Covenant was Barnet Multi-Faith Council. Their close involvement and immediate support for the Awards meant that there was an established platform, and a network through which candidates could be contacted. In addition, the experience of Jessica Hazrati and colleagues at Faith and Belief Forum helped with the provision of advice and considerable administrative support. This made the collection of nominations and the analysis of them much less stressful than might otherwise have been the case.

A further important factor was the identification of an impartial and strong Chairman of Judges. In the Vice Chancellor of Middlesex University, we were blessed with a man of faith, and a leader who commanded the respect of his fellow judges. Someone who could steer discussion with a fortunate combination of comprehension and discipline.

And finally, the public face of the Awards ceremony mattered, particularly as the event was solely on-line. Our compere for the evening was outstanding – competent, enthusiastic, committed and cultured, and the three performers she introduced – all personal friends added fascinating aspects of music, dance and singing.

Although this was the first Faith and Belief Awards in the borough, I have heard many requests for future events. Whether these are annual or biennial remains to be decided, but it is clear that many small charities and organisations would be unlikely winners of categories at the London level, but benefit from enhanced local recognition, and the boost to the morale of volunteers that public success inevitably brings.

A final point of caution: it is sensible to ensure that any new Faith and Beliefs Award programme fits in tidily with existing borough and other awards schemes, and does not multiply the effort of judges or those assembling the submissions. Awards must retain an element of uniqueness and scarcity, and an excess of awards schemes can easily become counter-productive. Winners really must justify the publicity they receive. As with so many things, due diligence is necessary throughout.



Rep DL Martin Russell with members of Barnet Multi Faith Forum and representatives of Barnet Council

Interview with Avril McIntyre MBE DL

Avril, you have had a fascinating life and career. Please tell me a bit more about your personal and professional background?

I was brought up in Ayrshire, Scotland and moved to London when I qualified as a social worker. Growing up, my parents were actively involved in our community and so our home was often filled with people who needed love and support – it was a good training ground for me!

I pursued my social work career for a few years and then decided to take up a role within my local church supporting the senior leader with whatever needed done. The church is very outward focused and I took a lead in supporting community leaders in 16 nations with a variety of community programmes. In 2000, I was the founding CEO for LifeLine Projects. It started with a £20,000 grant and within 10 years we had grown it to a £5 million charity, managing a range of local, regional and national programmes. I now have a variety of community roles within the London Borough of Barking & Dagenham where I now live. I have a busy household and love supporting local people to find solutions to the issues they face.



I understand that you are passionate about working with grassroots organisations and creating social change. Please tell us know about what this means to you and your work in this area.

There is social change that happens at policy level, but I have found that sometimes those who sit there can lose sight of what is happening at a community level. At the same time, those who sit within grassroots organisations can be oblivious to the bigger issues that they don't necessarily connect with.

Two years ago, with other community leaders, we set up the BD_Collective, funded by the Council as the 'infrastructure entity for the social sector co-ordination'. The vision for the Collective is to bring social sector (formal and informal) together to bring change on a borough level. It creates an environment for collaboration, as together, we can bring lasting change that just isn't possible on an individual organisational level. None of us have all the answers, yet the competition and mistrust that develops within and across sectors makes it impossible to learn from others. The BD_Collective is seeking to counter that, making it possible to connect, build trust and share power. We're learning a lot and seeing some small changes...

Through your experience as a Deputy Lieutenant, what would you say the importance of community work is?

I agreed to become a Deputy Lieutenant because of the 'Building Bridges' vision that Sir Ken Olisa published as the Lord-Lieutenant of Greater London. Within the Lieutenancy, we have the opportunity to demonstrate the importance of community and to highlight the incredible things people do every day for others.

Please tell us a bit about your role as Chair of the Honours and Awards Committee. What is the importance of recognising exceptional voluntary organisations and individuals?

As the Chair of the Honours & Awards Committee I oversee the assessment process for the Queens Award for Voluntary Service, promote the Queens Award for Enterprise as well as promote the Honours process. The Committee is made up of Deputy Lieutenants who give up a significant amount of time over the year to support this work. We have the amazing opportunity to promote the extraordinary work of organisations and individuals to Her Majesty the Queen by ensuring the Deputy Lieutenants across the Greater London Lieutenancy have all the information they need to make these opportunities known in their boroughs.

What are your aspirations for the Council on Faith?

The Council is an incredible team of dedicated Deputy Lieutenants who work tirelessly to promote the work of faith organisations across London. Their annual awards ceremony is always a highlight in my calendar and I believe their work is vital in not only recognising their service but also taking time to celebrate with them and express gratitude for all they do.

Events attended by The Royal Family



On 9th December, The Prince of Wales attended an Advent Service at Holy Trinity Brompton Onslow Square, St Paul's Church and was received by Her Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Greater London.

He met with Church Revitalisation Trust Church Planters, volunteers from Love Christmas (Love Your Neighbour), and members of Love Your Neighbour refugee response team and those they support.



On 14th December, The Prince of Wales and The Duchess of Cornwall visited the Trussell Trust Wandsworth Foodbank, St Mark's Church, Battersea Rise, London SW11, and were received by Lieutenant Colonel David Kemmis Betty (Deputy Lieutenant of Greater London).



On 20th January, Alongside Eva Schloss MBE, who is Honorary President of the Anne Frank Trust UK, The Duchess of Cornwall took part in a candle-lighting ceremony in memory of the Holocaust and other genocides, and victims of modern day hate crime.

Speaking at the event, the Duchess of Cornwall called on all generations not to "be bystanders to any kind of injustice or prejudice"



On 2nd February, The Prince of Wales and The Duchess of Cornwall visited the Chinese Information and Advice Centre.

They met members of the local community and the police to hear about the impact of hate crime towards the Chinese and wider East & South-East Asian Communities, and what is being done to combat it.

Events attended by the Lord-Lieutenant and Faith Council members

On 2nd March, Sir Kenneth Olisa and Bushra Nasir DL visited the Epicentre in Leytonstone. They saw the work of the charity PL84U al Suffa, which runs a food bank three times a week, plus a drop-in centre for vaccinations and dentalcare advice. They also met with members of the Waltham Forest Women's Network who organize charitable, health and social events for women in the community. Sir Kenneth was inspired by the work of both organizations who had both been past winners of the London Faith and Belief Awards.



Sir Kenneth Olisa also visited Newham meet two remarkable ladies Tee Fabikun and Cllr Lakmini Shah. Both women run cafes that support the needs of their local communities with food, advice, companionship and technology.

