

Canary Wharf Multifaith Chaplaincy

IN CONVERSATION WITH THE CHAPLAINCY
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Editorial

It has been another busy month at the Canary Wharf Multifaith Chaplaincy. While we cautiously welcome the lifting of Covid restrictions, many will feel overjoyed that we have seemingly come through the other side of this pandemic, while others may feel a little apprehensive at the prospect of ending social distancing rules while the virus is still at large.

The return of many to their offices has been noticeable, and our retail chaplaincy team has been busy meeting managers and retail staff on the malls as the estate becomes ever increasingly busy. The rest of the team have been supporting office staff both on and off the estate but have found our face-to-face meetings refreshing. With the best will in the world, nothing beats meeting other people in person.

We have continued our commitment to our continued professional development by completing a seminar about identifying and supporting vulnerable adults. This has become especially important in recent years and covers a range of mental and physical health challenges as well as people those who have experienced life changing events.

The Chaplaincy continues to build new relationships with companies moving into the Wharf, both in helping them to understand the support available to them for their employees in terms of pastoral care and how the team of chaplains can act as faith advisers to companies too.

For those of you who know us, we rely on you helping us to spread the word about the Canary Wharf Multifaith Chaplaincy! We are here to provide independent and confidential support to all those who work on the Canary Wharf estate who may be experiencing difficulty in their lives. We are a free, face-to-face service where individuals can self-refer and receive a rapid response and offer of a meeting – often within the same day. We also continue to provide consultancy to companies regarding diversity and inclusion while supporting the various faith networks on the estate.

We all very much hope to see a bright future ahead as the pandemic restrictions are lifted and life is allowed to return to some kind of normal. But whatever the future holds, just remember that we are just a phone call, email, or text message away.

Rabbi Dr Moshe Freedman

Being a good Neighbour

In these articles, three of our chaplains Revd Prebendary Dr Fiona Stewart-Darling from the Anglican tradition, Shaykh Ibrahim Mogra from the Muslim tradition and Rabbi Dr Moshe Freedman from the Jewish tradition, grapple with what it means to be a good neighbour.



Revd Dr Prebendary Fiona Stewart-Darling writes

I have recently been reading a collection of lectures hosted by St Martin-in-the-Fields, in central London, in a book called 'Who is my Neighbour? The Global and Personal Challenge' edited by Richard Carter and Samuel Wells.

I was struck by the contribution of Rowan Williams the former Archbishop of Canterbury's contribution. He reminded as of a conversation between Jesus and a lawyer. The lawyer asked the question 'Who is my neighbour? Jesus' answer was not to say everyone but tell a parable of the Good Samaritan, which most Christians will be familiar with, when Jesus had finished telling the parable he then he asked the lawyer who was the neighbour in the parable.

In response to who is my neighbour William's say this, and I quote...

"Who is my neighbour? Jesus turns the question back, eventually, and asked the lawyer, "Who was a neighbour to the man who fell among the thieves?" The neighbour, in other words, is not somebody sitting over there passively waiting for me to be good to them. The neighbour is me already involved in the life of another, already moving towards someone else, not passive, but active. So part of Jesus' answer to the lawyer's question is that we are invited to define ourselves as neighbours. The lawyer would like to think of a world where he knew who neighbours were and who neighbours weren't; ideally, a world where you could be reasonably sure that when you loved a certain number of people as much as you could, that would be all right, and the rest could look after themselves. By moving all this into the realm of action and choice, Jesus in effect says to us, 'It is not a matter of deciding who are out there deserves to be loved by you; It's a question your decision to be a neighbour to be someone who offers life to "other"'. "

Within Canary Wharf estate is an international and multicultural working community, many of us have colleagues of different nationalities, cultures, and faiths. These are our local neighbours, and we can be active in their lives as we work alongside them. But they are not our only neighbours the world has shrunk with the social media and fast communications of world news – we see our neighbours in the news.

Shaykh Ibrahim Mogra writes

Like other traditions, Islam also emphasises the need for good neighbourliness. The Prophet Muhammad said, "Your neighbour has a right over you." And he taught that if anyone wanted to build a structure or an extension then they should ensure it does not block the sun or passage of air. He encouraged the sharing of food with neighbours even if it meant adding a little extra water to the curry.

Rabbi Dr Moshe Freedman writes

The 19th century German rabbi, Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (d. 1888) noted that The Hebrew word *shachan* means both to dwell, and also to be a neighbour. He explains that in Jewish thought, to dwell in this world simultaneously means to be a neighbour. When we take our place on this earth and build our own dwelling place, we must concede that others must have the right to do the same.

One of the most powerful and enduring messages of the Torah is that all humanity is created in the Image of God. The inherent Divinity in every human being, regardless of any of their defining characteristics such as gender, race or religion is so fundamental, it is the very first lesson we are taught about our own creation in the story of Genesis. The Talmud (Sanhedrin 37a) teaches us that the reason God initially created one human from whom all humanity would descend, was to establish the absolute unity of mankind. With the same ancestor, no one individual or racial group could argue that their lineage was superior. Accordingly, this would act as a catalyst to bring about peace between different peoples.

In a similar vein, the Jewish sages recount a famous dispute between the Talmudic sages, Rabbi Akiva and Ben Azzai regarding the most fundamental verse in the Torah. Rabbi Akiva suggests the verse "Love your neighbour as yourself" (Leviticus 19:18), whereas Ben Azzai responds with "This is the book of the generations of Adam; in the day that God created man, in the likeness of God He made him" (Genesis 5:1). Rabbi Akiva's verse expresses the Golden Rule of ethics found in all major religions. But Ben Azzai's point is far deeper. Rather than an expression of ethical reciprocity, Ben Azzai recognises the unity of humanity through the creation story.

On a practical level, activities that endanger public health or quality of life were distanced from populated areas. For example, the Talmud instructs that establishments which are dangerous or merely have an unpleasant smell, such as tanneries or furnaces, should be built outside populated areas at a distance of at least fifty cubits (around 24 metres). The Talmud also regulated many domestic activities such as the placing of ovens, outhouses, and laundry pits to minimise harm to others. In modern terms, the past few decades have seen the adoption of environmental legislation that echoes the principle of being a good neighbour.

The corporate world is also increasingly aware of their obligation to act as good neighbours by taking its environmental obligations very seriously. In addition, ethical banking and investment which avoids working with organisations with dubious morals while simultaneously promoting green and blue investment are all examples of being a good neighbour on the global scale.

In our everyday lives, the way we interact with those around us determines whether we are being good neighbours or not. Across the world, the cultural and sociological zeitgeist is to move away from an inward-looking definition of one's neighbour, reaching well beyond the traditional tribal lines of nationality, race, religion, gender, sexuality, disability, along with many other defining characteristics.

It is natural to identify more strongly with those people who are more like ourselves. But this essentially animalistic, tribal human tendency often subliminally drives us to prioritise the rights of others who are similar to us, or even discount the rights of people who are not, simply because they speak a different language, practice a different religion, live in a different area, are of a different socio-economic standing, or are a different gender.

Being a good neighbour means reaching beyond those divisions and recognising the rights and needs of others no matter who they are. For if we do, the benefits to all of us and to societies across the world will be immeasurably beneficial to all humanity.

UPCOMING FAITH EVENTS in February, March and April

February Faith Festivals

Bahá'í: 24th-27th February - Ayyám-i-Há. Intercalary days.

Islam: 28th February - Isra and Mi'raj. Commemorates the Prophet Muhammad's journey from Mecca to Jerusalem and his ascent into heaven.

March Faith Festivals

Christianity: 1st March - Shrove Tuesday. The day of preparation for Lent (the 40 days leading up to Easter), traditionally marked by eating pancakes.

Hinduism: 1st March - Maha Shivaratri Festival celebrated in reverence of Lord Shiva.

Bahá'í: 1st March - Nineteen Day Fast. Adults fast from sunrise to sunset for 19 days; important time for prayer, reflection and spiritual renewal.

Christianity: 2nd March - Ash Wednesday. First day of Lent. Many Christians receive a cross of ash on their foreheads in church as a symbol of mortality and penance.

Christianity: 8th March - Commemorates the patron Saint of Wales.

Hinduism: 17th March - Birthday of Sri Ramakrishna. Celebrating the birth of the Hindu incarnation of God.

Judaism: 17th March - Purim. Celebration of Jewish deliverance as told in the Book of Esther.

Christianity: 17th March - Commemorates the patron Saint of Ireland.

Hinduism: 18th - 20th March - Festival of Colour marking the end of winter.

Bahá'í: 20th - 21st March - Naw-Rúz. End of the Nineteen Day Fast and the beginning of the Baha'í New Year.

Zoroastrianism: 26th March - Khordad Sal. Celebrating the birth date of Zoroaster.

April Faith Festivals

Islam: 2nd April - Ramadan. Starts the most significant month for Muslims. Marks a period of daily fasting from dawn to sunset.

Shinto: 8th April - Hanamatsuri. Flower festival celebrating the birthday of Shakyamuni, whose teachings form the basis of Buddhism.

Hinduism 10th April - Ram Navami. Celebrates the founding of the Khalsa, the Brotherhood of the Pure by Guru Gobind Singh.

Christianity 10th April - Palm Sunday. The first day of Holy Week, commemorating Jesus' triumphal arrival in Jerusalem before his arrest and death.

Jainism: 14th April - Mahavir Jayanti. Celebrates the birth of Lord Mahavira, the last Tirthankara (saviour).

Sikhism: 14th April - Vaisakhi. Marks the creation of Sikhism and the ordination of the Khalsa.

Sikhism: 14th April - Guru Nanak Gururab. Celebrates the birth of the first Sikh guru.

Christianity: 14th April - Maundy Thursday. Commemorates the Last Supper.

Christianity: 14th April - Good Friday. Commemorates the death of Jesus by crucifixion.

Judaism: 16th - 23rd April - Passover. Celebrates the Exodus, the freedom from slavery of the Children of Israel from ancient Egypt that followed the Ten Plagues.

Hinduism: 16th April - Hanuman Jayanti. Celebrated to commemorate the birth of Hanuman.

Christianity: 17th April - Easter Day. Christians celebrate Jesus' resurrection from the dead. The Easter season lasts for 50 days to Pentecost.

Bahá'í: 20th April - 1st May - Feast of Ridván. Start of festival commemorating the commencement of Bahá'u'lláh's prophethood.

Christianity: 23rd April - St George's Day. Commemorates the patron Saint of England.

Christianity: 24th April - Easter Day (Orthodox Christianity). Based on the Julian calendar.

Judaism: 28th April - Yom HaShoah. Anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, serves as a day of remembrance for those who perished in the Shoah (Holocaust).

Islam: 28th April - Laylat al-Qadr. Marks the night in which the Qur'an was first revealed.

Bahá'í: 28th April - Ninth Day of Ridván. Day when Bahá'u'lláh's family joined him at the Najibiyyih Garden, Baghdad.