



**Welcome** to our **Summer** quarterly newsletter.

## Editors Note



As much as I enjoy travelling, I do love a holiday at home in Summer. As the days are longer, we can take our time to enjoy the simple things. For me, these include, reading a book outside, eating homegrown veggies and enjoying dappled

sunlit bike rides. But before we get too relaxed, let me update you on what's been happening at the OLF office!

We've been as busy as blooming bees and we'll be sharing all our hardwork with you. In this edition, we have conference updates, an interview with a High Priestess and a catch up of coffee with our Bahá'í friends.

We don't have time to slow down but we really hope that you can stop and smell the roses and enjoy our Summer edition.

*Jen Buss*

Editor



## Conference Coverage

**Faith & Citizenship Conference 2019** 'From our shared values to our shared citizenship'

On Wednesday, 1<sup>st</sup> May, we hosted our second conference, held at the Coldra Court Hotel, Newport.

The conference saw over a hundred delegates and 8 faith groups come together to

participate in what was to be another successful event.

The theme of the conference was studied by our research team and they conducted a theoretical survey on citizenship as a concept and its implementation in the relationship between the state and people.

Here are the most important conclusions of this survey: Citizenship is a partnership between the State and the Citizens; but the definitions of the partners, their duties, and responsibilities are not yet common knowledge.

*However, throughout history, citizenship has maintained strong ethical links to justice, democracy, and liberty, which are, in part, established and regulated by the constitution and law of the state.*

*This may raise a question about the basis of the person's commitment to be a 'good citizen'.*



Above, our very special guests, The Deputy Minister and Chief Whip Jane Hutt AM, Deputy Lord Mayor Councillor Phil Hourahine and Mr Andrew Tuggey CBE Vice Lord-Lieutenant of Gwent, our honourable speakers and Onyx staff.

The conference was able to facilitate the above debate from a faith perspective: **How the concepts of justice, democracy, and liberty may be redefined/reformed to facilitate peaceful coexistence, equality, and engagement for all communities across Wales? And how a person's faith or morality may shape their conduct as good citizens in society?**



Our aims for the conference are to facilitate the documentation of A Faith Dimension of *Citizenship* based on *interfaith shared values* as well as to form a vision for investing this shared citizenship in improving our community relations, our relationship with the state, and our relationship with the environment.

**They did it again!** Our volunteers return for another year of hard work and dedication!



Above, our special guest Deputy Lord Mayor Councillor Phil Hourahine is joined by our volunteers and some Onyx staff.

We just wanted to pass on our special thanks to them. Our volunteers are vital in the smooth running of events like our conference. We really couldn't do this work without you, so **THANK YOU!**

## Did you miss the conference?

Don't miss it!

Don't worry if you missed the conference. You still have the opportunity to watch it on our YouTube channel - just use the following link @Onyx Link Foundation to access.

Thank you also to the delegates who have put their names forward to volunteer at our next event! We really appreciate your support!

**THANK YOU**

## Event of the year!

What was the event of the year? Our conference? Yes, that was pretty special but not as special as Sadia's wedding!

**Yes,** one of our beautiful volunteers, Sadia Ali has tied the knot and we are thrilled for the happy couple! We'd like to wish them health and happiness in their future lives together and congratulations from all at the OLF!

Our Chair & Operations Director, Dr Abdalla Mohamed was lucky enough to get a photo with the beautiful bride.



## An audience with... Jemma-Jane Thompson, High Priestess

Last year, we had the great pleasure and honour of meeting the faith leaders who spoke at our 'Shared Values' conference. We've taken time out to get to know one of our faith leaders a little better.

We'd like to welcome the Wiccan: Earth Religion representative, High Priestess, Jemma-Jane Thompson.

**Q:** Hi Jemma. So, what does a typical day entail for you?

**A:** Well, my weekdays involve teaching English to people from a range of different countries and cultures. However, I often think that they teach me more than I teach them! After work, I divide my time between my two



daughters and my houseful of rescue animals. A few times a month I hold circle with my Coven. This can be for training, study, work such as healing, or purely devotional. I also love cooking, theatre, and music.

**Q:** You first met the OLF team last year, what do you think about the work they do?

**A:** Phenomenal. I love how they are pushing boundaries and tackling some of the problem's society is facing right now. So much hatred and fear is generated from ignorance and lack of education. Organisations like the OLF are lighting torches and dispelling some of that ignorance, I'm so glad to be a part of that!

**Q:** How did you feel about being asked to participate in the OLF conference last year?

**A:** A little nervous to be honest-the path I walk has had a LOT of shade thrown on it down the years, and I expected to meet with a lot of misconceptions. I was pleasantly surprised at the warmth and openness with which I was received.

**Q:** You've been asked to participate in their 'Faith & Citizenship' conference this year. What do you think about the theme?

**A:** I have, and I'm so honoured to have been asked back! I think it's a great theme. I think that it's easy to hold our faiths in the comfort of our own homes, temples, churches and mosques, but it's how we behave OUTSIDE that really counts.

## Interfaith AYYAM-I-HÁ Coffee Morning



We were delighted to be invited to attend the Ayyam-i-Há coffee morning which was hosted by the Bahá'í community. It celebrated both the on-going friendship and collaboration between the diverse faith communities and a special time in the Bahá'í calendar – Ayyam-i-Há (Days of Hospitality).

Our good friend and Bahá'í representative, Vivian Bartlett opened his talk with a reference to Bahá'u'lláh (Founder of the Bahá'í Faith) advocating that associating with all people in friendliness and love leads to unity.

Vivian stated that more governments, academics and social protagonists are seeking to understand the positive contributions that religion and faith communities can make to society. He emphasised that we have to find new, uniting ways to talk about religion and how it relates

to the social transformation of our communities.

We really appreciated the invite to this uplifting event, and it was great to spend time with old, and new, friends alike.

## Buddha Day at the Buddhist Temple, Cardiff



We were honoured and delighted to be invited to the Interfaith Event at the Buddhist Temple, Aro Ling Cardiff. The title of the event was 'Faiths in Focus' – an Interfaith fire ceremony to celebrate Buddha Day.

The event was started by a speech delivered by Ngakma Nor'dzin Pamo, Chairperson, Buddhist Council of Wales, on the significance of Buddha Day for Buddhists, and the format of the ceremony itself. That was followed by an outdoor event, the fire ceremony. The event was attended by members of various faith group. It was a joyful and informative day.



Attendees were invited to place messages into the fire, symbolising the letting go of something negative and bringing a good wish or something helpful in its place.

