



WORLD INTERFAITH HARMONY WEEK

Interfaith Scotland

World Interfaith Harmony Week Report

Background to Interfaith Scotland

Interfaith Scotland is a registered Charity in Scotland (charity number SC029486) whose remit is to promote good relations between the diverse religion and belief communities in Scotland and beyond. We do this through interfaith dialogue, education and training. We also sponsor, market and promote Scottish Interfaith Week to engage as wide a range of faith communities, interfaith organisations and civic society in Scotland as possible to celebrate Scotland's rich religious diversity. Critical to our approach is the recognition that each faith community has something distinct and important to bring to the table. We have a staff team of 3.5 equivalent from diverse backgrounds and many volunteers who assist us in our work. Further information can be found at www.interfaithscotland.org and www.scottishinterfaithweek.org Additionally we have facebook, twitter and instagram accounts

Interfaith Scotland World Interfaith Harmony Week Events 2020

In Scotland and across the world there is a growing rise in Anti-Semitism, Islamophobia and religious sectarianism, as well as hatred, bigotry, extremism and violence. For World Interfaith Harmony Week we decided to focus all our attention on events that would assist as wide a range of audiences as possible to **try to understand what causes hatred and to explore how together can we overcome it and grow to 'love God and our neighbours' more deeply.** Our target audiences were civil society, faith communities, young people and prisoners.

We held four key events each explored separately below;

- 1) **We will not be Prisoners of Hate:** a unique interfaith event held in Barlinnie high security prison for 120 prisoners (3rd February 2020).

- 2) **Tackling Hate Together:** an interfaith dialogue event, open to the public hosted at the Jewish Synagogue in Glasgow which explored practical measures for tackling hate together. (29th January 2020)
- 3) **Unforgotten:** a free and public interfaith concert hosted at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland which premiered the specially commissioned music 'Unforgotten' to remember all the children who suffer because of hatred and discrimination. (28th January 2020)
- 4) **Stand Together:** an interfaith event encouraging civil society to **stand together** to tackle the root causes of hatred, held in the Scottish Parliament to commemorate the 75th Anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi death camps and the 25th Anniversary of the Bosnian genocide. (27th January 2020)



We will not be Prisoners of Hate

Barlinnie High Security Prison, Scotland



On 3rd February, as part of World Interfaith Harmony Week, a delegation of faith community representatives from the Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Sikh and Baha'i religions visited Barlinnie prison to engage with the prisoners on an interfaith programme entitled '**We will not be prisoners of hate**'.

The planning for the day had begun some months before when Interfaith Scotland was contacted by Fife College Head of Prison Contracts (Scotland) and Barlinnie Prison who asked for help to engage with prisoners, some of whom had violent backgrounds and others who had the potential to commit crimes motivated by racial or religious hatred. A team of diverse faiths worked together to plan the programme.

The men in the prison who had agreed to engage in the interfaith programme had begun an educational journey that explored the root cause of hatred and climaxed in them learning about the genocides that had resulted from deep division and hatred of what is perceived as 'the other'. The men produced artwork and poetry that had been inspired by their learning. Based on the theme of the interfaith engagement the book of poetry was entitled '**we will not be prisoners of hate**'. This was their first **World Interfaith Harmony Week** experience.

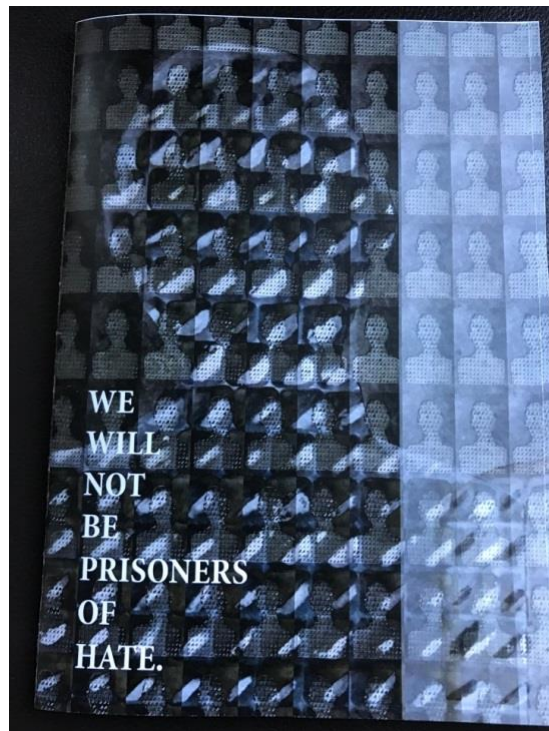
On the 3rd of February, Interfaith Scotland facilitated a programme which included a testimony from a Muslim survivor of the Bosnian Genocide (Hasan Hasonovic); a testimony from an ex-prisoner who had used his religion to transform his negative life experiences; a moving Q & A session with the prisoners; a viewing of the creative work of the prisoners;

and an opportunity for dialogue and engagement with the diverse faiths that had entered the prison.

Over the course of the day over 100 prisoners engaged in the World Interfaith Harmony Programme .

The image at the start of the report was of the delegation who visited the prison, for security purposes no photographs of the actual prisoners could be taken.

Below is the cover of the book published by the Prisoners and an excerpt from a Prisoner's Poem



...Turn off the news it's too hard to watch
I don't want to see that, burns my mind like a torch.
Let's take the distraction, it's not us that suffer.

It's happening again. Is it any wonder?
We can't walk away from their faces,
Even if they're far away. Those places.
We must acknowledge the horror – do what we can.
I see you. I remember you. With you I stand.

Comments from some of the Prisoners and Interfaith Delegation

I found it very moving to hear the stories of the two speakers, both of whom after harrowing experiences had turned their initial hatred of 'the other' into a powerful force for positive change in the world. Seeing prisoners engaging in dialogue with people from such diverse faith backgrounds was incredible. The prisoners had also created powerful works of art that formed the backdrop to the event. I was left feeling that this had been a transformative interfaith experience for all those involved. **A Christian participant**

I found the visit to Barlinnie very powerful. The ex-prisoner's testimony was extremely powerful and he obviously drew strength from the prisoners' reactions as they encouraged and applauded him to continue in difficult moments. The message he gave that although we come from distinct religions and cultures we are all 'human beings' really stood out. The poetry written by the prisoners and their artwork are amazing and, for me as an educator, demonstrated an impressive depth of learning. I feel very privileged to have been invited to this World Interfaith Harmony Week event. **A Scottish Education Specialist**

"This was a unique experience for pretty much everyone involved in this event. I had never been inside a prison before and was keen to see the artwork of the prisoners and how they would engage with us. I wasn't expecting to be quite so moved and amazed by their response to both our speakers and our dialogue and by the artwork they had produced. The theme of resisting hate expressed resonated so strongly in a room filled with stories which could so easily be defined by it and that was obvious from their emotional reactions. This event will stay with me for a long time as I consider how interfaith work can have an even greater reach than we often expect." **Interfaith Officer, Church of Scotland**

I have never had such an experience as this in all my years of sharing my story. I know that Interfaith Scotland and the World Interfaith Harmony Week Programme had a huge impact – it was an honour to be there. **Hasan Hasanovic, survivor of the Bosnian Genocide**

I have a deeper understanding now of where hate comes from (Prisoner)

I learned lots of new things I previously had little knowledge of (Prisoner)

It wasn't what I expected...it was far more than I expected, the event has sparked a genuine interest to learn more and to change (Prisoner)

..it has inspired me to incorporate some more awareness about not only the world, but family, friends and myself. Inspired to be better (Prisoner)

I thought I was going to be bored but it was so educational (Prisoner)

I have learnt to treat our fellow men with better respect and compassion



I would now like to see people living peacefully – I hope people can live in peace (Prisoner). It was more than I expected – thought it would be generic but it was in depth (Prisoner)

Impact: Interfaith Scotland has now been asked to work with the Planning Partnership of Community Justice Glasgow to **encourage** faith communities to support prisoners on their exit from prison. Together we will develop a support hub.

*From Faith Community congregations, we are asking that you consider whether you could be part of the solution, providing a connection in the individuals' own communities - to be that one good person that can make all of the difference, signposting to services, connecting into the community and being a role model/mentor – **Excerpt** from a letter of the Community Empowerment Service.*



‘Tackling Hate Together’

The World Interfaith Harmony event ‘**Tackling Hate Together**’ was supported by representatives from diverse faith communities, Remembering Srebrenica and Police Scotland. This open public interfaith event explored how we as a society could ‘tackle hate together’ and begin to stem the tide of growing division and hatred.

Over 65 people attended the event, held in Garnethill Synagogue, the oldest Synagogue in Glasgow. Those present came from diverse religious and non-religious traditions including, Jewish, Muslim, Christian, Buddhist, Sikh, Hindu, Baha’i, Unitarian and Humanist.

The evening opened with two short guest presentations from a Jewish Holocaust survivor and a Muslim survivor of the Bosnian Genocide. The focus of their presentations was on how the extreme hatred had evolved that led to mass murder and what they as individuals had done, over many years, to transform the hatred they initially felt into constructive energy to work for peace education and human rights.

Immediately after the presentations the audience engaged with the speakers in an open question and answer session which included hard-hitting questions such as *‘what happens to children that are born as a result of sexual violence?’* and *‘how can faith communities work together to help build peace and promote the spiritual values at the heart of their traditions?’*

Immediately after the Q & A those present paired with someone from a religious tradition other than their own and explored the following questions;

1. What could I do when I hear hateful words?
2. What could I do when I see hateful actions?
3. What could I do when I witness a hate incident or crime?

The participants were invited to write their answers on cards which were gathered at the end of the evening. Interfaith Scotland is using these answers to prepare a ‘Tackling Hate Together’ guide. This guide will be a complement to the ‘transforming hate speech guide’ that Interfaith Scotland published in partnership with diverse youth organisations (see <https://interfaithscotland.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Transforming-Hate-in-Youth-Settings-Practical-Manual.pdf>)

The evening ended with a short summary from Chief Inspector, Colleen Wylie (Safer Communities, Equality and Diversity Unit). The Chief Inspector highlighted how Police Scotland is working with communities to end hatred and violence and she emphasised the critical importance of the support of the faith communities of Scotland to the work of Police Scotland. She highlighted the unique contribution each faith community with their distinct

teachings could bring to tackling hate. The power of working together was also emphasised and World Interfaith Harmony Week was highlighted as a powerful global initiative.



Feedback excerpts: *loved the dialogue; learned so much; given me confidence to tackle hate; felt a rise in my courage levels; so much gained in one short evening; profound thanks to organisers; more please; World Interfaith Harmony Week such a great opportunity to highlight what we can do together; loved young and old and diverse faiths being together.*

‘Unforgotten’



Knowing how important it is to not only challenge the mind through education but to touch the heart through creativity and music, Interfaith Scotland decided to commission an original piece of music dedicated to children who have suffered or continue to suffer because of hatred and discrimination. The piece was commissioned for World Interfaith Harmony Week and Holocaust Memorial 2020 and was premiered on 28th January to a packed audience of over 200 people. The composers worked with Interfaith Scotland and with students from diverse faith traditions across Glasgow to prepare for the evening.

The event took place in the main auditorium of the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and was preceded by a reception hosted by Principal Sharkey who is himself from the Jewish Tradition. The Lord Provost of Glasgow attended the reception and the concert. The concert opened with profound words from Principal Sharkey and then Dr. Sier, Director of Interfaith Scotland, spoke of how important it is to learn from history and to challenge hatred and discrimination wherever we see it. This was followed by a full hour of music involving young people from countries as diverse as Scotland, South America, Ukraine, Russian, China and Armenia and the performances involved faith-based music from Muslim, Christian, Jewish traditions and Roma traditions.

The concert concluded with a 5 minute vigil involving Russian children from the Russian Cultural Centre of Glasgow. It was an evening never to be forgotten. The you tube link to the concert is included below:



Comments and feedback

This concert was one of the most moving I have ever attended. It had all the ingredients for opening the heart – diversity, incredible talent and a strong focus on working together to overcome prejudice and hate – I hope this becomes an annual event.

Catholic Youth

To hear such talent from people from all over the world who are living and studying in Scotland caused me to cry many times during this world premiere. Thank you to all who made it happen! May the children of the world someday soon be able to live and peace.

Baha'i, from Faiths Together in Skye

The hour passed so quickly although I imagine months of preparation – it was magnificent and a fitting event for World Interfaith Harmony Week – this will surely never be forgotten.

Representative of the Sikh Community

You Tube Link here for the concert:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SF7vkfcyI0Y&feature=youtu.be>

Stand Together (Scottish Parliament)



In 2020 World Interfaith Harmony Week fell immediately after Holocaust Memorial Day 2020 and Interfaith Scotland was delighted that the significance of this was marked by those in the highest office of Scottish Government and civil society.

The theme for HMD2020 was **Stand Together** a theme that resonated with the World Interfaith Harmony motto of **'love of God and love of neighbour'** and Interfaith Scotland organised and hosted a full programme of talks, exhibitions and music held in the Scottish Parliament on the evening of 27th January.

The first Minister of Scotland, Nicola Sturgeon, spoke at the event and emphasised the importance of **standing together to tackle hatred and discrimination**. Holocaust and genocide survivors, Janine Webber and Hasan Hasanovic, spoke of overcoming hate and promoting peaceful co-existence; school children spoke of lessons they had learned and the Glasgow Strings Orchestra played a section of the music 'Unforgotten' which was premiered the following night.

Rwanda and subsequent genocides were also highlighted. A moving exhibition of the Children of Buchenwald was created for the occasion by Scottish and Russian children working collaboratively.

The audience who were made up of Members of the Scottish Parliament, Faith Leaders and community representatives, representatives of diverse Consulates, school children and young people from across Scotland and members of local interfaith groups had time for dialogue and food together as part of this collaborative Holocaust Memorial and World Interfaith Harmony Week event.

Advertising, social media and press coverage for World Interfaith Harmony Week Scotland

Tackling Hate together: Eventbrite link: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/tackling-hate-together-tickets-89576434527#>

'Unforgotten': Official Concert Invitation letter from Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (see below)



World Interfaith Harmony Week Holocaust Memorial Day Concert

Tuesday 28 January 2020, 6.15pm for 7.00pm
Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, 100 Renfrew Street,
Glasgow, G2 3DB

Dear Distinguished guest,

You are invited to join us for this **special World Interfaith Harmony Week, Holocaust Memorial Day Concert and pre-performance reception** on Tuesday 28 January. 2020 will commemorate two very significant events, the 75th Anniversary of the liberation of the Buchenwald concentration camp on the 11 April 1945, and the end of WW2 in Europe on the 8 May 1945.

To commemorate these events Interfaith Scotland, will be hosting this unique **World Interfaith Harmony Week Concert** in conjunction with the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. This performance will feature an original work commissioned by Interfaith Scotland and composed by two world renowned Klezmer musicians, **Oleg Ponomarev** and **Lev Atlas**. The premier of this original piece will be performed by both the Glasgow Schools String Orchestra and Royal Conservatoire of Scotland students.

This will be followed by performances from RCS students and teachers and the RCS Junior Conservatoire, and we will also welcome on stage students and teachers from the Yerevan State Conservatoire in Armenia, who will be visiting the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland as part of an Erasmus+ collaboration.

Please join us for a pre-performance reception at 6.15pm ahead of the performance beginning at 7.00pm in the Stevenson Hall. Upon arrival at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, please make your way up the main front steps to guest registration next to the Box Office, where a member of staff will be on hand to assist you.

We look forward to seeing you next Tuesday.

Kind regards

RCS Events Team
events@rcs.ac.uk

Royal Conservatoire of Scotland
100 Renfrew Street
Glasgow G2 3DB
Tel: +44 0141 332 4101



*Additionally free places were made available to the general public via eventbrite

Interfaith Scotland Social Media;

Twitter: 34.6K tweet impressions (up 416%)

Facebook: Over 15,000 views on facebook and twitter

Edinburgh Live: digital reporting on 28/02/2020

<https://www.edinburghlive.co.uk/news/edinburgh-news/its-terrible-atmosphere-holocaust-survivors-17642451>

International Newspapers Bosnia:

Article 1)

<https://avaz.ba/kolumne/licnost-dana/546552/hasan-hasanovic-istina-o-genocidu-cuje-se-sirom-svijeta>

Article 2)



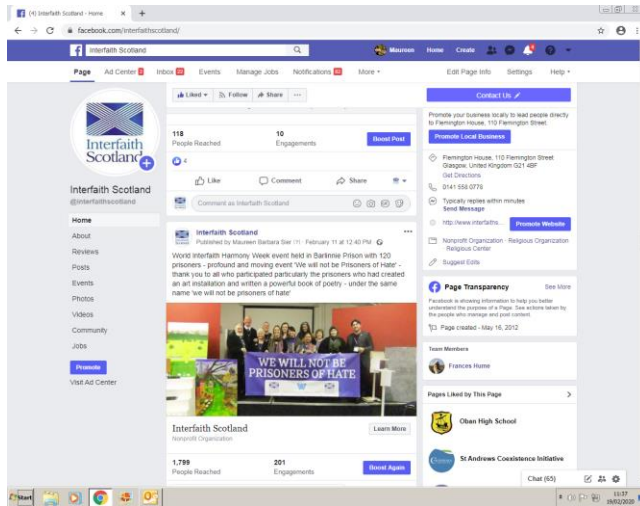
National Scottish Newspaper Scotland: 2nd February 2020: The Sun



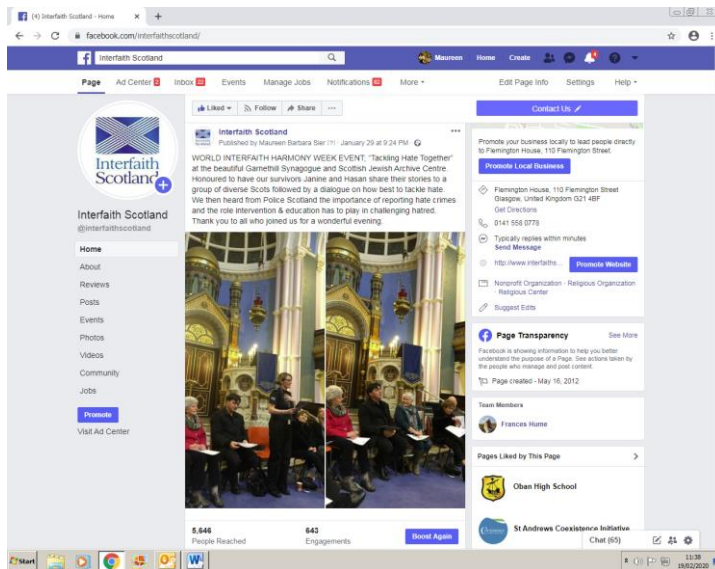
SAMPLE FACEBOOK POSTS FOR WORLD INTERFAITH HARMONY WEEK 2020

(Over 10,000 reached with the posts and hudreds of additional engagements)

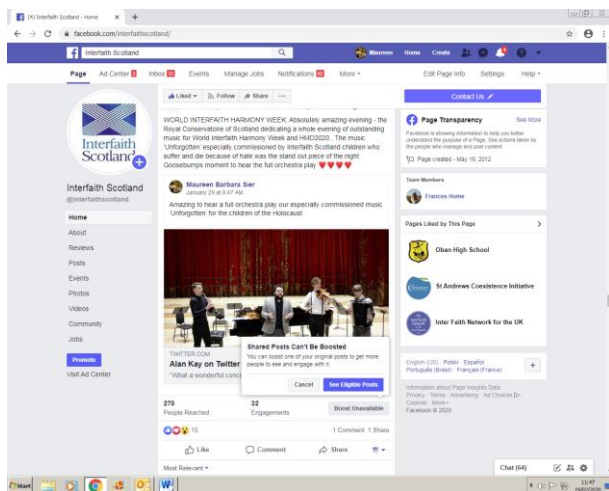
‘We will not be Prisoners of Hate’ (Interfaith Event in Barlinnie Prison)



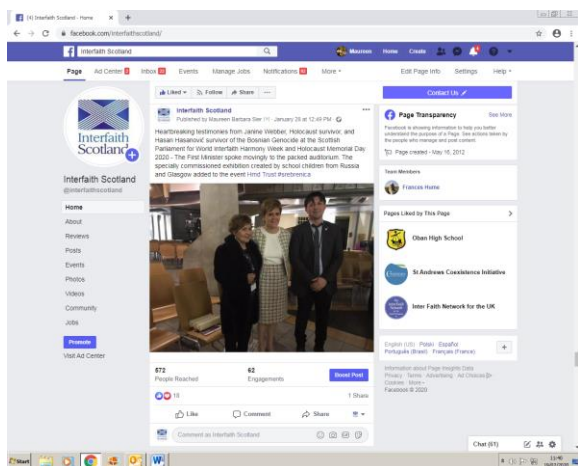
‘Tackling Hate Together’ (Interfaith event held in the Jewish Synagogue)



'Unforgotten' (Concert held in Royal Conservatoire of Scotland)



'Stand Together' (Parliamentary Event)



First Minister of Scotland's tweet:

Jan 2020 · 31 days

TWEET HIGHLIGHTS

Top Tweet earned 18.6K impressions

Powerful opening words from First Minister [@NicolaSturgeon](#) reflecting on her visit to Auschwitz, the importance of our theme "Stand Together" and subsequent genocides that have taken place since the Holocaust. "We cannot be bystanders in the rise of bigotry and hatred." #HMD2020
pic.twitter.com/RodkjU8VWT



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