

20 February 2020

**The St Mungo Museum of
Religious Life and Art**

2 Castle Street

Glasgow

G4 0RH

Phone: 0141 276 1625

Web: www.glasgowlife.org.uk

To whom it may concern.

The St Mungo Museum of Religious Life and Art has been proud to host two of the three impressive and much-needed events that Interfaith Glasgow has delivered to mark World Interfaith Harmony Week. The events were very well-attended and extremely well-received, providing an excellent example of what world-leading local interfaith work looks like.

I have been involved in the St Mungo Museum as a museum professional since its foundation in 1993. Since that time the museum has enjoyed fruitful dialogue with faith communities across the city but this dialogue has been significantly enhanced since Interfaith Glasgow began operations in 2012.

Interfaith Glasgow and St Mungo's have come to enjoy an ambitious relationship, which can best be described as symbiotic. This is well demonstrated by, for example, a number of highly successful one-off events we have run in partnership and, especially, by our popular joint '*Faith to Faith*' monthly interfaith dialogue programme. This has become the museum's principal adult learning offer, and provides an opportunity to connect with contemporary issues of local, national, and international concern. Through its *Weekend Club* project, moreover, Interfaith Glasgow has also helped the museum engage with refugees, from many different cultural and religious backgrounds, and has introduced many asylum seekers and refugees to Glasgow Museums and collections, encouraging them to become frequent service users.

I cannot stress enough the importance of Interfaith Glasgow and the added value our partnership brings to the mission and programmes we provide at the museum and beyond. All that Interfaith Glasgow does and has achieved over the past few years bears witness to a highly motivated and professional team of staff, who actively strive to make Glasgow a better and safer place for all its citizens. Their WIHW programme is no exception and shows Interfaith Glasgow to, once again, be a highly worthy candidate for international recognition.

Yours faithfully,



Harry Dunlop

Learning and Access Curator

Glasgow Museums | St Mungo Museum of Religious Life and Art

harry.dunlop@glasgowlife.org.uk

0141 276 1625





University
of Glasgow

21 February 2020

To whom it may concern,

It is my great pleasure to endorse the work that Interfaith Glasgow has been doing to promote better communications between different faith members in Glasgow. The University of Glasgow has been working with Interfaith Glasgow closely over a number of years. For example, in Aug 2018 we collaborated on the successful 'Religious Dress in the Flesh' event in partnership with St Mungo Museum of Religious Life and Art (funded by the University of Glasgow Chancellor's Fund and the College of Arts). As part of its outcomes, we created a short clip, which I use for my teaching at Theology and Religious Studies (TRS), and a speaker from the event and I visited a local secondary school to help raise religious literacy during the Scottish Interfaith Week, when I also volunteered at Family Fun Day. For the monthly series of 'Faith to Faith' informal dialogue events, Dr Zanne Domoney-Lyttle, a researcher at TRS, contributed to the Religion and Pop Culture session, and I spoke on Religion and Nature. Recognising its strong commitment of Interfaith Glasgow to engage with people of different backgrounds, as well as its well-established local knowledge, the University College of Arts is now working to set up a partnership with Interfaith Glasgow for a new Applied Dissertation with Placement from next academic year (2020/21). This will offer final-year students the opportunity to engage in a collaborative placement with an external partner, and the University is hoping that our students will gain valuable experience through working with Interfaith Glasgow.

As can be seen in the trilogy of events to mark World Interfaith Harmony Week in 2020, 'Thinking globally, Acting Locally', Interfaith Glasgow is committed to bottom-up and practical activities. It has been successful in providing a relaxed, inclusive and safe space where people from different backgrounds can explore various perspectives, enjoy friendly conversation and ask honest questions. This is one of the most effective ways to make a difference within and beyond the local area.

I therefore strongly commend Interfaith Glasgow to receive recognition for its inspirational work and impact on individuals, in order for it to continue and enhance current and future programmes.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Saeko Yazaki
Lecturer in Religious Studies
(Islam, Muslim-Jewish relations and Japanese traditions)
Theology and Religious Studies
4 The Square, University of Glasgow
Glasgow G12 8QQ
Tel: +44 (0)141 330 6756
Email: Saeko.Yazaki@glasgow.ac.uk



Refugee
Survival
Trust

Robertson House
152 Bath Street
Glasgow
G2 4TB

Email: info@rst.org.uk
Website: www.rst.org.uk

26th February 2020

To Whom it May Concern

I am writing on behalf of the Refugee Survival Trust to wholeheartedly endorse the work of Interfaith Glasgow, both in relation to its delivery of the 'New Scots Welcome Gala' for World Interfaith Harmony Week, but also in its work more generally. In Scotland's most religiously and ethnically diverse city, this wee charity is undertaking vital work: promoting mutual-understanding and peaceful coexistence, as well as providing a warm Glasgow welcome to 'New Scots' as they settle here and make Scotland their home.

Interfaith Glasgow tackles prejudice and increases interfaith and intercultural understanding through projects which foster mutual learning, tolerance, and respect. On a very limited budget, this organisation delivers some of the most innovative and effective interfaith work in relation to refugee integration that we have seen – work which is rightly attracting growing recognition nationally and internationally. Glasgow is home to the UK's largest population of asylum seekers and at a time when hate speech, prejudice, intolerance, and division are on the rise, efforts to build strong interfaith and intercultural bridges here could not be more vital. IG, though a small grassroots charity, has quickly positioned itself at the forefront of these efforts, challenging the root causes of prejudice, fostering empathetic connections between people from different backgrounds, and encouraging a more inclusive sense of community.

IG's work focuses on: friendship-building; dialogue; and cooperation and they run a variety of events and activities which support these ends. Successful initiatives of theirs include programmes focused on: creating opportunities for constructive social engagement and friendship-building; facilitating more in-depth dialogue about religious beliefs and practices; and fostering cooperative interfaith action, such as their establishment and support of Glasgow's Interfaith Food Justice Network (IFJN), which facilitates collaboration between groups tackling food poverty. Interfaith Glasgow has something special to offer: an antidote to prejudice, division, and hatred.

The project of theirs that we at Refugee Survival Trust are most familiar with is their Weekend Club (WC) -- a response to the social isolation experienced by refugees, asylum seekers, and new migrants. The WC aims to give people across Glasgow's diverse faith and belief communities opportunities to work cooperatively to improve the lives of these 'New Scots', helping them make friends, get to know Glasgow better, enjoy a good meal, improve their English, and learn about Scotland. Working with a group of volunteers from diverse backgrounds to plan, deliver, and evaluate monthly events, this project is reaching hundreds of newcomers despite funding challenges. The WC is genuinely ground-breaking in how it brings together of people from diverse backgrounds to work cooperatively to aid integration. This unique approach has been receiving growing recognition and the model has been replicated in Edinburgh. Having partnered with IG on a dance-based WC event earlier in the year, we have seen first-hand that, as well as being fun and educational, the WC is succeeding in its aim to offer participants experiences otherwise unavailable to them and to create a sense of belonging and inclusion.

We were delighted to hear of the 'New Scots Welcome Gala' IG were planning to mark World Interfaith Harmony Week. Many people from refugee backgrounds don't speak much English and

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where other means are not available***

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have little money to go out and explore their new home and hence many feel isolated and are unaware of the community support available to them. This Gala brings together people from different faith and belief backgrounds to tackle that problem, reimbursing travel expenses so that people can attend and bringing together the communities, organisations, and services best placed to support people from refugee backgrounds so that newcomers are more socially connected and better able to access the help available to them. We need more such events, both in the UK and elsewhere.

I cannot praise the work of Interfaith Glasgow highly enough and wish them every success in their application for the World Interfaith Harmony Week prize. They would be extremely deserving winners.

Yours faithfully,



Margaret Gibb
Interim Executive
Refugee Survival Trust

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