Religions *for* Peace
UNITED KINGDOM

2021 - 2022 ANNUAL REPORT

OVERVIEW

Religions for Peace United Kingdom (RfPUK) is a UK charitable incorporated organisation (CIO) registered with the Charity Commission (1190089). We are an independent chapter of the Religions for Peace International, which is a global organisation with a coalition of representatives from the world's great religions dedicated to achieving peace.

RfPUK is a constituent interreligious council within Religions for Peace Europe, and we work with our UK Women of Faith Network (UKWFN) and UK Interfaith Youth Network (UKIYN), each taking forward projects with their distinctive character and aims while sharing each other's support and networks.

Based upon deeply held moral principles widely shared by the world's faith traditions, RfPUK advances a positive notion of peace that acknowledges the well being of each person in a multi-dimensional understanding, we recognise individual and communal responsibility of all to reject the misuse of religion in support of violence. RfPUK shares the RfP global key priorities in

- Peaceful, Just, and Inclusive Societies
- Gender Equality for women and girls
- Environment awareness and action
- Freedom of Thought, Conscience, and Religion
- Interreligious Education to improve religious literacy
- Develop Local, Regional and International Partnerships

STRUCTURE

Following the practice of other chapters of Religions for Peace globally, we invite senior religious leaders to be our Patrons who will help us shape our policies and improve our reach to faith communities.

Trustees are appointed to take on operation oversight of RfPUK through regular meetings, they are responsible for the management and guidance of RfPUK.

After converting into a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO), RfPUK has engaged staff members to take forward development and programmes. We also welcome volunteers to help with our initiatives. UKIYN has a Steering Committee and UKWFN has a Coordinating Committee. While we draw on the strength of peacemakers throughout UK, the aim of both Networks is to build mutual respect and pluralism among women and youth groups from different religious traditions by empowering them to work together to serve others, going beyond mere tolerance of diversity, drawing on the strength of their religious and ethnic identity to foster active cooperation between peoples of faith and of none.

OUR WORK

2021 has turned out to be a year full of challenges, concerted efforts, new partnerships and growth for RfPUK. COVID was still affecting many of our planned activities and RfPUK's progress was indeed affected. Our scheduled programmes continued to take place over the internet, our development continues to evolve, and we are forging ahead to engage with our own projects as well as keeping keen interest in the strategies of our European and international partners.

Religions for Peace International has entered its 5th decade, under the leadership of the Secretary General Prof Dr Azza Karam, it has been a very busy time for the worldwide movement of Religions for Peace to realign our commitment and we have seen keen global contribution toward a set of key priorities for the future.

With the rapid advancement of our planned projects, in August we appointed Sabrina Pears to take up the position of Programme Manager at RfPUK. She comes to us with a wealth of knowledge, community ties and multi-faith project management experience and she will be in charge of launching new projects for RfPUK as well as developing our youth and women's network as we go from strength to strength, reaping the fruits of our work from past years.

RfPUK funded the second year of capacity building work of Faith for the Climate which exists to encourage, inspire and equip faith communities in their work on climate change, promoting

environmental awareness in thought, speech, worship and action, alongside and in partnership with secular environmental organisations. This work brought very positive results during COP26, where F4tC presented an exhibition, hosted multifaith talks and presentations.

In 2021, UKIYN launched a series of 3 webinars on “My Faith and the Environment: A positive interfaith youth response” throughout the year. Speakers were drawn from the Steering Committee as well as environmental activists. We reached and established contacts between faith youth groups, acted as a multifaith platform for participants to share their spiritual views as well as their experience in their work to safeguard the environment.

In June, some of the UKIYN Steering Committee members met face to face for the first time and the occasion gelled their friendship and made future cooperation more personable for all. In July, members of UKIYN presented a paper on youth activism in contemporary society to the RfP International Youth Forum Symposium, receiving acknowledgement from far and wide. During the August bank holiday weekend, our youth joined the First Ever London Interfaith Fun Run spearheaded by Maccabi GB and Faith and Belief Forum, it was a perfect opportunity to meet new friends and fundraise for our worthy cause.

In October, Eda Molla Chousein our Youth Coordinator represented UKIYN in the RfP Conference on Generational Dialogue in Lindau, she spoke passionately about the aspiration of UK youth on environmental issues and reported on their continued commitment. In November UKIYN took part in the Inter Faith Week and launched a pilot of their religious literacy improvement programme to visit St Ethelburga Peace Centre and the London Buddhist Centre. This marks the beautiful start to bringing understanding and the wish for peace and concord to youths of various faith backgrounds and of none. Some members of the Steering Committee participated in COP26 in November, representing their own faith groups and our “COP26 Aftermath” webinar in December gave them good opportunity to recount their experience in Glasgow and share their plans ahead.

The past year had been an extraordinary one for UKWFN. There were series of webinars, one focussed on the mental health well-being of women during the COVID pandemic, one on environmental concerns and issues, one on the inspirational work of women of faith, and the most recent was on planting trees and restoring biodiversity. These 11 webinars in the past year covered key priorities UKWFN shares with Global Women of Faith Network in claiming equal partnership in

addressing and bringing actions to women of faith in the UK, showcasing the achievements as well as aspirations of the many women who are formidable actors in making the world a safer and better place for us and for our future generations.

UKWFN Chair Ravinder Kaur Nijjar worked all year to bring the Network's effort to raise environmental awareness culminating in the intense participation at COP 26 in her capacity as Chair of UKWFN as well as a Sikh faith representative. She presented the Women of Faith Statement for COP26 produced by the RfP International Women's Coordinating Committee and the Glasgow Multi-faith Declaration to HRH Prince Charles at the Kirking of the Scottish parliament. This is the first time in the history of UN climate change conferences that a statement by women of faith globally has been made to denounce the destruction of the environment. She attended the COP26 Prayer Vigil, was one of the speakers at Religions for Peace International's office event addressing "Making Peace with Nature", and as a result of COP26 and a firm commitment to the future, UKWFN launched the "Let Earth Breathe, Plant Trees and Restore Biodiversity" campaign, which will be an ongoing effort to share the science as well as the spiritual approach to pay heed to the dilemma our planet is in.

THE FUTURE

Looking towards 2022, we may not know what the pandemic will bring, or what unsure measures we need to deal with, but we are now well prepared to carry out our work in whatever formats that best suit our times. We look forward to exciting beginnings in the New Year as we wish everyone Peace at heart, Peace at home, Peace amongst our countries, and Peace for the Planet which we all call HOME.

OUR TEAM

Patrons:
Bhai Sahib Dr Mohinder Singh Ahluwalia, Sikh
Imam Dr Abdujalil Sajid, Muslim
The Venerable B Seelawimala, Buddhist
Vinay Shah, Jain

Trustees / Officers

Jamie Cresswell, Trustee/ Chair

Ravinder Kaur Nijjar, Trustee/ Chair, UK Women of Faith Network

David Horner, Trustee/ Secretary

Prof Mark Owen, Trustee/ Acting Treasurer

Jehangir Sarosh, Trustee

Sheikh Ibrahim Mogra, Trustee

Cinde Lee, Trustee

Staff

Sabrina Pears, Programme Manager

Eda Molla Chousein, Youth Coordinator

Shirley Choi, Finance Officer