

IFCF AGM Chairs Report 2020

This year has been a year of new challenges and much change in nearly every aspect of our life, both locally and globally. 2020 began with much momentum, focus and structure for IFCF. Three events had been planned to be held across the first three months of the year.

The first being HMD in January, an event IFCF has organised for the past four years in partnership with several organisations and institutions from Suffolk Constabulary to the University of Suffolk, with participation from different individuals and groups, to commemorate the 75th Anniversary of the Liberation of Auschwitz, drawing an audience of around one hundred people.

The second event was, "An Evening of Reflection" in February. Hosted by the Mayor of Ipswich, Cllr. Jan Parry at the Mayors Parlour. The evening was chaired by Robin Herne, with the intention for IFCF to explore the presence of some of the world Religions and Beliefs in Ipswich and how they can contribute to tackling the problems facing Ipswich in 2020 and beyond - in law and order, education, politics, social support, environmental concerns and so forth. A panel of representatives from local religious and philosophical traditions, and civic institutions of the Town explored ideas and challenges raised by residents. Members of the public were invited to attend and to also raise questions for the religious representative and the civic institutions alike.

Our third event was to be in March, The Faith Lecture titled, "The Changing Landscape of Religion and Belief: Standing at the crossroads by Dr Edward Kessler. Naturally, due to the pandemic this has been postponed to March 2021.

Several events were undergoing planning for the Spring/Summer of 2020, unfortunately were halted due to the Coronavirus. These are listed below:

1. Storytelling – exploring the similarities and differences of storytelling in faiths and cultures
2. Visits to places of Worship
3. Second Evening of Reflection
4. Food & Faith Cookbook
5. Mayors Celebration of Faith

In August, IFCF was contacted by the Lord Lieutenant of Suffolk, requesting the participation in the VJ Day Remembrance Service. The intention was to include representation of the Indian Contribution to VJ. Given the restrictions to places of worship, it was a small, socially distanced service.

Also, in August, a few months after a unique virtual inauguration IFCF was contacted by the High Sheriff of Suffolk. Given the current issue and dialogue surrounding Black Lives Matter and the death of George Floyd, Bridgett McIntyre, High Sheriff of Suffolk was and is keen to engage with, learn from and speak to people around Suffolk who have faced racial based hatred, prejudice and discrimination, specifically from the BAME community and was therefore enquiring for suggestion of individuals to engage with.

Like many people and organisations, IFCF is learning to work, function and carry out our aims during this global pandemic. Holding our AGM electronically and not in person is one of those challenges we are facing. One of the cornerstones of Inter-faith work is to bring people together. Without the complications of a global pandemic, this can be tricky. Similarly, our planning for HMD 2021, is facing the same challenge of organising and delivering a COVID safe event. We still intend to mark the day in Ipswich; however, it will be carried out through a virtual platform.

