

Inter faith activity in the UK

A Teacher resource
for secondary pupils
aged 11–14



UNIT 3

Faith communities, service and solidarity



This unit is intended to take pupils on a journey:

Faith traditions contain teachings and historical examples which encourage their followers to put into practice such values as compassion, and to work for social justice.

That teachings include ones about treating others as one would be treated (the 'golden rule').

Faith communities are distinct in their beliefs and practices. However, shared values such as those reflected in the 'golden rule' are a basis for faith communities working together on social issues for the benefit of wider society.

Non-religious belief groups have their own version of the golden rule and have ethical teachings.

Individually and together, faith communities make a significant contribution to the welfare of society through their social welfare programmes and their volunteers.

While faith communities are distinct, there is a sense of commonality given shared experiences and there is a solidarity of response in contexts such as where places of worship are attacked or where there are common concerns about a topic such as climate change.

Teacher note: focuses on the ways that faith communities respond to social need on the basis of their teachings and work together to form inter faith groups and bodies to meet the needs of society. It builds on Unit 1 as an introduction to inter faith activity in the UK.

About the unit

It focuses on the contribution faith communities and inter faith groups make to society as a whole and communities across the UK. It introduces the language of solidarity. It builds on the work schools will be doing to promote community cohesion and British values¹.

Vocabulary

Inter faith, multi faith, service, cohesion, integration, solidarity, values.

Expectations

Pupils will:

- Identify the ways that people of faith respond to significant social issues based on their beliefs and the teachings they follow.
- Talk about how examples of faiths working together.
- Talk about why inter faith solidarity is important in the face of major occurrences such as terrorism or the pandemic.
- Show where faith traditions have common values such as service and compassion and talk about how these can be a basis for shared action, giving examples.

¹ The Department for Education published guidance on promoting British values in schools as of November 2014 to create and enforce a clear and rigorous expectation on all schools to promote the fundamental British "values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs."
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/promoting-fundamental-british-values-through-smsc>

The Inter Faith Network for the UK closed in 2024, with outward facing operations ceasing in April.

In order to ensure that the material in IFN's publications remained available to the public, to inter faith practitioners, and to scholars after IFN's closure, the copyright status of publications has been changed.

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES Pupils should learn...	POSSIBLE TEACHING ACTIVITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That faith traditions have teachings about caring for the neighbour and the stranger and service to society and that there is some commonality of core values – as reflected in the ‘golden rule’. 	<p>Pupils explore the ‘golden rule’ and look in greater depth at the teaching about that in two traditions.</p> <p>They could use, for example, the Inter Faith Network’s resource Shared Values – the Golden Rule and other resources on this topic and on a ‘global ethic’.</p> <p>Pupils look at the Millennium Act of Commitment of the Faith Communities of the UK which includes values which were identified together by faith communities.</p> <p>Pupils look at Values in Harmony, Scottish Inter Faith Council, at a range of teachings from faith and belief traditions to explore the concept of shared values as a basis for building a good society.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That faith traditions’ social teachings are drawn on by members of those traditions as a basis for social action. 	<p>Pupils research the teachings of a specific faith tradition and look at how its members draw upon those to inform their action for social justice and to help those in need.</p> <p>Some examples for consideration might include the Baha’i Faith, Catholic Social Action Network (Caritas), and the Triratna Buddhist Centre.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That the teachings of faith traditions have a practical benefit to local communities and society more widely. 	<p>Pupils could investigate principles underpinning the work of such organisations as the Church Urban Fund of the Church of England and Muslim Aid.</p> <p>Pupils might look at how the principle of sewa/seva (selfless service) has inspired such projects as Khalsa Aid and Sewa Day and how the Jewish concept of Mitzvah has inspired Mitzvah Day and the Muslim concept of sadaqa Sadaqa Day.</p> <p>Pupils could look at the resources such as those produced by Baptists Together to help their members express love for neighbour in a multi faith society</p> <p>Pupils might consider the practical implications of the Church Urban Fund’s programme Near Neighbours for social solidarity and effect social action.</p> <p>Pupils could research the ways that different faith communities respond to issues such as food poverty in the UK and the bases that they have for that response, such as The Trussell Trust, the Sufra Food Bank and The Sikh Food Bank (Scotland). [NB more examples can be found in Unit 4].</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That some inter faith bodies and faith groups working together have responded to particular social needs. 	<p>Pupils could investigate the work of Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees.</p> <p>Pupils could research the way that faith groups worked to respond to the needs of vulnerable people during the COVID-19 pandemic, such as the Wellsprings Together videos produced for Inter Faith Week 2020.</p> <p>Pupils could research how local faith and inter faith groups have worked to build community and respond to social need in their area. They could do this by looking at the websites of local faith communities and local inter faith organisations, the latter by using the search facility on the IFN website. Some examples include Barnet Multi Faith Forum; Faiths Together in Croydon; Birmingham Council of Faiths, Cornwall Faiths Forum and Fife Interfaith Group.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That faith leaders and representatives sometimes come together for joint vigils or to make statements, demonstrating solidarity and a shared commitment to a better society. 	<p>Pupils could look at some of the statements made by Inter Faith Network for the UK Co-Chairs and Faith Communities Forum Moderators, for example those in response to terrorist attacks exploring the themes of those statements.</p> <p>Pupils could also investigate how different faith bodies have made responses that demonstrate solidarity and shared commitment across a number of issues, as seen on the IFN website.</p> <p>Pupils could look at the way faith leaders have come together at specific times of international and national crisis or in response to areas of great concern to state their common view, such as nuclear disarmament and the climate crisis.</p> <p>Pupils could also explore ways that faith and inter faith groups shared positive messages during the COVID-19 pandemic, such as North Kent Council for Inter-Faith Relations' Messages of Hope video for Inter Faith Week 2020; and guidance by such bodies as the Inter Faith Council for Wales.</p>

LEARNING OUTCOMES Pupils should be able to:	POINTS TO NOTE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss the teachings of different faith communities which inspire/guide their members' social action. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give examples of ways that faith communities are engaged in meeting the needs of society and communities. 	There are more examples of this in Unit 4.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss the ways that faith traditions draw upon their own resources to engage in inter faith social action. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give an example of how faith communities stand together to respond in a crisis. 	

NOTES

The **Bahá'í** faith is a world religion, founded in the 1800s. Bahá'ís follow Bahá'u'lláh, who taught the oneness of humanity, unity of religions, gender equality, and the harmony of science and religion.

Baptists Together (Baptist Union of Great Britain) Baptists Together is the web portal and an informal name used for the Baptist Union of Great Britain, which is a linking body for Baptist Churches in Britain.

Caritas Social Action Network (CSAN) is an agency of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales.

Church Urban Fund is an agency of the Church of England and supports a number of projects, such as Near Neighbours

The Inter Faith Network for the UK (IFN) works to promote understanding, cooperation and good relations between organisations and persons of different faiths in the UK.

Inter Faith Council for Wales – Cyngor Rhyngffydd Cymru is the national inter faith linking body for Wales, and works with the Welsh Government to enable dialogue and close co-operation between the different faiths in Wales.

Khalsa Aid is an international NGO with the aim to provide humanitarian aid in disaster areas and civil conflict zones around the world. The organisation is based upon the Sikh principles.

Near Neighbours is a project of the Church of England. It brings people together in communities that are religiously and ethnically diverse, so that they can get to know each other better, build relationships of trust, and collaborate together on initiatives that improve the local community they live in. It is supported by the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government. It is present in a number of towns England in the North West, East and West Midlands, Yorkshire and Humber and in Luton, Peterborough and London.

Scottish Inter Faith Council is now Interfaith Scotland. It is the inter faith linking body for Scotland

Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees is a multi-faith partnership project hosted by the Church of Scotland.

Sewa Day is a charity which promotes acts of selfless kindness. It is rooted in the concept of Sewa which involves performing an act of kindness without expectation of reward. Sewa is a Sanskrit word and is embedded in the Dharmic traditions of ancient India.

The Sikh Food Bank (Scotland) is located in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Dundee and works with the Scottish Government to provide food parcels to families in need.

The Sufra Food Bank is a Muslim charity based in North West London providing emergency supplies of toiletries and food to individuals and families in crisis.

The Triratna Buddhist Centre is part of the Triratna Buddhist tradition that was developed in the West and has centres across the UK.

The Trussell Trust supports a nationwide network of food banks which together provide emergency food and support. It also campaigns for change to end the need for food banks in the UK.

Muslim Aid is a faith-based British international charity that provides help to people who are victims of natural disasters or conflict or suffering from poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, discrimination, homelessness, debt, unemployment, injustice, deprivation or lack of skills and economic opportunities.

Mitzvah Day is a day of social action led by the Jewish community. As part of its work it encourages projects run on an inter faith basis. It usually takes place on the first or last Sunday of Inter Faith Week.

Sadaqa Day is a day of social action led by the Muslim community.

Wellsprings Together is a joint venture between the Church Urban Fund and the Anglican Diocese of Leeds. It works with partners to address deprivation, isolation and division within communities in West Yorkshire.

Barnet Multi Faith Forum, Cornwall Faith Forum, Birmingham Council of Faiths, Faiths Together in Croydon, North Kent Council for Inter-Faith Relations are all examples of local inter faith organisations.

Technical vocabulary

Inter faith is used in this resource to describe interactions between people of different faiths, and

in some cases between those of religious and non-religious beliefs.

Multi faith is used in this resource of activities to describe activities involving several faiths contributing 'side-by-side' where the primary emphasis is not on their interaction.

Some resources

There are a number of reports which have highlighted the place of faith in society and its contribution to society as a whole, such as [Cohesive Societies: Faith and Belief Examining the role of faith and belief in cohesive societies](#) Dr Madeleine Pennington (2020) and [Faith as Social Capital](#) (2006) by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. Teachers may find it useful to have looked at these reports to give them greater context when delivering this unit.

This resource points to a number of resources linked to Inter Faith Network member bodies and other sources. There are many such materials available and those included are in no way exhaustive. IFN's member body list and other resources on its website www.interfaith.org.uk will take you to other useful materials.

The links provided are to materials of independent organisations. IFN takes no responsibility for their content – as it stands at this time or as it may evolve. The links may change over time. They are correct at March 2021 and will be checked periodically. If you find any that do not work, please do let us know so that we can replace them.

The resource covers a broad range of faith traditions in the UK and this is reflected across the resource as a whole, not in all or any of the individual units.

Teachers should consult the Teacher Introduction before using this unit as a basis for curriculum planning.