

FFWPU UK: Watford Interfaith Pilgrimage 2025 Celebrating faith, friendship, and community

Francoise Murphy
November 26, 2025



Watford Interfaith Pilgrimage 2025 Celebrating faith, friendship, and community.

On National Interfaith Week, Watford Interfaith Faith Association hosted its annual Interfaith Pilgrimage visiting 6 places of worship around Watford. It was an inspiring and uplifting event inviting Watford residents on a journey of discovery of the different faith communities of our town. I thought it would be a good idea on this occasion to invite our young missionaries to take part in the pilgrimage and give them this unique experience.





Watford Interfaith Pilgrimage
Sunday 16th November 2025

1) 12 noon – 12.50pm, Friends Meeting House, 150 Church Rd. WD17 4QB. You are invited for tea, coffee and refreshments before the presentation.

2) 1.00 – 1.35pm Watford & District Synagogue, 16 Nascot Rd. WD17 4YE

3) 2.20 – 3.00pm Al-Zahra Centre (Shia Mosque), 81 Fearnley street. WD18 0RB. Shoes should be taken off, and women need to cover their heads.

4) 3.15 – 3.50pm Watford Central Mosque, Cambridge Rd. WD18 0GJ. Shoes should be taken off, and women need to cover their heads. Refreshments.

5) 4.00 – 4.30pm Holy Rood RC Church, Exchange Rd. WD18 0PT.

6) 4.40 – 5.00pm St Mary's CofE Parish Church, High Street. WD18 0EG. Warm drinks and refreshments will conclude the pilgrimage.

Our interfaith Pilgrimage started mid-day on Sunday 16th November. Watford is such a town that in one afternoon you can have a glimpse at some of the major faiths in our world just by visiting their worship places reachable at walking distance. Around 60 members of the public participated in the pilgrimage. We started at the Friends Meeting House with warm drinks and refreshments followed by an introduction to Quakerism. We then stopped by the Watford and District Synagogue, walk through the town to the Al Zahra Centre, the meeting place of the Watford Shi'a Muslim community and then to the Watford Central Mosque (the Sunni Mosque) where after their presentation we enjoyed some delicious samosas and pakoras. Holy Rood Roman Catholic Church was our next stop before we concluded our pilgrimage at St Mary's Church of England around 5.30pm.



In each place we visited we spent around 30 minutes listening to an introduction to the faith of their communities. Lots of questions were raised and friendly conversations followed. We learned a lot about each other, overcame some misconceptions and develop greater understanding and respect for each other. The Watford Elected Mayor as well as the Deputy Mayor and some councillors participated in the Pilgrimage. The mayor thanked the organizers for this valuable annual interfaith Pilgrimage which brings our town together making Watford a most welcoming place for all.



The success of the Pilgrimage was reported in our local newspaper and on the website of Watford Football Club and other media. A few days later we were contacted by the BBC for an interview.

For more information about our Pilgrimage, please visit our Watford Interfaith Association website: www.wifa.org.uk/pilgrimage

Meeting with the missionaries afterwards, I asked them about their experiences and reflections on the day. This is what they wrote:

'I participated in the interfaith event this time and it was a wonderful experience, allowing me to learn about many different religions. I would also like to visit churches not only in Watford but in other areas as well. Thank you very much.'



From Seirei.

'I was truly grateful to be able to attend this interfaith event. Visiting churches, mosques, and cathedrals of different religions gave me a wonderful opportunity to see with my own eyes what I had previously studied and learned. It was also a blessing to hear directly from those who serve in these places. Their faith and values were beautiful and sacred. If I have the chance, I would love to participate again.'



From Munhee.

'I'm deeply grateful for the opportunity to learn about so many different religions for the first time. It has truly been a meaningful and inspiring experience for me. Especially in the European cultural environment, I was moved to see how people honour God, cherish their own faith traditions, and, through the interfaith community, even embrace and understand those from other religions. Witnessing this, I felt I could learn, even just a little, what genuine interreligious harmony and peace for humanity look like -

something I had rarely encountered in Korea. Many participants showed warm curiosity toward us, and their kindness touched my heart. If the opportunity arises, I would love to join again. I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to all the staff for their dedication and support. Thank you so much for creating such a wonderful experience.'



From Inseong.

'This pilgrimage was a really great opportunity for me, as I was able to visit a Muslim mosque and a Jewish synagogue for the first time. Until now, I had only learned about the culture and theology of the Family Federation, so I had never really thought about interfaith harmony, understanding, or peace. Thanks to this experience, I was able to deeply reflect on how we can achieve peace among different religions!'

From Lisa.

Written by Françoise M.



Interfaith Pilgrimage

The Interfaith Pilgrimage around Watford became an annual event in 2009 during National Interfaith week. Members of the public are invited to walk around Watford and visit the various places of worship of the town. The pilgrims spend 20 minutes in each place of worship and receive a bite-sized introduction to different faiths and their community. Refreshments are provided along the way. The 5 to 6 most frequently visited places are: Watford and District Synagogue, Watford Central Mosque, St Mary's C of E Parish Church, the Al-Zahra Centre, the Holy Rood Roman Catholic Church and the Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha but it can include other places. It varies every year.



Watford Interfaith Pilgrimage 2025

Sunday 16th November 2025.

On National Interfaith Week, WIFA hosted its annual Interfaith Pilgrimage visiting 6 places of worship around Watford. It was an inspiring and uplifting event inviting Watford residents on a journey of discovery of the different faith communities of our town. The turnout was great and interesting conversations brought us all together learning a great deal about each other.

This year, we started at the Friends Meeting House, also known as Quakers. A warm welcome with hot drinks and snacks was followed by a talk on the amazing contributions of Quakerism to our society promoting peace instead of war, initiating well known banks, introducing hot chocolate and more. We then visited the Watford & District Synagogue where we were privileged to admire the beautiful and precious Torah scrolls and many questions were asked about Jewish faith and traditions. Afterwards, we had quite a long walk until we reached the Al-Zahra Centre, a Shi'a Mosque. There we learnt about the similarities and differences between Shi'a and Sunni Muslims. They told us that those conflicts between the two were mostly due to politics: here in Watford both communities enjoy a good relationship with each other. Once again lots of questions were asked and answered. At the Central Mosque, the Imam and the members of the Mosque welcomed us warmly. After a short introduction to Islam and a resounding call for prayer we were invited to enjoy delicious samosas and pakoras. Then it was time to visit Holy Rood RC Church, a beautiful church building which was designed by the same architect who later built Westminster Abbey. After answering a few questions, Deacon Neville Dyckhoff offered a beautiful prayer about bringing all faiths together under the love of God. It was then time to reach St Mary Parish Church, the last stop of our pilgrimage. We had a bit of a break enjoying some warm drinks and delicious home-made biscuits before the presentation. Reverend Richard Banham, newly elected Vicar of St Mary's introduced us to his church, a church which had known Christian worship for over 800 years. He spoke about his faith and the vibrant community of St Mary's which also hosts the Watford Town Centre Chaplaincy led by Revd Geert Tap.

Yogesh Joshi, Vice Chair of WIFA concluded the Pilgrimage by thanking everyone for coming including Mayor Peter Taylor and Deputy Mayor Aga Dychton. He also thanked all the places of worship for their kind hospitality. We then left each other enriched and uplifted by the experience of the day.



Pilgrimage 2024

Sunday 17th November 2024.

This was the 15th year since we started to organize an interfaith pilgrimage around Watford. In 2009 Interfaith Network UK had initiated National Interfaith week across the country and WIFA's contribution has been its annual interfaith pilgrimage visiting the various places of worship around our town.

This year we started our Pilgrimage at the Watford & District Synagogue. We were pleased that we could go back to the Synagogue as last year it wasn't possible due to the events in the Middle East. As always, we were warmly welcome by the members of the Synagogue with hot drinks and delicious pastries. After some welcoming remarks by WIFA Chair and a representative of the Synagogue, Rabbi Mordechai Chalk told us the story of 2 Rabbis who were arguing with each other about the Torah and then met at the pub for a pint. Even though we have different beliefs and opinions this shouldn't affect our appreciation and respect for each other. This has been WIFA's aim over the year to recognise the value of all faiths and all human beings. Watford Mayor Peter Taylor and a representative of our Watford MP reiterated how good it was that Watford enjoy such good community relations. This sentiment was exemplified by our visits and warm welcome to all the places we visited afterwards: the Friends Meeting House, Watford Central Mosque, the Al-Zahra Centre, Holy Rood RC Church and St Mary CofE Church. Our long journey through the town started at 11.30am and ended at St Mary at 5.15pm. At St Mary, after a warm drink, a presentation about the church and a talk by the ordinand of the church Dr Lesley Gray, we were treated to go up the tower bells and witness the ringing of the bells.

WIFA would like to thank everyone who came and especially those who hosted us along the way. It was an inspiring and uplifting experience meeting each other and learning about each other.



The most uplifting Interfaith Pilgrimage (2023)

On National Interfaith week Watford Interfaith Association organised its 14th annual interfaith pilgrimage around Watford visiting 5 places of worship starting at St Mary's Church, the Al-Zahra Centre, Beechen Grove Baptist Church, the Central Mosque and ending up at the Sri Guru Singh Sabha Gurdwara. For security reason we couldn't start at the Synagogue like we usually did previous years however a representative of the Synagogue walked with us all the way.

On Sunday 19 November people gathered at St Mary Church and were warmly welcomed by the vicar, Reverend Tony Dindl. Various distinguished officials gave

welcomed by the vicar, Reverend Tony Rindl. Various distinguished officials gave inspirational talks: the High Sheriff of Hertfordshire Liz Green, Watford Elected Mayor Peter Taylor, Watford Town Centre Chaplain Geert Tap, Cllr Mark Watkin and Harjit Singh Chair of WIFA. Revd Rindl then spoke about his faith, his church congregation and St Mary been the oldest church in Watford.

We then walked to the Al-Zahra centre, the home of the Shia Muslim community. Now over 70 people joined the pilgrimage and listen to a presentation on the origin of the Shia Muslim faith and its basic beliefs. After some Q&A, we moved to Beechen Grove Baptist Church where a Romanian wedding was taking place. At an appropriate time in the service Reverend Simon Heard invited us to walk through the central aisle of a packed church. Beechen Grove Baptist Church is a large church holding 8 different services every Sunday.

Our next destination was the Central Mosque. We took off our shoes, the ladies covered their heads and we all sat in the main hall. Esoof the muezzin performed the call to prayer and introduced us to a summary of Islam. His presentation was concluded by a prayer for peace in our world which moved us all deeply. As we walked out of the prayer hall, Esoof met the Jewish man and a friendly conversation developed between them comparing their faiths. You say 'Salaam Alaikum' and we say: 'Shalom Aleichem'. At this time when the world is in turmoil with the conflicts going on in Israel Palestine here in Watford, we are coming together in peace and friendship.

After some delicious samosas, the pilgrimage took off on their last stretch to the Sri Guru Singh Sabha Gurdwara. Harminder Singh welcomed us, introduced us to the tenets of Sikhism and answered our questions. We then walked around the canopy where laid the Sikh Holy book the Guru Granth Sahib. After a demonstration of gatka a Sikh martial art used for defensive purpose only we were welcomed to a warm delicious vegetarian meal.

Before leaving the High Sheriff, who had been with us the all-time, thanked WIFA for organizing the Pilgrimage. She said that she had learned a lot and: 'If the world would follow Watford's model it would be a much better place'.

Thank you everyone for helping to make this pilgrimage a wonderful witness of the friendship between all our faith communities in Watford and for the support of Watford residents who attended the Pilgrimage.

