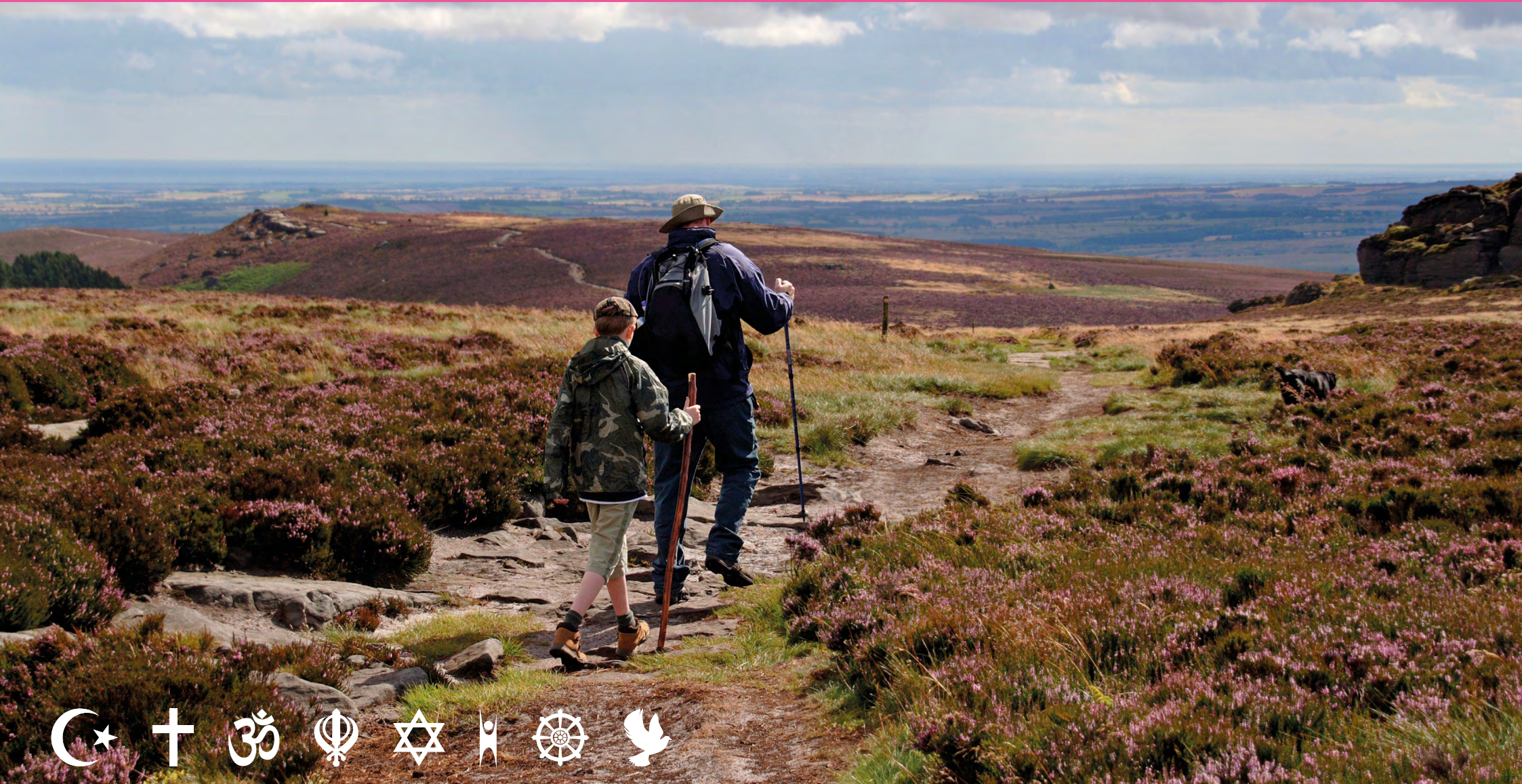


SACRE

NORTHUMBERLAND

Northumberland County Council

Newsletter for the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education for Northumberland



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The UK's best RE resource bank, the North-East Religious Learning Resources Centre

With the new RE Agreed Syllabus already over a year old, teachers in Northumberland will want to access the best collection of RE-related resources anywhere in England, thereby saving money at a time of financial austerity and ensuring that RE of the highest quality is provided to all their pupils and students.

The North East Religious Resources Centre has facilities in Percy Main, North Tyneside, and Durham City.

Many Northumberland teachers (or schools on behalf of their teachers) have already joined the Centre because they know that, once a member, they can access 38,000 items addressing lots of religions and secular world views. Such items include text books, posters, photo-packs, audio-visual material including films and documentaries, copies of RE agreed syllabuses and diocesan syllabuses, and, perhaps best of all, religious artefacts. There are also many books designed to ensure that acts of collective worship are stimulating and worthwhile educational experiences.

In recent years, Karenza Passmore and her colleagues have ensured that the ever-expanding resource bank not only covers the six religions we MUST teach (Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism), but also some of the faiths and secular world views which, in recent years, have become more popular to study. Thus, Karenza and her colleagues

have excellent resources relating to, for example, the Bahai Faith, Jainism, Rastafarianism and Humanism.

Before joining the Centre, you may want to visit it to see what you have missed out on for so long! Staff at the Centre are happy for visits to take place at times convenient to all concerned. Moreover, the Centre has sensible and flexible opening hours, opening hours which can be confirmed when you make contact with the staff.

For more information, ring the Centre in Percy Main on **0191-270-4161**.

The postal address is:
NE Religious Resources Centre
Church House, St. John's Terrace
Percy Main, North Shields,
NE29 6HS.

To access additional information about the Centre, and to find out in more detail about all the services staff provide, visit the Centre's excellent website:
www.resourcescentreonline.co.uk



“...There are also many books designed to ensure that acts of collective worship are stimulating and worthwhile educational experiences”

Accord's 2017 Inclusivity Award for SACREs

It's true, we did not win, but Northumberland's SACRE secured honourable mentions in the report that Accord produced to celebrate ways in which SACREs up and down the land have a beneficial impact, often when working in difficult circumstances locally.

Brent (in London) came first, Newham (also in London) came second and Leicester came third, with Suffolk securing a special commendation. As everyone will appreciate, Brent, Newham and Leicester are very different from Northumberland (and not merely in terms of religion and belief affiliation and levels of urbanisation), but Suffolk also did well, a county that has some similarities with Northumberland.

Accord's report singles out about ten SACREs for aspects of good practice. Northumberland SACRE's guidance on acts of collective worship is "praised" because, among other things, it explores "the flexibility that schools have to provide assemblies that are suitable to the backgrounds of all pupils, and unambiguously recommends that schools follow such an approach". The SACRE is also commended for

writing "to the Department for Education to express misgivings about the lack of RE teacher training and the effect on RE of the subject being excluded from the key performance indicators".

Off the record, Accord advised the SACRE that, although there were two issues which made it difficult for Northumberland to be placed among the best three or four SACREs nationally, it was nonetheless admired because its RE Agreed Syllabus includes the study of non-religious world views, the syllabus guidance places admirable emphasis on inclusion, some SACRE members belong to other SACREs and bring to Northumberland perspectives from outside the local authority, and the quality of its guidance on collective worship is of the highest order. The bid was described as a "serious candidate" for the Award. Additionally, Accord forwarded the bid to the Commission on

Religious Education to reveal how a SACRE functioning on limited resources can nonetheless have a beneficial impact locally.

What is sad is that the bid had to be submitted well before the recent very successful half-day Briefings about the new RE Agreed Syllabus and before it had been decided to arrange a conference for RE teachers in Autumn. Could these have helped ensure Northumberland's SACRE did even better? It does not really matter: we already have much of which to be proud.

Profoundest thanks to all the members of the SACRE who in their own way made the bid possible and such a good one. Should there be another opportunity to apply for the Accord Award, I am confident that Northumberland's SACRE will do so.

Holocaust Memorial Day

27th January 2018

Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) is, as always, on 27th January, and we are confident that many Northumberland schools have already planned events around that date.

The theme for 2018 is “The power of words”, so it is likely that many events will reflect on what happens after genocide, our responsibilities in the wake of such a crime and how people have responded to such terrible events in prose, poetry and song. This year’s theme is intentionally broad and open-ended.

If your school has yet to confirm how HMD will be commemorated, we suggest that an outstanding starting point for ideas is the HMD Trust website (www.hmd.org.uk), where, among other things, you can find out what is happening in other parts of the country and access lots of excellent teaching and learning materials.

There you will find this remarkable quote from Elie Wiesel, the author and Holocaust survivor whose childhood home was Sighetu Marmatiei in northern Romania:

“For the survivor death is not the problem. Death was an everyday occurrence. We learned to live with death. The problem is to adjust to life, to living. You must teach us about living.”

From 2015 to 2017, many HMD events reflected on the so-called “Forgotten Genocide” that began in 1915 in the Ottoman Empire and resulted in the murder of between a million and 1.5 million Armenians. This year, HMD events are likely to reflect on the attempted genocide directed against the Yazidis in Syria and Iraq. An immense amount of testimony exists to convey “The power of words” from the Yazidi experience of attempted genocide. See, for example, the UN’s 2016 report entitled “They came to destroy: ISIS crimes against the Yazidis”, which is made up largely of survivor testimony.

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While the Holocaust/Shoah will always be the focal point for HMD events, this year we imagine that, for added topicality, attention will be directed to the plight of the Rohingya Muslims, the vulnerability of Christians living in many parts of the Middle East and the crimes against humanity initiated by Ratko Mladic. The latter provides an opportunity to reflect on the genocidal act perpetrated against Bosniak Muslim males in Srebrenica, Bosnia, in 1995.

For teachers looking for “The power of words” as they relate to the Holocaust/Shoah, examine the poetry and prose of Primo Levi, chemist, poet, novelist and Auschwitz survivor whose works include “If this is a man”, “The Periodic Table” and “If not now, when?” But perhaps even more accessible than these works of prose are his poems, of which “Shema” is probably the best known and most frequently read. Read it and you will see why it is so popular – and you will see why pupils and students are often encouraged to reflect on genocide by writing a poem in similar style.

Above all, HMD is designed “to challenge prejudice, racism and discrimination, and to promote diversity, equality and harmony between communities”. Consequently, schools which address HMD confirm their commitments to community cohesion, equality, diversity, inclusion and challenging extremism and radicalisation.

If schools wish to share with a larger audience what they did to commemorate HMD, send a summary to Phil André at phil.andre@ntlworld.com and it will be published in a forthcoming SACRE Newsletter.



Northumberland County Council's first RE Conference, Choppington Social and Welfare Centre

Last November's RE conference, which was formally opened in admirable style by Councillor Wayne Daley, the SACRE chair, was deemed a great success by the teachers who attended it, so much so that it is hoped that there will be a similar high profile RE training event arranged annually.

Last November's conference, entitled "Diversity in Religion and Belief", was primarily designed to reveal to teachers that no religion or secular world view is monolithic in terms of belief and/or practice. Workshops led by SACRE members or friends of the SACRE examined Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Humanism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism. We now have teachers across the County in first, primary, middle, special and high schools who can engage as experts with terminology such as Theravada, Mahayana, Orthodox, miaphysite, Shaivism, Shaktism, the theory of evolution, rationally-based systems of thought/ethical decision-making, Shia, Ahmadi, Progressive, Hassidic, Khalsa and non-Khalsa!

Perhaps even more heartening than the conference itself has been the follow-up. Senior school managers

who attended the conference have arranged in-house training for their teachers, schools have confirmed visits to houses of worship (one school arranged no fewer than four visits to houses of worship) and teachers have been in contact with workshop leaders for additional information about religious diversity so they can enhance teaching and learning in their classrooms. There have also been a few teachers who have expressed interest in joining the SACRE itself.

The SACRE will consider during its forthcoming meetings how best to follow up the success of last term's RE conference. Once a decision is reached, schools will receive notification. Watch this space!



"...no religion or secular world view is monolithic in terms of belief and/or practice"

Visits to two houses of worship!

Morpeth First is one of many Northumberland schools that arranges exciting things inside and outside school to mark National Interfaith Week (which happens every year in November), even if such exciting things take place before, during as well as after the week, and this year, Year 3 pupils undertook a visit in late November to Newcastle's Hindu Mandir.

The coach dropped off over 50 children, two teachers and about eight parents just after 10.00am, and by 10.15am everyone had taken off their shoes and entered the mandir's worship hall, where the children were impressed with all the visual stimuli that confronted them. After being welcomed by the ever-smiling and patient pandit (priest), the children were broken into groups of about six so that each adult could escort them around the worship hall to examine more closely the murtis, the paintings, the posters, the signs, the symbols and the decorations, some of latter which had survived from Divali. After this, everyone gathered in one corner of the worship hall and the children and adults were provided with a simple explanation of Hindu belief and practice, and how Hindus make use of the mandir.

Panditji was so impressed with how well-behaved and respectful the children had been that an invitation was extended to the whole group to observe the arti ceremony which closes the mandir in the morning. Too good an opportunity to miss, the group remained and thereby experienced first-hand an important aspect of Hindu worship. Panditji spent two minutes at the end of the arti ceremony explaining exactly what the children had witnessed and what some of the spoken and chanted words had meant.

One of the unexpected outcomes of the November RE Conference was that a number of delegates made

contact with Phil André seeking additional information about the North-East's Ahmadiyya Muslim community. When Phil told the delegates that in late November he was visiting the Ahmadiyya Nasir Mosque in Hartlepool with Year 5 pupils, he asked if they would like to join the group, if they secured permission to do so from their headteacher/principal. Four teachers were able to join the Year 5 pupils.

The purpose-built Ahmadiyya Nasir Mosque is an attractive structure with a dome and a minaret. On arrival, after everyone had taken off their shoes, the group was ushered into the main prayer room where, after introductions had been made (a man and a woman shared responsibility for hosting the group), an excellent talk supported by informative slides provided an insight into Islam in general and the Ahmadiyya interpretation of Islam in particular. What impressed everyone the most were probably the following. First, Ahmadiyya Muslims renounce the jihad of the sword and instead commit completely to the jihad of the pen (in other words, they seek change not through force but through debate and discussion). Second, Ahmadiyya Muslims engage in charitable endeavours globally, but in their efforts to alleviate suffering, etc., work with people of all faiths and none. Third, some of the Ahmadiyya's most cherished values, which include tolerance and respect for all people no matter their beliefs, are the same as some of the fundamental

British values. Last, Ahmadiyya Muslims commit to the motto of "love for all, hatred for none", a message the children and teachers found repeated on many a wall around the mosque.

We were advised that the mosque has excellent relations with nearby St. Oswald's Anglican Church, so much so that combined social and educational events take place regularly.

We were taken by the woman who hosted the group on a tour of the premises, a third member of the congregation chanted the call to prayer and recited the opening verse of the Qur'an (both in Arabic of course), and the visit ended with everyone sharing food and drink as equals.

The Northumberland teachers left the mosque as impressed with what they had encountered as the Year 5 pupils – and the visit was the best mosque visit I have undertaken for perhaps two years. Not only was everything expertly arranged for us as visitors; the image of Islam was so positive. As one teacher from Northumberland said to me as we left the mosque, "Ahmadiyya Muslims challenge people's stereotyped ideas of Islam and Muslims." Indeed they do.

Forthcoming Festivals/Commemorations

5 January	Birthday of Guru Gobind Singh	(Sikh Nanakshahi Calendar)	3 March	Hola Mohalla	(Sikh)
6 January	Epiphany	(Western Christian)	8 March	International Women's Day	(International)
6 - 7 January	Christmas Eve and Christmas Day	(Orthodox Christian, Armenian Apostolic, Rastafarian)	17 March	St. Patrick's Day	(National)
22 January	Vasant Panchami/Saraswati Puja	(Hindu)	21 March	Nawruz	(Bahai, Zoroastrian)
27 January	Holocaust Memorial Day	(National)	25 - 31 March	Holy Week	(Western Christian)
30 - 31 January	Tu B'Shevat	(Jewish)	26 March	Rama Navami	(Hindu)
2 February	Imbolc	(Pagan)	28 March	Khordad Sal	(Zoroastrian)
2 February	Candlemas/The Presentation of the Lord	(Christian)	30 March	Good Friday	(Western Christian)
8 February	Nirvana Day	(Buddhist)	30 March - 7 April	Pesach/Passover	(Jewish)
12 February	Darwin's Birthday	(National)	31 March	Hanuman Jayanti	(Hindu)
12 February	First Day of Lent/The Great Feast	(Orthodox Christian)	1 April	Easter Day	(Western Christian)
13 February	Shrove Tuesday	(Western Christian)	3 April	Mahavir Jayanti	(Jain)
14 February	Ash Wednesday	(Western Christian)	5 April	Ching Ming	(Chinese)
14 February - 29 March	Lent	(Western Christian)	6 April	Holy Friday	(Orthodox Christian)
14 February	Maha Shivaratri	(Hindu)	8 April	Pascha/Easter Day	(Orthodox Christian)
16 February	Yuan Tan/Chinese New Year	(Chinese)	11 - 12 April	Yom Ha-Shoah/Holocaust Day	(Jewish)
28 Feb - 1 March	Purim	(Jewish)	13 April	Lailat-al-Miraj	(Muslim)
1 March	St. David's Day	(National)	14 April	Baisakhi	(Sikh)
2 March	Teng Chieh	(Chinese)	21 April - 2 May	Ridvan	(Bahai)
3 March	Women's World Day of Prayer	(Christian)	23 April	St. George's Day	(National)
3 March	Holi	(Hindu)	1 May	Beltane	(Pagan)
			1 May	Lailat-al-Bara'a/Barat	(Muslim)

P.S. Anyone seeking to identify the dates for additional festivals and/or commemorations from the start of January to early May should access the many lists available on the internet. Some of the best such lists (in terms of inclusiveness and accuracy) derive from the BBC and RE:Online. The Shap Working Party on World Religion also produces a very good list, but the list must be purchased whether in hard or electronic form.

The SACRE members

Committee A: Other Faiths

Bhakti Rasa Adhikhara: Hinduism

Mrs. J. Cousin: Roman Catholic Church

Reverend E. Marley, OBE: Baptist Church and United Reformed Church

Harpal Singh: Sikhism

Mrs. D. Van der Velde: Judaism

Committee B: Church of England

Mrs. E. Bainbridge

Mr. C. Hudson

Mr. P. Rusby

Reverend J. Scott

Committee C: Teaching Associations/Unions

Mr. M. Davidson

Miss F. Gannon

Mr. T. Nicholls

Mrs. H. Shaw

Committee D: Local Authority

Councillor B. Crosby

Councillor W. Daley (Chair of the SACRE)

Councillor B. Pidcock, MBE

Councillor T. Thorne

Co-opted Representatives

Mrs. C. Butterworth: North-East Humanists

Observer (representing the academies and free schools)

Steve Gibson of Northumberland CE Academy

Local Authority Officers in Attendance

Phil André, Part-time RE Consultant

David Cookson, Commissioner for Secondary Education and Sixth Forms

Andrea Todd, Democratic Services Officer

