

Religion and Places of Worship

in Walsall (February 2017)

Introduction

This document has been collated by the SACRE group in Walsall. The key aim is to try and produce a summary of churches and contact in Walsall with some background information. It is hoped that this information will be of use to schools. In particular that it might serve as a catalyst for contacts and visits to places of worship and also for people of different faiths to come into your school.

The quotes below from the Agreed Syllabus help to set the context. The intention is that this booklet can be updated on an annual basis.

“Walsall is a vibrant and diverse Borough. Our population includes significant communities of Christians, Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs and smaller groups of other significant faith communities including Jews, Jains, Buddhists and members of the Baha’i faith. Many children in Walsall come from families that hold non-religious life stances. RE taught using this syllabus allows all learners to share their experiences and to learn from one another and the religions and beliefs in our community. This rich diversity influences the religions and beliefs to be taught in RE in this new syllabus.”

“In line with the law, Walsall’s Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education expects that schools will enable pupils to explore Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Sikhism, as well as Christianity. It also enables the consideration of secular life stances.”

The Anglican Church

The Anglican Church is just one branch of Christianity (see also Methodist, Catholic, Pentecostal etc) and can trace its roots back to the early Church. It is a very diverse branch of Christianity and contains a mix of Catholicism and Reformed Protestant theology.

The Anglican Communion is a group of churches from over 160 different countries with about 85 million members. The spiritual head of the Anglican Communion is Archbishop Justin Welby who is also the Head of the Church of England.

The Church of England aims to be a Christian presence in every community and is made up of two provinces (Canterbury and York) and 41 dioceses (Walsall is in Lichfield Diocese). Each diocese is divided up into smaller units called deaneries. St Matthew’s Church is the oldest Anglican Church in Walsall and is one of the 16 parishes that make up the Deanery of Walsall.

Within the Anglican Church there are three orders of ministry called deacons, priests and bishops, with various roles (jobs) including vicar, rector, curate, chaplain, area dean, archdeacon etc.

The principal services in the Anglican Church are Holy Communion (also known as Mass, Eucharist, The Lord's Supper etc), a service of the word (focusing primarily on scripture) and Morning and Evening prayer. The Anglican Church aims to look after people from birth to death and through various life experiences. Services which illustrate this include baptism, confirmation, marriages and funerals.

Useful link to the Anglican Church can be found at

- <https://www.churchofengland.org/our-faith.aspx> (The Church of England's website which also provides some useful further links.)
- <https://www.churchofengland.org/about-us/dioceses.aspx>
- <http://www.anglicancommunion.org>
- <https://www.gotquestions.org/Anglicans.html>
- <https://www.lichfield.anglican.org/>
- <https://www.lichfield.anglican.org/acny/> (Most of the Walsall parish websites and contact details can be accessed through this website)
- <http://www.stmatthewswalsall.co.uk/> (St Matthew's Church is the oldest church in Walsall)

Catholicism

Roman Catholicism is the largest Christian Church in the World with some 1.3 billion members. Approximately 42% of Catholics live in Central and South America and 24% in Europe but the area of fastest growth is Africa. It may come as some surprise that 12% of the World's Catholics live in Asia.

There are nearly 6 million Catholics in the UK with just over 4 million in England. Although there has been a decline in the number of practising Catholics born in England, this has been more than counterbalanced by the entry of people to this country, Poles in particular. In the Birmingham Archdiocese average attendance at Sunday Mass is about 75,000 which is about 25% of the Catholic population.

The Catholic Church teaches that it was founded by Jesus Christ and that the bishops are the successors of the Apostles. The head of the Church on earth is the Pope. Pope Francis, the present Pope, is reaching out to other faiths to a greater extent possibly than any of his predecessors.

In Western Europe, the contribution of the Catholic religion to music, art and civilisation in general cannot be ignored.

For general information about the Catholic Religion, there are numerous web sites under such titles as Roman Catholic Wikipedia; Catholic Church in the UK and Roman Catholic Church World wide.

Catholic Schools in Walsall come under the jurisdiction of the Archdiocese of Birmingham (Archbishop Bernard Longley) and all, except two, come into the Deanery of Walsall. There are nine Catholic Schools in Walsall, including two Secondary. Although they are Catholic in terms of religion and ethos, they also contain children of other religions due to their reputation for educational excellence.

In addition to schools, the Archdiocese is also responsible for training priests; training teachers; further and higher education at Maryvale; safeguarding; youth services; social care; prison visiting and links with other religions, as well as many other activities.

For information about Catholic Schools in Walsall or for general educational information, probably the best contact is Diocesan Education Service, 61 Coventry Road, Coleshill, B46 3EA 01675 430230.

Hinduism

Hinduism is made up of a variety of different religious beliefs and practices which originated near the river Indus in India. The name 'Hindu' comes from the word Indus. The religion dates back over 4,000 years.

There are an estimated 1 billion Hindus worldwide, making Hinduism the third largest religion after Christianity and Islam. About 80 percent of India's population regard themselves as Hindus and 30 million more Hindus live outside of India.

According to the 2001 Census, which collected information about religious identity across Britain, Hinduism is the third largest practiced religion in Britain, with 559,000 describing themselves as Hindu, many of whose ancestry came originally from Gujarat and Punjab in India.

Hindu settlement began in Britain early in the 20th century as a result of Britain's colonial relationship with India. The majority of Hindu immigrants arrived in the 1960s and 1970s from East Africa following the impact of nation-building policies in the newly independent states. There are also Hindus in the UK today who have moved here from places like Trinidad and Fiji, and those who have moved to Britain directly from India. In recent times these have been mostly professionals, migrating to Britain to take up jobs in healthcare, education and business. Most Hindus in the UK have tended to achieve well in education and demonstrate considerable resourcefulness and flexibility in adapting to conditions in their new country.

About 2% of Walsall town's population will identify themselves as Hindu, the vast majority originating from Gujarat on the West coast of India. Other Hindu communities present in Walsall hail from the Punjab or East Africa.

Hinduism has no founder or date of origin. The authors and dates of most Hindu sacred texts are unknown, although the oldest texts (the Vedas) are estimated to date from as early as 1500 BCE. Scholars describe Hinduism as the product of religious development in India that spans nearly 4,000 years, making it perhaps the oldest surviving world religion.

The broad term "Hinduism" encompasses a wide variety of traditions, which are closely related and share common themes but do not constitute a unified set of beliefs or practices.

Hinduism is not a homogeneous, organized system. Many Hindus are devoted followers of Shiva or Vishnu, whom they regard as the only true God, while others look inward to the divine Self (atman). But most recognize the existence of Brahman, the unifying principle and Supreme Reality behind all that is.

In the 20th century, Hinduism began to gain popularity in the West. Its different worldview and its tolerance for diversity in belief made it an attractive alternative to traditional Western religion. Although there are relatively few western converts to Hinduism specifically, Hindu thought has

influenced the West indirectly by way of religious movements like Hare Krishna and New Age, and even more so through the incorporation of Indian beliefs and practices (such as the chakra system and yoga) into health and spirituality.

There are a total of three Hindu temples in Walsall, two of Gujarati heritage and a third consisting of a largely Punjabi congregation respectively:

Shree Ram Mandir, Ford Street, Pleck, Walsall Mr Asvin Patel Tel: 01922 634462 www.shree-ram-mandir-walsall.org.uk

Krishna Temple, 18 Salisbury Street, Darlaston

Mandir Baba Balak Nath, 96a Caldmore Road, Walsall 01922621177

Also locally is the

Shri Vekateshwara (Balaji) Temple in Tipton. www.venkateswara.org.uk

Shree Geeta Bhawan 107-117 Heathfield Road, Birmingham B19 1HL, UK
Tel: 0121 554 4120 www.shreegeetabhawan.com

Shree Krishna Mandir, (West Bromwich), 81 Old Meeting Street West Bromwich West Midlands United Kingdom B70 9Sz

Nationally we have Bhaktivedanta Manor in Aldenham Watford & Neasden Hindu Temple in Wembley

Islam

Muslims have had a recorded presence in the British Isles since the 16th century. The first Muslim arrivals in Walsall came from the Indian subcontinent in the 1960's and worked in some of the large engineering firms present within the town at the time.

The Muslims of Walsall tend to be either from the Deobandi or Barelwi sects although collectively all will adhere to the Hanafi school of Islamic law for guidance on personal, spiritual and legal matters.

Approximately 8% of the population of Walsall will identify themselves as Muslim with a historic community of people from Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Indian Gujarati heritage. In more recent times, the diversity of Walsall's Muslim community has increased with the addition of new arrivals from Afghanistan, Somalia and various parts of the Middle East.

There are twelve mosques based across Walsall and all are welcoming to visitors from other faiths, ethnicities or sectarian traditions within Islam. Some mosques do have an English-speaking single point of contact to facilitate school visits and make them more informative:

- *Aisha Mosque and Islamic Centre, Rutter St, Walsall (01922620982 ext 2) Also on their web site there is a form for booking a visit <http://www.aishamosque.org/book-a-visit/>*
- *Masjid Al Farouq, Milton Street, Walsall Imam Ebrahim Esakjee 07877414784*
- *Gausia Mosque and Islamic Centre, 15 Birchills Street, Birchills, WS2 8QB 01922640787*

Methodism

Information about your faith locally/nationally/internationally (it could include reading materials and web sites).

Website: <http://www.methodist.org.uk/>

The structure of the Methodist Church

Methodists are all linked together by a Methodist 'Connexion' and each member of the Church is a part of this wider Connexion. There are 31 Districts in England, Scotland and Wales.

Each District is made up of a number of Circuits.

In this area, we are in the Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury District.

The Walsall Borough covers 2 Circuits: The Walsall Circuit and the Brownhills & Willenhall Circuit. Each of these 2 Circuits has ten churches.

The Circuit websites have information on each Church including the Minister's details. Contact the Minister to arrange school visits in the first instance. All addresses of each Church are on these websites.

1. <http://www.walsallmethodist.org/> WALSALL CIRCUIT
2. <http://brownhillsandwillenhallmethodistcircuit.org.uk/> BROWNHILLS & WILLENHALL CIRCUIT

The Methodist Church is led by the President and Vice President of Conference and this changes every year.

The website says: Each year at the Methodist Conference, the following year's President (always an ordained presbyter) and Vice-President (always a lay person or deacon) are elected.

John Wesley himself was the original President of the Methodist Conference, but after his death it was agreed that in future, so much authority would not be placed in the hands of one man. Instead, the President would be elected for one year only, to sit in Wesley's chair.

Internationally there are many Methodist Churches all over the world as part of the United Methodist Church.

Reading materials

Methodist publishing: <https://www.methodistpublishing.org.uk/>

The Methodist worship book contains some liturgy for set services and communions.

The two main hymn books in use at the moment are: 'Hymns & Psalms' and 'Singing the Faith'.

Quakers

General information

The Quaker movement was started about 350 years ago by George Fox. It is rooted in Christianity, although it differs in many ways from other Christian denominations. Its formal title is "The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)". The word "Quaker" was used originally as a nickname.

Quakers share a way of life based on the belief that there is that of God in everyone. Their unity is based on the practice of shared silent worship, in which they seek direct experience of God. The local Meetings for Worship are open to everyone and are essentially silent, although anyone who feels moved to speak may do so. Such "ministry" may take the form of a reading from the Bible or a Quaker book, a prayer, or a reflection on experience. There are no clergy.

Quakers try to live with honesty and integrity, with respect for the environment. They have a strong commitment to peace and peace education which arises from the conviction that all human beings are unique and equal. They work locally and globally to put their faith into action. Quakerism is a way of life, rather than a dogma or creed.

Further information is available at www.quaker.org.uk

Local information, about Quakers in the Midlands, is available at www.centralenglandquakers.org.uk

A free information pack is available by writing to Quaker Outreach (QN), FREEPOST QUAKERS, or by phoning FREEPHONE 0808-109-1651.

Local contacts

To arrange a visit by a Quaker speaker to a school, contact one of the following:

Jim Green: greenaj@blueyonder.co.uk Tel. No: 01922-616385

Barbara Groombridge: bgroombridge@btinternet.com Tel. No: 0192-638323.

Local centres (Meeting Houses)

Walsall Quakers do not have their own Meeting House but meet on Sundays at 11.00 a.m. in rented premises (Walsall Deaf People's Centre in Lichfield Street). There are Quaker Meeting Houses in Wolverhampton and Sutton Coldfield as well as in different areas of Birmingham. The most central one in Birmingham is in Bull Street, and visits can be arranged by using one of the contacts above.

Other information

Central England Quakers, through their "Peacemakers" project, work by arrangement with local schools to provide Peer Mediation and Peacemaker courses. Their resource/training package *Learning for Peace* supports the teaching and learning of the spiritual, moral, social and cultural curriculum in schools.

For further information email: peacemakers.org.uk

Sikhism

Sikhism was founded in the 16th century in the Punjab district of what is now India and Pakistan. It was founded by Guru Nanak and is based on his teachings, and those of the 9 Sikh gurus who followed him.

About 5% of Walsall's population will identify themselves as Sikh with families settling here from the Punjab as early as 1957. All temples are equipped with a 'langar' or soup-kitchen that is staffed around the clock by volunteers to provide free meals for guests, worshippers or the homeless and needy. There are 4 Sikh temples (Gurdwaras) in Walsall and are equipped to host guests at any time and to observe religious rites.

Guru Nanak Sikh Temple, Caldmore Road, Walsall: Mr Sabjit Johal 01922 622199

Darbar Sri Guru Granth, Rollingmill Street, Walsall: Mr Jagdev Singh 07980 544602

Guru Nanak Sikh Temple Willenhall: Ms Raman Sandu 07809 439152

Nanaksar Gurdwaral, Wellington Street, Pleck: Ms Charanjit Kaur 01922 641 040

United Reformed Church (URC)

The United Reformed Church is a Christian organisation formed in 1972 by the union of the Presbyterian Church in England and the Congregational Church in England and Wales. In 1981 the Reformed Association of Christ joined the URC followed in 2000 by the Congregational Union of Scotland.

At present the URC has 1,400 churches, 56,000 members and 608 active Ministers. Churches may share a Minister and Elders support the Minister by taking on various responsibilities. Decisions about the church are made by a meeting of the church members. The churches are supported at regional level by meetings called a Synod. The General Assembly makes decisions affecting all churches in the URC.

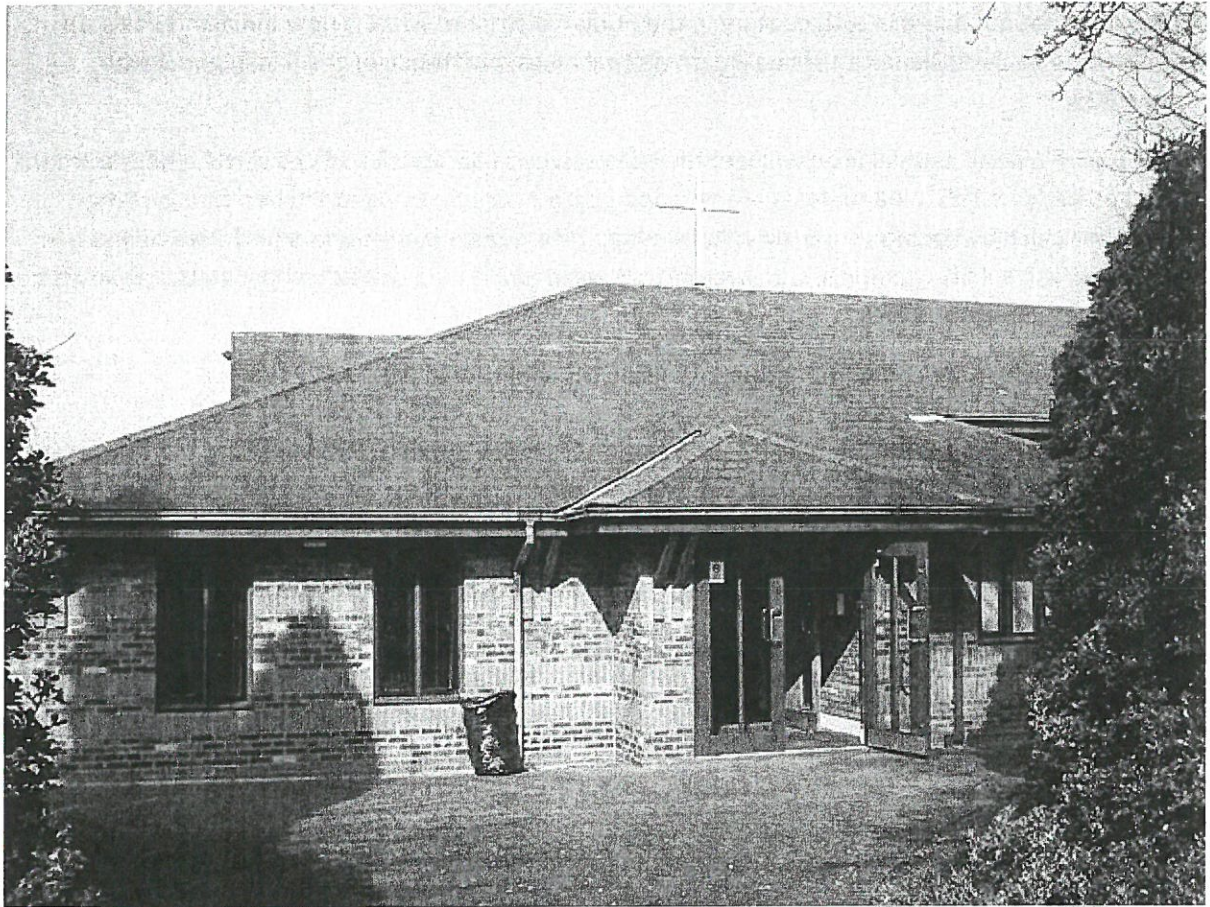
THE WALSALL PASTORATE.

The Walsall Pastorate of the URC consists of three churches who share a Minister, the Reverend Wilbert Sayimani, who is from Zimbabwe. All three churches have a Sunday morning service while Broadway also has an evening or afternoon service. All three churches offer a Junior Church for young people during the morning service. Broadway operates a Youth Fellowship on alternate Sunday evenings.

Music is very important and all three churches have a pipe organ. All the congregations are proud of their charity activities and especially events to support Christian Aid. Special services are held at Christmas, Easter and on other special Christian celebrations. Joint Services are held and these bring the congregations of the three churches together. In the interests of Christian unity joint services are also held with other Christian Churches.

The three churches have very different characteristics.

BLAKENALL URC Blakenall Lane, Walsall. WS3 1HF



A modern attractive building, built in 1995. It has a garden of remembrance. Services on Sunday morning start at 11am. Uniformed organisations include beavers, cubs, brownies and scouts.

BROADWAY URC Broadway, Walsall WS5 3PH

Built in 1959 the building offers a bright, cheerful environment. It comprises a large church hall. Music is particularly important and Broadway is one of few churches to have a four part choir. The church manages the Glebe Centre in Walsall. This is run by the YMCA and supports vulnerable adults.

Services on a Sunday begin at 10.30am and 6.30pm, 3pm in winter.



HATHERTON URC Hatherton Rd, Walsall. WS1 1XZ

A grade II listed building, unaltered since 1881 and including many interesting features including a rear balcony, leaded light windows, raised pulpit and pipe organ. Services on Sunday begin at 11am.



The Reverend Sayamani would be delighted to welcome visitors to any or all three churches.
Telephone 01922 627671

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