

# Confident Christianity

*Interfaith Engagement and understanding  
for Christians and their church communities*



*Sessions for  
Methodist Churches*

The **Methodist** Church



## Interfaith Engagement and understanding for Christians and their church communities

The St Philip's Centre is delighted that the Methodist Connexion has given us a grant to fund work enabling Methodists to join in with this exciting journey of faith. We expect this project to enable participants to increase their awareness of God's presence; help people to learn and grow as Christians; and become good neighbours with people of different cultures and faiths. In reference to "Our Calling" and the priorities of the Methodist Church, the project will enable participants to develop and grow their confidence in sharing their faith in a way that makes sense to those of other faiths and also enhance their own understanding of ministry and mission in a complex multi-faith, multi-cultural society. The project will encourage participants to break out of inward-looking church life to make friendships and to speak of God and of faith with people they meet in multi-faith settings, as well as providing scope for theological reflection on those meetings.



One aspect of Jesus' ministry that really challenges me is the fact that he was really comfortable as both guest and host in all kinds of complex situations. As I read the Gospels, I regularly see Jesus cross boundaries, defy social convention and build relationships with the most unlikely of people. One of the ways I learn how to get better at that is through interfaith engagement.

I have recently written on this theme in a book entitled Hospitality, Service, Proclamation: Interfaith Engagement as Christian Discipleship. As I look back on my decade or so of interfaith encounters, I realise that as a result of them I have become a

better guest and a better host. I have learnt to be more nuanced and Christ-like in what I welcome and what I challenge. I have had many opportunities to serve people of other faiths, but also to be served by them. I have grown in my ability to sensitively share my faith in Jesus in a way that means it is actually heard as someone speaking good news, even by those who do not share my faith. Interfaith engagement is a great way to grow as a follower of Jesus.

As John Wesley says in "On a Catholic Spirit" we must be confident and clear in our own identity, which enables us to be comfortable in engaging with others whom we disagree with. In particular we will work to grow participants' confidence in appropriate sharing of their faith with those of other faith backgrounds. Interfaith encounter does not put up barriers to evangelism; rather it equips people to act appropriately, aware of the full implications of their actions and the care needed by those who convert to Christianity from other faith backgrounds.

This booklet gives further information about the types of sessions we can offer. If you would like to know more, please do get in touch with either Laura Johnson – Churches Training Officer ([courses@stphilipscentre.co.uk](mailto:courses@stphilipscentre.co.uk)) or myself ([director@stphilipscentre.co.uk](mailto:director@stphilipscentre.co.uk))

All the best

**Revd Dr Tom Wilson,**  
Centre Director



# First Encounters

## 1) Introducing Interfaith Engagement: Hospitality, Service and Proclamation

A short session, consisting of a twenty to thirty minute presentation on the themes of Hospitality, Service, Proclamation: Interfaith Engagement as Christian discipleship. This session is designed as a confidence builder, using material developed over a number of years of preparing and equipping Christians for interfaith encounter. Participants will leave the session with fresh confidence to build meaningful relationships with people of other faith traditions.



## 2) A Taste of Faith

A Taste of Faith is a discussion and Q&A based session which is an excellent introduction to a world faith. We'll bring along a faith practitioner, a box of artefacts and some snacks related to festivals and cultural traditions.

Participants can choose from a variety of faiths, including Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism.

Watch a short film of a Taste of Faith session on our YouTube Channel (search 'St Philip's Centre') or on our Facebook Page (search 'St Philip's Centre Ltd')

## 3) Festivals and Faiths

These sessions help Christians explore festivals of world faiths by learning about them alongside Christian ones – enabling discussions around shared themes and contrasts. Participants can choose from:

- Advent and Diwali
- Easter and Passover
- Harvest and Eid
- Understanding Diwali (Hindu, Sikh and Jain perspectives)

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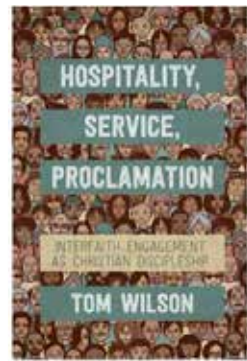


# Deeper Understanding

These sessions can last between 2 and 4 hours, depending on availability.

## 1) Hospitality, Service, Proclamation: Case Studies

A longer session exploring themes of hospitality, service and proclamation in the context of interfaith engagement. An interactive session, involving Biblical reflection, discussion of case studies and scenarios and sharing of experiences, both good and bad, of developing stronger relationships and partnerships between people of all faiths and no faith.



## 2) Preaching at Easter with Jewish Communities in Mind

The Holy Week and Easter Gospel readings are full of phrases and concepts that challenge the preacher. What should we say about Matthew 27:25, where the people cry, "His blood be on us and on our children!"? What do we make of Luke's Gospel, where Pilate seems to surrender his authority to mob rule? What about John's references to Jesus' first followers hiding for "fear of the Jews"? Working with a Jewish faith practitioner, this interactive session will enable preachers to discuss the texts they want to preach on during Holy Week and develop strategies for doing so that avoid casual or unthinking anti-Semitism.



## 3) Prophets in Islam and Christianity

The Bible and the Qur'an both tell stories of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Mary and Jesus. There are many points of connection between the two Holy Books of Islam and Christianity, but there are also points of contrast. What happens to Noah's wife? How did Joseph treat his brothers? Where did Mary spend her childhood? What exactly happened to Jesus on the cross and what is his role at the end of time? This session will explore one (or more) of these Prophet's stories, in conjunction with a Muslim faith practitioner, deepening our understanding of the Prophets' stories in our sacred texts.



## 4) Singing Faith: Hymns in Christianity and Hinduism

Christians love to sing. The Apostle Paul urges us to sing with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making music in our hearts to the Lord. Hindus also love to sing; within some strands of the Hindu faith there is a strong tradition of bhakti (devotional) sung worship. Working together with a Hindu faith practitioner, we will explore our favourite hymns and songs, their history, use and impact on faith and life today.



# Bespoke Sessions

The St Philip's Centre offers bespoke sessions that meet your needs in your locality, for example:

- A visit to your local Mosque... and opportunity to invite people back!
- Training session for youth workers in your Circuit or District
- A roadshow for your circuit or local preachers' meeting



If you would like to know more, please do get in touch – we'd be delighted to hear from you



Revd Dr Tom Wilson ([director@stphilipscentre.co.uk](mailto:director@stphilipscentre.co.uk))



Dr Laura Johnson ([courses@stphilipscentre.co.uk](mailto:courses@stphilipscentre.co.uk))  
Telephone 0116 2733459

Website: [www.stphilipscentre.co.uk](http://www.stphilipscentre.co.uk)

Facebook Page: St Philip's Centre Ltd

Twitter: @SPCLeicester



St Philip's Centre Ltd.  
2A Stoughton Drive North  
Leicester LE5 5UB

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