

Conference 2022

Plurality in Religion and Worldviews: Exploring Lived Traditions

Speaker Sessions

Monday, 4th July 2022 09.45a.m. – 10.45a.m.

Key note: Jagbir Jhutti Johal

A Personal Reflection of Lived Religion from a Sikh Woman of Faith and Academia Teaching Sikhi.



Session Outline:

Jagbir will reflect on lived religion from a personal perspective, but will highlight how whilst she might draw on a worldview lens there are Sikhs who object to the worldview perspective.

She will first highlight how the Sikh community is diverse on the basis of observance, but how there are key values that all Sikhs hold because they are what she calls universal worldviews. Taking examples of values such as respect, equality, activism and human rights, Jagbir will discuss how although she may not participate in institutionalized religion, she draws on key Sikh teachings - Ik Onkar, Sarbat Da Bhalla and Sewa - to understand and live within the world.

Jagbir Jhutti Johal is a Sikh woman of faith who is also an academic at the Department of Theology and Religion, University of Birmingham. She has been teaching Sikh Studies for over twenty-two years and focusses on Sikh theology, inter-faith dialogue and contemporary issues facing the Sikh community. Her research and teaching covers issues of equality, Sikh identity in the diasporic community, racialization and mistaken identity and other contested issues that confront the Sikh community nationally and globally. Her work in the Edward Cadbury Centre for the Public Understanding of Religion, looks at public policy, social and political engagement issues as they affect and are effected by the British Sikh community.

Jagbir was a Commissioner on The Commission on Religion and Belief in British Public Life (CORAB), convened in 2013 by The Woolf Institute, and is regularly called upon by policy makers to provide a Sikh input into consultations. For example, she was a member of the Sikh Roundtable for the Government Covid-19 Places of Worship Taskforce. Jagbir is currently a steering group member on the UK Freedom of Religion or Belief Forum, and an International Panel Member for the OSCE/ODIHR on FORB. Her work and profile is internationally recognised which means she gets asked to present and participate in international work – having presented to the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom on the Sikh and Hindu religious minorities in Afghanistan.

As well as teaching, Jagbir is an activist and a board member and trustee on a number of organisations, such as Faiths for the Climate and Race Equality Foundation. She is a layperson on the Royal College of Obstetrics and Gynaecology Women's Network and very involved in interfaith work and voluntary work within the community, especially around women and children's issues.

Jagbir is also presenter on the Thought for the Day segment on BBC Radio 4's Today programme.

10.45a.m. – 11.15a.m. Discussion Time

Monday 11.15a.m. – 11.30a.m. Show and Tell:

Robert Kirkwood - Sparks in The Classroom

Veronica Wukics - Hodder Education

11.30a.m. – 12.00 Refreshments and Exhibition of Resources

12.00 – 12.45p.m. with Debbie Tibbey

Unity in Diversity

Session Outline:

“In reality all are members of one human family -- children of one Heavenly Father. Humanity may be likened unto the vari-colored flowers of one garden. There is unity in diversity. Each sets off and enhances the other's beauty.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Divine Philosophy, p. 25-26



The Bahá'í Faith, the youngest independent world religion, has no branches or divisions. The Covenant, a clearly delineated line of succession has ensured that there is no division. So how does this work in a religion which, in less than 200 years, has spread to every nation and country of the world and embraces people of a multitude of backgrounds, cultures and traditions?

We will explore the central principle of “Unity in Diversity” and see how difference unites and enriches us. We will also look at what can be used in the RE classroom to learn about a religion with no clergy, set artefacts, rituals or dress, but a very distinct code for living.

Debbie Tibbey's day job is to mentor teenagers who find regular school education tricky, often because the adults and systems in their lives have let them down. Although she was a Primary School teacher for many years, she now teaches functional skills English and maths for some of these lovely young people on a small care farm in rural Dorset.

The Bahá'í teaching that each and every one of us has been “endowed with talents and faculties” focusses her interactions, helping young people to draw out their best. One of her guiding principles is that we should “regard man as a mine, rich in gems of inestimable value”.

Debbie has been a Bahá'í for forty years, and is a member of the Bahá'í RE Group which advises teachers and students, and creates materials on the Bahá'í Faith for use in RE.

12.45p.m. – 1.15p.m. Show and Tell:

Anne Mosley – Storytent

Claire Ramalli

Gill Vaisey - Books at Press

Jan McGuire – VAT in RE

1.15p.m. – 2.15p.m. Lunch and Exhibition of Resources

Monday 2.15p.m. – 3.00p.m Updates Panel and Q & A

Sue Holmes – Young Ambassadors

Ed Pawson – REC

Kathryn Wright – Culham St Gabriel's

3.00p.m. – 4.00p.m. with Coventry and Warwickshire SACRE Members

Visits and Visitors to Enhance RE Experiences.

Session Outline:

In this session, Rocky Grove and four of his fellow serving members of Warwickshire and Coventry SACREs will share their experiences and insights into engagement with the local communities, supporting schools with visits and visitors and details about their Youth SACRE.



Rocky Grove represents the Baha'is on Warwickshire SACRE and has served as co-chair for the last 5 years. Until his retirement, he taught in a primary school and was a teacher for nearly 30 years. He now works as an Open University Tutor.

Helen Madouis, Greek Orthodox Community, is the Chair of Group A on Coventry SACRE. She has been a member since the inception of SACRE and has a wealth of experience with visits and visitors.

Ajitpal Lotay, Education Secretary from Guru Nanak Parkash Gurdwara, also Senior member of Midland Langhar Seva Service, in addition to his ICT job! He oversees the visits to the Gurdwara. The system was set up by Jatinder Singh Sikh, representative on Coventry SACRE.

Hema Yelleprada is the Hindu representative on Warwickshire SACRE. She is a recent arrival. She speaks Telegu. Hema played a major role during Covid with NHS and looking after their well-being. She has discussed inclusion through RE in the UK on Indian TV.

Zafar Bhatti is the Ahmadiyya Muslim Representative on Warwickshire SACRE. He has worked with Jatinder Birdi to co-host joint open days at the Masjid and Gurudwara.

4.00p.m. – 4.15p.m. Show and Tell:

Lesley Prior – EFTRE

Angela Hill and Julia Diamond-Conway – RE Today and NATRE

Ruth Everett

4.15p.m. – 4.45p.m. Refreshments and Exhibition

Monday 4.45p.m. – 5.30p.m. with Liz Wooldridge

Exploring World Views in the Early Years Classroom.

Session Outline:

In this session Liz will be sharing some of the ways she brings the lived experience from a range of world views into the Early Years classroom. This approach enables our youngest learners to gain an understanding of how religious beliefs, culture and tradition are expressed in the everyday lives of people today. Children are encouraged to use what they have learned to explore their own world view and look for similarities and differences between traditions.



Liz Wooldridge is Early Years Lead at Leamington Hastings Academy in rural Warwickshire, teaching both Nursery and Reception children in a mixed age unit. Liz is also RE Lead for her school and is involved in various projects led by Jen Jenkins, including the RE:Search group.

Liz and her husband live in a village on the outskirts of Rugby with their two teenagers and a naughty Labrador.

Tuesday 5th July 2022 10.00a.m. – 11.00a.m.

Tuesday key note: Martha Shaw

Understanding worldviews as lived, through our own self-conscious engagement in plurality.



Session Outline:

This session explores how we can promote an understanding of religion/worldviews as lived and suggests the need for a framework to support a process of active, reflexive, critical encounter or engagement in the plurality of which we are part. I argue the need for an explicit focus on the representation of religion and worldviews in curricula as well as in everyday life, contrasting reductionist as essentialist representations with the reality of lived experience as evidenced in contemporary research. I argue the importance of understanding worldviews as interpretable and that this is central to aims of academic rigour and acceptance of difference. Equally important is the deconstruction of revered 'knowledge' about religion and worldviews and the power structures therein, supporting the development critical consciousness. I examine how the shift to a 'worldviews approach' with a focus on interpretability, reflexivity and encounter, goes beyond a change in content and presents a fundamental shift in understanding the role of knowledge in RE. This is explored in terms of a move away from content-focused curriculum and pedagogy to a transformative process of praxis. Finally, I argue the need for a framework to support this process and suggest the development of 'worldview literacy' involves more than the accumulation of knowledge, skills and attitudes vis-à-vis diversity. Rather it can be understood as an ongoing process of reflexive engagement with the livedness of worldviews of which we are part and as such part of the broader aims of education as participation in the world.

Martha Shaw is Associate Professor in Education at London South Bank University. She joined LSBU in 2016 from Goldsmiths, University of London, where she was a researcher in the Faiths & Civil Society Unit. Here her experience in community development and Sociology combined in research projects exploring the role of religion in the public sphere. Prior to this, Martha taught RE and Sociology at secondary level and worked in community development as a researcher and facilitator.

Her role at LSBU combines her teaching and research expertise. She teaches across UG and PG courses in education and lead the RE element of the Primary PGCE and also supervises doctoral candidates.

Martha's key research interests are around religion and worldviews in education and education for intercultural citizenship. In 2015 she co-led a project, RE for REal, which helped lay the foundation for the recent Commission on RE and the proposed National Entitlement.

Current projects include an international research symposium on religion & worldviews education and citizenship. This collaboration with Manchester and Dalhousie University (Canada) brings together researchers to explore the relationship between teaching about religion and worldviews in schools and student understandings of citizenship.

Martha currently leads LSBU's Education for Social Justice research group, which brings together research and practice across formal and informal education to promote inclusion and social justice.

Related papers:

Shaw, M (2018) New Representations of Religion & Belief in Schools, *Religions*, 2018, 9(11). <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel9110364>

Shaw, M. (2019). Towards a religiously literate curriculum – religion and worldview literacy as an educational model. *Journal of Beliefs & Values*. 41 (2), pp. 150-161. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13617672.2019.1664876>

Shaw, M (2022). Worldview Literacy as Intercultural Citizenship Education: A framework for critical, reflexive engagement in plural democracy. *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice*. pp. 1-17. <https://doi.org/10.1177/17461979211062125>

Tuesday 11.00a.m. – 11.10a.m. Show and Tell:

Kevin Baldwin - Holy Land Gifts

Claire Clinton - RE Matters

11.10a.m. – 11.35a.m. Refreshments and Exhibition

11.35a.m. – 11.50a.m. with Richard Kueh, Update from Ofsted (via Zoom)

11.50 a.m. – 12.20 p.m. with Gill Vaisey

Exploring the lived traditions of individuals, families and communities through the lens of five-year-olds.



Session Outline:

In this session, Gill will provide an insight into her work with eight families, each with a five / six year old child and each holding a different worldview. Gill will give a glimpse of what it was like 'behind the scenes' working with the children and their families – the challenges, the unexpected and the highlights.

Gill Vaisey is a national Religion and Worldviews Adviser and writer of high quality RE curriculum materials for practitioners and pupils. As an experienced primary school teacher and RE Subject Leader, Gill became an independent education consultant and has specialised in Early Years and Primary RE for over twenty years, providing support to teachers, LAs, Dioceses and SACREs across the UK.

Gill has a wealth of experience in providing professional support to SACREs and Agreed Syllabus Conferences, leading and managing teacher working groups, writing Agreed Syllabuses and producing exemplar curriculum planning and support materials.

To meet the needs of practitioners and pupils, Gill began writing and producing books and resource materials for the classroom. Her series of Puddles books were the first to be awarded accreditation for the Understanding Christianity project. Her Muslim story resources received an Early Years Excellence award.

Gill's high-quality advice, training and curriculum materials facilitate more enjoyable, accessible and meaningful RE for practitioners and pupils. Her recent 'Belonging and Believing' project, working with eight families over three years, shares their lived experience through the lens of a five-year old from within each family. These resources bring an exciting fresh approach to exploring different religions and worldviews with young children.

She has recently worked with Jan McGuire and Trudy Sore on a Culham St Gabriel's grant funded project - The VAT of Belonging and Believing – which draws on Gill's recent experience working with Wilf and his humanist family and her wealth of experience with the Early Years curriculum and best practice.

Tuesday 12.20 p.m. – 12.40 p.m. with Gill Vaisey and Jan McGuire

**Wilf and his humanist family: The VAT of Belonging and Believing
Digital tool – a Culham St Gabriel’s funded project.**



Session Outline:

Exploring humanism as a worldview is a new challenge for practitioners. In this short session, Gill will share her learning journey in understanding humanism. She will highlight the key beliefs that can be explored with young children meaningfully and appropriately.

Gill and Jan will then introduce a recently developed digital learning tool, created to facilitate learning about humanism for Early Years.

The Culham St Gabriel’s grant funded project allowed Jan and Gill to team up with Trudy Sore, a digital software expert and three experienced Early Years practitioners to create ‘The VAT of Belonging and Believing – a digital tool for Early Years’.

Jan McGuire is a Religious Education and Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC) Consultant. As an experienced Adviser for the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) Jan works as a trainer, governance officer and Adviser in RE for Local Authorities and local, regional and national educational organisations.

Jan is involved in developing regional and national curriculum materials for use within the broad area of RE, SMSC, cultural and religious diversity. Jan is named lead author and editor of the ‘Teaching Controversial Issues Toolkit’, adopted by the UN in 2018 and the Religious Education leadership mentoring (REvitalise) programme (2019 AREIAC and CSGT). Jan developed the VAT in RE pedagogy to support non-specialist and new teachers to the curriculum area in 2020 (Westhill/NASACRE). Currently she is working on a collaborative digital tool project ‘VAT of Belonging and Believing’ focusing on Early Years and humanism (CSTG 2022). The VAT in RE pedagogy focus’ on vocabulary, artefacts and texts as a way of clearly developing a deep and high quality Religious Education curriculum.

An experienced classroom teacher and leader in RE for over 25 years, teaching from Primary through to Higher Education level, Jan provides training and support in all aspects of RE and SMSC.

Tuesday 12.45 p.m. – 1.30 p.m. with Justine Ball



Session Outline:

Exploring ways to teach about Jesus in the primary school which accurately reflect Jesus' historical background and the diversity among Christians, communities and traditions.

In my session I will outline my Masters research on the teaching about Jesus in English primary schools. I will consider scholarship in Religious Education (RE) about teaching religion through the principles of Religion and Worldviews research and scholarship in Religious, Biblical and Theological Studies about decolonising the curriculum. I will highlight that RE teachers from the beginning of a child's first lessons should present a Jesus who is Jewish with a context which is located within Judaea two thousand years ago. I will argue that the artwork and imagery used in the teaching about Jesus should be as carefully chosen as the content of lessons to avoid the dominance of Jesus being depicted as the White Western Christ of tradition. I will show that the historical Jesus and the Christ of faith is of interest to many communities, both within the Christian church and in other religions, yet this is not always seen in teaching. I will share research highlighting Christianity as a diverse religion in the UK as well as a global religion and I will highlight that this is not fully reflected in the imagery and teaching about Jesus. Presenting varied imagery from the UK and around the world and teaching about the historical Jewish person of Jesus is crucial to allow children from all backgrounds to engage with discussions and ensure all voices are heard in the classroom. This approach references anti-racist approaches to education and years of research about Jesus which are currently not reflected in all primary teaching.

Justine Ball works for Hampshire County Council as a Primary RE Inspector and Advisor. As part of her role, she provides professional support for primary RE across Hampshire, Portsmouth, Southampton and the Isle of Wight. She runs an annual conference for primary RE teachers as well as editing Hampshire's RE Primary News. Prior to joining Hampshire, she worked in a primary school, where she taught across the infant and junior classes. She has also taught for ten years in Adult Further Education. Justine is one of the joint Chairs of AREIAC and is also a joint Chair of the London and South East branch of AREAIC. Justine has recently gained her master's degree at Chester University.

1.30p.m. – 2.30p.m. Lunch

Tuesday 2.30 p.m. – 3.30 p.m. with Alastair Ross:

‘Schools Welcome!’ Promoting quality educational visits to enrich RE

Session Outline:

Dialogue between students and people of faith enriches religious education, nurtures tolerance and builds bridges of understanding within our local communities. Engagement can take the form of a visit to a faith community or receiving a visitor in an assembly, class or special event. Other opportunities can be taken on-line. Many schools find it invaluable to arrange such dialogue to help students to broaden their understanding and experience of our communities and world. For RE, direct human interaction transforms theory into lived encounter.



The session will explore:

- The value, importance and impact of encounters for RE, personal development and community cohesion
- Practical suggestions and templates for visits – both live and online
- Training and support for members of faith communities

Alastair Ross graduated in Philosophy, Politics and Economics (PPE) at Oxford University and has subsequently studied and researched in both Theology and Religious Studies at Nottingham and Manchester universities.

He was ordained to the Anglican ministry and worked mostly in Liverpool, where he was also an honorary canon of the city’s small and modest cathedral. In 2000 he trained as a secondary RE teacher, then becoming a head of department, advanced skills teacher and associate senior leader.

Over the past ten years he has focused on RE advisory work, forming Pennine Learning Associates to support schools and local authorities as their roles were forced to change. The team supports RE in several local authority areas across the north of England, including training, advising and producing resources, such as the local agreed syllabus in West Yorkshire. His work is rooted in a commitment to developing common understanding and challenging prejudice. This has included working with the Holocaust Educational Trust, Schools Linking Network, Anne Frank Trust, and the REC’s RESilience project.

Nevertheless, Alastair is most happy being out of doors when he can, exploring the wilder parts of northern Britain and elsewhere. He is a qualified hill and moorland leader and has written a number of walking guidebooks to northern England and Wales.

3.30 p.m. – 4.00 p.m. Reflections and Discussion

4.00p.m. Refreshments and Exhibition

Close of Conference