

## Watford observes National Interfaith Week, WIFA with interfaith pilgrimage

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On the occasion of National Interfaith Week, WIFA organised its annual interfaith pilgrimage visiting 5 places of worship around Watford. This time the pilgrimage took a different route than previous years: instead of starting at the Synagogue, we started at the Gurdwara responding to the invitation of Harjit Singh, the president of the Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha. The Sikh community was celebrating the birthday of Guru Nanak (founder of the Sikh religion) and Harjit wanted the pilgrims to be part of their celebration.



On Sunday 20th November, those who came for the pilgrimage were invited to a delicious Indian style lunch served by the Sikhs and then sat with the congregation listening to the closing of the 48 hours reading of the Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikh Holy Book. The Chair of Watford Interfaith Association welcomed everyone and thanked the Gurdwara for their kind hospitality. The group then left for St Mary's Parish Church, the oldest church in Watford with some parts dating back to around 1230. After a brief talk and a look around the church, we reached the Central Mosque. Imam Saleem warmly welcomed us and gave a brief overview of the main tenets of Islam and answered some of our questions. We were then surrounded by members of the congregation serving us with sweets, snacks and drinks. The Gurdwara, the church and the Mosque are very close to each other, 5 to 10 minutes' walk apart. Now the pilgrims took on the long walk uptown to St Andrew's Church where Rev Pankhurst was waiting for us. He told us that St Andrew's was built after the railway came to Watford and was the second parish church after St Mary's Church. We looked around the church and concluded our pilgrimage at the Watford and

District Synagogue where we met Rabbi Levine and his welcoming congregation and children. Once again after a wonderful talk on interfaith, Judaism and some jokes from the Rabbi we were served with warm drinks and delicious kosher pastries. We ended the pilgrimage perhaps tired but uplifted by our experience.



It has been now 8 years since WIFA has organised this interfaith pilgrimage. This year, it really felt like going around visiting old friends. The warm welcomes we received everywhere is a testimony of the trust and openness built up over the years. It is really heart-warming to witness the goodwill of everyone to each other whatever faith we come from. Even though sometimes the news seems dark and depressing, there are lights of hope shining in our communities. I would like to invite you to look at the Amazon Christmas ad this year [www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zrs8uoDmiDk](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zrs8uoDmiDk). Amazon quite amazingly chose an interfaith theme of a friendship between a priest and an Imam for its Christmas ad.