



COMUNITY SPIRIT  
*Good Practices*  
OF  
INTERFAITH DIALOGUE

[www.interrelgraz2013.com](http://www.interrelgraz2013.com)

# COM UNITY SPIRIT

## GOOD PRACTICES

### OF INTERFAITH DIALOGUE

This is a collection of 50 of Good Practice examples recommended by the participants of the “Interreligious Conference Graz 2013 ComUnitySpirit”, which have already been implemented in different countries and settings. This collection serves as an illustrative “snapshot” taken at the time of the Interreligious Conference and no claim is made with regard to its completeness.

#### **1 Bad Gams/ Graz, Austria:**

“FROM ALL FOUR POINTS OF THE COMPASS”

(Recommended by Inge Brenner)

In May 2013, the Jewish Community Graz and the Buddhist Centre Bad Gams jointly invited an interested audience to the Graz Synagogue for a reading of parables of different religions. The actor Daniel Doujenis narrated parables and traditions of some of the world’s major religions – Judaism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam as well as the Bahà’l faith. A reading tour for the young and the young at heart inspired by the religious cultures and musically accentuated by Stefan Heckel on the accordion.

Contact: Inge Brenner ([ingebrenner@sakyaling.at](mailto:ingebrenner@sakyaling.at))

#### **2 Berlin, Germany:**

“BERLIN DIALOGUE OF THE RELIGIONS”

(Recommended by Anika Sendes)

The Dialogue of the Religions, initially recommended by the mayor of Berlin and first implemented in 2011, is multilayered and includes a wide range of activities from events at the neighborhood community level, the so called “Kiez”, to cross-district partnerships and even Berlin-wide initiatives. Interfaith Dialogue can be initiated by all stakeholders involved: the leadership level of the religious communities, public institutions, multipliers as well as the individual believer. The aim of the Berlin Dialogue of the Religions is to facilitate networking activities of the numerous interfaith initiatives present in Berlin and to support the commitment of their various actors. The “Berlin Dialogue of the Religions” is backed by a considerable political interest to invite the citizens of Berlin, a city of great cultural, religious and ethnic diversity, to cooperate and assume social and civil responsibility.

Contact: Anika Sendes ([anika.sendes@kultur.berlin.de](mailto:anika.sendes@kultur.berlin.de))

#### **3 Berlin, Germany:**

“HOUSE OF PRAYER AND LEARNING AT PETRIPLATZ, BERLIN”

(Recommended by Anika Sendes)

On Petriplatz, a plaza located in the heart of Berlin, a house of prayer and learning is being built in partnership with the city of Berlin which will offer Jews, Muslims and Christians alike a space to hold services and pray, to teach and learn from one another. It is intended to be a house of scholarship and open discourse, not only among the faithful, but also with the secular. This new house of God will bring together the three major monotheistic religions, as they are required to plan, construct and operate the project jointly while being allowed to maintain their distinct identities. The building will provide each religious community with its own, separate space for prayer and worship as well as a shared, central area for dialogue. This project aims at meeting the growing need - also in spatial terms - for constructive community relations of people from different religious or ideological backgrounds. The project does not suggest or promote the

dilution of one's faith but rather aims at creating an opportunity for good practice of living one's faith alongside others and to engage in dialogue with other religions as well as with the public.

Information: [www.bet-lehrhaus-berlin.de](http://www.bet-lehrhaus-berlin.de)

Contact: Bet- und Lehrhaus Petriplatz Berlin e.V. ([info@bet-lehrhaus-berlin.de](mailto:info@bet-lehrhaus-berlin.de))

#### **4 Berlin, Germany:**

##### CINEASTIC WEEK "DIFFERENT APPROACHES, ONE GOAL - RELIGIONS IN DIALOGUE"

(Recommended by Anika Sendes)

Every evening in the Cinema Week "Different Approaches, One Goal- Religions in Dialogue" feature films and documentaries which stimulate interfaith dialogue are shown in the soup kitchen of a Franciscan convent in Berlin. After each movie, the audience is invited to engage in an analytic follow-up discussion with an invited expert guest.

Information: Deutsche Stiftung für interreligiösen und interkulturellen Dialog ([www.1219.eu](http://www.1219.eu))

Contact: Thomas M. Schimmel ([post@1219.eu](mailto:post@1219.eu))

#### **5 Berlin, Germany:**

##### "INTERFAITH PRAYER FOR PEACE"

(Recommended by Anika Sendes)

The "Interfaith Prayer for Peace" was initiated in October 2003 and has been taking place monthly ever since on the Gendarmenmarkt square in the center of Berlin. While the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq were the focus of the first prayers, the prayers addressed different aspects of the theme of peace in the following years. The concern of the initiators has been and still is to raise the voice of the religions as a vote for peace and the absolute priority of peaceful resolutions of armed conflicts respectively.

Individual prayers alternate with songs of the various religions. "The Interfaith Prayer for Peace" attracts members of different faith communities as well as people without religious affiliations who share common concerns.

Information: [www.friedensgebet-berlin.de](http://www.friedensgebet-berlin.de)

Contact: Reinhard Schaenke ([post@friedensgebet-berlin.de](mailto:post@friedensgebet-berlin.de))

#### **6 Berlin, Germany:**

##### "THE LONG NIGHT OF RELIGIONS"

(Recommended by Anika Sendes)

In the "Long Night of Religions", churches, synagogues, mosques, temples and other places of prayer and meditation open their doors to the public and invite people to an encounter, conversations and exchange.

The wide variety of activities on offer ranges from guided tours of churches, readings and discussion rounds to lectures, movie presentations, concerts, prayer meetings and meditations. In this way, the "Long Night of Religions" would like to send a visible signal of the religious diversity of Berlin. This projects aims at enabling an interested audience to get informed about religions, to re-explore seemingly familiar places and discover new and previously unknown religious sights and places. The "Long Night of Religions" is organised noncentrally. The participating religious communities present themselves and their program on their own terms.

Information: [www.langenachtderreligionen.de](http://www.langenachtderreligionen.de)

Contact: Peter Amsler ([info@langenachtderreligionen.de](mailto:info@langenachtderreligionen.de))

#### **7 Berlin, Germany:**

##### "MEMORY GAME: BERLIN PLACES OF WORSHIP"

(Recommended by Anika Sendes)

The "MEMORY Game: Berlin Places of Worship", which was developed with children of a Muslim child care center in Berlin, consists of Memory- pairs (of the dimensions 40 centimetres x 40 centimetres) with drawings, graphics and

pictures of various places of worship in Berlin and illustrates the variety of churches, synagogues, mosques and temples as well as destroyed Jewish places of worship in the city of Berlin. A sheet offers background information on the places of worship as part of the Memory game.

In addition to the large “MEMORY Game: Berlin Places of Worship”, which can be borrowed for use in interfaith events and festivities, a small-format MEMORY game for religious communities and other interested persons will be published by November 2013.

Information: [www.religionenaufdemwegdesfriedens.de](http://www.religionenaufdemwegdesfriedens.de)

Contact: Gerdi Nützel ([nuetzelgerdi@web.de](mailto:nuetzelgerdi@web.de))

## **8 Berlin, Germany:**

### “MUSIC OF THE RELIGIONS”

(Recommended by Anika Sendes)

“Music of the Religions” is a network of people from various religious backgrounds which express their religiousness through music. Their aim is to promote interfaith dialogue in Berlin through the diversity and wealth of musical means.

“Music of the Religions” was founded in 2011 as a working group. Currently, Hindu, Jewish, Sufi and Christians (of different confessions) musicians take part in this project. They perform jointly and in different instrumentation in various interfaith events such as peace festivals, parties, concerts and at events of the Berlin Dialogue of the Religions.

Contact: Shefika S. Würfl ([susanne@sufi-zentrum-berlin.de](mailto:susanne@sufi-zentrum-berlin.de))

## **9 Berlin, Germany:**

### “RELIGIONS MAKE HISTORY – ON A WALKABLE CITY MAP ON THE OCCASION OF BERLIN’S 775TH ANNIVERSARY”

(Recommended by Anika Sendes)

The exhibition “Religions Make History” on the occasion of the 775 year anniversary of the city of Berlin made Berlin’s great diversity clearly visible on a big walkable city map (with the dimensions 70 meters x 100 meters), which remained painted on a square in the center of Berlin over a period of two months. Fifteen sewing pins up to three meters high and with red knobs marked the places of religious diversity of Berlin in the course of the city’s historic development on the city map. Further, differently colored larger-than-life-size pins marked important places of science, music, literature, the world of employment, arts, politics, sports, education as well as culinary highlights on the city map.

On a special theme day focusing on “Religions Make History” representatives of different religious communities stood along an information board on the side of the city map and made themselves available for discussions with those interested in the topic.

Information: [www.religionenaufdemwegdesfriedens.de](http://www.religionenaufdemwegdesfriedens.de)

Contact: Gerdi Nützel ([nuetzelgerdi@web.de](mailto:nuetzelgerdi@web.de))

## **10 Berlin, Germany:**

### “WORKSHOP OF RELIGIONS AND BELIEFS”

(Recommended by Anika Sendes)

The “Workshop of Religions and Beliefs” is an open working group of people, mainly from the field of education, who are interested in dialogue. Currently Protestants, Catholics and Orthodox Christians, Sufis and Sunni Muslims, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs, Baha’i, secular humanists and some people who do not belong to any religious community such as atheists take part in the meetings of the working group.

The “Workshop of Religions and Beliefs” deals with relevant questions regarding religious education, development psychology, and democracy in order to increase the knowledge of its members on greater religious and ideological contextual meanings and to disseminate the results in publications. The workshop offers background information to teachers on issues with which they are confronted at school on a daily basis and designs teaching and training materials for the concept of dialogic teaching as well as brochures on topics such as “Living, Dying and Burying”, “Growing Up”, “Respect” or “Gender Roles in the Religions and Beliefs”.

Contact: Ruthild Hockenjos ([r.hockenjos@berlin.de](mailto:r.hockenjos@berlin.de))

### **11 Geneva, Switzerland:**

#### “WELCOMING THE STRANGER: AFFIRMATIONS FOR FAITH LEADERS”

(Recommended by Clare Amos)

In December 2012, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees organized a dialogue with faith leaders, faith-based humanitarian organizations, academics and government representatives from countries around the world on the theme of “Faith and Protection.” At this event, the High Commissioner recommended the development of a Code of Conduct for faith leaders to welcome migrants, refugees and other displaced people, and stand together against xenophobia.

In response to this call, a coalition of leading faith-based humanitarian organizations and academic institutions worked out “Welcoming the Stranger: Affirmations for Faith Leaders.” The Affirmations, which have been translated into Arabic, Chinese, French, Hebrew, Russian and Spanish, inspire a “welcome of the stranger” with dignity, respect and loving support. Faith groups around the world may use the document as a tool to foster support for refugees and other displaced people in their communities.

Information: <http://www.unhcr.org/51b6de419.html>

### **12 Geneva, Switzerland:**

#### “LEARNING TO LIVE TOGETHER”

(Recommended by Gelly Aroni )

The Interfaith Council on Ethic Education for Children with the support of the organization Arigatou International and in collaboration with UNESCO and UNICEF developed the programme and manual “Learning to Live Together”, an intercultural and interfaith programme for ethics education designed to contribute to the realization of children’s right to full and healthy physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development. The objectives of the programme are to strengthen children and young people, develop and promote successful practices for respectfully living together with people of different cultures, ethnicities, beliefs and religions. It provides tools for educators to work with intercultural and interfaith learning.

“Learning to Live Together” can be implemented in formal as well as informal settings with an age group of 12 to 18 and can be adapted to the respective needs of its users. The English manual has been translated into several languages: Arabic, French, Japanese, Portuguese and Spanish.

Information: <http://www.arigatou.ch/en/learningtolivetogether.html>

Contact: Arigatou International ([mail@arigatouinternational.org](mailto:mail@arigatouinternational.org))

### **13 Graz, Austria:**

#### „ENCOUNTER OF NATIONS“

(Recommended by Anke Neuenfeldt)

The United Methodist Church Graz, organized the “Encounter of Nations” by making use of the great diversity and internationality of its own community members and their networks. About 65 guests from 12 different nations and various cultural and religious backgrounds - among them many from the Muslim and Hindu communities – honored the invitation to an interfaith encounter. Among the highlights of the interfaith programme were the workshop “Discourse on the Living Conditions of Migrants in Austria”, chaired by the Anti-Discrimination Office, Styria, the workshop “No World Peace without Religious Peace” on the concept of a Global Ethic as well as creative workshops on Indian Dance, the art of Henna- Tattoos or telling stories from all over the world. Music from different corners of the world as well as an intercultural buffet completed this encounter of cultures and religions.

Information: United Methodist Church Graz (<http://www.emk-graz.at>)

Contact: Anke Neuenfeldt, ([anke.neuenfeldt@aon.at](mailto:anke.neuenfeldt@aon.at))

#### **14 Graz, Austria:**

##### **“DINING TOGETHER REVIVES THE FAITH – INTERFAITH COOKING WORKSHOPS”**

(Recommended by Nicola Baloch)

The banquet is often the highlight in many festivities of the different religions.

The series of interfaith cooking workshops “Dining together revives the faith” is a joint project of the Afro-Asian Institute, Graz and the Catholic University Students’ Community, Graz. The participants of the workshops get to know the culinary diversity of the various religions and cultures presented. The intercultural host presents the respective religious community as well as the festivity, gives information on the religious and culinary peculiarities of the occasion and explains the menu of the meal prepared in the cooking workshop. Following the presentation, the participants prepare various dishes under the skilled guide of the host and get to taste them at a joint dinner. In this way, the interfaith cooking workshops have become a recipe for success of interfaith dialogue at a culinary level.

Information: Afro-Asian Institute Graz ([www.aai-graz.at](http://www.aai-graz.at)) or  
Catholic University Students’ Community Graz ([www.khg-graz.at](http://www.khg-graz.at))

Contact: Pamir Harvey ([p.harvey@aai-graz.at](mailto:p.harvey@aai-graz.at))

#### **15 Graz, Austria:**

##### **“COMMON WOMEN’S IFTAR FOR WOMEN OF ALL FAITHS AND CONFESSIONS”**

(Recommended by Bassem Asker)

More than 100 years ago in the year 1912, Islam was legally recognized in Austria through the passing of the Islam Law. Today many Muslims live in Graz and feel at home in this city. Many members of the Muslim community in Graz practice their religion. Apart from the required five prayers a day, Muslim religious duties include fasting during the month of Ramadan. The “Common fast-breaking” for women of all faiths and confessions provides an opportunity for cultural exchange and coming together. In this way, prejudices and barriers can be reduced and overcome face-to-face with Muslim women.

Contact: Hemma Steininger, Muslim Social Service of the IRG ([hemma.steininger@gmail.com](mailto:hemma.steininger@gmail.com))

#### **16 Graz, Austria:**

##### **“INTERRELIGIOUS COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF GRAZ”**

(Recommended by the ComUnitySpirit- working group „The responsibility of religions in the public sphere“)

The Interreligious Council of the City of Graz is composed of representatives of the legally recognized religious communities and convenes as an advisory council on request of the mayor. There are two regular meetings a year and further meetings on demand. The members of the Interreligious Council as well exchange information in informal communication. The seven members of the Interreligious Council of the City of Graz are representatives of the Catholic, Protestant, United Methodist and Greek-Orthodox churches as well as of the Muslim community, the Jewish community and the Buddhist community.

Founded in 2006, the Interreligious Council of the City of Graz also serves as an advisory council for the mayor. Furthermore, the Council sometimes initiates projects such as the “Interfaith City Walks”, which aim to make religious diversity in Graz more visible.

Information: <http://www.graz.at/cms/beitrag/10160680/3723336>

#### **17 Graz, Austria:**

##### **“INTERFAITH FOOTBALL TOURNAMENT”**

(Recommended by Wolfgang Schwarz)

We all know that football brings people together regardless of their skin color, language, religion or background. Based on this consideration, the Catholic parish, Schutzengel in Graz organized its 5th annual football tournament in a row in June 2013, inviting teams to a friendly interfaith football competition on the football field behind the church.

A total of seven different religious communities featured two teams in the tournament: an adult and a youth team.

One of the highlights of the interfaith football tournament was the match between a team of local politicians of all political parties who competed against a team of the participating religious communities. During and after the tournament there was time for all players and fans to mingle and to get to know each other in a barbeque party. And at the end of the tournament, the proud winning team was crowned.

Contact: Wolfgang Schwarz (wolfgang.schwarz@graz-seckau.at)

### **18 Graz, Austria:**

#### “LONG NIGHT OF THE CHURCHES 2013 IN THE DIOCESE OF GRAZ-SECKAU”

(Recommended by the ComUnitySpirit- working group “Religions and young people”)

The “Long Night of the Churches” is an ecumenical event of the Christian churches and –communities. Over the last years, however, this major event has increasingly changed its program to include interfaith events in cooperation with other religious communities as well.

Among the interfaith highlights are guided tours through the Graz Synagogue, offered by the Jewish community, Graz and a concert of the multicultural women’s choir, SoSamma, which invited the audience on a musical world tour across different cultures, religions and musical traditions.

The “Long Night of the Churches” was staged for the 7th time in 2013. More than 100 churches of the diocese opened their doors and invited roughly 30,000 guests to more than 550 events and in this way, allowed the audience to perceive “church” in an extraordinary way. This event is jointly hosted by the Old-Catholic-, the Baptist-, the Protestant-, the United Methodist-, the Catholic – and the Coptic-Orthodox churches.

Information: [www.langenachtderkirchen.at](http://www.langenachtderkirchen.at)

### **19 Salzburg, Austria**

#### “ANNUAL CONFERENCE ON INTERFAITH DIALOGUE”

(Recommended by Markus Ladstätter)

Those people in the individual dioceses of the Austrian Catholic Church who are responsible for interfaith dialogue hold an annual two day spring seminar in the city of Salzburg in order to share their experience, exchange information on current developments and discuss and coordinate initiatives.

A second focus of this conference is an open study day, on which a certain topic is thoroughly deliberated upon by experts and discussed from the different perspectives of their various religions. The study day of next year’s seminar will hold on March 27, 2014 and will be dedicated to the topic of “The image of humanity in the horizon of guilt and responsibility”. The seminar places great emphasis on a serious and respectful dialogue. This event takes place at the Bildungshaus St. Virgil/Salzburg and is organized in partnership and support of several University departments, the Afro-Asian Institute Vienna, the Catholic Church, church based organizations and the city of Salzburg.

Contact: Markus Ladstätter (markus.ladstaetter@weltreligionen.org)

### **20 Graz, Austria:**

#### UNIVERSITY COURSE “INTERRELIGIOUS AND INTERCULTURAL LEARNING”

(Recommended by Markus Ladstätter)

In this three-semester career-integrated further qualification program (with 18EC) for teaching staff held at the Catholic University College for Education, Graz the participants from various educational backgrounds obtain further qualifications for a professional and competent approach to religious and cultural diversity. An important focus of the training program is getting in touch with the major religions through religious studies and also through direct contact and excursions to various religious communities on the occasion of their religious festivities.

Special emphasis is placed on reflecting and processing the different encountered cultural and linguistic backgrounds and realities. Graduates of this study program may teach “intercultural learning” at compulsory school level.

Information: <http://www.kphgraz.at/index.php?id=303>

Contact: Markus Ladstätter (markus.ladstaetter@kphgraz.at)

## **21 Graz, Austria:**

### “SUMMER ACADEMY GRAZ-REIN“

(Recommended by Anton Grabner-Haider)

The organization “Summer Academy Graz-Rein” annually hosts the “Summer Academy Graz-Rein” of the same name. This two-day educational event deals with questions concerning interfaith dialogue, global economic and political issues, religions and ethic systems as well as trends in our post-modern society. Renowned experts in various fields from Austrian and European universities offer a series of lectures and engage in dialogue with the audience. In 2013, the 5th Summer Academy focused on the relationship between China and Europe. The impetus of Chinese philosophy and aims of an intercultural philosophy were met with as much interest as a presentation on the dynamics of current Chinese economy, an introduction to traditional Chinese medicine and the current situation of the religions in China.

The “Summer Academy Graz-Rein” is organized in cooperation with the “Project World Ethos” Vienna and the adult education center, Urania Steiermark.

Information: [www.sommerakademie-stift-rein.at](http://www.sommerakademie-stift-rein.at)

Contact: Anton Grabner-Haider ([a.grabner-haider@aon.at](mailto:a.grabner-haider@aon.at))

## **22 Graz, Austria:**

### “SONGS OF SPIRIT-FESTIVAL“

(Recommended by Claudia Unger)

The “Songs of Spirit- Festival” as part of the European Choir Games was staged in association with the Interreligious Conference, 2013 and took place in Graz at the same time as the conference. Choirs from all over the world and across the religions were invited to jointly celebrate choral music of all religions and faith communities and to present the interfaith musical diversity to an international audience.

The “Songs of Spirit- Festival” enriched the Interreligious Conference and its events and expressed interfaith and intercultural dialogue through choral music in many concerts which took place in different locations all over the city. Among the highlights of the festival were the “Long Night of the Choirs” and the Requiem by Verdi which was jointly performed by members of the participating choirs in the festival. Last but not least, the choir performances in the opening and closing ceremonies of the Interreligious Conference have to be highlighted, in which choirs from countries such as Indonesia, Nigeria, Turkey and many more gave stunning performances and enthralled the audience with their great virtuosity.

Information: [www.interkultur.com](http://www.interkultur.com)

Contact: Constanze Grininger ([grininger@interkultur.com](mailto:grininger@interkultur.com))

## **23 Graz, Austria:**

### “LEARNING FROM EACH OTHER- JOINTLY ASSUMING RESPONSIBILITY- INTERRELIGIOUS ENCOUNTERS IN ST. LUKAS“

(Recommended by Hermann Glettler und Heinz Stroh)

Over a period of 15 years, interested members of the Christian churches, the Baha’i, Buddhist, the Muslim and the Jewish communities have met in the Interreligious Encounters in the Parish St. Lukas in Graz to engage in interfaith dialogue on current faith related, political and social issues, questions and challenges.

Representatives of the participating religious communities engaged in rewarding, stimulating and critical discussions. To give an example: In the encounter of May 2013 the question “What is the political contribution of the religions for world peace and for the respect of human rights?” was discussed with Imam Tarafa Baghajati, chairman of the “Initiative Muslim Austrians”.

Contact: Hermann Glettler ([hermann.glettler@aon.at](mailto:hermann.glettler@aon.at)) and Heinz Stroh ([uh.stroh@utanet.at](mailto:uh.stroh@utanet.at))

#### **24 Kottayam, India:**

“INDIA, A COUNTRY OF RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY – RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE AT SCHOOL LEVEL”

(Recommended by Jacob Thekkeparambil)

To promote religious tolerance among pupils in schools, the Vellayamkudi School in Kerala serves as a role model. Its headmaster, the teachers, the president of the Parents/Teachers Association, the president of the Mothers Association and others led their school children on an interreligious tour to the nearby 'Hidayatul Jemma Masjid-mosque, the St. George church and the local Hindu temple dedicated to the Goddess of Durga Devi.

The authorities of the mosque, the church and the temple welcomed them and explained to the children the meanings of the liturgical rites performed in the sacred places of each religion. The children appreciated this event which promotes respect for each religion already at school level. This model was an eye opening event for religious authorities and was reported by local newspapers as a model of religious tolerance.

Contact: Father Jacob Thekeparampil (seeri\_2000@yahoo.com)

#### **25 Kottayam, India:**

“PETTA THULLAL FESTIVAL OF ERUMELY”

(Recommended by Jacob Thekkeparambil)

In the annual Petta Thullal-festival, the Hindu pilgrims on their way to Sabarimala (the hill top Shabari, where they worship the Hindu deity Ayyappan) make a stop in Erumeli, near Kottayam. In small groups, they go round with drums, singing songs and pay a visit to the nearby Christian church, the Muslim mosque and the Hindu temple. This event attracts large crowds every year to Erumeli, where Hindus, Muslims and Christians in this way jointly demonstrate religious tolerance.

Contact: Father Jacob Thekeparampil (seeri\_2000@yahoo.com)

#### **26 Leipzig, Germany:**

“INTERCULTURAL WEEKS- LEIPZIG PRACTICES DIALOGUE AND COSMOPOLITANISM”

(Recommended by Stojan Gugutschkow)

In the “Intercultural Weeks” Leipzig presents and offers a wide ranging program of interfaith projects and activities in cooperation with numerous institutions, organizations and initiatives. The here stated example of the exhibition, “Ganges and Nirvana”, is representative of the multi-faceted program of the “Intercultural Weeks 2013”. This exhibition showcases photos taken in India at the world’s largest Hindu pilgrimage celebration, the Kumbh Mela in Allahabad. A topical discussion dedicated to the situation of the Christians in Nigeria is as much part of the “Intercultural Weeks 2013” as the exhibition and play reading “The Sun Knows No Shadow”, in which people of different religious and cultural backgrounds are portrayed in a psychiatric clinic in Haifa talking about their pursuit of happiness.

With the adoption of the “Guidelines for Integration” in 2011, the town council of Leipzig has set the course for sustainable peaceful coexistence of people of different origins in Leipzig.

Information: [www.leipzig.de/ikw](http://www.leipzig.de/ikw)

Contact: Department of Migration and Integration of the city of Leipzig ([migration.integration@leipzig.de](mailto:migration.integration@leipzig.de)),

#### **27 Leipzig, Germany:**

“DEALING WITH RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY-  
A MANUAL OF PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE MUNICIPAL PRACTICE”

(Recommended by Stojan Gugutschkow)

Immigration of people from all over the world is changing today’s composition of the population of European cities. The new challenges, which arise from the effects of global migration in the areas of religions and their practice, increasingly affect municipal areas of administration such as building regulations, health care or support measures for the youth and the elderly. This is why a municipal quality circle on integration in Leipzig worked out recommendations for “Dealing with Religious Diversity- A manual of practical recommendations for the municipal practice”. This manual

aims at offering guiding principles to experts and decision makers in municipalities on how to constructively deal with the increasing religious diversity in today's cities.

In this way, the signatories to the manual would like to contribute to a peaceful coexistence of people of different religious and ideological backgrounds. In addition to recommendations for action, the manual presents examples of potential conflicts of municipal life and offers approaches for peaceful conflict resolution.

Contact: Stojan Gugutschkow (stojan.gugutschkow@leipzig.de),  
<http://www.stuttgart.de/img/mdb/item/385012/82577.pdf>

### **28 Leipzig, Germany:**

#### **“MY GOD, YOUR GOD, NO GOD – STRENGTHENING INTERFAITH COMPETENCES”**

(Recommended by Stojan Gugutschkow)

In this educational project, teaching staff took part in a further training course in which the participants acquired the necessary skills and knowledge, background information and contacts about the various migrant based faith communities in the city of Leipzig. The program aimed at making the diverse lifestyles of religions visible and applicable in an educational context. Rather than merely studying theoretic, dogmatic or religious doctrines, the project focused on studying the individual faith and community-based family culture of the families actually living in Leipzig. The scope of the project included excursions to various faith communities in Leipzig, a symposium, the design and production of an interfaith calendar for Leipzig as well as the publication of a manual for teaching staff. In addition, the participants were taught methods and techniques which help qualified experts to question their own stereotypes and images concerning the religions.

Information: [http://zeok.de/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=43&Itemid=41](http://zeok.de/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=43&Itemid=41)

Contact: Stojan Gugutschkow (stojan.gugutschkow@leipzig.de),

### **29 Leipzig, Germany:**

#### **“INTERFAITH ROUND TABLE”**

(Recommended by Stojan Gugutschkow)

The “Interfaith Round Table” aims at strengthening existing interfaith initiatives, getting to know other faith communities, facilitating the exchange of information and topics of common interest, implementing joint projects and passing on suggestions of good practice among the faith communities.

Leading representatives of the Protestant, Catholic and Russian-Orthodox churches as well as representatives of the Jewish, Muslim, Vietnamese-Buddhist and the Bahá'í communities take part in the “Interfaith Round Table”. The Integration Commissioner of the city of Leipzig moderates and coordinates the two annual meetings of the “Interfaith Round Table” at the town hall of Leipzig. Religious arguments are not the subject of discussion at those meetings – these remain under the responsibility of the faith communities.

Contact: Department of Migration and Integration of the city of Leipzig (migration.integration@leipzig.de),

### **30 Leipzig, Germany:**

#### **“CITY CARAVAN: RELIGIOUS LEIPZIG”**

(Recommended by the ComUnitySpirit-working group “Living together in religious diversity”)

“City-Caravans” are special interactive city tours where people move in small groups through the city with the task of visiting certain institutions, organizations and the homes of private individuals. The aim of the City Caravans is to promote a culture of getting to know and learning about one another. The “City-Caravan: Religious Leipzig” is a special offer by the Department of Migration and Integration of the city of Leipzig which allows its participants to experience and learn more about the great religious diversity of Leipzig. Through visiting various religious communities and getting in personal contact with their members, prejudices can be reduced and replaced by interfaith dialogue.

Information: <http://stadtkarawane.de/projekt/idee2>

### **31 London, United Kingdom:**

#### “INTER FAITH WEEK” IN ENGLAND, NORTHERN IRELAND AND WALES

(Recommended by the ComUnitySpirit working group „Coexistence in religious diversity“)

The UK “Inter Faith Week” is organized by the Inter Faith Network, UK, whose members include representatives from the major faith communities, national interfaith organizations, local interfaith groups, academic institutions and bodies concerned with multifaith education. Building good relationships and working partnerships between people of different faiths and beliefs is part of the year-round work of many people and organizations across the UK. “Inter Faith Week” highlights the good work done by local faith, interfaith and faith-based groups and organizations, draws new people into interfaith learning and cooperation, enables greater interaction between people of different backgrounds, helps develop integrated and neighborly communities, celebrates diversity and commonality and opens new possibilities for partnership.

Information: <http://www.interfaithweek.org/>

Contact: The Inter Faith Network for the UK (IFNet@interfaith.org.uk)

### **32 Luzern, Switzerland:**

#### “THE WEEK OF THE RELIGIONS”

(Recommended by the ComUnitySpirit-working group “The significance of the conception of God for humans”)

The “Week of the Religions” facilitates the encounter of the religions and cultures through a wide range of interfaith activities in its ambitious program.

The project aims at reducing prejudices and to replace them with reliable information and experiences shared during face-to-face encounters. In a series of events members of different religious communities as well as people without religious affiliation meet in interfaith dialogue and exchange all over Switzerland: Congregations and Cantonal churches, mosques and temples, synagogues, school classes, choirs, youth organizations, freethinkers, interfaith forums and working groups take part in the “Week of the Religions”. Prior to the event, an interfaith newspaper is jointly published by a team of editors consisting of representatives of various religious communities.

Information: [www.iras-cotis.ch/woche-religionen/](http://www.iras-cotis.ch/woche-religionen/)

Contact: Iras Cotis (info@iras-cotis.ch)

### **33 Rome, Italy:**

#### “ALL DIFFERENT ... BUT ONE”

(Recommended by Roberto Catalano)

The project has successfully taking place in Teramo, Abruzzi-region, over the past ten years. The initiative, which started on a very small scale, today has grown up to the city level, involving civil and religious authorities and creating a path for social, ethnic and religious integration. Promoted by the friendship born among Christians and Muslims who met to pray for peace at the time of the Kosovo war, the project has engaged different levels of people on a community level. The central point is a Literary Festival which involves young adults, foreigners and inmates jailed in the local prison. To participate in the festival means to write an essay on a topic which is proposed every year, underlining unity among peoples.

Contact: Donato Fazzini (dosic@libero.it)

### **34 Rome, Italy:**

#### “WORKING TOGETHER FOR A CULTURE OF ENCOUNTER”

(Recommended by Roberto Catalano)

In the last two years, Muslims from different ethnic backgrounds and Christians from the Focolare Movement have promoted moments of exchange between families. The encounter is facilitated through religious celebrations, outings and picnics and one-day meetings in which people can share the challenges the family has to face today and how these challenges can be tackled. This has been instrumental for a growth in the spirit of brotherhood in several parts of Italy.

Contact: Cocco Pietro (cocco.p@gmail.com)

### **35 Rome, Italy:**

#### “THE INTEGRATION PROCESS IN NORTH-EAST ITALY”

(Recommended by Roberto Catalano)

In North-Eastern Italy, where the integration process of people coming from different cultures and consequently professing different religions – especially Islam – appears difficult, members of the Focolare Movement felt the need for a renewed commitment to building and strengthening fraternal relationships with the growing local Muslim community. To overcome all difficulties together offers a chance to get to know each other better and appreciate differences as well as peculiarities of the respective identities. In several cities, initiatives have been organized with the aim of building a climate of universal brotherhood. The examples are: folk celebration, school of Italian language for women, workshops for mothers, family outings and picnics. Today the project involves people from different cities and villages in the region.

Contact: Carlo Gallian (carlo.gallian@fastwebnet.it)

### **36 Straßburg, France:**

#### “THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE EXCHANGES”

(Recommended by Carole Reich)

Based on the 2008 Council of Europe’s “White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue”, the Council of Europe adopted recommendations to Member States on the dimension of religions and non-religious convictions within intercultural education and initiated annual exchanges on the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue. The Council of Europe’s work in the intercultural field is based on an open, sincere and lasting exchange between the main religious organizations and communities, representatives of non-religious convictions and all other stakeholders, whether from an institutional or civil society background. In 2012, the 5th exchange focused on the topic “Taking responsibility for tomorrow’s Europe: the role of young people in the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue”. In 2013, the theme “Freedom of religion in today’s world: challenges and guarantees” was at the center of discussion.

Contact: Carole Reich (carole.reich@coe.int)

### **37 Weiz, Austria:**

#### “WAY OF HOPE”

(Recommended by the ComUnitySpirit-working group “Responsibility for the world”)

“Way of Hope” was founded in 2009 as an interfaith, non-partisan platform of people, who are committed and participate at the grassroots level. Through applied spirituality, mutual encouragement and joint action “Way of Hope” would like to make constructive social change happen. “Way of Hope” initiates, supports and communicates new activities at grassroots level and future oriented initiatives. The aims are facilitating change through linking and deepening an individual’s spiritual practice, creating a new culture of interfaith coexistence, developing a sense of awareness and empathy as well as overcoming prejudice and hostile images. The ideal culture of interfaith coexistence according to “Way of Hope” is open to dialogue, respects differences and promotes common values of spiritual people as well as shared social commitment.

Information: [www.wayofhope.info](http://www.wayofhope.info)

Contact: Ferry Berger ( [info@wayofhope.at](mailto:info@wayofhope.at) )

### **38 Vienna, Austria:**

#### “FACE TO FACE - FACILITATING INTEGRATION THROUGH ENCOUNTER AND DIALOGUE”

(Recommended by Astrid Ingruber)

The aims of the project “Face to Face” are encounters at eye-level. These encounters increase the knowledge of one another and turn the audience into parties involved. The project facilitates knowledge transfer on the cultures and social realities of the countries of origin of migrants as well as reasons for and implications of migration and in this way helps to combat racism and to overcome prejudices.

Expert speakers from African and Asian countries offer tailor-made seminars on various issues concerning migration and intercultural encounter. In the seminars, the participants are introduced to the respective cultures of the countries

of origin and the way of life, as well as the current social and political situation in the home countries of the speakers. The speakers address their personal experiences in migration and integration processes. Social commitment of people with a background in migration is especially important in order to introduce migration and its implications as topics of interest to the mainstream of Austrian society.

Information: [www.aai-wien.at](http://www.aai-wien.at)

Contact: Afro-Asian Institute Vienna ([bildung@aai-wien.at](mailto:bildung@aai-wien.at)),

### **39 Vienna, Austria:**

#### “INTERRELIGIOUS SALON”

(Recommended by Astrid Ingruber)

Once a month, the “Interreligious Salon Evenings” are hosted in the Afro-Asian Institute, Vienna with the purpose of mutual interfaith exchange and the presentation of different perspectives and approaches to life. Representatives of different religions give topic-related impulse presentations and get into discussions with the interested audience. The wide range of topics discussed in the salon covers themes such as the father’s role in the various religions, the different characteristics of religious and cultural traditions in African and Asian countries, the presentation of religions in the media, stimuli emanating from the religions for responsible economic activity and literature readings. In addition to the discussions, the salon evenings feature an intercultural musical program and a buffet meeting Halal requirements.

Information: [www.aai-wien.at](http://www.aai-wien.at)

Contact: Afro-Asian Institute Vienna ([bildung@aai-wien.at](mailto:bildung@aai-wien.at)),

### **40 Vienna, Austria:**

#### “FATIMA 2011 – AN OFFENSIVE FOR HIGHER QUALIFICATION OF YOUNG MUSLIM WOMEN”

(Recommended by the ComUnitySpirit working group “Coexistence in religious diversity”)

In the project “Fatima 2011” for the promotion of young Muslim women, the participating women were supported in strengthening their self confidence and acquired key competences and special qualifications in the area of social participation. As “multipliers”, they passed on their acquired skills and qualifications to other women. This project was aimed at changing the often negatively portrayed image of Muslim women in society and in the media, fighting prejudices, reducing Islamophobia and tensions as well as communicating and promoting an “Austro-Islamic” identity. For a successful interfaith dialogue, as well as for social participation and inclusion in Austria, this is a decisive factor.

Information: [www.projektfatima.at](http://www.projektfatima.at)

### **41 Vienna, Austria:**

#### “JOINT VOLUNTEER CLEAN-UP EFFORTS AFTER THE CATASTROPHIC FLOODING IN 2013”

(Recommended by the ComUnitySpirit working group “Religions and gender”)

As a response to the disastrous flooding in Austria the organizations Muslim Youth, Austria and the Catholic Youth, Vienna jointly called upon their members to volunteer to help in clean-up efforts. Only two days after the first call of the Muslim Youth, Austria, more than a hundred young adults responded and volunteered to help in the relief efforts. Through this interfaith intervention, members of both youth organizations and other volunteers sent out a clear signal of solidarity to those most affected by the flood of 2013.

Information: <http://www.mjoe.at/articles/article/hochwasser-mjoe-und-kj-helfen-gemeinsam/>

### **42 Vienna, Austria:**

#### “INTERRELIGIOUS CELEBRATION AT A PRIMARY SCHOOL IN VIENNA”

(Recommended by Ingrid Stropek)

In May 2013, the primary school “Siebenhirten” in Vienna hosted an interfaith celebration, in which the musical “Joesph- Yussuf” developed by the teachers of religious education was premiered. The pupils belonging to different Christian churches and Muslim communities jointly performed and enacted the story of the Egyptian Joseph which is told in both the Bible and the Qur’an.

Even those among the 290 pupils of the school who are of no religious affiliation were included through the topic of "Peace" by crafting handmade white peace doves and letting them flutter. The celebration ended outside, where balloons with messages of peace attached to them were released into the sky.

Contact: Ingrid Stropek (stropek.ingrid@tele2.at)

#### **43 Vienna, Austria:**

##### **"PLATFORM FOR INTERRELIGIOUS ENCOUNTER – INTERRELIGIOUS PEACE PROJECT AUSTRIA"**

(Recommended by the ComUnitySpirit-working group "Coexistence in religious diversity")

The "Platform for Interreligious Encounter", which was established in Vienna in 2002, is committed to inclusive dialogue and mutual respect, promotes personal interfaith encounters and the possibility to get to know one another. A central concern of the platform is the non-violent and peacekeeping dimension of the religions and with it, an obligation to engage in conflict resolution. For this purpose the platform supports efforts of organizing encounters between members of different religions at community level. The platform's members engage in creating favorable social conditions for reducing prejudice, promoting mutual respect, strengthening social interaction and developing a culture of peace and nonviolence.

In order to achieve these aims, the platform organizes protest-vigils, prayers for members of persecuted and discriminated religious communities, open-door days in facilities affiliated with different religious communities, as well as interfaith discussions and celebrations. In addition to these activities, multi-religious district chapters were established in order to put the goals of the platform into practice at district level.

Information und Contact: Erwin Neumann, Organization Platform for Interreligious Encounter (www.pfirb.at)

#### **44 Vienna, Austria:**

##### **"PLATFORM OF THE ACKNOWLEDGED CHURCHES AND RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES FOR EXCHANGE AND COOPERATION ON POLITICAL AND LEGAL TOPICS"**

(Recommended by the ComUnitySpirit-working group "The responsibility of religions in the public sphere")

The platform is open for participants from all acknowledged churches and religious communities in Austria. The meetings of the platform are an exchange of opinion among its members and focus on political and legal developments in particular concerning the public and legal recognition of religious groups in Austria. Common activities of the platform include the exchange on questions concerning the relations between the state and religious communities.

Along with issues such as the debate on the scope of the freedom of religion, the regular meetings of the platform also deal with questions such as the contribution of the faith communities towards peaceful coexistence in Austria.

Information: [http://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS\\_20120525\\_OTS0066/plattform-der-kirchen-und-religionsgesellschaften-gegruendet](http://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20120525_OTS0066/plattform-der-kirchen-und-religionsgesellschaften-gegruendet)

#### **45 Vienna /Krems, Austria:**

##### **"INTERFAITH LEARNING THROUGH INTERFAITH EXCHANGES- EXPERIENCES MADE AT THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY COLLEGE FOR EDUCATION, VIENNA/KREMS AND THE ACADEMY FOR THE TRAINING OF TEACHERS OF RELIGION OF THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY IN VIENNA"**

(Recommended by Amena Shakir)

The aim of these interfaith exchanges, initiated by the private academy for the training of teachers of religion at compulsory school level of the Muslim community in association with the Catholic University College for Education, is the development of intercultural competence, which enables the students as prospective teachers to engage in interfaith and intercultural dialogue. Since its introduction in November, 2007, the interfaith exchanges have become an integral part of the curriculum. The students have the opportunity to learn more about other religions in a considerate and respectful way and are welcome to contribute their own religious experiences. Due to its great success, this innovative learning form has been expanded to the career-integrated study program. The exchanges take place on an annual basis.

Contact: Amena Shakir (amena.shakir@kphvie.ac.at)

#### **46 Vienna /Krems, Austria:**

“INTERFAITH STUDY VISIT TO ISTANBUL – CHRISTIAN AND MUSLIM TEACHING STAFF JOINTLY AT THE INTERSECTION BETWEEN THE ORIENT AND THE OCCIDENT”.

(Recommended by Amena Shakir)

Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant teaching staff of the Catholic University College for Education, Vienna/Krems together with the Muslim teaching staff of the Academy for the Training of Teachers of Religion of the Muslim Community in Vienna went on an eight-day study visit to Istanbul in May, 2013. The aim of this study visit was to experience Islam peacefully coexisting with the various Christian denominations in the city of Istanbul as well as the interfaith exchange among the participating teachers.

Apart from the visits to the Hagia Sophia and the Sultan Ahmet Mosque, one of the highlights of the trip surely was the reception of the group by the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, his holiness Bartholomew I.

Infos: <http://www.irpa.ac.at/?shownews=227&spr=de>

#### **47 Vienna, Austria:**

“FAMILY EVENT LIFE.FAITH.LIESING – INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE AT DISTRICT LEVEL”

(Recommended by Amena Shakir)

On the occasion of the centenary celebrations of the Law on Islam in Austria, the Academy of the Muslim community for the Training of Teachers of Religion at Compulsory School Level organized an interfaith family event in the Vienna district of Liesing. The family event took place simultaneously at four locations which were connected by a shuttle bus service and offered a diverse program including intercultural dance and music performances, creative workshops and information on the Law on Islam in Austria as well as Islamic culture.

The interfaith event was supported by the district council, Liesing and the Vienna municipal department for Integration and Diversity.

Information: <http://www.leben-glauben-liesing.at/projekt.htm>

#### **48 Vienna, Austria:**

“REGULAR STUDY VISITS OF MUSLIM STUDENTS TO THE SYNAGOGUE AND THE ST. STEPHEN'S CATHEDRAL IN VIENNA”

(Recommended by Amena Shakir)

The Academy of the Islamic community for the training of teachers of religion at compulsory school level in Vienna annually organizes an excursion to the synagogue of the Jewish community for the third year students in the frame of the course “Islamic Religious Education”.

The prospective teachers of Islamic Religious Education gain insights and an understanding of life of the Jewish community of Vienna today. In the frame of the study visit, students discuss commonalities and differences in terms of the religious practice, the concept of God and the relevance of text and context in the Islamic and Jewish tradition and contemporary practices.

A Christian- Muslim meeting of a special kind took place at the St. Stephen's Cathedral of Vienna, where at the specific request of Muslim students a comprehensive tour of the cathedral was organized. For prospective teachers, such experiences are of particular importance, because they allow them to enable them to establish new interfaith contacts and to carry the interfaith spirit into their future professional lives.

Infos: <http://www.irpa.ac.at>

#### **49 Vienna, Austria:**

##### **“FIGHTING ISLAMOPHOBIA THROUGH EDUCATIONAL WORK – EDUCATIONAL GUIDELINES TO COMBATING DISCRIMINATION AND INTOLERANCE AGAINST MUSLIMS”**

(Recommended by Amena Shakir)

The “Guidelines to Combating Discrimination and Intolerance against Muslims” were jointly developed by the Office for democratic institutions and human rights of the OSCE, the Council of Europe and the UNESCO.

The guidelines primarily address experts in educational professions such as heads of higher education and training institutes, managerial staff of trade unions or staff associations, decision makers in educational policies as well as teaching staff in their efforts of combating discrimination and intolerance against Muslims. The guidelines can be implemented at both primary and secondary education levels as well as in educational work outside of schools.

Info: <http://www.osce.org/de/odihr/91299?download=true>

#### **50 Vienna, Austria:**

##### **“CONTACT BOARD FOR WORLD RELIGIONS”**

(Recommended by Markus Ladstätter)

From 1989 to 2012, the Bishop’s Conference of Austria on the content basis of the Second Vatican Council operated a competence center for interfaith dialogue in Vienna. The competence center organized series of lectures, ran an educational program, offered a specialist library, published the quarterly magazine “Religionen Unterwegs” (religions on their way) and engaged in an ecumenical expert exchange of the churches on a national level.

Due to changing priorities of the Bishop’s Conference, this initiative was discontinued. Its concerns have been taken up by the “Contact Board for World Religions”, a private organization which continues the engagement in interfaith dialogue.

Information: [www.weltreligionen.at](http://www.weltreligionen.at)

Contact: [kontaktstelle@weltreligionen.at](mailto:kontaktstelle@weltreligionen.at)