



# Home, faith and COVID-19: insights from the pandemic and opportunities for the future

A guide for people of all faiths

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Stay Home Stories

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[www.stayhomestories.co.uk](http://www.stayhomestories.co.uk)

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# About this guide

Drawing on the experiences of people of many faiths living in London and Liverpool, UK, during the pandemic, this guide aims to answer two key questions:

- What have we learnt about home as a site of religious belief and practice during the COVID-19 pandemic?
- How can insights and experiences of the pandemic contribute to sustaining and growing faith communities into the future?

This guide recognizes the losses associated with the life of religious communities during the pandemic. These losses have been discussed in other outputs from the Stay Home Stories project (see table below). COVID-19 was deeply disruptive of many forms of spiritual and social connection, particularly as people retreated from ‘real’ and physical spaces, including places of worship, into their homes and the digital realm. However, at the same time, analysis from our study of the pandemic experiences of people of faith presents a range of outcomes, many of which are positive and may change religious practices in the future. This guide focuses on these positive experiences and the implications for future developments in faith communities.

This guide draws on interviews with people from different religious communities on their experiences during periods of lockdown and COVID-19-related restriction. Although our interviews revealed specific challenges for individual faith groups and denominations (e.g. the Eucharist for many Christians, rules against using technology on the Sabbath and festivals for Orthodox Jews), the pandemic was a shared

experience across faith communities. From this collective experience, this guide also considers what faith groups can learn from one another (albeit with points of difference), and what this could mean for future worship and pastoral support.

Our research revealed examples of resourcefulness, creativity and inclusivity within faith groups as well as religious groups reaching out to other faiths and the wider community. Respondents demonstrated creative ways to worship, teach and support one another which they wish to carry forward into the future. In response, this guide gathers together some of these ideas and suggestions so that they can be shared across faith groups. It is aimed at faith leaders, educators, interfaith organisations and anyone who wishes to learn from what others have developed and experienced in exceptional pandemic circumstances.

While we are still learning to live with COVID-19 and make sense of the legacies of the pandemic, most of us no longer face restrictions in how we go about our daily lives. Now seems a good time to take stock and consider how faith communities can use experiences of the pandemic to ‘build back better’ and, particularly, how we can draw from shared experiences of dealing with COVID-19 to create new dialogues among different religions. We hope that the insights, opportunities and case studies presented in this guide will be a starting point for further discussion, whether that includes learning of other examples beyond the scope of our own research, or experimentation with some of the ideas presented here and elsewhere.

## Religion and Home during COVID-19

Throughout 2021 and early 2022 – during periods of strict lockdown and when restrictions were eased – we interviewed over 120 people about their pandemic lives at home as part of an AHRC-funded project called Stay Home Stories. The experiences of people of faith were a key focus of the research. We were keen to capture the religious diversity of two COVID-19 hotspots – London and Liverpool (see Blunt et al. 2022 and Burrell et al. 2021) – and interviewed people from a wide range of faith backgrounds: Buddhist, Christian (Anglican, Anglo-Catholic, Baptist, Black Majority Church, Evangelical, Jehovah’s Witness, Quaker

and Roman Catholic), Hindu, Jain, Jewish (Liberal, Orthodox), Muslim, Sikh and Zoroastrian. A number of our interviewees feature on a podcast on religious belief and practice during COVID-19 produced by Stay Home Stories. We interviewed roughly equal numbers of men and women. We spoke to people of faith, faith leaders and those involved in interfaith work. This guide draws on interviews conducted by Miri Lawrence and community researchers who are from a range of faith backgrounds and none. Researchers also had established connections with interfaith organizations in London and Liverpool.

The materials and examples in this resource guide are the results of a research project funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) as part of the UK Research and Innovation rapid response to COVID-19 and in partnership with universities, museums and other cultural partners in London and Liverpool. ‘Stay Home stories’ explores the impact of staying home during the COVID-19 pandemic. This guide draws material from interviews with faith leaders and people in different faith communities, and those involved in interfaith work about the changing relationship between communal and private worship, religious festivals under lockdown and the impact of marking life-cycle events at home. Other outputs from the project - all available at [www.stayhomestories.co.uk](http://www.stayhomestories.co.uk) - include:

<b>Reports</b>	<p>Burrell et al. (2021) <i>At Home in Liverpool During COVID-19</i>, Queen Mary University of London: London</p> <p>Blunt, et al. (2022) <i>At Home in London During COVID-19: policy recommendations and key findings</i>, Queen Mary University of London: London.</p>
<b>Films</b>	<p><i>Eid Textile Tales</i>, with Praxis, a charity for migrants and refugees</p> <p><i>Our Home, Our Stories</i>, with project artist-in-residence Alaa Alsaraji about her installation at the Museum of the Home</p> <p><i>My Place, My Space</i>, with Write Back, a charity working with young people in Barking and Dagenham</p> <p><i>Life Under Lockdown</i>, street photography in East London with Adam Isfendiyar and Eithne Nightingale</p>
<b>Podcasts</b>	<p><b>Episode 1:</b> Museum of the Home ‘Stay Home’ Collection</p> <p><b>Episode 2:</b> Religious belief and practice at home during the COVID-19 pandemic</p> <p><b>Episode 3:</b> Migration, COVID-19 and community support in London and Liverpool</p> <p><b>Episode 4:</b> Sounds of Lockdown with artist Calum Perrin</p> <p><b>Episode 5:</b> COVID-19 in journalism and political debate - in production</p> <p><b>Episode 6:</b> COVID-19 and outside space – in production</p>
<b>Online gallery</b>	Maps submitted by children and young people aged 7-16
<b>Teaching resources</b>	Stay Home teaching resources for Key Stages 1 and 2
<b>Blog posts</b>	Blog posts across the work of the Stay Home Stories project

<sup>1</sup> The Stay Home Stories project has been taking place at the same time as ongoing protests about the statue of Sir Robert Geffrye on the buildings of the Museum of the Home. See the project website for a blog post about the impact of the statue on the project, links to other resources, and the current position of the Museum’s trustees.



“ I think ... as human beings, we're quite resilient and we can be resourceful if we put our minds to it. And so yes though we could not do the personal touch, we could not do the in-person meetings of praying together and weddings and baby namings and all of that. Technology did help to ... connect and be able to serve people and meet with people, albeit online, and talk.”

**Kofi**  
Evangelical Baptist Minister



# Staying connected

Insights	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Faith groups responded rapidly to lockdown, setting up online worship, and a range of methods of communication including via WhatsApp, Facebook, phone trees and letters.</li> <li>• WhatsApp groups, in particular, flourished amongst faith communities.</li> <li>• Participants were mindful that life would have been more isolating without the internet, smart phones and other electronic devices that enable people to work, worship, and, above all, keep in touch with one another.</li> <li>• Use of technology depended on expertise; some people only felt able to use more traditional methods of communication like letter writing and telephone calls.</li> <li>• Letters were particularly appreciated by patients in hospital.</li> <li>• Participants also described the value of receiving items that had a 'personal touch' such as small gifts, care packages and notes, especially around life-cycle events and religious festivals.</li> <li>• Home provides an intimate space for worship. Comfort and convenience often contributed to greater 'attendance' figures and inclusivity. Online worship has been significant for those who struggle to travel to religious buildings.</li> <li>• Uneven access to technical resources, skills, and support was an issue for some communities, who began streaming worship with only a handheld phone or tablet. Others were already familiar with more sophisticated technology and were able to draw on existing technical support and experience.</li> <li>• Faith leaders, usually competent at leading worship, had to quickly learn a range of computer skills and felt a sense of responsibility if there were errors.</li> <li>• Lack of funding for technical resources and training posed a threat to the sustainability of some faith communities. Some faith groups experienced a decrease in membership as congregants accessed alternative online religious services, whilst others increased their membership.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We recommend that faith groups develop a range of methods to communicate with congregants especially those who are isolated. Personal touches were appreciated by individuals and can be incorporated in ongoing communications.</li> <li>• In spite of issues relating to technical expertise, online platforms and social media increased inclusivity with some participants reporting increased attendance at events and a growth in membership of their religious community. Retaining these platforms will help faith communities to become more inclusive and enable them to connect with other religious groups.</li> <li>• We advocate technical training for faith leaders and their congregations in case of future lockdowns or to develop a fully hybrid offer.</li> <li>• We recommend allocation of resources for investment in communication technologies so that the benefits of greater connection can be sustained and enhanced.</li> </ul>



## CASE STUDY

Shahin | Zoroastrian



Paul Maguire Getty Images iStock 121685879

*The other thing that's been happening is people phone each other a lot. It's very much, you know, how are you? It's a community minded thing that people always phone their elders, or that people they know to be sick and ailing in the community. Though, I don't receive too many phone calls but I'm making still quite a lot of phone calls and I learned that from my mother. My mother would phone people always, even before COVID, it was just part of the duty of a good Zoroastrian to think about other people. And that's human nature. If you're a decent human, you show compassion. ... they have people who've got a rota and they have allocated and distributed. The people they know to be over 60, the various volunteers that phoned them up and they have a once-a-week buddy phone call and they also have another buddy who will do shopping for them. And they have people who they can phone up in emergencies or just to chat to if they're feeling lonely. So, this works because we are a small community in Britain.*



Rabbi Leading online service for Jewish New Year. Photograph Howard Cohen

## CASE STUDY

Christopher | Anglican Vicar

*I think most obviously it's connected us, people have been able to see and watch, and I think YouTube has been good in terms of breadth and a reach if you like, and it's been easy for us to connect with people who weren't originally part of the church. Zoom has been better for a sort of two-way thing, and people who opted for Zoom found that was better for including people, you see people's faces, people can comment, and they found ways of people connecting to Zoom on the phone as well, so people who didn't have internet access were also able to do that. That's been quite hard work for them, so I know one church in Newferry which had a very technically able vicar was very quick on communicating to older people in the congregation how they could ring up and listen to the service on their phone, even though they didn't have the internet. So that was brilliant and people really loved that, and they would have phone meetings for people in the church over Zoom. Yeah, so that was brilliant at connecting people. As I say, YouTube probably slightly less good. Facebook maybe in between the two because the comments section is slightly better on Facebook probably, so people watching but able to have an ongoing conversation.*

## CASE STUDY

Hasu | Jain

Hasu described the many activities organised by the Jain community during lockdown:  
*And I think they have actually tapped into so much talent within the community, you know, they've involved so many, whereas, if you did a physical event and you said, you had ten singers and you're only doing one song, probably some people say, "Why do I need to go all that way just for one song?" Whereas this way they're doing it from the comfort of their home. And a lot of young talent tap in too so I think it's actually brought generations together.*



*Many people who we have now met through the Zoom gathering we now become friends on WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram. If people use these mediums and we're able to strengthen one another - see how we are tackling the problem. We can learn from one another, share information and bless and guide one another throughout this struggle that we're all facing."*

**Wolda**

Christian interfaith worker

## CASE STUDY

Sheila | An atheist whose family are Muslim

*Well, my mum lives in Germany, so I have not seen her for a year and a half now. So obviously that is quite difficult. But at the same time, although I haven't seen her in person, I feel like, because everyone's video calling now and that - it's not something that we used to do because we just ... we'd speak on the phone but we wouldn't necessarily video call. But, yeah, we started doing that quite regularly. So I probably speak to her more than before. And I feel I need to check in with her more just because she lives on her own ... I don't want her to feel isolated. So, although we're kind of physically apart, I feel like perhaps we've grown a bit closer due to that regular contact. We also did stuff like Christmas celebrations and Eid celebrations over Zoom, which was ... not as nice as seeing someone in person. But ... it was still nice that we could actually do that. And we ... agreed beforehand what kind of food we would make so we were kind of having the same. And then I put the tablet on the dining table like she was sat there, a part of ... me and my partner sort of having dinner together.*



## CASE STUDY

Bisakha | Hindu



Photo by Varsha Patel

*I would say, oh, give us a postcard picture of your saris or, you know, how you are dressed, in this group, WhatsApp group or something, you know ... I'm going to wear this tomorrow.*

*It was really nice, it made it quite nice, and, what have you made? What are you offering? So people are posting those pictures. And sharing and having a banter over the phone in that time.*



*I think for my family it felt as though the exercise of faith was about dutifulness and keeping going, and in my sense professionally keeping going in the hope that I could find new ways of connecting with, and feeding, and caring for people within my community."*

**Nicolas**  
Church of England Rector



*One of the things I like about the Zoom service is actually looking at all of us in our rooms, in our own spaces, and there we are, each in our own little bubble, but the bubbles are all nestling together. Yeah, have a sense of into each other's homes in a way. Or bringing our homes together. I really do enjoy that."*

**Ol**  
Identifies as a Jew  
and attends Quaker meetings

# Creativity in Worship

Insights	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One of the areas in which faith groups flourished during lockdown concerned creativity within worship.</li> <li>• During the pandemic, faith leaders adapted existing rituals and made innovations as communal worship was experienced at a distance and primarily in the home. This helped to ensure that worship remained a meaningful and shared event.</li> <li>• Celebrating major festivals during lockdown over two consecutive years demonstrated the confidence many faith leaders developed in technical skills and support as they experimented creatively with service content.</li> <li>• Participants reported that one of the aspects of communal worship they missed most was the opportunity to sing together.</li> <li>• Communities tried a number of ways to sing together, including live-streaming services, a small choir or organist live streaming from faith buildings, sharing music via zoom, recording and sharing music, recording individuals and merging together to create virtual choirs.</li> <li>• Faith leaders educated and enabled their congregants to perform rituals previously led by faith leaders alone.</li> <li>• Faith leaders used IT creatively to bring people together.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is scope to build on the creativity of faith leaders who experimented with service content and a range of media during the pandemic, including by rethinking liturgy and incorporating art, music, drama, dance and online content in worship.</li> <li>• There are also opportunities to develop the use of music in worship, for example by sharing recordings and using streaming technologies so that people in different locations or different denominations and faiths can sing together.</li> <li>• Many faith groups would benefit from further training and sharing experiences around creative practice in worship.</li> <li>• Building on the education provided by faith leaders during the pandemic, religious groups should explore ways of empowering congregants to creatively lead and support services and wider religious practice.</li> <li>• Leaders should continue to review the creative possibilities offered by technology to bring people and communities together in innovative ways.</li> </ul>



“ I think the most exciting thing has been about the self-confidence of communities to give up on fixed liturgy ... And that I think out of that will be a whole new wealth of creative liturgy and creative way of feeling together. And a greater understanding of how the liturgy works.

Charley  
Liberal Jewish Rabbi



## CASE STUDY

Rabbi Saul | Orthodox Jewish

Rabbi Saul found many ways to engage his community as he grappled with the question, ‘How do we bring the synagogue into people’s homes?’ As part of the Orthodox Jewish tradition, Rabbi Saul used the pandemic as a means to educate his community, supplying a range of resources that need not be confined to lockdown conditions. These included sending essays, quizzes and games for families to engage with when celebrating Shabbat and Jewish festivals. For Passover he created a number of activities based around the currently popular concept of an escape room. Participants were given a number of challenges to enable an Israelite to escape Egyptian bondage. Rabbi Saul, although prohibited from engaging in online activities on Shabbat, provided a bite size Mishnah (Jewish oral law from the rabbinic tradition) each day, a Zoom call welcome just before the Sabbath, a Torah reading with summary, and a video of his ‘thought for the week’.

## CASE STUDY

Rebecca | Liberal Jew



Small family Seder during COVID. Getty Images iStock 1217631081 Dnaveh

I remember the first one [Passover Seder] quite well because it was only a couple of weeks into lockdown. So, we were all still learning about Zoom and how you manage Zoom and how you screen share on Zoom, and how you control Zoom. You know, so it was very much kind of rough and ready, straightforward Zoom meeting.

I think there was a bit of screen sharing, and that’s kind of as sophisticated as it got. Now, this year just gone, obviously a year into it, we’re much more – everyone’s much more Zoom savvy. So, everyone knows what they’re doing on Zoom. But what we did, we incorporated other aspects into the Seder. So, we produce some videos of – well, there was kind of some funny videos, so we did one of our members interviewed Moses kind of as a therapy session. And one of our other members videoed herself giving, like, a weather forecast, you know, with the ten plagues. But then, also, something that wasn’t – it was specific to Pesach, but our choir throughout the lockdown has been producing mixed audio. So, everyone’s been doing solos, and our choir director has been mixing them together. And then, we’ve been putting video images to those. So, we’ve been playing these kind of musical videos, which is the choir singing with images. And we did quite a few of those for the Seder night as well. So, it was much more kind of, you know, we made much greater use of the technology the second time around in the form of those videos and the music, than we were able to do the first time.



## CASE STUDY

Bisakha | Bengali Hindu



S. Pukkato iStock 1385868868

Bisakha, a Bengali Hindu, acknowledged the efforts her Priest put into creatively leading religious rituals. Her Priest informed all the community about the materials they required for religious festivals and instructed them online so that they could perform the required rituals. This was one of the many examples shared of faith leaders educating and enabling their communities to perform rituals usually led by faith leaders alone.

Bisakha also described how other members of the community emerged as leaders during the pandemic. One woman, a member of her Hindu community's committee, took responsibility for ensuring communal activities were continued in spite of the restrictions, as well as facilitating fun during a difficult time:

*One of the members of the committee was very enthusiastic. She made it even more interesting, she would sort of say, what are you wearing? You know, bringing in that social element in it ... So one of those things are on the last day of Puja ... all the married women go round putting this red vermillion on each other. Not only in the parting, where it usually goes, but all over the face, on your arms and everything. It becomes like a [laughs] a festival of colour. But, you know, they all mess everybody up. And it's kind of, you know, silly sort of fun. But it's interesting. And we would have missed it, you know. You just do take it as an important thing that happens, you know. So, again, this girl, she said, look, we are going to do that. So I'll call you, that - by that, in a group conversation. And have your red powders ready. And when we are all together, take that and put it on your forehead. You kind of put the colour on your own. But we are all together and you feel as if you're doing that. Or you can also call the names and tell them you put it here and there. And so you have to do it. In that sort of way we were trying to find ways of going round the actual problems. And the main reason is, really, connection between people and just a fun time together.*



Deepak Meena Vireshstudio 'Deepavali'

On a different occasion another woman organised a cultural celebration, again using the technical tools available during lockdown to creatively bring people together:

*We do one festival, which is kind of the final day of it, which is usually a cultural programme. So, yeah, which hasn't got any religious rituals in it, but a cultural programme. Which is an - almost an integral part of this festival. For that, we did that in Zoom. And we could see each other and, you know, whoever is doing that. But that was also wonderfully done by another person who is very skilled in technology. That she asked everybody to send her a little bit of footage of their movements. Because there's one thing which we call aarti where we show the light. And for this event we take it a bit further and men and women - actually, some men also do it very well - they will dance with that. You know, it's ... coming in front of the statue. And it's not only the light. Also, we burn something that smells - sort of fragrance coming out. So the burning thing, also, you take in your hand and, you know, you move with that. So they kind of did a little bit of that from different households and sent it to this girl. And she compiles those to have that ritual, also... what I'm saying, the dances that happen in this Puja place is more of community involvement.*



# Outdoor Spaces

## Insights

- Faith leaders and practitioners frequently made use of outdoor spaces for fellowship and to build community.
- Green spaces are often significant places for worship and integral to some religious traditions.
- Outdoor spaces became important during lockdowns as comparatively safe places to gather in small numbers, as well as offering a way for people of faith to escape their homes.
- Interviewees across a range of faiths described a variety of outdoor venues, especially for celebrating major festivals, including private gardens, parks, grounds of religious spaces and car parks. For example, a number of Jewish congregations organised drive-in services to celebrate the festival of Purim, often in synagogue car parks.
- In addition to communal celebrations, several participants described outdoor spaces as particularly important for private prayer and meditation. Outdoor spaces provided opportunities for reflection and enabled people to feel close to nature, enhancing their mood and helping their spiritual and mental well-being.
- Outdoor spaces also enabled greater inclusivity, both for individual faith communities and interfaith groups.

## Opportunities

- There are opportunities for faith groups to further develop their use of outdoor spaces into the future, including to improve access and inclusivity, particularly for those who struggle with closed spaces and access to some religious buildings.
- Communal worship and private meditation in outdoor spaces are beneficial to the spiritual experience of faith communities and have a place beyond lockdown.
- The use of outdoor spaces might become a focus for discussion within and between different faith groups, prompting greater awareness of environmental issues and how religions might work together to address them.



Flickr, photo by Edmond Terakopian

*Carrying the Cross in St Martin-in-the-Fields. Due to COVID-19 and the closure of Churches, St Martin-in-the-Fields transformed its courtyard into a new prayer garden. The photo shows Reverend Sally Hitchiner holding the cross and returning to the Church at the end of the two-hour opening.*



## CASE STUDY

Shahin | Zoroastrian

*I think you'll find a lot of solace in the countryside, in nature, in your garden, in the seeing of the birds, you know, just being aware of nature. I mean, that's really one of the most beautiful things that my religion has taught me is to observe the seasons changing, to be conscious of our place in the seasons and the world, and the whole role of nature and to be joyful about it, and to respect it. And to make extra effort to communicate that respect that we need to have to other people who haven't thought about it because it's a deeply uplifting beauty. Nature is beautiful, and unremittingly beautiful, if you look for the beauty in it. And, you know, we are very optimistic. Our religion is one about good thoughts, good words, good deeds, it's all about optimism. It's all about positivity, it's about moving forward, it's dynamic, it's regenerative. So, we don't dwell on the past, we don't dwell on negatives, we don't dwell on bad things.*

*I believe that many people have turned to their gardens and that's not exclusively Zoroastrians, but we have a great tradition in gardening, understanding how to make plants and people are very good at grafting fruit trees. I've been given a grafted walnut tree and a grafted fig tree because we have a tradition that when a child is born, you plant a tree. And it's got to be a useful tree to humankind, so it's either nuts or fruit. So, I've got a walnut tree and a fig tree. And they were both given to me by friends who had their own fig tree or walnut tree in the garden, and saplings grew up. And then some people know how to graft them. So, one of my friends has grafted a rose tree and given me a rose. So, they're very good at managing and making things propagate. So, people have been in their gardens a lot. I've heard this and my garden is looking better probably, not that it's very good at all because I'm not a great gardener, but I do love my flowers and I've done things I didn't do before. I think a lot of people have done that.*

## CASE STUDY

Deirdre | Anglican (Anglo Catholic)

*They put up three crosses in the church garden and on Good Friday they were just there. On Easter morning they asked people to bring flowers, and the whole community brought flowers. So by the end of Easter Day the crosses were surrounded by flowers. And that was something the community picked up on, and it was quite dramatic. (Photos provided by Deirdre).*



## CASE STUDY

Rachel and Alice | Quakers

*As for own my mental health. I've definitely – I prioritise spending Sunday mornings at the beach, for example, rather than sitting, staring at a screen. And I think that some of the other people in my faith community don't quite understand that (Rachel, Quaker).*



Photograph by Naomi James

*And then the other thing was having a garden which for me was amazing 'cos I grew lots of vegetables, and ..., for me, that feels quite spiritual, being out in the garden and just taking that space and having that relationship with land and the beauty of being outside and the peacefulness and stuff. So I was really lucky to have that. ... it was like a connection to the natural world alongside a reconnection with spiritual practice that I found during lockdown as well. So I think the two for me were very connected (Alice, Quaker).*



Photo by Jonathan Kempner Unsplash

## CASE STUDY

Debbie | Interfaith Representative

*I think things like disability access, I think it's going to be a good thing for people who couldn't necessarily make going to the place of faith or, you know, mental health issues, or learning disability. People who just don't fare well in a closed environment. I think that's going to be a more creative way of people doing things together. Where there's just more air and more space and less hemmed in feeling. I certainly hope that from an interfaith point of view, certainly. ... I suppose we've always tried to join in some of the outdoor festivals, of which there are quite a lot anyway. Street festivals and we've often been invited or there is an open invitation among the faith communities to attend people's festivals, ... quite a few of which are outside, and processions and so forth. And I think that would be more of the norm, so I think that will be great. And that people feel that they can attend 'cos I think up 'til now there was that feeling of oh, that's their thing, that's their thing. But I think now that people feel that outside is fine, is a good milieu for things to happen, and that we advertise and invite and include I think actually it will be quite a good thing. But it doesn't happen on its own, you've got to make people feel that it's okay and that they're welcome. And welcome them, even though – 'cos it's easier to welcome in a sort of an outside environment than it is in the formality of somewhere where you think you might be doing the wrong thing or you know... a good idea of making people feel comfortable.*



# Pastoral Support

Insights	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The inability to meet face-to-face was especially difficult if people were in hospital and care homes, and for those requiring end-of-life care, as well as the recently bereaved.</li><li>• Respondents developed creative ways to support one another which they wish to continue. Examples include writing letters to patients that were read out by nurses and notifying patients that they were being prayed for beyond the hospital.</li><li>• Many faith communities became more proactive in developing pastoral support, regularly contacting all members of the community.</li><li>• Within individual communities and among interfaith groups, we heard many examples of people taking food to individuals' homes and undertaking tasks like dog walking and shopping. Others assisted members of their faith groups in setting up technology so that they could connect with family, friends and faith communities.</li><li>• These methods were also employed to help people beyond their own faith group.</li><li>• Faith communities were influenced by the guidelines issued by their religious leaders to help others.</li><li>• Faith communities developed a variety of wellness programmes during lockdown to enhance mental and emotional well-being, including yoga and meditation.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The examples of faith groups helping those beyond their own communities can be continued beyond lockdown, building on newly established networks and infrastructures.</li><li>• We suggest that faith communities' provision of 'wellness programmes', be continued as a way to enhance the emotional well-being of congregants.</li><li>• We recommend that proactive methods for staying in touch, developed during the pandemic, should be sustained into the future to ensure that no individual is 'lost' at a time when support may be required.</li></ul>

## CASE STUDY

Christopher | Anglican Vicar



Piksel iStock 130743249

*What we did was quickly in the first week set up teams of ringer-uppers. So we did something we've never done before, which was to divide the whole church up and have someone allocated to ring ten or twelve people initially once a week and then it sort of became once a fortnight. And that continued all the way through, we met again in the spring and in the autumn of last year. So we had an initial meeting just as we started, set everything up, then we had someone ringing up the ringer-uppers to check they were doing okay. So just a sort of systematic approach, which we'd never done before, before it tended to be a responsive, reactive pastoral approach, you hear so-and-so's ill so you get in touch. But this was proactive, we rang everyone. ... So*

*that was a big difference. We also had a sort of practical team who were picking up stuff from the ringer-uppers but also direct requests from people who were housebound, unable to get prescriptions, walk the dog, get the shopping, so a team of people doing that. And that was mostly internal, it was mostly us looking after our congregation. ... And we have lots of people who were working in an individual capacity with Helplink, which was driving people around to the shops or homeless stuff or whatever. So that's what we did. Others were, as I say, very proactive, going around with letters, knocking on doors.*



## CASE STUDY

Saba | Muslim



*The mosque set up a support group for all of its congregation in a WhatsApp group so they can keep an eye on each other. They also looked after their neighbours whether they were Muslim or non-Muslim. So when you're constantly seeing things like this and it's all in the name of Islam, it's all from people of my faith, it sort of waters the goodness, you know, of the faith a bit. Because ... there's so much negativity about it, like in the media ... about Islam and it's - it was these good news stories that we hear all the time but that not everybody does. ... when COVID happened, because everybody had to pull together, like we knew exactly what the Pakistani community were doing, what the Caribbean community were doing ... what the Somali associations were doing, we all got to hear what was going on in the community.*

*... People would go out in the middle of the night to get somebody nappies. ... Our neighbours are all on a WhatsApp group so it was just like someone needed paracetamol or could somebody pick up an extra bottle of milk, it was - it was so lovely. But when you're a person of faith as well you know that that only comes from goodness, that that only comes from, you know, just from like the blessings of God that you're in that and you're part of that. So it just fortified the heart even more so that you look after your neighbour and your neighbour looks after you. Someone drops off a toy for the kids just to check that they're okay and it was just all of that that really shows like how beautiful faith can be, and especially in times of adversity as well.*

# Death and Dying

Insights	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The most difficult outcome of the pandemic related to death and mourning. Safety precautions meant that participants could not visit their loved ones, say goodbye, attend funerals, or receive face-to-face pastoral support.</li> <li>• Faith leaders found ways to preserve memories of those who died during lockdown. For example, one Rabbi compiled booklets of chat messages sent during Zoom funerals and memorial prayer services [Shiva] which were sent to mourners.</li> <li>• Faith leaders also experimented with how to carry out religious specifications around death and dying during lockdown. This often required adaptations to religious customs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We must continue to acknowledge and address the long-term effects of people not being able to participate in end-of-life and mourning rituals during the pandemic. We support the <a href="#">UK Commission on Bereavement (2022)</a>, which also documented the damaging effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on those who have lost loved ones, in calling for more funding for bereavement support.</li> <li>• Faith leaders have a continuing obligation to support the bereaved, as well as looking after their own mental and emotional health.</li> <li>• Support systems within and between faith groups should be put in place to meet the needs of congregants and faith leaders for dealing with any similar future crises.</li> </ul>

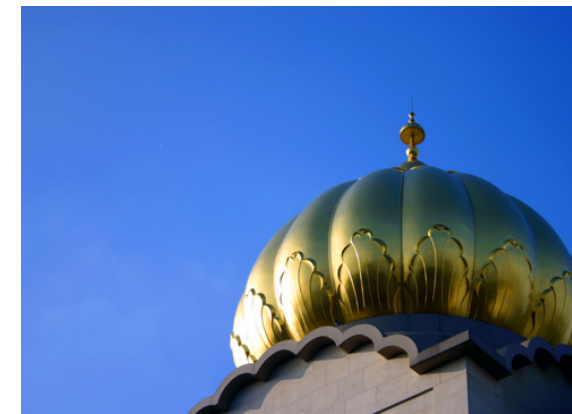




Marcos Casado Shutterstock 1720 Notice about funeral prayer

## CASE STUDY

Charanjit | Sikh



Peter Elvidge. Golden Dome on the Sri Guru Singh Sabha Gurdwara in Southall, London. Stock Photo ID: 775621 Shutterstock

Charanjit explained how it is customary in the Sikh tradition to read all the scriptures (*Akhand Paatth*), in a single sitting, usually in the Gurdwara after a death. During COVID-19 this religious obligation was shared among members of the Sikh community:

*It's 1,430 pages, the recitation, it takes about forty-eight hours. So some families have been doing it, you know, themselves, who can read. Others can't, so members of the community [were] helping out in that process.*

## CASE STUDY

Rabbi Saul | Orthodox Jewish

A similar approach was initiated by Rabbi Saul, whose synagogue provided the option that mourners “could allocate somebody who would say kaddish [memorial prayer] on their behalf in a synagogue which did have a quorum of men to be able to say kaddish.” Rabbi Saul also spoke to his community about the different meanings of the kaddish prayer as a way to offer alternatives for them following the death of a family member.

## CASE STUDY

Hasu | Jain



Comdas Stock Illustration ID: 1568619904 Shutterstock.

In the Jain community, a Mothers' Day event was created during lockdown to celebrate all mothers, living and deceased. Held on Zoom, it included pictures of mothers and shared memories, as Hasu explained:

*And even that Mothers' Day event, what I loved about it was it's not a traditional kind of celebration for us, but the way that they did it was they were actually almost worshipping mothers .... It was almost like they turned it into a religious kind of festival for mothers, which I think then it just was so great for all these elderly ladies who've never really been appreciated, you know. They've kind of always been taken for granted. I think they felt really good. And a lot of young talent tap in too, so it's actually brought generations together.*



# Impact on Faith Leaders

Insights	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Faith leaders reported that supporting their communities was often difficult and came at a significant personal cost.</li> <li>Pastoral support was especially challenging to reproduce without face-to-face contact, resulting in a sense of loss by both those giving and requiring help.</li> <li>Faith leaders found it hard to switch off and take time out. Many were dealing with their own stresses, such as personal bereavement, illness (including COVID-19), and balancing community life with home-schooling and other family commitments.</li> <li>The pandemic blurred several boundaries between religious buildings and home, to the detriment of an already exhausted leadership. Religious leaders felt, and were often perceived, as being continually on call since they were at home during lockdown.</li> <li>Few faith leaders had adequate support structures in place, especially lone faith leaders working without professional support from colleagues.</li> <li>Some created their own support systems by joining with other local faith leaders. These 'clusters' or 'teams' enabled ministers to share workloads and be more inclusive, whilst looking after their own emotional needs.</li> <li>Others retired early or changed jobs, due to tiredness and stress.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The importance of collegiality and shared ministry was revealed during the pandemic. We recommend the formation of more shared ministries in the future, including across different faiths.</li> <li>Sharing the load of pastoral support with 'lay' colleagues offers a way of protecting faith leaders from overload.</li> <li>A range of resources were produced or made available during the pandemic which faith leaders should continue to utilise to support their well-being and develop networks of professional support (e.g. webinars, online 'toolkits' to identify signs of burnout, prevent exhaustion, and feelings of inadequacy; see the resources at the end of this guide).</li> <li>We recommend creating support structures and training programmes within and across faith groups to support faith leaders.</li> </ul>



Daniele Cossu. Shutterstock 1888504189



*We organized one or two webinars. One on burnout amongst religious leaders just to help them be aware of the warning signs of burnout and the typical responses to crisis. Sort of, you know, hero mode, and then burnout, and then a more balanced perspective . . . cycles that we just go through. So we tried to just do some education around that to help people get some perspective."*

**Nathan**  
Interfaith Leader

## CASE STUDY

**Danny | Jewish Hospital Chaplain**

*Our staff are exhausted and overwhelmed, there's no doubt about it. And every time they think, have thought, oh, well, we can have a bit of recovery time, another wave has hit. And there is a question mark for me about how long people can sustain that, you know. You can gear yourself up so many times and the biggest challenge we had is simple absence. I mean it was reported that in some hospitals it was 40% absence rate. I just don't know how you cover, you know, if you don't have 40% of your nurses on. You know, you can call in as many bank people as you like but you probably can't get to 40%. So I think there remains a danger. I don't think it's about physical overwhelming, now other people would be able to comment on that. But I think the load that people are carrying is quite high and of course that*

*means even if we offer them a seminar on looking after yourself, they can't take the time to do it. So we tried quite a number of initiatives of bringing people together. And every time there is a window of opportunity it collapses very quickly. So I think there is a long-term challenge which I think is one of the reasons why our hospital is maintaining chaplaincy numbers and resources, that at some stage we are going to have to pick up a lot of people, you know, who may not be off sick but who are going to need support.*

Danny explained that the chaplaincy team was closely managed to ensure that there was space to talk and 'to make sure that we are looking after each other and checking with each other'.



# Social Action and Outreach

## CASE STUDY

Debbie | Interfaith worker

*The support has continued among what you might call our faith leaders, of which there's probably about fifteen, twenty who are the main drivers. And we've kept up the newsletter and you know, again when things happen like somebody's got – there's been a disaster or whatever – we always send out communications to whoever it is of sympathy and just to show we are there. And I think it's very positive and very, very supportive thing that interfaith has managed to – it has continued throughout the year.*

## CASE STUDY

Rabbi Charley | Liberal Jew

*I have a really strong concern about where the mental health of rabbis will be at the end of this period, because pastoral support has never been done in this way. And rabbis, you know, like many caring professionals, find it very difficult to switch off and to take time out. And actually, the pastoral demands on the rabbinate have been – any clergy – has been huge during this. And at the same time, you know, congregants are WhatsApping, emailing, phoning rabbis in ways that are kind of, you know, there aren't the same boundaries. I found, you know, even not having a congregation that suddenly I look down at my phone and someone's FaceTiming me, you know, because they have my mobile number. And instead of putting the phone there – like there's an assumption that, you know, you can see people all the time. And I think that's exhausting.*

*I think one thing that has improved is ... we've seen a lot of expansion of volunteer teams, so that there's been an understanding that not everything has to sit with the rabbi, but actually, also the rabbi in many cases, learning that they need other people as well to share that support. So, you know, old fashioned things like phone trees, you know, we do these weekly meetings. And, you know, we've looked at care several times in these meetings, cross-communally. And things like phone trees have really grown during this time and, you know, other congregants who weren't involved in the care team taking on just phoning a few people, and regularly keeping ... those up. So, that's been an amazing development.*

## Insights

- Interfaith groups and faith organisations were key contributors to social action projects during the pandemic, including setting up and maintaining food banks.
- Many faiths see it as part of their religious duty to support others, regardless of whether they share a faith.
- Faith groups and interfaith organisations were engaged with supporting local communities throughout the pandemic.
- Many of our interviewees were already involved in outreach work, but some of the narratives shared included new projects or adaptations, in the light of the difficulties experienced by specific groups during lockdown.
- In addition to supporting their own religious communities, participants supported their neighbours by keeping in touch, shopping, cooking and delivering food.
- Faith groups worked with non-faith charities and healthcare providers.
- Interfaith and individual faith groups offered their buildings as vaccination centres and provided information about vaccinations.

## Opportunities

- Involvement in social action initiatives was seen as important for raising the profile of minority religious groups. It is important that faith communities continue their involvement in social action projects because of the benefits to society that they bring and to maintain a positive profile.
- We recommend social action as a successful and proven way of faiths working together.
- There are opportunities to develop partnerships with non-faith groups, for example charity groups and healthcare providers, including around COVID-19 recovery initiatives.



## CASE STUDY

Shahin | Zoroastrian

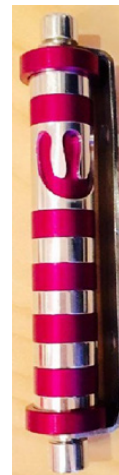
*So, we just said, let's do something as an interfaith group, showing collaboration, showing love for the environment that we all share, let us do something to celebrate that. So, we've had our kind of final narrow down, and we're having a meeting tonight with everybody. And we're going to be talking about how we implement the two top choices, which was to create a sensory scented garden, for people who might be blind or who need to have feeling, it's a feeling sensory garden of smell and feeling. It's a lovely idea and also, and we want to work together on that project. And also, to do something to make the outsides of train stations, tube stations, and overland stations more attractive. So, when people go in or come out, they're given a little bit of an uplift when they come up, and appreciate the beauty that is there to inspire us all, to you know, change one's mood and bring us up a bit. So, that's a start.*

## CASE STUDY

Debbie | Interfaith Representative

*I think from the interfaith perspective, I think there's an even stronger need and feeling for people to work together. And from my experience, the faith communities have been doing quite a lot during the pandemic, both for their own communities and opening their doors to, you know, anyone in need. So things like food, you know, food*

*banks, visiting people, well a lot of the faith communities have really come to the fore. And you know, it's the ethos, of course, of a lot of faith communities about charity and giving. And I think it's really, you know, it's come into its own, which is great.*



Hindu, Muslim and Jewish symbols of home and hospitality

## CASE STUDY

Richard | Interfaith Leader

*Where we did flourish was we worked with adults with learning difficulties through our partnerships with Mencap and other organisations in the area. And so, we rewrote the courses and adapted them and still called them Taste of Life. But there was no food obviously and drink involved. We had our encounters and we had little exercises and games and things and that worked really well. So, that's something that did work well. And they really enjoyed it because a lot of adults with learning difficulties were terrified of going out and weren't getting that personal encounter and what's the word I'm looking for? Companionship and just being able to talk to different people, you know, they were – a lot of them were trapped in their houses or in their residences where they were living. So, they really valued that. When lockdown did end for a bit, we'd actually managed to get a trip, and we did a trip to Strawberry Fields, which was great and we had a big good singsong and all the rest of it.*

## CASE STUDY

Charanjit | Interfaith Representative

*The CCG (Clinical Commissioning Groups), initially they wanted scrubs, there was such a shortage. The Gurdwara, some of the women in the mosques and other places were very helpful in putting it all together. Our local GPs managed to get their scrubs quite briskly because of the faith communities entering into that dialogue with them... I think they made them. The leaders and communities funded the material and then of course we have still got some very skilled people who can sew them. ... That was one of the very early things to do apart from, you know, making sure that the communities are also supporting the hub which is where the food is collected and supporting them.*

## CASE STUDY

Deirdre | Anglo Catholic

*Now, what the church really did, and the synagogue supports it through the nursery school, is set up a food pantry. And what we have there is people contributing food, and we have people who don't want to register with the food bank because that asks for lots of information. We have people who just turn up and get food. Now, I've got people from my neighbourhood and from the synagogue nursery school parents who like to give food that way. So yesterday I gave thirteen bags of food which was all contributed. Now, that's a community thing, but people like doing it in a slightly unorganised way, but it's what the church started, and every Wednesday people can turn up there and get food.*



GiselleFlissak Getty Images iStock 1316288184 Food donations at community outreach project



# Education

## Insights

- A number of participants reported that education programmes flourished during the pandemic. Many faith leaders felt that the pandemic facilitated a greater engagement in religious learning.
- Education programmes sometimes received higher attendance figures during lockdown. Interviewees believed that this was due to the convenience of being at home and not having to travel, especially in the evenings.
- Participants expressed a need to join activities during lockdown, partly due to a wish to connect with others. This was especially the case for those on furlough from work.
- Participants described a variety of educational programmes for different age groups. Many utilised the conditions of lockdown to develop specialist programmes in areas such as mental health and wellness.
- Other participants described how their programmes were influenced by the circumstances of the pandemic and developed programmes that discussed current issues.
- An important aspect of this work related to debates about the safety of COVID-19 vaccinations. Faith leaders discussed the benefits of vaccinations especially amongst members of faith groups who were hesitant.

## Opportunities

- Online education has been shown to be an inclusive way for faith groups to learn together.
- In addition to the learning resources provided to enable individuals and families to learn and worship together at home, learning can be expanded beyond religious texts, languages and traditions.
- The broader range of topics for education programmes should continue, including religious insights into contemporary issues, well-being programmes and practical skills such as IT.
- There are further opportunities for interfaith learning. Faith communities and interfaith groups broadened the remit of their education profiles. For example, an interfaith group in Liverpool developed interviews with people of different faith backgrounds and how their faith helped them cope with lockdown.



*They're doing a lot of mental health stuff and I think they're doing a lot more than they would have done . . . if they had to organise it physically."*

**Atul Jain**





## CASE STUDY

Faizan | Muslim



A Muslim prayer mat

*I think probably one thing I have noticed is a lot more people have been watching online lectures. And that's one thing that maybe would normally happen in your local community with your local Imam. But I think there has been a lot more of, you know virtual connection now and I think a lot of people have been engaging with some of the more online scholars. So that's probably been a change which was happening anyway I think with, you know, YouTube and social media anyway. But I think that has probably accelerated because people still wanted that connection with a scholar or, you know, watching Islamic lectures. And if they couldn't get in their local, you know, with the local community, then they were even more forced to do it online but in terms of actual prayers and that kind of stuff, not – not anything more than usual.*

## CASE STUDY

Father Michael | Roman Catholic Priest

*We had just started – before COVID came we had started a Gospel sharing group midweek, on a Wednesday evening. And it meant coming to church. That was the way we thought, you know, meant coming to church. So you had about six regulars would be coming. And that had been going on for four, five months when COVID came. And that group said, no, we must carry on. We'll use Zoom. So suddenly Zoom was all the rage, wasn't it, you know. That only came in with COVID, really, you know, in any way. And they've kept it up on Zoom absolutely every week. It's the same group of people. But they have grown, you feel the growth within themselves. Exploring the Bible. I don't know, Catholics are atrocious for not reading the Bible. They do everything else, all these other holy prayers and things. They just don't read the Holy Scripture. They were never taught to. And these people are discovering Scripture and therefore discovering a living Jesus, if you like. And they're more engaged now – since the lockdown was lifted they're more engaged. They're more into – you feel the influence as well on the rest of the community. So many people learnt to pray at home. Which they wouldn't – may not have done before. And then this group, that really have moved on with the Gospel sharing.*



Roman Catholic holy water font.

## CASE STUDY

Bisakha | Interfaith Group in Liverpool

*During this period also we have done – they have done quite a lot of work. You know, amazing how they have managed, and all socially distanced or within the COVID rules. But I have also managed to do a couple of talks on Hinduism, introducing Hinduism. One in earlier part of the lockdown, I could go to the venue, to the office. And they have got an open air little space outside. So we could – which was really good for the people I was talking to, they really needed that one-to-one conversation. Also, I talked to some RE students from the university, who wanted to*

*know about Hinduism. And they questioned – they did it for several religions. They're having one-to – not one-to-one, but with a small group and with someone directly talking about it and showing the way people do the prayers and explaining some of the philosophical issues. So we have done that. And then Liverpool Football Club wanted to do that, you know, multi-faith training. So kind of, you know, we have been involved in that. Yes, you know, however much one can do it, they're doing that.*



Sikh, Buddhist, Roman Catholic and Hindu faith symbols.

## CASE STUDY

Christopher | Anglican vicar and youth leader

*We saw that as a great opportunity actually because it was one of the things we'd been wanting to say anyway and we appointed a children youth and family worker, and one of the things we wanted to do was to say to our Christian families that we want to support you in being the ones who teach your children the faith, rather than feeling you're subcontracting it to us. And actually our children, youth and family worker John worked incredibly hard at producing resources that went out, some of them physical resources that got shoved through letterboxes, a lot of them online, videos, extra stuff, and getting that out to our families to say, "Look, here's stuff you can use if you want to, this links with what we're doing on a Sunday morning." So you're right, it sort of blurred but in a way that we wanted to be positive about and say this is important.*



## CASE STUDY

Charanjit | Interfaith Representative

*We have a voluntary sector group totally run by volunteers that work inclusively with faith communities, picking up issues resulting from the spread of COVID and how we can actually make our communities both safe and sustained well. So it's been a bit of a challenge. Even this week for example, last week the Gurdwara had a whole day session on vaccination and that was on Thursday. The mosque had it on Friday because Friday is the day when they get together. And of course, Twickenham rugby ground was something which we took initiative on because of this spread of what they call, the Indian variant ... So, in order, as far as we could manage to help with anti-vaxers to get over their hesitation, whatever, if possible. But also, as a way of informing communities because people trust faith leaders and faith communities much more than they might trust others.*

## CASE STUDY

Rabbi Saul | Orthodox Jew

*In terms of the non-religious elements, we set up a series of talks, particularly geared to issues that people were facing in lockdown, whether it be someone talking about the way the government had dealt with the different restrictions side of things, whether it be keeping healthy. We talked about healthy eating and exercise and that kind of thing. We had a talk from someone in Israel about the Israeli vaccination programme, so we tried definitely to kind of add themes that people would find useful in the situation they were, like parenting classes and so on. That's in terms of the non-religious aspect of things we tried to do.*



Fizkes Getty Images iStock 1385721227

# Concluding Reflections

Since the start of the pandemic, a number of studies have examined how COVID-19 has impacted on religious practice and belief. Our research is distinctive in its focus on a range of faiths. Through interviewing faith leaders, congregants and members of interfaith groups, we have heard many perspectives. There are several advantages to our approach. It has enabled us to consider the specific challenges experienced by individual faith groups and denominations within those faith groups. By focusing on two cities in different parts of the UK – London and Liverpool – we have been able to gain an understanding of experiences within their local context and to explore the variety of ways that neighbouring religious communities responded to the pandemic. In many cases we found points of similarity and connection between different religious groups, perhaps unappreciated prior to the pandemic. The learning of new skills, the creative reinvention of worship through online and hybrid formats, the discovery of fresh ways to connect with and care for one another, and a

commitment to new programmes of social action and community-centred mutual support, have often been shared as positive outcomes of a very difficult experience for all faith communities. It would be a missed opportunity not to learn from and build on, these experiences. The pandemic has undoubtedly been a shock to religious organisations and very disruptive of people's spiritual lives, but it has also provided an occasion for learning and a chance to create more inclusive experiences, underlining the value of faith in a diverse society as it recovers from COVID-19. Indeed, perhaps one of the most positive opportunities is the possibility of renewed inter-faith dialogue founded on recognising our shared pandemic experiences, while celebrating our differences.

We finish with a summary of opportunities for the future, alongside additional resources for pursuing these opportunities and for fostering interfaith dialogue.

# Summary of Opportunities

Themes	Opportunities
Staying Connected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We recommend that faith groups develop a range of methods to communicate with congregants especially those who are isolated. Personal touches were appreciated by individuals and can be incorporated in ongoing communications.</li> <li>In spite of issues relating to technical expertise, online platforms and social media increased inclusivity with some participants reporting increased attendance at events and a growth in membership of their religious community. Retaining these platforms will help faith communities to become more inclusive and enable them to connect with other religious groups.</li> <li>We recommend allocation of resources for investment in communication technologies so that the benefits of greater connection can be sustained and enhanced.</li> <li>We advocate technical training for faith leaders and their congregations in case of future lockdowns or to develop a fully hybrid offer.</li> </ul>
Creativity in Worship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is scope to build on the creativity of faith leaders who experimented with service content and a range of media during the pandemic, including by rethinking liturgy and incorporating art, music, drama, dance and online content in worship.</li> <li>There are also opportunities to develop the use of music in worship, for example by sharing recordings and using streaming technologies so that people in different locations or different denominations and faiths can sing together.</li> </ul>



Creativity in Worship (cont.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many faith groups would benefit from further training and sharing experiences around creative practice in worship.</li> <li>• Building on the education provided by faith leaders during the pandemic, religious groups should explore ways of empowering congregants to creatively lead and support services and wider religious practice.</li> <li>• Leaders should continue to review the creative possibilities offered by technology to bring people and communities together in innovative ways.</li> </ul>
Outdoor Spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are opportunities for faith groups to further develop their use of outdoor spaces into the future, including to improve access and inclusivity, particularly for those who struggle with closed spaces and access to some religious buildings.</li> <li>• Communal worship and private meditation in outdoor spaces are beneficial to the spiritual experience of faith communities and have a place beyond lockdown.</li> <li>• The use of outdoor spaces might become a focus for discussion within and between different faith groups, prompting greater awareness of environmental issues and how religions might work together to address them.</li> </ul>
Pastoral Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We must continue to acknowledge and address the long-term effects of people not being able to participate in end-of-life and mourning rituals during the pandemic. We recommend the formation of an interfaith working party to develop ongoing pastoral support and memorial practices for all faith groups and none.</li> <li>• Faith leaders have a continuing obligation to support the bereaved, as well as looking after their own mental and emotional health.</li> <li>• Support systems within and between faith groups should be put in place to meet the needs of congregants and faith leaders for dealing with any similar future crises.</li> </ul>
Death and Dying	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We must continue to acknowledge and address the long-term effects of people not being able to participate in end-of-life and mourning rituals during the pandemic. We support the <a href="#">UK Commission on Bereavement (2022)</a>, which also documented the damaging effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on those who have lost loved ones, in calling for more funding for bereavement support.</li> <li>• Faith leaders have a continuing obligation to support the bereaved, as well as looking after their own mental and emotional health.</li> <li>• Support systems within and between faith groups should be put in place to meet the needs of congregants and faith leaders for dealing with any similar future crises.</li> </ul>

Impact on Faith Leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The importance of collegiality and shared ministry was revealed during the pandemic. We recommend the formation of more shared ministries in the future, including across different faiths.</li> <li>• Sharing the load of pastoral support with ‘lay’ colleagues offers a way of protecting faith leaders from overload.</li> <li>• A range of resources were produced or made available during the pandemic which faith leaders should continue to utilise to support their well-being and develop networks of professional support (e.g. webinars, online ‘toolkits’ to identify signs of burnout, prevent exhaustion, and feelings of inadequacy; see the resources at the end of this guide).</li> <li>• We recommend creating support structures and training programmes within and across faith groups to support faith leaders.</li> </ul>
Social Action and Outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Involvement in social action initiatives was seen as important for raising the profile of minority religious groups. It is important that faith communities continue their involvement in social action projects because of the benefits to society that they bring and to maintain a positive profile.</li> <li>• We recommend social action as a successful and proven way of faiths working together.</li> <li>• There are opportunities to develop partnerships with non-faith groups, for example charity groups and healthcare providers, including around COVID-19 recovery initiatives.</li> </ul>
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Online education has been shown to be an inclusive way for faith groups to learn together.</li> <li>• In addition to the learning resources provided to enable individuals and families to learn and worship together at home, learning can be expanded beyond religious texts, languages and traditions.</li> <li>• The broader range of topics for education programmes should continue, including religious insights into contemporary issues, well-being programmes and practical skills such as IT.</li> <li>• There are further opportunities for interfaith learning. Faith communities and interfaith groups broadened the remit of their education profiles. For example, an interfaith group in Liverpool developed interviews with people of different faith backgrounds and how their faith helped them cope with lockdown.</li> </ul>



# Further Resources

The varied resources listed below were shared, recommended or developed by our participants, or stem from other research or projects about religion and COVID-19. Although these do not include all the faith groups in our research, or every theme in this guide, these links are a reflection of those shared with us during the course of the project. We hope to build on these as more information becomes available and welcome suggestions for other examples and resources.

## Pandemic responses and providing pastoral support

The Brink - Why are so many religious leaders facing stress and Burnout <https://www.bu.edu/articles/2022/why-are-so-many-religious-leaders-facing-stress-and-burnout/>

Co-op Funeralcare – A nation in mourning

<https://web.archive.org/web/20210711193526/https://www.coop.co.uk/funeralcare/nationinmourning>

UK Commission on Bereavement (2022) ‘Bereavement is everyone’s business.’

<https://bereavementcommission.org.uk/ukcb-findings/>

Health and fitness. Oshwal Health video, link provided by Jain participants.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F6HgHb2ZwNU>

The art of feeling happy even during an unhappy time. Link provided by Jain participant

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zN90hggISpE>

Seniors Fitness session 14th May 2020 for Oshwal UK Community in Gujarati & English Link provided by Jain participant

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xJa9vQFjIF4>

Healthy London Partnership toolkit, Five ways to good mental wellbeing and Judaism

<https://www.healthylondon.org/communications-toolkit-5-ways-to-judaism/>

Hindi Acts of Seva (service) Anishka Gheewala-Lohiya

<https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/religionglobalsociety/2021/03/hindu-acts-of-seva-service-material-and-spiritual-disruption-in-a-pandemic/>

Loss in translation. Funerals and Death Care, Social Distance Digital Congregations. Bric-19

Manchester Metropolitan University 2021

<https://www.socialbroadcasts.co.uk/broadcastoverview/bric19>

Liverpool Community Spirit – Coping with the challenges of COVID-19 from different faith perspectives

<http://www.liverpoolcommunityspirit.org/meeting-covid19-challenges>

Love your neighbour Charity set up as a response to COVID-19

<https://www.loveyourneighbour.uk/>

The Muslim Council of Britain Together in Tribulation

<https://mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/MCB-Together-in-Tribulation-British-Muslims-and-the-COVID-19-Pandemic.pdf>

Relationships, presence and Hope, University Chaplaincy during the COVID-19 Pandemic <https://www.theosthinktank.co.uk/cmsfiles/Relationships-Presence-and-Hope.pdf>

Sheldon hub – Burnout in a time of Pandemic February 2021 A blog from the Tragedy and Congregations team

<https://www.sheldonthub.org/usercontent/sitecontentuploads/2164/DB3883A517717DF14B0CB148C100A3E3/burnout%20a%20blog%20from%20tragedy%20and%20congregations.pdf>

Sikh Community feeds thousands during lockdown

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/uk-52966810>

Trauma response toolkit for faith groups <https://www.tragedyandcongregations.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/TRAUMA-RESPONSE-TOOLKIT.pdf>

The Woolf Institute presented the new series COVID-19 Chronicles comprising interviews with religious leaders about how faith communities stay connected and continue religious practices while in isolation.

<https://www.woolf.cam.ac.uk/videos/series/covid-19-chronicles>

## Creativity in Worship

Creative dramatic reading of the book of Jonah, traditionally read in synagogues on Yom Kippur. From the Liberal Jewish Synagogue during lockdown <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6I0TKurfK8s&t=44s>

Creative Additional service on Yom Kippur, usually read in Synagogue, using graphics throughout alongside the traditional liturgy. Elstree Liberal Synagogue Jain family of musicians remember their grandmother

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TuVsNd1O18s>

Religious Belief and Practice at Home During the Pandemic. Podcast, Stay Home Stories

<https://www.stayhomestories.co.uk/listen/episode-2>

Our Seder plates, creative project for the festival of Passover – Kingston Liberal Synagogue <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zbjyPFeuKNA>

BRIC-19 - research project examining how British religious communities have adapted to the COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions it has imposed .Including examples of innovations during lockdown

<https://bric19.mmu.ac.uk/research-updates/>

Podcast on Ramadan in lockdown

<https://www.thingsunseen.co.uk/podcasts/ramadan-in-lockdown/>

Song taught to liberal Jewish communities and shared at online conference. Each liberal community designated a person to learn the song and teach to their community. The results were played at an online conference and can be heard At 4 hours 2minutes and 46 seconds <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8CWtXKXbisY>

Liverpool Community Spirit Videos for a school project called ‘hats of faith’. People of diverse faiths were invited to talk about their faith by using any item of head-wear as a stimulus

<http://www.liverpoolcommunityspirit.org/hats-of-faith>

Liverpool Community Spirits, people of different faiths talk about ‘special times’ during lockdown

<http://www.liverpoolcommunityspirit.org/important-festivals>

## Other Projects and Studies

Stay Home Stories website, including blogs, news and comment and further details about the whole research project from which this is a part.

<https://www.stayhomestories.co.uk/>

BRIC-19 British ritual Innovation under COVID-19

<https://bric19.mmu.ac.uk/>

COVID-19 Christian Faith and Well-being, Exeter University

[https://socialsciences.exeter.ac.uk/media/universityofexeter/research/microsites/centreforruralpolicyresearch/pdfs/COVID-19\\_Christian\\_Faith\\_and\\_Wellbeing.pdf](https://socialsciences.exeter.ac.uk/media/universityofexeter/research/microsites/centreforruralpolicyresearch/pdfs/COVID-19_Christian_Faith_and_Wellbeing.pdf)

Interfaith Network for the United Kingdom – COVID-19 and Faith communities – Surveys and Research

<https://www.interfaith.org.uk/news/covid-19-and-faith-communities-surveys-and-research>

Gobinderjit Kaur and Manpreet Kaur Basra (2022) COVID-19 and the Sikh Community in the UK: A qualitative study, Journal of Religion and Health, 61, pp.2302–2318

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10943-022-01575-9>

LSE COVID and Care Research Group

<https://www.lse.ac.uk/anthropology/research/COVID-and-Care-Research-Group>

Woolf Institute. Religion and Society: The Impact of COVID-19 on the Interfaith Encounter

<https://www.woolf.cam.ac.uk/videos/religion-and-society-the-impact-of-covid-19-on-the-interfaith-encounter>





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from the pandemic  
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Stay Home Stories