



How Religious Communities Locally Responded to the Coronavirus Pandemic

Name of Religious Tradition: Sikhism

Location: Coventry

Place of Worship: Guru Nanak Parkash Gurdwara, Coventry

During the Pandemic, the main changes to our ways of worshipping were:

The Gurdwara is a social, political, and spiritual hub for the community. The Gurdwara was established in 1965 and for several decades has served the needs of the community, influencing the surrounding area, promoting social cohesion, spiritual solace and diversity. At the core of this are the teachings of the Sikh Guru's which are enshrined within the holy scripture, the Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji:

- Recognise humanity as one
- Advocate for the dignity and freedom of all
- Selflessly serving others with compassion and love

Worship, festivals and the use of your place of worship

The Gurdwara has adopted carefully managed lockdown measures to ensure the Sangat (congregation) can visit the Gurdwara for daily services. Working with our Sikh national bodies, local Gurdwaras and health professionals, the following measures have been introduced to ensure that safety is paramount in everything that we do:

- One-way system in and out of the building, including entry into the divaan halls (pray rooms)
- Thermal imaging temperature check point upon entry and track and trace system is in operation
- Social distancing markings and signage

Coventry SACRE & Warwickshire SACRE
February 2021

Written by Jatinder Singh, Sikh SACRE Member for Coventry, on behalf of Guru Nanak Parkash Gurdwara and the local Sikh community in Coventry

- Face coverings
 - Hand sanitizers throughout the building are made available
- Continually updating these protocols in line with government policy on COVID safety measures

Daily services are streamed over the Gurdwara's Facebook channel and local radio station, Radio Panj. Festivals and special events have been covered in a similar way broadcasted over the various media outlets including Sikh TV channels. One of the major developments to come out of the lock down has been the use of video conferencing, this has allowed events to become more collaborative and inclusive of groups from across Coventry and the UK.

During the Pandemic, the ways in which our religious community reached out to the local community were:

During this pandemic the Gurdwara has been involved in supporting the most vulnerable including the homeless and those who are living alone by supplying food, clothes and essential medicines. Working in partnership with Midlands Langar Seva Society (MLSS), Langar Aid and other partners. The Gurdwara kitchen and resources have been used to help prepare and distribute thousands of meals across the city and neighbouring towns. The Gurdwara is a key drop off point to allow the distribution of resources to other areas.

During the first national lockdown Sevadars (volunteers) came together to produce essential PPE for the local hospitals, The GGNP women's group were also busy knitting baby garments for the children's ward and uplifting each other through spiritual, physical and social discourse over video conferencing platforms such as Zoom.

A conscious effort has been made to support International students who have arrived from India during their first academic year and were new to the city by acting as a point of contact, providing useful information and offering food supplies.

One of GGNP's key objectives has been to actively engage and support local communities and faith groups. GGNP volunteers have been participating in

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local initiatives such as the cleaning of Swanswell Park and Coventry Canal basin from the build of rubbish and plastic waste. Maintaining a connection with the wider community is something we have placed a lot of value on during the pandemic, especially at a time of social restrictions.

GGNP has been supporting the local Sikh community in the translation of government guidelines, Covid-19 developments and relaying important information around the vaccine programme helping to ensure our community is kept up to date with the latest information. We have also advised and supported other faith communities in this area.