



# “Connections with People of Other Faiths”

**Avril Evans, St Laurence Parish Church member**

We have forged new friendships with people and groups from faiths beyond Christianity. For example:

- Evenings of Muslim and Christian encounter;
- An evening of worship, music, and prayers with those from the Bahá'í faith and Christians;
- There have been interfaith arts concerts – “The Armed Man: A Mass for Peace”, including the participation from an Iman; “Glorious Earth” celebrating the divine in nature;
- Inter-spiritual arts events have welcomed the community, including young people: the highly successful SHIFT festival celebrated the art of movement through physical art, yoga, music, prayer and movement;
- The “Solstice Spiral”, now a regular feature at St Laurence, invites anyone of faith or none to walk the spiral in silence and reflection at the winter solstice.

These events have drawn a wide variety of people into St Laurence - diverse spiritual explorers who have found St Laurence a spiritual home. Their testimonies include:

*“In these times of division and intolerance and growing fundamentalism it has been very inspiring to see a church reaching out to those of other faiths and of no faith, creating spaces for exchange and deeper understanding of spiritual life.”*

A Buddhist tells us – *“Having moved to Stroud, I was initially drawn to the local church through the multi-faith and arts events which felt refreshing and inspiring. Having engaged at that level, it has been wonderful to discover mystical Christian offerings at the church which have drawn me in further.”*

Another none Christian has said – *“When our distant family members visit us in Stroud we always proudly take them to St Laurence so they can experience the Spiritual Ambience that has touched our lives. This church is supporting and building bridges amongst so many communities and individuals, that it is nothing short of divine action.”*

And finally, we have heard – *“St Laurence church has become a hub for sacred music and arts, bringing people together without the need for words, uniting and connecting people from divergent faith and none faith communities. There is a strong thread of the sacred and mystical which binds all these varied events together, and this is what I love about the pioneering nature of the vision for St Laurence, that we can celebrate the divine in many different ways and celebrate these different paths together. It is wonderful to see the church being used in this way to build community and to promote peace.”*



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