

Diversity is the name of the game

You can put Wycombe together in many ways, but no one way captures the full variety that we celebrate here.

Geographically you can delineate wards of local government—Abbey, Sands, Ryemead, Disraeli; or you can focus on the old ‘village’ areas that have now been gathered into Wycombe town—Frogmoor, Downley, Marsh, Tylers Green, Terriers. But of course the ward boundaries cross over the ancient community boundaries; the lines don’t match.

Or Look at the people who live and work in Wycombe: from our appearance you can guess at our ethnic roots (but remember that not everything shows!). Listen to how we sound: all our different languages, dialects, accents give away something about us. Watch how we behave: our dress, food, cooking, family customs, life-stage rituals and faith practices reflect our cultural histories and traditions. Watch how we ‘do’ our faith or non-faith: and see similarities and differences.

In all these facets we mix and match. There is no box. No one-way to describe us all. Native American wisdom says that we cannot understand each other until we have *walked in each other’s moccasins*.

To highlight the idea of diversity in our local community, we introduced some students from local schools to an interactive game called DIVERSITY to help them begin to explore faith-identity and develop empathy and curiosity. They explored what it means to be identified as Baha’i, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim or Sikh.





Living out our true identity can sometimes be a heavy burden to bear, as Elizabeth Bagaaya recounts. It's not always easy.

Elizabeth was born into the royal family of Toro, a kingdom in Uganda. From local primary school she was sent to boarding school in Buganda, the neighbouring kingdom; from there to boarding school in England where she was the only black student; and from there she went to read Law at Cambridge in 1959—only the third black woman in the history of the university. A great achievement -- BUT she felt she carried the responsibility to represent *all* black people in favourable ways. *'I felt that I was on trial and that my failure to excel would reflect badly on the entire black race.'*

To me this seems an impossible task and an intolerable burden. In a similar way, it would seem impossible for one Christian to represent faithfully the position of all Christians, with all shades of belief and behaviour and understanding and theology and culture and history and life-experience. Or for one Muslim to speak for all Muslims. And so on. In this book we have been able to include the personal perspective of a few individuals within each faith; so inevitably this gives a limited view of the seven faiths we present, since there could be as many viewpoints as people.

Diversity means variety and variation, which enliven society and are an inherent source of strength. This brings richness in which we all have a share. Let's value all the diverse shades and *CELEBRATE!*

Anne and Michael Bowker