

*Statement from Bolton Faith Leaders' Forum*

*7<sup>th</sup> April 2020*

As faith communities of Bolton we are united in our commitment to working for the well-being of all affected by COVID-19.

We thank and support those who are working so hard to enable us to get through this testing time: NHS and care workers; emergency response services; providers of food, medicine and other vital goods; those in all levels of government and officials, and Bolton Council in particular, and the many others who may not be classed as 'essential workers' but make all the difference to our daily lives.

People of all faiths and none through the voluntary and community sector and neighbourhood groups are working together to respond to the many needs that have arisen. All of this is vital work. So, too, is the prayer and spiritual support that each faith offers.

We know that as the days go by there are challenges that will be faced. Sadly, COVID-19 will bring more deaths. We also know that as the days go by there will be ever more stories of kindness and active compassion. It is our hope and our prayer that these will far outweigh the challenges and that we will emerge on the other side of the epidemic as a better connected and more empathetic town, ready to move forward together on the basis of our experience in positive ways.

We pray for the health of those who are affected by the virus, currently including the Prime Minister, and all those who have been bereaved and are coping with the anxiety and uncertainty of this challenging time.

Chris Bracegirdle – Vicar of Bolton and Chair of the Faith Leaders Forum

Philip Austin – Bolton Interfaith Council

Phil Mason – Bolton Christian Community Cohesion

Manu Mistry – Bolton Hindu Forum

Asif Patel – Bolton Council of Mosques