



MARCH 2025

Welcome to the March Newsletter.

After the message from the Chair, this newsletter contains a list of forthcoming events in March. We then have short reports on events from January and February, including the Holocaust 600 candles service; also of note were two online meetings arranged through the Faith and Belief Forum.

This month, we continue the featuring of notes written by individual faith members on significant festivals coming up in March. These are listed in date order of the events, and I wish to thank the following for contributing to this issue: Sarah Hubbard on Purim; Varsha Gulati on Holi; Dee Boyle on Higan; James Rance on the Spring Equinox; Mahmood Foroughi on Nawruz; and Chris Styles on Mother's Day.

I am sure those who were present will remember the outstanding talk on the York Minster windows given by Hilary Moxon to our group in January. Hilary has very kindly written a detailed summary of her talk and added some graphics to help the explanation. This is a case where a diagram really does help. We have put this towards the end of the newsletter so that members can browse it at leisure. I can only add that if there is any member who has not yet seen the restored East Window in York Minster, it is much to be recommended: my personal tip is to take a pair of binoculars as they are very helpful in seeing some of the details!

Rory Allen

Message from the chair

I am writing this on 24th February which is the 3rd anniversary of the Russian Invasion of Ukraine. So our thoughts and prayers will be with the people of Ukraine as well as millions of people around the world who are living in war torn communities everywhere. So, the challenge for us is to continue working together, learning from each other and supporting each other to increase understanding of our faiths and to constantly recognise that we have more in common than that which divides us.

Tina Funnell, Chair

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Forthcoming Events

March's Interfaith Group Talk

Our March talk will be held on the 4th, at West Offices, from 7.00 as usual. Peter Orange and his daughter will be talking about their experience of completing the famous Camino de Santiago pilgrimage walk to Santiago de Compostela.

Planned forthcoming YIG talks and events

The Meetings are held on the first Tuesday of the month in the Council West Offices (both the building and the room are fully disabled accessible). The Meetings start at 7.00 pm with a moment's silence and finish around 8.30pm with the aim of vacating the building promptly at 9.00 pm. People gather from 6.30-ish for drinks and a time to 'catch up'.

MONTHLY MEETINGS 2025	
4 th March	The Camino Pilgrimage: a talk by Peter Orange and his daughter who have just completed the Pilgrimage. Avtar Matharu to Chair
1 st April	Music and Spirituality: a talk by Pam Heaton. Tina Funnell to chair.
6 th May	Part 2 of Rites of Passage with different faiths: Dee Boyle to chair.
3 rd June	Planning Meeting: All members are invited, and encouraged, to share their ideas about future events for YIG and to discuss the programme for Interfaith Week. Tina Funnell to chair.
8 th July	Medicine and Faith: details to be confirmed.
5 th August	Bring and Share annual picnic: York Mosque
November 4th (*Interfaith Week -Traditionally Sat 11th -Sun 19th)	Events to be confirmed
December 2nd	AGM and social evening

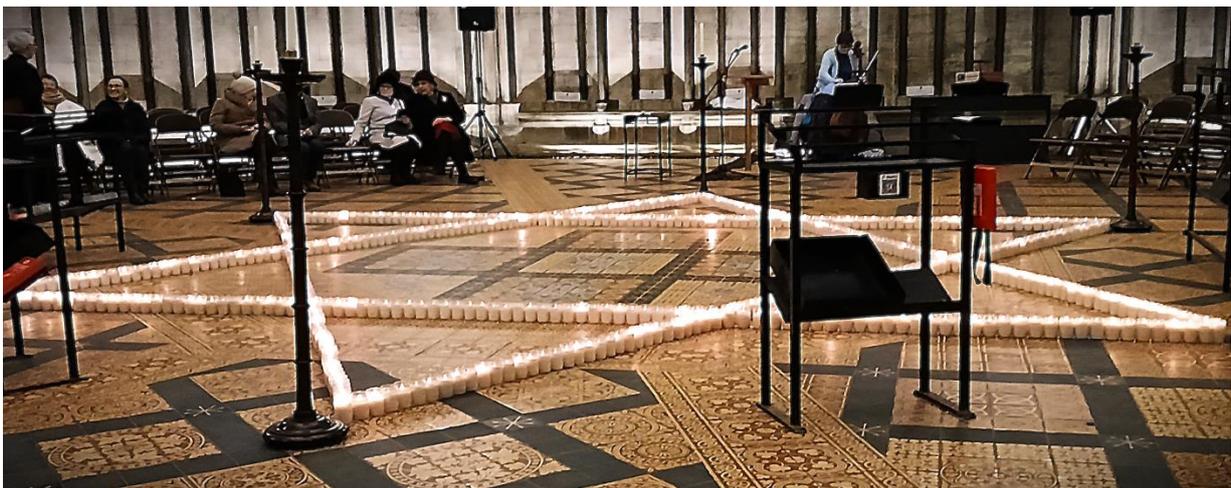
Talk by Neil Irving: Tuesday March 11th, 7.30pm, Friends Meeting House, Friargate, York



The Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI) is an international programme coordinated by the World Council of Churches. The programme was established following an appeal from church leaders in the Holy Land to create an international presence in the country, accompanying local people and communities, offering protective presence and witnessing their daily struggles and hopes. Neil, who is based in Thirsk, was an assistant director with North Yorkshire County Council prior to his retirement in 2023. He will be talking about his experiences as a human rights monitor over the three months that he spent recently in the Jordan Valley.

Reports on previous events

Remembering the Holocaust: 600 candles event at York Minster on 23 January 2025



The first 600 candles commemoration was held in the Chapter House at York Minster in 2014. Dr Sally Guthrie, who worships at the Minster and was at that time on the Advisory Board of the Council of Christians and Jews, suggested the idea which was welcomed by the Minster. It was widely covered by the media, and articles and photographs appeared in the national press.

This year the title was For a Better Future, and the Lord Mayor and Sheriff of York, together with the leader of the Council were present, along with representatives from a wide range of organisations. The Speakers were Professor Avtar Matharu from the Sikh community, Jay Prosser from the York Liberal Jewish

community who spoke about 'Torah shoes', Tina Funnell, Chair of the York Interfaith Group, and Dee Boyle from York City of Sanctuary. People lit candles, the music was very moving and the event was closed by a solemn reading by Jack Morris of the kaddish, the prayer in memory of the dead.

This was a special commemoration as it marks the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, the largest Nazi concentration camp complex; it also remembers the 30th anniversary of the genocide in Bosnia. We must hope for a better future, and become the generations who carry forward the legacy of the witnesses, remember those who were murdered, and challenge those who would distort or deny the past, or who discriminate and persecute today. Whilst racism and hatred do not always lead to genocide, all genocides begin with insidious stages including propaganda, othering and dehumanisation.

Tina Funnell

Faith and Belief Forum online workshop, 28 January 2025

This workshop was hosted by Sophie Mitchell, Programmes Coordinator, London Communities, from the Faith & Belief Forum. The FBF was founded in 1997 to make connections across schools, universities and local communities.

FBF described the current consultation exercise as follows:

'As you may know, Inter Faith Week has been a cornerstone of interfaith engagement in the UK since 2009. Following the closure of The Inter Faith Network in Spring 2024, The Faith & Belief Forum is now launching a nationwide consultation in England to ensure the future of Inter Faith Week is shaped by the people on the ground. We're delighted that the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government intends to fund this nationwide consultation, taking place in January and February 2025. We are inviting everyone – interfaith organisations, practitioners, and enthusiasts – to share their views and be part of the process.'

The FBF is limiting this consultation to how InterFaith Week can play a role in increasing mutual understanding between different faith communities. There will be a four week consultation period, during which information would be gathered using questionnaires, workshops, and interviews with specific individuals prominent in faith communities. FBF would then compile a report for submission to the government in March. The aim is to shape the future of IFW for 2025 and beyond.

The workshop addressed eight questions, given below:

- Q1: What impact does interfaith work have in the UK?
- Q2: What prevents interfaith work in the UK from being impactful?
- Q3: What did you do in Inter Faith Week 2024?
- Q4: What were the learnings from Inter Faith Week 2024?
- Q5: Why do or don't you take part in Inter Faith Week?
- Q6: How does Inter Faith Week contribute to your interfaith work through the rest of the year?
- Q7: In five years' time, what do you want Inter Faith Week to look like?
- Q8: From the highest level to the most local, what support is needed for this to happen?

At the time of writing, we still await the full outcome of these consultations. The website for the FBF can be accessed at: <https://faithbeliefforum.org/>

Faith in international climate policy webinar, 30 January 2025

The Faith and Belief Forum hosted this online event, held in conjunction with the UNEP Faith for Earth Council. The presentation was by Azmaira Alibhai, Faith and Ecosystems Coordinator at the UNEP Faith for Earth Coalition. Azmaira explained that climate change is the greatest long term threat to human wellbeing, and is already having visible and damaging effects on the natural world, and human communities globally, and especially on those which are less wealthy, less able to withstand it, and which bear the least responsibility for it. There is a role for interfaith communities in voicing concern over the the threat to the environment, biodiversity and pollution, and pressing for urgent action by governments and individuals worldwide. People of faith should be active in urging progress on an issue that is going to impact the future of individuals everywhere. Azmaira suggested that faith communities should work together to combat climate science denial and disinformation, and to incorporate ideas of earth stewardship into faith festivals and events.

Rory Allen

YIG visit to Woldgate School on 7 February

On Friday 7th February a variety of faith members made their way, early in the morning, to travel to Woldgate school, Pocklington, a large secondary school. Thankfully this year there was no torrential rain the night before our visit and so we did not have to negotiate the flooded roads and congestion of last year. This was our second visit to the school for a Religious Education enrichment day for year 10s, 14 to 15-year-olds and a small group of year 11s.

It came about last year through an approach to York Interfaith by the RE lead teacher, who had for some time wanted to host a day in which all year 10 students were able, whether taking RE GCSE or not, to learn about the lived experiences of a variety of faiths and none, to broaden their knowledge, understanding and experience of faiths in our communities.

It is worth mentioning that the RE curriculum of today encompasses what is referred to as 'world views' and looks at the impact of religion and worldviews on individuals, communities and societies and the diversity of religious and non-religious worldviews in society. The visit of York Interfaith members was an opportunity for students to learn about a variety of faiths represented locally and their personal faith journeys. York SACRE (Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education) has good supportive working relations with York Interfaith to support such visits to schools.

There was also the opportunity to start the day with York Interfaith taking a short whole year 10 assembly explaining the ethos of the work we do as an interfaith group, including sharing the great events and activities during interfaith week. We hope this opened the minds of the young to the value and importance of our work.

Following this assembly we started with a shorter first lesson, followed by three longer lessons finishing at 1:15pm for lunch, which the school kindly provided. Faiths shared various beliefs of their faith, artefacts, PowerPoint presentations, paintings, scriptures and personal experiences etc. inviting questions from students.

The students at the end of each lesson filled in a questionnaire which gave them an opportunity to give some feedback and reflect upon what they had heard and felt. A little of that feedback was to say, 'That every religion has their own worldview and Religions do have differences, but it is important to respect everyone'. How wonderful to see the younger generation beginning to engage in the work of interfaith.

Though it takes some careful coordination and work to bring the day together, it could not happen without the generous time given by members of York Interfaith to participate, and the willingness of the school and Woldgate Head Teacher being open enough to permit such a day. We are grateful to all those involved, and we look forward to our third annual visit in 2026 as it is such a valuable and worthwhile experience for everyone involved.

If you would like to explore the possibility of visits from members of York Interfaith, please contact yorkinterfaith@gmail.com we'd love to hear from you.

Penny Siddall, Secretary, York Interfaith Group

Interfaith Group talk on 4 February: Rites of passage within different faiths

Many thanks to those who contributed to the first part of our Rites of Passage session in February. We covered a few different rites from three of our Christian faith representatives (Catholic, Methodist and Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints) as well as hearing about some Muslim rites and also some Liberal Jewish rites. The last two speakers reminded us that there are often some cultural rites that get mixed up with religious rites and that sometimes the two become so intertwined that it is difficult to separate the cultural from the faith rites. There was a really important point for us to be made aware of and certainly something for us to note whenever we are in discussions at any time about rites of passage. The second part of our Rites of Passage sessions will be on 6th May when we will be hearing from Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh & Bahai speakers about the different rites within their faiths. Hopefully if there is time at the end of the session we may be able to ask questions of the first speakers too as we ran out of time in the February session.

Dee Boyle, Vice Chair

Faith Festival Perspectives

Purim: A Celebration of Resilience, Joy, and Unity. 13-14 March 2025, by Sarah Hubbard

Purim is one of the most exuberant and vibrant festivals in the Jewish calendar. It commemorates the salvation of the Jewish people from the ancient Persian Empire, as told in the Book of Esther. The story of Purim is one of overcoming adversity, celebrating survival, and remembering how unity and courage can defeat tyranny. What a relevant message for 2025! This festival brings together members of Jewish communities in a joyous celebration of life and faith, and has a timeless message that resonates with people of all faiths and none.

The Origins of Purim

The origins of Purim are rooted in the story of Queen Esther and her cousin Mordechai, who lived in ancient Persia under the rule of King Ahasuerus. In the narrative, the king's advisor, Haman, devises a plan to annihilate all Jews in the empire. However, through the bravery and cleverness of Esther, who had become queen, and the steadfastness of Mordechai, the Jewish people were saved. Esther reveals her Jewish identity to the king, and with her intervention, the king rescinds Haman's decree, leading to the deliverance of the Jewish people. The joyous outcome is celebrated annually through Purim, marking the survival of the Jews against a plan for their destruction.

How Purim is Celebrated

Purim celebrations are marked by joy, festivity, and a spirit of community. The central elements of the festival are detailed below.

Reading the Megillah (Book of Esther): The Megillah is read aloud in synagogues and homes. It is traditional for the congregation to make noise, often by using graggers (noisemakers), whenever the name of Haman is mentioned, symbolizing the blotting out of his name. The reading is a reminder of how the Jewish people were saved from destruction.

Feasting and Merrymaking: Purim is a time for joyous feasting. Traditional foods such as hamantaschen (triangular pastries filled with poppy seeds, fruit, or chocolate) are enjoyed. The meal is a communal event, often accompanied by music, dancing, and revelry. York Liberal Jewish Community is planning a dinner theatre, inspired by *The Sound of Music* on 14 March as well as celebrations for children on the morning of 15th March.

Giving Gifts (Mishloach Manot): One of the central mitzvot (commandments) of Purim is to send food gifts to friends and neighbours. This act fosters community bonds and is a way to ensure that everyone has enough to celebrate.

Charitable Giving (Matanot LaEvyonim): Another important mitzvah on Purim is giving to the poor. Donations are often made to help those in need, ensuring that everyone, regardless of their economic status, can celebrate the holiday with joy.

Costumes and Carnivals: A hallmark of Purim celebrations is the custom of wearing costumes. This playful tradition often includes dressing as characters from the Purim story, such as Esther, Mordechai, or Haman, but it can also be an opportunity for creative self-expression. This is why YLJC have decided to set Purim celebrations in Austria as there are lots of opportunities to dress up in lederhosen.

Purim in the Modern Day

While Purim retains its deep historical and religious significance, its celebrations have evolved over time to reflect both its ancient roots and the joys of modern life. In the contemporary world, Purim is often celebrated not just within the Jewish community, but also in interfaith contexts. Not least because its universal themes of resilience, unity, and overcoming injustice are appreciated by people of all faiths.

In a time when many communities are striving to come together against a backdrop of division and hatred, Purim's message of survival against the odds is a powerful reminder that hope, courage, and solidarity can triumph over adversity. The fun and inclusive nature of the holiday—marked by costumes, parties, and acts of charity—offers a moment of respite from the stresses of daily life, reminding us of the importance of joy and togetherness.

Walled Cities and the Special Celebration of Shushan Purim

A unique aspect of Purim is the celebration of Shushan Purim, observed in walled cities such as York. According to the Book of Esther, the Jews of Shushan (the capital city of ancient Persia) were granted an additional day to defend themselves from their enemies, which is why those living in walled cities celebrate Purim one day later than others. This practice continues today in cities that were walled in ancient times, such as Jerusalem and indeed much closer to home in York. In these cities, Purim can be celebrated on the 15th of Adar, a day later than in non-walled cities.

A Time for Joy and Reflection

Purim is a festival full of joy, unity, and remembrance. It invites us to reflect on the power of courage, the importance of community, and the enduring hope that even in the darkest times, there is a chance for light and redemption. For those who observe Purim, the holiday serves as both a commemoration of a historic victory and a reminder of the power of resilience, both in personal and collective struggles. Purim invites us all to participate in its spirit of joy, unity, and overcoming adversity—values that transcend religious and cultural boundaries.

Holi, the Festival of Colours, 14 March 2025, by Varsha Gulati



Holi has been celebrated in the Indian subcontinent for centuries, with poems documenting celebrations dating back to the 4th century CE. It marks the beginning of spring after a long winter, symbolic of the triumph of good over evil. It is celebrated in March, corresponding to the Hindu calendar month of Phalguna on the day after the full moon.

There are varying accounts of Holi's origin mentioned in several works of ancient Indian literature. According to one popular version of the story, an evil king became so powerful that he forced his subjects to worship him as their god. But to the king's ire, his son Prahlada continued to be an ardent devotee of the Hindu deity Lord Vishnu. The angry king plotted with his sister, Holika, to kill his son. Holika, who was immune to fire, tricked Prahlada to sit in a pyre with her. When the pyre was lit, the boy's devotion to Lord Vishnu helped him walk away unscathed while Holika, from whom the festival derives its name, was burned to death despite her immunity.

Another legend about Holi is related to Lord Krishna when he played Holi with his friend Radha.

On the eve of the festival, large pyres are lit in many parts of India to signify the burning of evil spirits (Holika Dahan - Burning of Holika). People often throw wood, dried leaves and twigs into bonfires.

On the day of Holi, entire streets and towns turn red, green and yellow as people throw coloured powder into the air and splash them on others. Each colour carries a meaning. Red, for example, symbolizes love and fertility while green stands for new beginnings. People also splash water on each other in celebration. Water guns are used to squirt water, while balloons filled with coloured water are also flung from rooftops. Later in the day, families gather together for festive meals. It is also common to distribute sweets among neighbours and friends and celebrate with love, hugs and joy.

Higan festival, 17-22 March, by Dee Boyle

The festival of *Higan* in Japan takes place this year between 17th and 22nd March (and again between 17th and 22nd September). 'Higan' means 'other shore' and represents crossing from the world of suffering (samsāra) to the world of enlightenment (nirvana). During this time, Japanese honour their ancestors, reflect on their own lives, and find inner peace.

Japanese Buddhists believe that during the equinoxes the boundary between the physical and spiritual worlds becomes thin, making it easier for the living to communicate with the dead. At this time, people visit their family graves to pay respects, offering flowers, incense, and food, and praying for the deceased. Families gather and show gratitude for the guidance and support from their ancestors.

Visits to temples are made and special foods are prepared and shared with family and friends.

Higan is also a time for self-reflection and personal growth. People are encouraged to practice the Buddhist Six Perfections (Pāramitās): generosity, morality, patience, diligence, meditation, and wisdom. By focusing on these virtues, individuals can cultivate inner peace and move closer to enlightenment.

Although the origins of *Higan* are rooted in Buddhism, the festival is a cornerstone of Japanese tradition, for both Buddhists and non-Buddhists.

The Spring Equinox, 20 March 2025, by James Rance

“And rich-crowned Demeter did not refuse but straightway made fruit to spring up from the rich lands, so that the whole wide earth was laden with leaves and flowers.”

Homeric Hymn 2: To Demeter

The spring equinox is a sacred time of year in many Pagan traditions. In Wiccan and Neopaganism, it is Ostara, a modern festival of life and rebirth loosely inspired by ancient Germanic traditions. In Roman polytheism, it is Hilaria, the festival of the death and rebirth of Attis, the beloved of the mother Goddess Cybele. In Hellenic (Greek) polytheism, we honour the return of Apollo to His holy site in Delphi, and the return of Persephone from the Underworld.

The Homeric Hymns tell us that winter is caused by the grief of Demeter, the Goddess of grain and fertility, over the disappearance of her beloved daughter Persephone. Her daughter stolen from her, Demeter wanders the earth in rage and agony. No tree bears fruit, no grain grows in the frozen earth: without Demeter's nourishment, the world is a cold, barren place. In Her wanderings, Demeter seeks comfort among mortals, sheltering for a time with a human family who offered Her their hospitality, but no kindness can soothe Her bereaved heart.

Eventually, Persephone is found, and an agreement is reached to quell Demeter's wrath: She will spend a third of the year in the Underworld with her husband, Hades, and the remaining two thirds with Demeter in the world of the living. At the spring equinox, we honour Persephone's return, and with her, the return of warmth, life and growth to the land. It is a time for joy and revelry, and is celebrated with offerings, feasts, dancing, and above all, time spent cherishing our loved ones, for we never know when they might be taken from us.



Every year Baha'is from all over the world and of all cultural backgrounds celebrate Naw-Ruz, the beginning of a new year in the Baha'i Calendar.

Naw-Ruz meaning "New Day" has its roots in ancient Persian traditions and is celebrated at the vernal equinox on the first day of spring, either the 20th or 21st March.

While Bahá'ís embrace the cultural heritage of Naw-Ruz, they emphasize its universal and spiritual meaning, which aligns with Bahá'í teachings on renewal, peace, and unity.

For Baha'is Naw-Ruz also has a deep spiritual significance, marking the end of the 19-day Baha'i Fast, which is a period for reflection and spiritual reinvigoration. A time for Bahá'ís to reflect on their personal growth, seek spiritual renewal and deepen their relationship with God.

Baha'u'llah founder of the Baha'i Faith marked Naw-Ruz as a Holy Day and a celebration of humanity's "spiritual springtime" symbolising both individual renewal and mankind's revitalisation.

Celebrations include prayers, gatherings and community activities. It is a joyful occasion, filled with a spirit of hope, renewal, and unity, central teachings in the Bahá'í Faith. It is an opportunity for Bahá'ís and their friends to come together, celebrate, and renew their commitments to serving humanity and promoting unity among all people.

Mother's Day, 30 March 2025, by Chris Styles



Happy Mother's Day!

"Mother's Day" falls on the fourth Sunday in Lent, and this year it's on 30th March, so go and pamper dear mama with chocolates and flowers: lots of pink fluffy stuff available from all exploitative outlets!

This now rather secular activity is actually pretty modern, Mother's Day having become a largely a commercialised re-branding of "Mothering Sunday" from as recently as the early 20th century CE. However the origins of Mothering Sunday (also coinciding with "Refreshment Sunday" – a bit of relief from the long Lenten fast) date all the way back to Medieval Western Christianity and so are at least partially shrouded in obscurity.

Back as early as the 8th Century CE, the Murbach Lectionary ^{*1}, in readings set for the fourth Sunday in Lent make several references to the theme of "Mother Church":

Introit: "I was glad when they said unto me, We will go into the house of the Lord" (Isiah 66:11, Psalm 122:1)

Epistle: 'Jerusalem ... which is the mother of us all.' (Galatians 4: 26-ish)

Gospel reading: John 6: 1 – 14: Feeding of the five thousand which prompted the associating the 'Gifts of Mother Earth' with this so-called "Refreshment Sunday".

It seems that by the early middle ages, and growing out of this scriptural prompting, peasantry and indeed some of the local big-wigs started to make processions from their village parish churches to the local Cathedral - as their "mother church" - replete with banners, other decorative garlands and possibly carnival music too. ^{*2}



Along with the tradition of men parading their local church banners, another custom that appears to have grown up at this time was that of “Easter Bonnets” for the ladies. This became a source of gentle but fierce local competition for the winner of the best headgear, and the hats would be carefully stowed away for the darker mood of Holy Week, presumably to be resurrected on Easter Sunday (no doubt having received a good sprucing up before Sunday Mass).

Particularly after the Black Death (England 1346-48, 51 CE) peasant workers would become more geographically mobile in search of better paid work, so the walk back to Mother Church could possibly take several days, obliging the disgruntled gentry to grudgingly respect the authority of the Church and give their workers the time off for the pilgrimage.

This would afford opportunities, too for the renewal of familial ties and also to enjoy the sight of the banners, garlands and the Easter Bonnets. It’s “Refreshment Sunday”, too, so after your lengthy walk back to the place of your birth and baptism they might even lay on a bit of a spread for you. No wonder the common people of the Middle Ages loved their mother church!



(Anna Maria Jarvis)

The modern “revival” of Mothering Sunday was started in the United States of America by Anna Maria Jarvis 1913 and brought to popularity in this country by Anglican clergyman’s daughter: Constance Adelaide Smith in the 1920s. It was Constance’s idea to link a celebration of motherhood and mothers to the Mothering Sunday date in the Christian calendar so a big thank you to these ladies for giving us all a happy Mother’s day and Mothering Sunday combined!

Further gen at: A short history of Mothering Sunday, by Constance Adelaide Smith:

<https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/009976838>

https://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/christianity/holydays/motheringsunday_1.shtml

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mothering_Sunday

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constance_Adelaide_Smith

***1** The Lectionary is compiled by the central relevant authority and lays down what scriptures are to be read on any particular day. Next time you’re in a nice, gentle evensong or Holy Communion service and they start reading out all fire and brimstone or the slaughtering of the firstborn, it’s worth remembering that the local clergy haven’t picked these readings out just for you!

***2** Interestingly enough the emergence of this possibly quite spontaneous tradition from the inspiration of pieces of scripture makes me wonder just how much the local populace could make out of the Latin text, prompting speculation that perhaps some of the more literate local clergy could share the meaning of phrases like “*Laetatus sum in his quae dicta sunt mihi: in domum Domini ibimus*” (“I was glad when they said unto me: we will go forth into the house of the Lord”) with their parishioners.

How painted and stained glass can reflect medieval belief: two windows in York Minster

We looked at 2 narrative windows: The medieval creators showed their beliefs thus:

1. The number of spaces available in any window to show the story meant that they had to make choices about what to include and what to leave out. This indicates their priorities.
2. The limited number of positions within a window meant they had to choose the location of each panel in order to show what they were emphasising.
3. Where relevant, they made careful choices about the context of each window.

We looked at two windows which worked in different ways

Paul's narrative in the Chapter House at York Minster, c. 1290

First, the context. When you go into the octagonal Chapter House, of the seven windows, (1) Christ's Passion was visible straight ahead. On either side of this were (2) Virgin Mary on Christ's right and (3) St Peter on his left, demonstrating their status in the Church. Then, on Peter's left is (4) St Paul, as the next most important saint to Peter and, opposite Paul and on the Virgin Mary's right, is (5) St William of York. This ensured that William was elevated to the highest level of the Church hierarchy. The remaining two locations show the most important virgin saints in the Church, (6) St Katherine of Alexandria and (originally planned) (7) St Margaret of Antioch (now five separate saints).

All the stories were told upwards through the window, row by row. In the Chapter House they started in the bottom left hand panel and finished in the top right. This means their stories start rooted on earth and finish high up, close to Heaven. Paul's is the only window where the panels are in their original order after centuries of being taken out, repaired and put back in the wrong place!

Paul's window is second on the right as you enter.

Paul preaching in a two-storey house. A young person listens and falls from the upper storey	The young person (Patroclus or Eutychus) is revived	On the way to Rome, Paul saves the boat from sinking in a storm	On Malta Paul is attacked by a viper	Paul is martyred in Rome by beheading
Paul heals a slave girl in Philippi	Paul and the slave girl are hauled before the magistrates	Paul is sentenced to being whipped in Philippi	Paul is imprisoned, but does not escape when there is an earthquake	The Magistrates in Philippi beg Paul to leave
Paul escapes from Damascus	Paul meets Peter in Jerusalem	Paul is stoned in Lystra after healing a cripple	Paul is taken out of Lystra as though dead	Paul revives among his allies
The High Priest sends Saul to Damascus to persecute Christians	Saul blinded on the road to Damascus	Saul led blind into Damascus	Saul (now Paul) baptised	Paul preaching to Jews in Damascus

Saul's (later known as Paul) decision to accept the commission to go to Damascus leads inevitably to his martyrdom (the culmination of his sanctity) (Figure 1)

All the narratives started in the bottom left with the saint/religious figure making a decision which would seal their fate. The culmination of their cult appears in the top right hand panel. (In the Margaret single light in the Five Saints' window, the decision is in the bottom panel and the culmination in the top panel). Here Paul (as Saul) took the decision to accept the commission to go and persecute Christians in Damascus. The decision led to his own martyrdom.

The two central panels in the window are visually and thematically similar: Paul suffers physical torment (as did Christ). All Christians need to reflect the life of Christ (Romans, 12:5 and 12:15).

The oddities in all the windows are in the central panels. The two scenes both show a similar theme – here, like Christ, Paul is being physically assaulted for his faith. The design of the two panels is very similar – and unusual. In both Paul is standing with his body, twisted, his head turned to his left and his torso turned to his right (see Figure 1). Here, the lower panel is also odd because the window doesn't show Paul's miracle of healing the cripple, which led to his punishment. We just have the scene where he is stoned in punishment for the furore the miracle causes. (Figure 2)

The other two corner panels (bottom right and top left) show Paul as a preacher/theologian, specifically his personal contribution to the Church (Romans, 12:4-8 and Eph. 4:11).

Oddity: On the bottom row we would have expected an earlier panel showing Ananias healing Paul's blindness. The suggestion is that this was omitted in order to get the current preaching scene in the bottom right corner. Paul's main personal contribution to Christianity was as a thinker and theologian and showing him preaching is the best way to present this visually. On the top row we have a rare scene of Paul preaching in the top left, next to its aftermath. In order to do this, the window misses out a scene in Rome which is always shown, namely Paul meeting Peter. Thus (a few but not all) of the windows have two scenes indicating each saint's personal role in the evolution of the Church in these corner panels.(Figure 3)

The reconstruction of the windows can be found in Volume 3, *York Minster's Chapter House and its Painted Glass Narratives*, pp. 1152-1159, by Hilary Moxon (<https://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/20920/>).

		
<p>Paul (as Saul) making the decision which will lead to his canonisation (Acts 9:1-2). Figure 1 (CHs3:2a)</p>	<p>Paul whipped in Philippi. The unusual stance of the central figure of Paul is echoed in the (more damaged) Lystra panel below. (Acts 16:22). Figure 2. (CHs3:6c)</p>	<p>Paul preaching in a two story house. A young person tries to listen from the upper storey and falls. (James, <i>Apocryphal Gospels</i>, 294 or Acts 20:7-9). Figure 3. (CHs3:8a)</p>

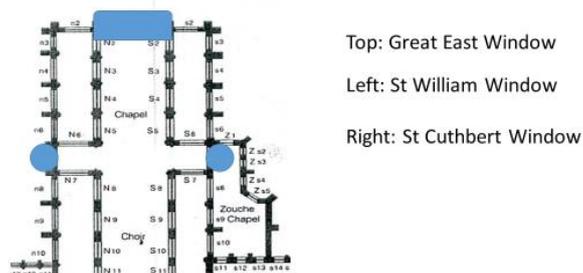
The Great East Window in the Lady Chapel. 1405-1408

This window, created by John Thornton from Coventry, is the largest expanse of medieval glass in the United Kingdom. It was conserved earlier this century and many repair leads removed.

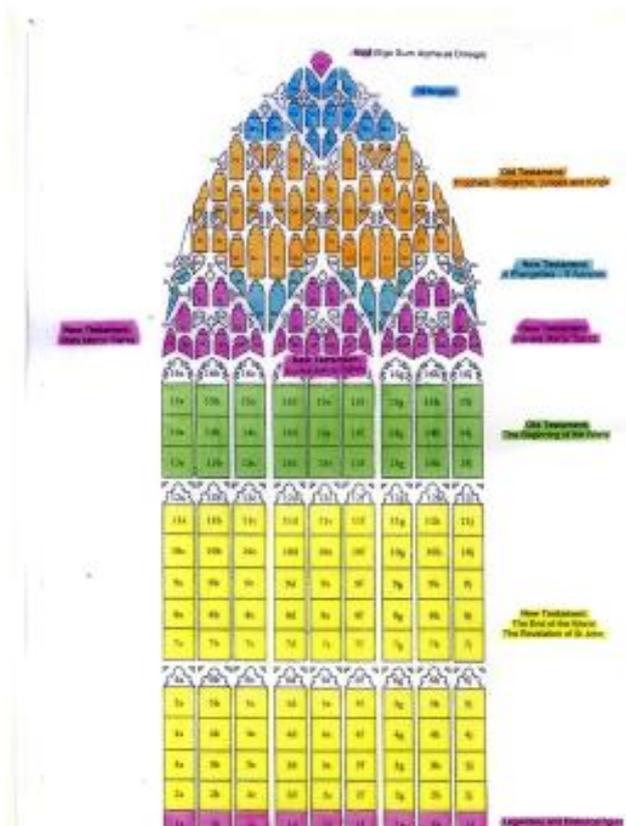
The window is rooted in its context because the bottom row shows the importance of York and its archdiocese. This message is picked up by the two enormous windows in the north and south aisles, the latter showing the life of St Cuthbert (the pre-eminent saint in the north of England) and, facing him in the north is St William of York. Again, the location gives William additional status.

The theme of the Great East Window is given at the top, in the apex, where God is holding a scroll, saying in Latin, that "I am the Beginning and the End" (Figure 4). This is what the window is all about.

Original context of the Great East Window



Secondly, note the way the panels are distributed around the window:



Under God in the apex, the window is first divided into panels here marked blue, brown and purple. These indicate the angels, saints and patriarchs who have reached Heaven.

Then the panels marked green show scenes from the "Beginning" of the world (Genesis through to 2 Samuel). See Figure 5.

The panels in yellow show scenes from the Book of Revelation, the "End" of the world. See Figure 6.

The "Beginning and End" sections of the Christian story are to be read downwards like a book, with the Last Judgement at the end.

The bottom purple row shows important figures associated with the York Province.

The arrangement of the panels: you can see that the mullions (stonework) between the glass panels are thick or thin. If you look at the thicker lines, you can see that they mark out three separate “windows”, within one whole. This indicates the fundamental Church doctrine of “three in one”.

Whenever a verse from Revelation talks about God, or the Son of Man, that figure is located in the centre of the relevant group of three panels within the separate mullions. The God/Son of Man figure is stressed as central to the overall theme of Beginning and End.

Finally, the number of panels in each section of the window has been carefully worked out. The rectangular panels (representing biblical or historical scenes) are in the lower sections of the window. Each of the sections is topped by a row of small panels showing canopies. If all these panels are added together they amount to 144, echoing the figure of 144,000 provided in the Book of Revelation (7:4) to represent the number of saved that will survive the Day of Judgement. The top section of the window is less clear because of the number of extremely small panels. It is, however, possible that there were similarly 144 panels in this section.

Another example of the significance of numerology in the window concerns the rectangular panels in a different way. There are 9 panels in the bottom row showing York’s historical connections, 81 in the Revelation sequence and 27 in the Creation of the world. If these numbers are multiplied together, they reach 19,683. As Professor Christopher Norton has pointed out, in some medieval assessments of the length of time the earth will survive (eg as demonstrated in the fifteenth-century Chapter House tiles in Westminster Abbey) this is the number of years the earth will exist.

See <https://stainedglass-navigator.yorkglazierstrust.org/window/great-east-window> for details of all the Great East Window panels.

		
<p>GEW: God at the apex, holding Latin scroll saying “I am the beginning and the end”. (Rev. 1:8). Figure 4. (e1: DD1)</p>	<p>GEW: God creating Adam (Gen. 1:24-31). Figure 5. (e1: 15f)</p>	<p>GEW: The Dragon hands Power to the Beast (Rev. 13:1-3). Figure 6. (e1: 5a)</p>

Conclusion

So, as well as telling the Christian story, in each case the elements that are important in the window are stressed through their selection, their context and their arrangement.

Many thanks to Professors Sarah Brown and Christopher Norton for their research.

Full references are available should anyone be interested (chrishilary@tiscali.co.uk)

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Hilary Moxon, January 2025

FAITHS	January	February	March	April	May	June	
BAHA'I	21 World Religion Day		20 Naw-Ruz	20-1 May Ridvan 28 9th day of Ridvan	23 Declaration of the Bab 28 The Ascension of Baha'u'llah		
BUDDHIST	1 Shuso (New Year) 16 Shinran Memorial Day 25 Honen Memorial Day 30 Sonam Losar (Nepal)	12 Magha Puja 8 or 15 Parinirvana *	20 Higan	8 Hanamatsuri	12 Vesakha Puja Buddha Day 15 Buddha's B.day		
CHINESE	7 Labajie (Laba Festival) 29 Tuan Yuan / Chun Jie (New Year: Snake)	12 Yuanxiaojie (Lantern Festival)		4 Qingmingjie Tomb Sweeping Day	31 Duanwujie/ Dragon Boat Festival		
CHRISTIAN	1 Naming of Jesus / Circumcision / Mary Mother of God 6 Epiphany [Ang/RC] 6 Theophany [3] 6/7 Christmas Eve/Day [3] 12 Baptism of Christ [Ang] 12 Baptism of the Lord [RC] 18-25 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 25 Conversion of St. Paul	2 Pres. of Christ in the Temple / Candlemas 14 St. Valentine	1 St David 1 World Day of Prayer 3 Great Lenten Fast begins [3] 4 Shrove Tuesday 5 Ash Wednesday Lent begins [to 17 April] 17 St Patrick 19 St Joseph [RC] 25 Annunciation [Ang/3]/[RC] 30 Mothering Sunday	6 Passion Sunday 13 Palm Sunday 17 Maundy Thursday 18 Good Friday 19 Holy Saturday 20 Easter Sunday 20 Pascha [3] 23 St George	11-17 Christian Aid Week 29 Ascension Day [RC] 29 Ascension Day [RC]	8 Pentecost / Whit 15 Trinity Sunday 19 Corpus Christi Body & Blood of Christ [RC] 27 Sacred Heart [RC] 29 St. Peter and Paul	
HINDU	12 Birthday of Swami Vivekananda 13 Lohri 14 Makar Sankranti / Pongal	2 Vasant Panchami/ Saraswati Puja 26 Mahashivratri	14/15 Holi	6 Rama Navami 12 Hanuman Jayanti 14 Tamil New Year		27 Ratha Yatra	
JAIN	28 Nirvana Day		14/15 Holi	10 Mahavir Jayanti			
JAPANESE	1 Ganjitsu (New Year)	3 Setsubun (Bean Scattering) 23 Emperor's birthday	3 Hinamatsuri 17-23 Higan 20 Shūbun No Hi				
JEWISH [1]	26 Dec (24) - 2 Jan Hannukah	13 Tu B'Shevat	14 Purim	13-20 Pesach 24 Yom Hashoah	1 Yom Ha'Atzma'ut 16 Lag B'Omer	2-3 Shavuot	
MUSLIM [2]	27 The Prophet's Night Journey [Isra and Mi'raj]	14 The Night of Forgiveness [Lailat-ul-Bara'ah]	1 - 30 Ramadan 27 Lailat-ul-Qadr: Night of Power 30 End of Ramadan 30 Eid-ul-Fitr*			5-9 Hajj begins 7 Eid-ul-Adha 15 Eid-ul-Ghadir 26 Al-Hijra (1447)	
RASTAFARIAN	6/7 Ethiopian Christmas Day			20 Easter Day [3]			
SIKH	6 Birthday of Guru Gobind Singh 13 Lohri		14-16 Hola Mohalla	14 Vaisakhi/ Baisakhi		16 Martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev	
ZOROASTRIAN [PARSEE]	30 Jashn-e-Sadeh [IZ]		11-20 Fravardin [IZ] 21 Jamsheh Noruz [IZ] 22 Ava Mah Parab [S] 26 Khordad Sal [IZ]	20 Adar Mah Parab [S]	22 Zartosht-no-Diso [S]		
PAGAN / DRUID [4]		1 Imbolc/Candlemas	20 Vernal (Spring) Equinox (Ostara / Alban Eilir)	30 May Eve 30 Beltaine Eve	1 May Day / Beltaine	21 Midsummer Solstice / Litha / Alban Hefin	
Some Other Notable Dates	1 New Year's Day / Hogmanay 21 World Religion Day 27 Holocaust Memorial Day	14 St Valentine's Day	1 St David's Day 17 St Patrick's Day 25 Lady Day	23 St George's Day	1 May Day	21 World Humanist Day 24 Midsummer Day	

(*) Indicates some uncertainty about the date.

☾ [1] Jewish Festivals commence, like Shabbat, at **sunset on the evening of the day prior** to the date shown.

☾ [2] Muslim Festivals begin in the **evening before the Gregorian dates** shown in this calendar.

[3] Indicates a festival celebrated in the Orthodox tradition of the Christian church.

☾ [4] All Baha'i and certain Druid and Pagan festivals also commence in the evening.

[5] IZ, K and S denote three Zoroastrian Calendars: Iranian Zoroastrian, Kadmi and Shahenshai.

