



NOVEMBER NEWSLETTER

Prayers for peace



In times of dismay, anger, rage, pain, and hurt, people of faith, or none, in York we are privileged to be able to stand together without fear, to pray for peace, understanding, respect and restraint towards those innocent human beings on both sides of a border who have suffered such grief at this time.

York Interfaith Group released the following unified statement:

“Following the recent events in Gaza and Israel leading to the horrific loss of many lives, young and old, the religious leaders of York Interfaith Group stand in solidarity for peace and calm based on its longstanding values of mutual understanding, respect and dialogue. Our prayers are for all communities in Gaza, Israel and York as we are united in our actions for hope, harmony and peace.”

PRAYERS FOR PEACE

On 18/10/2023, York Interfaith Group held a '**Prayers for Peace**' in association with members of North Yorkshire Police, the Rt Hon Lord Mayor of York, Reverend Cllr Chris Cullwick, Cllr Claire Douglas, Leader of City of York Council, Cllr Katie Lomas, Executive Member Human Rights Commission on equality, diversity and inclusion, Maria Ayaz, Head of Equality and Diversity, University of York.

The event saw local faith and community leaders came together to jointly pray for peace and unity for all of those innocently involved in the Israel-Hamas conflict.

Held at City of York Council West Offices, Jewish, Muslim, Christian, Baha'i, Buddhist, Hindu and Sikh faiths were all in attendance, together with, partaking in joint prayer.

North Yorkshire Police had Hate Crime Sergeant Kate Barrett and York Local Neighbourhood Inspector Sam Knott also attending the event.

Speaking on the event, Inspector Sam Knott said: "This evening's meeting has been a touching reflection and a chance to promote unity within York and send our thoughts and hope out to all those affected by this conflict."

Sergeant Kate Barrett said: "My thanks go to Avtar and the York Interfaith Group for arranging such a respectful and moving event.

"I felt privileged to attend it and am grateful for the invitation to take part."

Message from Lilian Coulson (Chair YLJC)

"I just wanted to thank you all for suggesting and then organising last night's meeting.(Wednesday 18th October) It was perfectly led by Avtar, with moving and meaningful contributions from everyone.

We all need the kindness and goodwill shown yesterday at this difficult time. My thanks and best wishes to you all.

I count myself very lucky to have York as my home City, and that is in no small part of the efforts and work undertaken by you all.

Our support for each other is so important and very much appreciated. It was very healing to stand together last night and to know that we will continue all our endeavours to continue to do so.

Many thanks and my very best wishes

Lilian"

Following the meeting of 18/10 Avtar recorded an interview for BBC Radio York which was aired on Sunday 22nd from 7.16.35 am - 7.22.23 am on the Steve Bailey show.

During the interview, he stressed the role of YIG in maintaining calm, peace and unity, adamant that we continue to work for harmony through respectful dialogue and understanding.

(A key principle that has kept us going for over 34 years.)

Here is the link if you would like to listen.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/p0gj43k0>

Advance Notice - Our Meeting on Tuesday December 5th, is the Annual AGM. We hope as many of you as possible will be able to attend. All the details will be sent out by email, including a reminder that membership fees will also be due at this time.

Our November Meeting will be Live

At City of York Council, West Offices, Station Rise, York YO1 6GA

Tuesday November 7th 7.00 - 8.30

Stories that help us grow in Faith

Examples of Stories from various traditions will be read, followed by time for questions, comment and contributions from the listeners of stories which have helped them grow

Chair - Sister Patricia Harriss



Interfaith Week in York



11th - 19th November 2023

“Being a Good Neighbour”

Our historic city will host a number of events during National Interfaith Week, each inviting you to discover more about our diverse and vibrant faith communities, beliefs, traditions, values and contributions to 21st Century York life.

York Interfaith Group banners will be on display at certain venues during the week

Saturday 11th Nov 10.30am to 12.30pm York Interfaith ‘Tree Loving Care’ event in the Clifton Bridge area. York Interfaith members & friends will be weeding, planting and clearing the Interfaith plots. All ages and abilities welcome. Please let us know you are coming along by contacting Penny at yorkinterfaithgroup@gmail.com and also find the project on JustServe.org, where you can volunteer <https://www.justserve.org/projects/97fb0ccc-2fb7-4832-a10a-3c92aa6b7378>

3pm to 4.30pm Bahai Craft Activity at York Explore in Museum Street. Join the Bahai group for a craft session, decorating prayers & quotations from the Holy Writings. Suits all ages. Venue: York Explore Café Contact yorkbahais@gmail.com

Sun 12th Nov a.m.– Remembrance Day services where Reps from Faith Groups attend the York Parade, Service and Laying of Wreaths at the war memorial as well as other services in the city.

6pm to 7.30pm - York Mosque invites you to join them for a one-of-a-kind experience that takes viewers 1,400 years back via a 7min immersive experience alongside an Islamic Beliefs talk. Contact Dr Rasha Salah El-Din at rasha.salah.ibrahim@gmail.com or 07898929675. Refreshments served.

Mon 13th Nov 6 to 7pm Pagan Moot with Kith of the Earthen Star at the Black Swan Inn, Peasholme Green. Their Moot talk at 6pm is titled ‘Who are the Pagans in your neighbourhood?’ Followed by their annual ‘Pre-Yule Bazaar’ at 8pm. The talk is a hybrid event - in person and on zoom. Meals & parking at the pub. Contact Eve on E: Kithoftheearthenstar1@outlook.com. N.B. Upper room not easily accessible for those with mobility problems, sorry. The Moot will be in a ground floor room. Anyone unable to go upstairs for the bazaar - items will be brought down to you.

Tues 14th Nov 1pm to 3pm Creating Interfaith Christmas Tree Decorations at the Unitarian Chapel in St Saviourgate, York. We have been invited to take part in the Christmas Tree Festival at York Minster this year that takes place throughout December and so during this session we want people from all faiths to join us in making decorations for our tree. We will use recycled and eco-friendly items as much as possible and have fun in creating some very special decorations that we can use again at events in the future. Contact deeboyle@gn.apc.org or yorkinterfaith@gmail.com

Wed 15th Nov 10am – 11.30am. Prayer and Meditation session via zoom organised by the York Bahais from 10am to 11.30pm with the title 'The Tabernacle of Unity'. Zoom open from 9.45, session includes pre-recorded relaxation and meditation, shared readings and contemplation. Please email: daryoush.mazloum@gmail.com to receive the links and further details.

1.15 p.m. Quaker Worship based at Friargate would like to invite anyone interested to join them for a Quaker meeting for worship at 1.15- 1.45. You are also welcome to bring your own lunch to eat with others at 12.15 and share time together before the meeting. There will be tea and coffee on hand too. Email: friargate@yorkquakers.org.uk to let them know that you will attending.

NB Anyone wanting to attend both of these events can use WiFi facilities at the Friends Meeting House for the Bahai prayers before attending the Quaker worship. Please let Friargate know if you are going to one or both of these by emailing them on the address above.

Wed 15th contd. Nov 7pm Panel & Discussion event with Faith Societies at the University of York Student representatives from faith societies come together to discuss how 'Bring a Good neighbour' is reflected in their faith traditions. It is organised by York University Chaplaincy and will take place on campus. Please contact Revd Catherine Reid for further details: catherine.reid@york.ac.uk

Thurs 16th Nov 11am An Interfaith Meditation at the Unitarian Chapel on St Saviourgate, York from 11am until midday. Zoom option will be available. Premises open from 10.30am. Contact: Dee Boyle on: m.07761762967 or email. deeboyle@gn.apc.org for zoom details. You are also invited to bring your lunch with you and stay for chats afterwards if you would like to. Hot drinks will be available.

Fri 17th Nov 5pm to 6.30pm Lantern walk and talk The Liberal Jewish Group in York invite you to take part in this special event at Clifford's Tower. Meet at the Tower at 5pm. There will be a lantern walk up the steps to the Tower to celebrate all our local communities coming together to stand shoulder to shoulder against prejudice and persecution. There will be a talk, hot chocolate and doughnuts in the Tower N.B. The Tower is not accessible for anyone with mobility problems. It is a free but ticketed event and to book please contact The Theatre Royal: 01904 623568. There will a zoom link available for people to watch the event from the bottom of the Tower.

7pm York Buddhist Network invite you to join them in the new Buddhist Centre at 17 Walmgate for a session about Practising Buddhist Ritual. Contact Mark at yorkbuddhistnetwork@gmail.com if want to join them. The session ends around 8.30pm

Sat 18th No. 10.30am-2.30pm – Stories from our Faiths. An event at the York Central Library / York Explore where simple short stories from different faith will be read to children throughout the day, plus there will also activities to do. Different stories every 30 mins. Refreshments in their café.

5pm – 8.30pm - Diwali Celebration. This event is organised by the Hindu & Sikh Faith Advisors from the University of York St John. There will be various performers and also activities first followed by an Indian meal. Tickets must be booked and purchased in advance. Contact person: Mahendra Verma mkv1@york.ac.uk (07588242419) or Suki Matharu (07730 943068)

Sun 19th Nov 11am – ‘Being a Good Neighbour’ An Interfaith Service to include various readings as well as contributions from the different faiths. There will be a zoom option for the service for those who can’t be there in person. Please contact York Unitarians on yorkunitarians@gmail.com for the zoom link.

This is followed by a shared lunch at 12pm at the Unitarian Chapel, St Saviourgate. Lunch is a ‘bring & share’ vegetarian one so if you are able to bring food items along, please do so before the service starts. Everyone most welcome. Photos of the events from the week will be shown.

N.B. Please note that the Lord Mayor & Civic Party have been invited to attend the closing event and have been sent a copy of the full programme in case they would like to attend any other events during the week. Contact York Unitarians on yorkunitarians@gmail.com if you plan to attend.

Website: www.yorkinterfaith.org **Email:** yorkinterfaithgroup@gmail.com **Facebook:** [yorkinterfaithgroup](https://www.facebook.com/yorkinterfaithgroup)



As members of *Interfaith Network UK* we bring its aims to York
Building Good Relations with People of Different Faiths and Beliefs

For more information contact us on yorkinterfaithgroup@gmail.com



Thanks to City of York Council, York St John University, University of York, members of York Interfaith Group and all the faith groups within York for their on-going support.

DIWALI FESTIVAL 12 November 2023



Diwali is India's most important festival of the year—a time to celebrate the triumph of light over darkness, knowledge over ignorance, and good over evil. Widely observed among [more than a billion people](#) from a variety of faiths across [India](#) and its diaspora, the five days of Diwali are marked by prayer, feasts, fireworks, family gatherings, and charitable giving. For some, Diwali is also the beginning of a new year. But Diwali is perhaps best known as a festival of lights. Derived from the Sanskrit *Deepavali*, which means “row of lights,” Diwali is known for the brightly burning clay lamps that celebrants line up outside their homes.

The dates of this festival are based on the [Hindu lunar calendar](#), which marks each month by the time it takes the moon to orbit Earth. Diwali begins just before the arrival of a new moon between the Hindu months of Asvina and Kartika—which typically falls in October or November of the Gregorian calendar.

In northern India, Diwali commemorates Prince Rama's triumphant return to the city of Ayodhya after 14 years of exile due to the plotting of his evil stepmother—and [after a heroic rescue](#) of his wife Sita, an incarnation of the goddess [Lakshmi](#), who had been kidnapped by the rival king Ravana. In South India, meanwhile, Diwali [honours](#) the victory of Lord Krishna over the demon king Narakasura, who had [imprisoned 16,000 women](#) in his palace and meted out harsh punishments to any of his subjects who dared stand up against him. And in western India, the festival celebrates Vishnu's banishment of King Bali—whose immense power had become a threat to the gods—to the underworld.

How Diwali is celebrated

Just as the legends of Diwali differ from region to region so, too, do the rituals. What [most have in common](#), though, are the abundance of sweets, family gatherings, and the lighting of clay lamps that [symbolize](#) the inner light that protects each household from spiritual darkness. But generally, each of the five days of Diwali has its own significance. On the first day of Diwali, people pray to the goddess Lakshmi, bake sweets, and clean their homes—which they decorate the next day with lamps and *rangolis*, designs made on the floor out of coloured sand, powder, rice or flower petals. Diwali's third day is its most important: On this day, people may go to temple to honour

Lakshmi or gather with friends and family for feasts and fireworks. Devotees also set ablaze the lamps they had displayed the day before.

For many celebrants, the fourth day of Diwali [marks](#) the new year and a time to exchange gifts and well wishes. Finally, the fifth day is typically a day to honour one's siblings.

Thank you to Varsha (Hindu Faith Committee Member) for submitting this article

DIWALI – THE SIKH PERSPECTIVE

Bandi Chorr Divas (Prisoner Release Day) – Sikh Diwali

For Sikhs, Diwali is particularly important because it celebrates the release from prison of the Sixth Guru, Guru Hargobind, and 52 other Princes with him, in 1619. The Sikh tradition holds that the Emperor Jahangir had imprisoned Guru Hargobind and 52 Princes. The Emperor was asked to release Guru Hargobind which he agreed to do.

However, Guru Hargobind asked that the princes be released also. The Emperor agreed, but said only those who could hold onto his cloak tail would be allowed to leave the prison. This was in order to limit the number of prisoners who could leave.

However, Guru Hargobind had a cloak made with 52 pieces of string and so each prince was able to hold onto one string and leave prison. Hence, **Sikhs celebrate Diwali as Bandi Chorr Divas (Prisoner Release Day)**. Sikhs celebrated the return of Guru Hargobind by lighting the Golden Temple. The tradition of lighting lamps (divas), offering prayers and celebration through shared meals, visiting family and exchanging gifts, continues today.

Our thoughts and prayers are with everyone during the period of Diwali – let's all be released from darkness in to new light of hope.

Happy Diwali to you all.

Sukhvinder Kaur Matharu

NHS Sikh Chaplain and York St John University Faith Advisor

VISIT MY MOSQUE OPEN DAY - SATURDAY 21ST OCTOBER 2023

Sister Patricia and I (and Avtar towards the end) received a warm welcome from Rasha and from the many people who had worked so hard to produce a fascinating exhibition, not to mention the coffee, sweets and biscuits!! I hope you enjoy the pictures of some of the activities we took part in. Please convey our thanks to all Rasha!

I had the experience of seeing what it felt like to wear the hijab. It was much more comfortable than I thought, but I'd need a lot of practice to make it look like this!



One young woman was writing such beautiful illustrated calligraphy, so I now have my name, and a 'Peace' bookmark in Arabic.



Rasha in charge of the 'virtual reality' experience.

Fascinating to be totally immersed in a story!

Anne and Patricia

YIG Programme for 2024

(This is a 'draft' programme so look out for any changes in each months newsletter)

JANUARY 9th (n.b. 2nd Tuesday, as first Tuesday so close to New Year)

'Virtual' visit to the Baha'i House of Worship in Chicago, 7-8p.m. via Zoom.

(chair and organiser, Daryoush Mazloum)

FEBRUARY 6th

How do faith-groups respond to current crises? (e.g. cost of living/housing, etc.)

Speaker: Julia Unwin

Chair - Tina Funnell

MARCH 5th

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church: its history and contemporary religious, social and political role.

Speaker: Roy Love, (recently returned from his 'final' visit.)

(Chair Sister Patricia Harriss)

APRIL 2nd

The Role of Art in Different Faiths (Chair and Organisers Christopher Styles and Sarah Hubbard)

April and October 2024 - "Bring and Share Objects of art and faith"

In these sessions we would like to share works of art that are precious to us as individuals from different faith backgrounds and discuss together how such works have been a personal inspiration to us in our diverse spiritual journeys.

If you are passionate about a piece of art that inspires you or speaks to you spiritually and that you would like to bring and share with us at one of the sessions then do contact Christopher and give him a brief description of your piece of art and what you would like to communicate about it.

You can reach him at WiseOldBob@BTInternet.com

Christopher or Sarah will then contact you and provide you with all the information you will need to take part.

MAY 7th

A Zen Perspective on Modern Science: the quantum world, AI and virtual realities

Speaker: Ocean Melchisedech

Chair Sister Patricia Harriss

JUNE 4th

Current Topics Which Concern Us: an inter-generational discussion in groups.

Two students will join each group, and lead it, introducing and discussing current topics which are matters of concern for them.

Organiser: Mimi Lowry

Chair - Penny Coppin-Siddall

JULY 2nd: Planning meeting, to collect suggestions for the 2025 programme and for Interfaith Week 2024

Chair Avtar Matharu

AUGUST 6th Annual Picnic - location to be decided

SEPTEMBER 3rd

'Music Which Inspires Me'.

Is there a piece of music which holds a deep and spiritual meaning for you? Would you consider bringing it along to our September meeting and sharing it with the group followed by a short explanation ? If so, please email Anne am.castle@btopenworld.com telling her the title and length of the music, (so we don't have a duplicate) and a short paragraph with the main thrust of why this piece has meant so much to you. Anne will put together a programme and you will be fully informed about how the evening will run beforehand. If you would like to invite a younger member of your faith community to participate with, or instead of, yourself, that would also be very welcome!
Look forward to hearing from you!

Organiser and Chair: Anne Castle.

OCTOBER 1st

The Role of Art in Different Faiths: second session. (See April 2nd)

Chair and Organisers: Christopher Styles and Sarah Hubbard

NOVEMBER 5th

Celebrations of Faith, presented in Photographs- Key Moments of our Faith Year.

We hope to make a presentation/display of photographs taken over twelve months (so starting this November) recording key moments in your faith year, or high points for individuals such as weddings or naming ceremonies etc. If photography is your passion why not consider putting yourself forward as the representative of your faith for the year? Obviously you would not have to take all the photos yourself but ensure that events are recorded and that any people in the pictures are happy for them to be on public display. For further information and any ideas you may have please email

Mimi Lowry Organiser - ml292@st-andrews.ac.uk

Chair - Penny Coppin- Siddall

DECEMBER 3rd

AGM followed by social activities.

Chair - Avtar Matharu -Organiser of social part: Anne Castle.

BIRTHDAY OF GURU NANAK (November 8th)

Sikhs from all over the world will celebrate the birthday of Guru Nanak Dev-Ji, the first Sikh Guru, who believed in the values of humanity, equality, diversity and inclusion.

The birthday of Guru Nanak Dev-Ji falls on Kartik Purnamashi, the full moon day of the month Kartik, which usually falls in November in the western calendar. This year it falls on 8th November.

The celebration starts one day prior, with a cover to cover reading of the Guru Granth Sahib – the Sikh Holy Book. On the second day, the holy book is paraded (Nagar Kirtan) through the streets of Amritsar in a hand-held carriage. The procession is led by five people representing the original Panj Pyare ("the Five Beloved Ones"). A special prayer known as 'Rehrasi' is organised at sunset.




(image taken from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guru_Nanak)

Suki Kaur Matharu


Sikh Faith Advisor York St John University

NHS Sikh Chaplain


RELIGIOUS FESTIVAL -NOVEMBER 2023

 **1 November (Wednesday) ALL SAINTS' DAY Christian (Western Churches)**


This day provides a chance to offer thanks for the work and witness of all saints, recognising that not all are known or specially celebrated. Many churches stress this day by holding events especially designed for children.

 **2 November (Thursday) ALL SOULS' DAY Christian**


The departed are remembered on this day and prayers are offered on their behalf.


 **2 November (Thursday) ANNIVERSARY OF THE CROWNING OF HAILE SELASSIE I Rastafarian**


One of the holiest days of the Rastafarian year; it celebrates Haile Selassie's accession to the Ethiopian throne.

 **8 November (Wednesday) BIRTHDAY OF GURU NANAK (1469 CE) Sikh**


This is the birthday of Nanak, the first Sikh Guru. To celebrate it, Sikhs gather at the *gurdwara* to hear sermons and sing hymns about the life of the first Guru. The congregation will share a free meal (*langar*).

 **12 November (Sunday) DIVALI / DIWALI / DEEPAVALI Hindu / Jain**


 For Hindus this is a New Year festival lasting from one to five days, during which fireworks are set off and lights are hung out. It is a festival of light, coinciding with the darkest night of the lunar month. It is generally associated with Lakshmi, goddess of wealth and prosperity, or with the victorious return of Rama and Sita after their exile. Divali marks the beginning of the Indian financial year.

 **12 November (Sunday) DIVALI / BANDI CHHOR DIVAS Sikh**


Sikhs also celebrate Divali since Guru Hargobind, the sixth Guru, was released from Gwalior prison on this day. The Golden Temple in Amritsar is illuminated and firework displays take place there. It is a time for new clothes, presents and sweets.

 **12 November (Sunday) REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY National**


The Sunday nearest to Armistice Day, devoted to remembering the dead of the two World wars and subsequent wars.

 **12 (Sunday) to 19 (Sunday) November INTER FAITH WEEK**


Beginning on Remembrance Sunday and running until the following Sunday each year, Inter Faith week seeks to strengthen good inter-faith relations, increase awareness of the different and distinct faith communities in the UK, and increase understanding between people of religious and non-religious beliefs. Visit www.interfaithweek.org for more.

 **15 November (Wednesday) SHICHI-GO-SAN (Seven-Five-Three) Japanese**

Girls of seven, boys of five and girls of three are dressed up in new clothes and taken to a Shinto shrine to pray for their future well-being.


 **24 November (Friday) MARTYRDOM OF GURU TEGH BAHADUR (1675) Sikh**


Under orders from the Moghul emperor, the ninth Guru was executed in public opposite the Red Fort in Delhi, so sacrificing his head rather than his faith, on behalf of Kashmiri Hindus, who had turned to him for help.


 **26 * November (Sunday) DAY OF THE COVENANT Baha'i**

The Day of the Covenant is the day when Baha'is celebrate the appointment of 'Abdu'l-Bahá as the Centre of Baha'u'llah's Covenant.


* Baha'i festivals begin the evening before the date given

 **26 November (Sunday) Feast of Christ the King**, always celebrated on the last Sunday of the liturgical year before the new cycle begins on the first Sunday of Advent. (Catholic)

 **28 November (Tuesday) LOY KRATONG Buddhist**
Loy Kratong is celebrated in most of the village and town temples in Thailand and often coincides with a temple's Kathina Day. Degradable baskets are made and filled with carefully folded banana leaves, incense sticks, a candle and sometimes a coin. These are then launched on rivers, canals ponds or the sea, while a wish for good fortune is offered to the spirits of the water.

 **28 * November (Tuesday) ASCENSION OF ABDU'L-BAHÁ Baha'i**
The Ascension of Abdu'l-Bahá is a holy day that commemorates the death of Abdu'l-Bahá. The typical observance consists of devotional readings and is held at 1:00 AM, as Abdu'l-Bahá passed away about 1:00 AM on 28 November, 1921.

* Baha'i festivals begin the evening before the date given

 **30 November (Thursday) ST ANDREW'S DAY National**
The patron saint of Scotland since the 8th century. Andrew was an apostle and brother of St Peter. In the Anglican communion he is associated with missionary activity.

And finally, A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIR

As Chair, I continue to value your membership and my aim for 2023/24 is to continue to expand our network through mutual respect and shared values for a better and inclusive York.

As York Interfaith Group continues to expand we are always looking for additional support. If, you would like to assist or shadow any of the above roles then please do not hesitate to contact me. Your skills and expertise would be most welcome.

York Interfaith Group Committee 2023	
Member	Responsibility
Avtar Matharu	Chair
Dee Boyle	Vice Chair and Interfaith Week planning
Penny Coppin-Siddall	Secretary
Daryoush Mazloum	Treasurer
Rasha Ibrahim	Press and Publicity Officer
Anne Castle	Newsletter
Varsha Gulati	Hindu Representative
Sister Patricia Harriss	Annual Meeting Planning
Sarah Hubbard	Jewish Representative

Your feedback is very important us. We constantly try to improve our service so that we can best support your needs and those of your faith. You can contact and/or follow us via:

Facebook York Interfaith group
Instagram @yorkinterfaith
Twitter @Yorkinterfaith
email yorkinterfaithgroup@gmail.com

If you would like to contribute an article or advertise an event in our December Newsletter, please email yorkinterfaithgroup@gmail.com or send direct to am.castle@btopenworld.com **by December 16th**

Please ensure that your contributions are in 'Word' or a format which can be converted to 'Word'. (PDF Leaflets are particularly difficult) Many Thanks

Wishing you all the very best for the month of October.

Avtar Matharu, Chair, YIG