

York Interfaith Group



July 2025

Welcome to the July newsletter

This month's newsletter is a little shorter than usual but there are a couple of events we would like you to note particularly. The York Interfaith Group will have a stand at the **Our City Festival** from 11-4 on 12 July, and it would be great to see you there to support us. Full details about the occasion are given below. We may be saddened, or angered, by what has happened in the past month, but this festival demonstrates that our community in York is stronger than those who want to sow dissent among us: also included is a statement from York Human Rights City Network on this and one from John Moroney, Councillor for the Hull Road Ward.

And of course we have our regular meeting in West Offices, this coming Tuesday 1 July: you won't want to miss our interactive 'Poetry in the Faiths' meeting.

Finally, we are giving some advance details of the York 50+ Festival in September. More details will be in the September newsletter.

Rory Allen, editor

Message from the Chair

Dear Friends

I am writing this as it looks as if, for now, the ceasefire between Israel and Iran is holding. Meanwhile in York we have recently had violent attacks on Muslim men in Hull Road, and also very aggressive young men at the Mosque.

So, as we go into the school holidays and the summer I hope we will hold all of the people who are threatened and intimidated because of their ethnicity and faith in our thoughts and prayers. And that we do all we can to promote our values that we have more in common than divides us and that we are all equal and valued whatever our faith, gender or ethnicity.

I look forward to seeing you all at our next Meeting.

Best wishes,

Tina Funnell, Chair

Statement from York Human Rights City Network

We have been saddened to hear about the incidents in the Hull Road Park and nearby, which appear to have been racially motivated. We send a message of strength and solidarity to those who were attacked, and to their friends and family. There is no place in our city for racism, hatred and violence of any kind. York Human Rights City Network embraces a vision of a vibrant, diverse, fair and safe community. It is up to all of us to work for the community we want, always remembering that there is more that unites us than divides us.

21 June 2025

Statement from Hull Road Ward Councillor John Moroney

The attacks in Hull Road Park were callous acts and ones we, as ward councillors, condemn in the strongest terms. We understand an arrest has already been made and we look forward to further developments in taking action against those involved.

As local Councillors and community leaders for Hull Road Ward, Councillors Pavlovic, Baxter and I are proud to represent an inclusive community and an inclusive city. We welcome everyone who lives in and visits our ward, including the thriving Muslim community at the nearby Mosque, which contributes so much to our local community, not least through its extensive charity work. The council leader and deputy council leader are due to visit the Mosque imminently to show their support following these appalling acts.

Hull Road Park is an important hub for our wonderful local community who care deeply about and work hard to improve their local area. We simply cannot let a few bad apples ruin things for the rest of us. The Park is also the site of impressive charity activity, including by TCV (The Conservation Volunteers) and St Nicks. There are lots of activities, including the tennis courts, Choose 2 Café, Cornerstone Pop Up Kitchen and York Knights activity sessions for children. We continue to work on improving the Park given its important role in the quality of life of local residents. We won't give up, because we care deeply about the area.

Contents

1. Forthcoming events in July and our future programme.
2. Reports on two Interfaith services in York in June
3. Faith Festival Perspectives
4. Shap calendar of festivals for July to December

Planned future YIG talks and events

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

MONTHLY MEETINGS 2025 (and interfaith week)	
1 st July	Poetry in the Faiths. Sarah Hubbard to chair.
5 th August	Bring and Share annual picnic: York Mosque
2 nd September	Medicine and Faith
7 th October	Talk by Neil Irving, an Ecumenical Accompanier
4 th November	Event to be confirmed
8 th – 16 th November	Interfaith Week: save the dates
2 nd December	AGM and social evening

Planning for future Interfaith Sessions

Many thanks to everyone who contributed to the June planning session where we discussed Interfaith Week in November and also the Monthly Programme for York Interfaith Group in 2026. All the ideas have been noted and we will now do our best to incorporate them into our future plans. There are two small groups of members who have volunteered to work on the next stages of the planning now and they will report back to the committee in September. If your faith group usually organises an event during Interfaith Week they will be contacted in the next few weeks so that it can be included to the programme for the week. We will keep you updated in the Autumn as to how plans are going and thanks again to everyone for your continued support for our York Interfaith Group.

Dee Boyle, Vice Chair

Celebrate Community and Culture at Our City Festival – Saturday 12th July 2025
#OurYorkOurStories



#OURYORKOURSTORIES

The much-loved **Our City Festival** returns on **Saturday 12th July 2025** at **York Explore Library and Archive**, bringing together communities from across the city for a day filled with creativity, connection, and celebration of stories.

Now in its fourth year, Our City Festival is York's vibrant and inclusive platform for people of all backgrounds to share their stories, express their identities, and celebrate the diverse cultures that shape life in our city.

Expect a packed day of music, dance, art, food, workshops, and storytelling, all led by local individuals, community groups, and performers. From interactive exhibits and performances to thought-provoking displays and delicious cultural cuisines, there's something for everyone to enjoy.

This free, family-friendly festival is open to all – so come along, bring a friend, and be part of this joyful celebration of what makes York special.

Keep your eyes on our Facebook page (Search Our City Festival) where we'll be announcing the full programme of events and highlights in the coming weeks.

Let's come together to celebrate York's stories, voices, and communities. We

can't wait to see you there!

Location:

York Explore Library and Archive

Library Square, Museum Street, York YO1 7DS

Date:

Saturday 12th July 2025 Time:

11am to 4pm

Follow Us:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100095552230984> Instagram: @ourcityfestivalyork

(ENDS)

Contact:

For more information please contact,

City of York Council - newsdesk@york.gov.uk

Our City Festival - ourcityfestivalyork@gmail.co.uk

York 50+ Festival, 20 September – 1 October 2025



Celebrate life, community, and creativity at York's only festival dedicated to the over 50s!

York Older People's Assembly (YOPA) and Age UK York are collaborating to host the York 50+ Festival - a unique, 10-day event featuring an exciting mix of talks, performances and social activities tailored to inspire, entertain, and connect.

Festival activities take place from:

- Saturday 20 September to Wednesday 1 October

With a Day of Celebration and Central Parade in York

- Saturday 27 September from 13.00

Help us make a difference

With 77,030 residents aged over 50 in York, our goal is to highlight the evolving and diverse experience of growing older. Ageism is a significant and widespread issue with nearly half of people over 50 in England experiencing age discrimination.

The Festival seeks to dispel ageist stereotypes, highlight the diverse experiences of older people in York, enhance wellbeing and enjoyment, and foster intergenerational understanding and links.

Get involved

- Either as a volunteer, sponsor or putting on activities
- Be part of parade, prepare materials for shop windows to show off what older people contribute, displays, posters, installations, storyboards
- Find out more www.yorkassembly.org.uk/50-festival-2025/
- Email d.willcocks@outlook.com or yorkfiftyplus@gmail.com
- 07850 111299

Interfaith Service at end of Refugee Week



This was held at the Unitarian Chapel in St Saviourgate, on 22 June. The theme of Refugee Week this year was Community as a Superpower, and the service explored the meanings of the concept of 'Community'. Dee Boyle conducted the service, and introduced the theme. This was followed between hymns by seven separate accounts by faith and community representatives illustrating the idea of 'Community in Action'.

Very fittingly, the final hymn was titled: 'Ours is a Town for Everyone'. The words seemed to have particular resonance in today's world as they reaffirmed the value of truth and honesty, combined with empathy and compassion.

After the service, we sat down together for a 'bring and share' vegetarian lunch, to round off the occasion with some delicious home produced contributions!

Rory Allen



Interfaith Shabbat service for PRIDE week



Members of YLJC with their York neighbours and friends came together to Celebrate PRIDE in York with a special interfaith erev Shabbat service at the York Unitarian Chapel on Friday 6th June. The service was organised by York Liberal Jewish Community's social action team.

The Community's spiritual leader Rabbi Elisheva Salamo who is passionate about engagement and making connections said - "Regardless of your circumstances, your identity, your training, or the person you embrace in love. We have a place for you at our table, a bit of challah, and a glass of juice to share with you. Come share your stories. Come in respect. Come with an open heart and an open mind."

It was a joyful service with much singing and at one point Rabbi Elisheva had everyone up dancing which was something else! The service was followed by kiddush, then coffee and cake were served which enabled community members and guests to chat and write messages of hope on the community's PRIDE flag. We are very grateful to The Unitarian Chapel for letting us use their wonderful space.

Social Action co-chair, Pete Simms said – "in creating the flag we have demonstrated that YLJC and the LGBTQ+ communities share common goals of hope and resilience." Social Action team members Sarah Hubbard (YIG committee member) and Natasha Almond were delighted by the great turnout and the opportunity the service provide for them to engage with their York interfaith and community group colleagues.

Sarah Hubbard



Illustration 1: Pete Simms, Owen Power and Eve Branston with PRIDE flag



Illustration 2: Community Dancing Photo

Ashoura - A Muslim Celebration, 4 July



On 4th July, a famous Muslim occasion, Ashoura, will be observed. It holds significant meaning for Muslims primarily due to its association with Prophet Musa (Moses, peace be upon him). According to Islamic tradition, it was on this day that God saved Moses and the Children of Israel from Pharaoh's tyranny by parting the Red Sea. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), upon learning that the Jews of Medina fasted on this day in gratitude to God, expressed appreciation for this tradition and encouraged Muslims to fast as well, recognizing the deep spiritual connection shared with Prophet Moses and his mission.

For Muslims, this connection to Moses underscores the continuity of divine guidance from the earliest prophets to the final Prophet Muhammad. Fasting on Ashoura is not only a means of commemorating a historical event but also an expression of unity with previous prophets and their followers in submission to one God. It exemplifies the shared spiritual heritage among Abrahamic faiths and reflects the Islamic principle that all prophets brought the same essential message of monotheism, righteousness, and justice. Thus, Ashoura serves as a day of reflection, worship, and reaffirmation of the timeless values championed by Prophet Moses and upheld by the Prophet Muhammad.

Shia Muslims (10-15% of Muslims worldwide) commemorate Ashoura as the day of mourning for the martyrdom of Imam Hussain, the grandson of Prophet Muhammad, at the Battle of Karbala in 680 CE. It marks a profound moment of sacrifice in the face of tyranny and injustice. The day is observed with mourning rituals, processions, and reflections on standing for truth and justice.

However, the views of Sunni Muslims (85-90% of Muslims worldwide) on the Shia commemoration of Ashoura vary. While Sunnis deeply respect Imam Hussain and recognize his martyrdom as a tragic event, they generally do not support the specific mourning rituals practiced by Shia communities, such as self-flagellation or large-scale public grief displays. Many Sunni scholars believe that mourning should be expressed in a dignified and private manner, without actions seen as excessive or unprescribed in Islamic tradition.

Birthday of the Dalai Lama, 6 July



The 14th Dalai Lama (born 6 July 1935) will be celebrating his 90th birthday on 6th July. His full spiritual name: Jetsun Jamphel Ngawang Lobsang Yeshe Tenzin Gyatso, shortened as Tenzin Gyatso; né Lhamo Thondup) is the incumbent Dalai Lama, the highest spiritual leader and head of Tibetan Buddhism. Each year Tibetans and followers of Tibetan Buddhism celebrate his birthday with prayers for a long life for him and also by gathering together wherever they are in the world. He has requested that people plant as many trees as they can during this last 12 months leading up to his 90th birthday and so that too has been happening all over the world, even here in Yorkshire where several hundred trees have been planted to honour his wishes and to celebrate his life. He has been living in exile in India now since 1959 together with thousands of Tibetans and has continued to be the spiritual leader of Tibet and advisor to the Tibetan Government in Exile in Dharamsala ever since. His work with people from many different faiths is well recorded and the 'Book of Joy' written by him and Archbishop Desmond Tutu continues to be a best seller worldwide.

Dee Boyle, Vice Chair

The martyrdom of the Báb, 9 July

The martyrdom of the Báb refers to the execution of Sayyid `Ali Muhammad Shirazi, also known as the Báb, in Persia (now Iran) in 1850. The Báb was the precursor to the Bahá'í Faith, which heralded the future appearance of a great, worldwide revelation, and the essential unity of all religions. His message aroused opposition in that very tradition-bound Shi'a Muslim culture.

His execution by firing squad is a significant event in Bahá'í history and is considered a foundational moment in the religion's development.

At first just a few people learned about the Bab, but then thousands and tens of thousands began to follow Him, radically breaking away from their society's normal religious traditions and practices. In fact, the rapid growth of His followers challenged the basic underpinnings of Persian society.

Today the fused, bullet-ridden bodies of the Bab and his faithful follower repose under a golden dome on Mt. Carmel in Haifa, Israel [see photo below]. Millions of people from all over the globe visit that holy spot, and every day the Shrine of the Bah proclaims the Baha'i message of unity, peace, love and selflessness to the world.

All around the globe, Baha'is will observe the Martyrdom of the Bab at noon on July 9th, believing that the Bab set in motion a fresh cycle of progressive revelation to humanity. His revolutionary new teachings opened the path for the new message of Bahá'u'lláh, the founder of the Bahá'í Faith, and his ultimate sacrifice gave us all a new vision of a unified world.

Mahmood Foroughi



Asalha Puja (Dhamma Day), 10 July

Asalha Puja, observed on the full moon of the eighth lunar month (10th July in 2025), commemorates the Buddha's first sermon — the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta — following his enlightenment at Deer Park, Benares. This discourse introduced the Four Noble Truths, the central doctrine of Buddhism: the existence of suffering, its origin in craving, its cessation, and the Noble Eight-fold path leading to its end.

The day's observances vary between Buddhist traditions, but typically include visiting temples for sermons, meditation, and chanting the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta. Flowers, incense, and candles are often to shrines.

Asalha Puja additionally signals the start of Vassa, or Rains Retreat. For Buddhists, Asalha Puja, or Dhamma Day is both a celebration of the Buddha's wisdom and an annual reaffirmation of commitment to his teachings.

On Wednesday 9th July, York Buddhist Centre will be celebrating Dhamma Day by telling the story of the Buddha's first teaching and carrying out a special puja to mark the occasion.

Entry to the Vassa, 11 July















The Entry to the Vassa, more commonly known as the Buddhist Rains Retreat, is an important tradition, particularly in Theravāda Buddhism. It begins on the full moon of Āsāḷha (July) or early Sāvaṇa (August) and calls for wandering monastics to stay in one place for three months during the monsoon period. Originally, the purpose of the practice was in order for monks and nuns to take follow Buddha's guidance that they should avoid travel in the rainy season to prevent harm to crops and small creatures, embodying ahiṃsā—non-harming, the first Buddhist precept.

However, as with many traditions arising out of practical considerations, the Rains Retreat took on a more spiritual dimension, involving heightened meditation, Dhamma (Buddhist teachings) study, and ethical renewal. Early Buddhist monasteries arose from the desire of monks and nuns to remain in one place, rather than forever wandering.

For laypeople, it is a period of generosity, simplicity, and rededication to mindfulness, often marked by taking extra vows or participating in retreats. The season opens with a formal declaration by the monks, setting their intention to remain rooted, transforming stillness into a mindful act.

For many Buddhists, the Entry to the Vassa is a sacred commitment — to remain, to observe, and to gently return to the present moment. It marks not so much a withdrawal, but a renewal along the path towards Enlightenment.

Mark Jones

FAITHS	July	August	September	October	November	December	
BAHA'I	9 Martyrdom of the Bab			22 The Birth of the Bab 23 The Birth of Baha'u'llah	25 Day of the Covenant 27 Ascension of Abdu'l-Bahá		
BUDDHIST	10 Asalha Puja / Dhamma Day 11 Entry to the Vassa		23 Higan	7 Pavarana Day	5 Anapansati Day 6 Loy Krathong	8 Bodhi Day	
CHINESE		29 Qixi - Double Seventh Festival 29 Herd Boy and Weaver Girl	6 Hungry Ghost Festival 28 Confucius' Birthday	6 Rabbit in the Moon Festival 29 Double Ninth Festival			
CHRISTIAN		15 Blessed Virgin Mary 15 Assumption of the B. Virgin Mary [RC] 15 Dormition [3] [Julian] 15 Dormition of the Mother of God [3] 19 Transfiguration [3]	Harvest Festival [Date Varies]	Harvest Festival [Date Varies] 31 All Hallows' Eve	1 All Saints' Day 2 All Souls' Day 30 St Andrew 30 Advent Sunday	8 Immaculate Conception [RC] 24 Christmas Eve 25 Christmas Day	
HINDU		9 Raksha Bandhan 15-16 Janamashtami / Krishna Jayanti 26-27 Ganesh Chaturthi	22-1 Oct Navaratri 30 Durgashtami	2 Gandhi Jayanti 2 Dussehra 21 Divali / Deepavali 22 Govardhan Puja [Gujarat New Year]			
JAIN		9 Raksha Bandhan 21-28 Paryushan Parva 24 Samvatsari		21 Divali 21 Mahavir Nirvana			
JAPANESE	13-15 O-Bon [Tokyo]	13-15 O-Bon [Japan]	21-25 Higan 23 Shûbun No Hi		15 Shichi-Go-San	31 Omisoka	
JEWISH [1]		3 Tisha B'Av	23-24 Rosh Hashanah	2 Yom Kippur 7-13 Sukkot 14 Shemini Atzeret 15 Simchat Torah		15-22 Hanukah	
MUSLIM [2]	6 Ashura		27 Birthday of the Prophet Muhammad [Milad un Nabi]				
RASTAFARIAN	23 Birthday of Haile Selassie I		11 Ethiopian New Year's Day		2 Anniversary of the Crowning of Haile Selassie I		
SIKH			1 Installation of the Guru Granth Sahib in the Harmandir Sahib in Amritsar	6 Confering of Guruship on Guru Granth Sahib in 1708 CE 20 Bandi Chhor Divas 21 Divali	5 Birthday Guru Nanak 24 Martyrdom Guru Tegh Bahadur	21 Martyrdom Sahibzada Ajit Singh & Sahibzada Jujhar Singh 26 Martyrdom Sahibzada Zorawar Singh & Sahibzada Fateh Singh	
ZOROASTRIAN [PARSEE]	1 Jashn-e-Tirgan [IZ] 6-15 Fravardigan [K] 16 Navroze [K] 21 Khordad Sal [K]	5-14 Fravardigan / Muktdad [S] 15 Navroze [S] 20 Khordad Sal [S]	1 Fravardin Mah Parab [S]	1 Jashn-e-Mehergan [IZ]		26 Zaratosh-t-no-Diso [IZ]	
PAGAN / DRUID [4]		1 Lammas / Lughnasadh	22 Autumn Equinox [Mabon / Alban Elued]	31 Hallowe'en 31 Winter Nights 31 Samhain / Samhuinn		21 Yule [Wiccan/ Pagan] 21 Winter Solstice AlbanArthon / Alban Arthuan	
Some Other Notable Dates			29 Michaelmas	12-19 Interfaith Week of Prayer for World Peace	9 Remembrance Sunday 9-16 Interfaith Week 30 St Andrew's Day	10 Human Rights Day 31 Hogmanay	
Own Dates							

(*) 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

