

York Interfaith Group

October 2025 newsletter



Welcome to the October newsletter

Following the hottest UK summer on record – yet another reminder, if needed, of the reality of climate change – the weather has become now truly autumnal. Those of us with allotments have been hard at work getting them ready for winter. Meanwhile, this month's issue includes the usual notices of forthcoming events and some information about free workshops organised by YGAM, to tackle the damage caused by gambling. From experience volunteering with Citizens Advice, I'm aware of how much destruction gambling can inflict on individuals and families, and recommend these workshops to anyone in a position of community and faith leadership who will have to deal with the consequences of gambling addiction.

As announced in our special bulletin, the York Mosque is holding an open day event from 2-4 on Sunday, 5th October, and the highlight will be a talk from 2.45 by Professor Adeeba Malik, speaking on the topic of "A journey of the first ethnic minority woman to be declared High Sheriff for West Yorkshire." This is particularly topical given that Adeeba has just been appointed to the position of Lord Lieutenant of West Yorkshire, which she will take up on 22nd December.

We also have a notice of an event, submitted by one of our longstanding and very active members (and former YIG secretary) Susan Maskill, in aid of the Palestinian Children's Relief Fund.

From 12th to 19th October, the Week of Prayer for World Peace is being held. Further details are on the internet at: <https://weekofprayerforworldpeace.co.uk/> This is timely, as our community in York, and the world in general, certainly needs to replace violence and hatred with peace and fellowship.

Don't forget that in November, we have the highlight of our year, Interfaith Week, from 8th to 16th November. Details will be in the next newsletter, but we can promise a full programme of events for everyone.

Rory Allen, Editor

Message from the Chair

Dear Friends

These last few weeks have been very distressing for many people in York, particularly the racist and abusive comments and attacks. York is better than this, but we cannot be complacent about what is happening in York, as well as across the country too. It makes the work that we do individually as different faith communities but together through Interfaith work to bring people of all faiths and none together even more important.

I write just before I go to Iona for a week of prayer, reflection, good music and time on an inspirational Island which I am greatly looking forward to. Quiet time to recharge batteries and reflect on what we can all do as people of faith to love our fellow human beings rather than focussing on our differences. Remembering that we have more in common than divides.

I look forward to coming back to York to celebrate the Open Day at the Mosque and especially to the Joint event that YIG is organising with the Mosque on Sunday 5th October from 2.00 to 4.00 pm when Professor Adeeba Malik will address the meeting. I am really pleased that we are organising this as a joint meeting with our friends at the Mosque to demonstrate, in a practical way, our support for the many members of the Mosque who are facing abuse and insults because of their faith

Best wishes,

Tina Funnell, Chair

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5. An account of the Seder to mark Jewish New Year on 22nd September
6. Faith Festival Perspectives: Dushahara, and Durgotsava, by Varsha Gulati (Hindu); the birthday of Baha'u'llah by Mahmood Foroughi (Baha'i).
7. Shap calendar of festivals for second half of 2025

YIG Meeting on the experiences of an Ecumenical Accompanier, 7th October

Neil Irving will be giving a talk entitled: 'Eye witness: Stories from Israel and the West Bank'. He will be addressing questions such as 'What is daily life under occupation really like?' and 'What can be done to promote a just peace in Israeli-occupied Palestine?' His experience is based on several months' work as a member of the EAPPI team, established by British Quakers to monitor the human rights situation in the region.

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)	
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

FREE City & Guilds assured gaming and gambling harm prevention workshops for community and faith leaders



DID YOU KNOW?

Cultural beliefs and values, influenced by family and cultural history, are key in shaping gambling behaviours and attitudes toward seeking help among young people in marginalised communities.

Flexible scheduling

Our workshops focus on identifying and addressing the impacts of gaming and gambling on young people in marginalised communities.

Topics covered:

- Gaming and gambling harms
- Mental health and wellbeing
- The role of religion and culture
- Marketing and sponsorship
- Spotting signs of harm
- Signposting help and support

Open Online Workshops

Multiple dates available, anyone can book and attend.

Bespoke Workshops

Book a workshop solely for your organisation.

Following your session you will receive:

- A **City & Guilds** certificate and digital credential.
- Access to our online **resources** that includes tools and materials to engage young people.
- Option to join our **Alumni programme** for exclusive access to further free training opportunities.



Scan the QR code to book your **FREE** place, or email us at training@ygam.org to arrange a bespoke workshop.

For more about our work, visit www.ygam.org



Community and faith Leader professionals and volunteers can sign up to one of our upcoming open sessions [here](#).

Parents, carers and guardians can attend one of our upcoming awareness sessions [here](#).

We can also run sessions for specific teams/groups at a set date/time convenient to them. Feel free to share my email if anyone wants to get in touch.

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Coffee Morning for Palestinian Children's Relief Fund



Report on 2nd September YIG talks on Religion and Health

Shamim Eimaan

The meeting was opened by Shamim, who spoke movingly about her 30 years of experience in the NHS, where she had learned the value of having a person to speak to patients or their families about sensitive issues such as bereavement, and who understood the religious and cultural backgrounds of different minorities. Shamim was concerned with health inequalities, such as low covid virus uptake in certain communities. She had found lack of understanding and awareness as well as a lack of diversity within the NHS.

Shamim had been one of the thousands of Ugandans of Subcontinental heritage expelled by Idi Amin in 1972. Her personal experience had enabled her to educate young people about the difficulties in the life of refugees.

Shamim spoke also about the history of hospital care and its connection with religion, in Greek temples or monasteries. There were many clergy who were also physicians. St Leonard's hospital, a ruin in the Museum Gardens, was an example. Shamim had been a volunteer in York Hospital, where her Muslim faith had enabled her to understand the particular needs of patients of that religion, and to comfort their families. She showed a short film made by, and about, Travellers, to illustrate the damaging effect of discrimination on social acceptance and health outcomes. She also mentioned the effect of loneliness on causing premature death, and the help that religious communities could give to support and help people struggling with their mental health.

Varsha Gulati

Varsha Gulati spoke next, on health and healing in Hinduism. Ayurvedic medicine draws on the use of medicinal plants, many of which were mentioned in the Hindu books known as the Vedas. The ideas of healing were based on the five element theory of matter, and of the three basic bodily humours, that control the state of a person's wellbeing. Individuals are divided into three 'doshas': light, muscular and heavy builds. [Note: this is reminiscent of William Sheldon's somatotype theory, of ectomorphs, mesomorphs and endomorphs. There has been speculation that he was influenced by Vedic ideas].

Hindu medicine aims for harmony between the three doshas, to prevent ill health. Harmony has physical, mental, social and spiritual aspects. Yoga is another way to achieve mental and physical harmony. The yoga styles represent paths to achieve moksha, unity with the divine. Meditation aims at liberation from samsara, the cycle of reincarnation, and achieving moksha. Spiritual music calms, lowers anxiety and uplifts the mind.

'Namaste' means 'the sacred in me greets the sacred in you', with which Varsha's talk concluded.

Mahmood Foroughi

Mahmood covered briefly the importance of mental health and gave some examples of religious teachings that visibly and evidentially have contributed to people's mental health at an individual and community level.

Around one billion people globally are living with a mental disorder, with anxiety and depression the most common (*World Health Organisation (WHO)*). Approximately 1 in 4 adults in England will experience a mental health problem each year (*Mind*).

Some examples of effects of positive religious teachings are:

- Builds moral framework: e.g. forgiveness, gratitude, compassion as a matter of embedded values
- Daily prayer, meditation, rituals that calm the mind
- Breaks cyclic thinking, shifts one outside oneself
- Positive reframing of problems
- Religious involvement → lower depression, substance abuse, suicide risk.

He also talked about the fact that religion often provides community and belonging, reducing loneliness and offering support in times of need. For many people, being part of a religious group creates a sense of shared identity and purpose. Attending regular services, gatherings, or rituals allows individuals to connect with others who share their beliefs and values, which can foster deep friendships and a strong sense of belonging. This communal aspect of religion helps people feel less isolated, especially during challenging periods in life, as they know they are part of something larger than themselves. For example, in many churches, mosques, or temples, members come together not only for worship but also for social activities such as shared meals, volunteer projects, or support groups. A person who has recently moved to a new city might feel disconnected and lonely at first, but by joining a local religious congregation, they may quickly build a network of caring relationships. These new connections can provide emotional support, practical help—such as meals during illness or childcare assistance—and a sense of security that they are not alone. In this way, religion acts as a bridge between personal faith and social belonging, offering both spiritual nourishment and tangible community support.

He also looked at one example of a balance of empirical science by metaphorical science. The example was about the heart signals that have a significant effect on brain function – influencing emotional processing as well as higher cognitive faculties such as attention, perception, memory, and problem-solving.

30 years research at the HeartMath institute in California found that people with high measure of gratefulness and belief in religious values have a higher rate of coherence between the heart rates and the cognitive wellness. The presentation ended with three questions posed for the group to think about and perhaps to discuss at a next future gathering.

This has been a very brief summary of three talks which covered a highly complex issue - religion and health – in greater depth than can be more than hinted at in these notes. The talks whetted our appetite for a fascinating topic, that could well be explored further in a future session.

Rory Allen

Report on Seder meal on 22nd September by Sarah Hubbard





York Liberal Jewish Community Welcomes the New Year with a Joyful Rosh Hashanah Seder at Clements Hall

On Monday evening, the **York Liberal Jewish Community** gathered at **Clements Hall** to celebrate the Jewish New Year with a joyful and meaningful **Rosh Hashanah Seder**. The evening was **led by Rabbi Elisheva**. She guided the community, including our interfaith friends, through traditional prayers, blessings, and reflections, weaving together the rich symbolism of the foods eaten at this special time of year.

As part of the Seder, participants enjoyed a variety of traditional foods, each carrying its own special meaning. **Apples dipped in honey** symbolised the hope for a sweet year ahead, while **pomegranate seeds** represented abundance. These were accompanied by a heartfelt prayer for peace and many good deeds in the coming year. The Seder also included **fish heads** (in sweetie form), symbolising our wish for wisdom and strong leadership as the community moves forward together.

Following the Seder, the celebration continued with a lively bring-and-share meal. Members brought a stunning array of homemade dishes — from vibrant salads to delicious desserts — creating a delicious feast. The generosity, creativity, and love put into the food reflected the warmth and togetherness of the evening.

Rabbi Elisheva shared her hopes for the year ahead, saying:

'We gather together to eat foods that are symbolic of hope: hope that the year we are beginning is a time of goodness for us and for all our friends: hope that the great tangle of conflict can be teased apart into a possibility of peace: hope that our actions and prayers can make a material difference for generations to come. We eat of the fruit of knowledge, tempered with the essence of sweetness, the nectar that endures continuity.'

Dushahara, 2nd October 2025, by Varsha Gulati



It's called Dasha-Hara in the north India, Vijayadashami in the south, and Durgotsava in the east. Whatever the name, one has to agree that the festival of Dussehra is one that unifies the nation celebrating the victory of good over evil.

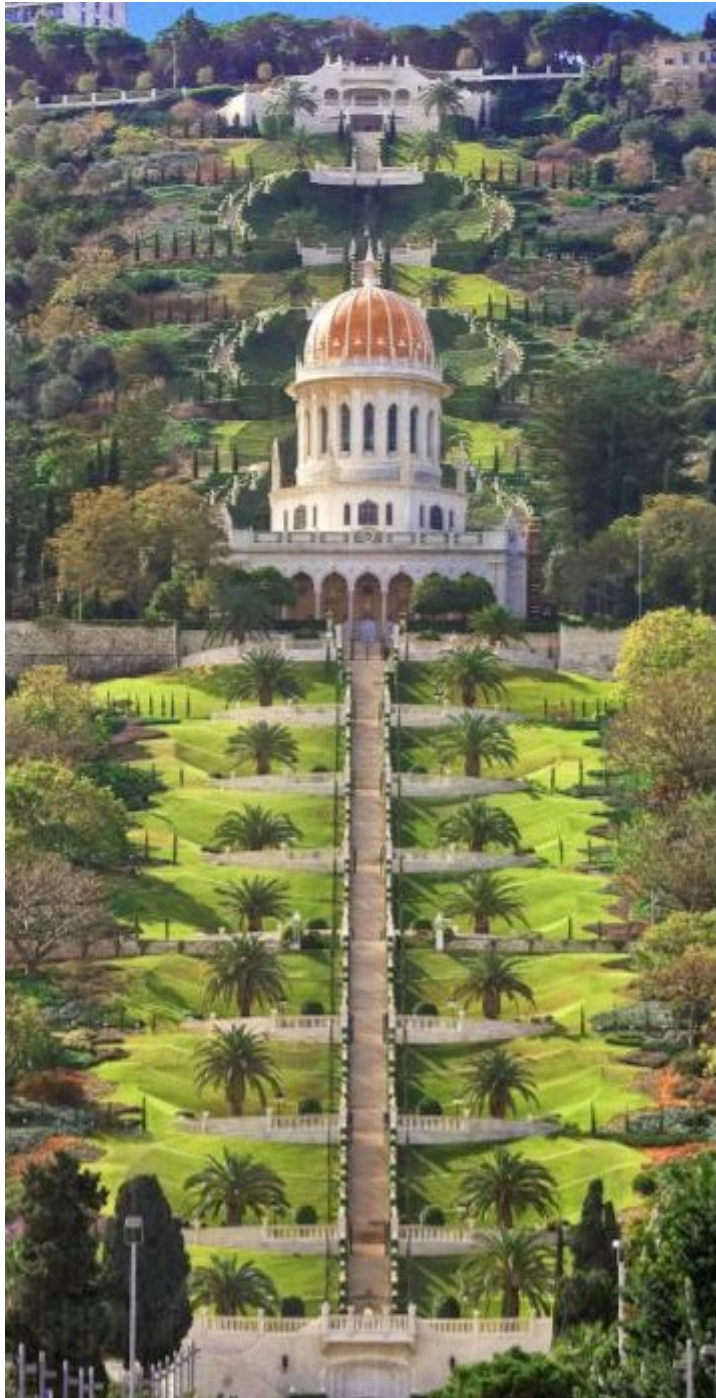
The victory is celebrated by burning a giant ten headed effigy of Ravana and of course lot of celebrations to go with it. The festival is the culmination of the nine-day long Navaratri celebrations, observed on the tenth day in the month of Ashvin or Kartik (September-October).

Most of the northern states of India see this festival as the day when Rama killed the ten-headed king of Lanka, Ravana. According to the Ramayana, Ravana kidnapped Rama's wife, Sita. After several years of penance, Ravana had received a boon from Lord Brahma which made him indestructible. Rama, the seventh incarnation of Vishnu, circumvented the boon and managed to kill the demon king in a fierce battle on this day. The word 'Dussehra' is made up of two Hindi words, 'dus' meaning ten and 'hara' meaning annihilated. Therefore, when combined, 'Dussehra' stands for the day when the ten evil faces of Ravana were destroyed by Lord Rama.

Durgotsava (Durga Pooja)

In many other states of India (specially Bengal) the festival is dedicated to the victory of goddess Durga over the demon Mahishasura. According to the Puranas, Mahishasura performed severe penance to be immortal.

The birthday of Baha'u'llah, 23rd October, by Mahmood Foroughi



Bahá'ís around the world will be celebrating the the birthday of Baha'u'llah, the founder of their faith. Baha'u'llah, which means the “Glory of God,” was born on Nov. 12, 1817, in Tehran, Persia.















The Bahai community of York will be celebrating this occasion on 25th October at St Aelred Community Centre at 4:30pm and invite friends to join them.

The Birth of Bahá'u'lláh is one of nine holy days in the Bahá'í calendar. Every year Baha'is anticipate this day with great joy. In the same way that Buddhists annually celebrate Vesak, the birth of Gautama Buddha; Christians celebrate the birth of Jesus every year on Christmas; and the same way that every great Faith annually commemorates the birth of its founder.

The Bahá'í Faith is based on justice, unity, and peace. When Baha'u'llah began teaching his new Faith in the spring of 1863, He promised that the religious, racial, and nationalistic hatreds dividing the world's peoples would in time be overcome. He promised that the war and fanaticism which separates human beings will be annulled. Baha'u'llah challenged all people to transcend their prejudices and the things that keep them apart and consider themselves as members of one human family.

He brought a blueprint for a new international order, which opens the way for lasting world peace based on a deeply spiritual foundation. He [raised the great call](#) for the unity of all peoples and cultures, all nations and religions, which the prophets of old had promised would one day appear:

“We desire but the good of the world and the happiness of the nations That all nations should become one in faith and all men as brothers; that the bonds of affection and unity between the sons of men should be strengthened; that diversity of religion should cease, and differences of race be annulled ... Yet so it shall be; these fruitless strifes, these ruinous wars shall pass away, and the 'Most Great Peace' shall come These strifes and this bloodshed and discord must cease, and all men be as one kindred and one family Let not a man glory in this, that he loves his country; let him rather glory in this, that he loves his kind”.

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 Diwali / Deepavali 22 Govardhan Puja (Gujarat New Year)			
JAIN		9 Raksha Bandhan 21-28 Paryushan Parva 24 Samvatsari		21 Diwali 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 Conferring of Guruship on Guru Granth Sahib in 1708 CE 20 Bandi Chhor Divas 21 Diwali	5 Birthday Guru Nanak 24 Martyrdom Guru Tegh Bahadur	21 Martyrdom Sahibzada Ajit Singh & Sahibzada Jujhar Singh 28 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 / Muktad [S] 15 Navroze [S] 20 Khordad Sal [S]	1 Fravardin Mah Parab [S]	1 Jashn-e-Mehregan [IZ]		26 Zaratosht-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 Alban Arthan / 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] Ali 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

