

# York Interfaith Group

August 2025



## Welcome to the August newsletter

The main event this month will be the annual YIG picnic, which will be held on 5 August from 7 to 8.30 pm at the York Mosque Field, York YO10 3EN. Details are given below; all are invited, but please email Rasha beforehand if you are coming. The forecast looks good, but if it rains, the event will move inside.

The record breaking European heatwave of June and the disastrous floods in Texas in July provided further evidence of climate change, and humanity's sad lack of resolve to tackle it. Attacks on civilians in Gaza continue: our condolences and prayers go out for the victims of the 17 July bombing of the Holy Family Church in Gaza, with the deaths of three people; ten others were wounded.

Rory Allen, Editor

## Message from the Chair

Hello

I am writing this on another very hot day which is great for people on holiday and all our visitors, but the rain was very welcome and, of course, much needed. We had a wonderful Meeting led by Sarah Hubbard, ably assisted by Christopher Styles, about Faith and Poetry on the 1<sup>st</sup> July. This was also Sister Patricia's 92<sup>nd</sup> birthday and we celebrated this remarkable woman who has been such a faithful supporter of Interfaith work. Unfortunately Sister Patricia was away in Germany so she was much missed, but we were glad to celebrate her.

That day was also the deconsecration of a long forgotten Synagogue in Aldwark. I was honoured to be there and to speak on behalf of YIG, Christopher Styles and Michael Chester were also at the ceremony as well as other friends. There is a full report later in this Newsletter.

So as we go into the school holidays I hope you are all able to relax and take time out from busy lives. Let us also hope that it will be a peaceful summer and I look forward to seeing a lot of you at the picnic at the Mosque.

Best wishes, Tina Funnell, Chair

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## *YIG Annual Picnic*

“You are all invited on Tuesday 5th August (7pm- 8.30pm) for a picnic at York Mosque Field. All food and refreshment will be provided by the mosque. But you are welcome to bring a vegetarian cake or snack if you like. Please book your free place by contacting [rasha.salah.ibrahim@gmail.com](mailto:rasha.salah.ibrahim@gmail.com) by 1st August 2025. Looking forward to having you all.”

Rasha Ibrahim, organiser and YIG Committee Member

## *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)	
5 <sup>th</sup> August	Bring and Share annual picnic: York Mosque
2 <sup>nd</sup> September	Medicine and Faith
7 <sup>th</sup> October	Talk by Neil Irving, an Ecumenical Accompanier
4 <sup>th</sup> November	Event to be confirmed
8 <sup>th</sup> – 16 <sup>th</sup> November	Interfaith Week: save the dates
2 <sup>nd</sup> December	AGM and social evening

## *York Minster Heritage Fair, 1-2 August*

The following is taken from a York Minster bulletin. Please note that if you wish to join the livestreaming of the events on 1 August, the email to which to send your request, is given below.

Unfortunately, the tickets for attending the events on 2 August are now mostly sold out, though there are a few left at:

<https://yorkminster.org/whats-on/event/heritage-fair/>

“To celebrate York Minster’s Centre of Excellence for Heritage Craft Skills & Estate Management becoming fully operational, we are hosting a Heritage Fair on Friday 1 and Saturday 2 August.

On Friday 1 August, we will be livestreaming a series of talks from our international cathedral partners each explaining how modern technology integrates with their current conservation works, the challenges and opportunities posed by future innovations, and how heritage estates can navigate the journey to Net Zero. Alex McCallion and Laura Cotter will begin the day talking about the Centre of Excellence, and Morwenna Slade will give the final presentation on the Journey to Net Zero UK. If you are interested in joining, please email [works@yorkminster.org](mailto:works@yorkminster.org) to request a link to register your attendance.

On Saturday 2 August, members of the public will be exploring the Heritage Quad and the Works & Technology Hub, on pre-booked tours, to meet our Works Department and the team at the York Glaziers Trust. Other partners, such as National Trust, English Heritage, York Archaeological Trust, York Civic Trust, will be setting up stalls in a marquee in Minster Gardens to share their work. No tickets are required to visit Minster Gardens.

The Heritage Fair will end with a Festal Choral Evensong in the Minster at 5.30 pm, to which everyone is welcome. The music will be led by Minster Voices and the Right Reverend Dr Flora Winfield, Bishop of Selby will preach on the theme of sustainability.”

# CHILDREN'S BEREAVEMENT EVENT



In partnership with Murton Park, Talking About Loss, Hayley Owen Funeral Directors, and The Yorkshire Barn Café, this special event offers a gentle, supportive space for children who have experienced the loss of a loved one. It's a chance to explore aspects of grief, share memories, reflect, and simply be together.

Inspired by the story Waterbugs and Dragonflies, the day includes a range of creative and comforting activities, supported by volunteers from Talking About Loss and the Yorkshire Barn Bereavement Café:

- STONE PAINTING
- PLANT IN MEMORY
- STORY SESSIONS
- ICE CREAM SUNDAE MAKING
- VISIT THE ANIMALS IN THE PARK
- CREATE A CLAY LAMP AND CANDLE LIGHTING
- SUNCATCHERS
- MEMORY KITE MAKING

This free event includes a buffet lunch.

There are 100 places available – 50 for children and 50 for accompanying adults – allocated on a first-come, first-served basis **and must be pre-booked**. To request a referral booking link or find out more, please contact us at [fiona.brown@yorkshirebarn.co.uk](mailto:fiona.brown@yorkshirebarn.co.uk)

## WHEN

MONDAY 11TH AUGUST 2025

## TIME

10.30AM-3PM (REGISTRATION FROM 10AM)

## LOCATION

MURTON PARK, MURTON LANE, YORK YO19 5UF



## *Advance notice about Interfaith Week, 8-16 November*

Following the [Nationwide Consultation on Inter Faith Week](#) and [Bursting the Bubble: Recommendations for enhancing Inter Faith Week in England](#) report, we are pleased to confirm that Inter Faith Week 2025 is taking place this year from Sunday 9th to Sunday 16th November.

Since the closure of the Inter Faith Network for the UK in April 2024, Inter Faith Week has been organised by a consortium of national inter faith organisations. The group forms the Inter Faith Week steering group for 2025, and we have lots of exciting plans to share with you!

The theme for Inter Faith Week 2025 is:

# Community: Together we serve.

## Serving others, sharing values, building belonging.

Join us to celebrate how faith and belief inspires social action; to experience how working together towards a common aim can unite across lines of difference; and to explore what “community” really means in practice.

**N.B. York Interfaith Group will be having an extra day as usual for our Interfaith 'Week' and so it will be from Sat 8<sup>th</sup> – Sun 16<sup>th</sup> Nov.**

## *Poetic Fragments: Poetry and Faith Meeting, 1 July, by Sarah Hubbard*

At our meeting on Faith and Poetry, we created our own poems inspired by a unique version of “Burnt Norton,” the first of T.S. Eliot’s Four Quartets. Instead of the original poem, we received a ‘collapsed’ version of a section of the poem: every word from the chosen section, listed alphabetically. Our challenge was to craft poems using only these words—no extras were allowed. The results are printed below and reflect how our faiths and individual spiritual perspectives shape and influence what we created. Interestingly, no one knew that the word list came from “Burnt Norton.” The original poem explores themes of redemption and memory, and provided words with a deep sense of resonance.



Caught in the laughter  
of timeless sunlight  
Before desire and love—  
a shaft of dust,  
being undesiring,  
moves not—  
unmoving movement.



Here is sudden sunlight.  
Children, love and laughter  
Between the hidden foliage  
The stretching shaft of  
pattern and of the timeless figure.  
Desire undesiring,  
Movement unmoving.



After sad is laughter  
The time is timeless  
Stretching in the shaft of sunlight  
The sudden detail of movement is quick –  
Ridiculous desire hidden in the dust.



Dust rises timeless between love and foliage;

there is hidden desire of unbeing, and sudden ridiculous movement.

While sunlight stretching in quick sudden movement, being itself undesiring, is of the aspect of time.

Only the movement of children, and limitation in pattern, is even.

Unmoving, the shaft is itself sad.

Always end in a figure:

Ten!



We displayed these poems on the wall and invited people to suggest titles for them. The titles people came up with are shown below as a Word Cloud.

I would like to thank Christopher Styles for his excellent introduction to the meeting and his technical support throughout.





## *Report on YIG stand at Our City Festival, 12 July*



YIG Committee Members were delighted to attend and showcase our amazing interfaith work at the 4th Annual Our City Festival on Saturday 12 July. The weather was scorching hot outside and we were glad to be situated in the foyer of York Explore Library (Library Square) where it was slightly cooler.

We had a steady stream of inquisitive visitors to our stand throughout the day which made for an engaging day as we continue to strive for community cohesion. Huge thanks to Tina, Varsha, Rory and Penny.

Avtar Matharu



## Report on York's Forgotten Synagogue by Christopher Styles

### Sacred stones, farewell: the de-consecration of Aldwark Synagogue

On Tuesday 1st of July members of Jewish communities from all over Yorkshire and Lincoln and friends gathered for a short service of witness, thanksgiving and deconsecration at the old Synagogue on Aldwark.. This was the first time in almost exactly fifty years that any of us have entered this sacred space since the sale of the building in 1975 and its subsequent dormancy awaiting redevelopment.

The building: not much to look at from the outside, or indeed from the inside since the 1970s conversion work took place...



### History

A group of Ashkenazi Jews arrived in York after fleeing the pogroms in Eastern Europe in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century. The building in Aldward was a carpenters' and joiners' workshop and the Christian owner and his Jewish wife opened the upper floor up as a synagogue to serve this community until the eventual closure of the building in 1975.

(Touchingly, I was told that the craftsmen would all pause with their work so as not to disturb proceedings as services were taking place in the sacred space up above them, which funnily enough reminded me of "the sound of sheer silence" in 1Kings 19:12<sup>\*1</sup>).

In typical York fashion, the building stood dormant – abandoned almost – until earlier this year when it became destined for conversion into apartments. Now Howard Duckworth the warden of the York Liberal Jewish community arranged with Rabbi Alby the Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregation in Leeds to hold a ceremony of de-consecration and an opportunity to farewell this small sacred space in our city, and we were delighted to join Rabbi Alby leading us in this final act of worship.

Rabbi's Address - Rabbi Albert Sebastian Chait MBE  
(Cantor and Senior Rabbi to the United Hebrew Congregation in Leeds)

*"Today we have access to the building that that hasn't been entered by any member of the Jewish community since 1975 – 50 years nearly to the day,*

*. . . and to think that all of us have the honour and privilege of returning here today and at the same time giving these rooms and this building the last sense of prayer and purpose and dignity and respect and love fills me with that bitter-sweet feeling –*

*I know that there are people here who used to pray here, used to daven<sup>\*2</sup> here, people who know all of the history of this building, people who came here as children or teenagers or have a great sense of relationship to the building and to the prayers inside."*

*"You know: I remember when I was a little boy and one time I came to Shul with my father and there wasn't a minion<sup>\*3</sup> and he (my father) said on the way home something I've never forgotten. He said "Albie: the bricks of the Shul cry this evening because there wasn't a minion."*

*"... And that really had an impression on me, because we are a community of people, but we're also a community of buildings."*

*And all of the prayers inside this sanctuary - and the ark would've been right here from what I gather: “*



(the Rabbi gestures and places his hand on the wall, with Howard bearing one of the original Sefer Torah Scrolls beside him)

*“... many people had come here with prayers of thanksgiving,*

*with prayers of Kaddish, asking for someone who's unwell to become well, for babies, bar mitzvas <sup>\*1</sup>*

*Who knows of the wonderful things, and the sad things, the comfort and the joy that will have been had in this room, in this building, here upstairs over the last however-many years.*

*... So the bricks sing, and the bricks smile, and the bricks cry, and the bricks give great thanksgiving for all of us to be here today....*

*But the most important thing is that all of us, as custodians of the Jewish community, as guardians of the Jewish community recognise that we take all of those emotions and all of those feelings and we ensure that the next generation remembers that not only was there a congregation here and there will be - there've been the immense history of the York community for hundreds, thousands of years - but there will be, please God, much to remember for the future,*

*Amen”*

### Comments and insights

Rabbi Chait said: “It was an honour and a privilege to lead the service. There is an immense sense of pride in the history of this congregation. When asked to conduct it, it filled me with excitement that all of us could enter a building that has not been entered by any member of the Jewish community since 1975.”

Howard Duckworth, Warden of the York Liberal Jewish Community, who's persistent efforts made this service possible said: “It will be a number of years before those present today will forget this momentous occasion.”



(Howard, with the Sefer Torah Scroll after the service)

York Interfaith Group chairman Tina Funnell said: "I was honoured to attend the service to acknowledge and remember the long history and presence of our Jewish neighbours and friends in York. They continue to be an active and positive group in the city and public life."

A spokesman for York Liberal Jewish community said: "As York's current Jewish community, we considered it a mitzvah to work with the developer to ensure that the Aldwark synagogue's usage and history has been given the respect that it deserves. Lillian Coulson, engagement officer for the community, has worked with York's planning office and York Civic Trust to ensure that the redevelopment respects and reflects its historic former use and that its Jewish history should be commemorated long term."

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<sup>\*1</sup> 1Kings 19:11-12

**11** The Lord said, 'Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by.' Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; <sup>12</sup> and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of sheer silence.

<sup>\*2</sup> "Daven" is when we bow, and make other physical gestures as part of the worship.

<sup>\*3</sup> A Minion is a quorum of ten jews or more.

<sup>\*4</sup> at this point I overheard a lady commenting in an aside "and weddings, too!" I think that must've been one of the original congregation, remembering services here in the 1960s.



Raksha means to keep safe.

Bandhan means tying a sacred thread or amulet on the wrist.

This one-day festival, commemorating the love and affection of brothers and sisters, is celebrated on the full moon day in the Shraavana month of the lunar calendar (usually falls in August of the Gregorian calendar).

Traditionally, during the Raksha Bandhan festival, sisters tie Rakhi around their brothers' wrists, followed by the Aarti (prayer) and tilak (putting sacred colour on forehead). It is said and believed that tying a Rakhi gives a responsibility to the brothers to honour his religion and the duty to protect his sister. Brothers also give a gift to the sisters.

In ancient times Rakhi (a holy amulet) tying meant their needs of taking help and promises. People also tended to tie Rakhi to someone's wrist to keep them safe and protected from evil.

Nowadays, some people also tie the sacred Raksha thread to close ones, friends, neighbours, soldiers, and to everyone standing by them through thick and thin.

*Janmashtami, birthday of Lord Krishna, 15<sup>th</sup> - 16<sup>th</sup> August, by Varsha Gulati*



One of Hinduism's most widely celebrated holidays, **Janmashtami** is especially important to followers of *Gaudiya Vaishnavism* — a tradition in which Krishna is considered to be both the source and ultimate form of the Divine, and is worshipped through the process of *bhakti yoga* (yoga of loving devotion). Other Hindu traditions describe Krishna, as an avatar of Vishnu, eradicating the corrupt and malevolent King Kamsa, protecting the oppressed, and establishing favourable leadership.















Kamsa heard the prophecy that the eighth child of his sister, Devaki, and her husband Vasudeva, would kill him. In order to prevent this, Kamsa imprisoned his sister and her husband in the kingdom's capital, Mathura, and killed every child she gave birth to. As the prophecy foretold, Krishna was Devaki's eighth child. Shortly after he was born, all of the prison doors were mystically opened and the guards fell into a deep sleep. Taking this opportunity, Vasudeva escaped and carried the baby to the village of Vrindavan in North India, leaving him to be raised by Yashoda and Nanda. This couple became known as Krishna's adopted parents. In Vrindavan he was a simple cowherd boy, loved deeply by his family and friends.

After spending his childhood in Vrindavan, Krishna returned to Mathura and killed Kamsa, ending his tyrannic rule and re-establishing dharma, or righteousness. Krishna eventually became the king of his own city and spent his time ridding the world of its oppressive powers, replacing them with altruistic and magnanimous leaders. Krishna is also well known for the wisdom relayed in the *Bhagavad Gita*, one of Hinduism's most revered philosophical texts, which expounds upon the nature of the Divine, the individual, the physical world, and their relationships and responsibilities to one another.

Though all of Krishna's forms are worshipped, his form as a cowherd boy is given special emphasis and Janmashtami is celebrated with particular pomp and splendour in Vrindavan, where he spent his childhood.

Home to more than 4,000 thousand temples, Vrindavan becomes abuzz with the chimes of bells and the singing of *kirtan* (devotional music), as festivities begin 10 days prior to Krishna's actual birthday. Priests assemble and conduct public readings from the *Bhagavad Gita*, while pilgrims from all over the world make their way into town. In addition to kirtan and public scriptural readings and discussions, dances and dramas enacting the life of Krishna are performed on Janmashtami day. The Murti of Krishna is given *abhisheka*, an auspicious ceremony in which the public gets to see the deities as they are ritually bathed by temple priests.



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 Conferring 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 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

