

## York Interfaith Group



### July 2026

#### Welcome to the July newsletter

Our Chair has written in more detail below on the matter, so I will just briefly mention here that a working group is currently putting together ideas for a new Aims and Objectives section for our constitution, and we hope to have this ready for consideration by the wider membership within the next month.

Rory Allen, Editor

#### Message from the Chair

##### Dear Friends

At the AGM in December 2025 we agreed to explore YIG becoming a charity and we also recognised that our constitution was in need of revision and an update. This work began with the setting up of a small working group chaired by Rory Allen with Dee Boyle and myself from the management committee and David Laverick as a member. I had also been encouraged to prepare a paper on what I wanted to achieve as Chair. I consulted and listened to members, and also drew on what we learned from the National Interfaith Consultation Day for Yorkshire which YIG hosted on 15<sup>th</sup> May.

The work on the constitution raised a number of questions in particular the way we work, and the processes for electing members of the management committee. We also recognised that we

needed to focus our attention on how we promote YIG and our work, and whether or not we need to expand, or change our activities to stay relevant in a rapidly changing society. Comments and suggestions from members who attended the planning meeting last month reinforced the need for this work to begin.

We had our first meeting this week and more are planned. But it is clear that we will need to widen the participation of all our members to share the work load and, more importantly to contribute to the thinking and planning for the future.

One of the excellent suggestions made by Dee Boyle at our meeting last night was that we have a York Interfaith Consultation Event. We all agreed that this would be an excellent opportunity for us to bring people together to focus on the future of YIG to preserve the best of what we are already doing and prepare for the future. More information to follow after the second discussion meeting of the Management Committee.

So I am appealing for members to get involved, as David Laverick has done with the working group. Please do not think you do not have anything to contribute or that you do not have the skills – what we need is your commitment to the values of interfaith work and your enthusiasm to join in this process. Remember we all have to start somewhere and there will be lots of support and help to anyone who is interested in discussing the possibility of joining: contact me at [tinafunnell@btinternet.com](mailto:tinafunnell@btinternet.com)

I look forward to seeing those of you who have booked to visit the Sikh Gurudwara next Tuesday, and in August to attending the annual picnic – this year kindly hosted by our friends from the York Liberal Jewish Community at the Friends Meeting House

Remember that we have more in common than that which divides us.

Best wishes, Tina Funnell, Chair

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4. Reports: 15<sup>th</sup> May Interfaith Consultation, 2<sup>nd</sup> June Planning Meeting, 8<sup>th</sup> June Baha'i discussion, and two YLJC items.
5. Faith Notes: the Muslim Festival of Ashoura.

## ***Planned future YIG talks and events***

Apart from special events (such as those in July and August this year), meetings are held on the first Tuesday of the month in the Council West Offices (in fully disabled accessible premises), normally in the Auden Room. 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'.

***The full address is: West Offices, Station Rise, York YO1 6GA. There are a limited number of disabled parking spaces outside the front entrance to West Offices.***

**Next meeting: visit to the Guru Nanak Niskam Sewa Jatha (GNNSJ) Gurudwara, Leeds, 7 July**

Kindly note that this visit has attracted so much interest that it is now fully subscribed, so we regret we are unable to accept any more participants. For those who have already booked, a reminder that the coach leaves at 5.15pm from Memorial Gardens.

**Other planned meetings in 2026**

YIG hugely appreciates the support of our members and friends and especially your attendance at our monthly meetings. Please see the table below which shows the programme for 2026. This year we have tried to build on the successes of last year, for example holding meetings in which members can share their personal experiences of their faith(s). We have also tried to include topics that enable us to connect with our local community as well as the wider world. We are distributing the organisation and chairing of meetings, as we now have a team of people who oversee meetings, which includes myself, Bessie and Alicia.

Sarah Hubbard

	<b>Meeting topic</b>
August	<b>Picnic: YLJC to host, Friends' Meeting House</b>
Sept	<b>Religious faiths in Japan (part 1) Chris Collingwood</b>
October	<b>Languages in faiths</b>
November	<b>Talk from Local Chaplain from the Fire service</b>
December	<b>AGM and bring and share of food from different faiths and cultures( social event)</b>

## ***Baha'i meditation, 13<sup>th</sup> July***

Community Reflection Evenings are a regular monthly space for everyone from any background or belief, to come together to listen to inspiring passages in an uplifting atmosphere, on a variety of subjects and themes, allowing anyone who wishes, to share their reflections in a non judgmental and friendly atmosphere. It is aimed to promote community building and creating fellowship. All are welcome. For any queries please contact Helen on 07545 755188.

For details of the next meeting, see below.

**Community Reflection Evenings**

Inspiring passages presented in an uplifting and reflective atmosphere, enhanced by music.  
Followed by open discussion and light refreshments

All welcome

Monday 13th July 7.30 - 9pm at the Super Sustainable Centre Derwenthorpe,  
YO31 0RW

## ***Interfaith Week 2026: advance notice***

The dates for this event are 7<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> November, and the the theme that has been selected for the UK is 'Lighting the Way for a Shared Future'. More details will be available as the plans come together. We are hoping to have plans for the week in place by the end of September, so that people can see what the programme will be in plenty of time to be able to keep dates free in their diaries.

## ***Time to Be Out***

This organisation has sent us a copy of their latest newsletter, which we can forward to interested members on request. Meanwhile, a link to their website can be found below:

**[Time to be Out | Supporting LGBT+ Asylum Seekers](#)**

## ***Healthwatch York calls for participants***

Healthwatch York are working with the Administrative Fairness Lab at the University of York to explore the experiences of those waiting for social care.

If you recently waited or are currently waiting to access adult social care support, we want to hear from you!

Taking part will involve an interview where we will talk about your experiences and perspectives.

If you are interested in taking part or would like more information, please contact [healthwatch@yorkcvs.org.uk](mailto:healthwatch@yorkcvs.org.uk).



Contributed by Sian Balsom of Healthwatch York

## ***North Yorkshire looks to join the City of York in celebrating Interfaith Work***

Plans are underway to for the development of future interfaith dialogue and cooperation in the County of North Yorkshire. The work is being led by the North Yorkshire Swift Project in partnership with North Yorkshire Council, North Yorkshire Police, the Combined Authority and Voluntary Sector Representatives. Although this work is still in its infancy, initial discussions are currently taking place with Faith Leaders across the County with the intention of bringing them together to explore ideas and possibilities during Hate Crime Week in October. We hope to be able to bring you more developments on this in the next edition of this newsletter. For more information please contact Matthew Joseph at [matthew.joseph@northyorks.gov.uk](mailto:matthew.joseph@northyorks.gov.uk)

Contributed by Matthew Joseph

## ***Future of Interfaith Groups and Networks***

As part of nationwide Interfaith consultations that are taking place York Interfaith Group were asked to organise the Yorkshire and Humberside consultation day in May. We did this on May 15<sup>th</sup>, and it was held at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in York who kindly offered to be host for the day. Penny, Avtar and Dee volunteered to help organise the day. It took us quite a long time to find contacts for many of the previous Interfaith Groups as, when the original Interfaith Network (IFN) closed a few years ago, they were not allowed to pass any details onto others so it was a daunting task to start from scratch again in seeking groups or organisations that were still in existence. Many had unfortunately closed down completely but a few others had amalgamated in order to work together rather than risk closure.

We managed to find representatives from Calderdale, Halifax, Sheffield, Doncaster, Bradford, Leeds, Kirklees, Rotherham, and HERI (Hull & East Riding Interfaith). There were about 40 delegates there in total on the day and of course the committee members from York Interfaith Group also took part as they were mainly the volunteers on the day and we were joined by two members of the Faith & Belief steering group who are organising this whole consultation. These were Warwick Hawkins and Canon Hilary Barber (first two photos below).

During the day those attending had various questions to discuss about the general future of Interfaith work and we were also asked to consider whether a new National Interfaith Network should be established for the future. All comments and suggestions during the day were carefully recorded and these will all be collated with those from all the other consultation days.

It was certainly useful to be able to speak to other people from the different areas of Yorkshire and Humberside and interesting to hear how much or little support they had from their local councils for the work they were undertaking. One suggestion that we managed to glean from the day was that we could hold our own York Interfaith Consultation Day and this was mentioned by a few people during our own YIG planning session in June so it looks like that could be a possibility for the future for us in York at least, no matter what happens nationally.

The consultations will be continuing over the next month and we will then be able to hear what the general findings are from all the different regions of England. Penny and Dee have agreed to be the link people for the Consultation Group and York Interfaith Group and so we will be giving feedback once all the consultations have ended.

Dee Boyle, Vice Chair

## Main speakers and other conference activities



## ***Planning Meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> June***

I think it is useful to have perspectives from two of those who attended, as the range of suggestions was very wide. So below are contributions from Sarah Hubbard and Dee Boyle who were both very active in organising and recording what happened. (Editor).

1. YIG held its annual planning meeting in June and like every other year, we were very grateful for your ideas and suggestions for next year. We divided into three groups for this meeting, each facilitated by a member of the committee. Everyone had the chance to contribute their ideas and suggestions under three headings: Interfaith Week, Monthly Meetings and 'Other Activities', which is a new category. YIG members are keen to work in partnership with other groups and organisations that have similar goals. We, therefore, decided this year to include, 'Other Activities'. This is an aspect of our work that we are seeking to develop over the coming year. It builds on the meeting that Mahmood led in April, when we explored how we could use our interlinked faith perspectives to engage meaningfully with issues that concern us. The 'Other Activities' area also links to our ongoing discussions regarding refining and developing YIG's vision and constitution.

During the meeting, we collectively explored how we might extend YIG's engagement with communities across York and beyond, as well as our partnership work with local stakeholders, civic authorities, and similar organisations to ours. We also asked for suggestions about how, going forward, YIG might emphasize the importance of shared humanity and collective action to build a peaceful, inclusive society.

I am grateful to committee members who facilitated discussions in small groups and to Christopher Styles whose professional PowerPoints have helped us to have a clear meeting structure and also share information in attractive ways.

Sarah Hubbard

2. As you can imagine there were an incredible number of suggestions in each of the sections which we will now be going to try to process and hopefully quite a lot of them will be turned into actual events or activities either during Interfaith Week in November or during the months ahead and in the 2027 Programme.

We ran out of time during the actual evening to find out who would like to be part of the sub-groups helping to organise the different events, so if anyone is interested please do contact us and let us know, as we would be really grateful to have help from others as we work our way through everything and try to put the ideas into action – hopefully – and help secure the future work of York Interfaith Group. Please do remember that it is YOUR group, and we are limited in what we can do without the help and support of all of our members.

Dee Boyle

## ***Report on Baha'i meditation on 8<sup>th</sup> June***

The theme for this month's Community Reflection gathering was 'The making of a healthy Community'. The event began with a quotation: "A community is more than sum of its membership ... it is a comprehensive unit of civilisation composed of individuals, families and institutions that can be truly creative in the search for new ways of achieving progress." Today's challenges are too difficult for traditional, top down solutions. They need solutions which arise from the people affected by them, and this needs a democratic process based on consultation.

We watched two in a series of very helpful YouTube videos by Bright Moon Trust about approaches to grass roots social change. The videos were aimed to prompt ideas and enhance the discussion that followed.

The first asked the question: how do we make changes or find solutions as a community? The suggested answer was: use an adaptive approach. Real life problems are complicated and specific; each community will need to find its own responses. In the discussion that followed, points that were made were: we must not be afraid of change; getting the commitment to change from everyone is as important as what the change is; the change needs to be made specific and achievable; the community needs to generate a sense of belonging, like members of a football club or a hobbies society.

The second video asked: how do we learn or get to know how to do positive changes? The answer suggested was: you have to learn through action ('suck it and see', in other words). You need to start with a question. Try out a tentative solution, see what happens, and try again. The process is like a cycle: action -> reflection -> planning -> action etc. To me, this is very much like the 'research cycle' in science, where you begin with a research question, design an experiment to test it, analyse the result, and plan for the next experiment.

In the discussion that followed, the point was made that young people can see that the world isn't working for them. The traditional rites of passage – getting a job, getting married, finding a house, having children – are increasingly being denied them. They often stay at home and undergo a sort of 'forced infantilism', while they feel powerless to make progress in their lives.

This reservoir of discontented young people is dangerous: revolutions have generally started with the youth. All the old solutions provisions have failed. The establishment seems to have no answer to joblessness, and the lack of affordable homes. This has led to a loss of trust in the powers that be. This creates an ideal opportunity for extremists to use the discontent to their advantage. They pretend to sympathise with the plight of young people and claim know the causes ('immigration'; 'Culture wars') and to offer solutions. They attempt to divide communities and exploit the anger and disunity to ride to power. They have in fact no solutions because they refuse to acknowledge the nature of the problems, including the reality of climate change and the need to make ourselves independent of fossil fuels by creating a domestic renewable energy industry.

Another very good point that arose in the debate, was the need to distinguish between primary and secondary identities in a community. The primary identity is about the values that brought them together in the first place, usually involving concern about generating opportunities, or correcting injustices in the world. The secondary identity is about regarding the prestige of the group as more important than its core values. It is the idea of 'my country right or wrong'. You support your own football team even if they don't play well and don't deserve to win. That is harmless for a sports club but fatal to the usefulness of an organisation meant to make the world a better place.

It was suggested that we continue the discussion at our next meeting in a month, as the two videos generated so much discussion that we ran out of time. The next reflection meeting will be in July, and everyone is welcome and cordially invited to attend and contribute to the friendly, open and non judgmental discussion with your own thoughts to our debate!

Meanwhile if you would like to watch them yourselves, the full series of videos is available at [\(3038\) Bright Moon Trust - YouTube](#)

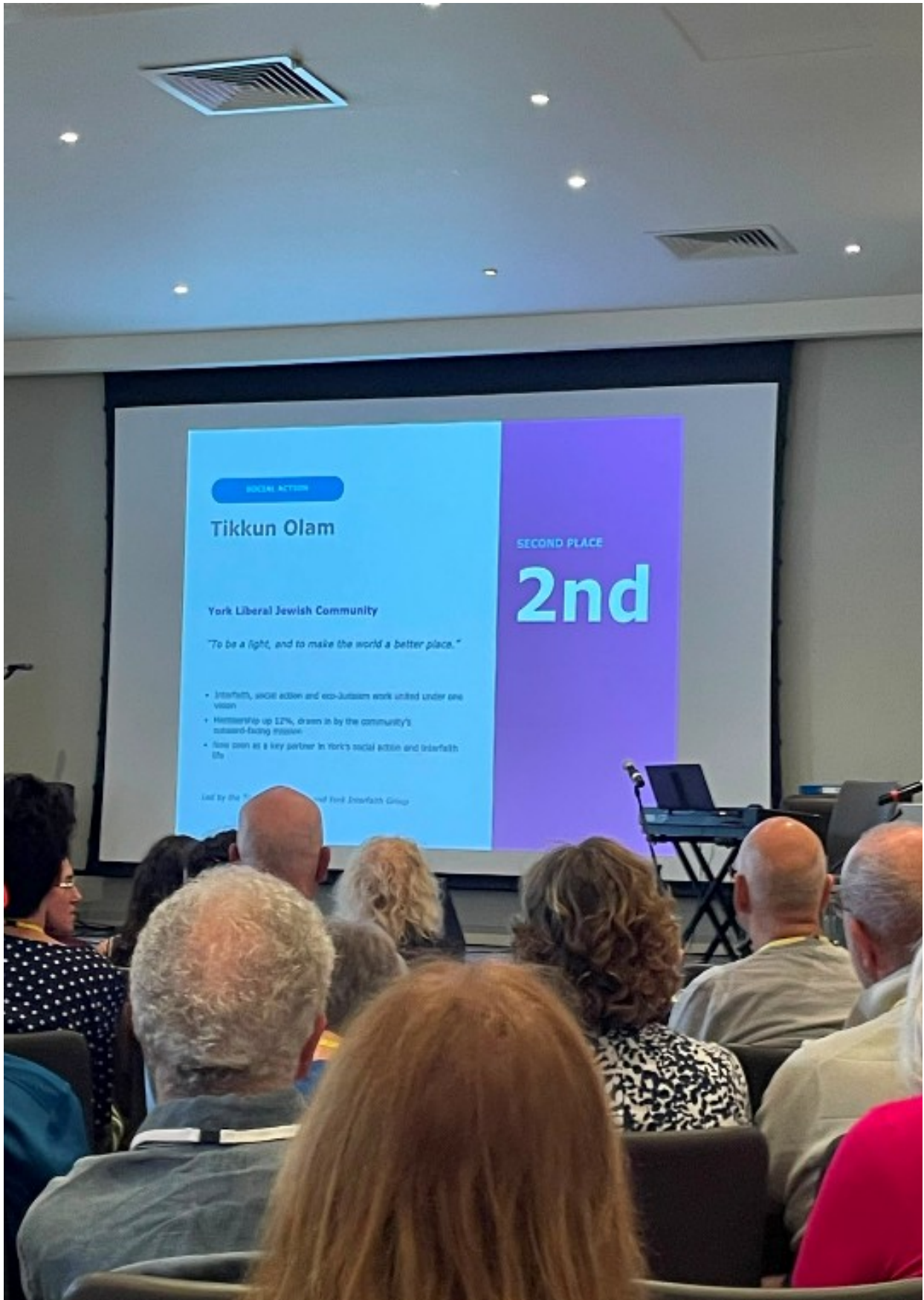
Contributed by Rory Allen

### ***YLJC wins second place for Interfaith work***

I recently attended MPJ's (Movement for Progressive Judaism) inaugural conference in Northamptonshire. This was a celebration of our new movement opening its first chapter, and was entitled Hineinu, which means 'here we are'. The aim of the conference was to explore with other progressive Jewish communities across the UK, what kind of Progressive Judaism we want to bring into being and how we will carry it back into our own communities. Programming was led by dynamic and inspiring rabbis, cantors and teachers from the UK and abroad. Many of the sessions I attended explored how we can build better communities in this fractured world and how despite a rise in antisemitism, we should not retreat but reach out to others.

The conference ended with an awards ceremony to celebrate the special work of individual progressive Jewish communities across the UK. I am delighted that York Liberal Jewish Community won second place in the Movement for Progressive Judaism Awards for its Tikkun Olam (Hebrew: תִּיקּוּן עוֹלָם) work, which is a Jewish concept that translates to 'repairing the world'. In YLJC we have put all our social justice and interfaith work under this umbrella. We feel that 'repairing the world' is a shared activity, enacted through communities and by working across faiths, and with all who share our desire for justice and peace. We know that many of you have supported our interfaith work over the year and we value your support highly. Tikkun Olam is at the centre of our culture in YLJC, and we often have Torah study sessions which explore this theme. We will continue to share interfaith events and study sessions with YIG members over this coming year.

Contributed by Sarah Hubbard



WORLD ACTION

## Tikkun Olam

York Liberal Jewish Community

"To be a light, and to make the world a better place."

- Interfaith, social action and eco-Judaism work united under one vision
- Membership up 12%, driven in by the community's outward-facing mission
- Now seen as a key partner in York's social action and interfaith life

Led by the York Liberal Jewish Community and York Interfaith Group

SECOND PLACE

# 2nd

## ***Report on YLJC walking tour: 31<sup>st</sup> May at 2pm (joint with Huddersfield Jewish Group)***

There was an excellent turnout (see photo below) for this event, which was led by two highly knowledgeable University of York students, Ari and Izzy.

After meeting at Whip-Ma-Whop-Ma Gate, we viewed the nearby site of the home of Benedict of York, a prominent Jewish citizen of the time. York's mediaeval Jewish community was one of the largest and wealthiest in England, and as its representative, Benedict had attended the coronation of King Richard I, but had been attacked on his way back to York and died of his wounds. Widening antisemitic violence had reached York in March 1190, when Richard Malbis, a prominent citizen who owed money to the Jewish community, incited the mob to attack Benedict's home and kill his widow and children. When the remaining Jews, numbering about 150, fled to Clifford's Tower, the mob – still incited by Malbis – demanded that they convert to Christianity. Those that submitted and came out from the protection of the castle were then lynched. Those who remained, chose death by their own hand. The Crusader enthusiasm of the new king had led to a decline in the protection that the early Norman monarchs had extended to Jews in England, leaving them dangerously exposed.

The walk continued with a visit to the oldest surviving relics of a mediaeval house in York, which remains not as an independent site but as the stone remains visible in the walls of a more modern brick built house, approached via a little snicket off Coney Street. The house belonged to one of York's most prominent Jewish citizens, showing that the community had re-formed after the 1190 pogrom and continued to provide essential services to the people of York. This respite did not last, however. In the late 13<sup>th</sup> century, stories spread about ritual murders of Christian boys by Jews, most notably the tale – or rather, myth – of 'Little Saint Hugh of Lincoln'. This generated more violence against Jews and culminated in the expulsion of the Jewish community from England by Edward I in 1290, who used the 'blood libel' to hold the Jews responsible for attacks on their community, an early example of victim blaming. Jews did not return as an identifiable group until the Cromwellian revolution, though probably many people of Jewish origin had chosen to convert to Christianity and merge with the wider English population.

The walk ended outside the Minster, where one of the South windows contains a Star of David. There is a long-standing tradition that the famous Five Sisters Window was financed in part through money borrowed from York's Jewish community, which led to it sometimes being nicknamed the 'Jewish Window'.

So we have a situation where a particular group, identifiable as 'other', is subject to malicious disinformation spread by powerful and cynical men with a financial interest in manipulating popular opinion. This disinformation leads to mob violence, including the burning down of buildings housing people attempting to find refuge from mob anger. A weak or complaisant central authority abandons its duty to protect all its citizens, and allows this violence to continue and expand, subsequently blaming the group itself for the injuries that it has suffered.

'Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it' (George Santayana).

Contributed by Rory Allen



***Walk participants, together with our two guides (left, and third from left)***



***Plaque off Coney Street at site of Aaron of York***

## *The Muslim festival of Ashoura*



A few days ago, Muslims around the world observed Ashoura, an important day in the Islamic calendar. For Sunni Muslims, Ashoura is associated with the story of 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 oppression by parting the Red Sea.

When the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) arrived in Medina, he learned that the local Jewish community fasted on this day in gratitude to God for Moses' deliverance. Recognising the significance of this event, he expressed appreciation for the practice and encouraged Muslims to fast on Ashoura as an act of thankfulness to God. He also recommended fasting an additional day either before or after Ashoura to distinguish the Islamic practice.

For Muslims, this tradition reflects the continuity of God's guidance throughout history, and recognizing the deep spiritual connection shared with Prophet Moses and his mission. Fasting on Ashoura therefore commemorates not only a remarkable historical event, but also the shared spiritual heritage of the Abrahamic faiths. It serves as a reminder that the prophets, including Moses and Muhammad, called humanity to worship one God, uphold justice, and live righteous lives.

Ashoura also holds special significance for Shia Muslims, who comprise approximately 10–15% of the global Muslim population. They commemorate the martyrdom of Imam Hussain, the grandson

of Prophet Muhammad, who was killed at the Battle of Karbala in 680 CE after standing against what he regarded as unjust rule. For Shia Muslims, Ashoura is a solemn day of mourning and remembrance, marked by gatherings, processions, and reflection on the values of sacrifice, justice, and moral courage.

Sunni Muslims, who represent around 85–90% of Muslims worldwide, also hold Imam Hussain in the highest regard and consider his death a profound tragedy in Islamic history. However, while sharing this respect, most Sunni scholars do not observe Ashoura through the formal mourning rituals practised in some Shia communities. Instead, they emphasise fasting, prayer, remembrance of God, and reflecting on the lessons of both the story of Prophet Moses and Imam Hussain, while expressing grief in a manner they believe is consistent with the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad.

Contributed by Rasha Salah