

York Interfaith Group Newsletter

May 2026

Message from the Chair

Hello Friends,

We are once again saddened to hear of another attack on Jewish people in London. This is totally unacceptable and everyone whatever their faith, race, or nationality should be able to live in peace and safety. We hold the Jewish community in our thoughts and prayers.

On Sunday morning I sat in Museum Gardens just absorbing the peace and beauty of this wonderful space, filled with many ancient and very diverse trees. It was pleasant to see families, and people young and old, appreciating the sunshine and the gardens. It was also inspiring to hear many languages, not knowing if the people were residents or visitors. Later I attended the St George's Day Parade, and I am hopeful that this annual celebration of the banner of St George by the many youth organisations in the city is the way to celebrate this flag as the best of our country, rather than as a means to promote racist and hateful beliefs. I urge you all to enjoy the gardens and to remember that we have so much more in common than that which divides us.

Tina Funnell, Chair

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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'.

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

	Meeting topic
May	Faith and Movement
June	Planning meeting
July	Sikh Temple visit
August	Picnic: venue TBC
Sept	Religious faiths in Japan (part 1) Chris Collingwood
October	Languages in faiths
November	Talk from Local Chaplain from the Fire service
December	AGM and bring and share of food from different faiths and cultures(social event)

The next YIG meeting on 5th May

Our next meeting will be in some ways the second part of our meeting earlier this year on 'Faith and Touch'. It is entitled 'Faith and Movement'. During this meeting, members of the group will discuss and share the role of movement in their faith rituals. They will be focusing on how movement acts as a physical manifestation of internal faith.



Our June planning session: Your thoughts & ideas needed

On June 2nd we will be having our annual planning session and, as always, everyone is most welcome to attend. This is when we share and consider thoughts and ideas for our Interfaith Week in November, and also the Monthly Programme for the following year. We also discuss some of the other events and festivals held in York that it could be possible for York Interfaith Group to take part in. Your input into this session is really important as it how we know what subjects you want us to cover and where to find guest speakers to join us. The choice of what we include in the programme throughout the next year is all down to you as members and so your contributions are essential if the sessions are to reflect what you want York Interfaith Group to be about. So, save that date – June 2nd – and do try to join us. There will be another reminder and a bit more information in the June newsletter.

Invitation to a film on the climate crisis, 9th May, 2.30-4.30pm

We would like to pass on a warm invitation to attend the York screening of the National Emergency Briefing, a short film of scientists, health and security experts discussing the imminent risks we face and re-emphasising the need for us to work together as a City and a region to ensure the opportunities for a flourishing future are not lost. Those not already engaged in this area are especially welcome.

The Tempest Anderson Hall is in the Museum Gardens, attached to the Yorkshire Museum.





Tickets - <https://www.tickettailor.com/events/yorkcliconnect/2158955>

For more details, see below.



What's happening with climate and nature, and what does it mean for everyday life in York?

Join us for a special York screening of the People's Emergency Briefing - an eye-opening film bringing together nine leading UK scientists and experts with the latest evidence and why it matters for things like:

-  Extreme weather
-  Food security
-  Health
-  Cost of living

The film is based on the [National Emergency Briefing](#) in that took place in Westminster (featured by ITV, Channel 4 and The Times) with appearances from Chris Packham, Deborah Meaden, Jennifer Saunders and a range of voices from across the UK.

After the film there will be a short panel discussion featuring local faces who have put their knowledge of the emergency into action:



Sarah West (Chair)
SEI York



Rachael Maskell
MP for York Central



Rosie Toothill
Parents for Future



Climate Expert
to be announced

There will also be the opportunity for a more open discussion about what this all means for us here in York and how we can respond together.

We particularly encourage leaders across local politics, business, culture and community to join this flagship screening in York City Centre. This event is also an opportunity for anyone wishing to host the People's Emergency Briefing in their workplaces and communities to watch film and connect with others who are facilitating similar events and discussions.

Accessibility notes: Age 16+ recommended. We will be showing the subtitled version of the film. The hall and toilets are wheelchair accessible. More information [here](#). Contact yorkcolconnect@proton.me with any queries.

York Health and Arts Mela, 17th May

York Interfaith Group are delighted to be part of the Arts and Health Mela which is now in its third year. We look forward to seeing you at our exhibition stand.

If anyone would like to steward the event, then that would also be greatly appreciated. For further information on volunteering, please contact Shamim directly at shamim.eimaan@hotmail.com



York Health and Arts Mela is back!

Sunday 17th May 2026, 10am to 5pm

York Museum Gardens, Main Lawn YO1 7FR.
The nearest car park is Marygate, YO30 7DT.

Join our award-winning vibrant Multi-Cultural celebration of Healthcare, Wellbeing, Arts, Diverse Food, Entertainment, Awareness and much more. Follow us on social media for updates.

Facebook
Instagram

FREE ENTRY



nimbus
Nimbuscare Community Fund
local care, for local people

York Museums Trust

NHS
Humber and North Yorkshire
Integrated Care Board (ICB)

Eimaan Culture & Community Services

JRF JOSEPH ROWNTREE FOUNDATION

CITY OF YORK COUNCIL



Ebor Lecture, 20th May

Ebor Lecture: When Every Hope Has Gone: Grief, Rage and Refuge in a Merciless Age

Professor Alison Phipps, UNESCO Chair in Refugee Integration through Education, Languages and the Arts at the University of Glasgow.

7.00-9.00pm, Wednesday 20 May, York Minster

Our next Ebor Lecture is now open for booking! Please join us in the Minster and share the invitation to this free event with your own networks.

- In the lecture Professor Alison Phipps will explore the theological and practical failures exposed by recent genocidal assaults in Gaza, Sudan and Tigray. Drawing on decades of work with refugees worldwide, and especially from her home in Scotland, she will consider the resistant work of offering refuge in apocalyptic conditions and what heartbreak might teach us of our betrayal of refugees. In the face of immense grief, she will offer poetic and prayerful resources for courage, faith and cheerfulness from her tradition within The Iona Community.

- 7.00 - 8.00pm Talk by Alison Phipps with Q&A, 8.00 - 9.00pm drinks reception for in-person attendees

- Hybrid event - in person at the Minster and live online

- Free to attend

- All welcome!

Find out more and book your places at this [link](#)

York African Community presents Africa Day, 23rd May

York African Community

P R E S E N T S

AFRICA DAY

Celebration in York



Homestead Park

40 Water End,
Clifton, York,
YO30 6WP

Adekunle 7Strings De Merry Maker

Come experience Nigerian
Afrojuju tunes and
entertainment at its best

Saturday

May 23
2026

10AM - 4PM

Special Attractions

Art Exhibition

Nduka Omeife &
Basit Salam

Practical Rug Weaving

Lu Mason

Sax Sister

Pure Instrument Entertainment

Traditional African Songs

Bruce Ncube

**other side attractions include, dance presentations from some African Culture
poem recitation, story telling, art and craft and many more**

Supported
by



Homestead Park



Free
Car Park
Available



Benefit evening for Hope Flowers School, Bethlehem, 23rd May

Minster Ukes and Lennanshees present a

Benefit for Hope Flowers School Bethlehem

**Saturday 23 May 7-9 pm,
St Aelred's Community Centre,
Fifth Ave, Tang Hall, York YO31 0PN**

Join in with: Singalong band Minster Ukes who will play an eclectic mix from their repertoire

Be entranced by: Lennanshees, who feature ukulele, guitar & spine-tingling acapella harmonies, including self-penned songs of love, loss and laughter.



**Tickets £10 or
£12 on the door**

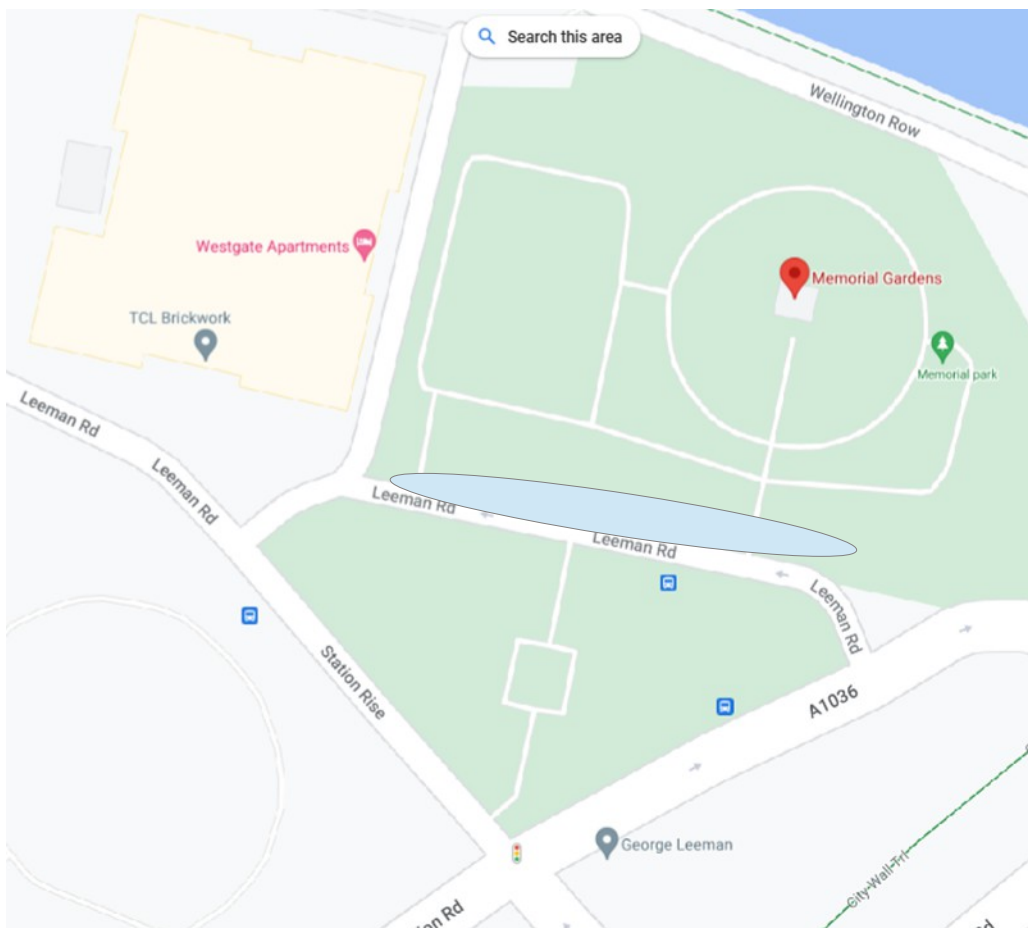
Or from Eventbrite:
<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/benefit-hope-flowers-school-bethlehem-tickets-1985693049364>

Advance Notice, July meeting: Tuesday 7th July excursion to Guru Nanak Niskam Sewa Jatha (GNNSJ) Gurudwara, Leeds

Our July meeting will be an excursion to Excursion to Guru Nanak Niskam Sewa Jatha Gurudwara (GNNSJ), Leeds. We will be shown the inner workings of a Gurudwara, a chance to see langar being prepared and listen to the wider activities taking place on site, such as the fully functional nursery and the building of 'care home' style accommodation.

As we will be hiring a coach, in order to gauge numbers, if you would like to attend then please contact Avtar Matharu (avtar.matharu@york.ac.uk). We are limited to 35 persons on the coach but anyone that wishes to go direct can do so. The excursion is free to YIG Members and a £5 donation for non-Members.

The coach will pick up from Memorial Gardens, Leeman Road, at 5.15 pm (see blue ellipse, below) and leave the Gurudwara at 8.45 pm with an expected return in York for 9.30 pm.



Report on human rights in the City of York

We have received the following information on the 2025 Indicator report from the York Human Rights City Network, hosted by The Centre for Applied Human Rights at The University of York and the York Centre for Voluntary Service. It is available via this link: [The State of the City](#). It is also available in [Easy Read](#), and in [BSL](#)

This year the report raises concerns over growing inequalities in education among children and young people in York. Particularly, the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers in York continues to be wider than the regional and national average at the end of both Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4. New disaggregated data also shows that pupils who are young carers have lower educational attainment than their peers in York at the end of Key Stage 2.

More broadly, the report captures how the ongoing cost-of-living crisis and deepening poverty have undermined vulnerable residents' enjoyment of the right to housing and the right to an adequate standard of living. The increasing number of people who are homeless and at risk of becoming homeless and the consistently high level of food bank use suggest that vulnerable groups in York are under intensifying pressure in meeting their needs for essentials.

The report also highlights mounting challenges in achieving social cohesion in York. The increasing number of hate crimes and hate incidents – especially those related to race, sexual orientation, and disability – shows that the identity-based rights of marginalised groups are at stake. The report documents how the flag flying campaign in York since summer 2025 has further fuelled the social and political divide in the city.

Amidst these challenges in protecting human rights, the report features several case studies to demonstrate civil society's resilience and solidarity when human rights are challenged on different fronts. Among the featured case studies are civil society-led projects that empowered young people to exercise their human rights through the arts and a poster campaign initiated by local residents in response to the flag flying controversy.

The annual York Human Rights City Network Indicator Report tracks York's progress in realising five human rights prioritised by residents – the right to education, equality and non-discrimination, the right to housing, the right to a decent standard of living, and the right to health and social care. It also showcases human rights-based practices in different areas of urban governance and everyday life across the city.

Report on YIG meeting on 7th April, on World Peace through a Faith Lens

We were grateful to Mahmood Foroughi for giving a most thought provoking talk and leading the subsequent discussion.

The presentation suggested that despite extraordinary technological and intellectual progress since World War II, humanity continues to experience widespread conflict - hundreds of wars, many ongoing - driven primarily by nationalism and ethnic division, religious or sectarian tensions, and competition over economic resources. At the heart of the presentation was a central paradox: how a highly advanced humanity remains deeply divided. It suggests that conventional approaches - treaties, policies, and institutions - are not enough, because they fail to address the deeper moral and spiritual roots of human behaviour.

The core message was that lasting peace requires a transformation in human consciousness grounded in spiritual principles and shared human values. Drawing on thinkers like Aurelio Peccei, Erich Fromm, and Arnold Joseph Toynbee, the slides emphasised that a genuine “change of heart” is essential for humanity’s survival. Central to this is the principle of the oneness and interconnectedness of humanity: just as the cells and organs of a single body must function in harmony for the whole to thrive, all parts of humanity are interdependent and must work together. This idea - echoed across religious traditions and supported by modern science - positions unity not as an idealistic aspiration but as a practical prerequisite for solving global conflicts. The presentation concluded that religion and interfaith collaboration, building on efforts like the Parliament of the World's Religions and Interfaith organisations have a unique responsibility to foster this sense of shared identity, counter extremism, and cultivate empathy, enabling a shift from division toward cooperation and lasting world peace.

***“Human beings are members of a whole,
In creation of one essence and soul.
If one member is afflicted with pain,
Other members uneasy will remain.
If you have no sympathy for human pain,
The name of human you cannot retain.”***

Poem by Persian poet Saadi Shirazi

Displayed at the entrance of the United Nations Security Council chamber in New York

Report on Baha'i Meditation, 13th April



Mahmood Foroughi led another in the monthly series of meditation evenings at the Derwenthorpe sustainability centre.

After a number of readings on the theme of unity and harmony between people, a lively discussion took place exploring these ideas.

Among the points made were: there is a lack of a sense of shared identity and common purpose in the world; much unhappiness is caused by the false belief that money alone will bring happiness, and this fallacy will always lead to disappointment; there is an unmet desire for personal and social justice, which further fuels dissatisfaction; and our human evolutionary origins lie in a long period of existence as hunter-gatherers, living together as a group, dependent on one another. The failure of modern communities to supply the needs that were met by group living, may explain why despite collectively being more prosperous than ever before in human history, many people feel a profound emptiness and lack of centre to their lives. This has been exploited by 'leaders' who manipulate this absence of common purpose to form false ideologies and artificial group identities, which divide people into divergent interest groups and fundamentally weaken the cohesion of society. Humans are equipped with paleolithic brains, mediaeval institutions and space age technology, and the result is fragmentation.

Contributed by Rory Allen

Spring Clothes Sale Success, 18th April



YLJC hosted a wonderful pre-loved clothes sale in support of York Food Bank on 18th April. We are extremely grateful to the Unitarians for kindly allowing us to use their beautiful chapel on St Saviourgate, which provided a perfect setting for the event.

Members of the local community generously donated high-quality pre-loved clothing, which was artfully displayed along the chapel pews and on rails, creating a vibrant and eye-catching showcase of couture. The event attracted a steady stream of visitors, including members of the public and friends from the York Interfaith Group. We were especially pleased to welcome the chair of YIG, Tina Funnell.

Thanks to this fantastic support, we raised a total of £250 for York Food Bank. The sale was held as part of Mitzvah Day, a special initiative encouraging acts of kindness and community service. While Mitzvah Day is usually marked in November, this year it coincided with Interfaith Week, so we were delighted to celebrate it in the spring instead.

We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to our interfaith partners, the wider public, and our own community. Their generosity and enthusiasm played a vital role in making the event such a success.

Contributed by Sarah Hubbard

Progressive Judaism Movement publishes its first book

This movement was founded last year in a merger of the Liberal Judaism and Reform Judaism movements, by Rabbi Charley Baginsky and Rabbi Josh Levy. The YLJC is affiliated to the movement.

The movement's first book, "Progressive Judaism, Zionism and the State of Israel," is a collection of 40 essays from Jewish clergy and community leaders debating issues surrounding Jewish identity, Zionism and Israel.

"We have a responsibility to show that our religious Zionism is not the religious Zionism that we see sometimes coming out of the West Bank," Baginsky says. "My Zionism is also a recognition of Palestinian self-determination."

A link to the Amazon listing of the book is given here:

[Progressive Judaism, Zionism and the State of Israel: Amazon.co.uk: Kessler, Dr Ed, Baginsky, Charley, Levy, Josh: 9798253536209: Books](https://www.amazon.co.uk/dp/978253536209)

Faith Festivals

Feast of the English Martyrs, 4th May

From 1535 till 1680, Catholic priests were regularly hanged drawn and quartered, including many on the Knavesmire in York, as well as lay people such as Margaret Clitherow, pressed to death at the end of Ouse bridge. Thank goodness that Christians are no longer executing Christians in York, but too many people of faith are still being persecuted worldwide. English Martyrs' parish usually hold a simple walk of witness in honour of the martyrs, from York Tyburn to Dalton Terrace, - followed, of course, by refreshments.

Contributed by Mary Callan

Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva's birthday, 20th May















On 20th May, some Mahayana Buddhists will be celebrating Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva's birthday. In Buddhism, a Bodhisattva is a person who seeks enlightenment (awakening) but compassionately chooses to help others awaken before fully entering nirvana themselves. In Mahayana Buddhism, anyone who develops *bodhicitta*, the sincere intention to become enlightened for the sake of others, can be considered a bodhisattva and it is said that the number of bodhisattvas is immeasurable.

Mañjuśrī is the oldest and most significant bodhisattva in Mahāyāna literature. The name "Mañjuśrī" can be literally translated as "Beautiful One with Glory" or "Beautiful One with Auspiciousness".

Mañjuśrī is often depicted as a youth holding the 'Sword of Wisdom' in one hand, and a Sūtra (sacred text) in the other. He is often depicted as riding or seated on a blue lion, or sitting on the skin of a lion, representing the use of wisdom to tame the mind, which is compared to riding or subduing a ferocious lion.

In China, Mañjuśrī is known as Wenshu and his birthday is celebrated by partaking in the 'Nine Lamp Light Offering', a symbol of illuminating the path for all sentient beings. It is said that each lamp serves as a prayer for the eternal presence of the Buddha's teachings and a beacon to dispel the shadows of ignorance.

Contributed by Mark Jones

FAITHS	January	February	March	April	May	June	
BAHA'I	18 World Religion Day	25 - 1 Mar Ayyam-i-Ha	2-20 Baha'i Fast 21 Naw-Ruz	21-2 May Ridvan 29 9th day of Ridvan	2 12th Day Ridvan 24 Declaration of the Bab 29 The Ascension of Baha'u'llah		
BUDDHIST	3 Mahayana (New Year) 16 Shinran Memorial Day	8 or 15 Parinirvana * 18 Sonam Losar (Nepal)	3 Magha Puja 15 Hönen Matsuri 20 Higan	8 Hanamatsuri 13 Theravada New Year	24 Buddha's B.day 31 Vesakha Puja Wesak		
CHINESE	26 Labajie (Laba Festival)	17 Tuan Yuan / Chun Jie (New Year: Horse)	12 Yuanxiaojie (Lantern Festival)	5 Qingmingjie (Tomb Sweeping Day)		19 Duanwuje (Dragon Boat Festival)	
CHRISTIAN	1 Naming of Jesus / Circumcision / Mary Mother of God 6 Epiphany [Ang/RC] 6/7 Christmas Eve/Day [3] 11 Baptism of Christ [Ang] 11 Baptism of the Lord [RC] 18-25 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 19 Theophany [3] 25 Conversion of St. Paul	2 Presentation of Christ in the Temple / Candlemas 14 St. Valentine 17 Shrove Tuesday 18 Ash Wednesday 18 Lent Begins [-Easter] 23 Great Lenten Fast [3]	1 St David 6 World Day of Prayer 15 Mothering Sunday 17 St Patrick 19 St Joseph [RC] 22 Passion Sunday 25 Annunciation [Ang]/[3]/[RC] 29 Palm Sunday	2 Maundy Thursday 3 Good Friday 4 Holy Saturday 5 Easter Sunday 12 Pascha [3] 23 St George	10-16 Christian Aid Week 14 Ascension Day 21 Ascension Day [3] 24 Pentecost / Whit 31 Pentecost [3] 31 Trinity Sunday	4 Corpus Christi Body & Blood of Christ [RC] 12 Sacred Heart [RC] 29 St. Peter and Paul	
HINDU	12 Birthday of Swami Vivekananda 13 Lohri 14 Makar Sankranti / Pongal 23 Vasant Panchami/ Saraswati Puja	15 Maha Shivratri	3/4 Holi 26 Rama Navami	2 Hanuman Jayanti 14 Tamil New Year			
JAIN			3 Holi 31 Mahavir Jayanti	10 Mahavir Janma Kalyanak			
JAPANESE	1 Ganjitsu (New Year)	3 Setsubun (Bean Scattering) 23 Emperor's birthday	3 Hinamatsuri / Dolls Day Festival 15 Hönen Matsuri 17-23 Higan 20 Shūbun No Hi	29 Showa Day			
JEWISH [1]		2 Tu B'Shevat	3 Purim	2-9 Pesach 14 Yom Hashoah 22 Yom Ha'Atzma'ut	5 Lag B'Omer 22-23 Shavuot		
MUSLIM [2]	16 The Prophet's Night Journey [Isra and Mi'raj]	3 The Night of Forgiveness [Lailat-ul-Bara'ah] 18 Ramadan (till 18 Mar)	16 Lailat-ul-Qadr: Night of Power 20 Eid-ul-Fitr*		25-29 Hajj 27 Eid-ul-Adha	4 Eid-ul- Ghadir 17 Al-Hijra (1448) 26 Ashura	
RASTAFARIAN	7 Ethiopian Xmas Day 19 Timket			12 Easter Day [3] Faskia 21 Groundation Day			
SIKHI	6 Birthday of Guru Gobind Singh 13 Maghi / Lohri		4-6 Hola Mohalla 14 Nanakshahi (Sikh New Year)	14 Vaisakhi/ Baisakhi		16 Martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev Ji	
ZOROASTRIAN [PARSEE]	30 Jashn-e-Sadeh [IZ]		11-20 Fravardin [IZ] 21 Jamshedi Noruz [IZ] 22 Ava Mah Parab [S] 26 Khordad Sal [IZ]	20 Adar Mah Parab [S]	22 Zaratost-no- Diso [S]		
PAGAN / DRUID [4]		1 Imbolc/Candlemas	20 Vernal (Spring) Equinox (Ostara / Alban Eilir)	30 May Eve 30 Beltaine Eve	1 May Day / Beltaine	21 Midsummer Solstice / Litha / Alban Hefin	
Some Other Notable Dates	1 New Year's Day / Hogmanay 18 World Religion Day 27 Holocaust Memorial Day	14 St Valentine's Day	1 St David's Day 17 St Patrick's Day 25 Lady Day	23 St George's Day	1 May Day	21 World Humanist Day 24 Midsummer Day	

(*) 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.

