



## York Interfaith Group



### May 2025

#### Message from the Chair

I spent Easter in Amsterdam with my sister, daughter, and family. Last time I was in Amsterdam many years ago it was with my Dutch mother who lived in Amsterdam during the war. She never spoke about the war, but visiting the Holocaust museum with her brought back many painful memories.

Today Amsterdam is a thriving, vibrant city with many fine museums. My sister and I visited the Jewish Museum, (which is a Synagogue), the Portugese Synagogue which is both a museum and a Synagogue and also the Holocaust Museum which has expanded from the school where it was housed when my Mum and I visited. We also joined an Ann Frank Tour which told the story of the Jewish people in Amsterdam and how they were identified and take away to be murdered in their thousands. We learnt so much but it was also distressing to see the security presence, and huge boulders outside the Holocaust museum as there is still antisemitism in Amsterdam.

Tina Funnell, Chair

## **A tribute to Pope Francis from the Dalai Lama**

This was missed from our recent bulletin devoted to Pope Francis but I would like to include these words from the Dalai Lama, who is a great advocate of Interfaith Work and meets with people from all faiths on a regular basis, includes them in dialogue whenever possible, and has arranged Interfaith conferences on specific subjects in the past.

“His Holiness Pope Francis dedicated himself to the service of others, consistently revealing by his own actions how to live a simple, but meaningful life. The best tribute we can pay to him is to be a warm-hearted person, serving others wherever and in whatever way we can.”

Rory Allen, Editor

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7. Shap calendar of festivals for first half of 2025

## **Forthcoming Events**

### *May's Interfaith Group Talk*

Our May talk will be held on the 6th, at West Offices, from 7.00 as usual. This month we have Part 2 of our Rites of Passage series. The speakers will be from the Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist and Baha'i faiths and they will tell us about the different rites associated with their beliefs. Some of the rites in these faiths may not be as well known to us as the ones in our first session, and so it should prove to be a very interesting and informative evening for us. As usual there will be time for questions at the end of the session and also the possibility of asking any other questions from the Part 1 speakers as we ran out of time for questions in their session. The session will be chaired by Dee Boyle.



### *Our June planning session: Your thoughts & ideas needed*

On June 3rd 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 3rd – and do try to join us. There will be another reminder and a bit more information in the June newsletter.

### *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 premisses). 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)	
6 <sup>th</sup> May	Part 2 of Rites of Passage with different faiths: Dee Boyle to chair.
3 <sup>rd</sup> June	Planning Meeting: All members are invited to share their ideas about future events for YIG and to discuss the programme for Interfaith Week. Tina Funnell to chair.
8 <sup>th</sup> July	Medicine and Faith: details to be confirmed.
5 <sup>th</sup> August	Bring and Share annual picnic: York Mosque
2 <sup>nd</sup> September	Poetry in the Faiths. Sarah Hubbard to chair.
7 <sup>th</sup> October	Event to be confirmed
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 Health and Arts Mela, 11 May*

Once again, York Interfaith Group is delighted to support the Arts and Health Mela 2025. Please visit our stand in Museum Gardens as well as all the other activities taking place on a fun-packed day. It's free to attend, no registration or pre-booking required - just enjoy!


A promotional poster for the York Health and Arts Mela. The top half features a light blue background with colorful confetti in the corners. The title 'York Health and Arts Mela' is in large purple font. Below it is a purple circular badge with 'FREE ENTRY' repeated three times. The date and time 'Sunday 11th May 2025, 10am to 5pm' are in bold dark blue. A yellow box contains the location: 'York Museum Gardens, Main Lawn YO1 7FR & Exhibition Square, YO1 7EW. The nearest car park is Marygate, YO30 7DT.' A purple wavy-edged box on the left lists themes: 'Join our award-winning vibrant Multi-Cultural celebration of Healthcare, Wellbeing, Arts, Diverse Food, Entertainment, Awareness and much more...'. On the right, a woman in a red and gold Indian outfit is dancing. The bottom left says 'York Museums Trust'.

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**Spirit Of Peace/UK Friends of Hope Flowers warmly invite you to:**

**'Hope Flowers School, Bethlehem:  
Supporting Children in Times of Conflict.'**

**Monday May 5th,  
7pm-8.30pm,  
Clements Hall, Nunthorpe Rd,  
York, YO23 1BW**



Scan QR code for tickets

*With*  
**Ibrahim Issa,  
Director, Hope  
Flowers School,  
Bethlehem**



Hope Flowers school stands as a lifeline and beacon of hope to traumatised children, their families and communities in the West Bank, Palestine. Please come to hear about this innovative school and find out how we in the UK can help.

**Entry free. All donations/sponsorship/support warmly welcomed.**

**Search 'Eventbrite Hope Flowers School' to book tickets**

**Doors open from 6.30pm. Parking available opposite the venue in Scarcroft School, YO23 1BS. Fully accessible venue.**



**Hope Flowers**



**Spirit  
of Peace**  
Working together for a world  
where all can flourish

**info@spiritofpeace.co.uk    www.spiritofpeace.co.uk**

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*York Human Rights City Network Lecture*

**You are invited to the York Human Rights City Network Annual Lecture:**

**The right to protest for children and young people: Setting an agenda for human rights cities**

8 May 2025, 6pm - 7.30pm In person and Online

**Attendees must** register on Eventbrite. **PLEASE SHARE IN YOUR NETWORKS**

In recent years, children and young people have increasingly been involved in protests - on issues such as climate change, education, citizenship, the impact of war, or even on the right to sing. This public lecture will include some interesting histories of child protestors, demonstrating that this is not a new phenomenon. The lecture will explain the rights to freedom of association and assembly which are protected by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and will propose an agenda for human rights cities to enable children and young people to safely exercise their right to peaceful protest.

**Ann Skelton** is a Professor of Law and holds the Chair on Children's Rights in a Sustainable World at the University of Leiden, where she is programme director of the Advanced Masters in International Children's Rights. She also holds the UNESCO Chair in Education Law at the University of Pretoria. Ann has appeared as counsel in numerous landmark child rights cases in the South African Constitutional Court. She was a member of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child from 2017 to 2025, and was Chairperson from May 2023 to Feb 2025.

**Venue:** K/122 - The Huntington Room, Kings Manor, Exhibition Square, York YO1 7EP and online

View the accessibility guide for the room (wheelchair accessible; accessible toilets; hearing loop). Limited disabled parking is available in the car park at Kings Manor.

York Human Rights City Network Executive

LINK FOR REGISTRATION:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/the-right-to-protest-for-children-and-young-people-tickets-1284213770959?aff=oddtcreator>

### *Unitarian – Hindu Connections*

Every month there is a zoom session for an hour that is organised by the Unitarian/Hindu Connections group here in the UK. The sessions have been running now for around two years. The sessions generally have a guest speaker and then some time for questions or sharing thoughts. The topics are varied but are generally about subjects that are of interest to those connected to Hinduism or Unitarianism and also with Interfaith work. If anyone would be interested in joining this group please contact either Dee Boyle ([deeboyle@gn.apc.org](mailto:deeboyle@gn.apc.org)) or Varsha Gulati ([varshagulati46@gmail.com](mailto:varshagulati46@gmail.com)) and they will pass on the zoom link for the next talk to you. If you then decide you would like to attend more sessions you can contact the group organiser direct and he will add your name to his email list.

### **Announcement**

#### *Details of a new Mental Health Neighbourhood Centre in York*

York has been awarded funding to open a 24/7 Mental Health Neighbourhood Centre in Acomb Garth, supporting communities in Acomb, Holgate, and Westfield. This innovative hub will provide round-the-clock mental health support in a welcoming, accessible space, with a multi-agency team including TEWV NHS Trust, York Mind, York Carers Centre, and City of York Council, alongside local partners.

Think of it as a one-stop shop for wellbeing, offering a wide range of support under one roof. This is the second of three planned hubs across York—joining the city-centre daytime hub and a future Tang Hall/Burnholme hub—ensuring everyone has access to mental health support close to home.

We want these hubs to work for everyone! Co-produced with people with lived experience, we're especially keen to hear from ethnically diverse communities to ensure the hubs meet the needs of all York residents.

Want to get involved or learn more? Contact Ben Hutchinson (Co-Production Champion) at [ben.hutchinson@yorkcvs.org.uk](mailto:ben.hutchinson@yorkcvs.org.uk) — your input can help shape inclusive, effective mental health support for our city!

## Reports

### *YLJC Clothes Swap for York City of Sanctuary*

On April 5th, the social action committee for York Liberal Jewish Community organised a clothes swap to support YLJC's eco agenda and raise money for City of Sanctuary. It was also part of our 'Every Day is Mitzvah Day' campaign, which aims to support and engage with communities within York and beyond by doing good deeds or Mitzvahs. Many of our friends from York Interfaith Group supported the event in different ways, including with clothes donations. The event raised £150 for City of Sanctuary. The clothes that were not swapped were donated to Carecent, a local York charity that assists homeless people. The event was truly collaborative, with support from staff at Friends Meeting House as well as members of the public. Tina Funnel (Chair of YIG) and a trustee of City of Sanctuary attended the event and helped us count the proceeds! A big thank you to everyone for their continued support of YLJC!





*Seder night at St Clement's Hall*



This a photo from our community seder for Passover. It was held on 14 April at St Clement's Hall. We were eating traditional Passover food and celebrating freedom.

Sarah Hubbard

PS if anybody would like to know more about the significance of seder and of the six traditional foods, please refer to our April newsletter and Sarah's Faith Festival notes on the event.

Rory Allen

## Faith Festivals



### *Beltane, 1 May, by James Rance*

Beltane is possibly the most popular of the modern Pagan festivals, celebrated around the world by countless moots, groves, covens, and solitary practitioners unaffiliated with groups, traditionally on 1 May. Camps are held, bonfires constructed, and the Maypole is erected and adorned with ribbons and flowers.

Beltane is primarily a festival of fire and fertility, a welcoming of the warmth and light of summer. The name Beltane comes from the Irish *Bealtaine*, and is believed to mean “bright fire”, again a hint towards the nature of this festival. The fires lit at Beltane were traditionally need-fires – that is, fires lit with the friction of rubbing pieces of wood together alone, and these fires were believed to have protective properties. Cattle were driven between two fires, or made to leap over the flames, in order to call protection upon them.

People, too, would jump over the fires for protection and good fortune, and torches would be lit from the fire, carried home, and used to rekindle the hearth, bringing the blessings of the Beltane fire into the home.

In modern Paganism, the majority of us have no cattle to drive between the fires, and many of us lack the space to create bonfires at all. For some, the season can be marked by lighting candles or creating small fires (safely!) and walking each member of the household, including pets, between them, giving offerings of food, wine, honey, incense and/or seasonal flowers to the Gods at a household shrine, and relighting the indoor fire or shrine candles from the celebratory Beltane fires.

While our lives take on very different patterns to those of our ancestors, the Gods of fire, light and fertility are always alongside us.





*Vesakha Puja, 12 May, by Mark Jones*

Vesakha Puja (also known as Buddha Day and Wesak), is one of the most significant and widely celebrated festivals in the Buddhist calendar. Since 1950, when the World Fellowship of Buddhists formalized it as Buddha's birthday, the celebration of Buddha's birth takes place on May 12<sup>th</sup>. However, most Buddhist traditions celebrate the Buddha's birth, (along with his enlightenment and death in some traditions) on the first full moon of the Vesakha month, which falls in April or May.

The celebrations of *Vesakha Puja* vary across different countries and cultures, but they share common themes of reverence, reflection, and community. Temples and monasteries are adorned with colourful decorations, and devotees gather to participate in various rituals and activities.

Central to *Vesakha Puja* are meditation sessions and chanting of Buddhist scriptures, which help devotees connect with the teachings of Buddha and cultivate mindfulness and inner tranquillity. The chanting often includes recitations of Buddhist scripture.

Devotees make offerings of flowers (to signify both beauty and impermanence), incense, and candles to Buddha statues and shrines. These offerings symbolize respect and gratitude towards Buddha and his teachings. The practice of *dana*, or generosity, is another important tradition where Buddhists provide food, clothing, and other necessities to monks (in monastic traditions) and the less fortunate. This act of generosity reflects the core Buddhist values of compassion and selflessness.

In many regions, *Vesakha Puja* is marked by vibrant and colourful processions and parades, particularly in Mahayana traditions, such as in Thailand. Participants carry images of Buddha and other religious symbols, accompanied by music and dance. These processions often culminate at temples where special ceremonies are held.

Vesakha Puja is also time for Buddhists to reflect on their spiritual journey and renew their commitment to the teachings of Buddha and to practise mindfulness, compassion, and ethical living. Many devotees take, or reaffirm vows to abstain from harmful actions and engage in positive deeds.



*Feast of the Ascension, 29 May, 40 days after Easter, by Sister Patricia Harriss*

Stand in the central nave at York minster and look up at the roof bosses, with their gleaming gilding. Look for the soles of two bare feet, surrounded by a ring of faces, mostly bearded. This is a depiction of the Christian feast of the Ascension of Jesus to heaven, forty days after his Resurrection to life. With typical humour, the medieval sculptor is reminding us just how human Jesus is, even as he illustrates Jesus' final exit from his disciples' company. I find it amusing that the Psalm with which we celebrate the feast says, "the Lord goes up with trumpet blast," whereas Jesus ascended so quietly, "as he blessed them he was lifted up and a cloud hid him from their sight," that two angels had to explain what had happened. (Acts of the Apostles chapter 1, vv 9-11)

The earliest Christians held a pilgrimage each year to the reputed site of the Ascension, a hillside opposite Jerusalem, where a very ancient church now stands. Jesus had reassured his followers, "It is better for you that I go. Unless I go the Comforter (Holy Spirit) will not come." They returned to the city, "rejoicing."

Anglican Christians especially observe this feast as a celebration of Jesus' kingship, seated at the Father's right hand.



*Note from Chris Styles on the Camino de Santiago (topic of our March YIG talk)*

As I was prepping some stuff for Peter's talk yesterday I turned on the radio (Radio Four, of course) and by miraculous coincidence there was a programme on about a bloke with one leg on the Camino de Santiago. If members fancy some further insights it's well worth a listen.

The programme is called "Hear and Soul" and this episode is "Hervé's Way: the story of a one-legged pilgrim"

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/w3ct5tf2>

*Notes on Pam Heaton's talk to YIG on 1 April: Music and Spirituality*

Wolves jamming in the key of F: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hOAraGKpAhs>

Music from Seikilos epitaph: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qdlFLw5Asc8>

Recording of St John Passion: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3VjBXhqxm20&t=26s>

Summary of the powerpoint slides:

Music has long been an important aspect of human culture

Descriptions of music in Genesis. Prophet Samuel established a school of music and the old testament makes reference to a very wide range of musical instruments (e.g. flute, harp, cymbals, lyre, trumpet, zither)

In Ancient Greece music was important for entertainment, celebration and spiritual purposes. Seikilos epitaph:

As long you live, shine  
Grieve you not at all  
Life is of brief duration  
Time demands its end

Earliest example of musical instruments made by modern humans - homo sapiens

The flutes are made from bird bone and mammoth ivory and carbon dating shows they are between 42,000 and 43,000 years old

Why do we do it?

“As neither the enjoyment nor the capacity of producing musical notes are faculties of the least use to man in reference to his daily habits of life, they must be ranked amongst the most mysterious with which he is endowed”

Increases in brain size in humans and small pelvic size in human females meant that infant brains were very immature at birth. Dissanayake (2001): the need to ‘communicate’ with these infants drove changes in our species that were important for the emergence of musical traits. We became more expressive with infants and this new trait spread through the species over time.

Musicality evolved in the context of broader evolving social, intellectual, creative and aesthetic capacities

### Music and ‘Groupishness’

Fur grooming activates neuroendocrine responses implicated in emotional bonding (Dunbar, 2010)

For apes, grooming increases group cohesion, helps avoid group conflict within the group and creates ‘in-groups’ that are formidable to ‘outgroups’.

Music replaced fur grooming in humans. It activates neuroendocrine responses, creates bonds between people. and has been used to ‘signal’ unity in war.

### Music and Contagion

(Brown, 2007)

But why do people listen to music now?















Study of 834 children and adults (8 – 85 years) – Why do you listen to music?

- 1) to regulate arousal and mood
- 2) for self-awareness and development
- 3) for social relatedness.

Music is important for communal spiritual experience. But by its nature (its “floating intentionality”) it allows for spiritual experiences that are personal.

### Music and spiritual journeys

- personal experiences

FAITHS	January	February	March	April	May	June	
BAHA'I	21 World Religion Day		20 Naw-Ruz	20-1 May Ridvan 28 9th day of Ridvan	23 Declaration of the Bab 28 The Ascension of Baha'u'llah		
BUDDHIST	1 Shuso (New Year) 16 Shinran Memorial Day 25 Honen Memorial Day 30 Sonam Losar (Nepal)	12 Magha Puja 8 or 15 Parinirvana *	20 Higan	8 Hanamatsuri	12 Vesakha Puja Buddha Day 15 Buddha's B.day		
CHINESE	7 Labajie (Laba Festival) 29 Tuan Yuan / Chun Jie (New Year: Snake)	12 Yuanxiaojie (Lantern Festival)		4 Qingmingjie Tomb Sweeping Day	31 Duanwujiie / Dragon Boat Festival		
CHRISTIAN	1 Naming of Jesus / Circumcision / Mary Mother of God 6 Epiphany [Ang/RC] 6 Theophany [3] 6/7 Christmas Eve/Day [3] 12 Baptism of Christ [Ang] 12 Baptism of the Lord [RC] 18-25 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 25 Conversion of St. Paul	2 Pres. of Christ in the Temple / Candlemas 14 St. Valentine	1 St David 1 World Day of Prayer 3 Great Lenten Fast begins [3] 4 Shrove Tuesday 5 Ash Wednesday [to 17 April] 17 St Patrick 19 St Joseph [RC] 25 Annunciation [Ang/[3]/RC] 30 Mothering Sunday	6 Passion Sunday 13 Palm Sunday 17 Maundy Thursday 18 Good Friday 19 Holy Saturday 20 Easter Sunday 20 Pascha [3] 23 St George	11-17 Christian Aid Week 29 Ascension Day [RC] 29 Ascension Day [RC]	8 Pentecost / Whit 15 Trinity Sunday 19 Corpus Christi Body & Blood of Christ [RC] 27 Sacred Heart [RC] 29 St. Peter and Paul	
HINDU	12 Birthday of Swami Vivekananda 13 Lohri 14 Makar Sankranti / Pongal	2 Vasant Panchami / Saraswati Puja 26 Mahashivratri	14/15 Holi	6 Rama Navami 12 Hanuman Jayanti 14 Tamil New Year		27 Ratha Yatra	
JAIN	28 Nirvana Day		14/15 Holi	10 Mahavir Jayanti			
JAPANESE	1 Ganjitsu (New Year)	3 Setsubun (Bean Scattering) 23 Emperor's birthday	3 Hinamatsuri 17-23 Higan 20 Shûbun No Hi				
JEWISH [1]	26 Dec (24) - 2 Jan Hannukah	13 Tu B'Shevat	14 Purim	13-20 Pesach 24 Yom Hashoah	1 Yom Ha'Atzma'ut 16 Lag B'Omer	2-3 Shavuot	
MUSLIM [2]	27 The Prophet's Night Journey [Isra and Mi'raj]	14 The Night of Forgiveness [Lailat-ul-Bara'ah]	1 - 30 Ramadan 27 Lailat-ul-Qadr: Night of Power 30 End of Ramadan 30 Eid-ul-Fitr*			5-9 Hajj begins 7 Eid-ul-Adha 15 Eid-ul-Ghadir 26 Al-Hijra (1447)	
RASTAFARIAN	6/7 Ethiopian Christmas Day			20 Easter Day [3]			
SIKH	6 Birthday of Guru Gobind Singh 13 Lohri		14-16 Hola Mohalla	14 Vaisakhi / Baisakhi		16 Martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev	
ZOROASTRIAN [PARSEE]	30 Jashn-e-Sadeh [IZ]		11-20 Fravardigan [IZ] 21 Jamshedi Noruz [IZ] 22 Ava Mah Parab[S] 26 Khordad Sal [IZ]	20 Adar Mah Parab [S]	22 Zartosht-no-Diso [S]		
PAGAN / DRUID [4]		1 Imbolc/Candlemas	20 Vernal (Spring) Equinox (Ostara / Alban Ellir)	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 21 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.

