



JANUARY 2023

Dear Friends

Welcome to January's newsletter and a very Happy New Year to all

Whether you have been celebrating Christmas as a religious festival or just as a welcome break from work, I hope you have found some joy amongst the hard realities of a world at war with itself on so many fronts.

I suppose I count myself amongst the happy (or delusional!) band of optimists who always think things will get better! In darker moments I still find myself smiling at the story Dee told me about the boy on the beach where thousands of starfish have been thrown up by a storm and await their doom. The boy picks up one starfish and throws it back into the water at which point a man asks him, "What is the point of that?, there are thousands more ". and the answer....."Well, I saved that one didn't I?"

I think my New Year's resolution will be "Help a starfish when you can", and then add a line from one of my favourite hymns," Father, I place into your hands the things I cannot do". (Feel free to copy and paste!)

If you would like to submit an article or news item for February's Newsletter, please see details at the end of this edition. We would love to hear from you!

Anne Castle

OUR JANUARY MEETING WILL BE LIVE

at City of York Council, West Offices, Station Rise, York YO1 6GA

January 10th SECOND TUESDAY OF THE MONTH 7.00 - 8.30 pm

The Ethics of Film-Making

A reflection by Dr. Rasha Ibrahim.

Message from Liz Roberts:

Holocaust Memorial Day Event

26th January 2023

**Creative Centre
York St John University**

1800-2000

This event will include:

- Welcome from York St John VC
- Address from the Lord Mayor
- Theatre performance from drama students
 - Talk by a Ukrainian refugee
- An address from Partners and Friends of HMD
 - Reading of the seven commitments

If you wish to attend then please book online through Eventbrite at:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/holocaust-memorial-day-2023-tickets-479285414577>

Or contact: HMD@york.gov.uk

Further information can be also be found at <https://www.facebook.com/HMDYork>

BIRTHDAY OF GURU GOBIND SINGH (1666 CE)

Sukhvinder Kaur Matharu



On the 20th of January 2023, Sikhs from all over the world will celebrate the birth of Guru Gobind Singh-ji, the tenth and last Sikh living guru.

Guru Gobind Singh, born Gobind Rai, was the tenth Sikh Guru, a spiritual master, warrior, poet and philosopher. When his father, Guru Tegh Bahadur, was executed by Aurangzeb, Guru Gobind Singh was formally installed as the leader of the Sikhs at the age of nine, becoming the tenth and final human Sikh Guru

Guru Gobind instituted the practice of the Five Ks (Kesh (hair), Kashera (baggy shorts), Kara (metal bracelet), Kanga (comb) and kirpan (sword)) and established the Order of the *Khalsa* on Vaisakhi (Baisakhi). An *akhand path*, an unbroken reading of the whole of the Guru Granth Sahib (Sikh holy book), spreads typically over a 48 hour period.

Here are some poignant quotes (known as Bani) from Guru Gobind Singh-ji.

"Without the support of the One Name, Consider all religious ceremonies superstitions."

"Karta (The Creator) and Karim (The beneficent) are the names of the same God.

Razak (The provider) and Rahim (The merciful) are also the names given to Him.

Let no man in his error wrangle over differences in names.

Worship the One God who is the Lord of all.

Know that his form is one and He is the One light diffused in all."

Makar Sankranti

Dr Varsha Gulati



Makar Sankranti is a significant Hindu Festival and will be celebrated on 14th January 2023

From ancient times, Hindus saw that the Sun is the life giver and they have given thanks to the Sun. The movements of the Sun are mentioned in the Vedas, and Makar Sankranti is the time of this celebration.

Considered to be one of the most ancient Hindu festivals, Makar Sankranti is observed according to the solar cycles. Thus, it almost always falls on the same Gregorian date every year: 14th January.

Makar Sankranti is a major festival, celebrated with much fervour across several parts of India. This day marks the beginning of a new **harvest season**.

On this day, people express gratitude to the **Sun-God "Surya"** and thank nature for its abundant resources. This festival is celebrated in most parts of the country, with different names.

The celebrations include bon fires in colder north India with prayers, plenty to eat especially sesame seed and jaggery combinations, washing in holy rivers, making colourful beautiful diagrams on floors (Rangoli) and interestingly kite flying.

Though the sentiment is the same in celebrations but the names can be different and some regional difference in celebrations. The various names in different parts of India are Sankranti, Lohri, (Punjab) Maghee, Bihu (Assam), Pongal (South India), Uttarayan (Gujarat) Pouch Parba (Bengal) and so on.

The passage of Sun to northern hemisphere as it enters into Capricorn from 14th January, as the days are getting longer, carries a religious significance and is considered a good time to elevate personal and business relationships, for lovebirds to tie the knot, and to start new business and of course prayers and become more aware of the goodness on earth.

RELIGIOUS FESTIVALS JANUARY 2023

1 January (Sunday) NEW YEAR'S DAY / HOGMANAY National

A day widely observed, as is New Year's Eve the preceding night, throughout the UK, and more especially in Scotland, where bagpipes, haggis and first footing are widespread.



1 January (Sunday) SHUSO (New Year) Buddhist

New year in the Buddhist calendar.



1 January (Sunday) GANJITSU Japanese

New Year's Day celebrations in Japan are sometimes extended for up to three days, during which businesses are closed, families spend time together, decorations are put up and the first visit of the year is paid to local Shinto shrines.



1 January (Sunday) THE CIRCUMCISION OR NAMING OF JESUS Christian

Celebrates the circumcision and naming of Jesus in accordance with Jewish custom.

Celebration of Mary Mother of God (Catholic)



5 January (Thursday) BIRTHDAY OF GURU GOBIND SINGH (1666 CE) (Bakrami Lunar Calendar) Sikh

Birth Anniversary of the tenth Guru, who instituted the practice of the Five Ks and established the Order of the *Khalsa* on Vaisakhi (Baisakhi). An *akhand path*, an unbroken reading of the whole of the Guru Granth Sahib, spreads over a 48 hour period.



6 January (Friday) THEOPHANY Christian (Orthodox)

Orthodox Christians commemorate the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist. 'Theophany' means 'Manifestation of God'. Jesus' miracle at Cana in Galilee is also remembered.



6 January (Friday) EPIPHANY Christian (Anglican and Roman Catholic)

Celebrates the visit of the magi/wise men to the infant Jesus, bearing symbolic gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. This is the twelfth day of Christmas.



6 / 7 January (Friday / Saturday) CHRISTMAS EVE AND DAY Christian (Orthodox)

(Eastern Orthodox: Julian calendar). Many Orthodox churches celebrate Christmas (and other fixed festivals) thirteen days after the Western churches.



6 / 7 January (Friday / Saturday) ETHIOPIAN CHRISTMAS DAY Rastafarian

To Rastafarians this is a time not only to celebrate the birth of Jesus in the manner prescribed by tradition, but also to reflect on this event in the context of the original prophecy of his birth, seen as a manifestation of God not only as Priest but as King



8 January (Sunday) BAPTISM OF CHRIST / BAPTISM OF THE LORD Christian (Anglican / Roman Catholic)

Christians commemorate the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist; they recall how at this event the heavens were opened and a voice was heard proclaiming Jesus, while God's spirit descended on him in the form of a dove



12 January (Thursday) BIRTHDAY OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA Hindu

Vivekananda, an Indian Hindu monk and a disciple of Ramakrishna, was a key figure in the introduction of the Indian philosophies of Vedanta and Yoga to the Western world.



14 January (Saturday) MAKAR SANKRANTI / LOHRI / PONGAL Hindu

This is a day for almsgiving and patching up quarrels. It is celebrated with rice sugar, pancakes, halva or cornmeal *chapattis*, eaten around a fire



16 January (Monday) SHINRAN MEMORIAL DAY Buddhist

Shinran was the founder of Jodo Shin-shu, one of the schools of Pure Land Buddhism.



15 January (Sunday) WORLD RELIGION DAY Baha'i and other groups

This day promotes interfaith understanding by emphasizing factors common to all faiths. It was first introduced among Baha'i communities in the 1950s, and is now celebrated by a wider spread of communities, including the Baha'i, usually on the third Sunday of January.



18 (Wednesday) to 25 January (Wednesday) WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY Christian

United services are held, and dialogue on unity is encouraged; some worshippers visit other people's churches or invite preachers from denominations different from their own.



18 January (Wednesday) LABAJIE / LABA FESTIVAL Chinese



19 January (Thursday) TIMKAT Christian (Ethiopian)

The celebration of Epiphany in the Ethiopian and Eritrean Orthodox Tewahedo Church



22 January (Sunday) SONAM LOSAR Buddhist (Nepal)

Sonam Lhosar is a new year festival of the Tamang and Hyolmo people of Nepal and the Sikkim and Darjeeling regions of India. It falls on the second new moon after the winter solstice which is usually the Magh Sukla Pratipada based on the eastern lunar calendar.



22 January (Sunday) YUAN TAN [New Year Festival] Chinese

Celebrations last for three or more days, and involve fireworks, dances (e.g. the famous Lion Dance) and gifts of paper money, flowers and sweets. Business accounts are settled and all debts paid before the New Year begins.

2023 is the year of the Rabbit.



25 January (Wednesday) HONEN MEMORIAL DAY Buddhist

Honen (1133-1212 CE) is one of the outstanding figures in the history of Japanese Buddhism, and was the founder of Jodo Shinshu, one of the schools of Pure Land Buddhism.



25 January (Wednesday) CONVERSION OF SAINT PAUL Christian



25 / 26 January (Wednesday / Thursday) SARASVATI PUJA / VASANT PANCHAMI Hindu

Widely celebrated in North India, this festival marks the beginning of spring. For Hindus it is usually linked with Saraswati, the goddess of learning and the arts. Yellow is her associated colour.

27 January (Friday) HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY National

A day for remembrance of people who suffered, chiefly at the hands of the Nazis during the second World War but also in other persecutions. It aims to keep memory fresh and ensure that no such atrocity happens again.



30 January (Monday) JASHN-E SADEH Zoroastrian [Iranian]

A mid winter bonfire festival to signify that days are getting longer. The litany to fire, the *Atash Niyayesh*, is recited, and Iranian legends are told of King Hoshang (who discovered the art of making fire). Piping hot stew, dancing and merry making feature.

Thank you to Sister Patricia for her work on this programme for 2023

2023 Programme: York Interfaith Group.

1. **JANUARY 10th (n.b. second Tuesday): The Ethics of Film-Making** - a reflection by Dr. Rasha Ibrahim.
2. **FEBRUARY 7th** Religion and World-views: a way to expand the boundaries of the RE Classroom - Professor James Holt, University of Chester (Associate Professor of RE), the Church of Jesus Christ.
3. **MARCH 7th:** How does my Faith understand Miracles? A panel-discussion.
4. **APRIL 4th:** Sacred Books I: What are our sacred books, and where did they come from? Insights from Buddhism (Dr. Peter Harvey) and speakers from the Hindu and Sikh faiths.
5. **MAY 2nd:** **VISIT to a synagogue in Leeds is being arranged: details awaited**
6. **JUNE 6th:** PLANNING MEETING: ideas for next year's programmes, annual and in Interfaith Week.
7. **JULY 4th:** Sacred Earth: how can we recover our bond with the natural world?' Nick Morrice (Unitarian Church)
8. **AUGUST 8th** 'August Picnic' – an informal evening to share food and conversation in the Bar Convent garden.
9. **SEPTEMBER 5th:** Approaches to Prayer in different faiths.
10. **OCTOBER 3rd:** SACRED BOOKS II: Insights from the Jewish, Christian (the Reverend Dr. Christopher Collingwood) and Muslim faiths.
11. **NOVEMBER 7th:** Stories that help us grow in faith: examples from the sacred writings of various traditions.
12. **DECEMBER 5th:** AGM and Christmas activities.

And finally, A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIR

Firstly, may I wish everyone a very Happy New Year and, secondly welcome the new Management Committee for 2023, elected at our AGM on Tuesday 6th December 2022. As Chair, I continue to value your membership and my aim for 2023 is to continue to expand our network through mutual respect and shared values for a better and inclusive York.

Avtar Matharu	Chair
Dee Boyle	Vice-Chair and special responsibility for planning Interfaith Week
Penny Coppin-Siddall	Secretary
Daryoush Mazloum	Treasurer
Rasha Ibrahim	Press and Publicity Officer
Anne Castle	Member with special responsibility for our monthly newsletter
Varsha Gulati	Member
Sister Patricia Harris	Member (Christian Faith) with special responsibility for planning our annual calendar of meetings
Adrian Tellwright	Member

As York Interfaith Group continues to expand we are always looking for additional support. If, you would like to assist or shadow any of the above roles then please do not hesitate to contact me. Your skills and expertise would be most welcome.

Your feedback is very important us. We constantly try to improve our service so that we can best support your needs and those of your faith. You can contact and/or follow us via:

Facebook	York Interfaith group
Instagram	@yorkinterfaith
Twitter	@Yorkinterfaith
email	yorkinterfaithgroup@gmail.com

If you would like to contribute an article or advertise an event in our February Newsletter, please email yorkinterfaithgroup@gmail.com or send direct to am.castle@bopenworld.com **by January 16th to guarantee inclusion.**

Wishing you all the very best for the month of January and for 2023.

Avtar Matharu, Chair, YIG