



March 2023

Dear Friends

Welcome to our March Newsletter as we look forward to the miracle of spring arriving to cheer us all in these dark and gloomy times. At our meeting this month we consider the nature of 'miracles' as understood by various faiths. I am sure that this will promote a lively and insightful discussion and I am sorry I will not be able to attend. (Sadly the 'miraculous' has not yet extended its reach to being in two places at once.) For myself, I reserve the word 'miracle' for those things in life which at one point seemed so unlikely, so impossible, I did not believe they would happen, and yet somehow, they did. When human beings first went into space, travelling in what was little more than a tin can making manoeuvres based on the calculations of a few extremely talented people, (not computers) I still wonder how it was achieved with the same awe I felt at the time. But the miracle I prayed for then was the safe return of the astronauts. I guess the biggest miracle was that the people who made the calculations were the right people, in the right place, at the right time. If you would like to learn some more about them I can recommend a great little movie called 'Hidden Figures'. It teaches an uncomfortable lesson about how people of colour, even those who helped to create a miracle, were airbrushed out of history. Now, older(and hopefully wiser), I pray for truth.

Our March Meeting will be [Live](#)

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

March 7th 7.00 - 8.30 pm

How does my faith understand miracles.?

A Panel Discussion

Lead by representatives of various faiths

Chair - Sister Patricia Harriss

York Interfaith Group do it on the radio



Thanks to our out lovely Press and Publicity Officer Rasha, members of York Interfaith are now contributing a daily “Thought for the day” slot on Jorvik Radio.

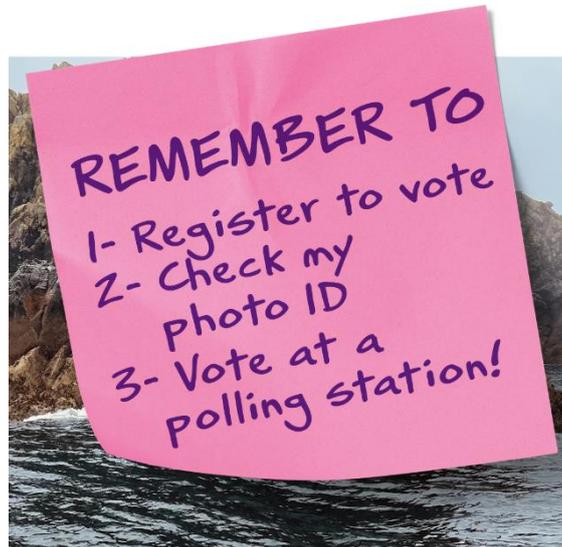
We began with a long interview on 3rd February where Dee was invited into the studio to speak with Nick Love . She was able to talk about the history of YIG , who we are, where we meet, and to emphasize our commitment to tolerance and respect of our differences and celebration of the many more things which unite all those of faith and none

If you would like to ‘catch up’ with our contributions, just search “Jorvik Radio listen again”, and click on “Love in the Morning” A fair few past dates will appear and you can click on the one you want to hear. If, like me, you are at work, or do not have the time to listen to the whole program you can move along to the appropriate time. Dee’s interview was on 3rd February beginning at approximately 10.20 and lasting 15-20 minutes with a music break in the middle. All the one minute slots, Monday - Friday from 6th February are at about 9 50 so, as the show begins at 9.00 just scroll along to 49 mins approx.

Special thanks to Rasha and Dee for facilitating this great opportunity to introduce YIG to more people in York.

A message from Megan Rule -

Megan Rule | Senior Communications Manager – People Directorate
t: 01904 552017 | m: 07767 318063 | 24/7 news desk: 01904 555515
e: megan.rule@york.gov.uk



Voter ID

The UK Government has introduced a requirement for voters to show photo ID when voting at a polling station at some elections. This new requirement will apply for the first time in England at the local elections on Thursday 4 May 2023.

Which forms of ID can I use to vote?

You may already have a form of photo ID that is acceptable. You can use any of the following:

- Passport
- Driving licence (including provisional license)
- Blue badge
- Certain concessionary travel cards
- Identity card with PASS mark (Proof of Age Standards Scheme)
- Biometric Immigration document
- Defence identity card
- Certain national identity cards

For more information on which forms of photo ID will be accepted, visit electoralcommission.org.uk/voterID or call their helpline on 0800 328 0280.

If you don't have an accepted form photo ID

If you don't already have an accepted form of photo ID, or you're not sure whether your photo ID still looks like you, you can apply for a free voter ID document, known as a **Voter Authority Certificate**. You can apply for this at voter-authority-certificate.service.gov.uk.

Alternatively, you can complete a paper application form and send this to the electoral services team at your local council.

If you need any help with applying for a Voter Authority Certificate or want to request an application form, contact your local council. To find their contact details visit electoralcommission.org.uk/voter.

Find out more

If you have any questions or would like to find out more, go to electoralcommission.org.uk/voterID, or call their helpline on 0800 328 0280.



Holi is a Hindu festival that has been celebrated since ancient times. The Holi Festival is celebrated as a way to welcome in spring, and also is seen as a new beginning where people can release all their inhibitions and start fresh. It is said that during the Holi Festival, the gods turn a blind eye, and it's one of the few times extremely devout Hindus allow themselves to let loose. They open up and enjoy each other's company, take time to dance and party, and throw their cultural norms to the side. On the first day of the festival, a bonfire is lit to symbolically burn away all the bad and give way to a colourful and vibrant new future.

At the Holi Festival, participants throw powder dye into the air, covering all in attendance with vibrant colours. In a religious sense, the colours are rich with symbolism and have multiple meanings: they can mean a vibrant new life and even represent sin in a way. For some, washing off the dye at the end of the day can mean new commitment to live well, as cleansing oneself of evils and demons.

The major story behind Holi is victory of good over evil and is about an evil ancient king called Hiranyakashyap, who claimed to be immortal and demanded to be worshipped as a god. His son Prahlad was deeply devoted to worshipping the Hindu deity Vishnu, and Hiranyakashyap was angry that his son worshipped this god over him. According to the story, the Lord Vishnu appeared as half-lion and half-man, and killed Hiranyakashyap. In that way, good conquered evil.

Another story tied to the Holi Festival is that of Radha and Krishna. As the eighth incarnation of the Hindu god Vishnu, Krishna is seen by many as the supreme god. Krishna is said to have blue skin because as legend has it, he drank poisonous milk from a demon when he was a baby. Krishna feared, that his best friend Radha will reject him for his blue skin. Radha and friends played with colours and the blue skin was forgotten. On Holi, Festival participants apply colour to each other's skin in honour of Krishna and Radha.



Alternative Wedding Fair



25th March 2023 10am to 4pm
Unitarian Chapel, St Saviourgate, York

Planning a wedding with a limited budget?
Want a more environmentally friendly wedding?
Thinking about an Interfaith or same sex wedding?
Want to create a day just for you?
Fashion shows at 11am & 2pm
Refreshments available all day

Free Entry

Check out www.yorkunitarians.org for more detail

RELIGIOUS FESTIVALS MARCH 2023



1 March (Wednesday) ST DAVID'S DAY Christian / National

Anniversary of the death of St David, the 6th Century CE patron saint of Wales.



3 March (Friday) HINAMATSURI [Doll's Festival / Girls' Day] Japanese

Clay dolls representing the Emperor and Empress, are displayed in the home, and offerings of peach blossom, rice-wine and rice-cakes are placed before them. The dolls carry away any illness which is afflicting the daughters of the house, for whom prayers are offered.



3 March (Friday) THE WOMEN'S WORLD DAY OF PRAYER Christian

This international, interdenominational prayer movement was begun in 1887. The service material is produced by a different country each year. In 2023 the theme will be 'I have heard about your faith' and the material has been prepared by Christian women in Taiwan.



7 March (Tuesday) HOLI Hindu / Jain



A spring festival lasting one to five days. Bonfires are lit and coloured powders and dyes are thrown over people. Various stories of Vishnu and of Krishna and the *gopis* (milkmaids) are related throughout the festival.



7 * March (Tuesday) PURIM Jewish

Purim is a carnival festival, recalling the saving of the Jewish community of Persia, as retold in the Book of Esther (the *Megillah*), which is read through twice in each synagogue. The name of Haman is drowned out with rattles and hooters and boos by the congregation whenever it is read.

* Jewish festivals commence at sunset on the evening of the day prior to the date shown.



8 * March (Wednesday) LAILAT-UL-BARA'AH [The Night of Forgiveness] Muslim

Muslims seek forgiveness for their sins at this time. Many hold that on this night a person's destiny is fixed by Allah for the coming year. The night is spent in prayer, asking for forgiveness and God's guidance. Some fast during the daytime in preparation. In certain parts of the world Muslims visit the graves of relatives, and the giving of charity is also traditional. In many places the night is marked with firework displays.

* Muslim festivals begin in the evening before the Gregorian dates shown in this calendar.



11 March (Saturday) to 20 March (Monday) FRAVARDIGAN / MUKTAD Zoroastrian (Iranian)

In the Fravardigan festival the immortal souls, together with their *fravashis* (the guardian spirits of departed ancestors, half man/half bird), come to reside in the place of worship. Many Zoroastrians take time off to pray, recite the five *Gathas* and cleanse their houses. Daily samples of sacred food are tasted by them during the daily ceremonies.



14 (Tuesday) NEW YEAR'S DAY Sikh



17 March (Friday) ST PATRICK'S DAY Christian / National

The patron saint of Ireland, who lived in Britain in the 4th century CE, became a priest and set out to evangelise the Irish. His symbol is the shamrock, sprigs of which are worn on this day. Parades are held in Dublin and elsewhere, often of a secular nature.



18 (Saturday) to 24 (Friday) HIGAN Japanese

21 March (Tuesday) SHUNBUN NO HI Japanese

Higan is a 7 day festival that marks the Spring equinox (Shunbun No Hi). As at the Autumn equinox, harmony and balance are the themes. Sutras are recited, and the graves of relatives are visited. Higan usually runs for three days either side of the equinox.



18 / 20 March (Saturday / Monday) HOLA MAHALLA / HOLA MOHALLA Sikh

In 1680 Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Sikh Guru, introduced this festival at Anandpur in Punjab, India, on the day after the Hindu Holi. It includes displays of swordsmanship, horsemanship, archery and wrestling, together with displays of weapons and symposia of poetry, making it a lively and colourful occasion, particularly for young Sikhs.



19 March (Sunday) ST JOSEPH'S DAY Christian (Roman Catholic)

A day to honour Joseph, Husband of the Virgin Mary, who, along with Mary, was responsible for Jesus' upbringing.



19 March (Sunday) MOTHERING SUNDAY / SIMNEL SUNDAY Christian

This is more popularly known as Mother's Day. Traditionally, Christians visited their 'mother church' and took gifts to their mothers, which often included a *simnel* cake.



20 March (Monday) SPRING EQUINOX / OSTARA Pagan VERNAL EQUINOX / ALBAN EILER / ALBAN EILIR Druid

By the Spring Equinox, the powers of the gathering year are equal to the darkness of winter and death. The God (the Green Man) awakens during this season. Some dedicate this time to Eostre, the Anglo-Saxon goddess of fertility.



21 March (Tuesday) NAW-RUZ Baha'i

New Year's Day and the end of the nineteen day fast that concludes the old year.



21 March (Tuesday) JAMSHEDI NORUZ Zoroastrian (Iranian)

NoRuz (New Year's Day) occurs on the first day of spring. It represents the resurgence of life and the symbolic victory of the forces of light over darkness. New clothes are worn and gifts and prayers offered at the Fire Temple to seek blessings from Ahura Mazda, and to participate in a *jashan* or thanksgiving ceremony, followed by dancing and making merry.



22 * March (Wednesday) to 21 April (Saturday) RAMADAN Muslim

Ramadan is the 9th month of the Islamic Calendar, when the Prophet received the first revelation of verses of the Qur'an. It is the holiest month for Muslims, and they dedicate themselves to spiritual renewal, prayer and intensive devotional reading of the Qur'an. During the month of Ramadan Muslims are required to fast from daybreak until after sunset. No food or drink may be consumed during the hours of fasting, and those fasting must also abstain from smoking and from sexual relations. After the custom of the Prophet, the fast is traditionally broken each evening by taking dates and water.

* Muslim festivals begin in the evening before the Gregorian dates shown in this calendar.



23 March (Thursday) AVA MAH PARAB (ABAN JASHAN) Zoroastrian (Shahenshahi / Parsi)

Ava is the guardian/protector of the waters, and is associated with fertility. Zoroastrians celebrate the birth of the waters by going to seas, rivers and streams to recite a litany to the waters, to which they offer flowers, sugar, coconuts and flat cakes of sweet lentils.



25 March (Saturday) THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE LORD Christian (Anglican / Orthodox / Roman Catholic) / LADY DAY Christian / National



Celebrates the announcement to Mary by the angel Gabriel that she is to bear a child, and her response in the Magnificat. Historically the day also marked New Year's Day in England.



26 March (Sunday) KHORDAD SAL Zoroastrian (Iranian)

On the birthday of Prophet Zarathushtra there are visits to the Fire Temple to give thanks to Ahura Mazda for his gift of the Prophet; to participate in a *jashan* or thanksgiving ceremony; to listen to stories of the miraculous birth and life of the Prophet; and to share in a happy community meal, a drink and a dance.



26 March (Sunday) PASSION SUNDAY Christian

This is the 5th Sunday in Lent, when Christians begin to concentrate their thoughts on the Passion or suffering of Jesus.



30 March (Thursday) RAMA NAVAMI Hindu

The birthday of Rama, the seventh avatar of Vishnu, is celebrated at noon in the aarti ceremony, performed in front of a murti or of a picture depicting Rama swinging in a cradle.

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

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 Harriss	Member (Christian Faith) with special responsibility for planning our annual calendar of meetings

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 March Newsletter, please email yorkinterfaithgroup@gmail.com or send direct to am.castle@bopenworld.com **by March 16th to guarantee inclusion.**

Wishing you all the very best for the month of March.

Avtar Matharu, Chair, YIG