



FEBRUARY 2024

Welcome to the February Newsletter.

I hope those of you who joined our January meeting really enjoyed your 'Virtual' visit to the Baha'i House of Worship in Chicago. A big thank you to our host across the 'pond' and to Daryoush for all his hard work in organising the meeting. This month we are delighted to welcome Dame Julia Unwin as our speaker for the evening, and I hope as many of you as possible will be able to come and hear what she has to say.

In this newsletter you will find some information regarding the 'transport consultation, being run by the council, information about help for refugees in this area and an invitation to a special service at the Unitarian Church. Also, please do think about what you will contribute to April's meeting about the role of art in different faiths. Full details can be found in the yearly plan below.

And.....There's always a night out at the pantomime!! Oh no there isn't, Oh YES there is!!! and it's free!! See below for all the details and help raise some funds for the young people of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter day Saints.

All the best for the month of February. I saw snowdrops today so spring is on the way!!

Anne Castle

Our February Meeting will be [Live](#)

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

Tuesday [February 6th](#) 7.00 - 8.30 pm

How do faith-groups respond to current crises? (e.g. cost of living/housing, etc.)

Speaker: Dame Julia Unwin - (Read more about Dame Julia below)

Chair - Tina Funnell

Dame Julia Unwin



Dame Julia Unwin is an experienced non-executive, speaker, consultant and mentor.

She was the Chief Executive of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation for a decade until the end of 2016.

In 2017 she launched and chaired the Independent Inquiry into the Future of Civil Society in England, which reported in November 2018, and held a fellowship with Carnegie UK Trust 2017/18 considering the role of kindness in public policy.

She has written and spoken extensively on issues relating to philanthropy, governance, the voluntary sector and its relationship with government. Her publications include 'Why Fight Poverty?', 'Kindness, Emotions and Relationships', the 'Blind Spot in Public Policy Making' and 'The Grant Making Tango'.

She is currently a non-executive director of the Mears Group PLC and of Yorkshire Water. She is Inaugural Chair of Smart Data Foundry based at Edinburgh University. She also chairs the Board of Governors at York St John University.

In 2010 Dame Julia was awarded the Outstanding Leadership Award in the Charity Awards and has received honorary doctorates from three universities. In the 2020 New Year Honours she received a DBE. For more information about Julia please visit her website: www.juliaunwin.com



City of York Council is currently running an important consultation about all aspects of transport, from buses to cycling & walking, accessibility and more.

There is an online portal and a series of in-person events. The online questionnaire is quite long, but structured in a way to enable people to skip bits they aren't so interested in. It's also not just for residents within the CYC area as they are keen to understand the issues people face getting into and out of York too.

Further information can be found here. <https://ourbigconversation.york.gov.uk/>

Decisions around what the council do with transport and how they construct the strategy are very much not set, and the consultation remains open to all comments. This doesn't necessarily have to be before 4 February, although the online survey will close on that day. It will take some weeks to go through the responses and more comments can always be taken on board.

Julian Ridge is the person drawing up the strategy
julian.ridge@york.gov.uk

Information regarding various organisations that give help to migrants and refugees in this area.

Please pass on any information provided to anyone you know of who might benefit.

If you know of any further help out there which we have not mentioned please send details to Anne (am.castle@btopenworld.com)

for publication in the next newsletter

Many Thanks

Contact details for Refugee Action York are: Carrie Wheeler

CEO: carrie@refugeeactionyork.com or

John Williamson Senior Project Worker: john@refugeeactionyork.com

Contact details for York City of Sanctuary are: Rebecca Russell: rebecca@yorkcos.org.uk or Paul Wordsworth: paul@yorkcos.org.uk

There is a 'Welcome Café' that takes place every two weeks where refugees come for advice, support and also to meet with friends over refreshments. This has been running for almost 2 years now. The Café is held in the City Church on Gillygate, York, between 12.30 and 2.30pm. To find out the dates, please contact Rob who organises it. His email is: rob.ainsworth@yorkcitychurch.org.uk

York Mosque Community Kitchen - warm food, tea and refreshments by York Mosque and Guest Kitchens from the local community

Open every other Thursday 12.00 -14.00 (next dates 1st Feb, 15th Feb 29th Feb. for further information contact Rasha Ibrahim via the YIG email.

Migrant Help's Refugee Employability Programme

designed to assist refugees in preparing for work and life in England.

This programme offers personalised support from dedicated case workers who will help you enhance your English proficiency and guide you in finding suitable employment. The goal is to provide unique, locally tailored assistance that caters to specific needs, empowering people to succeed in their new life.



Migrant Help are proud to be delivering the programme with [Growth Company in Yorkshire & Humber](#)

help with: Finding work. Employability skills including CV writing, job applications, and interview skills. General English and employment-specific language courses. Work experience opportunities. Finding skills and training programmes. Community integration - help to settle in the local community by accessing local support such as health, housing and community services.

E-leaflets: [For referrers](#) [For refugees](#) [For employers](#)

Contact - Laura O'Shea <Laura.O'shea@migranthelpuk.org>

York Unitarians, St Saviourgate Unitarian Chapel



SPECIAL SHARED SERVICE

You are invited to join the congregation on Sunday 18th Feb at York Unitarians in St Saviourgate, York when they are hosting a slightly unusual service.

It is going to be a shared service led by Rabbi Elisheva and Rasha Salah El-Din.

It is at the usual Sunday service time of 11am and if you are available they would love to see you there.

You are welcome to pass on the invitation to other members of the Interfaith Group too. It promises to be a very special occasion. There will be refreshments and time to chat together after the service.

Rev. Stephanie Bisby

Celebrate Eid!

Join local artist Griselda Goldsbrough for a
FREE Eid card making workshop

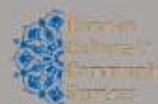
Create cards to celebrate Eid with pens, pencils and
collage materials.

Friday 16th February

**No need to book drop in any time between
10 am - 12 pm and 12 - 2 pm**

**Everyone Welcome
York Art Gallery Learning Studio**

For more details visit www.yorkartgallery.org.uk/your-visit/events/
or scan the QR code



**York
Art
Gallery**

It's that time of year!! Oh no it isn't! Oh yes it is!!!!!!



Here is the link to get the tickets:

Get your tickets now on Eventbrite.

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/rapunzel-tickets-794284445157>

It is held at The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints which is right next to West Bank Park, off the B1224 Acomb Road
West Bank, Acomb, York YO24 4ES
There is free car parking at the side of the church.

This year it's Rapunzel. Book early to guarantee seats at one of our four free performances.

Choose from either Thursday 15th February at 7pm, Friday 16th February at 7pm, or Saturday 17th February at 2pm or 7pm. Refreshments will be on sale in the foyer before the performance and during the intermission. All proceeds go towards more great activities for our young people.

YIG Programme for 2024

(This is a 'draft' programme so look out for any changes in each months newsletter)

FEBRUARY 6th

How do faith-groups respond to current crises? (e.g. cost of living/housing, etc.)

Speaker: Julia Unwin

Chair - Tina Funnell

MARCH 5th

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church: its history and contemporary religious, social and political role.

Speaker: Roy Love, (recently returned from his 'final' visit.)

(Chair Sister Patricia Harriss)

APRIL 2nd

The Role of Art in Different Faiths (Chair and Organisers Christopher Styles and Sarah Hubbard)

April and October 2024 - "Bring and Share Objects of art and faith"

In these sessions we would like to share works of art that are precious to us as individuals from different faith backgrounds and discuss together how such works have been a personal inspiration to us in our diverse spiritual journeys.

If you are passionate about a piece of art that inspires you or speaks to you spiritually and that you would like to bring and share with us at one of the sessions then do contact Christopher and give him a brief description of your piece of art and what you would like to communicate about it.

You can reach him at WiseOldBob@BTInternet.com

Christopher or Sarah will then contact you and provide you with all the information you will need to take part.

MAY 7th

A Zen Perspective on Modern Science: the quantum world, AI and virtual realities

Speaker: Ocean Melchisedech

Chair Sister Patricia Harriss

JUNE 4th

Current Topics Which Concern Us: an inter-generational discussion in groups.

Two students will join each group, and lead it, introducing and discussing current topics which are matters of concern for them.

Organiser: Mimi Lowry

Chair - Penny Coppin-Siddall

JULY 2nd: Planning meeting, to collect suggestions for the 2025 programme and for Interfaith Week 2024

Chair Avtar Matharu

AUGUST 6th Annual Picnic - location to be decided

SEPTEMBER 3rd

'Music Which Inspires Me'.

Is there a piece of music which holds a deep and spiritual meaning for you? Would you consider bringing it along to our September meeting and sharing it with the group followed by a short explanation ? If so, please email Anne **am.castle@btopenworld.com** telling her the title and length of the music, (so we don't have a duplicate) and a short paragraph with the main thrust of why this piece has meant so much to you. Anne will put together a programme and you will be fully informed about how the evening will run beforehand. If you would like to invite a younger member of your faith community to participate with, or instead of, yourself, that would also be very welcome!
Look forward to hearing from you!

Organiser and Chair: Anne Castle.

OCTOBER 1st

The Role of Art in Different Faiths: second session. (See April 2nd)

Chair and Organisers: Christopher Styles and Sarah Hubbard

NOVEMBER 5th

Celebrations of Faith, presented in Photographs- Key Moments of our Faith Year.

We hope to make a presentation/display of photographs taken over twelve months (so starting this November) recording key moments in your faith year, or high points for individuals such as weddings or naming ceremonies etc. If photography is your passion why not consider putting yourself forward as the representative of your faith for the year? Obviously you would not have to take all the photos yourself but ensure that events are recorded and that any people in the pictures are happy for them to be on public display. For further information and any ideas you may have please email

Mimi Lowry Organiser - ml292@st-andrews.ac.uk

Chair - Penny Coppin- Siddall

DECEMBER 3rd

AGM followed by social activities.

Chair - Avtar Matharu -Organiser of social part: Anne Castle.

RELIGIOUS FESTIVALS FEBRUARY 2024



1 February (Thursday) IMBOLC / CANDLEMAS Pagan

Imbolc/Candlemas celebrates the awakening of the land and the growing power of the Sun. Snowdrops, which appear at this time of the year, are seen as the heralds of spring.



2 February (Friday) PRESENTATION OF CHRIST IN THE TEMPLE / CANDLEMAS Christian

Congregations hold lighted candles to recall the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple, and Mary's following Jewish tradition after the birth of a son. His recognition by the aged Simeon is expressed in the words of the *Nunc Dimittis*.



3 February (Saturday) SETSUBUN [Bean Scattering] Japanese

The day for the Bean Scattering ceremony, performed both in homes and in temples.



8 or 15 February** (Wednesday) PARINIRVANA [Nirvana Day] Buddhist

Mahayanists mark the final passing away from this world of Gautama Buddha at Kushinagara, India, at the age of 80. Pure Land Buddhists call this Nirvana Day.

*** some uncertainty about date*



8 * February (Thursday) ISRA AND MI'RAJ [The Prophet's Night Journey] Muslim

This marks the night journey of the Prophet Muhammad through the heavens to the presence of God, when the command that Muslims should pray five times a day was given to the Prophet. The rock from which the Prophet ascended is now in Jerusalem's 'Dome of the Rock'. Muslims mark this night by reading the Qur'an and saying additional prayers.

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



10 February (Saturday) SONAM LOSAR Buddhist (Nepal)

Sonam Losar 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.



10 February (Saturday) YUAN TUAN [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.

2024 is the year of the Dragon.



13 February (Tuesday) SHROVE TUESDAY Christian (Western Churches)

‘Shrove’ relates to absolution from sin. Nowadays it is a day for eating and enjoyment. In Britain it is called ‘Pancake Day’, as pancakes use up all the rich foods before Lent. Elsewhere it is known as *Mardi Gras* (Fat Tuesday), and is a time for carnivals and fairs.



14 February (Wednesday) ASH WEDNESDAY Christian (Western Churches)

This first day of Lent recalls the temptations Jesus faced for forty days in the wilderness. In Catholic and some Anglican churches, worshipper’s foreheads are marked with a cross of ash made from burning the palm crosses of the previous year – hence ‘Ash Wednesday’.



13 / 14 February (Tuesday / Wednesday) 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.



14 February (Wednesday) [to 28 March] FIRST DAY OF LENT Christian (Western Churches)

This is the beginning of the Lenten Fast, which involves abstinence from meat, fish and dairy products until Easter. Unlike the Western tradition, where Lent begins on the Wednesday before the first Monday of Lent, Eastern Churches start Lent on the Monday before the first Monday.



14 February (Tuesday) ST VALENTINE'S DAY Christian / National



22. February (Thursday) The Chair of St. Peter Christian

A feast kept since the 4th century as a celebration of the unity of the Church. (The ‘chair’, or ‘cathedra’ is the special seat in every cathedral from which the bishop preaches, including St. Peter’s in Rome.)



23 February (Friday) Emperor's Birthday Japanese



24 February (Saturday) CHUNJIE / YUANXIAOJIE / TENG CHIEH [Lantern Festival] Chinese

The Lantern Festival marks the first full moon of the year and the lengthening of the days. Strings of lanterns in various designs are hung up indoors and outside as decoration.



24 February (Saturday) MAGHA PUJA Buddhist

1,250 enlightened disciples came to the Bamboo Grove on the full moon of Magha. The Buddha predicted his death and gave a summary of his teachings and a code of discipline which all monks are expected to recite every fortnight. The day is observed with meditation, chanting and listening to sermons.



25 * February (Sunday) 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.

And finally, A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIR

As Chair, I continue to value your membership and my aim for 2024/25 is to continue to expand our network through mutual respect and shared values for a better and inclusive York.

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.

York Interfaith Group Committee 2024	
Member	Responsibility
Avtar Matharu	Chair
Dee Boyle	Vice Chair and Interfaith Week planning
Penny Coppin-Siddall	Secretary
Daryoush Mazloun	Treasurer
Rasha Ibrahim	Press and Publicity Officer
Anne Castle	Newsletter
Varsha Gulati	Hindu Representative
Sister Patricia Harriss	Annual Meeting Planning
Tina Funnell	Planning assistance
Sarah Hubbard	Jewish Representative

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@btopenworld.com **by February 16th**

Please ensure that your contributions are in 'Word' or a format which can be converted to 'Word'. (PDF Leaflets are particularly difficult) Many Thanks

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

Avtar Matharu, Chair, YIG