



## DECEMBER 2024

As I write this, I can see snow, well, sleet really, falling outside the window behind me. It is very seasonal as we are about to enter December but how glad am I to be in a nice warm house! At this point in time I am in the unusual position of not actually knowing where I will be at Christmas. Don't worry I won't be homeless, but at a time when I am usually making Christmas puddings, I am just trying to visualise how many boxes I will need to pack up the things we will take with us, and whose garage they might go into between moving out and moving in. I was quite amazed really, when it was our three grown up children who are determined that we will all be together somewhere for the 24th/25th and that they would sort it out! So, just like the story of the "Grinch", Christmas will come "without ribbons, tags, packages boxes, ( except the moving ones!) and bags" but with the things we really need. ( better add Christmas puddings to that "go without" list!),

As this will be the last newsletter I edit, I would just like to say what a pleasure it has been to work with all of you at York Interfaith and to be part of something that might actually help to make the world a better place. Kind Regards and Best wishes for the Holiday Season and for 2025 - Anne Castle

**An early message from the Chair:** Anne, Thank you so much for your brilliant Editorship of our monthly newsletter. You have not missed a single deadline, keeping everyone informed of important matters every month. Your contribution to YIG is highly valued. May we wish you and Laurence lots of onward success with your new (ad)venture(s) - Avatar

**Our December Meeting will be LIVE**

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

**Tuesday December 3rd 7.00 - 8.30 pm.**

**A.G.M.**

**Followed by Refreshments, Quiz, (optional) and Social Time**

As a group, York Interfaith has just celebrated its 35th birthday! Its a great record, but the group will only continue to thrive with your support, so PLEASE do come along, participate in the election of the new committee and consider how you can contribute in 2025.

All the information you need regarding nominations and voting procedures has been sent to you by email from our secretary Penny Coppin-Siddall

**\*EARLY WARNING - OUR JANUARY MEETING IS ON TUES 7TH JANUARY, NOT 2ND**

**FOR OUR DEAR FRIEND DARYOUSH - SADLY MISSED BUT JOYFULLY REMEMBERED**



A message from Avtar YIG Chair  
Daryoush touched many lives as a person of faith, interfaith, genuine warmth and high intellect. We all have many special memories of Daryoush who served in YIG for many years as Baha'i Faith Committee Member, Chair and Treasurer.

I know many members of YIG have already sent messages of condolence to his family and Fleur sends her thanks to all of you. All I can say is that Daryoush was always so kind to me, and I really admired his unshakable faith in the wonderful life that would be his beyond our world.  
I wish you well in your next adventure my friend.  
Anne Newsletter Editor



A message from Fleur (daughter )

Despite our best efforts to keep him here, God had other plans, and in the early hours of this morning (22nd November) dad made peace with the world and winged his way to the Abha Kingdom.

We are still a bit numb, getting used to the fact that we will no longer be able to embrace him, to feel the warmth of his generosity and spirit, to eat together, to laugh together, and so much more that we took for granted and thought we had years left to enjoy. We know that he will be missed by many, not just because he was a wonderful man, but because he tirelessly strived to make this world a better place. His life was truly one of service to his family, his friends, his Faith, his community and the entire human race. But we also know he will be welcomed with open arms at the big summer school in the sky by many loved ones waiting to greet him, closer to his beloved wife Denise and daughter Gabby.

Love you dad



# York Interfaith Group -Interfaith Week in York



**9<sup>th</sup> - 17<sup>th</sup> November 2024**

## **‘Unity – We are all on a Journey’**

A big Thank you to all who arranged or hosted any event during a very busy and interesting Interfaith Week. Particular thanks to Dee and Penny who put so much effort and time into making the event such a success. (Photos of some events below)



### **INTERFAITH UNITY BREAKFAST**

9th November 9-10 am

### **TREE LOVING CARE**

9th November 10.30-1.30



**DIWALI CELEBRATIONS 9th November 4pm - 8.30**



REMEMBRANCE DAY  
WREATHS LAID BY MEMBERS  
OF YORK INTERFAITH GROUP



FAITH IN SCHOOLS - YIG AND SACRE  
12th November 4-530pm



CIRCLE OF LIGHT-FRIENDSHIP ON  
CAMPUS Tues, Thurs and Fri 5-6.30



Armageddon: Are we living the end of times? An  
Islamic Perspective

Wed.13th 6-730 York Mosque



INTERFAITH MEDITATION Thurs 14th



CREATING INTERFAITH TREE  
DECORATIONS  
14th November 1-3pm



STORIES FROM OUR FAITHS -York Library Sat 18th Nov. 10-12.30



Shabbat 2pm Friends Meeting House.  
Stories of Sarah and Hagar



UNITY  
an Interfaith service - Unitarian Church  
Sun 17th 11am

**YORK INTERFAITH 35TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION**  
**Sunday 17th November 2024**



What a Celebration!! 35 Years is a pretty good record to hold

It was a fantastic end to a highly successful Inter faith Week with many visitors from the past and new faces too. The event was fully supported by several influential decision makers and stakeholders which puts York Interfaith Group in a very positive light going forward.



## **MONTHLY MEETINGS 2025**

Tina has been working hard to arrange the first part of next year's programme. Please do not be shy about volunteering to speak yourself or suggesting the name of anyone who might be able to provide an interesting evening.

It can be as simple as a conversation with an acquaintance and something to which all members should be considering contributing.

| MONTHLY MEETINGS 2025 (Usually first Tuesday of the month)           |                                                                                                 |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| January 7th (second Tuesday)                                         | The stained Glass of York Minster<br>Speaker - Hilary Moxon<br>Chair -Tina Funnell              |
| February 4th                                                         | Rites of Passage within different Faiths<br>Speakers from different faiths<br>Chair - Dee Boyle |
| March 4th                                                            | The Camino Pilgrimage<br>Speaker - Peter Orange<br>Chair -Avtar Matharu                         |
| April 1st                                                            | Hospital Chaplaincy presentations from 3 faiths.<br>Chair – Tina Funnell and Varsha Gulati      |
| May 6th                                                              |                                                                                                 |
| June 3rd                                                             | Planning Meeting                                                                                |
| July 1st                                                             |                                                                                                 |
| August 5th                                                           | Picnic                                                                                          |
| September 2nd                                                        |                                                                                                 |
| October 7th                                                          |                                                                                                 |
| November 4th<br>(*Interfaith Week -Traditionally Sat 11th -Sun 19th) |                                                                                                 |
| December 2nd                                                         | AGM and social evening                                                                          |

## **VOLUNTEERS NEEDED**

For February's meeting it was suggested that people from various backgrounds could speak for 5 minutes about a rite of passage in their faith followed by questions and discussion.

Christian-Baptism, Jewish-Bar mitzvah, Hindu-Wedding, Sikh-Amrit, Islam- Birth and naming, Baha'i -Age of maturity, Catholic - First communion

Please could anyone who is able to fulfil the roles above, or know someone who can, contact Tina asap      [tinafunnell@btinternet.com](mailto:tinafunnell@btinternet.com)

POSTER KINDLY SENT IN BY CHRIS CHARTERS



The York Bereavement Alliance provides advice,  
information and support for people in the  
City of York to find the right help.

For help search 'bereavement' under the services and  
products directory on **Live Well York**  
Email: [enquiries@yorkbereavementalliance.org](mailto:enquiries@yorkbereavementalliance.org)



**We are here to help**

Call or text for advice and information.  
**07741 734659** (Mon to Thurs 12pm to 2pm)

# RELIGIOUS FESTIVALS DECEMBER 2024



## **1 December (Sunday) ADVENT SUNDAY Christian (Western Churches)**

The start of the Christian year, four Mondays before Christmas. It is often celebrated by lighting the first candle in the advent crown – a circular wreath of greenery. A further three candles are lit on subsequent Mondays, culminating with the Christmas candle on the 25th December. This signifies the transition from darkness to light.



## **8 December (Sunday) IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY Christian (Roman Catholic)**

This day celebrates the doctrine, held mainly by Roman Catholics, that Mary herself was born free from Original Sin, leaving her sinless for the conception and bearing of Jesus.



## **8 December (Sunday) BODHI DAY Buddhist**

Some Buddhists (e.g. Pure Land followers) celebrate Gautama's attainment of Enlightenment on this day under the Bodhi tree in Bodhgaya, North India.



## **10 December (Monday) HUMAN RIGHTS' DAY International**

In 1948 The United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: 'All human beings are born with equal and inalienable rights and fundamental freedoms.'



## **21 December (Saturday) MARTYRDOM OF SAHIBZADA AJIT SINGH AND SAHIBZADA JUJHAR SINGH Sikh**

This day commemorates the martyrdom of the elder sons of Guru Gobind Singh.



## **21 December (Saturday) WINTER SOLSTICE / ALBAN ARTHAN / ALBAN ARTHUAN Druid**

## **21 December (Saturday) YULE (archaic form Geola, pronounced Yula) Wiccan / Pagan**

Yule is the time of the winter solstice, when the sun is reborn, an image of the return of all new life. Heathens celebrate Yule for twelve nights and days, starting the evening before the Winter Solstice (called Mother's Night), when they think of their female ancestors and spiritual protectors. The night heralds the beginning of the major holiday in Heathenry.



## **24 December (Tuesday) CHRISTMAS EVE Christian**

Evening carol services, crib services and Midnight Masses inaugurate the festival of Christmas. Santa Claus (from the Dutch *Sinter Klaus*) is a legendary figure, based on St Nicholas of Myra, and is supposed to bring presents to children on Christmas Eve.



## **25 December (Wednesday) CHRISTMAS DAY Christian Western churches (see also 6 / 7 January for Orthodox Church)**

Christmas Day celebrates the birth of Jesus, whom Christians believe to be the son of God. Gifts are given as reminders of the offerings brought to the infant Jesus, and Christmas carols, plays and evergreens are associated with this time, while nativity sets are displayed in many churches and in some homes.



### **26 December (Thursday) ZARATOSHT NO DISO Zoroastrian (Iranian)**

Zaratosht no diso is the death anniversary of Prophet Zarathushtra and is a sorrowful occasion. Tradition records that he was assassinated at the age of 77. It is customary to visit the Fire Temple, participate in special remembrance prayers and ponder upon the *Gathas* or Hymns of Zarathushtra, which embody his eternal message to humanity.



### **26 December (Thursday) MARTYRDOM OF SAHIBZADA ZORAWAR SINGH AND SAHIBZADA FATEH SINGH Sikh**

This day commemorates the martyrdom of the two younger sons of Guru Gobind Singh.



### **26 \* December (Thursday) to 2 January (Thursday) HANUKAH / HANUKKAH Jewish**

Celebrates the rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem after it was recaptured from the Syrian Greeks by the Maccabee brothers in 165 BCE. For the eight evenings of the festival, candles are lit from right to left in a *hanukiah*, a nine-branched *menorah* – one candle for each evening. The ninth candle is the *shamash* (the servant candle) from which the other candles are lit. Foods cooked with oil - such as doughnuts and *latkes* (potato cakes) – are traditional to remember the miracle with oil that happened at this time.

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



### **26 December (Thursday) ST STEPHEN'S DAY / FEAST OF ST STEPHEN Christian (Western churches) also 27 December (Friday) in the Eastern Churches, or 9 January for those Orthodox churches using the Julian Calendar**

A Christian saint's day to commemorate Saint Stephen, the first Christian martyr or protomartyr.



### **31 December (Tuesday) OMISOKA Japanese**

Japanese festival which prepares for the new year by cleansing Shinto home shrines and Buddhist altars. The bells of Buddhist temples are struck 108 times to warn against the 108 evils to be overcome.



### **31 December (Tuesday) HOGMANAY National**

A celebration widely observed throughout the UK, and especially in Scotland, where bagpipes, *haggis* and first footing are widespread. Clearing one's debts, cleaning the house, welcoming guests and strangers and a host of other traditions feature at this time.

## And finally, A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIR

This is my last message as Chair as I will be standing down at the AGM but will stay active on the Committee in another role. I have not taken this decision lightly but I want to allow someone else to experience this amazing opportunity and all the privileges that it brings.

May I firstly re-iterate YIG's deepest condolences on hearing of the sad and sudden loss a few days ago of Daryoush. In January 2020, I took over from Daryoush as Chair and learnt so much from him over the years, often in how to tackle difficult situations. He will be missed and the last few months have been unfortunate, as we also heard of the loss of Maurice Vassie, another stalwart of York Interfaith Group. Our condolences to the Vassie Family. Sister Patricia, Tina Funnell and I attended his funeral service 14th November 2024 at a packed St Helen's Church, Escrick, where there was standing room only – a true testament of Maurice's brilliance and positive impact of people.

That leaves me to thank the brilliant current and past Committee's and Members that I have had the honour and privilege to Chair and serve. We, not I, have achieved so much together. We have always adopted a 'can do', positive attitude. Our influence across the City through our community cohesion work has grown exponentially, making us a trusted partner with many organisations. You have kept me going but there is still so much more to do. May I wish my successor an even more successful tenure as Chair.

Thank you for everything and wishing you all the best for the festive season and Happy 2025.

Avtar

| 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                         | Annual Meeting Planning                 |
| 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

X   Formally known as Twitter)      @Yorkinterfaith

email      yorkinterfaithgroup@gmail.com

**If you would like to contribute an article or advertise** an event in our January Newsletter, please email [yorkinterfaithgroup@gmail.com](mailto:yorkinterfaithgroup@gmail.com) **by December 16th**

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