



GREETINGS TO YOU ALL!

I write this after returning from the Holocaust Commemoration at Oxford Town Hall. (See p.3)

Surveys that come through my inbox are often from a specific religious group and some will have among the questions those designed to determine which faction I most identify with, or other questions as whether the subject of my charity is dependent on the religious affiliation of the recipient. I cannot find a faith tradition which has as a core tenet that before doing an act of charity you ask the religious credentials of the recipient. Where are we going wrong, when our faith seems to be getting in the way of treating all human-beings as intrinsically equal?

Post-Brexit and post-Trump, a number of demonstrations have taken place across the country. The one in Oxford was advertised as a 'Muslims against Racism' event – I briefly went along and found the section of the crowd by me seemed to have been packed by far-left activists. They were carrying placards calling for the resignation of President Trump and starting chants of 'Trump out!' I felt deeply unhappy. It is not that I agree with the politics of President Trump, but he is the elected leader of a nation state which carried out the election in a democratic manner, and concluded with a rather unsuitable person being placed in a position of great power. We need to express our dissent, but we also need to express our abhorrence of the mind-set that took George Bush and Tony Blair into an invasion of Iraq to bring about a change of its government with all the ensuing consequences for the region.

There are many states in the world with a disgraceful record of civil-rights and the restriction of liberty and freedom of expression for their citizens. We have a right to object to them, and to provide such humanitarian support their citizens as we are able to. But, without very careful consideration of all the possible unintended consequences, we have no right to directly attempt to bring about the end of the regime. We can boycott goods and services that the UK obtains from those states. (I was brought up in a household where no South African produce crossed our doorstep; because of apartheid.) That boycott over many years may have helped to bring about the democratisation of South Africa.

What can we be doing about the evils in our modern world?

Bede Gerrard

PS Oxford's 2017 Friendship Walk of Faiths is on Thursday 29 June.



**THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY AND THE
ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH
COMMIT TO TACKLING MODERN SLAVERY
Istanbul, Turkey, 7 February 2017**

Photo Credit: Lambeth Palace

Archbishop Justin Welby and His All-Holiness Bartholomew of Constantinople have pledged to fight modern slavery in its various forms.

At a forum in Istanbul they signed a joint statement, <https://www.patriarchate.org/-/modern-slavery-a-joint-declaration>, vowing to **CONTINUES....**

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- Condemn all forms of human enslavement
- Pray for all victims
- Commend the efforts of the international community
- Repent of not doing enough to curb modern day slavery
- Appeal to governments to implement strict modern day slavery laws
- Urge members of the Orthodox Church and Church of England to become educated, raise awareness and take action
- Commit to establishing a joint taskforce for modern day slavery, looking at ways the Orthodox Church and the Church of England can work together.

EVENTS IN AND AROUND THE SOUTH EAST

ANNUAL MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN EVENING FOR CHRISTMAS, PORTSMOUTH CATHEDRAL Address by Sheikh Fazole Abbas Dato, Resident Alim / Imam, Wessex Shia Ithna Asheri Jamaat – Al Mahdi Centre. 23 January, 2017 (Excerpts)

In the name of God, Most Beneficent, Most Merciful. Peace and greetings be upon all prophets of God, His virtuous servants. Salamun Alaykum / May peace be upon you all. On behalf of the local Muslim community and my community, the Wessex Shia Ithna Asheri Jamaat, I am delighted and grateful to have once again been invited to join you, our Christian brethren, at this 22nd joint Muslim Christian event.

What is the word of the year for 2016? Dictionary.com declared it to be *xenophobia*. The word finds its roots in two Greek words: *xénos* - 'stranger, guest', and *phóbos*: 'fear, panic.' Its English usage is relatively new, only entering the language in the late 1800s. *Xenophobia* has come to mean 'fear or hatred of foreigners, people from different cultures, or strangers', and it can also refer to fear or dislike of customs, dress, and cultures of people with backgrounds different from our own.

The largest spike in online searches in search for the term *xenophobia* occurred on June 24, 2016 with a nine-fold increase in 'lookups'. Does June 24, 2016, strike any bells? This was the day after the UK voted to leave the European Union. Soon after the second-largest surge for the term was in the period leading to the 2016 US presidential election. Another word which attracted increased user interest was the term 'hate-crime'. Use of the expression soared in the month of July as newspapers covered an increase in crimes motivated by prejudice in post-Brexit UK. In October, the Home Office reporting a 41% increase in hate-crimes during the month following the EU referendum.

What I would like us all to reflect upon is that despite being chosen as 2016's Word of the Year, *xenophobia* is not to be celebrated. Rather it is a word to reflect upon deeply in the light of the events of the recent past. In a similar vein the increased 'lookup' trend for the phrase 'hate-crime' does not deserve acclamation.

As 2016 Word of the year *xenophobia*, should set alarm bells ringing for all of us as we reflect on events not only on the international scene from regions such as Myanmar / Burma, the Middle East or the lands across the pond, but also on the local landscape here in Europe and the UK. For a long time we seem to have been fed a message of fear and worry about issues ranging from globalization, political strife, ethnicity, genocide, terrorism, immigration, refugees, Islamophobia; about freedom of movement of goods, people, services and capital over national borders. From all of these to financial crises and austerity leading to loss of jobs, cuts in social care services and many other worries. Underlying all these is the fear of 'the other', *xenophobia*.

Sometimes it seems as though everyone is talking about it, at all levels of society and from every personal, professional and political platform. Certainly this is having an effect. Barbed wire fences along borders have been erected. Some countries have been motivated to enact legislation that bans the public expression or practice of one's faith. Messages of populism like building walls, locking entry at borders for people of 'other groups' are being fired. To put it simply: It is boiling down to the sentiment that, 'I don't like you because you don't look like me.' Unfortunately that is becoming the reality of the world we live in.

As our communities around the world get buffeted by these rough waves of *xenophobia*, hate, bigotry and racial prejudice, the question I ask tonight is: 'As human beings, especially as people of faith, will we allow ourselves to be sidelined by immoral political slogans, or a media that often is filled with hate, intolerance, bigotry and contempt of 'others', or an atheist agenda that pushes man away from God and closer to materialism and egotism?'

We may not have the opportunity to do much about these rough waves on a broader plane, but locally in our nation and here at home, we can stand firm against the ugly face of *xenophobia*, racial prejudice and hatred. In Britain today, people of many different faiths and of no faith live side by side. Diversity, a core part of our British Values, has always been regarded as something to be celebrated, and there is recognition that it is

wrong to cause offence to those whose lives are different from our own. And isn't this precisely what both our faiths [Christianity and Islam], and indeed all faiths uphold?

All the prophets have brought a message of love, love of God, love of the parents and family, love of neighbour, love of His creations. Through this we elevate ourselves to become closer to earning Divine pleasure. To emphasise that the differences in our creation are neither a cause for superiority or discord, I would like to share with you a verse from the Noble Quran:

O mankind! Indeed we have created you of a male and a female, and made you nations and tribes so that you may recognise / identify with one another; indeed the most honoured of you in the sight of God is the most God-wary among you; Indeed God is all-Knowing and all-aware. (Al Hujurat : The Private Chambers 49:13).

And in another verse Almighty God draws attention that the variation in our languages and colour is among the signs of God. Is it possible that appreciating our gifts of diversity in creation and coming together, coming into close contact with each other with love, respect and service, will lead us into enhancing our spirituality? The opportunity lies before us to continue working together to build a society rooted in the values we treasure.

How do we safeguard ourselves from *xenophobia*? I offer a few thoughts. Let us learn from one another about our diversity and remove misconceptions. When we understand each other's perspectives our lives can be transformed and enriched. The more we connect, meet each other, talk to one another, try and understand each other, then the better this country, the continent and the world is going to be for everyone, irrespective of faith, ethnic or cultural background. Cohesion and trust needs to win over *xenophobia* and mistrust.

Let us strive to live with our neighbours with compassion, to appreciate our differences, and to rejoice in our common values and our common humanity. We all carry within ourselves the power to transform our communities, and when we come together, something truly magical can happen! It is important that we continue to work together and pray together so that the world around us may see that our faith and our diversity in creation does not divide us, but rather draws us closer to one another as we worship and seek to serve Almighty God, our Creator, our Nourisher. Let us glorify our Creator by working to live together in peace and harmony. Love teaches us that, though our theology and our practices are different, the enduring human spirit that is in each of us remains a ray of hope in the chaos around us.

By coming together this evening, we have practised love for Almighty God our Creator, love for our neighbour, love for our community. These are essential doctrines taught to us by Jesus, Prince of peace and the Prophet Muhammad, the Rahmatulil 'aalamin. (mercy for the universe). Isn't this certainly a blessed gift for our communities? Subhaanallah - Glory to God.

I sincerely hope and pray that we carry on to attain greater heights as we continue to serve in God's Holy name in our communities.

If you have any feedback, please contact Sheikh Fazle Abbas Dato: residentialim@almahdi.org.uk

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY REMEMBRANCE - Oxford Town Hall, 27 January 2017

About forty-five people gathered at the top of the main stairway into the principal hall, waiting and talking quietly with each other until the Lord Mayor arrived to welcome us to the short ceremony, and introduce the



annual commemoration. Among those present were people from the City and County Councils and representatives of Oxford's faith communities, including the City Rector and a local Imam with his daughter who said prayers before a memorial light was lit and a minute's silence was observed.

Oxford's Lord Mayor, Cllr Mohammed Altaf-Khan, said: 'Holocaust Memorial Day is not only about commemorating past genocides and honouring those who died, but about standing with those who survive so this year's theme is 'How can life go on (after genocide)?'. "It is a chance to reflect on and learn from the lessons of the past to influence and create a safer future as well as to ensure that these horrendous crimes are not forgotten or repeated.'

Mrs Penny Faust, Chair of Oxford Council of Faiths and member of the Oxford Jewish Congregation, said: "Holocaust Memorial Day reminds us of the dangers of racism and prejudice across the world. It's a reminder that, more than seventy years after the liberation of the Nazi concentration camps, we can still see genocide, the conscious and deliberate effort of one group to eliminate another. In each generation it is not enough to know that personally, you are not racist. I believe that each of us must speak out against racism and prejudice

at all levels of our society wherever and whenever we notice them, before they grow into something much worse. We should be aware that every small step we take that is engendered by 'fear of the other' takes us along a road that could make future genocides acceptable.'

Holocaust Memorial Day has been commemorated in the UK since 2001, and in 2005 the United Nations declared 27 January as an international day for remembrance and contemporary action: to remember the millions of people who have been murdered or whose lives have been changed beyond recognition during the Holocaust, under Nazi persecution and in the subsequent genocides in Cambodia, Bosnia, Rwanda and Darfur.

While the event was covered in that night's local TV programmes, one person commented: 'All very worthy, but how do we take it out into the streets rather than just having it 'for the converted?' A question bolstered by the small exhibition of photographs and text in one of the Town Hall's rooms. The rise of fascism in 20th-century Europe and the continuing acts of genocide in Bosnia, Africa, and the Middle East were remembered. All was focused on the European manifestation of internecine hatred. Nothing of the 19th/20th-Century Armenian and Chaldean massacres, or the plight of the Yazidis or the minorities in Burma / Myanmar, or the other SE Asian countries. Yes, the Nazi destruction of 11 million lives was the greatest act of genocide in modern times, but have we learned nothing from it? We can still be so selective in our remembrances. Pastor Martin Niemöller's words springs to mind:

First they came for the Socialists, and I did not speak out - because I was not a Socialist. Then they came for the Trade Unionists, and I did not speak out - because I was not a Trade Unionist. Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out - because I was not a Jew. Then they came for me - and there was no one left to speak for me.

We should perhaps add for ourselves 'It did not affect Europeans, so it is nothing to do with me'. The long-term aim of what we do in the inter-religious activities is to get away from the 'us and them' attitudes; the attitudes that make us do things just for our own group or interest.

Bede Gerrard

YOM HASHOAH / יום השואה

Yom HaZikaron laShoah ve-laG'vurah (יום הזיכרון לשואה ולגבורה; 'Holocaust and Heroism Remembrance Day'), known colloquially in Israel and abroad as Yom HaShoah (יום השואה) and in English as Holocaust Remembrance Day, or Holocaust Day, is observed as Israel's day of commemoration for the approximately six million Jews and five million others who perished in the Holocaust as a result of the actions carried out by Nazi Germany and its accessories, and for the Jewish resistance in that period. In Israel, it is a national memorial day and public holiday. It was inaugurated on 1953, anchored by a law signed by the Prime Minister of Israel David Ben-Gurion and the President of Israel Yitzhak Ben-Zvi. It is held on the 27th day of the month of Nisan (April/May), unless that would be adjacent to Shabbat, in which case the date is shifted by a day.

This commemoration is independent of the United Nations 'Holocaust Memorial Day' held in late January. The intention of both days is to recall the inhumanity of man to man throughout history combined with the prayer that through remembering we may not repeat the tragedies of the past. *Shoah* is a Hebrew word meaning 'tragedy or catastrophe'; this removes the otherwise direct association of 'sacrifice to God' which is inherent in the word 'Holocaust'.

This year, 2017, Yom HaShoah begins at sundown on Sunday, 23 April.

THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY EXPRESSES SHOCK OVER CHILD MIGRANT CHANGE

The Rt Revd Justin Welby said that he was saddened and shocked to read in the Ministerial statement released yesterday that only 350 children will be received under the regulations in the Dubs Amendment. Our country has a great history of welcoming those in need, particularly the most vulnerable, such as unaccompanied children.

Archbishop Justin stated

Refugees, like all people, are treasured human beings made in the image of God who deserve safety, freedom and the opportunity to flourish. Jesus commands us to care for the most vulnerable among us: 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.' (Matthew 25:40). The Government's decision last year to take in vulnerable children was the right thing to do and was further evidence of the UK's leadership on the response to the Syrian and wider migration crisis. Our Government's leadership on financial and technical support in the region, and its leadership in resettling

refugees from UNHCR camps is to be commended. However, I fear that this week's decision does not meet the spirit of the commitment that was given during the passage of the Immigration Act last year.

I agree entirely with colleagues who have spoken out on this already that for those of us who supported the Dubs amendment*, we believed that the Government was committed to welcoming up to 3000 children under this scheme. To end the scheme now, when such a small proportion have actually entered the country, is regrettable. Local authorities, who are bearing the costs of the resettlement, must be given the resources and time needed to meet our original commitment.

On Tuesday, I was in Istanbul to co-sponsor a Forum on modern slavery and trafficking. During the event, we heard about the clear and terrible link between the large-scale movement of refugees and the risk of trafficking. Providing safe passage for unaccompanied children already in Europe, into caring and loving homes – in some cases through Christian groups such as the excellent Home for Good – is a clear and tangible way in which we as a country can demonstrate our values of protecting the vulnerable and welcoming the stranger.

We must resist and turn back the worrying trends we are seeing around the world, towards seeing the movement of desperate people as more of a threat to identity and security than an opportunity to do our duty. We cannot withdraw from our long and proud history of helping the most vulnerable.

I very much hope that the Government will reconsider this decision, and work with church groups and others to find a sustainable and compassionate solution that allows those most in need to find sanctuary in our country."

10 February 2017 Anglican Communion News Service

* The scheme is known as the 'Dubs amendment' as it was designed by a former child refugee, Lord Dubs, who arrived in the UK as a six-year-old after fleeing the Nazis.

The scheme, introduced last year, aimed to help some of the estimated 90,000 unaccompanied migrant children across Europe. While there was no target number specified in law, campaigners had suggested the UK could help 3,000 of the most vulnerable. British ministers have announced that 200 children have been brought in under the scheme so far and that it will shortly close - after another 150 are settled in the UK. The government has defended the decision, which it said had been made after France raised concerns that the scheme could be encouraging more children to make the perilous journey to Europe and encouraging people traffickers.

However the Bishop of Croydon, the Rt Revd Jonathan Clark, who has been involved with efforts to welcome child migrants, said the government was 'in effect helping the trafficking industry.' He described the change as disgraceful: 'The Dubs amendment, as Alf Dubs originally put it forward, proposed a commitment to 3,000 children and ministers signalled that the Government would abide by the spirit of the original amendment. There is a huge question over how about 400 is in the spirit of 3,000.'

FORTHCOMING EVENTS IN AROUND THE SOUTH EAST



CANDIFA
CANTERBURY AND DISTRICT INTER-FAITH ACTION



AND

17TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Saturday 4 March, 3.00pm

Friends' Meeting House, The Friars, Canterbury CT1 2AS

This falls in the middle of Fairtrade Fortnight, so please bring fairly traded drinks, food or food made from fairly traded ingredients. CANDIFA is a group member of Canterbury Fairtrade Network, so our theme will be

faith in fairtrade

Discover how people of faith and belief are involved in the Fairtrade Movement

www.fairtrade.org.uk/en/get-involved/in-your-community/faith-groups

Following our business meeting we will have a conversation about Fairtrade in our lives and communities and beliefs, and then we shall share the refreshments we have brought. We are grateful to the Society of Friends for their kind hospitality. The nearest car parking is at St Radigund's. We shall be pleased to see you - do feel free to welcome friends. With warm good wishes, Mike Walling, CANDIFA Chair

FAITH DAY 2016: THE CITY OF BRIGHTON & HOVE AT ITS BRIGHTEST AND BEST INTERFAITH CHOIR'S CHARM OFFENSIVE FOR THE CITY

Now in its third year, The Interfaith Choir goes from strength to strength. Its repertoire of songs, chants and exquisite harmonies has grown exponentially. Last year it performed well at a great variety of events including a Refugee Festival, The Mayors Service, The City's Remembrance Day Service in Hove, the IFCG Summer Concert and The Annual Interfaith Service. Other very special events included a sacred festival in Horsham and an invitation to a superb Christmas celebration held by the interfaith community of Crawley, which was a massive success, and enjoyed equally by the choir and the enthusiastic interfaith congregation.

The Choir continues to grow, but with over 50 other choirs operating in the City, many singers living locally have other commitments. To join, it's not necessary to read music, or have previous choral experience, or is it necessary to be a person of faith, either. It is helpful to enjoy and appreciate the spirit and ethos of the City's Interfaith community, to be ready to participate in some beautiful music of ethnicity and spirit and be happy to sing with a delightful group who enjoy singing at all sorts of fun and spiritual occasions - spreading the message of peace and harmony throughout our City.

It costs just £5 per rehearsal session, or £40 per term; choristers who may have problems in paying are never denied membership. If you are interested contact 07730-617 000; admin@interfaithcontactgroup.com.

SONGS FOR THE SPIRIT - Saturday 4 March, 6.30pm, Hove Methodist Church

The Interfaith Contact Group of Brighton & Hove invite you to their Spring Concert - with glorious music from The Interfaith Choir, Judith Silver, Razia Aziz, Companion Voices www.interfaithcontactgroup.com

THE INTERFAITH CONTACT GROUP OF BRIGHTON & HOVE

Sunday 12 March, 3.00pm, The Friends Meeting House

Leading interfaith figure, Satish J. Sharma, explains current challenges to the interfaith movement

A popular and respected force in the UK interfaith community, Satish J. Sharma is General Secretary of the National Council of Hindu Temples. He will address the IFCG Annual General Meeting, and will discuss the alarming social and political changes that could threaten the interfaith movement worldwide.

IFCG SERVICE AND FILM OPEN NEW DOORS TO THE INTERFAITH COMMUNITY

The 2016 Interfaith Service proved to be tremendously successful, with many people throughout Sussex and beyond attending the service at The Progressive Synagogue. The profound effect of this sacred event and its significance was appreciated by people from across the world, who were able to see the short and visionary film of the service made by Sarah West of WestCreative www.westcreative.org.

Many of those that contacted the IFCG commented on how the film affected them, and how they would like to be there at the next service in 2017. **Access the film** www.interfaithcontactgroup.com

GUIDE TO INSURING FAITH-BASED ORGANISATIONS

CaSE Insurance was set up and remains part-owned by the charity NCVO and the charity lawyers, Bates Wells Braithwaite and an insurance specialist called aQmen Underwriting. It has been going for ten years and has over 4,000 charity, faith and not for profit clients.

It has developed its own Faith insurance policy in partnership with Aviva, and is offering a free guide on 'Insuring your faith-based organisation' to members of the Inter Faith Network for the UK.

Further information <http://caseinsurance.co.uk/inter-faithnetwork-guide/>

TRUSTEES AND OTHERS - DUTIES UNDER SECTION 19 OF THE TERRORISM ACT

Last year, the NTFIU and the commission released an alert about the duties of Trustees, and others involved with charities, under Section 19 of the Terrorism Act 2000.

New address Report concerns of a Section 19 offence being committed to S19Alerts@met.pnn.police.uk

Trustees must also ensure any suspicions or beliefs are reported to us under the 'Serious Incident Reporting framework':

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/375979/
Reporting_Serious_Incidents_LowInk.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/375979/Reporting_Serious_Incidents_LowInk.pdf)

Are your contact details up-to-date? Check the contact details for your charity's named contacts, including an up-to-date email address so that we can quickly contact you when needed:

<https://apps.charitycommission.gov.uk/officeforms/CCPortal.ofmland>

Keep up with all our news, guidance and events [Twitter](#) @ChityCommission; [LinkedIn](#); sign-up to our [blog](#) <https://charitycommission.blog.gov.uk/>

FUNDING CENTRAL - www.fundingcentral.org.uk/default.aspx

Funding Central is a free website for charities, voluntary organisations and social enterprises in England that provides access to thousands of funding and finance opportunities, together with tools and resources for supporting organisations to develop sustainable income strategies appropriate to their needs.

Similar websites for funding in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland can be found at **Funding Scotland** - www.fundingscotland.com/; **Wales Council for Voluntary Action** - www.wcva.org.uk/funding/search - **Grant Tracker for Northern Ireland** - <https://www.grant-tracker.org/>

2017 INTERFAITH CALENDAR AND INFORMATION

For some Orthodox Christians dates are observed on the Julian calendar which is currently 13 days later than Gregorian/civil calendar – the feast dependent upon Easter are kept by all Orthodox Christians on the same days. Some faith traditions begin the day at sunset so festivals begin a day earlier than the date might suggest. Dates that depend on a lunar calendar will change from year to year on the civil calendar. Within the same faith tradition a local date may be observed for some celebrations. The Islamic calendar means that dates advance approximately ten days each civil year.

FEBRUARY

- 19 **MEAT FARE SUNDAY** *Orthodox Christian* Sunday when the last meals using meat are eaten until the breaking of the Lenten Fast on Easter Sunday.
- 25 **MAHA SHAVARATRI** *Hindu* Festival in honour of Lord Shiva and his marriage to Goddess Parvati. Ceremonies involving prayers and hymns take place, mostly at night.
- 26 **CHEESE FARE SUNDAY** *Orthodox Christian* Sunday when the last meals using dairy produce are eaten until the breaking of the Lenten Fast on Easter Sunday.
- 27 **LENT BEGINS** *Orthodox Christian* Period of preparation for Easter; extra prayers and actions of self-denial or of particular good deeds are undertaken.
- 28 **SHROVE TUESDAY** *Western Christian* Day before Lent begins. Traditionally larders would be cleared of the foods not eaten during Lent.

MARCH

- 1 **ASH WEDNESDAY** *Western Christian* Lent begins: period of preparation for Easter during which extra prayer and actions of self-denial or of particular good deeds are undertaken. As a sign of repentance some Christians have a cross made from ashes put on their foreheads.
- 12 **PURIM** *Jewish* Celebration of the deliverance of the Jewish minority in Persia from genocide. Charity to the poor, sharing food with friends, and vigorous merrymaking mark the observance.
- MAGHA PUJA DAY** *Buddhist* Celebration of the presentation of teachings by Lord Buddha to an assembly of holy men.
- 13 **HOLI** *Hindu* Spring festival dedicated to the concept of pleasure observed in a colourful and boisterous manner. People shower each other with coloured water and smear red and green powder on each other.
- HOLA MOHALLA** *Sikh* Day when mock battles are fought and martial arts are displayed.
- 20 **EQUINOX / OSTARA** *Wicca/Pagan* Northern hemisphere celebration of the turn of the year when day and night are of equal length.
- 21 **NOROOZ (NEW YEAR)** *Persian/Zoroastrian*
- NAW-RÚZ (NEW YEAR)** *Baha'i*
- 25 **ANNUNCIATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY** *Christian* Celebration of the message delivered by the Archangel Gabriel from God to the Virgin Mary that she was to be the Mother of Jesus.
- 28 **HINDU NEW YEAR** *Hindu*
- 28 **March-April 5 RAMANAVAMI** *Hindu* Celebration of the birth of Lord Rama, hero of the religious epic poem, *The Ramayana*. The days involves telling of stories and going to the temple.
- 28 **KHORDAD SAL (Birth of Prophet Zaranthushtra)** *Zoroastrian*

APRIL

- 8 **LAZARUS SATURDAY** *Orthodox Christian* Last day of Great Lent before the beginning of the strict fast of Holy Week when the last days of Jesus' earthly life are remembered.
- 9 **PALM SUNDAY** *Christian* Celebration of the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. The day begins Holy Week. It is observed by worship and processions using palm branches.
- 11 **LORD'S EVENING MEAL** *Jehovah's Witness* Primary annual celebration of Jesus' Last Supper; takes place in the evening.
- HANUMAN JAYANTI** *Hindu* Celebration of Hanuman, an embodiment of Lord Rama. Devotion and selfless work are encouraged.
- 11-14 **THERAVADIN NEW YEAR** *Buddhist*

- 11-18 PESACH (PASSOVER)** *Jewish* Eight-day celebration of the deliverance of the Jews from slavery in Egypt. The story of the Exodus is recounted, and the ongoing struggle of all peoples for freedom from internal and external tyranny is celebrated. A special meal is a central feature.
- 13 MAUNDY THURSDAY** *Christian* Observance during Holy Week of Jesus' Last Supper and His washing of the disciples' feet indicating the New Commandment to serve one another.
- 14 HOLY / GOOD FRIDAY** *Christian* Remembrance of the crucifixion of Jesus and His entombment
- BAISAKHI (VAISAKHI)** *Sikh* The day remembers Guru Gobind Singh and the founding of the militant fraternity of Sikhs named Kahlisa. The day is observed by temple worship, feasting and dancing.
- 16 PASCHA / EASTER** *Christian* Easter Day, the most important festival of the Christian year. After a vigil the preceding night the Resurrection of Jesus from the dead is greeted with lighting of candles and the affirmation, 'Christ is risen'. Customs include colouring and decorating hardboiled eggs as symbols of new life from the tomb.
- 20 FIRST DAY OF RIDVAN** *Baha'i* Commemoration of the twelve-day period in 1863 when Baha'u'llah declared he was God's messenger for this age. Work is suspended on days 1, 9, and 12 of the festival.
- 23 YOM HA-SHOAH (HOLOCAUST DAY)** *Jewish* A day of remembrance when Jewish people remember the six million Jews, including one and a half million children, who were victims of the Nazi Holocaust. Memorial candles are lit and special services are held. The date is chosen as the closest date in the Jewish calendar to the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.
- 24 THE PROPHET'S NIGHT JOURNEY and ASCENT / LAILAT UL ISRA WA-L-MIRAJ** *Muslim* Festival celebrating in one night the journey of the Prophet Muhammad, in the tenth year of his prophethood, from Makkah to Jerusalem, and through the heavens to the presence of God. Muslims believe the Prophet received the command that they should pray five times daily. The rock from which the Prophet ascended is now contained in the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem. Muslims mark this night by reading the Qur'an and saying additional prayers.
- 29 NINTH DAY OF RIDVAN** *Baha'i*

MAY

- 1 BELTAINÉ** *Druid* The wheel of the year continues to turn and fertile spring yields to the height of summer. Many pagans celebrate Beltaine by lighting fires and leaping over them, and/or with maypole dances, symbolizing the mystery of the Sacred Marriage of Goddess and God.
- TWELFTH DAY OF RIDVAN** *Baha'i*
- 10 VESAKHA PUJA / WESAK / BUDDHA DAY** *Buddhist* Wesak is the greatest Buddhist festival. Theravadins celebrate the birth, enlightenment and final passing away of Gautama Buddha. Mahayanists have separate days for each of them, and on Bodhi Day celebrate the enlightenment of the Buddha. Houses are decorated with lanterns and garlands, and temples are ringed with little oil lamps. People often send 'Wesak cards' to their friends, and lay people come together at monasteries at this time.
- 12 THE NIGHT OF FORGIVENESS / LAILAT-UL-BARA'AH** *Muslim* The 14th of Sha'ban, the 8th month of their calendar, 2 weeks before Ramadan, Muslims seek forgiveness for their sins. Many believe that on this night Allah fixes a person's destiny for the coming year. the night is often spent in prayer, asking for forgiveness and God's guidance. In the day some fast to prepare for the night. Giving of charity is also traditional. In some places Muslims visit relatives' graves or mark the night by firework displays.
- 14 LAG B'OMER** *Jewish* The Omer, a period of 49 days, lasts from Pesach to Shavuot. It is a time of sadness, the days of mourning broken on this, the 33rd day. Lag b'Omer recalls the end of a plague in Roman times during Rabbi Akiva's lifetime. It is often celebrated by out of door activities. Many weddings take place on this day, since they are not usually permitted during most of the rest of the Omer period.
- 23 ANNIVERSARY OF THE DECLARATION OF THE BAB** *Baha'i* The Bab heralded the arrival of Baha'ullah and was co-founder of the Baha'i faith. He first declared his mission in Persia in 1844. He inaugurated the Baha'i calendar which numbers itself from the year of this declaration.
- 27 RAMADAN BEGINS** *Muslim* As the year is a lunar year about eleven days shorter than the solar year on which the Gregorian (British) calendar is based, Ramadan occurs ten or eleven days earlier each year in the Gregorian calendar. During Ramadan Muslims fast from dawn to sunset. Fasting (sawm) is one of the five pillars of Islam, requiring self-discipline, giving everyone some experience of deprivation.
- 28 ANNIVERSARY OF THE ASCENSION OF BAHA'U'LLAH** *Baha'i* Commemorates the death of Baha'u'llah at Bahji, near Acre, in 1892. His shrine there has become the place towards which all Baha'is face when praying.
- 31 May-1 June SHAVUOT / THE FEAST OF WEEKS / PENTECOST** *Jewish* Shavuot, a two-day festival falling seven weeks after Pesach, celebrates the revelation of the Torah to Moses on Mount Sinai, and also marks the time when the first harvest was taken to the Temple. Synagogues are decorated with flowers. Dairy foods are traditionally eaten. During the festival Orthodox Jews are not permitted to work.

25 (Thursday) ASCENSION DAY (40th day after Easter) *Christian* Commemorates the last earthly appearance of the Risen Christ, who ascended into heaven in the presence of witnesses.

JUNE

- 4 PENTECOST / WHIT SUNDAY** *Christian* The name Pentecost indicates the fifty days that have passed since the observance of Easter. It is the day when the Jesus' disciples first proclaimed the Gospel after they received the gift of the Holy Spirit. Seen as the 'birthday' of the Church, its alternative name comes from the custom of baptizing converts who were traditionally dressed in white on this day.
- 11 TRINITY SUNDAY** *Christian (Western Churches)* On Trinity Sunday, Christians reflect on the mystery of the One God, understood as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, three persons in One Godhead. Eastern Christians celebrate this Sunday as a Commemoration of All Saints.
- 16 MARTYRDOM OF GURU ARJAN (1606)** *Sikh* The fifth Guru was executed on the orders of the Moghul Emperor, Jehangir, for refusing to pay a fine arising from a charge of treason. Guru Arjan made the first compilation of the Sikh Scriptures, called the Adi Granth, and supervised the completion of what is now the Golden Temple in Amritsar.
- 21 SUMMER SOLSTICE (Alban Heruin / Alban Hefin)** *Druid* The summer solstice is the festival of Midsummer, sometimes called Litha. The light of the sun is at the height of its power. It is a time of plenty and celebration.
- 22 LAILAT AL KADR (Lailat ul-Qadr)** *Islamic* Observed during the last ten days of Ramadan, the Night of Destiny celebrates the first revelation of the Qur'an to Prophet Mohammed. There are prayers to Allah for a good destiny.
- 26-28 EID AL FITR ('Id al-Fitr)** *Islamic* Event marking the close of Ramadan. It is a festival of thanksgiving to Allah for enjoying the month of Ramadan. It involves wearing finest clothing, saying prayers, and fostering understanding with other religions.
- 29 FEAST DAY OF SAINTS PETER AND PAUL** *Christian* Feast day celebrating Peter and Paul Apostles who were crucial in the development of the early Christian Church. To emphasise the importance of these two preachers of The Way, Orthodox Christians fast from the Sunday of All Saints until now.

2017 DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Sadaqa Day 26 March <http://mysadaqaday.org>

Islam Awareness Week 27 March-2 April www.iaw.org.uk

Oxford Friendship Walk 29 June from Jewish Centre at 6.15 pm

Srebrenica Memorial Day 11 July www.srebrenica.org.uk

Peace One Day 21 September www.peaceday.org

Sewa Day 1 October www.sewaday.org

One World Week 22-29 October www.oneworldweek.org

National Inter Faith Week in England, Wales and Northern Ireland,
an '8 day week' this year, 12-19 November www.interfaithweek.org

NATIONAL INTER FAITH WEEK

www.interfaithweek.org; facebook.com/IFWeek; [@IFWeek](https://twitter.com/IFWeek)

Highlights The good work done by local faith, inter faith and faith-based groups and organisations

Draws New people into inter faith learning and cooperation

Enables Greater interaction between people of different backgrounds

Helps Develop integrated and neighbourly communities

Celebrates Diversity and commonality

Opens New possibilities for partnership. It builds good relationships and working partnerships between people of different faiths and beliefs and is part of the year-round work of many people and organisations across the UK. Having a special Week provides a focal point, helping to open inter faith activity up to a* wider audience so that more and more people are made aware of the importance of this vital work and are able to participate in it.

The three aims of the Week Strengthening good inter faith relations at all levels;

Increasing awareness of the different and distinct faith communities in the UK, in particular celebrating and building on the contribution which their members make to their neighbourhoods and to wider society

Increasing understanding between people of religious and non-religious beliefs

INTER FAITH WEEK IS FOR EVERYONE!

An opportunity to Strengthen good inter faith relations at all levels Increase awareness of the different and distinct faith communities in the UK, in particular celebrating and building on the contribution which their members make to their neighbourhoods and to wider society Increase understanding between people of religious and non-religious beliefs Reflect, Debate, Cooperate, Learn, Question, Respect, Appreciate, Make, Friends, Celebrate!

Some ways of marking the Week

Faith trails and open door days – opportunities to visit places of worship
Highlighting an inter faith project or programme of your organisation
Launching a new inter faith project or resource; A social media inter faith awareness campaign
Joint social action – like a community litter-pick or charity fundraising; Inter faith sports events
Dialogues, debates and talks; Quizzes, poster and photography competitions
Hands-on learning activities and exhibitions; Whole school and classroom activities
Exchange visits between members of different places of worship
A young people's inter faith forum event; Arts and cultural events
Faith and food events – however you do it, everyone likes to eat!

Join with the many faith, belief and inter faith bodies, community and voluntary organisations, local authorities, Police and emergency services, SACREs, schools, colleges, universities, chaplaincies, businesses and others who will be taking part this year.

This year, why not consider a hands-on social action project – from tree planting to volunteering together in another way that helps the local community? Or hold a discussion about living well together as people of different faiths and beliefs and how we contribute to our shared society?

IDEAS, RESOURCES, EVENT INFORMATION, REGISTER YOUR EVENT PUT IT ON THE MAP www.interfaithweek.org

Inter Faith Week is a programme of The Inter Faith Network for the UK (Reg. Ch. No. 1068934)
2 Grosvenor Gardens, London SW1W 0DH interfaithweek@interfaith.org.uk
The work of IFN is supported by faith communities, trusts, other donors and Government

SUMMER ISSUE OF THE SEEFF Newsletter – July 2017

Events or reports you would like included – please send them to me **before 29 June**.

Short explanations of a festival – I am happy to be sent these.

For reasons of space or balance articles may be edited. If you would like to see an edited version of what you send, before it is published, please let me know.

Bede Gerrard seeffchair@gmail.com

STOP PRESS

PRACTICAL SHARING IN INTER-FAITH SITUATIONS

Provisional title for the 2017 SEEFF CONFERENCE AND AGM

10.00am-4.30pm, Tuesday 17 October

Worth Abbey, Crawley, West Sussex

➔ ➔ ➔ ADD THE DATE TO YOUR DIARY NOW! ⬅ ⬅ ⬅

WOMEN'S ROLE IN PEACEMAKING

A JEWISH AND A PALESTINIAN ISRAELI IN CONVERSATION

Monday 27 March, 6.00-8.00pm, Quaker Meeting House, St Giles, Oxford OX1 3LW

Information and registration office@oasisofpeace.org.uk; 020-8952-4717