



## **AUGUST 2021 MONTHLY NEWSLETTER**

Welcome to our August Newsletter and the first after lifting of Covid-19 restrictions. It is true that for many this marks 'freedom day'. However, freedom is both relative and subjective so let us not forget those that are persecuted for their beliefs, gender, disability, faith etc. We must continue to respect equality, diversity and inclusion for all by working in harmony. Love, charity and compassion is a central tenet of all faiths.

As Chair, I continue to value your membership as York Interfaith Group continues to grow as a community. Thank you for your suggestions of topics for interfaith week (15-21 November 2021) and our 2022 Calendar. Both are taking shape but we still have an opportunity to include more events within interfaith week so please do contact us with your ideas.

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](mailto:yorkinterfaithgroup@gmail.com)

Finally, thank you to Anne Castle for producing our August Newsletter. It's packed full of useful information and stories. Anne is already looking for items for our September newsletter. If you like to submit an article or communicate a relevant event then please email [yorkinterfaithgroup@gmail.com](mailto:yorkinterfaithgroup@gmail.com) or contact any Committee Member. Anne requests that she receive relevant items by August 16<sup>th</sup> to guarantee inclusion.

Wishing you all the very best for the month of August

Avtar

Chair, YIG

### **OUR AUGUST MEETING WILL BE A VIRTUAL MEETING USING ZOOM**

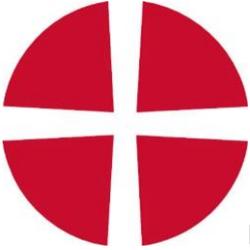
**TUESDAY AUGUST 3rd at 7.30pm Join from 7.20 onwards (or 7pm for speakers)**

**'Love and Charity in our scriptures' are there shared principles?**

The meeting will include contributions from a panel of speakers from different faiths, and will be followed by open discussion from the floor. The meeting will be chaired by Sister Patricia Harriss. A zoom link will be sent via email to those on our email list. For anyone new to York Interfaith Group who wishes to attend then please email [yorkinterfaithgroup@gmail.com](mailto:yorkinterfaithgroup@gmail.com).

# GOD IN LOVE UNITES US

By Anne Castle



Early in 2019, I was able to attend a meeting of all the Methodist Churches in my 'Circuit' to discuss a report on Marriage and Relationships entitled 'God in love unites us' this document was the result of many years of hard work addressing one of the most contentious issues for people of faith, that of how can we best live in relationships today.

We already live with a huge variety of relationships in our world. Within our circle of friends, family and acquaintances, most of us will have at least some experience of 'conventional' two-parent families, single parent families, cohabiting couples, single people, people who have divorced and re-married, same sex partnerships and many others and we were being challenged to ask ourselves, 'how can we best live faithfully as Christians in these relationships today?'

The task group who worked on the report were honest in admitting that each member had started at a different place, that they had disagreed, grappled with their contradictory convictions and found God meeting them in each other.

In July this year all Methodists received a pastoral letter from The Revd Sonia Hicks and Mrs Barbara Easton, President and Vice President of the Conference, partly reproduced below.

*"We wished to take this opportunity to write to you after the Conference voted on the resolutions contained in the marriage and relationships report.*

*We very much appreciate that these decisions will stir up many different emotions for our siblings across the Connexion. There will be some who will be deeply hurt and others who will rejoice by what has been decided. Our Presidential theme this year is God's Table: An Invitation for All, and God's invitation is for every single one of us.*

*During the past years we have continued to listen to and to pray for each other and remaining true to what God is saying to us. We must remember in all this, to continue to hold each other in prayer, and to support each other as we find a way forward, respecting our differences.*

*Our prayer for you, beloved siblings, is that in joy or sorrow, in pain or excitement, we might continue to live within that reconciling love."*

And so, many of you may have heard the news that this year the Methodist Conference voted to allow "any two persons in a loving relationship" to marry in its churches and chapels. Marriage is no longer referred to as 'gay' or 'same sex' or 'heterosexual'. It is just 'marriage'. And in the letter above we are referred to as 'siblings' rather than 'brothers and sisters' in Christ.

Of course we continue to pray for those who are 'deeply hurt' by this decision, but I freely admit to being one who rejoices on behalf of those I know who were once excluded but can now feel truly welcomed and included. Sometimes we find it hard to understand why others do not see things as we do. Yet as the Methodist people, we have chosen to journey on together and find ways of living with contradictory convictions.

## Hindu Celebrations in August by Varsha Gulati

### **Krishna Janmashtami** - Celebrating 30 August 2021

Janmashtami, a major Hindu festival celebrating the birth (janma) of the god Krishna on the eighth (ashtami) day of the dark fortnight of the month of Bhadrapada (August–September). The number eight has another significance in the Krishna legend in that he is the eighth child of his mother, Devaki.

Krishna is a major deity in Hinduism. He is worshipped as the eighth avatar of Vishnu and also as the supreme God in his own right. He is the god of protection, compassion, tenderness, and love and is one of the most popular and widely revered among Indian divinities. Krishna's birthday is celebrated every year by Hindus on Krishna Janmashtami according to the lunisolar Hindu calendar, which falls in late August or early September of the Gregorian calendar.

The story about the birth of Krishna is famous. He was nephew of King Kansa who was afraid that his sisters eighth child will kill him. He imprisoned his sister and brother in-law and killed all their children. Krishna as eight Avtar of Vishnu was to be born to destroy Kansa. On the day of his birth the prison doors opened and all the guards fell asleep and his father was able to take him away to the foster parents through a very rough rainy night.

In the end Krishna did destroy the evil king Kansa

### **Onam** - Celebrating - August 21st 2021

Onam is a Hindu festival celebrated by the people of Kerala. It is the most popular festival in the state and is celebrated each year in August and September, and is also a major harvest festival. This year the festival will be celebrated on August 21, with festivities starting on August 12, till September 23.

Onam marks the first month of the Malayalam calendar known as Chingam. The festival commemorates the appearance of the Vamana avatar of Vishnu and the subsequent homecoming of the legendary King Mahabali. Onam celebrates the Asura King Mahabali's annual visit from Patala (the underworld). On Thiruvonam day, Asura King Mahabali is believed to visit every Malayali home and meet his people.

The celebrations of Onam start on Atham day (the day when Atham Nakshatra prevails) and continue for 10 days till Thiruvonam day, also the most auspicious day during the festival of Onam. Atham Nakshatra is known as Hasta Nakshatra in other Hindu Calendars.

### **Raksha Bandhan** Celebrating.....22 August 2021

**Raksha** means to keep safe, **Bandhan** means tying a sacred thread or amulet on the wrist

This one-day festival, commemorating the love and affection of brothers and sisters, is celebrated on the full moon day in the Shraavana month of the lunar calendar (usually falls in August of the Gregorian calendar).

Traditionally, during the Raksha Bandhan festival, sisters tie Rakhi around their brothers' wrists, followed by the Aarti (prayer) and tilak (putting sacred colour on forehead). It is said and believed that tying a Rakhi gives a responsibility to the brothers to honour his religion and the duty to protect his sister. Brothers also give a gift to the sisters.

In ancient times Rakhi (a holy amulet) tying meant their needs of taking help and promises. People also tended to tie Rakhi to someone's wrist to keep them safe and protected from evil.

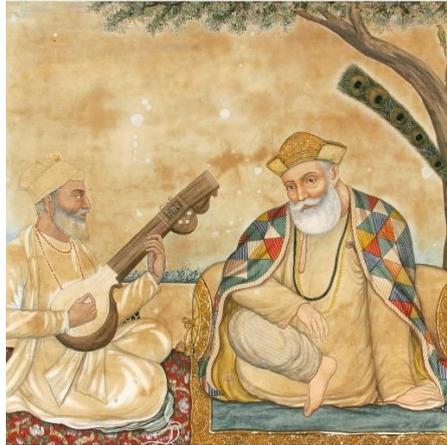
Nowadays, people also tie the sacred Raksha thread to close ones, friends, neighbours, soldiers, and to everyone standing by them through thick and thin.

## Guru Nanak Dev Ji

### Love, compassion, charity and one-ness

By Suki Kaur Matharu

As this month's talk is on love and charity in our shared scriptures, I would like to reflect on teachings of Guru Nanak Dev-ji, the First Sikh Guru, and his relationship with Bhai Mardana, a Muslim. Bhai Mardana accompanied Guru Nanak Dev-ji for most his life, sharing a deep bond of compassion, harmony and respect during many of his travels across India, China and Persia. On their spiritual travels, Guru Nanak Dev Ji sang praises of God and Bhai Mardana played the rabab (stringed instrument) in the tone of love and compassion for the entire humanity.



Picture of Bhai Mardana (seated left) playing the rabab alongside Guru Nanak Dev-ji (seated right). Image taken from [https://www.reddit.com/r/Sikh/comments/hnur8f/guru\\_nanak\\_with\\_bhai\\_mardana\\_victoria\\_memorial/](https://www.reddit.com/r/Sikh/comments/hnur8f/guru_nanak_with_bhai_mardana_victoria_memorial/)

The strength of their relationship and legacy is still evidenced today in the Guru Granth Sahib (Sikh Holy Book) as when Guru Arjan Dev Ji, the fifth Sikh guru compiled the Guru Granth Sahib, he chose Bhai Mardana's grandsons, Bhai Balwand and Satta, for musical compilations to ensure continuity in the singing and music style.

Guru Nanak Dev Ji strove to remove caste. In his eyes, all were equal. *Sarbat da bhala*, (welfare of all) is one of the core principles of Sikhism that can lead us to a humane world

Guru Nanak Dev-ji introduced the concept of langar (sharing food) where people from all walks of life could sit and eat without any sort of discrimination. He coined the verse '*Na Koi Hindu, Na Koi Musalman*' translated as '*there is no Hindu, there is no Muslim*' but instead we are all equal in the eyes of God and fought a society based on truth, gender equality, protection of the environment and universal responsibility. However, Guru Nanak Dev-ji did not believe in conversion. He believed that whatever faith you follow, it's your deeds and actions that should always be pure and honest.

Sikhs believe in three central tenets formalised by Guru Nanak Dev-Ji:

1. Naam Jap: Meditating on God's name to live a life of decency and humility.
2. Vand Shak: Sharing with others, helping those in need, as well as participating as part of a community. A spirit of giving, sharing, and caring for one another often seen in the form of *sewa* (selfless service).
3. Kirit Karo: Earning/making a living honestly.

## RELIGIOUS FESTIVALS AUGUST 2021

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**1 August (Sunday) LAMMAS/LUGHNASDH Wiccan LUGHNASADH Pagan**

Lughnasadh, otherwise called *Lammas*, is the time of the corn harvest, when Pagans reap those things they have sown and when they celebrate the fruits of the mystery of Nature. At Lughnasadh, Pagans give thanks for the bounty of the Goddess as Queen of the Land.



**6 August (Friday) THE TRANSFIGURATION Christian (Western churches)**

This festival commemorates the occasion when Jesus went up a mountain with three of his disciples, Peter, James and John, who saw his face change and his clothes become dazzling white. They witnessed him in conversation with Moses and Elijah, and heard a voice saying, 'This is my own dear Son with whom I am pleased – listen to him'. For many Christians this confirms the divine nature of Jesus.



**6 August (Friday) – 15 August (Sunday) FRAVARDIGAN/MUKTAD Zoroastrian (Shahenshahi-Parsi)**

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.



**10 August (Tuesday) ISLAMIC NEW YEAR 1443 / AL-HIJRA / RA'S UL 'AM (Muharram 1) Muslim**

This day commemorates the Hijra or migration of the Prophet Muhammad from Makkah to Medina in 622 CE, which led to the establishment of the Muslim community there. The day is not universally celebrated amongst Sunni Muslims but is notable as Muslim years are dated from this time and are marked AH (After the Hijrah). In 2021 CE the Muslim year 1443 AH begins.



**13 August (Friday) - 15 August (Sunday) O-BON Japanese [in Tokyo - for rest of Japan see 13 July]**

A Japanese festival when the spirits of the departed are welcomed back home with feasting and dancing. Fires are often lit to illuminate their arrival and departure.



**14 August (Saturday) HERD BOY AND WEAVING MAID FESTIVAL/QIXIJE/CH'I HOU CHIEH Chinese**

This Double Seven festival perpetuates an ancient folk tale of two stars, one on either side of the Heavenly River (the Milky Way). They are held to have been a herd boy and a heavenly weaving maid who had married but were separated when she returned to heaven. The lovers are allowed a reunion on the seventh day of the seventh lunar month when a flock of magpies form a bridge across the Heavenly River.



**15 August (Sunday) ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY Christian (Roman Catholic, Anglican)**

This celebrates the 'taking up' of Mary, body and soul, to heaven. Many Catholic communities mark the festival of the Assumption with processions and fêtes.



**15/ 28 August (Sunday/Saturday) THE DORMITION OF THE MOTHER OF GOD Christian (Eastern Orthodox) [second date follows Julian calendar]**

On this day, Eastern Orthodox Christians commemorate the passing of Mary, Mother of Christ, in the presence of the Apostles. The apostles buried Mary at Gethsemane, where Jesus had also been buried; but on the third day after the burial, when they were eating together, Mary appeared to them, saying "Rejoice". When the apostles went to the grave, her body was gone, leaving a sweet fragrance. This event conveys the idea of death as 'falling asleep' (this is what 'dormition' means), to be followed by eventual resurrection.



### 16 August (Monday) NAVROZE / NO RUZ Zoroastrian (Shenshai-Parsi)

New Year's Day on the Shenshai Calendar. By the twentieth century the Parsis of India had become the largest group in the world practising Zoroastrianism, and in the twenty first century over 95% of Zoroastrians in the UK are Parsis. Like their Indian counterparts, they celebrate two new years – giving more time for making merry!



### 19 August (Thursday) THE TRANSFIGURATION Christian (Eastern Orthodox - Julian calendar)

This festival commemorates the occasion when Jesus went up a mountain with three of his disciples, Peter, James and John, who saw his face change and his clothes become dazzling white. They witnessed him in conversation with Moses and Elijah, and heard a voice saying, 'This is my own dear Son with whom I am pleased – listen to him'. For many Christians this confirms the divine nature of Jesus.



### 19 August (Thursday) ASHURA (10th Muharram) Muslim

For Sunni Muslims Ashura is a minor fast observed by the Prophet. Shi'a Muslims recall a great tragedy that took place in AH 61 (680 CE). The Imam Husayn (son of Ali and Fatimah and therefore grandson of the Prophet) was attacked and killed at Karbala (now in Iraq) along with his family and followers by the troops of the Caliph Yazid.



### 21 August (Saturday) KHORDAD SAL Zoroastrian (Shahenshahi) [26 March (Monday) Zoroastrian (Iranian)]

Khordad Sal is the Birthday of Zarathushtra and falls on the sixth day after NoRuz. *Khordad* means perfection and the festival of Khordad Sal symbolically celebrates the birthday of Prophet Zarathushtra. It is customary on this day to visit the Fire Temple, to give thanks to Ahura Mazda for giving humanity the Prophet Zarathushtra, to participate in a *jashan* or thanksgiving ceremony, to listen to stories of the miraculous birth and life of Prophet Zarathushtra, and to share in a happy community meal, a drink and a dance.



### 21/22 August (Saturday/ Sunday) RAKSHA BANDHAN Hindu

*Raksha* means 'protection' and *bandhan* means 'to tie'. Girls and married women in families of a north Indian background tie a *rakhi* (amulet) on the right wrists of their brothers, wishing them protection from evil influences of various kinds.



### 22 August (Sunday) FESTIVAL OF HUNGRY GHOSTS/ ZHONGQIUJIE / CHUNG CH'IU Chinese

Chinese Buddhist and ancestral festival, when paper objects for use in the spirit world are made and offered to aid those spirits who have no resting place or descendants. Large paper boats are made and burnt at temples to help spirits cross the sea of torment to Nirvana.



### 29/30 August (Sunday/Monday) JANMASHTAMI / KRISHNA JAYANTI Hindu

Birthday of Krishna. Many *Hindus* fast till midnight, the time of Krishna's birth. Those unable to fast will have some fruit and milk. In the temples Krishna is welcomed with singing, dancing and sweets. In some homes and temples an image of the new-born Krishna is put in a cradle. Krishna is a very popular avatar or incarnation of Vishnu and this festival is celebrated widely.

## **OPPORTUNITIES FOR FAITH MEMBERS TO SERVE ON SACRE**

**(Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education)**

### York SACRE:

Sikh

Hindu

Please contact York SACRE directly for further information.

### North Yorkshire SACRE:

We have a number of vacancies on North Yorkshire SACRE, if anyone under the following religions would like to join NYCC SACRE, then please contact [yorkinterfaithgroup@gmail.com](mailto:yorkinterfaithgroup@gmail.com) and the YIG Secretary will pass your expression of interest to a representative on NYCC SACRE

HINDU

JUDAISM

SALVATIONISTS

SOCIETY OF FRIENDS

### **An Interesting Event**

**Environmental Day - 9th October 2021 via Zoom from the Diocese of York**



This is a day of inspiration and encouragement through talks and workshops on the theme of building our awareness and care of the environment. Our keynote speaker will be Dr Ruth Valerio, who is an Environmentalist and theologian, social activist and author. She is the Director of Global Advocacy and Influencing at Tearfund, based in the UK. She was previously Churches and Theology Director at A Rocha UK, during which time she launched the Eco Church scheme. Ruth writes: "I have a particular interest in environmental issues and long to see the culture of the Church change so that caring for God's earth becomes an integral part of church life". We will also be joined by Jo Chamberlain, who is the National Environment Officer for the Church of England, who will talk about resources for churches and individuals for taking action on the environment.

This is a Zoom Conference, which means you log in from home. A more detailed programme and a list of available workshops to choose from during the day (one in the morning and one after lunch) will be sent to you by email in September, giving you the opportunity to choose your preferences in good time

Thank you to Audrey Miller for this information - Link below

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/saying-yes-to-life-environment-conference-registration-152841796929>