

E – News Redbridge Faith Forum

Redbridge Faith Forum News & Events: March 2017 Vol9, No 11

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Redbridge Faith Forum office hours are

10am to 4pm Monday-Tuesday & 10-1 Wednesday-Thursday



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## REDBRIDGE FAITH FORUM LOOKING FORWARD

“Making our Communities Safer” – Monday 6th March 6.30-8.30 pm

St Cedd’s Church Hall, 4 Blythswood Road Ilford IG3 8SH

Please come and join us to:

- Share what makes you feel safe/unsafe.
- Discuss ideas on how to make us feel safer and work with local services to identify & tackle issues of concern.
- Meet your local Safer Neighbourhood Team and Street Enforcement Officers

The venue is located opposite Homebase and is on bus route 86. Please email [faith.forum@redbridge.gov.uk](mailto:faith.forum@redbridge.gov.uk) to book your free place or contact the office on 0208 708 2478/2445. Advance registration is appreciated to help with arrangements but is not essential.

- **Advance Notice – Save the Date – the next RFF Network Meeting will take place on Tuesday 25th April 12-1.30pm in Redbridge Central Library (Gloucester Room)**

## REDBRIDGE FAITH FORUM LOOKING BACK

“Women’s Interfaith Workshop on Prayer” 28 February

Thirty three women from different backgrounds and faiths met together at the Parish Church of St Alban, Albert Road, Ilford on Tuesday afternoon for a very informative and friendly workshop addressing the questions ‘Praying: How? Why? When? To Whom?’ This was the third of a series of workshops on the topic of prayer and featured presentations from different Christian denominations. The first workshop in June had featured the Buddhist and Hindu faiths, and the second in November featuring Sikh and Bahai faiths. A further workshop will take place in May featuring the Jewish and Muslim faiths.



As 28<sup>th</sup> February was Shrove Tuesday the women started the afternoon’s proceedings by helping themselves to hot pancakes with their choice of

toppings. Shrove Tuesday is the last day before the period of Lent begins which is the 40 days leading up to Easter and was traditionally a time of fasting for Christians in recognition of the 40 days Jesus spent in the Wilderness being tempted by Satan. Christians would therefore use up their stock of “rich” food on that day and in some countries the day is called “Fat Tuesday” and Mardi Gras festivals are held.

Jacquie Grieve, Chair of Redbridge Faith Forum welcomed all the women and explained that she would be giving the Roman Catholic perspective on prayer and worship. Jacquie explained about the tradition of fasting during Lent and also that the first day of Lent is known as Ash Wednesday. On this day Roman Catholic churches will use the ash from the burning of the palm crosses which had been made last Easter to mark Palm Sunday – the ashes would be mixed with olive oil and used to make the mark of a cross on the forehead of Roman Catholic worshippers at Ash Wednesday services. This is a symbol to remind mankind of mortality –that mankind is formed from the dust and one day their bodies will return to dust but their souls will live on into the next life. The head of the

Roman Catholic Church is the Pope (currently Pope Francis) who resides in the Vatican in Rome.



Christians believe in the tri-une God – Father, Son (Jesus Christ) and the Holy Spirit. The Bible records that Jesus prayed whilst he was on earth and one example is known as the “Lord’s Prayer” which Jesus used to teach his disciples how to pray. This

prayer is universal across all Christian denominations as it gives a structure for prayer including adoration ( giving God the honour due to him), supplication (for God’s kingdom and personal daily needs), forgiveness (for self, including repentance and for help to forgive others) and to seek God’s help in avoiding sin.

Prayer for Christians is communicating with God – to share our feelings and listen for guidance and prayers are made through the name of Jesus and is the means by which Christians offer themselves to God for his honour and glory.

Prayer can take different forms it can be vocal (said out loud) as an individual, it can form part of a church service such as in Holy Communion/Mass when the sacrifice of the crucifixion of Jesus is remembered, Prayer can take the form of meditation – talking and listening to God and/or contemplation – just resting in God’s presence.

Jacquie explained that the central service in the Roman Catholic Church is that of Holy Mass and Catholics are required to go to Mass every Sabbath (this starts at dusk on Saturday and ends at dusk on Sunday) but many Catholics go to Mass more frequently.

The service includes readings from the Bible (the Book of Psalms and readings from the New Testament) and the Sacrament which is a re-enactment of the Last Supper when Jesus on the night before he was betrayed and arrested broke bread and shared wine with his disciples and told them to do this in remembrance of him. Roman Catholics use wafers of unleavened bread and wine for this service and these are consecrated by the priest – they believe that the words of consecration actually transform the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ. These are therefore held in great awe and left over bread and wine is kept in a decorated box called a tabernacle and a light is kept burning there. The only time when the light does not burn and the box is empty is Good Friday which marks the day Jesus



Christ was crucified. The sacraments are taken to the housebound so that they do not miss out on this important act of worship.

Gill Leonard then gave some additional information from the Anglican perspective (Church of England). Gill explained that there is a large range of variations within the Anglican Church as to the way worship is conducted and that some are known as “high church” such as the venue of today’s workshop as St Albans which practices Anglo-Catholic traditions and others that are much more informal. There are currently 35 variations worldwide of the Anglican Church. The Queen is the head of the Church of England and appoints bishops and archbishops, the spiritual leader of the Church of England is the Archbishop of Canterbury (currently Justin Welby who resides at Lambeth Palace in London).

The Book of Common Prayer gives details of the Orders of Service to be used at Morning & Evening Prayer and Holy Communion and on other occasions. These community prayers are common to all Anglican churches but private personal prayer is often the most important to believers. This communication with God enables believers to become more like Jesus and to share His love with others. Gill explained that she believes that God hears every prayer but He many not always answer them in the way we wish – this can led to people getting angry believing God does not listen to them but in fact it is necessary to acknowledge that God does know best and prayers should be offered in the concept of God’s will being done.

The digits of the hand can be used as a aid to prayer – the thumb being linked to prayers of thanks for home, family, relationships, the first finger (pointer) to pray for those that guide or care for us eg teachers, NHS staff, tallest finger – for those in authority – our MPs, political leaders, those in government, ring finger which is the weakest finger this can help us remember that we are weak and need God’s help to have compassion and love for the weak and vulnerable in our society, and finally the last and smallest finger to pray for our own needs.

Gill explained that in her experience prayer can take place at any time in any location and does not require a certain position eg standing, sitting but can be practised whilst commuting on public transport! Also using visual aids such as music, flowers, candles can help the mind to focus on prayer.

Dulcie Thomson of Vine Church then made some further comments from the perspective of the United Reform denomination. The Reform movement came about in the 1500s when the Protestant church broke away from the Catholic church when Martin Luther became very angry about the taxes imposed on people to build magnificent cathedrals. Worship focuses very much on intercessory prayer with a strong emphasis on Bible teaching and that God is Love and can work through Christians whose duty it is to love others and be anchored in love. There are currently several congregations who worship at Vine Church.

Following these presentations there was the opportunity for questions to be asked and the answers discussed and those present were invited to add personal perspectives from their own Christian denominations.

Women spoke from Methodist, Baptist and Salvation Army backgrounds and explained that these denominations usually have less richly decorated premises and less ceremony and ritual (churches usually have just a plain table but not a decorated altar, don’t usually have stained windows, statues, icons or use incense or bells during worship). Also bread and wine used in Holy Communion (or Breaking of Bread service) is viewed as being

purely symbolic which differs from the Catholic perspective. Accordingly ordinary bread or rolls are used and a non-alcoholic wine or fruit juice are usually used

Time was given for the women to discuss the presentations and ask questions which were gladly answered. All present, felt they had learnt something new and had gained more understanding from the workshop. Many identified some common strands with their own faith teachings and practice. The overall evaluation was that it was an excellent workshop and very worthwhile as it gave the opportunity to ask questions in a friendly and non-threatening environment where people were prepared to listen to each other's views.

## REDBRIDGE FAITH FORUM

### What is it and what does it do?

The Redbridge Faith Forum (RFF) is a charity acting as a collective voice for Redbridge's Faith communities.

RFF hold regular public meetings to discuss social issues affecting faith communities such as education, health, and give people the opportunity to meet and share with other faiths.

RFF was set up in 2003 following a faith conference set up by Redbridge Council, which brought faith leaders together to talk about their communities' needs.

- RFF bring together local members of different faith communities.
- RFF promote social harmony.
- RFF foster a community spirit within Redbridge and the local area.
- RFF recognise the important contribution that religion and spirituality makes to the lives of Redbridge residents.
- RFF lobby relevant organisations that affect faith communities.

### Easy fundraising for Redbridge Faith Forum

Please help us raise funds for the Redbridge faith Forum through online shopping and searching with [easyfundraising.org.uk](http://easyfundraising.org.uk). It's very simple! And it won't cost you a penny. Whenever you buy something or search for something online through this account, the retailer makes a donation to the **REDBRIDGE FAITH FORUM**. All these small donations soon add up! Charities using this method of fundraising have benefited by hundreds & in some cases thousands of pounds!

**Just visit and register at <http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/redbridgeff/>**

**Once you've registered, an email will be sent with login details and then you are ready to help raise money for RFF! To start you off**

**Here are 4 ways through the easy fundraising link above and click on deals at the top of the page and select raise funds for free, for you to start raising money for RFF immediately, just 15minutes of your time!**

**1. Raise 20p for RFF by registering with [greenpreferenceservice.com](http://greenpreferenceservice.com) which is a free service where you decide what mail you want to receive through your letterbox and what you'd prefer to see online.**

**2. Raise 50p for RFF by registering with Download Find & Remind and raise 50p for RFF**

**3. Raise 50p for RFF by signing up to receive emails from Groupon. It features great deals at an unbeatable price every day, whether it's 90% discount on famous coffee brands, 2 for 1 at an exclusive restaurant, or discounted treatments at a heavenly health spa. Sign up to receive emails from Groupon.**

**4. Raise 5p for RFF by registering with beonscreen.com - your ticket to appearing on TV!** Search through shows that are looking for participants, get free audience tickets, find a job in television & entertainment and receive email alerts of new listings!

**With 100 people registering, you could help raise £125 for RFF!**

You will have access to over 2000 well known online retailers- Amazon, Boden, John Lewis, M&S, Expedia, eBay, Argos & more

You can make a difference to Redbridge Faith Forum and help us raise money to continue the good work we do bringing people and communities together and providing essential information and services. **We will keep you updated of money raised through easy fundraising.**

### **Current Trustees**

RFF is an independent organisation with a charitable status (1118675). RFF has a board of trustees composed of representatives of different faiths :

#### **Christian:** ✝

- Jacquie Grieve (chair)
- Phil Butcher (Vice Chair)
- Rev Bernardino Mandlate

#### **Hindu:** ॐ

- Vinaya Sharma
- Appathurai Ramkumar

#### **Jewish:** ☆

- Lawrence Becker
- Angela Banner

#### **Muslim:** ☪

- Ali Qureshi
- Ghazanfer Ali
- Mo Dedat (Treasurer)

#### **Sikh:** ੴ

- Harbans Singh Seehra
- Harmander Singh

#### **Baha'i:** ☼

- Carol Khorsandyon

#### **Buddhist:** ☸

- Rev P Hemaratana
- Dr Suhasini

#### **Jain:** ॐ

- vacancy

#### **Zoroastrian:** 𐬰𐬀𐬎𐬌

### **Redbridge Faith Forum Membership**

We hope that you will understand that in order to continue our work to the benefit of all living in Redbridge, the Faith Forum needs to raise funds to cover the various activities we organise. Membership is open to all and there are a range of options available.

**Associate member:** (open to everyone) receives all e-mail updates, a membership certificate, invitations to all events, able to attend training sessions organised by RFF, able to vote at AGM – suggested donation £10 per year.

We are proposing two other membership scales for large groups and businesses as follows:

- **Place of Worship:** full membership (open to recognised faith groups and their designated representative) all rights as above; additionally such representative may be nominated for election to the Management Committee and - £30 per year.
- **Business member:** receives all e-mail updates, invited to all events, able to attend training sessions organised by RFF, able to vote at the AGM and provided with a copy of the RFF charter

for display at the business premises. Business Member rates: small business £25 (less than 10 employees); medium business £50 (less than 200 employees); large £75 (more than 200 employees).

If you would like to become a RFF member please email [faith.forum@redbridge.gov.uk](mailto:faith.forum@redbridge.gov.uk) for a membership form.

## EVENTS TO COME IN REDBRIDGE

### **Womens World Day of Prayer**

**2.00 pm Friday 3rd March SS Peter & Paul RC Church, High Road Ilford**  
**2.00pm & 7.30 pm St Francis of Assisi Church, Fencepiece Road, Barkingside**

This year's **Women's World Day of Prayer** has been written by the women of the **Philippines**, and **everyone** is cordially invited to attend one of the above services.

Each year, these services from around the world give us an insight into the life and problems, health and wealth of people from the "host" country, always interesting, and this year will be no exception. Please do come, all are welcome and perhaps you could let your community know about the event.

### **Coffee Morning organised by AWAAZ**

**Monday 6th March 10-11.30 am 1 Holstock Road Ilford IG1 1LG**

**Workshops on "Gang kine and gun crime" run by Awaaz at Redbridge CVS organised by**  
**Thursday 9th March 10am-1.00pm Redbridge CVS Forest House , 16-20 Clements Road**

Parents of young people are invited to attend this workshop – light lunch provided. Further details available from Awaaz Group (MBE For voluntary groups),1 Holstock Road

Email: [awaazgroup@hotmail.com](mailto:awaazgroup@hotmail.com)

Website: [www.awaaz.org.uk](http://www.awaaz.org.uk) Mob: +44 (0) 7956661508

### **Redbridge Music Lounge**

**12.30-4.30 pm – Wednesday 1st<sup>h</sup> & 15th March and Thursdays 9<sup>th</sup> & 23rd<sup>h</sup> March** at The Cranbrook Centre in Valentines Park – Melbourne Gate, Melbourne Road IG1 4SB (for directions see [www.cranbrookcentre.london](http://www.cranbrookcentre.london))

The venue is for musicians and anyone interested in playing music, who are retired, in part-time work, unemployed or semi-professional, even if committed to bands/group already but have time and expertise to offer and share mainly, for daytime projects, events and local festivals. Feel free to bring along your instruments and perform – rehearsal equipment and performing facilities are also available.

For further information contact Chris Wyatt mob 07929 071155 email [criswyatt@aol.com](mailto:criswyatt@aol.com)  
[www.rmluk.org](http://www.rmluk.org). Registered Charity 1151132

### **Saturday, 4th March: Litter picking**

1. Community Litter pick: Meeting point at Karamsar Centre, Buckingham Road, IG1 1TP (previously Ilford County Courts) at 10.15 am. Please note that there are thirteen parking spaces on Buckingham Road. To pay phone 02030460010
2. Community Litter pick: Meeting point at Ilford Islamic Centre, 50-58 Albert Road, Ilford IG1 1HW at 10.30 am
3. Community litter picks and activities at Town Centre. Meeting point at the community pitch outside Waterstone's 158-160 High Road, Ilford, IG1 1LL from 11 am.
4. Community Litter pick: Meeting point at Vine United Reformed Church, Riches Road, Ilford, IG1 1JH at 11.15 am

### **ILFORD HOSPITAL CHAPEL OPEN DAY**

**Saturday 11th March 10am-2 pm**

Come and see this beautiful Chapel – free entry and guided tour. Located on Ilford Hill next to the Nat West bank with wheelchair access via Reeds Close behind the Chapel.

### **Government Plan King George A & E Closure in 2019 March & Rally**

**SATURDAY 18TH MARCH 2017 – 1.30-4.30 PM**

#### **Important Message from Ilford North MP, Wes Streeting for all Redbridge Residents**

Our local Accident & Emergency Department at King George Hospital faces the axe in 2019. I am fighting this plan using every avenue open to me with Mike Gapes MP, local councillors and members of the community.

We have over 10,000 signatures on my parliamentary petition but we are stepping up the campaign with a march and rally to show how much the community cares about their local A & E. The details of the event are at the top of this page - **you are required to sign up so that we can organise the march and rally safely. You can sign the petition online or obtain hard copies of the petition to submit by post.**

This is the link <http://www.wesstreeting.org/kgmarch>

If you have signed the petition or want to fight the closure plan it is vital you show your support for the campaign. The final plan to close the A & E is being drawn up over the next few months but we have an opportunity to persuade the Government to change their minds. The march starts at 1.30pm at the Valentines Park Perth Road Entrance

If you can't march, then please sign up for the rally at Redbridge Town Hall. This starts at 3.00pm and will be a great opportunity to hear how you can help.

Thank you for your help and support.



## **Redbridge's Got Talent**

**7pm Friday 24<sup>th</sup> March – Sir James Hawkey Hall, Broomhill Road, Woodford Green IG8)**

The Mayor of Redbridge and his fundraising appeal committee proudly presents “REDBRIDGE'S GOT TALENT.”

As well as raising funds for local charities, we want to present the wonderful range of organisations who work in the local borough helping to develop talent, supporting art and cultural activities and offering great benefits to the local community.

Net proceeds will go towards worthy local charities: Vibrance, DAWN and Healthy Living Projects.

**AUDIENCE TICKETS: £10 per person & £35 for group of 4. For audience tickets, book online at <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/redbridge-got-talent-tickets...>**

## **Sophia Hubs**

For information or any query regarding Sophia Hubs Seven Kings, please contact Ros Southern on 07707 460309/0208 590 2568, or by email [ros.southern@virginmedia.com](mailto:ros.southern@virginmedia.com) Twitter: @sophiahubs7k FB: Sophia Hubs Seven Kings or consult the blog: <https://sophiahubs7k.wordpress.com/>



**On the Redbridge Timebank** – just ask and someone will be able to help you set up or develop your website. The Sophia Hub website doesn't cost a penny <https://sophiahubs7k.wordpress.com/> and I as well as others can offer Timebank hours to help you (in return for hours to spend elsewhere!)

## **HAVE YOUR SAY**

***Comments welcome on the Redbridge draft End of Life Plan 2017-20***

Redbridge Council would like to invite you and the people you support to comment on the Borough's draft End of Life Plan 2017-20.

In recent years, the need to improve end of life care has become a priority at national, regional and local level. Redbridge Council has produced a draft joint plan for end of life services for adults in Redbridge which provides an update on local achievements and a new action plan for 2017-2020.

We would like to know what you think of our plan and would welcome your thoughts and ideas on what further actions you think will help us to continue to improve and achieve our vision for the future.

The closing date for responses is 31 March 2017.

You can find the consultation online at <https://mylife.redbridge.gov.uk/redbridge-homepage/categories/hidden-pages/end-of-life-plan-2017-20/>

## SOME CELEBRATIONS TO COME

*Dates come from interfaith calendar <http://www.interfaithcalendar.org/> and RE online <http://www.reonline.org.uk/>. Information sources as per each item.*

**1<sup>st</sup> March** is **St David's Day** for our **Christian** friends. Saint David, or Dewi Sant as he's called in the Welsh language, is the Patron saint of Wales. His influence is shown in the number of churches dedicated to him in Wales and the celebrations each Saint David's Day. There aren't many facts about St David; All we know is that he really existed, that he was at the heart of the Welsh church in the 6th century, that he came from an aristocratic family in West Wales, his mother was a saint, Saint Non, his teacher was also a saint, St Paulinus, he founded a large monastery in West Wales, he was one of the early saints who helped to spread Christianity among the pagan Celtic tribes of Western Britain, he became Archbishop of Wales, but remained in his community at Menevia (now called St David's), his shrine became a great place of pilgrimage; four visits to the shrine at St David's were considered the equivalent of two to Rome, and one to Jerusalem!

The most famous story about Saint David tells how he was preaching to a huge crowd and the ground is said to have risen up, so that he was standing on a hill and everyone had a better chance of hearing him.

For more <http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays/uk/st-david-day>

**1<sup>st</sup> March** is **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'.

**1<sup>st</sup> March – 15<sup>th</sup> April Lent Christian (Western Churches)** A period of forty days fasting and self-discipline (not counting Sundays) that leads up to Easter. Traditionally Christians give up something during this time to mark the forty days Jesus spent in the wilderness. Many Christians feel it is a time for study groups, prayer and Bible reading.

In Western Christianity, the liturgical season of Lent starts on Ash Wednesday and lasts 40 days (not including Sundays) until Maundy Thursday (the same day that commemorates the last supper).

In Eastern Orthodox Christianity, Great Lent starts on Clean Monday and ends on the Friday before Palm Sunday. Lent was originally known by the Latin term "quadragesima", which translated means the fortieth.

This relates to the fortieth day before Easter and the forty days of fasting to come. It was during the Middle Ages, when sermons were no longer given in Latin that the English term "Lent" was adopted. Lent is derived from the Germanic name for Spring "Lencten" and the Anglo-Saxon name for March "Lencet".

"Lencten" comes from the Germanic root for "long" as Spring is the time of year when the days become longer. Lent traditionally falls within the period of Spring each year. For more:

<http://www.whenis.co.uk/lent> ; <http://www.calendarpedia.com/when-is/lent.html>

**10<sup>th</sup> March** is **Mahavira Jayanti (599 BCE) Jain**. The birthday of the last Tirthankara, or great teacher and model of the Jainas. His birth and the events surrounding it are re-enacted. Monks or nuns read from the scriptures and teach about the rest of Mahavira's life. Lay people then return home to a celebratory feast. <http://www.interfaith.org.uk/resources/2017-religious-festivals/march>

**12<sup>th</sup> March** is **Purim** for our **Jewish** friends. The story of Purim is told in the Book of Esther. Purim commemorates Esther's courage in saving the Jewish people living in Persia 2000 years ago from extermination. Esther is a Jewish girl who becomes Queen to King Xerxes of Persia, and through her bravery, is able to thwart an attempt to slaughter all the Jews living in Persia at that time. Purim is celebrated on the 14th and 15th days of Adar, the twelfth month of the Jewish calendar.

The 14th day of Adar is the day that Xerxes' Prime Minister, Haman, chose for the extermination of the Jews. The word Purim means lots and refers to the lottery that Haman used to choose the date for the massacre, (Esther 3:7). Adar usually falls in March, and is synonymous with joy because it has traditionally been a month of hope and good luck for the Jewish people.

The main commandment related to Purim is to hear the reading of the Book of Esther. The Book of Esther is known as the Megillah, which means scroll. In the synagogue, it is usually an entertaining and rowdy occasion as during the reading, everyone, often dressed up in costume, is expected to boo and clang noise-making instruments every time the name of the villain of the story, Haman, is heard and to cheer whenever the names of the heroes of the story, Queen Esther and her uncle Mordechai's names are uttered. Another mitzvah (commandment) is that Jewish people should eat, drink and be merry at Purim. It is customary to hold carnival-like celebrations on Purim, to perform plays and parodies. Last but not least, Jews are commanded to send gifts of money, food or drink, and make donations to charity. More at <http://www.jewfaq.org/holiday9.htm>

**12<sup>th</sup>- 13<sup>th</sup> March (Sunday/Monday) is Magha Puja.** This is when our Buddhist friends celebrate Magha Puja. (AKA Fourfold Assembly or "Sangha Day") Considered one of the most important Buddhist celebrations, Magha Puja Day refers to the veneration of Buddha and his teachings that takes place on the full moon of the third lunar month (about the last week of February or early March). This holy day is observed to commemorate an important event that occurred early in the Buddha's teaching life: the day on which Lord Buddha recited the "Ovadha Patimokkha" (the Fundamental Teaching or rules and regulation of the monastic orders) to his disciples.

After the first Rains Retreat (Vassa) at the Deer Park at Sarnath, the Buddha went to Rajagaha city where 1250 Arahats, (Enlightened saints) who were the Buddha's disciples, without prior appointment, returned from their wanderings to pay respect to the Buddha. They assembled in the Veruvana Monastery with the two chief disciples of the Buddha, Ven. Sariputta and Ven. Moggalana

The assembly is called the Fourfold Assembly because it consisted of four factors: (1) 1,250 Buddhist monks from different places spontaneously came to pay homage to the Lord Buddha, without any appointment. (2) All of them were Arahants (enlightened monks) who had attained the Apinyas (Six Higher Knowledge). (3) All of them had been individually ordained by Lord Buddha himself (Ehi Bhikkhu). (4)-It was the full moon day of Magha month (March).

Magha Puja is a time for Buddhist to give thanks for the existence and work of the monks and nuns in the religious orders without whose prayers and guidance, sustaining a spiritual life and a spiritual community would be much more challenging. The spiritual aims of the day are: not to commit any kind of sins; to do only good and to purify one's mind. Celebrations vary, but can include chanting, meditation, the lighting of oil lamps, and the reaffirmation of people's commitment to Buddhist practice and traditions. Magha Puja is a traditional time for exchange of gifts; it has become a prominent festival among Western Buddhists even though it is less well known in the East. For more, see <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/buddhism/holydays/sangha.shtm>

**13<sup>th</sup> March** is when our **Hindu** friends celebrate **Holi**. "Holi celebrates triumph over divisiveness and negativity," Sheetal Shah, senior director of the Hindu American Foundation in the National Geographic <http://news.nationalgeographic.co.uk/news/2013/04/pictures/130401-india-holi-krishna-vishnu-holiday-religion-culture/>.

"Celebrated on the day after the full moon in the month of Phalguna—which usually falls in early March—the major Hindu festival also marks the beginning of spring. During the evening of the full moon, bonfires are lit to ward off spirits and to celebrate the victory of good over evil. The following day, people pile into the streets for the beginning of the central Holi ritual—the throwing of bright, vibrant coloured powders and water at friends and strangers alike as they celebrate the arrival of spring, commemorate Krishna's pranks, and allow each other a momentary freedom -- a chance to drop their inhibitions and simply play and dance". For more <http://www.holifestival.org/holi-calendar.html> and for a glimpse of how it is celebrated in India see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xaysqwFoVOE>

**14<sup>th</sup> March** is **Hola Mahalla** (in the Lunar Calendar) for our **Sikh** friends. Hola Mahalla begins on the first day of the lunar month of Chet in the Nanakshahi calendar and follows the Hindu festival of colours, Holi. Guru Gobind Singh started this festival as a day for Sikhs to practise their military exercises and hold mock battles. Today, Sikhs celebrate by watching and partaking in martial arts parades, led by the Nishan sahibs (triangular flag on mast denoting the existence of a Gurdwara) of the Gurdwaras. These are followed by poetry readings and music. For more see [http://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Hola\\_Mahalla](http://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Hola_Mahalla)

**17<sup>th</sup> March** is **St Patrick's Day** for our Christian friends. It is a national holiday in Ireland and commemorates one of its patron saints, St Patrick. In the United Kingdom, it is celebrated in Irish pubs and in cities, such as Nottingham and London where many people with an Irish background live. St Patrick is believed to have died on March 17 in or around the year 493. He grew up in mainland Britain, but spent time in Ireland as a young man and later as a missionary. According to popular legend, he is buried under Down Cathedral in Downpatrick, County Down, and banished all snakes from Ireland. However, it is thought that there have been no snakes in Ireland since the last ice age. The "snakes" that St Patrick banished from Ireland, may refer to pagan worshipers of snake gods. St Patrick's Day was originally a religious occasion to mark the life and work of St Patrick. In 1903 it became a public holiday in the whole of Ireland. Pubs were not allowed to open on March 17 until the 1970s. It is only recently that St Patrick's Day has become a secular holiday. For more <http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays/uk/st-patricks-day>

**19<sup>th</sup> March** is **St Joseph day**, (husband of the Blessed Virgin Mary) for our Christian friends. St. Joseph's Day is a Roman Catholic feast day commemorating the life of St. Joseph, the step-father of Jesus and husband of the Blessed Virgin Mary. "As befitting Saint Joseph's legacy of never speaking directly in the scriptures, leading years of unknown activities as Jesus' earthly father, and dying at date and place unknown, there are two different names for his feast and two different dates and one variable date. There is a tremendous lack of information about St. Joseph.

Catholic tradition honours the feast of Saint Joseph as the husband of Mary on March 19 and the feast day of St. Joseph on May 1 as Joseph the worker. The March 19 date is of comparatively recent years (1621) and is formally named the Solemnity of Saint Joseph Spouse of The Blessed Virgin Mary, the traditional day in the Western Church. An optional date of May 1 for Joseph the Worker was set in 1955 but has not caught on in the Christian world. On the March 19 feast of St. Joseph, Catholics honour him with an age-old tradition called St. Joseph's table. History has it the tradition began on the Italian island of Sicily. There was a drought that ruined harvest and caused a famine. The Sicilians prayed to Saint Joseph, the Patron Saint of the Family and prayers were answered when the famine and the drought receded. In the finest Italian heritage, homage to St. Joseph comes in the form of food and celebration. Over the years many different types of foods have joined the traditional collage that today is known as St. Joseph's table – all done in the theme of bounty food for all". For more, see <http://www.st-joseph-medal.com/st-josephs-day.html> and <http://www.fisheaters.com/customslent5.html>

**20<sup>th</sup> March** is **Naw-Ruz (News Year)** for our **Bahá'í** friends. "Baha'is faithful celebrate the start of a new year with the arrival of spring. After sundown on March 20 – the eve of the vernal equinox (in the Northern Hemisphere) – Baha'is throughout the world will celebrate Naw-Ruz, the start of the Baha'i New Year. For Baha'is this is a religious holiday that marks the end of the Nineteen Day Fast. It is one of the nine Baha'i holy days on which work and school is to be suspended.

The Baha'i Faith originated in Persia (present-day Iran), and the Baha'i calendar adopted the Persian new year holiday, Naw-Ruz, which has been celebrated for thousands of years at the vernal equinox (in the Northern Hemisphere). Baha'is practitioners observe Naw-Ruz through prayer, meditation, readings from Baha'i scripture and festive gatherings." <http://www.bahai.us/2011/03/02/the-annual-nineteen-day-fast-a-time-of-spiritual-purification/>. For more, <http://info.bahai.org/article-1-4-7-2.html>

**21<sup>st</sup> March** is **Naw-Ruz or Norooz (Zoroastrian New Year in the Fasli calendar)** for our **Zoroastrian** and our **Persian** friends. Naw-Ruz or Noruz (also known as **Jamshedi** or **Jamshidi Noruz**) is the seventh obligatory feast and it is dedicated to fire. It is one of the most important festivals for the Zoroastrians for it is believed that Zoroaster himself started this tradition. It is the first day of the Zoroastrian New Year. Many people believe that what they do on this day will affect and influence

the rest of the year. Preparations for Noruz start with thorough cleaning of homes and businesses. Further, traditions include meeting and greeting friends and family and enjoying a special meal together.

"The Zoroastrian Parsis of India celebrate Noruz twice, firstly in common with their Iranian brethren on the vernal equinox as Jamshedi Navroz (also referred to as the Fasli New Year) and secondly on a day in July or August, depending upon whether they follow the Kadmi or the Shahenshahi calendar. This is because the practice of intercalation in the Zoroastrian calendar was lost on their arrival in India. The Kadmi New Year always precedes the Shahenshahi New Year by 30 days. <http://www.crystalinks.com/noruz.html>

Noruz is so deeply embedded in Iranian culture that it is still celebrated as the Iranian New Year in Islamic Iran, although without the religious connotations. Many fires are lit and there is feasting and celebrations. In modern times fireworks have also become part of the festivities.

For more <http://festivals.iloveindia.com/jamshed-e-navroz/jamshed-navroz-date.html>

**25<sup>th</sup> March is The Annunciation of the Lord/ Christian (Anglican).** Lady Day celebrates the angel Gabriel announcing to Mary that she is to bear a child, and Mary's response in the Magnificat. The day provides an opportunity to focus on the doctrine of the incarnation. Gabriel told Mary to name her son Jesus, meaning "Saviour". It is one of the twelve Great Feasts of the church year.

Many Christians observe this event with the Feast of the Annunciation on 25 March, nine full months before Christmas, the birthday of Jesus. The feast of the Annunciation is usually is moved in the Catholic Church, Anglican and Lutheran liturgical calendars when this date would fall during Holy Week or Easter Week or on a Sunday. The Eastern Orthodox Church, Oriental Orthodoxy and Eastern Catholic Churches do not move the feast, having special combined liturgies for those years when the Annunciation coincides with another feast. For more: <https://www.cute-calendar.com/event/feast-of-annunciation/20433.html>

**25<sup>th</sup> March is Lady Day Secular.** This day commemorates the crucifixion of Jesus. Meditative services are held in church to mark the time that Jesus spent on the cross. In the western Liturgical year, Lady Day is the traditional name of the Feast of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin in some English-speaking countries. It is the first of the four traditional English quarter days. The "Lady" was the Virgin Mary. The term derives from Middle English, when some nouns lost their genitive inflections. "Lady" would later gain an -s genitive ending, and therefore the name means "Lady's day." For more: [www.cute-calendar.com](http://www.cute-calendar.com)

**26<sup>th</sup> March is Mothering Sunday (Simnel Sunday) Christian.** This is more popularly known as Mother's Day. Traditionally, Christians visited their 'mother church' and took gifts to their mothers, which often included a simnel cake.

**26<sup>th</sup> March commemorates Khordad Sal** that is the Birth of Prophet Zarathushtra (in the Fasli calendar) for our Zoroastrian friends. Khordad Sal is celebrated as the birthday of Zoroaster. This is known as the 'Greater Noruz' and happens six days after Noruz. The chosen date is symbolic since the actual date of the Prophet's birth cannot be identified accurately. This festival is considered one of the most important in the Zoroastrian calendar. Zoroastrians gather in Fire temples for prayers and then celebrate with feasting. "It is a day of rejoicing, when Zoroastrians and Parsees go to fire temples to pay homage and offer prayers. A feast is prepared, and Parsees in India decorate their homes with flowers and rangoli (colourful patterns). Since the Parsee community is especially tight-knit, Khordad Sal is an occasion for gathering together; it is also seen as an opportunity for individual believers to review their lives and make resolutions for the future."

[http://www.mythicmaps.net/Festival\\_calendar/March/Khordad\\_Sal.htm](http://www.mythicmaps.net/Festival_calendar/March/Khordad_Sal.htm) . For more <http://sakshigopal.blogspot.co.uk/2012/03/zoroaster-english-pronunciation-zrostr.html>

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