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REDBRIDGE FAITH FORUM LOOKING FORWARD

Tuesday, 29th January - RFF Network Meeting 12noon - 1.30pm (registration from 11.45)

Gloucester Room of Central Library, Clements Road Ilford

Please save the date to come and join us for an opportunity to network and listen to an interesting speaker (topic to be confirmed).

REDBRIDGE FAITH FORUM LOOKING BACK

Celebrating Interfaith Week - 14th November 2018

Around 70 people came together at the Ilford Islamic Centre on Wednesday evening 14th November to celebrate national Interfaith Week to enjoy a vegetarian Indian Buffet Meal whilst socialising in the comfortable surroundings.

Deputy Mayor, Councillor Tashir Rashid extended a warm welcome to all the diners as did Phil Butcher, Co-Chair and Mohammed Omer, trustee of Redbridge Faith Forum.

Some examples of feedback from guests

"It was a great opportunity to mingle with people of diverse backgrounds and the food was extremely delicious"

"We both had a great time. Good company and a lovely dinner"

"It was a splendid evening filled with fun, integration with other faith souls and the food was delicious"

Redbridge Faith Forum wishes to thank Ilford Islamic Centre for hosting this event and Masood Chaudhry of Capital Banquets for the delicious catering



REDBRIDGE FAITH FORUM

What is it and what does it do?

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.

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: ✝

- Phil Butcher (Co Chair)
- Rev Bernardino Mandlate

Hindu: ॐ

- Vinaya Sharma
- Appathurai Ramkumar

Jewish: ✡

- Rabbi Lawrence Becker
- Angela Banner

Muslim: ﷻ

- Imam Rafiq
- Mo Dedat (Co Chair & Treasurer)
- Mohammed Omer

Sikh: ॴ

- Harbans Singh Seehra
- Harmander Singh

Baha'i: ۞

- Carol Khorsandyon

Buddhist: ☸

- Rev P Hemaratana
- Dr Suhasini

Jain: ॐ

- vacancy

Zoroastrian: 𐬰𐬀𐬎𐬎𐬀

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 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.

If you would like to become a RFF member please email faith.forum@redbridge.gov.uk

DID YOU KNOW?

Free Counter Terrorism Awareness Briefing for Faith Communities

As the current threat level from terrorism is at SEVERE which means an attack is highly likely, the Counter Terrorism team at Ilford police station are happy to come and deliver a briefing to your community members at your chosen date/time. The ACT project is a Home office led initiative to promote and encourage members of the community to work in partnership with the police to report, deter and detect terrorist activity and crime.

The briefing session provides essential knowledge in counter terrorism awareness to both help prevent an attack and to know what to do if caught up in one and usually takes two hours to deliver. For further queries and to book a session please PC TICKNER or PC HUSSAIN on 0208 345 2601 or e-mail EastAreaEABCUMailbox-.CTPBST@met.pnn.police.uk

Help & Support for Victims of Hate Crime

Redbridge Equalities & Community Council along with sister organisations run a project – Community Against Hate Crime. A hate crime is a crime motivated or aggravated by prejudice against a particular group in society – for reasons of race, religion, disability, gender, gender reassignment, sexuality, migrant or refugee...If you are the victim of hate crime please get in touch to make an appointment to see RECC advice worker on 020-8551 8178 for advice and advocacy services.

The organisation will also come along to speak at events to inform how to report hate crime and what can be done to support those being targeted and can establish mutual support groups of victims. You can also volunteer to become involved in the Community Witness & Support Team.

Email - Office1@redbrideequalities.org.uk - 020-8551 8178

RECC, Room 203, 2nd Floor, Heraldic House, 160-162 Cranbrook Road IG1 4PE.

CAN YOU HELP?

Save Lives at the Night Shelter

8 People died sleeping on the streets of Ilford in the last year.

You can save lives -Sign up to volunteer at the nightshelter at ilfordshelter.com

Ilford Salvation Army, 15 Clements Road IG1 1BH tel 0208 478 2961

REDBRIDGE TOGETHER

Rebuilding the lives of the homeless

“We’ve got to raise awareness. We all have to do something about it. We can’t leave it to somebody else.” -- Russell, previously homeless and now a member of Staff at The Salvation Army

What is Redbridge Together?

Redbridge Together is a collaborative campaign started by local charities, businesses, the London Borough of Redbridge and The Ilford Recorder with the aim to rebuild lives of rough sleepers in the

borough. *Together, we can rebuild the lives of those without a home in Redbridge.*

Our aim is to initially fundraise £50,000 to support rough sleepers, but our **ultimate ambition is to raise £500,000**. The money raised will be donated to local charities The Salvation Army and The Welcome Centre to support a long-term solution to help people off the streets and the short-term needs people face today.

What is the issue and what is it an issue?

Homelessness is a big issue in Redbridge. With 1 in 48 people being homeless in the borough, it ranks number 11 in the country for homelessness; over 65 people are sleeping rough in the borough. Many of these rough sleepers don't have access to welfare or benefits.

How will the money support rough sleepers?

- [The Salvation Army](#) are launching a 'pop up' hostel called [Project Malachi](#), which will see 42 shipping containers constructed in Ilford where rough sleepers can get off the street and start to rebuild their lives. Eight of these containers will be for people who have no access to welfare or benefits. Project Malachi was born out of the frustration of the same individuals attending the winter night shelter at [The Salvation Army](#) year on year and nothing changing. The project will run for 5 years and aims to reduce the number of people sleeping rough in Redbridge over that time.
- Some funding will also go to [the Welcome Centre](#) which is a well-respected local day centre for homeless people. It helps with providing hot meals, showers, clothing, laundry but also advice and support, training and employment and a nurse led clinic supporting health and mental health.

What difference could you make?

At [the Welcome Centre](#):

- £5 would provide hot meals for a homeless person for a week
- £10 would pay for a session with a chiropodist
- £25 would provide a one to one support session
- £50 would pay for one motivational workshop for up to 10 people
- £100 would pay for group exercise classes for a month
- £150 would provide a Back to Work training course for a homeless person
- £250 would pay for a series of Life Skills workshops
- £500 would pay for 12 sessions with a trained counsellor

Photo: Welcome Centre

For the Salvation Army's Project Malachi (based on current estimates):

- £11,000 would provide accommodation and 2.5 hours of support work per week for a year
- £55,000 would provide accommodation and 2.5 hours of support work per week for Five Years



Photo: Community Engagement for Project Malachi

Read More

- Read more on the Ilford Recorder [here](#)
- Hear from M&S's store manager James Mugford on his blog [here](#)



Photo: Fundraising Efforts at M&S

Redbridge Together is the community campaign to end rough sleeping in Redbridge. Together we are providing funding for two projects in Ilford to support some of the boroughs least fortunate. We are asking every community group in Redbridge to do a fundraising event event for us. This can be a challenge, bake sale, a raffle or even some traditional fundraising. See below for the link for donating the proceeds of your event.

You can donate by clicking on this link which will take you to the project's crowdfunding page

<https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/redbridgetogether>

EVENTS TO COME IN REDBRIDGE

Stay strong, stable & active – free classes – booking essential limited places
From Friday 30th November 1.45-3.15 pm at Cardinal Heenan Centre, 326 High Road IG1

With thanks to the London Community Foundation & Redbridge Small Grants Programme- Whole

Body Therapy will be delivering a 16 week free Falls Prevention exercise programme from 30th November at the Cardinal Heenan Centre.

This programme is aimed towards residents of Redbridge who are over the age of 60 and have noticed a decline in their strength and/or balance and are at risk of a fall or fall related injury or have had a near miss in the last 12 months.

The exercise course will consist of evidence based standing and sitting progressive strength, balance, flexibility and aerobic exercise including adapted Tai Chi. Some participants may be able to progress onto the backward chaining exercises which teach people how to get down to and up from the floor safely.

We will be open to applications until mid-December.

The sessions will be led by a qualified Level 4 Postural Stability Instructor (a specialist in falls prevention exercise with older people). They are also a qualified Obesity & Diabetes Exercise instructor and have taken over 200 people through the evidence based programme. The class will also be supported by another qualified exercise professional so that everyone can have a more personalised exercise session to their physical needs.

Full assessments will be conducted at the first session to ensure everyone gets the best from the course. Telephone registration is required to ensure participants are able to join as GP permission/referral may be required so it is best to phone first. Referrals from other services are also welcome with participant's permission. Most medically stable people will be able to join as it is a fully inclusive programme.

Reasons for joining the course would be:

- To improve your strength & balance
- To stay independent
- To keep enjoying the things you like to do
- To improve your ability to do everyday living activities and to socialise with others over a cup of tea
- To stay as active as possible

To apply for a place please contact us on 07806205942 or email info@wholebodytherapy.org.uk
Whole Body Therapy is an award winning social enterprise which has helped over 250 people over the last few years improve their strength & balance. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask.

Christmas Fair at Valentines Mansion

Sunday, 2nd December 10am-4pm – Emerson Road IG1 4XA

Suitable for all ages – free entry – no booking required. A fantastic collection of hand-picked stalls selling a variety of original and handmade crafts, including jewellery, homeware, soaps, candles, food and much more. The artist's studios on the top floor will also be open throughout the day.

Afternoon Tea with Barkingside 21

Thursday 6th December 2-4 pm at Sweet, High Street Barkingside

This is a social event – all welcome. Cup of tea or coffee and a patisserie for £3 per head.
For further details e-mail Barkingside21@btinternet.com

Christmas Bazaar at St Andrews Church, The Drive IG1 3PE

Saturday, 8th December - 1pm-4 pm

Craft, food, books, bric a brac, raffle, refreshments – come and meet Father Christmas and his real live donkeys.

Redbridge Equalities Forum – Patients Participation Groups

Monday, 10th December 2-4.30 pm New Hall, Gants Hill United Reform church
(entrance in Ethelbert Gardens IG2 6UN)

The forum seeks to bring organisations, professionals and activists in different equality strands together in order to:

- Exchange information and learn from each other
- Reduce barriers between communities – raising awareness, understanding and challenging myths
- Promote Equalities & Human Rights
- Lobby & Campaign to challenge inequalities
- Contribute to consultations by the council and other statutory bodies especially where they impact on equalities.

The guest speaker will be Cathy Turland from Healthwatch Redbridge.

Redbridge Mayor's Appeal Event – Winter Wonderland

Mayor of Redbridge's Appeal 2018/2019

All proceeds to ELHAP the Mayor's Charity of the Year



Redbridge Winter Wonderland

15th & 16th December
2pm to 10pm

Sir James Hawkey Hall
Broomhill Road
Woodford Green IG8 0BG

Come and meet Santa in his Grotto
Christmas Stalls
Lots of gift ideas from
hand crafted jewellery, cakes, chocolate
and much more

FREE ENTRY: £12 to meet Santa (You must book a slot!)
To book your place please follow: www.eventbrite.co.uk
"Redbridge Winter Wonderland"

Hosted by The Mayor of Redbridge
Email: redbridgemayorsappeal@hotmail.com
Tel: 020 8708 2297 Mob: 07985 161112

 Like our page on Facebook - search Redbridge Mayor's Appeal

Concert Date with Pianist Carl Bahoshy

Tuesday 18th December 12 noon at St Mary's Church, 426 High Road, Ilford IG1 1TW.

Retiring collection with all profits to the Refugee Welcome Dagenham Project.

The East London 3 Faiths Forum

Tuesday, 18th December from 7.30pm at Valentines Mansion, Emerson Road

Everyone welcome to attend this celebration of Chanukah, the Prophets Birthday and Christmas. Bring food and drink to share and musical instruments to play, songs to sing or poems to read.

Redbridge Music Lounge at The Cranbrook Centre, Valentines Park

Wednesdays 12th & 19th December 2nd 16th & 30th January

Thursdays 6th December 10th & 24th January- 12.30-4.30 pm at Melbourne Gate, Melbourne Road IG1 4SB (for directions see 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 www.rmluk.org. Registered Charity 1151132

Live Crib in front of SS Peter & Pauls Church, 342 High Road, Ilford IG1 1QP

Saturday, 22nd December - 4 pm

The Christmas story will be told, sung and enacted by parishioners and animals. All welcome.

Barkingside 21 Coffee Morning and an audience with Wes Streeting MP.

Tuesday 22nd January 2019 10.00-11.45 am Hainault Room, Fullwell Cross Library,

For further details e-mail Barkingside21@btinternet.com

SOME CELEBRATIONS TO COME

2nd December Advent Sunday Christian (Western Churches)

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

3rd December Monday to 10th December Monday Hanukah Jewish Celebrates the rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem after it was recaptured from the Syrian Greeks by the Maccabee brothers in 165 BCE. For the eight evenings of the festival, candles are lit from right to left in a hanukkah, a nine-branched menorah – one() candle for each evening. The ninth candle is the shamash (the servant candle) from which the other candles are lit. Foods cooked with oil - such as doughnuts and latkes (potato cakes) – are traditional to remember the miracle with oil that happened at this time. A game of dreidel, a special small spinning top, is popular with children to commemorate ‘the great miracle that happened there’. More: <http://www.interfaith.org.uk/resources/2016-religious-festivals/december>

8th December Saturday Bodhi Day. On this day, our Buddhist friends celebrate Bodhi Day or Rohatsu (Japanese) .Bodhi Day honours the enlightenment of Siddhartha Gautama -- the historic first Buddha. After years of trying to find the source of suffering through various religious practices, including for the latter part of his life, asceticism, Siddhartha Gautama, decided to let go of these practices which had proven fruitless, and just to look for the key inside by going into deep meditation under a bodhi (banyan) tree. This led to his enlightenment or full realisation, making him the first Buddha. Buddhists observe the importance of this event by celebrating Bodhi Day in many ways, including prayer, meditation and teachings, but also by the use of symbol e.g. the bodhi leaf and lights around the home. To learn more http://www.buddhanet.net/e-learning/buddhism/pbs2_unit03.htm (children’s story) or <http://www.buddhanet.net/e-learning/buddhism/lifebuddha/index.htm> (adult’s story) or <http://www.doityourself.com/stry/bodhi-day>

8th December Saturday marks the Feast of the **Immaculate Conception of Mary** for our Catholic Christian friends. For more see <http://www.fisheaters.com/customs/adv5.html> and <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07674d.htm>

10th December (Monday) Human Right’s Day (National)

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

24th December Monday is Christmas Eve for our Christian friends. Christmas Eve, also known as the Vigil of Christmas, is perceived as the culmination of the Advent season. Christmas Eve is the day before Christmas Day and is associated with celebrating Jesus Christ’s birth, although his actual birth date has been disputed among many scholars. However, many Christmas traditions that are around today have their roots in pre-Christian winter festivals. These include the importance of candles and decorations made from evergreen bushes and trees, symbolizing everlasting light and life. Hence, services in church often include popular Christmas customs such as candlelight vigils, plays re-enacting the Nativity from the Gospel of Luke, and hymns sung by children. Many churches are decorated with candles, greenery, and nativity scenes. More <http://www.sharefaith.com/guide/Christian-Holidays/whats-the-true-meaning-of-christmas.html> and <http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays/common/christmas-eve>

25th December Tuesday is Christmas, the day on which our Christian friends celebrate Christmas to celebrate the birth of Jesus, son of God. Although now a secular festival celebrated by people of all faith and none, it is at its heart a Christian festival. For more, see <http://www.whychristmas.com/customs/25th.shtml> . We owe much of the way we celebrate Christmas as a society to the Victorian who were inspired by the tale A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens to popularise such traditions as singing carols, sending cards and decorating a tree. For more http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/christianity/holidays/christmas_1.shtml or for Dicken’s role in shaping our modern concept of Christmas see <http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/dickens/xmas/pva63.html>

26th December Wednesday is Zarathosht Diso. On that day, our Zoroastrian friends commemorate **Zarathosht Diso** or Death of Prophet Zarathustra .The Zoroastrian holiday of Zarathust No Diso is celebrated in Iran on December 26 and by the Parsi in May. It commemorates the death of Zoroaster, founder and prophet of the Zoroastrian religion. The holiday is considered a day of mourning, and it is often marked with prayers and studies on the life of Zoroaster. For more <http://altreligion.about.com/od/holidaysfestivalsevents/p/zarathust-no-diso.htm>

31st December Monday is St Sylvester's night AKA Watch Night for our Christian friends. In the Roman Catholic Church, January 1 is a solemnity honouring the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of Jesus; it is a Holy Day of Obligation in most countries (Australia being a notable exception), thus the Church requires the attendance of all Catholics in such countries for Mass that day. However a vigil Mass may be held on the evening before a Holy Day; thus it has become customary to celebrate Mass on the evening of New Year's Eve. (New Year's Eve is a feast day honouring Pope Sylvester I in the Roman Catholic calendar.) Many Christian congregations have New Year's Eve Watch Night services. Some, especially Lutherans and Methodists and those in the African American community, have a tradition known as "Watch Night", in which the faithful congregate in services continuing past midnight, giving thanks for the blessings of the outgoing year and praying for divine favour during the upcoming year. In the English-speaking world, Watch Night can be traced back to John Wesley, the founder of Methodism,[19] who learned the custom from the Moravian Brethren who came to England in the 1730s. Moravian congregations still observe the Watch Night service on New Year's Eve. Watch Night took on special significance to African Americans on New Year's Eve 1862, as slaves anticipated the arrival of January 1, 1863, when Lincoln had announced he would sign the Emancipation Proclamation. Source http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Year%27s_Eve

1st January: New Year's Day/Hogmanay (National) - is widely observed, as is New Year's Eve the preceding night, throughout the UK, and more especially in Scotland, where bagpipes, haggis and first footing are widespread.

1st January: Mary, Mother of God –Tradition: **Christian Catholic**

"Like the Churches of the East, Rome wished to honour the Virgin Mother of God during the days after Christmas: as a result, the Natale S. Mariae ("Annax. + Anniversary of St. Mary") made its appearance on January 1st in the seventh century. It has accurately been called "the first Marian feast of the Roman liturgy." — the Church at Prayer" For more,

1st January: The Circumcision or Naming Of Jesus - Tradition: **Christian**

It is also called Feast of the Holy Name of Jesus celebrated by holding a vigil on the night of 31st December. Being born a Jew, it was natural that Jesus, like all Jewish male should be circumcised and named on his 8th day, to be received within the Jewish community.

5th January: Twelfth Night – tradition: **Christian**

The Twelfth Night marks the conclusion of the twelve days of Christmas and the eve of Epiphany. According to tradition, three kings arrived in Bethlehem twelve days after Jesus' birth to bestow gifts. This night is celebrated much like Christmas Eve, with merrymaking, eating traditional foods like King Cake, and parties. For more http://www.religionfacts.com/christianity/holidays/twelfth_night.htm

6th January: Epiphany- tradition: **Christian**

Epiphany commemorates the Magi's (Three Wise Men) visit to Bethlehem, and the "shining forth" or revelation of Jesus as God in human form. Some traditions celebrate Epiphany by giving gifts to represent the gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh that Jesus received from the wise men. In many countries, the feast is celebrated by the baking and eating of a special cake or sweet bread in which is hidden a little figure, often in the shape of a lamb or of Christ. The observance had its origins in the eastern Christian churches, and included the birth of Jesus Christ; the visit of the three Magi (Caspar, Melchior and Balthazar) who arrived in Bethlehem; and all of Jesus' childhood events, up to his baptism in the Jordan by John the Baptist. The feast was initially based on (and viewed as a fulfilment of) the Jewish Feast of Lights. More at

<http://www.religionfacts.com/christianity/holidays/epiphany.htm>

6th January: Theophany / Baptism Of Christ –tradition: **Orthodox Christian churches**

Christians commemorate the baptism of Jesus in the river Jordan, by John the Baptist; they recall how at this event the heavens were opened and a voice was heard proclaiming Jesus, while God's spirit descended on him in the form of a dove, i.e. the divine revelation of the Holy Trinity. At the Baptism of Christ, all three Persons of the Holy Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—were made manifest. Thus, the name of the Feast is Epiphany, meaning manifestation, or Theophany, meaning manifestation of God. For more http://www.goarch.org/special/listen_learn_share/epiphany/

6th January: Dia de los Reyes (Three Kings Day) - tradition: Christian (Hispanic)

In Hispanic countries, the day of the Epiphany is referred to as Dia de los Reyes, Three Kings Day, and children receive gifts from los Reyes Magos: the three wise men. In Spanish tradition, the three kings represented Europe, Arabia, and Africa, and arrived on a horse, camel, and elephant. Children and adults leave their shoes out for the Kings' presents before they go to bed the night before, and leave treats to refresh the traveling Magi

6th January: Christmas day- tradition: **Armenian Orthodox Christian**

This day marks the Armenian Orthodox celebration of Christ's birth and baptism. It is preceded by a seven-day fast and, on the eve of the feast, a Divine Liturgy is celebrated in honour of Jesus as the Son of God, followed by a Blessing of the Waters. The Blessing of the Waters symbolizes Jesus' descent into the Jordan River, and the descent of the Holy Spirit upon him. The following day, worshippers often partake in drinking or anointing with the blessed water. More at <http://www.armenianchurch-ed.net/feasts/feastschristmas/about/>

7th January is Christmas Day or day of the Nativity of Christ –tradition: **Orthodox Christian**

The Feast of the Nativity is the Orthodox Christian celebration of the birth of Jesus. It is also the break of a 40-day fast of the Advent started this year on November 15th, in which participants purify both body and soul in preparation for Christ's birth. For more <http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays/uk/orthodox-christmas-day> and <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-16453975>

13th January: Maghi- tradition: **Sikh**

On this day, our Sikh friends commemorate the sacrifice of forty Sikhs, who fought for Guru Gobindh Singh Ji. Maghi generally coincides with Makar Sankranti on the first day of the month of Magh which heralds the arrival of spring in India. The eve of Maghi is the common Indian festival of Lohri when bonfires are lit in Hindu homes to greet the birth of sons in the families and alms are distributed. In the morning, people go out for an early-hour dip in nearby tanks. For Sikhs, Maghi means primarily the festival at Muktsar, a district town of the Punjab, in commemoration of the heroic fight of the Chali Mukte, literally, the Forty Liberated Ones, who laid down their lives warding off an attack by an imperial army marching in pursuit of Guru Gobind Singh. For more on Maghi, see <http://www.allaboutsikhs.com/sikh-festivals/the-sikh-festivals-maghi>

13th January: Baptism of the Lord Jesus – tradition: **Christian**

The Baptism of the Lord is the name of a distinct feast day observed in the Roman Catholic Church, the Anglican or Episcopalian Church, as well as the Eastern Orthodox Church. This occasion memorializes the baptism of Jesus Christ in the Jordan River by John the Baptist. The Baptism of Christ was originally celebrated on Epiphany, which commemorated three events: the arrival of the Magi (the wise men), Jesus' baptism and the wedding in Cana, where Jesus turned the water into wine. Over time, the Baptism of the Lord feast was separated from the other events of Epiphany. More at <http://www.sharefaith.com/guide/Christian-Holidays/baptism-of-the-lord-the-feast.html>

14th January: Makar Sankranti/Pongal- Tradition: Hindu

This is a day for almsgiving and patching up quarrels. It is celebrated with rice sugar, pancakes and halva, eaten around a fire, especially when following the birth of a son. Cornmeal chapatis and mustard leaf constitute the traditional meal. Celebrating, the sun's journey into the northern hemisphere and the beginning of spring, Makar Sankranti is one of the most auspicious day for the Hindus, and is celebrated in almost all parts of India in myriad cultural forms, with great devotion, fervour & gaiety. People in their thousands take a dip in places like Ganga Sagar & Prayag and pray to Lord Sun. It is celebrated with pomp in southern parts of the country as Pongal, and in Punjab is celebrated as Lohri & Maghi. Gujarati's not only look reverentially up to the sun, but also offer thousands of their colorful oblations in the form of beautiful kites all over the skyline. For more, see <http://www.vmission.org.in/hinduism/festivals/sankranti/>

18th -25th January: Week of Prayer for Christian Unity - tradition: Christian

United services are held, and dialogue on unity is encouraged; some worshippers visit others' churches or invite preachers from denominations different from their own. This week was first set aside in 1908.

20th at sundown to 23rd January sundown: World Religion Day - tradition: Baha'i

World Religion Day was initiated in 1950 by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States. The Assembly's purpose was to call attention to the harmony of spiritual principles and the oneness of the world's religions and to emphasize that religion is the motivating force for world unity. It is observed the third Sunday in January by Baha'is in the United States and increasingly by people around the globe, with interfaith discussions, conferences and other events that foster understanding and communication among the followers of all religions

20th January (starts on 24th at sundown): Tu B'shevat - tradition: Jewish

Tu B'shevat is a popular minor festival which celebrates the New Year for trees. Jewish tradition marks this day as the day when the sap in the trees begins to rise, heralding the beginning of spring, aka The New year for the trees and the beginning of spring in Israel. It is one of the four Jewish New Years' (Rosh Hashanahs). Tu B'Shevat is a transliteration of 'the fifteenth of Shevat', the Hebrew date specified as the new year for trees. The Torah forbids Jews to eat the fruit of new trees for three years after they are planted. The fourth year's fruit was to be tithed to the Temple. On Tu B'Shevat Jews often eat fruit associated with the Holy Land, especially the ones mentioned in the Torah, particularly the kinds associated with Israel. The Torah praises seven 'fruits' in particular: wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives and dates. A short blessing is recited after eating any fruit. A special, longer blessing is recited for the fruits mentioned in the Torah. Some Jews plant trees on this day, or collect money towards planting trees in Israel. For more <http://www.jewfaq.org/holiday8.htm>

Disclaimer:

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