

Connecting Communities

# Celebrating Festivals



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## To readers of this manual:

This manual is part of the Dialogue Society's Community Dialogue Manual Series. The PDF version of this and the other manuals in the series can be downloaded from [www.dialoguesociety.org/publications](http://www.dialoguesociety.org/publications)

If you have any comments on this, or any of the other manuals in the series, we would be very glad to have your feedback. Please email your comments to [manual@dialoguesociety.org](mailto:manual@dialoguesociety.org)

We would like to showcase the valuable work and effort of groups that use the Community Dialogue Manuals to help inspire other groups to take part also. Please get in touch and let us know how this manual helped you and your group with any photographs and testimonials. Please email these to [manual@dialoguesociety.org](mailto:manual@dialoguesociety.org)

If you represent a local stakeholder or public body and are interested in Dialogue Society consultancy please email [consultancy@dialoguesociety.org](mailto:consultancy@dialoguesociety.org)



The Dialogue Society is a registered charity, established in London in 1999, with the aim of advancing social cohesion by connecting communities through dialogue. It operates nationwide with regional branches across the UK. Through localised community projects, discussion forums and teaching programmes it enables people to venture across boundaries of religion, culture and social class. It provides a platform where people can meet to share narratives and perspectives, discover the values they have in common and be at ease with their differences.

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**DIALOGUE  
SOCIETY**

LONDON 1999

Registered Charity No: 1117039

## Celebrating Festivals

First published in Great Britain 2011

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ISBN 978-0-9569304-1-5

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# Overview

01

## Preface

The Dialogue Society is a registered charity, established in London in 1999, with the aim of advancing social cohesion by connecting communities through dialogue. It operates nation-wide with regional branches across the UK. Through localised community projects, discussion forums and teaching programmes it enables people to venture across boundaries of religion, culture and social class. It provides a platform where people can meet to share narratives and perspectives, discover the values they have in common and be at ease with their differences. It has done this through a wide range of events including community celebrations, interfaith sharing circles, and open cultural festivals as well as a broad variety of dialogue meetings and seminars.

The manual you hold in your hand is part of a series of ten Community Dialogue Manuals developed by the Dialogue Society to encourage interaction between members of different communities. The primary aim of the series is to help people to bring their communities together through a number of approaches and events that the Dialogue Society has found successful. We have always found that the most successful events have been those with clear objectives and where attention has been paid to detail. Therefore the manuals are full of advice, tips and checklists to help everything go smoothly as you plan, organise and host your own events.

This manual is intended to provide ideas for ways of acknowledging festivals observed in a range of different religious traditions, spreading goodwill and respect between people of different faiths. The manual gives a list of the main festivals of each of a selection of religions and gives one or two ways in which a selected festival from that religion could be acknowledged by people of other faiths or none. A section on significant national days is also included, with ideas for promoting community spirit and social cohesion through activities on those days.

Please get in touch with us to let us know if and how the manual was helpful, to give any feedback and comments about the manual's content, style and structure and with any other enquiries. Please see inside cover for contact details.

We hope that this manual and perhaps others will be helpful to you, and that you will enjoy uniting your community through the events you hold.

## The Dialogue Society

## Introduction

The purpose of this manual is to provide inspiration and advice to help people of different faiths to acknowledge each other's religious festivals. Doing this shows other faith groups that you recognise that this is a special time for them and demonstrates respect for and interest in their religious life and practices. Simple, thoughtful gestures of acknowledgement can be powerful ways of creating goodwill, appreciation and respect between different religious communities.

Where there is distrust between people of different faiths, the gesture can be transformative. If certain people are, for any reason, wary of your religious group, thoughtfully presenting them with cards or gifts at their religious festival may relieve their wariness and change their attitude.

Following the Manual Overview, this manual outlines three main ways in which you might like to acknowledge festivals. Hints and tips to bear in mind when acknowledging festivals, and a note on how and why to work in partnership with other groups, are also included. The main body of the manual is taken up with lists of the main festivals of a range of religions and ideas on specific ways of acknowledging selected festivals. The appendices give some sample materials to help with the organisation and publicity of some of the proposed activities.

The PDF version of this and the other Community Dialogue Manuals can be downloaded from [www.dialoguesociety.org/publications](http://www.dialoguesociety.org/publications); you can copy and paste materials from the appendices to adapt for your own use.

This fairly long manual is not intended to be read from cover to cover. The intention is that reading the Manual Overview will give you ideas for the sorts of festivals that you might like to acknowledge in the place where you live. Exploring the relevant section(s) of the manual will provide brief explanations of festivals and advice on possible ways of acknowledging them. Perhaps on another occasion you will turn to the manual again for advice on acknowledging the festival of a different faith group.

## Aims and Objectives of This Manual

1. To spread goodwill between people of different faiths and none
2. To encourage the opening up of different communities to one another
3. To facilitate neighbourly and community interaction
4. To bring about dialogue and partnerships between cultural, community and faith-based organisations
5. To combat mistrust between different religious/cultural groups
6. To encourage a sense of belonging and national pride among people of all faiths and cultures
7. To encourage inclusion of people who may not necessarily be interested in dialogue
8. To provide strategies, tips, advice and know-how for organising successful activities/events

## Who is This Manual For?

- Individuals looking to make contact with neighbours of other faiths in a positive way
- Religious groups looking to reach out to others with simple interfaith initiatives
- Community groups and charities looking to spread goodwill between different cultural/faith communities
- Public sector workers with similar intentions
- Employers who want to respect and acknowledge the religious observances of staff
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# Ways of Acknowledging Religious Festivals

02

## Overview of Ways of Acknowledging Festivals

Simple gestures can be very appropriate and powerful. People will have their own plans for celebrating their festival and you don't want to interfere with these by proposing some kind of additional event. The best ways to acknowledge their festival are by making small, simple contributions to their enjoyment of it or by asking them to explain it to you or share the experience with you.

Distribution of cards, food or small gifts can be a very valuable friendly gesture. You are not disrupting their way of celebrating but are adding to their celebration in a simple, thoughtful way. See "Distributing Cards/Gifts" below, page 22.

Another nice way of acknowledging religious festivals is by arranging to visit a service prior to a festival and/or inviting someone to come and explain a festival to your group. Again, in doing this you are not in any way interfering with a festival that is theirs. Rather, you are respectfully asking them to explain it in their own way. See "Inviting Speakers" below, page 21.

Arranging to visit a service at the time of a religious festival is another simple way of expressing interest and respect. See "Visiting Religious Festivals" below, page 16.

## A Note on Working in Partnership

### Why?

Working in partnership on a simple project to acknowledge a religious festival can make what you are doing all the more valuable; it allows you to connect with two different groups - your partner group and the group whose festival you are acknowledging.

### The benefits of partnership go far beyond just the sharing of the workload:

- It doesn't just bring together your group with two others - it also brings together the two others, who may not otherwise have taken the step of making contact with each other.
- It unites your ends and your means; your goal of promoting interaction and friendship between different groups is served even at the planning stages of your event as your group and another work together on the project and get to know each other.
- It can bring you new insight into the perspectives and concerns of a different cultural, social or religious group.
- It increases the credibility of your dialogue work by showing that even as you plan your events you are practising what you preach and engaging with other groups.
- It can increase trust and interest in your project and your organisation; some sectors of the community who are unfamiliar with your work may already

know and trust your partner organisation.

- It helps keep your work genuinely rooted in dialogue. Even as you work on your project you are engaging in a form of dialogue, and probably growing in appreciation and understanding of a different group.
- It can establish a lasting, mutually beneficial relationship where each partner can sometimes benefit from the support, expertise, contacts and facilities of the other.

## How?

It should be quite simple to arrange to work in partnership to acknowledge a festival. For example, if you have decided to send cards to a Jewish group at Hanukkah, you could simply tell a local church about it and see if they want to help. Have a card-writing session together over tea and biscuits and get to know each other before going with a mixed group of volunteers to distribute the cards.

If you are organising anything more elaborate - such as a seminar related to a particular religious festival, or a street party on the day of a royal wedding (see Christianity, Jainism and National Festivals sections) - invite another group to come to a planning meeting at an early stage so that they can be involved in the whole process. (See Appendix 1 for a sample email to a potential partner asking them to join you in acknowledging a religious festival.)

At the individual level, if you are taking cards or gifts to neighbours of a particular faith at their festival, you might like to involve another neighbour whom you know - perhaps someone of another faith. You can both sign the card/gift tag and go round together.

## Who?

If you are doing this project with your faith group, the obvious choice is to involve a third faith group, extending the interfaith interaction brought about by the event. This is a great way of tackling mistrust between people of different faiths and helping them get to know each other.

There are, however, all sorts of other options. You don't have to restrict the project to religious people - indeed it could be equally valuable to bring together a mixed group of people with a religion and without. You could invite members of a local community group, such as a women's group, older people's group or youth group. Or you could approach a cultural community centre. Or use the opportunity to bring together local stakeholders with local religious groups - you could, for example, invite the local police to participate.

Please see the *Building Partnerships* Community Dialogue Manual for ideas and advice on locating and contacting a range of possible partners.

## Visiting Religious Services/Festivals

This is a simple but meaningful way of acknowledging the religious life of another group. It allows you and your group to get a sense of their religious faith and practice, and it expresses respect and interest. It can be a good way of acknowledging a religious festival but can also be a valuable gesture at another time.

### Finding Religious Groups

Notice boards outside places of worship often display contact details for leaders along with service times. Use these to get in touch.

Google Maps can help you find places of worship nearby. Try typing “Church near [Your Address]” into the search box, and then repeat with “synagogue”, “temple” etc.

The Interfaith Network for the UK may help you find a local multi-faith/interfaith forum. It is an umbrella organisation, and its website has a “member bodies” section listing all the local member organisations with links to websites and email. See: <http://www.interfaith.org.uk/members.htm>

As well as being an important contact in itself, a local multi-faith/interfaith forum may be able to put you in touch with its members - local faith groups. Some have directories of faith groups/places of worship on their websites. See, for example, Islington Faiths Forum’s directory: <http://www.islingtonfaithsforum.org.uk/database.html>

Some national directories of places of worship within a particular religion are given in the sections on those religions below, and in Appendix 9: Further Information on Different Religions and Their Festivals.

### General Guidelines for Visitors

- Contact an acquaintance or a religious leader at the place of worship you wish to visit and ask if it would be appropriate to attend a particular festival. If it is not, ask about visiting at another time.
- Explain why you wish to visit. It is important that people understand that you are not coming to challenge their faith and practices but out of interest and a desire for better understanding.
- Be ready to explain the reason for your visit to curious members of the congregation.
- Particularly if more than three of you are visiting, ask your contact to mention your visit to the congregation in advance and/or on the day so that they understand why you are there; they will feel more comfortable with you and know how to start a conversation.
- Ask your contact if they can send any guidelines for visitors (dress code, conduct etc).

- Remember that you are a guest in a place of religious importance and at a religious ceremony and be respectful. If your general attitude is one of respect, people are unlikely to be offended by any accidental mistakes.
- Remember to turn off your mobile phone.
- Do not eat or drink in the place of worship (unless, of course, you are offered something).
- Do not film or take photographs unless you have a particular reason to do so and have been given permission.
- Don't feel that you have to join in anything that you are not comfortable with.
- Follow the lead of the rest of the congregation as to when you should sit, stand etc.
- Take an active interest in the place of worship and the service. Ask questions afterwards.
- Do stay and chat with members of the congregation afterwards.
- Invite people you meet to return the visit by coming to your place of worship.
- You may also wish to write to the congregation, through your contact, thanking them for having you and inviting anyone who wishes to return the visit. Provide contact details so that they can arrange things with you first if they wish.

## Etiquette for Visiting Selected Places of Worship

### In Church

Dress codes vary between religious denominations and even individual churches. The congregation of a “high” Anglican church may dress very formally while that of a large Baptist church may come to church in jeans. However, fairly smart, modest dress is unlikely to be out of place in any church.

You can join in with what is being said or sung when it seems appropriate, or keep silent if you feel more comfortable doing so.

Only confirmed Christians take the bread and wine at communion. You would be welcome to go up to the altar rail for a blessing, but as the blessing makes reference to God as Trinity and the priest often makes the sign of the cross you may prefer just to stay in your seat. It is quite usual for some members of the congregation to do this.

### At the Synagogue

Dress codes vary between religious denominations and even individual synagogues. However, fairly smart, modest dress is unlikely to be out of place in any synagogue.

Do not wear a tallit, the prayer shawl, as this is a sign of a specifically Jewish obligation to the law. If you are offered one by an usher who is unsure whether or not you are Jewish politely decline it. Men should cover their heads as a sign of respect if the men of the congregation do so. Skullcaps or kippahs/yarmulkes will often be provided at the door for those who do not have one. In some Orthodox congregations married women cover their heads with pieces of lace and in some Reform congregations all worshippers wear kippahs. If you are a woman and do not cover your hair anyway it is respectful to cover your head in such synagogues. Coverings will often be provided.

In Orthodox synagogues men and women sit separately.

Try to follow the rest of the congregation when they sit and stand but don't worry if you get it wrong. You can try to follow the service in the siddur, service book and the Humash, the Torah book. If these are in Hebrew they usually include English translations. They usually begin at what is, in English terms, the "back".

Join in with the congregation's words, as and when you feel comfortable saying them. Wearing a kippah and sitting and standing<sup>1</sup> with the congregation is not an expression of religious allegiance, only of respect. Bowing is a more significant religious act in the synagogue service. If you do not want to join the congregation when they bow, just remain sitting/standing. If wine and bread is shared at a kiddush or blessing after the service you are free to accept or decline it. It does not have the same meaning as the Christian sacrament; it is just bread and wine that is blessed and shared. You will not be under any obligation to share the offerings.

### At the Mosque

Dress conservatively. Men should wear long trousers. Women's clothing should cover arms and legs. Girls aged twelve and over should dress modestly in this way. Covering hair with a scarf is a respectful gesture although this will often be optional. Where visitors are requested to wear headscarves spare scarves are sometimes provided. Wear clothes in which you can comfortably sit cross legged on the floor. Visitors may be requested to sit on the floor, although a few chairs may be available for elderly visitors or those whose health makes it difficult for them to sit on the floor.

Do not bring food, drink or any animal into the mosque.

Remove your shoes before entering the prayer hall, leaving them in the designated place to collect afterwards. It is customary for men and women to worship separately in the mosque. Women's prayer facilities will often be on a gallery level or if there is only one main prayer hall, it will be divided into a men and women's section. Your host will direct you to the appropriate section.

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<sup>1</sup> Rabbi Daniel Kohn, "What a Bar/Bat Mitzvah Guest Needs to Know", [http://www.myjewishlearning.com/life/Life\\_Events/BarBat\\_Mitzvah/Practical\\_Aspects/Guide\\_for\\_Guests.shtml](http://www.myjewishlearning.com/life/Life_Events/BarBat_Mitzvah/Practical_Aspects/Guide_for_Guests.shtml)

Avoid walking in front of someone who is praying and be quiet when people are engaged in prayer. During prayer, observe quietly at the back of the mosque, or as directed by your hosts. When seated be careful not to extend your feet towards the Kibla, the direction of prayer.

Some Muslims do not shake hands with people of the opposite sex, so it is best not to extend your hand to people of the opposite sex unless they do.

### At the Mandir (Hindu)

Rules concerning dress and conduct vary from mandir to mandir. It is worth asking for guidance from the particular mandir you are visiting, especially if you are going with a group.

Dress conservatively. Do not wear shorts or skirts above knee length. Wear clothes in which you can comfortably sit cross legged on the floor.

You will need to take off your shoes before entering. There will usually be a designated area for this.

In some mandirs worshippers and visitors are expected to keep silent (apart from the chanting of mantras).

Do not bring in food or drink. In particular do not bring in animal products, even if they are in your bag.

Be careful not to extend your feet towards the murtis - the statues believed to embody Gods - or towards the guru - spiritual teacher. If you are visiting a service and are not able to sit cross-legged in reasonable comfort for perhaps one hour, make use of one of the chairs at the back.

It is often customary for men and women to sit on different sides. Respect the custom.

When food and/or water which has been offered to the Gods is distributed, you are welcome to accept it, holding out cupped hands with your right hand on top, and thanking the person offering it by slightly bowing your head. You may decline it if you wish but do so with respect, as the food is considered a sacred gift. Eat it using only your right hand.<sup>2</sup>

### At the Gurdwara (Sikh)

Dress conservatively, covering arms, legs and chest. Wear clothes in which you can comfortably sit cross legged on the floor.

Women should cover their heads with a scarf (the gurdwara will probably provide these) and men with a patka (which will be provided).

<sup>2</sup> Akasha Lonsdale, Do I kneel or do I bow? What you need to know when attending religious occasions. Kuperard, 2010.

Visitors are not obliged to give a donation but you may wish to give a small contribution.

Shoes are removed on entering the prayer hall. Shoe racks will generally be provided.

It is respectful to bow slightly to the holy book, the Siri Guru Granth Sahib on entering. When you leave it is respectful to bow slightly again and to take a few steps backwards rather than just turning and walking out.

Worshippers and visitors sit on the floor when seated, although a few chairs may be available for elderly visitors or those whose health makes it difficult for them to sit on the floor.

You will be offered Kara Parshad as a gift. This is a sweet food made with flour and oil. It may cause offence if you do not accept this. Take a small plastic bag in which to keep it if in case you do not want to eat it. It is also worth having a tissue or wet wipe with you as it will be greasy. Eat the Kara Prashad with your right hand.

You may be offered Langar- a free vegetarian meal from the communal kitchen. It is polite to accept this as it is seen as a blessing from the Guru. Try to avoid wasting any - if you do not want to eat much ask for a very little when it is being served.<sup>3</sup>

### At the Buddhist Temple

Dress modestly, with comfortable clothing covering arms, legs and chest.

Shoes should be left outside the Shrine Room.

People are generally seated on the floor on cushions, although in some temples chairs will be available.

Do not point at anything while in the temple; it is considered very rude (instead you can indicate things with your right hand with your palm upwards). Be careful while seated not to extend your feet towards the main statue of Buddha or towards monks or other Buddhists.<sup>4</sup>

Do not touch Buddha statues or sit too close. When leaving back away from the statues before turning around.

Avoid stepping over any part of other people or over religious materials such as books or prayer beads.

It is respectful to stand up when monks or nuns enter and to remain standing until they have finished their prostrations. If you go to talk to a monk or nun who is seated, sit down before speaking, and avoid sitting on a higher level than him/her.

<sup>3</sup> Akasha Lonsdale, Do I kneel or do I bow? Kuperard, 2010.  
[http://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Visiting\\_a\\_Gurdwara](http://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Visiting_a_Gurdwara)

<sup>4</sup> Akasha Lonsdale, Do I kneel or do I bow? Kuperard, 2010.

Avoid physical contact with monks (e.g. do not shake hands). Women should be particularly careful to avoid touching monks in any way or handing them things directly; if you need to give something to a monk it should be given to a man who can pass it on.

Small donations will be appreciated; there will usually be a small box for donations from visitors.

## Inviting Speakers to Explain Festivals

In inviting somebody from another religious group to visit your place of worship to explain their religious festival you can express your interest in their religious life while simultaneously offering them an insight into yours. Ideally, this should be scheduled prior to but near to the festival so that your community/congregation can appreciate the festival when it arrives and understand how to celebrate it with neighbours/friends of that faith.

Alternatively you could make more of an event of the occasion and arrange an evening seminar with refreshments and entertainment. At a shared festival, such as Diwali, which is celebrated by Hindus, Sikhs and Jains, you could invite speakers and guests from all the relevant traditions (see “Interfaith Diwali Seminar” in the Jainism section). Or if different festivals fall close together (such as Christmas and Hanukkah) you could explore two or more festivals from different religions in a single interfaith seminar.

See Appendix 2 and Appendix 5 for sample emails to possible speakers (Appendix 2: Sample Email to a Religious Leader Inviting Him/Her to Visit and Explain a Festival; Appendix 5: Sample Email Inviting Speakers to an Interfaith Diwali Event).

## Checklist

### Inviting a Speaker to Your Religious Service

- At least six weeks in advance contact a local religious group and ask them if somebody could come and speak about their festival. Invite others to come along too.
- Decide on a date.
- Inform your community/congregation/group and invite them to participate and meet with your guests.
- Give your guests all the necessary information: time and duration of the service, when you would like the speaker to speak, refreshments available afterwards, guidelines for dress code and conduct at the service.
- Arrange refreshments for your guests.

### Seminar

- At least six weeks in advance contact and plan with a local religious group(s).
- Decide on a speaker(s).
- Invite the other group(s) to get involved in the planning and running of the event as far as possible so that you can work in partnership and get to know each other.
- Set date, time, venue, programme.
- Prepare/send invitations for both/all groups/congregations.
- You could also advertise with posters in local community centres, other places of worship, shops, Post Offices etc. For a larger event you might also want to email local community groups, other places of worship and stakeholders, or deliver invitations door to door.
- Prepare event booklets (giving the programme, organisers' contact details and any forthcoming events).
- Arrange refreshments.
- Arrange additional entertainment such as music.<sup>5</sup>
- Make sure you have a qualified first aider present.<sup>6</sup>

### Distributing Cards/Gifts

Giving cards and/or gifts is a thoughtful gesture to celebrate a person's religious festival. It is also a wonderful ice-breaker. Gifts can be as big/small or expensive/inexpensive as you wish. The important thing to remember is that the recipient will appreciate the time, thought and effort that have gone into remembering another person's special day.

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<sup>5</sup>NB if your event will include the performance of a play, an exhibition of a film, the performance of live music or the playing of recorded music and your venue does not have a premises licence, you will need a Temporary Event Notice. Incidental (background) music is an exception and does not require a licence.

You will need to fill in a Temporary Event Notice form and send it to the Council's Licensing section, and to the local police, a minimum of ten working days before the event. The Licensing section will be able to give you the appropriate form and advise you on whom you should send the police copy to. An individual can apply for up to five TENs in a year, and a single premises can be used up to twelve times. Currently an application costs £21.

<sup>6</sup>St John's Ambulance (<http://www.sja.org.uk/sja/training-courses.aspx>) and the British Red Cross (<http://www.redcrossfirstaidtraining.co.uk/>) provide a range of first aid courses. Local branches can also offer first aid cover for events at competitive rates.

If you know a doctor or nurse personally you could ask him/her to be present at the event and provide First Aid cover.

See <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Accidents-and-first-aid/Pages/Introduction.aspx> for a First Aid guide.

## Checklist

### Cards/Gifts for Neighbours/Friends/Colleagues

- If you are delivering cards/gifts to neighbours, ask another friend or neighbour if he/she would like to help and make preparations together.
- Buy/make/prepare your card(s)/gift(s).
- Write your card(s)/gift tag(s), including your address and other contact details unless the recipient has these already.
- Write a traditional greeting if you can.
- Deliver to your friend/colleague and wish him/her a happy festival, preferably using a traditional greeting.
- Take the card/gift round to your neighbour. When your neighbour answers the door wish him/her a happy festival, preferably using a traditional greeting, and give him/her the card/gift.
- Take your children with you if you have children.
- Have a chat, if he/she is willing to. If you wish, invite him/her to return the visit.
- Don't forget to smile.

### Cards/Gifts for Religious Groups

- At least two months in advance make contact with the place of worship, explain your plans and seek advice on the best time to come and on how to distribute your cards/gifts. If you are giving individual gifts to a congregation, determine the quantity required. Remember this can be as simple as giving each person a single flower or a small sweet/dessert.
- Contact another local group to invite them to work in partnership with you. See “A Note on Working in Partnership” above.
- If you are giving more than a few gifts, you may want to raise the funds by asking for donations from your own community group.
- Arrange a time and a venue to prepare cards/gifts together. You may want to organise some refreshments also.
- Buy/assemble materials (including materials for any wrapping, and gift tags for gifts).
- With volunteers from your religious congregation, community group or friends, and volunteers from any partner group, make and sign cards/prepare and wrap gifts.
- Make sure your cards/gift tags give your name(s)/the name of your group with contact details.
- Write a traditional greeting if you can.

- If you are working with a partner group, take this opportunity to get to know them as you work.
- Make sure that someone is ready to give a little explanation of what you have brought and why if asked to do so.
- If you are working with a partner group, make sure volunteers from both groups are involved in distributing the cards/gifts.
- Make sure all those who will help with the distribution know what they will say to explain what they are doing and why.
- Bring your cards/gifts on the day and set up your table if you are using one.
- You may wish to attend the service first (see “Visiting Religious Festivals/ Services” above, page 16).
- Give out your cards and/or gifts and wish people a happy festival. If possible use the appropriate traditional greeting.

## Hints and Tips for Acknowledging Festivals

This section gives some key points to bear in mind to ensure that your gestures are taken in the spirit of respect and friendship in which they are offered.

- Pick a really popular festival. Not all people of a particular religion will celebrate all the festivals - for example, many people who identify as Christians will only really celebrate Christmas and Easter.
- Make sure your gesture is in keeping with the festival - don't make the mistake of offering celebratory food on a very solemn day.
- Don't be shy - smile and be friendly.
- If you have children it is always nice to bring them along - people tend to be more friendly and open around children.
- Make sure that any food you give is acceptable to those you are giving it to. Certain religions have particular food laws and requirements, mentioned in the relevant sections of the manual below. For example, Jains are always vegetarian.
- Try to avoid foods to which some people may have dangerous allergies, such as nuts. Unless what you give is simple and recognisable, include a little card with ingredients on it.
- If you distribute your gifts in a public place you can distribute to people of any/no faith and any culture, even if the festival in question belongs to a particular group.
- When visiting a neighbour, make sure you know what you are going to say. This could be as simple as “Happy Christmas! I am your neighbour from number [Number]. My name is [Name].”

- Make sure you give your neighbour enough information to be able to return the visit. Include your name and address in a card or gift tag in case they forget.
- Make sure that you make your intentions clear when visiting religious groups. Unfortunately, religious groups may be wary of visiting groups of other religions - they may initially wonder if you have an ulterior motive to challenge or change them. So:
  1. When visiting a religious group to acknowledge a festival with cards or gifts, contact the leader of the group first to explain your plans.
  2. Prepare a brief, clear explanation of what you are doing and why, ready to explain on the day.
  3. If you are giving gifts, attach a message making it clear who you are and in what spirit you are giving the gift. For example, a group from a mosque congregation delivering gifts to a local Hindu temple at Diwali might attach cards or gift tags with this message:

“The congregation of [Name of Mosque], in a spirit of friendship and respect, would like to wish you a very happy Diwali!”
- Include your name or the name of your organisation and contact details in cards/gift tags to facilitate further interactions in the future.

A series of horizontal dotted lines for taking notes.



COMMUNITY  
DIALOGUE  
MANUAL  
S E R I E S

# Religious Festivals and Specific Suggestions for Acknowledging Them

03

## Christianity

Christianity is the religion of those who seek to follow Jesus Christ, believed to be the Son of God and Saviour of humanity. It is a monotheistic system of beliefs and practices based on the Old Testament (a large portion of the Jewish Scriptures) and the New Testament (made up of accounts of the life and teachings of Jesus, stories of his early followers and certain letters from leaders of the early Christians).

There is a wide range of different Christian groups or “denominations” which vary in some of their theological and moral teachings, structures of authority, styles of worship and dates for festivals.

The various Orthodox Churches have their roots in the churches of the Eastern Roman Empire. Communication difficulties between the Western and Eastern Roman Empire allowed differences to develop and the Eastern - Orthodox - and Western Churches split in 1054.

The Roman Catholic Church, the oldest element of Western Christianity, is headed by the Pope in Rome. The 16th Century saw further splits over theology and authority and “Protestant” Churches were born. The Church of England came into existence when Henry VIII established himself as head of the Church in his jurisdiction.

The “A Church Near You” website will help you find local Church of England churches and give contact details where these are available: <http://www.achurchnearyou.com/>

## Christian Festivals (based on 2012)

6<sup>th</sup> January

### Epiphany

Celebrates the visit of the wise men to the infant Jesus, the baptism of Jesus in the River Jordan and his first miracle at Cana. The name means “manifestion”.

For Orthodox Christians this day is the **Feast of Theophany**, which marks the revelation of the Holy Trinity at the baptism of Jesus Christ.

For *Armenian Orthodox* Christians this is **Christmas Day**, celebrating Jesus’ birth.

7<sup>th</sup> January

### Christmas Day (Orthodox)

18<sup>th</sup> January

### Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (start)

21<sup>st</sup> February (2012)\*

### Shrove Tuesday (Western)

The day before Ash Wednesday. It is also called Pancake Day because of the tradition of eating pancakes to use up rich foods before Lent.

- 22<sup>nd</sup> February (2012)\* **Ash Wednesday (Western)**  
 The first day of Lent, 40 days of reflection and repentance before Easter. In some churches a cross is drawn in ash on worshippers' foreheads as a sign of mortality.
- 18<sup>th</sup> March (2012)\* **Mothering Sunday (also Mid-Lent or Laetare Sunday)**  
 The fourth Sunday of Lent when motherhood is celebrated. The day also commemorates the banquet given by Joseph to his brothers.
- 1<sup>st</sup> April (2012)\* **Palm Sunday**  
 The Sunday before Easter. Commemorates Jesus' entry into Jerusalem.
- 5<sup>th</sup> April (2012)\* **Maundy Thursday (also Holy Thursday)**  
 Commemorates Christ's Last Supper and his washing of the disciples' feet. The Pope and many other Christian leaders imitate Jesus and wash the feet of Christians.
- 6<sup>th</sup> April (2012)\* **Good Friday**  
 Solemn day commemorating the Crucifixion of Jesus. The name reflects the belief that Jesus' death liberates people from sin and death.
- 8<sup>th</sup> April (2012)\* **Easter Sunday (Western)**  
 Principal festival of the Christian church year, celebrating the Resurrection of Jesus Christ on the third day after his Crucifixion.
- 15<sup>th</sup> April (2012)\* **Easter Sunday (Orthodox)**
- 17<sup>th</sup> May (2012)\* **Ascension Day**  
 Commemorates the Ascension of Jesus on the 40th day after the Resurrection.  
 The Catholic Church in England and Wales celebrates on the following Sunday.
- 27<sup>th</sup> May (2012)\* **Pentecost (also Whitsun)**  
 Commemorates the descent of the Holy Ghost on the apostles. Fifty days after Easter, hence on a different date for Orthodox Christians. The Orthodox day is also known as Trinity Sunday and honours the Holy Trinity.

- 3<sup>rd</sup> June (2012)\* **Trinity Sunday (Western)**  
 Instituted to honour the Holy Trinity - One God in Three Persons.
- 6<sup>th</sup> August **Transfiguration (Orthodox)**  
 Commemoration of the day when Christ's appearance was radiantly transformed on the mountain. Fruit is taken to church for "the blessing of the fruit".
- 15<sup>th</sup> August **Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Roman Catholic)**  
 A feast commemorating Jesus' mother being taken up into heaven.  
 Dormition (falling asleep) of the Theotokos (Orthodox)  
 Orthodox festival commemorating Mary's death, resurrection and glorification.
- September/October **Harvest (unofficial)**  
 Many churches give thanks for the harvest on a Sunday in late September or October. Produce is brought to church. Donations are often given to the needy.
- 1<sup>st</sup> November **All Saints' Day (Hallowmas, All Hallows')**  
 Honours all Christian saints, known and unknown. The Orthodox Churches observe this festival on the first Sunday after Pentecost.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> November **All Souls' Day**  
 An occasion for remembrance of the souls of loved ones who have died.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> December **Advent Sunday (Western) (the date varies)**  
 The fourth Sunday before Christmas and start of the Church Year and of Advent, the season leading up to Christmas. Children receive Advent calendars.
- 24<sup>th</sup> December **Christmas Eve**  
 In many Christian families, and in many other families in countries influenced by Christianity, "Father Christmas" or "Santa Claus" delivers presents during the night - a tradition based on the folk myth of the generous Saint Nicholas.
- 25<sup>th</sup> December **Christmas Day**  
 The most celebrated Christian festival, marking the birth of Jesus Christ.

*\* Denotes a date which will vary as the date of Easter is determined according to the lunar calendar. Easter can fall anywhere between 21st March and 25th April. Dates of various other festivals are fixed with reference to it. These festivals are celebrated on different days by Orthodox Christians, because the date of Easter is calculated in a different way.*

## Acknowledging Christian Festivals

### Christmas

#### 1. Cards and Sweets

Christmas is a time for peace and goodwill. Spread some by distributing Christmas cards or sweets.

- While you can of course easily find and buy Christmas cards, it can also be fun to make them, especially if children are involved.
- Chocolate and sweets are common gifts at Christmas. Traditional sweets or biscuits from your own cultural background will probably be greatly enjoyed, or you could be more specifically festive and make some star-shaped biscuits or other Christmas treats. If you don't have recipes the Internet does!
- You could take your cards or gifts to a local church, visiting a service during Advent (the period of four weeks leading up to Christmas).
- Alternatively, build a sense of community and friendship among your neighbours by delivering cards, sweets or little gifts door-to-door. To avoid excluding or offending non-Christian neighbours you may want to make sure you have some sweets without a "Happy Christmas!" message to give to them.
- Because Christmas is such a widely celebrated festival in the UK, enjoyed as a time for family get-togethers and gift giving among many people who are not practising Christians, giving out Christmas cards in a public place can also work well. Many passersby will appreciate the gesture; it will add something different and special to their Christmas shopping experience. It can also be good fun to do this as a group.
- See checklist under "Distributing Cards/Gifts", page 22.

#### 2. Interfaith Explorations

- If you belong to a religious tradition, why not propose an interfaith seminar/discussion with a church group and your own religious congregation during Advent?
- In the Bible, Jesus is called the "Prince of Peace". Why not organise a community discussion event with a Christian speaker and a Muslim speaker discussing peace in their own religious traditions? The speakers could be an imam and a priest, or simply well-informed members of the congregations,

or academics from local universities. Combined with some refreshments and some music, and even a shared prayer for peace, this kind of event could be a great way of encouraging mutual respect and friendship between different religious groups.

- Another promising theme is Mary/Maryam, the mother of Jesus. Speakers from the Christian and Muslim traditions explaining Mary's characteristics and significance in their faiths can, again, be the basis of a valuable time of sharing.
- It is best not to organise this sort of event too close to Christmas because people often get very busy with their preparations. The beginning of December could be a good time.
- See checklist under "Inviting Speakers to Explain Festivals" above, page 21.

## Easter

### *Chocolate Eggs*

In religious terms, Easter is the most important festival of the Christian year, and a joyful time. Easter eggs (usually chocolate) are traditionally given, especially to children. They symbolise new life.

- Delivering Easter eggs to Christian friends and neighbours with an explanatory card is a valuable friendly gesture. Many families who are not actively religious still give chocolate eggs to their children and will appreciate yours.
- Taking chocolate eggs to a church after Easter is a lovely way to acknowledge the religious life of a neighbouring religious community. It is best to take them on Easter Sunday or on one of the following Sundays (the season of Easter lasts for seven weeks) rather than in advance; Lent, a season of abstinence, lasts until Easter day and chocolate would not be very appropriate before the joyful celebration of Easter arrives. Make arrangements with the priest/minister.
- Alternatively you could buy or make decorative eggs. See Appendix 4 for ideas on decorating eggs. It is great fun to do this with children.

## Harvest

### *Visiting a Church and Contributing to Food Collections*

Harvest festivals are times for thanksgiving for and celebration of God's good gifts - an idea which can easily be appreciated across different religions.

- If a local church is having a harvest festival, with produce brought to the church for sale or redistribution, why not bring some along and visit the service?
- Particularly if you are bringing a group, it may be nice to make contact with

the priest/minister or with a member of the congregation in advance so that they are expecting you.

- Note that not all churches will have a harvest festival, and that practices vary from church to church.

## Islam

Islam is a monotheistic religion based on the submission of the faithful to the will of God as recorded in the Qur'an and put into practice by Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon Him). Literally, being a word derived from the root word "s-l-m", "silm" and "salamah", Islam means peace and submission of oneself to God.

### Muslim Festivals (based on 2012)

9<sup>th</sup> February (2012)\*

#### Milad un Nabi

The birthday of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon Him) is celebrated by some Muslims. The day is usually marked by a sermon, remembrance of the Prophet's (peace be upon Him) life and mission, gift-giving and a feast. Celebrations are motivated by a sense of love and respect for the Prophet (peace be upon Him).

16<sup>th</sup> June (2012)\*

#### Lailat al Miraj

"Night of ascension."\*\* Believed by Muslims to be the night that Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon Him) ascended to heaven as alluded to by the Qur'an (17:1) to reach the throne of God.

4<sup>th</sup> July (2012)\*

#### Lailat al Bara'at

This night (the night of 3rd July in 2012\*\*) is believed to be a night of forgiveness, and to be the night on which destinies for the coming year are written. Also known as Borak's Night, or in Persian, Shab-i-Barat.

20<sup>th</sup> July (2012)\*

#### Ramadan (start)

Month of fasting and purification of the soul in Islam. Sawm, fasting, involves abstaining from eating, drinking, smoking and intercourse from the beginning of dawn until dusk.

15<sup>th</sup> August (2012)\*

#### Lailat al Qadr

Night of Power. The night when the Qur'an was first revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon

Him) and the most holy night of the year. The Qur'an states that it is better than a thousand months (Surah 97:3), but does not disclose its exact date, although it is traditionally commemorated on the 27th day of Ramadan. Because of this Muslims are advised to spend as much time in prayer as possible over the last ten days of Ramadan.

19th August (2012)\*

### Eid ul Fitr

Three-day feast of the end of the month of fasting. Literally, "celebration of the breaking of the fast".

26th October (2012)\*

### Eid ul Adha

Feast of Sacrifice (four days). It falls on the tenth day of the twelfth and final Islamic month, Dhu al-Hijjah, at the end of the annual pilgrimage to Mecca. It commemorates Prophet Ibrahim's readiness to sacrifice his son at God's command.

15th November (2012)\*

### Al-Hijra

Islamic New Year. The first day of Muharram, the first month in the Islamic calendar, which is lunar.

24th November (2012)\*

### Ashurah

A traditional day observed by some Muslims on the tenth day of Muharram, the first month of the Islamic year, recognising the Creation of the world, Prophet Noah's departure from the ark, and the saving of Prophet Moses from Pharaoh. For Shi'a Muslims it is a day of mourning for the Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon Him) grandson Hussein, the third Shi'a imam, who died in battle.

*\* Because the Islamic calendar is lunar the dates of all festivals change from year to year. Each festival is eleven days earlier each year according to the western Gregorian calendar.*

*\*\*Note that in the Islamic calendar festivals begin at sunset on the preceding evening.*

## Acknowledging Muslim Festivals

### Ramadan

#### *Fast-Breaking Gifts for Friends, Neighbours and Colleagues*

- To acknowledge this special Muslim observance, why not help friends, neighbours or colleagues break their fast by taking them some dates, fresh fruit, cake or biscuits?

- You could use the occasion to make contact with Muslim neighbours whom you do not know well.
- See checklist under “Distributing Cards/Gifts” above, page 22.
- If you are invited to a fast-breaking dinner, take a gift such as flowers, chocolates, some nice fruit juice or cake. Remember that Islam forbids alcohol and pork derivatives, so check the ingredients of chocolates or cakes and do not make the mistake of taking a bottle of wine. Further, Muslims only eat halal meat/poultry products. Vegetarian options are always best. Take your shoes off when you enter.

## Eid ul Fitr

### 1. With Friends and Neighbours

- This festival is a joyful celebration of the end of Ramadan’s fast. Celebratory meals are eaten with family and friends and presents are given to children.
- You may want to acknowledge the festival by giving a card and/or some chocolates or other food-based gift to Muslim neighbours, friends or colleagues.
- For lots of *Eid* card inspiration run an image search for “*Eid* card” using a search engine such as Google.
- Again, you could use this opportunity to make contact with Muslim neighbours whom you do not know. Take round your gift and wish your neighbour “*Eid Mubarak!*” - “have a blessed *Eid!*”
- See checklist under “Distributing Cards/Gifts” above, page 22.
- If you are invited to a celebratory dinner, take a gift such as flowers, chocolates, some nice fruit juice or cake. Remember that Islam forbids alcohol, so do not make the mistake of taking a bottle of wine!

### 2. Gifts After Eid Congregational Prayers

- To acknowledge *Eid* on a larger scale, contact the imam of a local mosque and see if you can bring a group to give out cards and/or chocolates/sweets/biscuits to Muslims leaving the *Eid* prayers, wishing them “*Eid Mubarak!*” This is a nice activity to do with a religious group, community group, or simply an interested group of friends.
- See checklist under “Distributing Cards/Gifts” above, page 22.

## Ashurah

### Noah’s Pudding

- Among Anatolian Muslims and some others it is customary to make Noah’s Pudding, otherwise known as *Ashurah*, at around the time of the festival and to share it with neighbours. The pudding represents the dish that Prophet Noah is said to have made for the inhabitants of the Ark from their

remaining supplies when the flood waters receded.

- The Dialogue Society has long been encouraging Muslims to share their Noah's puddings with non-Muslim neighbours in various ways, encouraging dialogue and friendship between different groups. Individuals families and groups have, among other activities:
  - Distributed individual puddings to next-door neighbours
  - Hosted Noah's Pudding evenings for other religious groups, community groups, stakeholders or for local people in general
  - Taken puddings to church services and other religious services to share with the congregation
  - Delivered puddings to schools and workplaces
- Any of these activities could be replicated by non-Muslim groups seeking to acknowledge the festival of Muslim neighbours. A recipe is included in this manual (see Appendix 3). For extensive advice on using Noah's Pudding activities please see the *Noah's Pudding* Community Dialogue Manual.

## Hinduism

Hinduism is a body of religions and philosophical beliefs and cultural practices native to India and characterised by a belief in reincarnation and a supreme being of many forms and natures, by the view that opposing theories are aspects of one eternal truth, and by a desire for liberation from earthly evils.

### Hindu Festivals (based on 2012)

14 <sup>th</sup> January	<p><b>Makar Sankranti</b></p> <p>One of the most important Hindu festivals, marking the very auspicious period of the sun's journey into the northern hemisphere.</p>
28 <sup>th</sup> January (2012)*	<p><b>Vasant Panchami (also called Sri Panchami)</b></p> <p>Celebration of the coming of spring in Eastern Indian Hinduism. Honours Saraswati, the goddess of learning, and Vasanta, companion of Kama.</p>
20 <sup>th</sup> February (2012)*	<p><b>Maha Shivaratri (also called Shivaratri)</b></p> <p>A night of fasting, dedicated to Lord Shiva, the third and the superior deity of the Hindu trinity.</p>
8 <sup>th</sup> March (2012)*	<p><b>Holi</b></p> <p>The lively "festival of colours", celebrating Spring.</p>

- 1<sup>st</sup> April (2012)\* **Rama Navami**  
Marks the anniversary of the birth of Rama, the first human incarnation of the God Vishnu.
- 1<sup>st</sup> April (2012)\* **Swaminarayan Jayanti**  
Celebrates the birthday of the founder of the Swaminarayan tradition, Lord Swaminarayan.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> August (2012)\* **Raksha Bandhan**  
One of the brother-sister holidays. The sister ties a thread (rakhi) to her brother as a symbol of her love for him and of his promise to protect her.
- 12<sup>th</sup> August (2012)\* **Krishna Jayanti (also known as Janmashtami)**  
Celebrates the birth of Bhagavan Sri Krishna, who is seen by most Hindus as an avatar (incarnation) of the God Vishnu.
- 19<sup>th</sup> September (2012)\* **Ganesh Ghaturchi**  
Birthday of Ganesh, elephant-headed Hindu god, son of Shiva and Parvati, remover of obstacles and Lord of wisdom.
- 16<sup>th</sup> October (2012)\* **Navaratri (nine nights)**  
Chiefly a women's festival of worship of three divine goddesses, Saraswati (Goddess of learning and speech), Lakshmi (Goddess of wealth and prosperity) and Durga (Goddess of strength and courage). Celebrated with dancing and festivity as well as fasting and rituals.
- 13<sup>th</sup> November (2012)\* **Diwali**  
The Hindu festival of lights, held on the final day of the Hindu calendar. It celebrates the triumph of good over evil, of light over darkness and of knowledge over ignorance. The following day marks the beginning of a new year.

*\*The dates of most festivals change year by year because of the use of the lunar calendar*

## Acknowledging Hindu Festivals

### Diwali

#### 1. With Friends, Neighbours and Colleagues

- Acknowledge this time of celebration by giving Hindu friends, neighbours

and/or colleagues a Diwali card and perhaps a small gift. Sweets and dried fruits are traditional.

- Bear in mind that many Hindus are vegetarian and that those who are generally do not eat eggs; check ingredients of edible gifts accordingly.
- Lotus flowers, associated with the goddess Lakshmi, are popular in Diwali designs, as are images of candles, lamps and lights. For lots of Diwali card inspiration run an image search for “Diwali card” using a search engine such as Google.
- You may want to use the opportunity to make contact with Hindu neighbours whom you do not know. Take round your card and/or small gift and wish your neighbour “Shubh Diwali!” - “Happy Diwali!”
- If you are invited to a celebratory dinner, take a gift such as flowers, sweets or cakes. Remember that many Hindus are vegetarians<sup>7</sup> and that although alcohol is not forbidden, many do not drink it. Take your shoes off when you enter.
- See checklist under “Distributing Cards/Gifts” above, page 22.

## 2. Gifts at the Mandir

- If there is a mandir, a Hindu temple, in your area, you might want to make contact and ask if you can bring a group to give out cards and sweets to worshippers on their way out. This is a nice activity to do with a religious group, community group, or simply an interested group of friends.
- See checklist under “Distributing Cards/Gifts” above, page 22.

*See Jainism section for advice on organising an Interfaith Diwali Seminar with Hindu, Sikh and Jain speakers.*

## Sikhism

Sikhism is a monotheistic religion founded in northern India in the 6th century by Guru Nanak. It shares some features with Hinduism and with Islam. It is a spiritual path which stresses the importance of remembrance of God and service of others in this worldly life.

### Sikh Festivals (based on 2012)

5 <sup>th</sup> January	<b>Birthday of Guru Bobindh Singh</b> Honours the birthday of the founder of the Khalsa (Sikh baptism) who lived from c.a. 1469-1539).
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<sup>7</sup> Hindu vegetarians do not usually eat eggs, but generally will consume milk/dairy products

- 9th March (2012)\* **Hola Mohalla**  
Established by Guru Gobind Singh as a day for Sikhs to practise their military skills, the festival is now observed with martial arts parades, poetry readings and music.
- 13th or 14<sup>th</sup> April **Vaisakhi/Baisakhi**  
The Sikh New Year festival which also commemorates the founding of the Akhal Kahlsa (body of baptised Sikh “Soldiers of the Timeless One”) by Guru Gobind Sahib at Anandpur Sahib in India.
- 14<sup>th</sup> April **Birthdays of Guru Nanak (Nanakshahi calendar)**  
**Hola Mohalla (Nanakshahi calendar)**  
These festivals are currently celebrated by most at different times (28th November and 9th March respectively in 2012), according to the lunar calendar. This arrangement may not be permanent.
- 16<sup>th</sup> June **Martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev**  
The fifth Guru of the Sikhs, who updated the text of Sikh scripture, completed the construction of the Golden Temple and was instrumental in founding four important Sikh towns in central Punjab.
- 13<sup>th</sup> November (2012)\* **Diwali**  
The festival of lights. For Sikhs, the festival commemorates the release from prison of Guru Hargobind along with 52 other princes in 1619.
- 24<sup>th</sup> November **Martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur**  
The ninth Sikh Guru, killed for his faith on the orders of Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb in 1675.
- 28<sup>th</sup> November (2012)\* **Birthdays of Guru Nanak**  
Guru Nanak Dev Ji was actually born on 20th October 1490, but his birthday is celebrated on the first full moon after the 20th October.

*\*The festivals marked with a star move from year to year because they are determined according to the lunar calendar*

## Acknowledging Sikh Festivals

### Diwali

#### Giving Sweets

- If you would like to acknowledge a Sikh festival at the neighbourhood level, or among friends or colleagues, Diwali is a good one to choose.
- Sweets are an appropriate gift.
- You may want to use the opportunity to make contact with Sikh neighbours whom you do not know. Take round some sweets and/or a card and wish your neighbour a happy Diwali.
- See checklist under “Distributing Cards/Gifts” above, page 22.

### Major Festivals

#### Attending Parades

- Where there is a large enough Sikh community, a parade is likely to be held to celebrate major festivals. The parade will often be led by five men representing the first five members of the Khalsa, the panj piyare, “beloved five”. Music, chanting and martial arts displays usually feature in the parade. Drinks are generally given out to spectators, and free food is distributed at the parade and/or at the gurdwara (Sikh place of communal worship).
- As giving out food is such a part of Sikh festivals, offering gifts of food to acknowledge the festival may be a bit out of place. The best thing to do is to go out and enjoy the parade!
- Encourage a group from your religious congregation, neighbourhood or organisation to come out with you.

*See Jainism section for advice on organising an Interfaith Diwali Seminar with Hindu, Sikh and Jain speakers.*

## Buddhism

Buddhism is a philosophical tradition, founded by Gautama Siddhartha Buddha in the fifth century BCE, that took on various forms as a religion and spread throughout Asia. Buddhism attempts to help the individual conquer the suffering and mutability of human existence through the elimination of desire and ego and attainment of the state of nirvana.

## Buddhist Festivals (based on 2012)

- 7<sup>th</sup> February (2012)\* **Magha Puja or Sangha Day**  
 A joyful celebration of the Buddhist community. For some, sangha really refers to monks and nuns but others see it as extending to all Buddhists. Gifts are exchanged and it is a time to reaffirm commitment to Buddhism.
- 8<sup>th</sup> February **Parinirvana**  
 Nirvana Day. Annual Buddhist festival celebrating the Buddha's death when he reached Nirvana, at the age of 80.
- 15<sup>th</sup> February **Alternative date for Parinirvana**
- 22<sup>nd</sup> February (2012)\* **Losar (Tibetan Buddhism)**  
 Tibetan New Year. A three day celebration in Tibet with dancing and feasting. Often condensed to one day in the West.
- 6<sup>th</sup> April (2012)\* **Lunar New Year**  
 New Year for Theravada and Mahayana Buddhists, which falls on the first full moon in April. In the West it is often celebrated on the nearest Sunday when it falls on a week day.
- 5<sup>th</sup> May (2012)\* **Vesak (also called Wesak, Visakha Puja and Buddha Day)**  
 The most important Buddhist festival, commemorating the Buddha's birth, enlightenment and entry into Nirvana. Celebrated on the first full moon day in May on which all three events took place, except in a leap year when the festival is held in June. In Thailand it is celebrated with mass releases of caged birds, sacred chants, fasting and other religious observances.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> July (2012)\* **Asalha Puja or Dharma Day**  
 Commemorates the delivery of the first discourse of the Buddha, two months after his attaining enlightenment. The festival falls on the full moon of Asalha, the fourth month of the Indian calendar. It marks the start of the three month "rains retreat", during which monks are supposed to stay in one monastery and not travel. It is a time of increased religious observance for both members of the sangha - monks and nuns, and the upasaka - lay followers.

19<sup>th</sup> October-16<sup>th</sup> November (2012)\*

### Kathina

Following the “rains retreat” period, this is a festival of alms-giving. Monks moving on after their retreat are offered gifts of cloth by lay people.

8<sup>th</sup> December

### Bodhi Day

Commemorates the enlightenment of Sakyamuni Buddha.

*\*Because of the use of the lunar calendar, the dates of most festivals change from year to year*

*\*\*Note that in the UK, when a festival falls on a week day it is usually moved to the nearest weekend*

## Acknowledging Buddhist Festivals

### Vesak

#### Cards and Flowers

Some Buddhists exchange Vesak cards. This is a custom which you could easily join in with to acknowledge this popular Buddhist festival.

- Acknowledge this time of celebration by making or buying cards for Buddhist friends, neighbours and/or colleagues.
- Images of the Buddha or of a lotus flower are traditional. For lots of card inspiration run an image search for “Vesak card” using a search engine such as Google.
- Flowers are an appropriate gift, as homes are often decorated with flowers for Vesak.
- You may want to use the opportunity to make contact with Buddhist neighbours whom you do not know. Take round your card/flowers and wish your neighbour a happy Vesak.
- Note that many Buddhists are vegetarian; check ingredients of edible gifts.
- See checklist under “Distributing Cards/Gifts” above, page 22.
- If there is a temple/centre in your area, you might want to make contact and ask if you can bring a group to give out cards or flowers to worshippers when the festival is celebrated (often at the nearest weekend when it falls on a weekday). This is a nice activity to do with a religious group, community group, or simply an interested group of friends.
- See checklist under “Distributing Cards/Gifts” above, page 22.

## Magha Puja or Losar

### Gifts of Sweet Foods

- If you have friends, neighbours or colleagues who celebrate Magha Puja, or Tibetan Buddhist contacts who celebrate Losar, you may want to give a small gift of sweets, cake or biscuits at the festival.
- If either festival is celebrated at a local Buddhist temple/centre, you may wish to distribute gifts there with a group of volunteers.
- See checklists under “Distributing Cards/Gifts” above, page 22.

## Judaism

Judaism is the religious system of the Jewish people, centred on the belief in One God and in his Covenant made with the Jewish people through Moses, as described in the Torah.

### Jewish Festivals (based on 2012)

8<sup>th</sup> February (2012)\*

#### Tu B'Shevat

The Jewish “New Year for Trees”. Tu B'Shevat is the new year for the purpose of calculating the age of trees for tithing.

8<sup>th</sup> March (2012)\*

#### Purim

Joyous Jewish feast commemorating the saving of the Jews of Shushan as told in the Book of Esther.

7<sup>th</sup> April (2012)\*

#### Passover

Commemorates the mass departure of the Israelites from Egypt, and is celebrated by the Seder ritual in Jewish homes. The story of Passover is told and symbolic foods are eaten, including unleavened bread or matzoth which represents the hurry in which the Israelites started their journey. The festival is celebrated for eight days by Orthodox and Conservative Jews outside Israel, and for seven days by Reform Jews and Jews in Israel.

19<sup>th</sup> April (2012)\*

#### Yom Hashoah

A day of remembrance of the Shoah (often called the Holocaust), the Nazi atrocities of World War II in which 6 million Jews were murdered. “Shoah” in Hebrew literally means “whirlwind”; it came to signify “catastrophe” or “destruction”.

- 27<sup>th</sup> May (2012)\* **Shavuot**  
 The Feast of Weeks. Originally marking the beginning of the wheat harvest, it has come to commemorate also the receiving of the Torah on Mount Sinai. Synagogues are often decorated with fruits and flowers.
- 29<sup>th</sup> July (2012)\* **Tisha B'av**  
 The traditional day of mourning in Judaism for the destruction of the First and Second Temples and other tragedies in Jewish history. It is marked with a 25-hour fast and the reading of the Book of Lamentations in synagogues.
- 17<sup>th</sup> September (2012)\* **Rosh Hashanah**  
 The Jewish spiritual New Year, recalling the Creation. It is also called Yom Hadin, or the Day of Judgement, and begins a ten-day period of repentance known as the Days of Awe. Prayers of penitence are said in the synagogue and the shofar, ram's horn, is sounded.
- 26<sup>th</sup> September (2012)\* **Yom Kippur**  
 Concludes the 10 days of repentance which began with Rosh Hashanah. Jews observe a 25 hour fast and seek purification and reconciliation with God through repentance and the forgiveness of others. God is believed to decide on what the next will hold for each person; the Book of Life, opened on Rosh Hashanah, is closed.
- 1<sup>st</sup> October (2012)\* **Sukkot**  
 Also called the Feast of Tabernacles, or Feast of Booths. Sukkot commemorates the life of the Israelites in the desert during their journey to the land of Israel. During their wandering the Torah records that they lived in sukkot (huts). Many Jewish families build their own sukkah to eat and perhaps even sleep in for seven days.
- 9<sup>th</sup> December (2012)\* **Hanukkah**  
 Also called the Feast of Dedication, Hanukkah commemorates the rededication (164 BCE) of the Second Temple of Jerusalem after its desecration three years earlier by order of Antiochus IV Epiphanes. The festival lasts for eight days.

Every Friday

### Shabbat

Shabbat, the Jewish Sabbath, is a weekly day of rest and religious observance which lasts from nightfall on Friday until nightfall on Saturday. Work is forbidden. Families eat a special Shabbat meal together on Friday evening.

*\*Festivals vary from year to year because the calendar is lunar. Note that festivals begin at nightfall on the previous evening.*

## Acknowledging Jewish Festivals

### Rosh Hashanah

#### Giving Cards

Jews often exchange Rosh Hashanah greetings cards before the festival, and this is a custom which you can easily engage with:

- Acknowledge this time of celebration by making or buying cards for Jewish friends, neighbours and/or colleagues.
- For lots of card inspiration run an image search for “Rosh Hashanah card” using a search engine such as Google.
- The traditional greeting is “L’Shanah Tovah!”, “For a good year!”
- You may want to use the opportunity to make contact with Jewish neighbours whom you do not know. Take round your card and wish your neighbour a good New Year.
- If there is a synagogue in your area, you might want to make contact and ask if you can bring a group to give out cards to worshippers at an appropriate time, such as the previous Saturday. This is a nice activity to do with a religious group, community group, or simply an interested group of friends.
- See checklist under “Distributing Cards/Gifts” above, page 22.

### Hanukkah

#### Giving Cards

The giving and receiving of cards is traditional at Hanukkah, and you can acknowledge the festival by joining in with this in the ways described above for Rosh Hashanah cards.

- The traditional greeting is “Chag Sameach!”
- See checklists under “Distributing Cards/Gifts” above, page 22.

## Jainism

Jainism was given its present form in 500BCE by Mahavira, believed to be the 24th Tirthankara (teacher). The religion emphasizes asceticism and the immortality and transmigration of the soul. It denies the existence of a Perfect or Supreme Being. Jains respect all life and are strict vegetarians.

### Jain Festivals (based on 2012)

- 5<sup>th</sup> April (2012)\* **Mahavira Jayanti**  
 Celebrates the birthday of Mahavira, the 24th and final tirthankara of the present age. (A tirthankara is a great omniscient teacher who shows others the way to liberation.)
- August/September\* **Paryushana**  
 A very important eight-day festival of repentance, fasting and worship which began as a monastic practice but became more widely observed. The Kalpasutra, the most sacred of the Jain scriptures is read and explained by monks.
- 13<sup>th</sup> November (2012)\* **Diwali**  
 For Jains the day commemorates Mahavira's final teaching and his liberation. Children are often given sweets. Particularly religious Jains may fast, following Mahavira's example.
- Following Diwali,  
 October/November\* **Kartak Purnima**  
 An auspicious time for pilgrimages to sacred Jain sites.
- November/December\* **Mauna Agyaras**  
 A day of fasting and silence, with meditation on the five great beings.

*\*Jain festivals move from year to year because of the use of the lunar calendar*

### Acknowledging Jain Festivals

Jain temples can be located via: <http://www.jainology.org/resources/jain-temples-in-the-uk/>

### Mahavira Jayanti/Diwali

#### Day of Vegetarianism

In accordance with the principle of ahimsa, "non-injuring", Jains are strict vegetarians. They do not eat eggs and some do not consume milk or milk products. In addition,

honey is forbidden because of the violence done to bees in its collection and root vegetables are not eaten because harvesting them destroys the whole plant. Fermented food and drinks are not consumed.

Why not acknowledge a Jain festival in a truly appropriate way by honouring the Jain principle of ahimsa and adopting a vegetarian diet for that day? Send a little card or note to Jain friends or neighbours to let them know what you are doing. It will undoubtedly be appreciated.

Even better, arrange for your religious congregation, community group or group of friends or neighbours to have a day of vegetarianism and let a local Jain group know what you are doing.

At Diwali, you could combine this gesture with the following:

## Diwali

### 1. Gifts of Sweet Foods

- Jain families often exchange sweets at Diwali. Why not join in and acknowledge this important festival by offering some sweets or chocolates to a Jain friend, neighbour or colleague?
- Be careful what you choose: Jains have particular dietary requirements because of their careful adherence to the principle of non-violence (see note under “Mahavira Jayanti/Diwali: Day of Vegetarianism” above). When making or buying sweets, check the ingredients for forbidden ingredients.
- If there is a local Jain congregation you could contact them and arrange to go with a group to distribute sweets after a service.
- See checklist under “Distributing Cards/Gifts” above, page 22.

### 2. Interfaith Diwali Seminar:

- If you live in an area with Hindu, Sikh and Jain communities, why not invite a speaker from each tradition, and guests from that community, for a joint seminar with your own religious congregation or community group?
- Especially if you can involve volunteers from the different communities in provision of refreshments, music and decoration, this could be a fascinating and colourful event.
- It will therefore be worth advertising properly, with invitations to each congregation, posters in shops, places of worship, community centres, Post Offices etc and perhaps an advert in local papers.
- See checklists under “Inviting Speakers to Explain Festivals” above, page 21.
- For a sample letter to a possible speaker see Appendix 5.

## Rastafarianism

With roots in the thought of the Jamaican political activist Marcus Garvey, who founded the “Back to Africa” movement, Rastafari developed after the coronation of the Emperor Haile Selassie I of Ethiopia in 1930. Rastafari, also known as Rastas, worship Emperor Haile Selassie as an incarnation of God, as Jesus Christ was. They believe that he will ultimately lead oppressed and exiled blacks back to Africa.

### Rastafari Festivals

7 <sup>th</sup> January	<p><b>Ethiopian Christmas</b></p> <p>Celebrated with a vegetarian feast, music and worship. (Rastafarian music is called Nyabingi, and meetings dominated by music are known as Nyabingi meetings.)</p>
21 <sup>st</sup> April	<p><b>Groundation Day</b></p> <p>Commemorates the visit of Emperor Haile Selassie I to Jamaica in 1966. Celebrated with a Nyabingi meeting with music and worship.</p>
16 <sup>th</sup> July	<p><b>Ethiopian Constitution Day</b></p> <p>Marks Ethiopia’s first constitution, implemented in 1931 by Haile Selassie. Ethiopia is seen as the spiritual homeland of Rastafarians.</p>
23 <sup>rd</sup> July	<p><b>Birthday of Emperor Haile Selassie I</b></p> <p>Honours the birth of the Emperor Haile Selassie in 1892. He is seen as an avatar or incarnation of God.</p>
17 <sup>th</sup> August	<p><b>Birthday of Marcus Garvey</b></p> <p>Marks the birth in 1887 of the Jamaican politician who started the “Back to Africa” movement.</p>
11 <sup>th</sup> September	<p><b>Ethiopian New Year’s Day</b></p> <p>New Year in the spiritual homeland of Rastafarians.</p>
2 <sup>nd</sup> November	<p><b>Crowning of Emperor Haile Selassie I</b></p> <p>Ras Tafari was crowned in 1930. (Ras Tafari was the Emperor’s title prior to his coronation.)</p>

## Acknowledging Rastafarian Festivals

### Ethiopian Christmas

#### *Gifts for the Feast*

- If you have any Rasta friends, neighbours or colleagues, why not acknowledge their Christmas feast by taking them a gift to contribute to their celebration.
- Note that Rastafarians generally do not eat meat, with the exception of fish no more than twelve inches long. They do not drink milk, coffee or alcohol and prepare their food without salt. They eat “I-tal” - “natural and clean”. Some nice fruit or fruit juices could be a good choice of gift.
- If you happen to know of a local Rastafarian congregation you could get in touch and visit a gathering with gifts. Rastafarians generally meet in someone’s house or a community centre.
- See checklists under “Distributing Cards/Gifts” above, page 22.

## Baha'i

The Baha'i Faith was founded in Iran in 1863. It emphasizes the spiritual unity of all humankind and that all races, religions and civilisations should be unified as one universal civilization. It incorporates Christian and Islamic tenets.

### Baha'i Festivals

2<sup>nd</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> March

#### Nineteen Day Fast

Start of Nineteen Days' Fast in the Baha'i Faith. This is the month immediately preceding the Baha'i New Year, which occurs on the day of the vernal equinox; the period of fasting is therefore viewed as a time of spiritual preparation and regeneration for a new year's activities.

21<sup>st</sup> March 2012

#### Naw-Rúz

New Year. Baha'is observe a special feast for this day by the name of, “Feast honouring the one Deity as Baha - Splendour”.

21<sup>st</sup> April-2<sup>nd</sup> May

#### Ridvan

The most important festival in the Baha'i calendar, commemorating the declaration of the prophethood of Baha'u'llah, the founder of the Baha'i faith, in the garden of Ridvan in Baghdad. The first, ninth and twelfth days are consecrated for special worship and service.

23 <sup>rd</sup> May	<p><b>Declaration of the Báb</b></p> <p>Anniversary of the declaration made by the Bab in 1844. This was in the form of a letter to Baha'u'llah informing him of the new Revelation.</p>
29 <sup>th</sup> May	<p><b>Ascension of Baha'u'llah</b></p> <p>Anniversary of the death of Baha'u'llah. Born Mirza Husayn Ali (12th November 1817-29th May 1892) in Tehran, Persia, he was also known as Baha'u'llah, "He Whom God will make manifest" (from the writings of the Bab) and as "Father of the Poor".</p>
9 <sup>th</sup> July	<p><b>Martyrdom of the Bab</b></p> <p>The Bab was killed by firing squad in Tebriz, Persia (now Iran) and his body disposed of in a ditch. Several years later it was buried by the Baha'is in a mausoleum on Mt Carmel, in Israel. The title "Bab" (Arabic: "gateway") was assumed by Mirza Ali Mohammad in 1844 and he is one of the central figures of the Baha'i faith.</p>
20 <sup>th</sup> October	<p><b>Birth of the Bab</b></p> <p>The Bab is said to have been born on 20th October 1819 (1 Muharram 1235 AH) in Shiraz, Persia.</p>
12 <sup>th</sup> November	<p><b>Birth of Baha'u'llah</b></p> <p>Birthday in 1817 of the founder of the Baha'i faith.</p>
26 <sup>th</sup> November	<p><b>Day of the Covenant</b></p> <p>Minor festival celebrating the covenant of Baha'u'llah and honouring the life of his son, Abdu'l-Bahá.</p>
28 <sup>th</sup> November	<p><b>Ascension of Abdu'l-Bahá</b></p> <p>Anniversary of the death of Abdu'l-Bahá in 1921.</p>

## Acknowledging Baha'i Festivals

### Naw-Rúz

#### *Gifts of Sweet Foods*

- Baha'is often exchange gifts at Naw-Rúz. Why not join in and acknowledge this important festival by offering a little gift, perhaps sweets, biscuits or chocolate, to a Baha'i friend, neighbour or colleague?
- If there is a local Baha'i congregation you could contact them and arrange to go with a group to distribute small gifts after a service.
- See checklists under "Distributing Cards/Gifts" above, page 22.

## Ridvan

### Flowers

- Why not mark this key Baha'i festival, associated with the lovely garden of Ridvan, by taking some flowers to a Baha'i neighbour, friend or colleague? Since abundant roses grew and still grow in the garden of Ridvan, a rose or roses would be a particularly appropriate choice of gift.
- Alternatively you could give a card, perhaps with a floral image.
- If you know that you have Baha'i neighbours but do not know them well, you could take this opportunity to make contact.
- If there is a local Baha'i congregation you could contact them and arrange to go with a group to distribute flowers among them after a service.
- See checklists under "Distributing Cards/Gifts" above, page 22.

## Zoroastrianism

Zoroastrianism is a religion founded in the sixth century BCE by the Iranian Prophet Zoroaster, who taught that there are two equal and opposite deities or powers at work in the universe, and that the affairs of human beings are the result of the conflict between the two.

### Zoroastrian Festivals

21<sup>st</sup> March\*

#### Noruz or Naw Ruz

Zoroastrian New Year, according to the Fasli calendar.\* Also New Year for Bahais, Shi'ite Muslims and Kurds. It is fixed on the day of the vernal equinox, 21st March, which marks the beginning of spring in the Northern Hemisphere. The Zoroastrian festival is dedicated to fire. It is celebrated with the feasting, celebrations and the lighting of fires.

26<sup>th</sup> March\*

#### Khordad Sal

Celebrates the birth of the Prophet Zoroaster. Noruz is one of seven obligatory feasts. The other six are known as gahanbars or gahambers and are related to the agricultural year in Iran where the religion originated. They are as follows:

30<sup>th</sup> April-4<sup>th</sup> May \*

#### Maidyozarem (Mid-Spring)

29<sup>th</sup> June-3<sup>rd</sup> July\*

#### Maidyoshahem (Mid-Summer)

12<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> September \*

#### Paitishahem (Harvest)

12<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> October \* **Ayathrem (Bringing Home the Herds)**

31<sup>st</sup> December - 4<sup>th</sup> January\* **Maidyarem (Mid-Year/Winter)**

16<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> March\* **Hamaspathmaidyem (All Souls)**

*\*The dates given are according to the Fasli calendar, one of three used by Zoroastrians. According to the other calendars the dates of festivals in the Gregorian calendar vary from year to year. For further information on Zoroastrian calendars and for festival dates according to the Shahanshabi and Qadimi calendars, visit <http://www.avesta.org/zcal.html>*

## Acknowledging Zoroastrian Festivals

### Noruz

#### Gifts for the Feast

- If you have any Zoroastrian friends, neighbours or colleagues, why not acknowledge the New Year feast by taking them a gift to contribute to their celebration. Sweets or cakes are obvious choices, but any cultural or personal speciality could be a good option. Zoroastrians are not required to abstain from any particular foods.
- If you happen to live near one of the rare Zoroastrian fire temples in the UK you could get in touch and visit with gifts after a worship service.
- See checklists under “Distributing Cards/Gifts” above, page 22.

## Shinto

Shinto is the ancient indigenous religions of Japan based on a combination of nature and ancestor worship, Taoism and Shamanism. It does not have a founder, official scripture or fixed system of ethics. It is characterised by veneration of nature spirits and of ancestors.

### Shinto Festivals

- |                          |   |
|--------------------------|---|
| 1 <sup>st</sup> January  | <b>Oshogatsu/Ganjitsu</b><br>New Year. Traditionally a time to visit a shrine to pray and make New Year’s resolutions.  |
| 15 <sup>th</sup> January | <b>Seijin Shiki</b><br>Adults’ Day. A time of thanksgiving for people who have turned twenty in the last year.  |
| 3 <sup>rd</sup> February | <b>Setsubun</b><br>“Seasonal Division.” A festival held one day before the start of spring according to the Japanese calendar, when panheated beans are thrown out of the door to purify the house. |

- 30<sup>th</sup> June **Oharai**  
In Japan, this is the first day of a two-day Shinto purification ritual.
- 6<sup>th</sup> August **Hiroshima Peace Ceremony**  
Every year the city of Hiroshima holds the Peace Memorial Ceremony to console the souls of those who were lost due to the atomic bombing on 6th August 1945 as well as to pray for the realisation of everlasting world peace.
- 13<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> August **Obon**  
Festival of Souls.
- 22<sup>nd</sup>/23<sup>rd</sup> November (22<sup>nd</sup> in 2012)  
**Shubun No Hi**  
Autumn Equinox Day. A day observed also by some Buddhist sects as a time for visiting ancestral graves. 15<sup>th</sup> November (or the nearest Sunday)  
**Shichi-Go-San**  
Literally, “Seven-Five-Three”. A festival for girls who are three and seven years of age and boys who are three and five years of age. Odd numbers are considered lucky in Shinto religion.

## Acknowledging Shinto Festivals

### Oshogatsu/Ganjitsu

#### *Cards and Sweets*

- At this important festival, why not give Shinto friends, neighbours or colleagues a card with a greeting in Japanese?
- Take your card round just before the New Year, perhaps on New Year’s Eve (Omisoko).
- The Zodiac animal for the New Year is a popular choice for a card design at this festival. 2011 is the year of the rabbit; 2012 is the year of the dragon; 2013 is the year of the snake. (The Japanese zodiac calendar (Kanshi or Eto) is a variant of the Chinese Zodiac.)
- You could also take some sweets or cakes.
- If you have Shinto neighbours, or any neighbours of Japanese origin whom you do not know well, take the opportunity to make a little effort to recognise their cultural identity.
- See checklist under “Distributing Cards/Gifts” above, page 22.

## National Days

1 <sup>st</sup> January	<p><b>New Year's Day</b></p> <p>An official holiday in over 100 countries and time for New Year's resolutions.</p>
25 <sup>th</sup> January	<p><b>Burns Night</b></p> <p>Honours Robert Burns, famous Scottish poet who wrote Auld Lange Syne. Burns Suppers have been part of Scottish culture for about 200 years.</p>
14 <sup>th</sup> February	<p><b>St Valentine's Day</b></p> <p>The day is now widely observed as a celebration of romantic love, although this theme has no real connection to the three or more saints who share the name.</p>
1 <sup>st</sup> March	<p><b>St David's Day</b></p> <p>Honours St David, (Dewi Sant in Welsh), patron saint of Wales and of poets.</p>
17 <sup>th</sup> March	<p><b>St Patrick's Day</b></p> <p>Honours the patron saint of Ireland.</p>
18 <sup>th</sup> March (2012)	<p><b>Mothers' Day (date changes each year; see "Mothering Sunday" in the "Christian Festivals" section)</b></p> <p>No longer just a Christian tradition, this is a day for showing appreciation for mothers with gifts, cards or flowers.</p>
1 <sup>st</sup> April	<p><b>April Fools Day</b></p> <p>A day on which people traditionally play practical jokes on each other.</p>
21 <sup>st</sup> April	<p><b>The Queen's (Real) Birthday</b></p>
23 <sup>rd</sup> April	<p><b>St George's Day</b></p> <p>Honours the patron saint of England.</p>
1 <sup>st</sup> May	<p><b>May Day</b></p> <p>Rural English May Day traditions include Morris dancing, crowning a May Queen and dancing round a maypole.</p>
A Saturday in June	<p><b>The Queen's Official Birthday</b></p>
20 <sup>th</sup> /21 <sup>st</sup> June	<p><b>Midsummer's Day</b></p>

5 <sup>th</sup> November	<p><b>Guy Fawkes Night (Bonfire Night)</b></p> <p>Commemorates the failed Gunpowder Plot of 1605, in which Guy Fawkes and others purportedly attempted to blow up the king and Parliament. It is commonly celebrated with firework displays, bonfires, and the burning of a “guy”.</p>
11 <sup>th</sup> November	<p><b>Remembrance Day</b></p> <p>A day set aside to remember the fallen of the two World Wars and other conflicts. A two minute silence is commonly observed at 11am.</p>
30 <sup>th</sup> November	<p><b>St Andrew’s Day</b></p> <p>Honours Saint Andrew, patron saint of Scotland as well as of Greece and Russia. The flag of Scotland is the Cross of St. Andrew.</p>
31 <sup>st</sup> December	<p><b>New Year’s Eve (“Hogmanay” in Scotland)</b></p> <p>Celebrated with parties.</p>

## Marking National Days

### Mothers’ Day

#### Flowers for Neighbours and Friends/Care Home Residents

Mothers’ Day is a nice chance to show appreciation of mothers, grandmothers and women who look after or have looked after children and other people. Why not take this opportunity to spread this appreciation and care among members of your community who could do with some extra attention?

- If you know any older female neighbours who do not have regular visits from their children they may really appreciate a visit and a bunch of flowers on this day.
- You could also go with a small group to visit a local retirement home or care home and take some flowers. Contact the home in advance to talk about your plans (see Appendix 6).
- Why not involve volunteers from a local religious congregation or community group? Or you could invite people from your neighbourhood to join in - deliver notes inviting people to help and ask those who are interested to contact you (see Appendix 7).

## The Queen's Official Birthday (or a Royal Wedding)

This national event is a good excuse for some summer celebration to encourage community spirit.

### 1. Coffee Morning/Afternoon Tea

- Holding a coffee morning or an afternoon (cream) tea is a fairly simple way to bring local people together. Why not run the event to raise money for a popular local or national charity? Or share the proceeds between one of these and your own organisation?
- If you can hold the event in a community centre/house with a garden, so that guests can enjoy the sunshine, all the better.
- Providing a play area for kids will make it easier and more relaxing for parents to attend.
- Why not join forces with another community group/religious congregation to organise the event and provide home-made cakes?

### 2. Street Party

- A street party is a traditional British way of celebrating national events, and is a great way of bringing people in your neighbourhood together and of involving people who might not turn out for an event elsewhere.
- You needn't do anything elaborate; if a good number of residents bring out some food to share and children are allowed to play freely on their street you already have the main ingredients for a party.
- You will need to contact the Council for permission to close the street and also consider whether you will need liability insurance (see <http://www.streetparty.org.uk/insurance.aspx>)
- Your local Council website may give information and guidance (see, for example [http://www.islington.gov.uk/leisure/licences/street\\_parties.asp](http://www.islington.gov.uk/leisure/licences/street_parties.asp)), and the Government Department for Communities and Local Government also provides a guide to organising street parties: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/streetpartyguide>
- Visit Streets Alive's "The Street Party Website" at <http://www.streetparty.org.uk/> for guidance, advice and inspiration.
- See Appendix 8 for a sample flier inviting local residents to a street party meeting.
- Invitations to the party itself need not be professionally designed. You could just write out the information and decorate by hand, scan and print.



COMMUNITY  
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# Gallery of Inspirational Quotes

04

## Gallery Of Inspirational Quotes

These inspirational quotes draw on the wisdom of all of the religions included in this manual and on the thoughts of impressive and reflective individuals of other faiths or none. You may wish to use this smorgasbord of intercultural wisdom in any of the following ways:

- to provide conversation starters at dialogue events
- in Power Point displays at such events
- in publicity materials
- to provide inspiration at the beginning of committee meetings
- to include in your Gift Cards

And of course you may find your own different uses for it.

We should... claim, in the name of tolerance, the right not to tolerate the intolerant.

**Karl Popper**

In peace the sons bury their fathers, but in war the fathers bury their sons. **Croesus**

Fight with yourself, why fight with external foes? He who conquers himself through himself will obtain happiness. **Mahavira**

Doing good to others is not a duty, it is a joy, for it increases our own health and happiness. **Zoroaster**

Be worthy of the trust of thy neighbour, and look upon him with a bright and friendly face.... Be unjust to no man, and show all meekness to all men... Be a home for the stranger, a balm to the suffering, a tower of strength for the fugitive. **Bahá'u'lláh**

Repentance is another word for aspiration. **Henry Ward Beecher**

Mankind must put an end to war or war will put an end to mankind. **John F. Kennedy**

Be so tolerant that your bosom becomes wide like the ocean. Become inspired with faith and love of human beings. Let there be no troubled souls to whom you do not offer a hand, and about whom you remain unconcerned. **Fehullah Gülen**

Whoever destroys a single life is as guilty as though he had destroyed the entire world; and whoever rescues a single life earns as much merit as though he had rescued the entire world. **The Talmud, Mishna, Sanhedrin**

If you want others to be happy, practise compassion. If you want to be happy, practise compassion. **The Dalai Lama**

Friendship marks a life even more deeply than love. Love risks degenerating into obsession, friendship is never anything but sharing. **Elie Wiesel**

I am certain of nothing but the holiness of the heart's affections and the truth of imagination. **John Keats**

The more we sweat in peace, the less we bleed in war. [Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit](#)

It's a time for greatness - not for greed. It's a time for idealism - not ideology. It is a time not just for compassionate words, but compassionate action. [Marian Wright Edelman](#)

You must not lose faith in humanity. Humanity is an ocean; if a few drops of the ocean are dirty, the ocean does not become dirty. [Mohandas K. Gandhi](#)

Friend, if you possess some good, let us be friends. Let us be partners for doing good, and let us ignore each other's flaws. [Guru Suhi Rag](#)

Human diversity makes tolerance more than a virtue; it makes it a requirement for survival. [René Dubos](#)

The instinct to worship is hardly less strong than the instinct to eat. [Dorothy Thompson](#)

The world is a dangerous place, not because of those who do evil, but because of those who look on and do nothing. [Albert Einstein](#)

The response to war is to live like brothers and sisters. The response to injustice is to share. The response to despair is a limitless trust and hope. The response to prejudice and hatred is forgiveness... [Jean Vanier](#)

Have compassion towards all living beings. Hatred leads to destruction. [Mahavira](#)

The human race has one really effective weapon, and that is laughter. [Mark Twain](#)

Do not protect yourself with a fence, but rather by your friends. [Czech Proverb](#)

Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. [Martin Luther King Jr](#)

Pray as if everything depended upon God and work as if everything depended on man. [Francis Cardinal Spellman](#)

Allah forbids you not, with regard to those who fight you not for (your) Faith nor drive you out of your homes, from dealing kindly and justly with them: for Allah loveth those who are just. [Qur'an 60:8](#)

To be conscious that you are ignorant is a great step to knowledge. [Benjamin Disraeli](#)

We must become members of a new race, overcoming petty prejudice, owing our ultimate allegiance not to nations, but to our fellow men within the human community. [Emporer Haile Selassie I](#)

Peace is not an absence of war; it is a virtue, a state of mind, a disposition for benevolence, confidence and justice. [Baruch Spinoza](#)

The test of courage comes when we are in the minority; the test of tolerance comes when we are in the majority. [Ralph W. Sockman](#)

True religion is real living; living with all one's soul, with all one's goodness and righteousness. [Albert Einstein](#)

Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed. [UNESCO](#)

No one is my enemy and none is a stranger to me. Everyone is my friend.  
[Guru V, Kanara Rag](#)

Remember not only to say the right thing in the right place, but far more difficult still, to leave unsaid the wrong thing at the tempting moment. [Benjamin Franklin](#)

Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. [Matthew 5:44](#)

There is no compulsion in religion. [Qur'an 2:256](#)

Do all the good you can. By all the means you can. In all the ways you can. In all the places you can. At all the times you can. To all the people you can. As long as you can.  
[John Wesley](#)

There is nothing that war has ever achieved that we could not better achieve without it.  
[Havelock Ellis](#)

[Peace be with you!](#) Christian; [As-Salumu Alaykum!](#) Muslim; [Shalom Aleichem!](#) Jewish

Through violence you may murder a murderer, but you can't murder murder. Darkness cannot put out darkness. Only light can do that... [Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr](#)

Establishing lasting peace is the work of education; all politics can do is keep us out of war. [Maria Montessori](#)

Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. [Leviticus 19:18](#)

Blessed [are] the peacemakers; for they shall be called the children of God. [Matthew 5:9](#)

One kind word can warm three winter months. [Japanese proverb](#)

Spend each moment perfecting the next, not correcting the last. [Scott Michael Durski](#)

Let the world know you as you are, not as you think you should be. [Fannie Brice](#)

Great thoughts speak only to the thoughtful mind, but great actions speak to all mankind. [Emily P. Bissell](#)

Always remember that God does not reward man for what he does but for what he is; therefore you should extend help to your fellows without the thought of rewards. [Tao](#)

It is only through the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye. [Antoine de Saint-Exupéry](#)

As long as you live, keep learning how to live. [Seneca](#)

May thy Law propagate peace all through the world. May all things be a source of peace to us. And may thy peace itself bestow peace on all and may that peace come to me also. [Hindu Peace Prayer](#)

I believe that every right implies a responsibility; every opportunity, an obligation; every possession, a duty. [John D. Rockefeller Jr](#)

Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. [1 John 4:7-8](#)

Violence breeds violence... Pure goals can never justify violent action... They say the means are after all just means. I say means are after all everything. As the means, so the end. [Mahatma Gandhi](#)

Would you become a pilgrim on the road of love? The first condition is that you make yourself humble as dust and ashes. [Abdullah Ansari of Herat](#)

Those who believe, and those who follow the Jewish (scriptures), and the Christians and the Sabians - any who believe in Allah and the Last Day, and work righteousness, shall have their reward with their Lord. [Qur'an 2:62](#)

God loves each of us as if there were only one of us. [St Augustine](#)

The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong. [Mahatma Gandhi](#)

Kindness is the light that dissolves all walls between souls, families, and nations. [Paramahansa Yogananda](#)

Help your brother's boat across, and your own will reach the shore. [Hindu Proverb](#)

The more we love our friends, the less we flatter them; it is by excusing nothing that pure love shows itself. [Molière](#)

When our eyes see our hands doing the work of our heart, the circle of Creation is completed inside us, the doors of our souls fly open and love steps forth to heal everything in sight. [Michael Bridge](#)

O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know (learn) each other (not that ye may despise each other). [Qur'an 49:13](#)

I believe that interfaith dialogue is a must today; and that the first step in establishing it is ignoring past polemical arguments, and giving precedence to common points, which far outnumber polemical ones. [Fethullah Gülen](#)

Learning without thought is labour lost; thought without learning is perilous. [Confucius](#)

The spiritual life does not remove us from the world but leads us deeper into it. [Henri J. M. Nouwen](#)

Kindness is a mark of faith: and whoever has no kindness has no faith. [Prophet Muhammed](#)

Religious people must do more than offer prayers if the world is to become a better place to live. [The Dalai Lama](#)

Holding on to anger is like grasping a hot coal with the intent of throwing it at someone else; you are the one getting burned. [The Buddha](#)

It is easy enough to be friendly to one's friends. But to befriend the one who regards himself as your enemy is the quintessence of true religion. The other is mere business. [Mohandas K. Gandhi](#)

Being tolerant does not mean that I share another one's belief. But it does mean that I acknowledge another one's right to believe, and obey, his own conscience. [Viktor Frankl](#)

The smallest minority on earth is the individual. Those who deny individual rights cannot claim to be defenders of minorities. [Ayn Rand](#)

To forgive is to set a prisoner free and discover that the prisoner was you. [Lewis Smedes](#)  
Love love, hate hatred. [Fethullah Gülen](#)

What is tolerance? It is the consequence of humanity. We are all full of weakness and errors; let us mutually pardon each other our follies. It is the first law of nature. [Voltaire](#)

God requireth not a uniformity of religion. [Roger Williams](#)

War is sweet to those who haven't tasted it. [Desiderius Erasmus](#)

He who helps to remove the hardship of another will have his difficulties removed by God in this world and the Hereafter. [Prophet Muhammed](#)

God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference. [Serenity Prayer](#)

I do not feel obliged to believe that the same God who has endowed us with sense, reason, and intellect has intended us to forgo their use. [Galileo Galilei](#)

Be kind and merciful. Let no one ever come to you without coming away better and happier. Be the living expression of God's kindness. [Mother Teresa](#)

Life's most persistent and urgent question is: "What are you doing for others?" [Martin Luther King, Jr](#)

There is so much good in the worst of us, and so much bad in the best of us, that it behoves all of us not to talk about the rest of us. [Robert Louis Stevenson](#)

Until he extends his circle of compassion to include all living things, man will not himself find peace. [Albert Schweitzer](#)

Come, let's know each other. Let's make things easy. Let's love. Let's be loved. This world will remain to no one. [Yunus Emre](#)

Peace at home, peace in the world. [Mustafa Kemal Atatürk](#)

Let us then try what Love will do: for if men did once see we love them, we should soon find they would not harm us. Force may subdue, but Love gains: and he that forgives first, wins the laurel. [William Penn](#)

The best portion of a good man's life: his little, nameless, unremembered acts of kindness and love. [William Wordsworth](#)

Come, come, whoever you are, wanderer, worshipper, lover of leaving, it doesn't matter: ours is not a caravan of despair. Come, even if you have broken your vow a thousand times, come, yet again, come, come. [Mevlana Jaleddin Rumi](#)

God doesn't look at how much we do, but with how much love we do it. [Mother Teresa](#)

Those who want to reform the world must first reform themselves. [Fethullah Gülen](#)

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# Appendices

You can copy materials from appendices via:

[www.dialoguesociety.org/publications](http://www.dialoguesociety.org/publications)

# 05

## Sample Email to a Potential Partner Group Asking Them to Join in Acknowledging a Religious Festival

Dear [Title Surname],

My name is [Name Surname] and I am writing on behalf of [Name of Organisation]. We wondered whether any of [the members/the congregation] of [Name of their Organisation] would be interested in joining us in acknowledging the forthcoming festival of our [Christian/Muslim/Hindu/Sikh/Jewish/Buddhist/Jain/Rastafarian/Bah'ai/Zoroastrian] neighbours.

[Name of Festival] will be celebrated on [Date]. As a gesture of friendship and respect we would like to visit the [Place of Worship] on that day with some [cards/sweets/small gifts/flowers] for the worshippers. We have no intention of attempting to challenge or change the beliefs of others, only of promoting respect and understanding between different religious and cultural groups in the local area. We have consulted the [Religious Leader] who has said that we would be most welcome to attend the service, explain our reasons for visiting and give out our [cards/sweets/small gifts/flowers].

We would love to be able to involve another [religious group/group] in this project. If any of your members would be interested perhaps we can combine our efforts to prepare the [cards/sweets/small gifts/flowers] at some point in the week before [Name of Festival]. We would propose the evening of [Date], but this is negotiable.

We also intend to have a short meeting to finalise our plans on [Date] at [Time] and would be delighted if you or any of the [congregation/group] would like to contribute at that stage also.

We hope that the project will make a real contribution to goodwill and understanding between people of different faiths in the area. The involvement of your [congregation/group] would further that goal and we would be very glad if we could get to know members of your [congregation/group] in the course of the project.

Please do pass this invitation on to the whole [congregation/group] and let me know whether anyone would be interested and whether the proposed meeting dates are convenient.

I look forward to hearing from you.

With best wishes,

[Name Surname]

[Address]

[Telephone]

[Email]

## Sample Email to a Religious Leader Inviting Him/Her to Visit and Explain a Festival

Dear [Title Surname],

My name is [Name Surname] and I am writing to you on behalf of [Name of Organisation]. [Brief description of your organisation. For example: The mosque, established in 1970, accommodates around 100 worshippers for Friday congregational prayers. It has organised several successful interfaith events over the last few years.]

We are aware that [Name of Festival] is approaching, and wondered whether you or any of your contacts would be willing to come and explain the festival after one of our services. We have no intention of trying to change people's beliefs; we would simply like to learn more about the practice and festivals of our neighbours and to meet with them in a spirit of respect and friendship.

Our services are held on [Day]s from [Time] to [Time]. I hope that you, or another suitable speaker suggested by you, might be able to visit the service and give some explanation about [Name of Festival] afterwards over coffee and biscuits. We would like to invite members of your congregation to attend also. Our congregation are keen not only to understand more about your festival and your religious life, but also to meet members of your congregation.

Please let me know whether this is something that would be of interest to you and your congregation. Perhaps we could meet and discuss it; I am available on [Day] mornings and on [Day] and [Day] afternoons from [Time] and would be delighted if you would like to come for a cup of tea and a chat at [Address]. Alternatively we could speak on the phone.

I look forward to hearing from you.

With best wishes,

[Name Surname]

[Address]

[Telephone]

[Email]

## Noah's Pudding Recipe

(Serves 6)

### Ingredients

- 1 cup of pearl barley
- cup of chickpeas
- $\frac{1}{3}$  cup of dry white beans
- 2 tablespoons of rice
- 1 $\frac{1}{2}$  cups of water
- 10 pieces of dried apricots
- 5 pieces of dried figs
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of raisins (seedless)
- 1 small orange
- 1  $\frac{2}{3}$  cups of sugar
- 2 tablespoons of rose water
- $\frac{2}{3}$  cup of walnuts (not crushed)
- $\frac{1}{2}$  small pomegranate

### Preparation

Wash the pearl barley, chickpeas and dried beans. Soak them overnight. Soak the beans and chickpeas separately in 1 cup of water each and the pearl barley in 2 cups of water.

Add 3 cups of water to the pearl barley and 2 cups of water each to the chickpeas and beans and cook them separately on the hob. Cook the pearl barley until the grains break up and the starch comes out. If necessary boil the chickpeas in a pressure cooker. Cook the rice.

Wash the dried fruit and soak for 2 hours in 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  cups of water.

Mix the cooked ingredients and the dried fruit in a pan and cook for 15 minutes.

Peel the orange and cut the rind, including the white inner part, into strips 3-4 cm long and 1 cm wide. Divide the orange segments into 4-5 pieces.

Add them all together to the mixture and cook for another 5 minutes. Add the sugar and cook for 1-2 minutes and then remove from the hob. Add the rose water and stir.

Pour into pudding bowls. Garnish with walnuts and pomegranate. Best served cold.

## Ideas for Decorating Eggs

Real eggs can be boiled before decorating and given as pretty, temporary decorations. Alternatively, to make a gift that will last longer, you could blow out the contents of the egg and decorate the shell. To blow an egg:

- Carefully make a small hole at each end with a corkscrew, small drill or skewer (a job for adults only)
- Over a sink or bowl, blow into one of the holes so that the egg white and yoke slowly fall out of the other end
- Run water through the egg to clean it
- Dry

There is a range of ways in which eggs can be decorated:

### Painting

Children will enjoy painting eggs with any paints that you have available.

You could even stick on sequins, bits of ribbon or paper flowers for a finishing touch.

### Dying

You can dye eggs pretty colours by boiling them in a pan of water with one teaspoon of vinegar and a colourful fruit or vegetable: beetroots will give a lovely purple colour, onion skins will make an orangey colour and spinach leaves will give a pale green.

You can also dye eggs using colourful crepe paper. Soak different colours of crepe paper in very hot water and place the eggs in until they take up the colour.

Polishing with a little vegetable oil gives a nice shiny finish.

### Paste eggs

To make very pretty patterned eggs:

- Gather some small flowers or flower petals.
- Take the skin off some onions.
- Wet the egg.
- Arrange as many flowers as possible on the egg. Small ones should stick on with water.
- Wrap the egg in onion skins.
- Secure gently with string or wrap in foil.
- Boil for 7 minutes.
- Allow to cool.
- When you unwrap the egg it will have taken up the colour from the onion skin and will be covered in marbled patterns and the imprints of flowers!
- You can do this without using flowers- it will still give pretty marbled patterns.

## Sample Email Inviting Speakers to an Interfaith Diwali Event

Dear [Title Surname],

My name is [Name Surname] and I am writing to you on behalf of [Name of Organisation]. [Brief description of your organisation. For example: The mosque, established in 1970, accommodates around 100 worshippers for Friday congregational prayers. It has organised several successful interfaith events over the last few years.]

We are aware that Diwali is approaching, and we would like to organise an interfaith evening exploring the meaning of the festival in Hindu, Sikh and Jain traditions. We hope to be able to find a speaker from each religion to give a short (15 minute) presentation on the festival in their faith tradition. We would like to invite you to speak on the festival in [Hindu/Sikh/Jain] tradition, or to suggest another appropriate speaker.

The provisional date for the event is [Date], but this is negotiable. We plan to hold it in [Venue, Address]. There will be a vegetarian meal and music from local musicians.

In addition to speakers, we are looking for:

- People from different religious groups to help us with the planning of the event
- Local children who would like to contribute a song, poem or piece of drama on the theme of Diwali

I would be very grateful if you could mention this to your congregation and put anyone interested in touch with me. I would suggest that anyone interested should come to our first planning meeting, pencilled in for [Date], [Time]. If you would be so kind as to put me in touch with any interested contacts I can give them further information. We are also keen to invite your congregation to the event itself, and will issue invitations when the details are settled.

Please let me know whether this is something that would be of interest to you and your congregation. Perhaps we could meet and discuss it; I am available on [Day] mornings and on [Day] and [Day] afternoons from [Time] and would be delighted if you would like to come for a cup of tea and a chat at [Address]. Alternatively we could speak on the phone.

I look forward to hearing from you.

With best wishes,

[Name Surname]

[Address]

[Telephone]

[Email]

## Sample Letter to a Care Home Concerning Mothers' Day Flowers

[Your Name]  
 [Position and Organisation]  
 [Address], [Postcode]  
 [Telephone]  
 [Email]  
 [Date]

[Title Name Surname]  
 [Position and Organisation]  
 [Address], [Post Code]

Dear [Title Surname],

RE: Mothers' Day

I am writing to enquire whether it would be possible and appropriate for a small group from [my neighbourhood/church/mosque/etc] and from [Partner Group] to bring some flowers for your female residents on mothers' day. We thought that they might enjoy the gesture, and in particular that it could be nice for those who do not have children or whose children are not able to visit on the day. Perhaps you can advise us on whether this is something that residents would appreciate.

[Brief details of your organisation(s) or group(s) and background to the idea. For example:

The congregations of Rumi Mosque and All Saints Church are both keen to be engaged with the local communities and enjoy working together in this engagement. Both places of worship are situated close to the care home but have not recently been in contact with it. If the residents would enjoy a visit from a small mixed group we would like to visit them.]

Please let me know whether you think that this would be a worthwhile gesture. If you would like us to come, perhaps we could discuss details over the phone, or I could drop in to talk to you at a mutually convenient time.

Yours sincerely,

[Name Surname]  
 [Position]  
 [Organisation]

## Sample Note Inviting Neighbours to Join You on a Mothers' Day Visit to a Local Care Home

Dear Neighbour,

As you know, it is Mothers' Day on [Date]. I thought that it might be nice to take some flowers to the female residents of [Name of Care Home], the local care home at [Address]. I made enquiries with the manager [Name Surname] who thinks that the gesture would be appreciated, especially by residents whose families are not able to visit on the day or who do not have children.

I was wondering if anyone from the neighbourhood would like to join me. If you might be able to come, please give me a ring on [Number].

Best wishes,

[Name Surname]

[Address/House Number]

## Sample Flier Inviting Residents to a Planning Meeting for a Street Party

Dear Neighbour,

I have been thinking that it would be fun for our street to have a street party [for the royal wedding on [Date]/on the Queen's official birthday, [Date]]. I have spoken to people who have done this and think that it could be arranged without too much trouble, and that it could be an enjoyable day for the whole street. If you are interested in the idea, please come for a brief discussion outside my house, number [Number], on [Day] evening at [Time]. It would be great for as many people as possible to say what they would like to be included. If it rains we can go in and have tea.

I hope to see you there,

Best wishes

[Name]

## Further Information on Different Religions and Their Festivals

### General/All<sup>8</sup>

Lonsdale, Akasha. "Do I kneel or do I bow? What you need to know when attending religious occasions." Kuperard, 2010.

The BBC Religions website (includes an introduction to each of the religions covered in this manual, and an interfaith calendar): <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions>

RE online website- festivals section: <http://www.reonline.org.uk/festivals>

### Specific Religions

Oxford University Press has published a series of "Very Short Introductions" to a range of subjects including various religions. See <http://www.oup.co.uk/vsi>

#### Christianity

Church of England website: <http://www.churchofengland.org/>

The Catholic Church for England and Wales website: <http://www.catholic-ew.org.uk/>

The Evangelical Alliance website: <http://www.eauk.org/>

The Orthodox Church in the UK website: <http://www.theorthodoxchurch.co.uk/>

Wikipedia article: "Christianity": <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity>

#### Islam

Islam is Peace website: <http://www.islamispeace.org.uk/>

Lastprophet.info website: <http://www.lastprophet.info/>

An Original Approach to the Life of the Prophet website: <http://www.infinitelight.org>

Inspired by Muhammed website: <http://inspiredbymuhammed.com/>

The Prophet Muhammad website: <http://www.pmuhammad.com>

Love and Tolerance website: <http://www.loveandtolerance.net>

Friday Sermons website: <http://fridaysermons.org.uk/>

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<sup>8</sup> These references to external websites are provided to guide you to further information that you may find helpful. The references are correct at the time of publication. The Dialogue Society is not responsible for the content of external websites and is not able to guarantee its accuracy; it does not create and update this content and has no control over whether and when it is altered.

## Hinduism

The Heart of Hinduism website: <http://hinduism.iskcon.com/>

The Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies website: <http://www.ochs.org.uk/>

## Sikhism

<http://www.sikhs.org/>

Sikh Net website: <http://www.sikhnet.com/>

Sikhi Wiki- Encyclopedia of the Sikhs: [http://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Main\\_Page](http://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Main_Page)

## Judaism

Judaism 101 website: <http://www.jewfaq.org/index.htm>

The United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism website: [http://www.uscj.org/Links\\_To\\_Conservativ5360.html](http://www.uscj.org/Links_To_Conservativ5360.html)

Reform Judaism website: <http://www.reformjudaism.org.uk>

Liberal Judaism website: <http://www.liberaljudaism.org>

## Buddhism

The Buddhist Society website: <http://www.thebuddhistsociety.org/>

On festivals see: <http://www.thebuddhistsociety.org/resources/Festivals.html>

## Jainism

The Institute of Jainology website: <http://www.jainology.org>

For a list of Jain temples in the UK see: <http://www.jainology.org/resources/jain-temples-in-the-uk/>

## Rastafari

Telegraph article: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1548384/Rastafarianism-Origins-and-beliefs.html>

Wikipedia article: "Rastafari Movement": [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rastafari\\_movement](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rastafari_movement)

## Bah'ai

The Bahai Faith website: <http://www.bahai.org/>

## Zoroastrianism

Avesta - Zoroastrian Archives website: <http://www.avesta.org>

On the Zoroastrian religious calendar: <http://www.avesta.org/zcal.html>

## Shinto

International Shinto Foundation: <http://www.shinto.org/eng/sitemap.htm>

<http://www.shinto.org/isf/index.html>

Sacred Text Archive: <http://www.sacred-texts.com/shi/>

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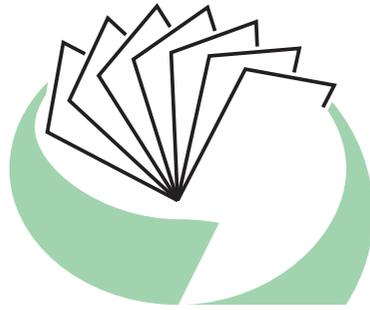
**COMMUNITY  
DIALOGUE  
MANUAL  
S E R I E S**

This manual is part of the Dialogue Society's  
Community Dialogue Manual Series:

1. Building Partnerships
2. Noah's Pudding
3. Celebrating Festivals
4. Community Fairs
5. Community Engagement Dinners
6. Community Centres Branching Out
7. Speed Dialogue
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10. Media Engagement

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# COMMUNITY DIALOGUE MANUAL S E R I E S

## Connecting Communities

