



The year ahead

Your young people can work towards their World Challenge Award and World Faiths Activity Badge with our guide to the celebrations happening over the next 12 months

Words: Alex Drew

CELEBRATING FAITHS

APRIL 2017

One of the biggest dates in the Jewish calendar is Passover, the Festival of Freedom, held on 10–18 April. This eight-day festival commemorates the liberation of the Children of Israel who were led out of Egypt by Moses, as stated in the Bible.

The first two and the last two days of Passover are full days of rest and the highlight of the festival sees family and friends gather together for meals. Chametz, or leavened foods – foods that contain one of five types of grain, have been mixed with water and left to rise – are forbidden during Passover. Their inflated nature is symbolic of arrogance and during Passover Jews aspire to rid themselves of chametz so that they can become humble vessels.

ACTIVITY: Talk to your young people about chametz and make unleavened bread together by mixing a third of a cup of vegetable oil with three tablespoons of honey. Add half a cup of hot water, stirring well, and then half a cup of milk before stirring again. Gradually add two cups of flour and mix until it becomes dough. Knead the dough – sprinkling flour over it to prevent sticking – and then divide into smaller round loaves. Bake at 200°C for 14 minutes, turning the loaves halfway through.

ALSO THIS MONTH...

As part of the Hindu festival of Rama Navami on 4 April, organise a Group archery session at your nearest outdoor centre to represent Lord Rama's divine bows. This celebration honours the birth of Lord Rama, the seventh avatar of Vishnu who is one of the main deities of the Hindu faith.

MAY 2017

On 27 May, a month-long fast begins for Muslims, known as Ramadan, which is broken by Eid-ul-Fitr, the Festival of the Breaking of the Fast. This month is significant because it's when the Qur'an was first revealed to the Prophet Muhammad. Many Muslims try to read the whole of the Qur'an at least once during this time.

During Ramadan, Muslims fast during daylight, eating a meal just before sunrise and another after sunset. It's a time to be with family and friends, who gather together to eat evening meals. Fasting helps Muslims practise self-discipline and it reminds them of the poor, who may not get to enjoy the same benefits. Ramadan is also a time when Muslims try to dedicate more time to charitable deeds.

ACTIVITY: Every year, hundreds of mosques across the UK sign up to Visit My Mosque – a scheme that invites people of all faiths into their local mosque to share tea and biscuits and to meet some of the people who worship there. This year's scheme was held on 5 February, but keep an eye on visitmymosque.org in early 2018 to arrange a visit. Can't wait that long? Why not contact your local mosque independently to see if you can schedule in a special group visit?

ALSO THIS MONTH...

Between 30 May–1 June, talk to your Group about Shavuot. This day not only marks the all-important wheat harvest in Israel, but also commemorates the day God gave the Torah to the Jewish people. The Torah is the teachings at the core of the Jewish faith, usually written on a scroll in Hebrew.

JUNE 2017

When the official news arrives of the first sight of the new moon, the festival of Eid begins. Muslims sit down for their first daytime meal in a month, and give thanks to Allah for helping them practise their self-control and keeping strong during Ramadan.

During Eid there are special services in mosques, Muslims dress in finery, spend time with friends and family and give gifts to children. Women and children adorn their hands and feet with henna. Homes are decorated with lights and, in some countries, celebrations can last up to three days. During this time Muslims give money to charity to help the poor celebrate too by being able to buy clothes and food.

ACTIVITY: Show your young people some examples of henna designs before asking them to draw around their hands onto a sheet of paper and begin designing their own. You can discuss some of the meanings behind the symbols and patterns, for instance acacia leaves represent persistence and long life, or the mandala, which symbolises the universe. You can also look at the meanings associated with where the henna is applied as they all have significance, for instance henna on the palm of your hands signifies an offering from you to the world.

ALSO THIS MONTH...

On the Sunday 50 days after Easter (4 June this year), Pentecost is celebrated in the Christian church as the day the Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles. During the celebrations, the Holy Spirit is depicted as a white dove, so why not make paper-plate doves with your young people?



JULY 2017

This year, 9 July is Dharma Day – a celebration of Buddha’s first sermon, or the ‘turning of the wheel of Dharma’, or the wheel of truth. So this festival is all about celebrating the teachings of Buddha, namely his Four Noble Truths and Eight Fold Path, known collectively as the wheel of Dharma.

The most important day in the Buddhist calendar, the festival gives Buddhists the opportunity to meet to reflect on their gratitude for Buddha’s teachings. On Dharma Day, Buddhists read accounts of the lives of the

Enlightened ones and think about what it might mean for them.

Buddhism is different to other religions in that they don’t worship or believe in a personal creator, and they do not consider Buddha to be a god; they are very much about the path taken in life and about the cycle of life.

ACTIVITY: Show your young people pictures of the Buddhist Wheel of Life and talk them through what the various sections symbolise (you’ll find some helpful information at bbc.co.uk/religion/galleries/bhavachakra) and

then work as a team to create your own version on a large sheet of paper, either by using coloured pens or by collaging using magazine pages.

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ALSO THIS MONTH...

On 10 July, the Bahá’í commemorate the martyrdom of the Bab, the first prophet. Talk to your young people about tolerance and acceptance – two of the principles of the Bahá’í faith – and how they might be able to work these principles into their everyday decisions and actions. ▶



AUGUST 2017

Paryushan, falling between 18–25 August, is the most important Jain festival of the year. Jainism is an ancient religion, which teaches that the way to liberation and bliss is through a life of non-violence and respect towards all life – even down to the tiniest micro-organism. Because of this, Jains are strictly vegetarian – they also tend to limit the amount of dairy products they consume and don't eat fish, eggs or anything grown under ground (for fear of damaging or injuring the plant or the creatures living on or around the plant).

Paryushan gives Jains the chance to take a break from routine life and allows time for reflection. The final day of Paryushan (which lasts between eight to 10 days) is marked with a feast.

ACTIVITY: Echo the Jain philosophy by cooking vegan meals on camp with your young people. There are plenty of options, from corn on the cob to peanut butter and chocolate quesadillas. For the latter, take a wholewheat tortilla and spread it generously with peanut butter. Finely slice bananas and place several slices over one half of the tortilla and sprinkle over dairy-free chocolate chips. Fold the tortilla and cook in a shallow pan over a medium heat until it's golden on both sides.

ALSO THIS MONTH...

On 15 August, Catholics will celebrate the Feast of the Assumption – the day that the Virgin Mary was inducted into heaven. Find recipes for cloud meringue biscuits online and make them with your section to represent the heavens above and to join the feasting of this day.

SEPTEMBER 2017

Yom Kippur on 30 September is the most holy day of the year in Judaism; it's also the most solemn, with fasting for 25 hours. Known as the Day of Atonement, Jewish people reflect on the year that has just passed and ask God to forgive them for their sins. In order to prepare for Yom Kippur, the 10 days prior to the festival are used to put things right and make up for any wrongdoings.

Traditionally, Jews wear white on Yom Kippur because it symbolises purity. Leather shoes are also avoided. Attending the synagogue is the most important part of Yom Kippur, and there are five services on that day. The day is spent in continuous prayer for forgiveness and it is said that those who properly repent for their sins will have a happy new year ahead of them.

ACTIVITY: Having explained Yom Kippur to your young people, get them involved in a role-play where they explore the themes of forgiveness. You could propose several scenarios, for instance, someone breaks something of theirs, or a friend says something unkind to them and then apologises, or encourage them to work up something of their own. How does forgiveness look and feel in these scenarios?

ALSO THIS MONTH...

Muslims observing Al-Hijra (the Islamic new year) on 21 September this year will do so with reflection, remembrance and gratitude. Ask your young people what they're grateful for and to create posters or poems reflecting these sentiments.

OCTOBER 2017

Also known as The Festival of Lights, Diwali is celebrated by Sikhs, Hindus and Jains, but for different reasons.

For Sikhs, Diwali marks the release of the sixth guru, Guru Hargobind, from a Mughal Empire prison in 1619. Sikhs celebrated by lighting the Golden Temple, which is represented today by the lighting of earthenware oil lamps, called diyas. Gifts are also exchanged.

For Hindus, Diwali signifies the spiritual victory of light over darkness and good over evil. Before the festival, Hindus clean and decorate their homes, buy new clothes and light diyas before fireworks, a family feast and the exchanging of presents.

For Jains, Diwali marks the day when the soul of sage Mahavira was finally released and he attained moksha, or liberation. It also represents the new year, when lights and diyas are used to mark the festival and are symbolic of the removal of ignorance.

ACTIVITY: Make diyas with your section (find instructions at scouts.org.uk/magazine) and discuss the significance of the oil lamps for each of the faiths that use them, whether it's for decoration, to ward away darkness or to symbolise knowledge.

ALSO THIS MONTH...

Learn about the Jewish festival of Sukkot on 4–11 October which marks the 40 years that Jewish people were wandering the desert, living in temporary shelters, also known as sukkah. Your young people can put their pioneering skills to good use by building their own sukkah. ▶

Reflect

NOVEMBER 2017

All Souls' Day on 2 November is the day when Christians around the world remember and pray for the dead. This day is primarily celebrated by the Catholic church, which believes that when a person dies, their soul goes to one of three places: heaven, for people who die in a perfect state of communion with God; hell, for those who die in a state of mortal sin; and purgatory, where those who are in a state of lesser sin go to have their souls perfected before they enter heaven. Catholics believe that the sins of the dead may be cleansed through the

prayers of the faithful on earth and this is the focus of this day of remembrance. People across the world light candles in memory of lost loved ones, or visit graves. In Mexico, they even celebrate with a big fiesta.

ACTIVITY: Arrange a visit to your local church and encourage your Beavers, Cubs, Scouts or Explorers to find out about the saint to whom the church is attached. Then encourage them to embark on a research project, either in pairs or small groups, where they discover all there is to know about the saint and present their findings back to

the rest of the section. If there is more than one church in your local area you could allocate a couple of groups to one church and the rest to another.

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ALSO THIS MONTH...

Encourage your young people to visit a gurdwara (Sikh temple) on 4 November to see the celebrations surrounding the birth of Guru Nanek, the first guru and founder of the faith. Sikhs celebrate by reading their holy book continuously from beginning to end before rejoicing with songs, prayers and a feast.

DECEMBER 2017

From 12–19 December this year, Jews will be celebrating the Festival of Light, also known as Hanukkah. This eight-day and eight-night celebration commemorates the rededication of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem by the Maccabees and the ‘miracle of oil’ that followed. According to Jewish tradition, there was only enough sacred oil to keep the menorah (a seven-branch candlestick) lit for a day and yet it miraculously stayed alight for eight days – long enough to prepare more kosher oil. An eight-day holiday was declared in honour of this miracle.

Today, Jews acknowledge the festival by lighting one candle of a nine-branch menorah per day, using the ninth candle to light all the others in turn while saying traditional blessings. Other festivities include saying prayers, singing songs, playing the dreidel (a four-sided spinning top) and foods that are cooked in oil such as latkes (potato pancakes), fritters and doughnuts.

ACTIVITY: Challenge your sections to create something for Hanukkah – be it a prayer, a menorah made of tin foil, a homemade dreidel, paper chains to decorate the Scout hut, or some latkes for everyone to try – and hold a special evening dedicated to Hanukkah.

ALSO THIS MONTH...

Acknowledge Yule on 22 December by making and decorating a Yule log candle holder with your young people. Or if you fancy something a little more mouthwatering, you can try baking and decorating a delicious chocolate Yule log (a log-shaped chocolate cake) with your section.

JANUARY 2018

The 5 January marks the birth of Guru Gobind Singh, the last of the 10 human gurus of the Sikh faith. Celebrations begin three days before the festival itself with the Akhand Path, the continuous reading of the Guru Granth Sahib (the Sikh holy book). Sikh places of worship, called gurdwaras, are decorated with flowers, flags and lights, Sikhs dress up in new clothes, and hymns and poems are recited. In some parts of the UK, there are processions where the Sikh Scripture is paraded around. Food also plays an important part of the celebrations. Sikhs come together to eat special dishes, such as karah prashad – a sweet pudding that is served warm. Free sweets and meals are also distributed at gurdwaras.

ACTIVITY: Make karah prashad with Cubs and Scouts by bringing three cups of water and one cup of sugar to the boil to make sugar syrup. In another pan melt one cup of clarified butter (or ghee) and mix in one cup of wholewheat flour and stir continuously until it turns reddy-brown. Add two crushed cardamom pods and mix well, before gradually adding the sugar syrup. Keep stirring as the mixture thickens until it has a firm pudding consistency. Garnish with chopped almonds before serving.

ALSO THIS MONTH...

Epiphany – also known as Three Kings Day – is the day that Christians believe baby Jesus was visited by the three kings or wise men. Falling on 6 January in 2018, bake a king cake (a brightly coloured bundt-shaped cake) or vibrant cupcakes with your section and discuss the significance.

FEBRUARY 2018

In Buddhism, 15 February is Nirvana Day – the day Buddha died and reached Nirvana. The day is marked by meditating or by going to Buddhist temples. In Buddhist monasteries the day is seen as a social occasion, with food prepared and eaten. Visitors bring gifts such as money and clothes. As is fitting with Buddhism, reflection is a big part of the day. Buddhists are encouraged to think about their lives and how they can work towards gaining Nirvana – which is perfect peace. They also remember friends or relatives who have died and reflect on the fact that death is a part of life for everyone.

ACTIVITY: Scouts and Explorers could try meditating as a group. Ask them to sit comfortably on cushions and to close their eyes or gaze at the floor. You are attempting to show them how they can make their minds peaceful. One way of doing this is to encourage them to tune into their bodies and relax each part in turn (starting with the tips of their toes and working up to the top of their heads), while focusing on calm and steady breathing. You could even expand the activity to a yoga night involving all sections. Just make sure there’s a tranquil atmosphere and silence, so they can use the time for quiet reflection.

ALSO THIS MONTH...

During the spring festival of Vasant Panchami on the first day of February, Hindus dress themselves in yellow, eat sweet dishes and fill their houses with yellow flowers to symbolise the vibrancy of life. Join the celebrations by donning your young people and your HQ in yellow. ▶

Life and Energy

MARCH 2018

This year, Holi falls on 2 March. The most fun and colourful Hindu festival, Holi is characterised by people throwing bright powder paint and dyes around in the streets, hence it's known as the Festival of Colours. This festival doesn't focus on religious activity, instead celebrating the life and energy of the new season with dancing and singing. In India, it's viewed as a great leveller because you can't tell what class or caste people are from.

ACTIVITY: This is the messiest and most spirited of the Indian festivals so why not join in the fun by making marble paper with your section?

Get them to put two tablespoons of cooking oil into five small bowls, then add one teaspoon of food colouring to each one, putting a different colour in each bowl and mixing them vigorously with forks until combined. Take a shallow pan that is roughly the same size as your paper and cover the bottom with an inch of water. Using a pipette or a medicine dropper, your young people can draw up the coloured oils and drip them into the pan. Now they can gently lay a sheet of paper on top, leaving it for 30 seconds before carefully lifting it off. Don't forget to lay down plastic sheeting to protect your HQ, and ask your section to wear old clothes that can get messy.

ALSO THIS MONTH...

This is a great time to talk about Nowruz – the Iranian New Year – with your young people and make desk tidies from cardboard tubes or unwanted food packaging to represent the Iranian tradition of spring cleaning. You could even offer your tidying services to the community. ✿

HAVE WE MISSED ANY?

Share your faith celebrations with us by emailing scoutingmagazine@scouts.org.uk. Or find out more about faith badge requirements by heading to tinyurl.com/zdbu22b.