

**2010 - 2011**

**Schools and Learning Branch**

# **UK Minority Faiths Festival Calendar**

**Wiltshire Council**  
 Where everybody matters

The following calendar gives a selection of festivals from the minority faiths in the UK, but it is not comprehensive. The internet has much more information about these faiths and other festivals associated with them. There are many great sites with background information, teaching ideas and pages designed for children.

**A selection of Multi-faith Festival Websites:**

[www.bbc.co.uk/religion/calendar/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/calendar/)

[www.shap.org](http://www.shap.org) (poster calendars to buy)

[www.bbc.co.uk/schools/religion/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/religion/)

[www.interfaithcalendar.org/](http://www.interfaithcalendar.org/)

[www.woodlands-junior.kent.sch.uk/Homework/Religion.html](http://www.woodlands-junior.kent.sch.uk/Homework/Religion.html)

**Suggested companies for resources:**

[www.articlesoffaith.co.uk](http://www.articlesoffaith.co.uk)

[www.artefactstoorder.com](http://www.artefactstoorder.com)

[www.parrotfish.co.uk](http://www.parrotfish.co.uk)

**There are also many sites with ideas or lesson plans for assemblies:**

[www.teachernet.gov.uk/teachingandlearning/assemblies](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/teachingandlearning/assemblies)

(you can search by year group and topic)

[www.assemblies.org.uk/standing](http://www.assemblies.org.uk/standing)

(choose world religions festival assemblies)

[www.icteachers.co.uk/teachers/links/tre.htm](http://www.icteachers.co.uk/teachers/links/tre.htm)

(choose collective worship/assemblies, covers many religions)

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## SEPTEMBER 2010

### **August 12 – September 9 Ramadan (Islam)**

28 days of fasting (called sawm) for Muslims when they do not eat or drink during the hours of daylight. This is one of the five pillars of Islam. Older children may be encouraged to try at least one day of fasting and by secondary school age they will be fasting most of the month.

### **09 Rosh Hashanah - New Year (Jewish)**

Apples dipped in honey are eaten in hope of a sweet new year. The ram's horn (shofar) is blown in the Synagogue as a reminder of Abraham's sacrifice of a ram in place of his son, Isaac. The greeting is 'Leshanah Tovah Tikatev' (may you be inscribed for a good year).

### **10 Eid ul-Fitr (Islam) End of Ramadan**

Major Islamic festival. Children are given money and clothes. There is much partying and feasting. Families get together.

### **11 Ethiopian New Year (Rastafarian)**

This is celebrated the world over by Rastafarians who see Ethiopia as their spiritual homeland.

### **18 Yom Kippur (Jewish)**

The holiest day of the Jewish year, it is marked by a total fast for 25 hours. Jews spend the evening and most of the day in prayer for forgiveness and resolving to improve the future.

### **23 Sukkot - Harvest festival (Jewish)**

This remembers the 40 years spent by Jews in the wilderness on their way from slavery in Egypt to the promised land. A temporary hut 'sukkah' is used for meals

and socialising. The roof is made of palm branch, etrog (yellow citrus fruit), myrtle and willow.

## OCTOBER 2010 *Black History Month*

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### **17 Navratri/Durga Puja/Dussehra (Hindu)**

Ten day celebration of the victory of the goddess Durga over evil demons. This festival is universally popular throughout India.

### **20 Birth of the B'ab (Baha'i)**

Celebrates the birth of the founder of the Baha'i faith.

## NOVEMBER 2010

### **02 Coronation of Emperor Haile Selassie celebrations (Rastafarian)**

Emperor Haile Selassie was crowned in 1930 and is viewed as a god by Rastafarians.

### **05 Diwali (Hindu and Sikh)**

Hindus remember Rama's defeat over Ravana, the demon king. Homes are lit with tiny lamps and gifts are exchanged. Sikhs remember Guru Hargobind who refused to accept freedom unless 52 imprisoned Hindu princes were released too.

### **15 Shichi-go-san (Japanese)**

Festival celebrating children. Girls of 3 and 7, and boys of 3 and 5 are dressed in new clothes and taken to Shinto shrines to pray for their future.

## **17 Eid ul-Adha (Islam)**

Festival of sacrifice, 80 days after Eid ul-Fitr. It celebrates Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac. Animals are sacrificed and food shared with friends, family and the poor.

## **21 Birthday of Guru Nanak (Sikh)**

Sikhs celebrate by performing Akhand Path, a complete reading of their holy book, the Guru Granth Sahib.

## **DECEMBER 2010**

### **02 Hanukkah (Jewish)**

Jewish families gradually light an 8-branched candlestick (hanukkiah) to remember the rededication of the Temple in 168 BC.

### **08 Bodhi Day (Buddhist)**

On Bodhi Day some Buddhists celebrate Gautama's enlightenment under the Bodhi tree in Bodhgaya, India.

### **26 Dec -01 Jan Kwanza**

A seven day festival celebrating Black cultures. Each day has a special theme, for example, Unity, Faith, Purpose; and everyone is encouraged to use these ideas to strengthen family and community life.

## **JANUARY 2011**

### **05 Birthday of Guru Gobind Singh (Sikh)**

Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708) was the tenth and last of the Sikh Gurus. He established the 5 Ks and the order of the Khalsa.

## **14 Makar Sankranti (Hindu)**

Makar Sankranti is one of the most important festivals of the **Hindu calendar** and celebrates the sun's journey into the northern hemisphere, a period which is considered to be highly auspicious.

## **27 Holocaust Memorial Day - Yom Hashoa (Jewish / multifaith)**

A recently introduced remembrance of people who suffered at the hands of the Nazis in World War 2.

## **FEBRUARY 2011**

### **03 Yuan Tan (Chinese) New Year**

Demons are driven out with firecrackers and cymbals. Houses are decorated with red and gold paper lanterns.

### **03 Setsubun (Japanese) Spring Festival**

Celebrates the end of winter and there is a roast soya bean throwing ceremony to drive out evil spirits. Everyone has to eat the number of beans equivalent to his or her age to bring good luck in the year ahead.

### **08 Parinirvana/Nirvana Day (Buddhist)**

Mahayana Buddhist festival marking the anniversary of Buddha's death.

### **15 Milad al-Nabi (Islam) Birthday of the prophet.**

Food is given to the poor, prayers are said.

### **17 Lantern Festival - Shang Yuan (Chinese)**

Marks the end of the Chinese New Year celebrations with dragon dances and the lighting of 100's of paper lanterns.

## MARCH 2011

### **03 Hinamatsuri Girls' Festival (Japanese)**

Families of girls display in their homes dolls representing an aristocratic wedding, arranged on a series of steps.

### **19 Holi (Hindu) Spring festival**

People throw coloured powder over one another. The day before, bonfires are lit.

### **20 Purim (Jewish)**

Festival celebrating the Jews' deliverance from the Persian king's minister. Presents are exchanged. People wear fancy dress to the synagogue.

### **21 Naw-Ruz (Baha'i)**

Beginning of New Year and end of 19 day fast marking the end of the old year.

### **21 Jamshedi Noruz (Zoroastrian)**

New Year's Day in the Fasli calendar used in Iran. A family day in which eggs and evergreen plants symbolize eternal life.

### **26 Khordad Sal (Zoroastrian)**

Commemorates the birth of Prophet Zaranhushtia.

## APRIL 2011

### **13 Baisakhi/Vaisakhi (Sikh)**

Guru Gobind Singh established the Sikh brotherhood (Khalsa) in 1699.

### **19 Passover (Jewish)**

During the family *seder* meal the story of the Jews' exodus from slavery in Egypt is retold.

## MAY 2011

### **02 Ridvan (Baha'i)**

First day of 12 that celebrate the occasion when Baha'u'llah said he was the prophet predicted by the Bab.

### **05 Children's Day (Japanese)**

Families display on tall poles in the garden balloons in the shape of carp, and, inside the house, displays of arrows and helmets representing Samurai armour.

### **17 Wesak (Buddhist)**

Western Buddhists celebrate the Buddha's birth, enlightenment and attainment of Nirvana. In many countries houses are decorated with lanterns and garlands, and birds are released, symbolizing the Buddha's compassion.

## JUNE 2011

### **08 Shavuot (Pentecost) (Jewish)**

Jews celebrate receiving the Torah.

### **16 The Martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev (Sikh)**

Guru Arjan Dev was the fifth Sikh Guru and the first Sikh martyr: he gave up his life for the Sikh people. He also was the first Guru to put all the sacred writing in one book – the Guru Granth Sahib.

## JULY 2011

### **07 Tanabata (Japanese) Star Festival**

Children decorate bamboo branches in the garden with little bells and coloured paper on which they write their wishes for the future. As the stars come out, fireworks are lit.

### **13 Obon (Japanese)**

A Japanese Buddhist event that is a time to remember ancestors' spirits. There are special visits to relatives, dances, food offerings at the temple and lanterns are used to guide the spirits to visit their descendants. (celebrated 13<sup>th</sup> July in Tokyo and 13<sup>th</sup> August elsewhere in Japan).

### **23 Birthday of Haile Selassie I (Rastafarian)**

One of the holiest days of the Rastafarian year, it is celebrated with drumming, hymns and prayers.

## AUGUST 2011

### **01 Beginning of Ramadan (Islam)**

The beginning of 28 days of fasting (called sawm) for Muslims when they do not eat or drink during the hours of daylight. This is one of the five pillars of Islam. Older children may be encouraged to try at least one day of fasting and by secondary school age they will be fasting most of the month.

### **06 Dragon Boat Festival (Chinese)**

Commemorates the poet Ch'u Yuan with a story which includes colourful dragon boat races.

### **13 Raksha Bandhan (Hindu)**

Festival of brothers and sisters. Presents and special bracelets called Rakshi are exchanged.

### **14 Hungry Ghost Festival (Chinese)**

Festival of the hungry ghosts is a Chinese Buddhist ancestral festival. Paper objects are made and offered to aid the spirits who have no resting place. Large paper boats are made and burnt at temples to help spirits on their journey to Nirvana.

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### **Baha'i**

The Baha'i faith was founded in Persia in 1844.

The founder, Baha'u'llah, taught that there is only one God, that all the world religions represent the changeless and eternal faith in God, and that all humanity is one race, destined to live in peace and harmony. Baha'is worship together every nineteen days. When there are nine or more Baha'i believers locally they form a spiritual assembly, however they have no clergy so they administer the affairs of the faith themselves.



### **Buddhism**

Buddhism is a way of life taught by the Buddha. Buddhists do not believe in a divine being or creator nor in the promise of salvation through prayers and belief. Buddhists believe that all actions have consequences called Karma. This links to the continuing cycle of life, death and rebirth. The cycle is only broken when the enlightened state is reached.

Buddhists practice Wisdom, Compassion and Morality to reach enlightenment, otherwise known as the state of Nirvana. The type of worship and practice for Buddhists depends on the school of Buddhism being followed. Congregational meetings take place in centres or Temples and sometimes peoples' homes but there is no set time for Buddhists to worship.



### **Chinese**

Chinese traditional religion is the term used to categorise the common religion of the majority Chinese culture. This refers to a way of life as much as any spiritual or religious significance.

A combination of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism as well as the traditional non-scriptural/local practices and beliefs make up this way of life.

The traditional practices are found in the context of Chinese culture and social structures, which like many throughout East Asia, are not bound up in a single belief system. The Chinese tradition has a rich cultural meaning and a long history where Chinese festivals form an important part of the culture.



### **Judaism**

The Jewish religion dates back over 3500 years. Jewish people believe God made a covenant with the people, which required the observance of 613 commandments, including the ten commandments revealed to Moses. Orthodox and Progressive Jews differ in their interpretations of these laws, but all Jews believe there to be one God, who revealed the Torah - the Jewish Holy Book - Jewish followers worship in Synagogues. The Sabbath begins with the lighting of candles at sunset on Friday and ends with sundown on Saturday evening.



## Islam

Islam is an Arabic word, which means to submit to God to achieve peace and security. The followers of Islam are called Muslims and they believe there is one God called Allah who created the universe and whose power and majesty are supreme. Muslims believe that God sent prophets to interpret His will. It is Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him), the last prophet, who Muslims believe completed the expression of Allah's divine will which was revealed in the Qur'an. The Qur'an, also known as the Holy Book, is a source of law and practical guidance. Islamic law stands on five pillars. These are to: witness that there is no God but Allah and that Muhammad (PBUH) is the prophet of Allah; pray 5 times a day; fast during Ramadan; make a pilgrimage to Makkah; and give alms to the poor (each Muslim should give a percentage of their yearly savings to the needs of the poor). The place of worship where Muslims gather for prayer is called a Mosque or Masjid.



## Shinto / Japanese

The word Shinto means 'way of the divine' and represents an almost entirely Japanese way of thinking. The essence of Shinto is the devotion to invisible spiritual beings and powers called Kami, they are not gods and there are millions of them. They are spirits concerned with human beings and earth. There is no defining morality of its own.

Followers of Shinto believe the world is good, the people are good and there is harmony, however, evil spirits, which must be kept at bay, threaten these ideals.



## Hinduism

Hinduism has its origins in India. Hindus regard their religion as Sanatan Dharma, an eternal religion. It is considered to be a way of life. Although Hinduism has many gods (deities), Hindus believe in one supreme universal spirit, the creator and eternal God Brahman.

Hindus recognise the other deities as different aspects of the Brahman. They believe that all of life is bound by the cycle of birth, death and rebirth governed by Karma. The principal Hindu scriptures are the Vedas which are believed to be direct revelation from God and the two epics, the Bhagvad Gita and the Ramayana. Hindus worship in Temples and will often also have a shrine at home where they will worship and make offerings.



## Rastafarianism

The Rastafarian religion is guided by the concept of peace and love and has its origins in Jamaica. In the early 1920s Marcus Garvey, an influential Black spokesman, proclaimed "Look to Africa for the crowning of a Black King, he shall be the Redeemer".

The coronation of Haile Selassie I as King of Ethiopia in 1930 saw the fulfilment of this prophecy and he was recognised by Rastafarians as Jah (the living manifestation of God). The Kebr Negast (the Ethiopian Bible) and parts of the Christian Bible are important sources of reference for the Rastafarian way of life.

Rastafarians follow strict dietary rules. They do not cut their hair and are easily identified by their dreadlocks.



### **Zoroastrianism**

Zoroastrianism was founded between 2000 and 1800 BC. Its founder was Prophet Zoroaster, who is said to have seen God.

It is believed Zoroaster was conscious of Ahura's presence and heard his words which were then used to comprise five songs/ poems called Gathas and these were used to form part of the Zoroastrian sacred text, Avesta. Zoroastrians believe in a single supreme god, Ahura Mazda, and that the world is based on good versus evil. When mankind chooses good, evil will be defeated and when this happens all creations will be pure and the earth will become paradise. Zoroastrianism is a religion of free choice and personal responsibility with great emphasis on truthfulness and care for the natural environment. Ceremonies are performed in front of a sacred fire and worship is made up of prayers and symbolic ceremonies.



### **Sikhism**

Sikhs believe in one immortal being, ten Gurus, the Guru Granth Sahib and the teachings of the ten Gurus. Sikhism began with Guru Nanak. He preached the love of God and the love for each other. Pacifism finally gave way to the militant Khalsa with the tenth guru, Guru Gobind Singh. He allowed his followers to fight persecution and in 1699 the Khalsa brotherhood was formed. Guru Gobind Singh proclaimed Granth Sahib to be the only Guru of the Sikhs. Men and women have five distinctive signs of faith seen in their style of dress and personal appearance. These are the 5Ks -

Kesh -hair; Kangha -comb; Karra -steel bracelet; Kachha - underwear trousers; Kirpan - sword. Sikhs meet and worship in Gurdwaras.