

Editorial

Approximately every 30 years three major festivals of the three main Abrahmic faiths - Pesach (Passover) for Jews, Easter for Christians, and Ramadan for Muslims - coincide with one another. This year has been especially significant for the chaplaincy as we have celebrated these important events together.

One of the best parts of working for a multifaith chaplaincy is that since we all have different religious backgrounds, we naturally experience working in a rich and diverse environment, which is unlike anything we experience when working within our own faith communities. This is especially important to us as we aim model good working practices within our own profession, to demonstrate to others the benefits of a diverse team.

To enhance the chaplains' relationship with one another within the team, the chaplains engage in a monthly study session called Scriptural Reasoning. This involves taking holy texts from each faith tradition – Judaism, Christianity, and Islam – on the same subject, so that participants can analyse and discuss each text. Each participant makes a presentation about their own holy text before breaking into a broader discussion.

The purpose behind Scriptural Reasoning is to build an understanding of one another's faith traditions through the joint study of holy texts, which in turn builds an appreciation of the richness of ideas within our respective religions. The conversations about subjects such as 'covenant', 'neighbours', 'leadership' and 'science and faith' are deep and fascinating.

The idea for Scriptural Reasoning began in the mid-1990s when a group of theologians including Professor Peter Ochs, (Edgar M. Bronfman Professor of Modern Judaic Studies at the University of Virginia), Professor David F. Ford (Emeritus Regius Professor of Divinity at the University of Cambridge), Anglican theologian Daniel W. Hardy, and Basit Koshul (associate professor at the Lahore University of Management Sciences) founded the International Society for Scriptural Reasoning. The chaplaincy is deeply grateful for all their support and for their source sheets we enjoy using each time. The discussion never fails to be both fascinating and enriching.

This month's subject was the concept of revelation, which the team really enjoyed, and has been especially apt given the confluence of the Jewish festival of Pesach (Passover), the Christian festival of Easter, and the Muslim month of Ramadan.

This month our newsletter reflects event in both April and the beginning of May as we wanted to reflect personally on our experiences with our own faith festivals. Our Jewish Chaplain Moshe, our Catholic Chaplain, Wayne, and our Muslim Chaplains Saleha and Ibrahim have all shared some of their personal stories about preparing for and celebrating their respective festivals. Fiona has also written about her experiences in Greece of the Greek Orthodox church celebrating Orthodox Easter.

Wishing you all well and please remember – we are just a phone call, email, or text message away.

Rabbi Dr. Moshe Freedman

Preparing for Pesach (Passover) reflection by our Jewish Chaplain, Moshe.

Many of my own childhood memories involve the preparation and celebration of Pesach. The eight-day festival commemorates the Israelite nation's exodus from Egypt and freedom from slavery. In the evening of each of these holy days we hold a special meal at home with our family and friends called a 'seder', which literally means order. The name derives from the fact that there are a number of readings and rituals we do which take place in a particular sequence.

The passages we read remind us of the history of the Jewish people from the time of our ancestors, all the way through to our enslavement in Egypt. We relate the acts of God through the teachings of our sages and recounts the miracles He did for us at that time.



We eat symbolic foods which help us to relive the experience – including bitter vegetables such as lettuce or radishes, dipped in salt-water, symbolising the bitterness of exile and slavery, together with the salt-water tears shed by those enslaved. The Matzah (unleavened bread) reminds us of the fact that the Jewish people had a little time to bake their bread before the exodus began; redemption happened very quickly, and the people had to leave in haste which left no time for the bread to rise.

We also drink four cups of wine (or grape juice for the children!), to symbolise the four expressions of redemption promised by God to the Children of Israel through Moses: "I will take you out from the suffering of Egypt, and I will deliver you from their bondage; I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. I will take you to Myself as a nation, and I will be to you a God..." (Exodus 6:6-7)

Our seder table is all set! In the background you can see the table with boxes of Matzah (unleavened bread) together with wine and grape juice for the four cups

During Passover Jewish people are not allowed to eat, own, or benefit from any leaven products. This means that we must clear our houses of any bread cake biscuits pasta dash or indeed any products that I made with one of the five grains specified in the Hebrew Bible which are wheat, oats, barley, spelt, and rye.

The night before Pesach begins, we take ten small pieces of bread which are wrapped up and hide them around the house. We then search for them in the dark, traditionally using a candle for light, and a feather and wooden spoon to gather up the pieces of leaven. This is a great opportunity to get our kids involved, who all take turns hiding the leaven before their parents go searching for it.



The next morning, before Passover begins we light a bonfire and burn any remaining leaven together with the ten pieces we found the previous night. We also prepare for the Passover seder by making food

and setting the table with special crockery and cutlery used only for Passover.

Burning the remaining leaven in our front yard on the morning before Passover begins

While the festival begins at sunset, the Seder meal cannot begin until after nightfall. This year, that meant starting in London at around 8.41pm. The children prepare short ideas to share at the seder and are encouraged to ask questions about God, faith, and the story of the Exodus. Discussions can go on very late into the night – we finished our seder at around 1:30am and didn't get all the kids down until 2am! But we had so much fun eating, drinking, and discussing our faith and rich history.

Holy Week - Our new Catholic Chaplain Wayne writes...

Holy week has always been very important within our family and usually one of the rare times we can be all together because of work commitments. Whilst we celebrate getting together, we also use it as a special time for reflection and looking at what it means to be a Christian in today's world.

The Tridium, that consists of the three days of the Lords passion, days that are all interlinked, but also have their own particular meaning, are celebrated within our family.

Maunder Thursday

This marks when the last supper was celebrated, and Jesus commanded us to love one another. He then went on to wash his disciple's feet. This is replicated within the mass when twelve people are chosen to have their feet washed by the priest. This year, my wife was selected by our parish priest. We are also asked to keep watch until midnight commemorating the disciples trying to keep watch with Jesus at the garden of Gethsemane. As a family we gather at the Altar of repose, and we also use it as an opportunity to remember love ones who have gone before us.



Altar of Repose, with the list of remembrance

Good Friday is a day where we all gather at 3 o'clock to remember the crucifixion of Jesus. The service is very simple and without the pomp and ceremony we usually associate with many feast days within the church, it is a real day of reflection. It is also a day whereas a family we all get together and eat fish and chips! This serves as an abstinence of meat and should be the only meal of the day, as a means of fasting.



Blessing of Easter food and Easter Vigil

The custom of blessing of food for Easter arose from the discipline of fasting during Lent - meat, eggs and other foods are blessed and form the first meal eaten on Easter Sunday. The Vigil is a beautiful mass, where we start off in darkness awaiting the first Easter morning. We listen to readings from the Old Testament, then the Gloria is sung and all the lights come on in the church and bells are rung once again. It is also a time where we usually welcome news members into the Church through adult Baptism and Confirmation.



Easter vigil

As a family we always gather on Easter Sunday and eat the food blessed on the previous day for us. We also might eat one or two Chocolate eggs!

Ramadan - Month of Mindfulness, Saleha one of our Muslim chaplain writes ...

The Qur'an was first revealed to the Prophet Muhammad in the month of Ramadan, and it is read and revised most frequently during this blessed month.

Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic year which follows the lunar cycle. It is a month of strict fasting when food, drink and intimacy is forbidden from dawn to sunset. It is a month of exercising self-restraint, renewal, and spiritual growth.

All sane, mature adults observe the fasts with exemptions offered to a few categories of people including menstruating and pregnant women, nursing mothers, the sick and travellers undertaking an arduous journey.

At sunset, the fast is broken with dates and water, followed by the Maghrib (sunset prayer) and a meal called the iftar.

Traditional date biscuits coated in white chocolate are a treat for all the family



During the night, additional prayers are offered in the mosque in which a part of the Qur'an is recited by the imams (prayer leaders) each night and the whole book is completed over the month.

A traditional candle lamp adorns a dining table in this family home

The end of the month is marked by news of the sighting of the new crescent. Muslims celebrate 'Id al-Fitr (Eid) to mark the end of Ramadan, give charity, offer special morning prayers, and have a grand feast shared with family and friends. Gifts and traditional sweets are also shared with friends and neighbours. Everyone tries to wear new or their best clothes and use perfume.



A typical gift box of biscuits shared with friends and neighbours during 'Id (Eid)



The celebrations are also tinged with some sadness that a very blessed and auspicious month has ended during which they had a tremendous spiritual experience and attained closeness to God. Muslims believe their sins have been forgiven by God and try to refrain from repeating them.

Orthodox Easter – Fiona writes about her experience while on holiday recently in Greece.



After Easter I went on holiday to Greece and our holiday coincided with the Orthodox Easter, which is usually a week later than our churches. The date for Eastern Orthodox Easter comes from following the Julian calendar that differs from the Gregorian calendar which is used by most western countries and Christian denominations. Consequently, the Orthodox Easter often occurs later.

The events for Orthodox churches, are like our western churches, observing Lent and Holy Week. Many Eastern Orthodox churches observe a Paschal Vigil which ends just before midnight on Holy Saturday (or Great Saturday), the last day of Holy Week on the evening before Easter. During the Easter Vigil services, a series of 15 Old Testament readings begin with these words, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." Often Eastern Orthodox churches celebrate Saturday evening with a candlelight procession outside the church. Photo shows the Village Church in Parga, Greece.

Immediately following the Paschal Vigil, Easter festivities begin with Paschal Matins at midnight, Paschal Hours, and the Paschal Divine Liturgy. Paschal Matins is an early morning prayer service or, in some traditions, part of an all-night prayer vigil. It usually begins with the tolling of bells, and in some place's fireworks. So on Easter Saturday we discovered that dinner was not served until either 22:30 or 00:30 after the Paschal vigil so very late.

Easter Eggs

As part of the symbols of Easter, there were chocolate eggs, but also many baskets around our hotel. In the Orthodox tradition, eggs are a symbol of new life. Early Christians used eggs to symbolize the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the regeneration of believers. At Easter, eggs are dyed red to represent the blood of Jesus that was shed on the cross for the redemption of all people.



The customary food for Easter Day was lamb, which were roasted on spits – and lunch was a huge family affair. We also found in our room when we arrived at the hotel a sweet Easter dessert bread.

Great experience to celebrate two Easters!

Our Muslim Chaplains participated in a panel about Ramadan



Ibrahim and Saleha were delighted to be asked by the Canary Wharf Group Muslim Association to join a panel discussion at their 'Lunch and Learn' on the topic 'The Month of Ramadan'. They were joined on the panel by the CWG Director, Zakir Khan.

Saleha talked about the importance of fasting and the physical endurance required throughout the month. She explained that Muslims follow the lunar calendar and fasting starts at the beginning of the new month, daily beginning at dawn and ending at sunset. The iftar, breaking of the fast, is

an important family time to eat together and share with neighbours.

Some groups of Muslims are exempt from fasting and Saleha gave some examples such as, the very old and frail, the sick and menstruating and nursing women, and travellers undertaking an arduous journey. They are able to make up for the missed fasts later in the year. Those who simply cannot make up the fasts would feed a substantial meal to a poor person for every missed fast.

Ibrahim explained that Ramadan was a time to seek to strive spiritually against temptations and desires and be a better person. Ramadan is a time when Muslims endeavour to spend more time in prayer, reciting the Qur'an, and extended night prayers at the mosque. Late nights and waking up before dawn for breakfast means short and disrupted sleep which can take its toll. Ibrahim talked about the challenges for Muslim colleagues fasting and following their devotions during Ramadan, suggesting some ways to ease and manage some of them.

Some suggestions were shared for consideration by managers and team leaders. These included early or late starts and/or finishes, flexible shifts, collaborating with Muslim colleagues when arranging time off, swapping days, getting the more physical work done earlier in the day, for example enabling perimeter security staff to come indoors every so often out of the sun etc.

Zakir shared his personal experience. He talked about taking time off during the month, working from home where possible, and asking for meetings not to be arranged late in the evenings if possible.

The panel discussion was followed by interesting and helpful Q&A. We were glad that they received positive feedback from the attendees.

In case you were wondering it was a LUNCH and learn! Lunch was provided which included samosas and spring rolls for a touch of Ramadan! The event was recorded and is available on the CWG Plc website.

If your company or Muslim business resource group would like our chaplains to come and talk about Ramadan, they would love to be invited.

The Canary Wharf Multifaith Chaplaincy provides well-being support for everyone who works on the Canary Wharf estate by offering face-to-face and online meetings to help individuals who need guidance. We also offer faith advice to companies and guidance on issues relating to diversity and inclusion.

We are generously supported by the Canary Wharf Group and are free to those individuals who use our services while being fully independent. We treat all our conversations with the strictest of confidence. If you would like to speak to us for an informal chat about what we offer, or to meet with one of the chaplains, please see our website for our [contact details](#) or email talktous@canarywharfchaplancy.co.uk.

Up Coming Faith Events

April Faith Festivals

Judaism: 28th April - Yom HaShoah Anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, serves as a day of remembrance for those who perished in the Shoah (Holocaust).

Islam: 28th April - Laylat al-Qadr Marks the night in which the Qur'an was first revealed.

Bahá'í: 28th April - Ninth Day of Ridván Day when Bahá'u'lláh's family joined him at the Najibiyyih Garden, Baghdad.

May Faith Festivals

Paganism: 1st May Beltan Celebration of fertility marking the beginning of Summer.

Bahá'í: 1st May Twelfth Day of Ridvan Close of the festival.

Islam: 2nd May Eid al-Fitr After the end of Ramadan with an additional morning congregational prayer in the mosque.

Hinduism: 3rd May Akshaya Tritiya An auspicious day for the Hindu.

Buddhism: 15th May Wesak Celebration of Buddha's enlightenment.

Paganism: 20th May Spring Equinox Celebration of Spring.

Bahá'í: 23rd – 24th May Declaration of the Báb Celebrates the Báb's declaration of his mission as the messenger of God.

Christianity: 26th May Ascension Day Marks the ascension of Jesus Christ to Heaven after he rose from the dead on Easter Sunday.

Bahá'í: 29th May Ascension of Bahá'u'lláh Commemorates the death of Bahá'u'lláh.

June Faith Festivals

Judaism 5th - 6th June Shavuot: Celebrates the giving of the Torah (Five Books of Moses), the first harvest, and the ripening of the first fruits.

Christianity 5th Pentecost/Whitsun: Marks the appearance of the Holy Spirit.

Sikhism 16th Martyrdom of the Guru Arjan Dev: Commemorates the fifth Sikh Guru and first Sikh martyr.

Paganism 24th Midsummer's Day: A celebration of the sun's power on the longest day of the year.

Christianity 29th Feast of Saints Peter and Paul: Observed by Roman Catholics, Anglicans and Lutherans.

July Faith Festivals

Hinduism 1st July Jagannath Rath Yatra: Public procession and chariot festival.

Islam 7th – 12th July The Hajj: Once in a lifetime pilgrimage to Makkah; is the largest gathering of Muslims anywhere in the world.

Islam 8th July Yawm Arafat 2nd day of Hajj: Day of repentance and acceptance of supplications, many non-pilgrims fast on this holiest day in Islam.

Bahá'í 10th July Martyrdom of the Báb: Commemorates the Báb's execution in 1850, after which his teachings continued to spread.

Islam 9th – 13th July Eid al-Adha: Marks the sacrifice made by Prophet Abraham.

Hinduism 13th July Guru Purnima Day: An Indian and Nepalese festival dedicated to

spiritual and academic teachers.

Buddhism 13th July Asalha-Dharma Day: Commemorates Buddha's first teaching to the five ascetics in the Deer Park near Benares, India.

Rastafarianism 23rd July Birthday of Emperor Halle Selassie I A holy day of commemoration for Rastafarians.

Islam 30th July Al-Hijra: The Islamic New Year. First day of Muharram. Start of Islamic year 1444.

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