



Bahá'í



Buddhism



Christianity



Hinduism



Islam



Jainism



Judaism



Paganism



Rastafarianism



Shinto



Sikhism



Taoism



Zoroastrianism

Faith Calendar 2011

JANUARY

- 1 Gantan-sai Shinto**
The start of three days of celebrations to mark the new year. Includes visits to local Shinto shrines.
- 2 Epiphany Christianity**
Celebrates the visit of the Three Wise Men (or Magi) to the infant Jesus Christ.
- 5 Birthday (Prakash Utsav) of Guru Gobind Singh Sikhism**
Guru Gobind Singh was the tenth Sikh Guru and the last one in human form. He founded the Khalsa, the Brotherhood of the Pure.
- 7 Christmas Day Rastafarianism**
Rastafarians worldwide celebrate Christmas on this day to coincide with Christmas celebrations in Ethiopia.
- 7 Christmas Day Orthodox Christianity**
Eastern Orthodox Christians celebrate Christmas on the 7 of January.
- 27 Holocaust Memorial Day Inter Faith**
An international day of commemoration honouring all victims of the Holocaust and Nazi persecution, as well as those affected by more recent genocides.

FEBRUARY

- 2 Imbolc Paganism**
Imbolc honours the goddess Brigid. Its name refers to the flow of ewes' milk that heralds the return of spring.
- 3 Setsubun Shinto**
People traditionally scatter beans at home and in their temples to ward off evil and bring happiness.
- 3 Yuan Tan Taoism**
Chinese New Year.
- 8 Saraswati Pooja (Vasant Panchami) Hinduism**
A celebration in honour of the Goddess of Education.
- 8 Parinirvana Buddhism**
Buddhist celebration to mark the final passing of the Buddha.

MARCH

- 1 St David's Day Christianity**
Commemorates the patron saint of Wales.
- 2 Bahá'í fast begins Bahá'í**
Adult Bahá'ís fast from sunrise to sunset for nineteen days. It is an important time for prayer, reflection and spiritual renewal.
- 3 Hanamatsuri Shinto**
This flower festival celebrates the birthday of Shakyamuni, whose teachings form the basis of Buddhism.
- 3 Mahashivratri Hinduism**
Traditionally, Hindus spend a night at the temple to worship Lord Shiva. Milk is poured over the symbolic form of Lord Shiva as an offering. For some families, Mahashivratri is a time of fasting.
- 8 Shrove Tuesday Christianity**
The day of preparation for Lent, traditionally marked by eating pancakes.
- 9 Ash Wednesday Christianity**
The first day of Lent. Many Christians receive a cross of ash on their foreheads in church services on this day as a symbol of mortality and penance.
- 17 St Patrick's Day Christianity**
Commemorates the patron saint of Ireland.
- 19 Holi Hinduism**
Holi is the Festival of Colour when liquid dyes, coloured powder and water are scattered over people. The event marks the end of winter, celebrating the land's fertility in anticipation of a good harvest.
- 20 Purim (The Festival of Lots) Judaism**
Celebrates the time when the Jewish people living in Persia were saved by the courage of Queen Esther from extermination by the wicked chief minister to King Ahasuerus, who cast lots to decide on which day to execute the Jews.
- 20 Spring Equinox Paganism**
During this celebration of Spring, Pagans often depict their God and Goddess as the Green Man and Mother Earth. Egg races, egg hunts and egg painting are also traditional activities at this time.
- 21 Naw-Ruz Bahá'í**
Marks the end of the nineteen-day fast and the beginning of the Bahá'í New Year, which coincides with the start of Spring. A time of great celebration for Bahá'ís as they look forward to the coming year.
- 21 Shubu-Sai Shinto**
A day for visiting graves.
- 26 Khordad Sal Zoroastrianism (Fasli)**
In the Shahenshai calendar, this is the Prophet Zarathustra's birthday, which Zoroastrians celebrate symbolically.

APRIL

- 12 Rama Navami Hinduism**
Hindus celebrate the birth of Lord Rama as an avatar, meaning incarnation of God, at Ayodhya in India. Worshippers fast and listen to Ramayana, the story of Rama and Sita.

- 13 Vaisakhi (Baisakhi) Sikhism**
Celebrates the founding of the Khalsa, the Brotherhood of the Pure by Guru Gobind Singh. After it has been washed, the Nishan Sahib (flag) is raised outside the Gurdwara again. The Nanakshahi calendar places this festival a day later.
- 16 Mahavira Jayanti Jainism**
Marks the anniversary of the birth of Lord Mahavira, the twenty-fourth and last Jain Tirthankara (saviour), founder of the pathway to spiritual liberation.
- 17 Palm Sunday Christianity**
Palm Sunday is the first day of Holy Week, the seven days leading up to Easter. Palm leaves, formed into crosses, are sometimes given to people, commemorating how Jesus Christ was welcomed into Jerusalem a few days before his crucifixion.
- 19 Pesach (Passover) Judaism**
Commemorates the liberation of the Children of Israel from Egypt, when they were led out of slavery by Moses. They left so quickly their bread did not have time to rise, so Jewish law requires that no leavened bread nor anything that has been in contact with leaven may be eaten throughout Passover.
- 21 Maundy Thursday Christianity**
Christians remember this as the day of the Last Supper, when Jesus celebrated the first Eucharist before he was betrayed by Judas. The word 'maundy' comes from the Latin verb to command (mandatum), and refers to Jesus's command that we should love one another. In many countries, this day is known as Holy Thursday.
- 21 First Day of Ridván Bahá'í**
Start of a twelve-day festival celebrating Bahá'u'lláh's declaration of his mission as the Manifestation of God, bringer of divine revelation for this age. His declaration took place in the Ridván Garden before he left Baghdad. Bahá'ís elect their local and national governing councils during this period.
- 22 Good Friday Christianity**
Commemorates the crucifixion of Jesus Christ and is known as Good Friday because Christians believe that his self-sacrifice results in the offer of new life and hope on Easter Sunday.
- 24 Easter Sunday/Pascha Christianity**
Jesus Christ's resurrection from the dead. People mark this day by giving Easter eggs to symbolize new life. The Easter season is celebrated for fifty days, until Pentecost. The term Pascha is used among Eastern Orthodox Christians.
- 29 Ninth Day of Ridván Bahá'í**
The day when Bahá'u'lláh's family joined him at the Najibiyyih Garden, Baghdad (Garden of Ridvan).

MAY

- 1 Yom Ha Shoah (Holocaust Remembrance Day) Judaism**
The anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, which serves as a day of remembrance for the six million Jews and many martyrs who perished in the Shoah (Holocaust) under the Nazis.
- 1 Beltane Paganism**
This festival – a celebration of fertility – marks the height of Spring. The pagan goddess appears as the May Queen and Flora. God manifests himself as the May King and Jack in the Green. The symbolic maypole represents their unity.
- 2 St George's Day Christianity**
Commemorating the patron saint of England. (moved by Christian churches from 23 April this year to avoid Easter)
- 2 Twelfth Day of Ridván Bahá'í**
The close of the greatest festival of the Bahá'í year.
- 17 Wesak/Vaisakha Pooja (Buddha Day) Buddhism**
Perhaps the most important festival in the Buddhist year, which focuses mainly on celebrating the Buddha's enlightenment. This day is known as Wesak in Sri Lanka Buddhism and Vaisakha Pooja in Theravada Buddhism.
- 23 Declaration of The Báb Bahá'í**
Celebrates The Báb's declaration of his mission as the messenger of God. The Báb, a title for Mirza Ali Muhammad was the forerunner who prepared the way for the coming of Bahá'u'lláh.
- 29 Ascension of Bahá'u'lláh Bahá'í**
Commemoration of the ascension of the Bahá'í faith's founder. Meetings are held in the small hours of the morning.

JUNE

- 2 Ascension Day Christianity**
Marks Jesus Christ's ascension into heaven after he rose from the dead on Easter Sunday.
- 8 Shavuot (The Feast of Weeks) Judaism**
Celebrates the giving of the Torah (Five Books of Moses), the first harvest, and the ripening of the first fruits. It is customary to stay up throughout the first night of Shavuot to study the Torah.
- 12 Pentecost or Whitsun Christianity**
Pentecost marks the appearance of the Holy Spirit. It is sometimes known as Whitsun, which means White Sunday and recalls how people prepared for baptism by dressing in white.
- 16 Martyrdom (Shaheed Divas) of Guru Arjan Dev Sikhism**
Commemorates the fifth Sikh Guru and first Sikh martyr. Guru Arjan is remembered with particular devotion among Sikhs, who honour him as the King of Martyrs (Shaheedan de Sirtaj).

- 21 Midsummer's Day (Solstice - Litha) Paganism**
A celebration of the sun's power on the longest day of the year. At dawn, hundreds of worshippers gather at ancient religious sites such as Stonehenge and Avebury.
- 29 St Peter's and St Paul's Day Christianity**
Observed by Roman Catholics, Anglican and Lutheran Churches. One of the oldest Saints' days.

JULY

- 9 Martyrdom of The Báb Bahá'í**
Commemorates The Báb's execution in 1850, after which his teachings continued to spread.
- 15 Dharma Day Buddhism**
Commemorates Buddha's first teaching to the five ascetics in the Deer Park near Benares, India.
- 23 Birthday of Emperor Haile Selassie I Rastafarianism**
A holy day of commemoration for Rastafarians.

AUGUST

- 1 Ramadan Islam**
Starts the most significant month of the year for Muslims. It is a time for greater devotion to Allah, inner reflection, religious observance and self-control. It also marks a period when Muslims fast from dawn to sunset every day. The precise start date may vary and it is determined by the sighting of the crescent moon.
- 2 Lughnasadh Paganism**
This celebration (pronounced loo'nass'ah) marks the first day of the harvest, which continues until the next Pagan festival, Samhain in October. The land and symbols associated with reaping corn play a big part in the day.
- 13 Raksha Bandhan Hinduism**
Hindu sisters tie a special thread called Rakhi around their brother's wrists to protect them from evil.
- 19 No-Ruz Zoroastrianism**
Originated by the famous Persian monarch, King Jamshid, No-Ruz is New Year's Day for Zoroastrians and marks the Spring Equinox. People celebrate the day by wearing new clothes, exchanging presents and holding social gatherings.
- 22 Janmashami Hinduism**
Hindus celebrate the birthday of Lord Krishna, believed to have shown himself in human form 5,000 years ago. Worshippers offer poojas (prayers) and sing bhajans (religious songs).
- 30 Eid-al-Fitr Islam**
People mark the end of Ramadan with an additional morning congregational prayer in the mosque. People of all ages celebrate the rest of the day visiting friends and relatives, and also make charitable donations. The precise date may vary and it is determined by the sighting of the crescent moon.

SEPTEMBER

- 1 Ascension (Gurughadi Divas) of Guru Granth Sahib Sikhism**
The Granth Sahib is the most revered of all Sikh scriptures and it is worshipped as the faith's living word. It was given Guruship on this day in 1708.
- 8 The Blessed Virgin Mary Christianity**
Christians celebrate the life and dedication of Mary, the Mother of Jesus. Catholics traditionally celebrate this day as the Assumption of Mary, believing that at the end of her life on Earth, she entered heaven in body and soul.
- 9 Samvatsari Jainism**
A day when Jains ask for forgiveness from all, especially those they have harmed physically or emotionally, and forgive all those who have harmed them. Also the start of Dasa Laxani parva, a ten-day contemplation on the nature of the soul.
- 11 Ethiopian New Year's Day Rastafarianism**
Rastafarians celebrate the New Year.
- 21 International Day of Peace Inter Faith**
Inaugurated by the United Nations, this day is observed by communities from all faiths and backgrounds worldwide. It is frequently marked by collective moments of silence, and also includes peace marches, vigils and festivals.
- 23 Autumn Equinox Paganism**
For many Pagans, this is a time to reflect on the passing seasons as the balance of the year shifts from summer to winter.
- 29 Rosh Hashanah (Jewish New Year) Judaism**
Celebrates the creation of the world. Families gather for festive meals, attend synagogue and listen to the blowing of the shofar (ram's horn), which marks the start of ten days of repentance, ending on Yom Kippur.
- 28 Durga Pooja/Navaratri/Dussehra Hinduism**
A celebration lasting five days. The Goddess Durga is the Hindus' most important female deity. She is worshipped in a colourful and dramatic festival celebrating Rama winning the freedom of his beloved wife Sita from the demon king Ravana.

OCTOBER

- 8 Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement) Judaism**
The holiest day of the Jewish calendar, marked by a 25-hour fast and solemn prayer to repent for the previous year's sins.
- 13 Sukkot (The Feast of Tabernacles) Judaism**
Commemorates the autumn harvest and the wandering of the Jews in the wilderness after their Exodus from Egypt. During these eight days, it is required to eat and, where possible, sleep in sukkahs (makeshift shelters).

- 20 Birthday of The Báb Bahá'í**
Celebrates the birthday of The Báb, forerunner who prepared their way for Baha'u'llah, who was born in 1819 in Shiraz, Persia.
- 21 Simchat Torah (Rejoicing in the Law) Judaism**
Celebrates the completion of the annual reading of the Torah (Five Books of Moses). A joyous festival when the Torah scrolls are taken from the Aron HaKodesh (Holy Ark) and danced around the synagogue seven times.
- 26 Paryushana Jainism**
Start of an eight-day festival of fasting, contemplation on Jain teachings and devotional rituals.
- 26 Diwali and New Year Hinduism Jainism Sikhism**
Diwali symbolises the victory of light over darkness and knowledge over ignorance. Its main focus is Lakshmi, the Goddess of Wealth. Sikhs also celebrate this day (as Bhandi Chhor Divas) because the sixth Guru reached Amritsar on Diwali after his release from prison. Among Jains, this day is celebrated as the anniversary of Lord Mahavira's death.
- 26 Bandi Chhor Divas Sikhism**
Sikhs celebrate the sixth Guru's arrival at Amritsar on Diwali, following his release from Fort Gwalior. He also secured the release of 52 Hindu rajas from the same prison, after which he was called Bandi Chhor. This day also marks the martyrdom of Bhai Bani Singh.
- 31 Samhain Paganism**
Literally meaning 'summer's end', this festival is a celebration of endings and transformation. Popularly known as Halloween, it is also for many Pagans a celebration of New Year.

NOVEMBER

- 1 All Saints' Day Christianity**
Honours all the saints in Christian history, particularly those who do not have their own special feast day.
- 2 All Souls' Day Christianity (Roman Catholic)**
Officially commemorates the faithful departed, but is more popularly a day to remember family members and friends who have died.
- 2 Anniversary Haile Selassie's coronation Rastafarianism**
On this day, Rastafarians celebrate the crowning of Haile Selassie I, the Emperor of Ethiopia, who is believed to be the Messiah.
- 4 Hajj Islam**
The fifth pillar of Islam is a once-in-a-lifetime pilgrimage to Makkah during 8-13 of Dhul-hijjah, the month of Hajj. It is the largest gathering of Muslims anywhere in the world.
- 5 Day of Arafah Islam**
The Day of Arafah falls on the second day of the Hajj rituals. Muslims congregate in Arafah, where they believe they will be raised on the day of judgment, to seek forgiveness and remember the Prophet's last sermon which also took place there.
- 6 Eid-ul-Adha Islam**
Marks the sacrifice made by Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him). People celebrate this festival with an Eid prayer on the morning of the first day, and share meat with their relatives and the poor.
- 10 Birthday of Guru Nanak Sikhism**
Celebrates the birth of Guru Nanak, founder of the Sikh religion.
- 12 Birthday of Bahá'u'lláh Bahá'í**
Celebrates the birth of Bahá'u'lláh, one of the twin founding figures of the Bahá'í faith, who was born in 1817 in Tehran, Persia.
- 15 Shichi-Go-San Shinto**
Girls of seven and three and boys of five dress up in new clothes and visit a Shinto shrine to pray for their future well-being.
- 24 Martyrdom (Shaheed Divas) of Guru Tegh Bahadur Sikhism**
Commemorates the martyrdom of the ninth Guru in 1675. Sikhs revere Guru Tegh Bahadur as someone who gave up his life so that others could practice whichever faith they chose.
- 26 Al-Hijra Islam**
The first day of the Muslim New Year (1427). It marks the journey of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) from Makkah to Madinah.
- 27 Advent Christianity**
Beginning on the fourth Sunday before Christmas, this is the season of preparation for Jesus Christ's birthday, which is celebrated on Christmas Day.
- 30 St Andrew's Day Christianity**
Commemorates the patron saint of Scotland.

DECEMBER

- 5 Ashura Islam**
Muslims mark the tenth day of Muharram as the day Allah saved Moses from the Pharaoh, and they fast to show their gratitude to God.
- 21 Chanukah (Festival of Lights) Judaism**
Celebrates the rededication of Jerusalem's Second Temple and the miracle of its menorah (seven-stem candelabrum), which was kept alight for eight days with one day's oil. The lighting of the menorah on each night of the festival commemorates this miracle.
- 22 Midwinter/Yule Paganism**
This celebration of light takes place on the shortest day of the year. Followers gather in a show of faith that the sun's warmth will return. Among other rituals, Druids cut mistletoe from oak trees and distribute it as a blessing.
- 25 Christmas Day Christianity**
Commemorates the birth of Jesus Christ and is widely celebrated by the exchanging of gifts.

The dates used are correct to the best of our knowledge.

To order additional copies of this calendar, please contact barry.clark@towerhamlets.gov.uk

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