

MARCH 2020 EASTER AND PASSOVER



Fostering Cohesion, Understanding and Harmony in Manchester

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Welcome to the March 2020 Faith Network for Manchester Newsletter

It has been absolutely amazing to see and be part of the way so many communities and voluntary groups around the country have responded to the needs of the Covid-19 crisis, social distancing and the resulting needs. Local councils and faith communities across the country and especially here in Manchester and Greater Manchester have certainly risen to the task and there is some amazing work going on.

Religious communities have adapted incredibly quickly to respond to the restrictions on movement and gatherings and to the closure of faith community buildings. Obviously this affects all festival celebrations and religious ceremonies and many communities have been able to make online plans for some of these, although it will mean that celebrations and observance of these holy days will be very different.

In addition to the practical changes, the emotional fall out must not be ignored and the support we can offer our members, congregants and communities will be hugely important. The longer we are confined to our own homes and unable to 'do normal things' the more difficult it is going to be and the greater the need for extra support for each other and ourselves.

We at the Faith Network for Manchester hope to be arranging a series of online training events to cover the themes of loneliness, safeguarding, suicide prevention, mental health issues and domestic abuse. All of these are increasingly major concerns at present and we will rely on each other to help resource the way we can respond to the problems faced.

This newsletter includes examples of some of the work going on and details of two major festivals taking place this week. The accompanying email has details of more, including the need for urgent offers to store a million airline meals, currently frozen. Their 'Use By Date' is May 2020, but GM Poverty Action need to know by tomorrow morning how many of these meals our partners across Greater Manchester will be able to store!

Also in the newsletter are details on Webinar on COVID-19 & The Financial Impact On The Faith Sector and a Helpline For Faith Institutions. Our thanks go to Strengthening Faith Institutions for these two initiatives.

Also there is a GMP Questionnaire to Improve Service and Engagement that the police can offer to faith communities and organisations across Greater Manchester, especially bearing in

mind the large number of religious festivals occurring in April and May.

We also have some information on Easter and Passover and three poems/prayers that have been offered to us at this time to help us consider or deal with the Covid-19 crisis.

Finally, all of us at FN4M wish all of our members, friends, supporters, and our families, and everyone across Greater Manchester and across our world, the forbearance, resilience, strength and compassion to deal with everything thrown at us through this period.

We hope and pray that we all stay healthy, safe and strong.

May God bless us all.

Rabbi Warren Elf MBE,
Director of
Faith Network for Manchester

WEBINAR ON COVID-19 & THE FINANCIAL IMPACT ON THE FAITH SECTOR

Join us in the comfort of your home on

WEDNESDAY 8TH APRIL @ 2pm-3pm



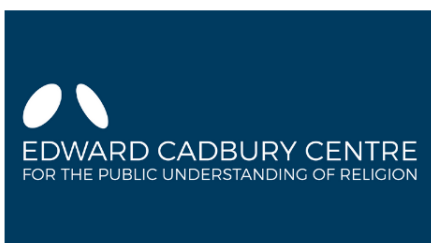
Led by expert financial advisers from Lloyds Bank and SFI

Discussions include:

- Managing finances - staffing & Government grants
- Developing a contingency plan & how your insurance will be impacted
- Immediate actions to manage your finances
- How your investments will be impacted
- Other financial implications

Register at <https://bit.ly/3bPaawE>

or contact us on info@sfitogether.org/ 07590 028 823



Strengthening
Faith Institutions

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EVERY DAY OF THE WEEK, 1PM-7PM



Call our team of expert consultants for up-to-date support during this critical time.

**CALL US ON
0333 772 1989 OR SEND
US AN EMAIL AT
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WE CAN HELP WITH:

- Local and National Government economic support schemes
- Charity Registration
- Gift Aid
- Legal matters
- counseling support
- Safeguarding children online
- Health and well-being
- Volunteer opportunities
- technical and financial support for online engagement

GMP: COVID-19

Short Questionnaire to Improve Service and Engagement

Following the outbreak of Covid 19 across the UK in March 2020 The Health Protection Coronavirus Restrictions Regulations 2020 came into force on 26th March. These regulations place restrictions on public movement and gatherings and require the closure of non-essential businesses and premises to restrict the spread of virus.

We are aware that Greater Manchester encompasses a diverse community where over 200 different languages are spoken and over 40 religions and faiths are practised, and that the restrictions will have a significant impact on these religious and community groups.

The months of April and May are significant in the calendars of many religions and during this time several key festivals and dates are usually celebrated or remembered. Under normal circumstances many of these would involve large religious, social and family gatherings and pilgrimages.

It is vital that we continue to engage with our communities over the coming weeks and identify any tensions or issues associated with these key festivals and dates as a result of the current restrictions.

In order to continue to proactively engage, we want to gain a greater understanding of how you and your community may be affected so that we can do our best to provide the reassurance, support and relevant information you require/need.

Help us to help you by considering the following:

- Q1.** How is the faith or community you identify with impacted by current Covid-19 Public Health Restrictions?
- Q2.** What events or significant dates are there in your calendar that are likely to be impacted by the restrictions if they are in place for the next two or more months?
- Q3.** What support would your faith community require from GMP and wider agencies during this period?
- Q4.** Are there any particular concerns or issues that you believe may require specific support for your faith members or community?
- Q5.** Are there other key contacts from your community who would like to receive regular events?

Please return your comments to forcecommunityhub@gmp.police.uk at your earliest convenience.

Passover (Pesach)

- The Jewish Festival of Freedom

Passover 2020 begins at sundown on Wednesday, April 8, and ends Thursday evening, April 16. The first Passover seder is on the evening of April 8, and the second Passover seder takes place on the evening of April 9.

What is Passover?

Passover is a festival of freedom. It commemorates the Israelites' Exodus from Egypt, and their transition from slavery to freedom. The main ritual of Passover is the 'Seder', which occurs on the first two nights of the holiday. The Seder is a festive meal that involves the re-telling of the Exodus through stories and song and the consumption of ritual foods, including matzah and maror (bitter herbs). The Seder's rituals and other readings are outlined in the Haggadah — today, many different versions of this Passover guide are available in print and online, and you can also create your own.



What are some Passover practices?

The central Passover practice is a set of intense dietary changes, mainly the absence of hametz, or foods with leaven, such as bread or any foods with yeast. (Ashkenazi Jews also avoid kitniyot, a category of food that includes legumes.) In recent years, many Jews have compensated for the lack of grain by cooking with quinoa, although not all recognize it as kosher for Passover. The group of psalms called Hallel is recited both at night and day (during the seder and morning prayers). Additionally, Passover commences a 49-day period called the Omer, which recalls the count between offerings brought to the ancient Temple in Jerusalem. This count culminates in the holiday of Shavuot, the anniversary of the receiving of the Torah at Sinai.

What foods are eaten on Passover?

Matzah, or unleavened bread, is the main food of Passover. But the holiday has many traditional, popular foods, from haroset (a mixture of fruit, nuts, wine, and cinnamon used at the Seder) to matzah ball or kneidlach soup — and the absence of leavening calls upon a cook to employ all of his/her culinary creativity. The first two and last two days (first and last in Israel and for Reform Jews) are holy days with special services and prayers, normally in synagogue. This year the special services and Seder gatherings will not be communal gatherings, due to Covid-19 restrictions, but people will be celebrating in their homes.

Easter and Holy Week

Easter

Easter is the time of the Christian year when Christians remember the Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. They believe that Jesus, the son of God, died for everyone's wrong-doings and then came back to life three days later to defeat death and evil: so if you believe in Him you will live forever in Heaven.



Holy Week is the last week of Lent and is the week before Easter Sunday (also known as Easter Day). It starts on Palm Sunday and finishes with the celebration of Easter Sunday. In many churches, during Holy Week, special services are held on everyday up to and including Good Friday.

Palm Sunday is the first Day of Holy Week. It is when Christians remember how Jesus entered Jerusalem riding on a donkey. It is called Palm Sunday because the people were so happy to see Jesus and knew that he was very important, so they took branches from the Palm and Olive Trees that lined the road. They waved them in the air shouting 'Hosanna' (which means 'God Saves' in Hebrew).

Maundy Thursday is the Thursday of Holy Week. On Maundy Thursday Jesus had his last meal with his friends and followers before he was killed. This meal is now known as 'The Last Supper'. At the meal, Jesus and his friends would have followed the Jewish Passover custom of eating roast lamb and unleavened bread (matzah) and drinking red wine.

However, Jesus gave the bread and wine a special meaning

When they got to the part of meal when the Bread was eaten and the wine drunk, Jesus said that these would be a symbol of his body and blood to his followers to help them remember that through his death, our sins are forgiven. Also at the same meal, Jesus told his followers to think of him when they ate bread and drank wine. This is very important to Christians and is now remembered in the Christian service known as Communion, Mass or Eucharist.

Good Friday is a very important day for all Christians. On Good Friday, Christians remember that Jesus died for everyone. He was crucified by the Romans on a hill outside Jerusalem although he had not done anything wrong. When a person was crucified, they were tied and nailed by the wrists and feet to a large wooden cross or scaffold and left to die. This is why a cross is used as a symbol of the Christian faith.



Easter Sunday or Easter Day is the most important day of the year for Christians. It is when they celebrate that three days after being killed, Jesus rose from the dead, sometimes called 'the Resurrection' and defeated evil forever.

A lot of Churches start the Easter Sunday celebrations at Midnight on Easter Eve. Candles are used in churches all over the world to start the Easter Day Midnight celebrations. Candles help Christians to remember that Jesus is the light of the world and that when he rose to life on Easter Day he got rid of the darkness of evil.

In some churches, the service starts in darkness. Then twelve candles are lit and these are taken round the rest of the church lighting the other candles. When a candle is lit the Priest says 'Christ is Risen!' and the congregation respond 'He is Risen Indeed!'. In Greece, fireworks are sometimes used to start the service.

Churches are filled with flowers on Easter Day. These represent new life. Priests wear their best, brightest robes in celebration. If a Church has a model of a tomb in it from Good Friday, it will be empty with the stone rolled away, as it was on the first Easter Day.

Holy Week is a special time for Christians. Although every day is important, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Sunday are very special to Christians.

We wish all of our Christian friends and family a holy and blessed Easter and hope that it is still a very special time, even with the Covid-19 restrictions.

THE VIRUS 2020

BY SANDY MACLEAN

Unitedly we stand
But keep two yards apart!
We sneeze into our elbows.
Our flights do not depart.
We stock up on the basics
Of food in tins and packs
We stay inside our houses
So no need for coats or macs.
No visits to our grandmas
Except to drop off food.
No holidays, no school, no church
Or eating in a pub.
We'll learn to value people
We'll learn to value food
We'll learn to value freedom
Like walking in a wood.
We'll learn to value TV
And 'phones and iPads too
We'll curb our wants for cars and homes
And all things grand and new.

Be thankful for a medic,
For those who keep the peace
And hope the present curse
Will make our faith increase.
To home grown food and home made meals
To a lower, gentler pace,
By making do and mending
We WILL all win the race.
Value well the love and care in 2020 days
So when at last the virus fades
LETS NOT RETURN TO
MATERIALISTIC WAYS

The Shema

An adaptation of the Jewish prayer,
recited twice daily

BY BY BEN JANOFF

As this young man's rabbi suggests, it is slightly heretical but very appropriate at this time:

Hear O humanity, handwashing is our best defence, our best defence is handwashing.

Praised forever be the soap's glorious majesty.

You shall wash the virus from your hands, with all your hot water, with all your soap, with all your time.

Let this cleaning which I command you this day, be always on your hands.

Wash diligently the hands of your children; wash them in your home and on your way, when you lie down and when you rise up.

Never mind the dryness of your hands, let it sting like a soap bubble in your eyes; put soap dispensers on the doorposts of your house, and on your gates.

Likrat Shabbat

(To Welcome the Sabbath)

BY JACK RIEMER

God does not wave magic wands to remove hardship; God works within human suffering to transform it, usually through the help of others, so we share this prayer from the Jewish tradition.

WE CANNOT MERELY PRAY TO YOU O GOD, to end war and violence, for we know that you have made the world in such a way that all must find their own path to peace within themselves and with their neighbours.

WE CANNOT MERELY PRAY TO YOU O GOD, to end starvation and homelessness, for you have already given us the resources with which to feed and shelter the entire world, if we would only use them wisely.

WE CANNOT MERELY PRAY TO YOU O GOD, to root out prejudice and hatred, for you have already given us eyes with which to see the good in all people, if we would only use them rightly.

WE CANNOT MERELY PRAY TO YOU O GOD, to end disease and ignorance, for you have already given us great minds with which to teach others and to search out cures and healings, if we would only use them constructively.

THEREFORE WE PRAY TO YOU O GOD, FOR STRENGTH,
DETERMINATION AND WILL-POWER, TO DO INSTEAD OF JUST PRAY,
TO BECOME INSTEAD OF MERELY TO WISH.

AMEN.

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