

Forthcoming Festivals/Commemorations

4 April	Ching Ming (Chinese)
14 April	Baisakhi/Vaisakhi (Sikh)
15 April	Rama Navami (Hindu)
19 April	Mahavir Jayanti (Jain)
21 April - 2 May	Ridvan (Bahai)
22 April	Hanuman Jayanti (Hindu)
22 - 30 April	Pesach/Passover (Jewish)
23 April	St. George's Day (National)
29 April	Holy Friday (Orthodox Christian)
30 Apr -1 May	Beltane (Pagan)
1 May	Pascha/Easter Day (Orthodox Christian)
4 - 5 May	Yom Ha-Shoah/Holocaust Day (Jewish)
5 May	Ascension (Christian)
5 May	The Prophet's Night Journey and Ascension (Muslim)
15 May	Pentecost (Christian)
15 May	Wesak/Visakha Puja (Buddha Day) (Buddhism)
15 - 21 May	Christian Aid Week (Christian)
21 May	The Night of Forgiveness (Muslim)
23 May	Anniversary of the Declaration of the Bab (Bahai)
25 May	St. Bede the Venerable (Christian)
7 June - 5 July	Ramadan (Muslim)
9 June	Dragon Boat Festival (Chinese)
11 - 13 June	Shavuot (Jewish)
16 June	Martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev (Sikh)
21 June	Midsummer Solstice (Pagan/Druid/Wicca)
21 June	World Humanist Day (Humanist)
5 July	Birthday of Guru Hargobind (Sikh)
6 July	Eid-ul-Fitr (Muslim)
9 July	Anniversary of the Martyrdom of the Bab (Bahai)
15 July	Dharma Day (Buddhist)
14 or 15 August	Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Christian)
17 August	Hungry Ghosts Festival (Chinese)
18 August	Raksha Bandhan (Hindu)
25 August	Krishna Jayanti (Hindu)
29 Aug - 5 Sept	Paryushana (Jain)
1 September	New Liturgical Year (Orthodox Christian)
5 September	Ganesh Chaturthi (Hindu)
11 September	Ethiopian New Year (Rastafarian)

P.S. Anyone seeking to identify the dates for additional festivals and/or commemorations from April to early September should access the many lists available on the internet. Some of the best such lists (in terms of inclusiveness and accuracy) derive from the BBC and RE:Online. The Shap Working Party on World Religion also produces a very good list, but the list must be purchased whether in hard or electronic form.

Please send your contributions or comments to:

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For further information, please see NASACRE newsletters at:
www.nasacre.org.uk and www.multifaiths.com

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**Newsletter for the Standing Advisory Council
for Religious Education for Northumberland**

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Northumberland's Second Holocaust Memorial Day Commemoration

Northumberland County Council hosted the County's second Holocaust Memorial Day Commemoration in the Council Chamber at County Hall in Morpeth on 27th January 2016.

The young people from Voices Making Choices wrote the script, focusing on the experience of the Holocaust from a young person's perspective. The students from Ashington High School who reflected on their studies of the Holocaust further emphasised this.

A special film on the same theme, Holocaust and Children, was commissioned, and it was shown as a cello solo was played alongside.

The need to maintain the memory of the Holocaust was symbolically represented as candles were lit from the Holocaust Memorial Candle, secured last year on behalf of Northumberland. The whole of the Council Chamber was lit from the one candle while a solo violin piece was played.

Before the Rabbi gave a blessing, Councillor Pidcock reflected on the continuing event of Holocaust happening in our communities all over the world, and as close to us as Calais.

Participants were welcomed to the Council Chamber by a four-piece brass band and entertained in the Restaurant after the event by the full band of Bedlington Casino.

"It was a moving and fitting event, which reflected the importance of keeping the memory alive."

Councillor Bernard Pidcock MBE





Humanism in the school curriculum: some more possible ways forward

An article in the January 2016 SACRE Newsletter discussed humanist baby-namings and weddings. This article is about humanist funerals, by far the most frequent of humanist ceremonies.

As readers will know, humanists do not believe in an afterlife, so the humanist funeral centres on the purpose of life, the life of the deceased person and the deceased person's family. In most circumstances it will be the celebration of a life well lived, though there are times, for example as a result of a suicide or a road traffic accident, when other considerations come into play.

A ceremony at a crematorium is the most common, though humanists do conduct burials, quite often at a green burial site. Ceremonies are sometimes conducted in village halls in advance of a short committal ceremony elsewhere.

Each ceremony is written from scratch. The work starts with an interview with the next of kin and may extend to gathering information from other family members or even colleagues or friends. The ceremony will include brief words of introduction and some thoughts on life and death, but the main part will be about the deceased. The committal is usually about remembering the person as they were and committing the body to its natural end. Humanists try to find preferences that the next

of kin may have on entering the crematorium (for example, should the family follow the coffin) and whether the curtains should be closed or left open at the committal.

After the committal, humanists try to offer some positive words so that those present can leave feeling a bit more uplifted. I have been told on more than one occasion that "You made it easy for me to leave after the ceremony. I felt much better."

Some ceremonies can be a little different as, for example, when someone has left their body to medical science and there is no coffin. In such cases the ceremony is a memorial, but one which takes place very shortly after the death, as with a funeral. I have had a hall decorated with things associated with the deceased so that there was a visual focus to the ceremony.

Very often, humanist funerals include some appropriate poetry or prose chosen with the family and, of course, there is music at the beginning and the end. Sometimes there is a short piece of music for the committal.

Time spent in crematoria is crucial when crematoria are busy and officiants must therefore always bear timings in mind. There is always a clock on the back wall of a crematorium. If the deceased was well

known and there is more than one speaker, we would suggest that families book twice the normal allotted time, which all crematoria will do. If it is appropriate, we include some lighter moments of a person's life, and sometimes a joke. This gives a more rounded picture of the deceased.

We find that a ceremony focussing on the deceased and their family means a great deal to our clients.

Humanist officiants are selected and trained for their work. This involves (amongst other things) practice in writing ceremonies of different types and role-playing a ceremony. Humanist officiants are also observed to ensure that they meet certain standards. They also take care to familiarise themselves with the crematoria and how each one works.

With older school students who have discussed Humanism and death, it is possible to plan a lesson or workshop based on the creation of a ceremony (based on a brief life history) and role-play involving the main characters at a funeral (mourners, officiant, funeral director, etc.).

Chris Butterworth,
Humanist Representative,
The Northumberland SACRE

A few tips about making sure that visits to houses of worship go to plan

The SACRE is delighted to see how often schools in Northumberland arrange visits to houses of worship, not least because many such visits involve considerable expense (e.g. coach hire) and long journeys (some schools take pupils and students across the border to destinations in Scotland). Many such visits have featured in past editions of the SACRE Newsletter.



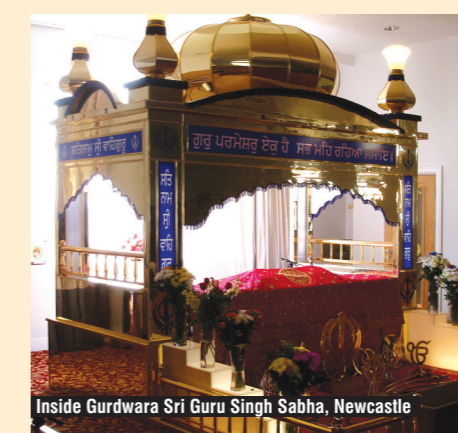
The new RE Agreed Syllabus will contain an improved and updated list of recommended places to take pupils and students on visits, but here we would like to share a few general observations about such visits to ensure they are a success for all concerned.

Well before a planned visit (four to six weeks is usually long enough. At least six weeks is essential for places very popular with all the region's schools - unless you are a regular visitor for whom, perhaps, special arrangements are possible), please make contact with the house of worship or a known potential host. You need to allow plenty of time to agree a date, time, etc. convenient to everyone involved. At this initial point of contact, reveal the age of the

pupils or students that wish to visit because a small number of houses of worship do not encourage visits by the very youngest children. It is also useful at this point to reveal whether any pupils or students have special needs. Having said that, we are not aware of any house of worship that does not welcome visits by pupils or students with special needs.

Remember that some of the houses of worship have many

groups already making visits, so, if possible, please have more than one suggested date on which you wish to attend. Also remember that some of the houses of worship have only one or two people who host the visits, and that such hosting is often done voluntarily when other duties and responsibilities allow. While many houses of worship welcome groups free of charge, do check that a fee



or donation is NOT required. Where a fee or donation is NOT required, do bear in mind that your hosts are giving of their time freely and/or providing groups with light refreshments, so, at the very least, a charitable donation is appropriate (as a general rule, £1 per pupil or student is much appreciated). Also check about dress conventions. Some houses of worship require visitors to remove their shoes, and some require visitors (sometimes everyone, sometimes only males, sometimes only females) to cover their heads. If heads must be covered, confirm what constitutes an acceptable headcovering when arranging the date and time of the visit. In emergencies, some houses of worship (e.g. gurdwaras, at least one synagogue and at least three mosques) have headcoverings for those who need them.

As you can see, flexibility and forward planning will work to your advantage. We are confident that at all the places listed in the RE Agreed Syllabus's "Guidance" (this will be accessible in June or July via the SACRE webpage of the Northumberland County Council website) you will receive a warm welcome and have an enlightening visit.