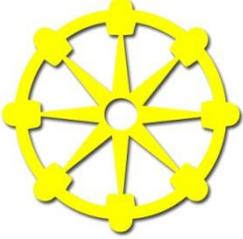


Shepparton Interfaith Network – Overview of World Religions

	<p>The terms interfaith or interfaith dialogue refer to cooperative and positive interaction between people of different religious traditions (i.e., "faiths") and spiritual or humanistic beliefs, at both the individual and institutional levels, with the aim of deriving a common ground in belief through a concentration on similarities between faiths, understanding of values, and commitment to the world. It is distinct from syncretism or alternative religion, in that dialogue often involves promoting understanding between different religions to increase acceptance of others, rather than to synthesize new beliefs.</p>
	<p>Buddhism</p> <p>Buddhism is 2,500 years old. There are currently 376 million followers worldwide. Buddhism is a spiritual tradition that focuses on personal spiritual development and the attainment of a deep insight into the true nature of life.</p> <p>Buddhism teaches that all life is interconnected, so compassion is natural and important.</p>
	<p>Christianity</p> <p>Christianity is the most popular religion in the world with over 2 billion adherents.</p> <p>Christians believe that Jesus was the Messiah promised in the Old Testament. Christians believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.</p> <p>One of the most important concepts in Christianity is that of Jesus giving his life on the Cross (the Crucifixion) and rising from the dead on the third day (the Resurrection).</p>
	<p>Hinduism</p> <p>Hinduism is the religion of the majority of people in India and Nepal. It also exists among significant populations outside of the sub continent and has over 900 million adherents worldwide.</p> <p>Hinduism teaches that everything comes from the one reality, and that reality is Divinity itself. All of life is a journey of return to that reality.</p>

	<p>Islam</p> <p>The word Islam means 'submission to the will of God'.</p> <p>Islam is the second largest religion in the world with over 1 billion followers. Followers of Islam are called Muslims. Muslims believe that there is only One God. The Arabic word for God is Allah.</p> <p>According to Muslims, God sent a number of prophets to mankind to teach them how to live according to His law. Jesus, Moses and Abraham are respected as prophets of God. Muslims believe that the final Prophet was Muhammad.</p>
	<p>Jainism</p> <p>Jainism is an ancient religion from India that teaches that the way to liberation and bliss is to live lives of harmlessness and renunciation.</p> <p>The essence of Jainism is concern for the welfare of every being in the universe and for the health of the universe itself.</p> <p>Jains believe that animals and plants, as well as human beings, contain living souls. Each of these souls is considered of equal value and should be treated with respect and compassion.</p> <p>Jains are strict vegetarians and live in a way that minimises their use of the world's resources.</p>
	<p>Judaism</p> <p>Judaism is the original of the three Abrahamic faiths, which also includes Christianity and Islam. There are 14.5 million Jewish people in the world in 2007, most residing in the USA and Israel.</p> <p>Judaism was founded by Moses, although Jews trace their history back to Abraham. Jews believe that there is only one God with whom they have a covenant.</p> <p>Judaism has a rich history of religious text, but the central and most important religious document is the Torah. Jewish traditional or oral law, the interpretation of the laws of the Torah, is called halakhah.</p>
	<p>Sikhism</p> <p>There are 20 million Sikhs in the world, most of whom live in the Punjab province of India. Sikhism was founded in the 16th century in the Punjab district of what is now India and Pakistan. It was founded by Guru Nanak and is based on his teachings, and those of the 9 Sikh gurus who followed him.</p> <p>The most important thing in Sikhism is the internal religious state of the individual. The Sikh place of worship is called a Gurdwara</p>

	<p>The Sikh scripture is the Guru Granth Sahib, a book that Sikhs consider a living Guru</p>
	<p>Taoism</p> <p>Taoism originated in China 2000 years ago. Taoism is an ancient tradition of philosophy and religious belief that is deeply rooted in Chinese customs and worldview.</p> <p>Taoism is also referred to as Daoism, which is a more accurate way of representing in English the sound of the Chinese word.</p> <p>Taoism is about the Tao. This is usually translated as the Way. But it's hard to say exactly what this means. The Tao is the ultimate creative principle of the universe. All things are unified and connected in the Tao.</p> <p>It is a religion of unity and opposites; Yin and Yang. The principle of Yin Yang sees the world as filled with complementary forces - action and non-action, light and dark, hot and cold, and so on</p>
	<p>Zoroastrianism</p> <p>Zoroastrianism is one of the world's oldest monotheistic religions. It was founded by the Prophet Zoroaster (or Zarathustra) in ancient Iran approximately 3500 years ago.</p> <p>For 1000 years Zoroastrianism was one of the most powerful religions in the world. It was the official religion of Persia (Iran) from 600 BCE to 650 CE.</p> <p>It is now one of the world's smallest religions. In 2006 the New York Times reported that there were probably less than 190,000 followers worldwide at that time.</p> <p>Zoroastrians believe there is one God called Ahura Mazda (Wise Lord) and He created the world.</p>