Episcopal Curriculum for Youth

What Do Others Believe?

A Guide for Leadership Teams

Episcopal Curriculum for Youth—What Do Others Believe?
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ISBN 0-8192-6073-8

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What Do Others Believe?

One of the most frequent requests from youth who helped design the Episcopal Curriculum for Youth was to learn about other faiths. This module honors that request within the ECY format. In only seven content sessions, it is impossible to capture the faiths of people throughout the world. It is also impossible to capture the complexities and diversity of those faiths.

This module is designed to be an introduction into some of the major religions of our country and the world. It points youth in a general direction that will encourage them to learn more about these religions and gain respect for the similarities and differences among the different faiths and the people who practice them. The same differences of opinion and types of parishes in the Episcopal Church are found within the religions of the world. Just as culture and location affects churches within the worldwide Anglican Communion, they also impact people of other faiths who live in diverse parts of the world.

Finally, the central purpose of this study of *What Do Others Believe?* is for youth to explore and discover their own faith. By looking at other religions, youth can come to a better understanding of their own beliefs and how those beliefs are a part of their lives. We must know and love our neighbor before we can discover what facets of the Gospel will be most appropriate to share. To encourage that, activities in this module direct youth to compare and contrast other faiths with elements of biblical narrative or Christian practice.

This module will explore a series of questions: "What does God look like for me? What does God have to do with my life? Do my actions reflect my beliefs?" As youth learn more about the beliefs of others, they continue to discover how to live more fully in relationship with God.

Introduction

What Do Others Believe? is one of a series of modules developed for Older Youth who are in senior high school. The curriculum is based on the promises made in the Baptismal Covenant found in *The Book of Common Prayer.*

The vision for the curriculum also includes the development of leadership skills for Christian young people. Youth need to be leaders of their own lives by following Christ's example and making choices that are best for them.

The leadership of the group will come from a team that includes youth and adults. It is recommended that leadership teams of youth and adults meet in advance, perhaps on retreat, to choose and plan for the various areas of study.

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This Guide

This guide contains nine sessions, seven of which focus on particular religions in the world. The first session, "Making Plans," is designed as a planning tool for the remaining eight sessions. It begins with a "Point of Contact," a personal story about a young person's feelings about attending a school with people of different beliefs and backgrounds. The planning session begins, as do all other sessions, with prayer and scripture study to focus the experience on the presence of God in our hearts and God's will for our lives.

This planning session should occur several weeks or months in advance of the actual study. Field trips and outside activities and speakers, suggested for other modules in the curriculum series, are crucial for this module. The best way to learn about another faith is to visit a church, synagogue, or temple and talk to people who worship there. Outside speakers can also provide information for this study. Finally, there are rich resources available from libraries and on the Internet that will give this study of other faiths added substance. Use the church newsletter or bulletin to let the congregation know about the group's plans; others in the church may be able to identify speakers or other contacts in the religions being studied.

If a smaller group does much of the planning in advance, the activities in Session 1 can be used to introduce others in the group to the topic. Find a way to tap the gifts of everyone in the group. Use the Planning Reference Guide on p. 18 to describe the upcoming study. Choose youth leaders who are willing to take responsibility for each session, including all of the issues around transportation or hosting a speaker.

Sessions 2 - 8 examine the issues of *Who Are the People of God?* through these individual topics:

Episcopal
Protestantism
Roman Catholicism & Eastern Orthodox
Judaism
Islam
Hinduism
Buddhism

Each session begins with prayer, scripture, and a Personal Story. The Personal Stories, written from the perspective of a young person, focus on the heart of the topic for that session. The group may select from a variety of themes and activities developed from those themes the ways in which they want to interact with the materials.

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A study of issues and Scripture often leads to more than just awareness of an issue. **Session 9** is designed to help youth bring together what they have learned and make decisions about the actions they will take in response. This may be done as individuals or as a group. The final activities include plans for liturgical celebrations, social action, and just plain fun.

Other Modules in the Episcopal Curriculum for Older Youth

Diversity	**Relationships**	**Spirituality**	**Violence**
Peace & Justice	**Success & Failure**	**Difficult Decisions**	**Treasuring Our Gifts**
Who Is God?	**What Am I Called to Be?**	**What Do Others Believe?**	**What Is Evil?**

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How to Use These Materials

1. DECISIONS ARE MADE BY LEADERSHIP TEAM

This curriculum is based on a model that requires a team of people to lead the sessions and the planning process. The assumption is that this team will consist of several teenagers who will take the key leadership roles and adults who will provide resources and support.

Each issue-based session develops three themes using a specific passage from the Bible as a focus for study. Suggestions for activities, discussion topics, and questions are provided for the three themes. Teams can decide to focus on one or two of the themes or take a broader look using all three.

The members of this team may change during the year as new issues are introduced or the needs of the group change. Leadership skills introduced throughout the module are for the whole group of youth and adults.

2. BUILDING A YOUTH-LED TEAM

The best way to function well as a team is to spend eight to ten hours together before the year begins. The team may decide to meet several times or go on retreat for this purpose. Here is a way to set up an effective team.

- Identify four to six teens who are leaders in school, church, and other settings. Choose two to four adults who are leaders but who also know how to follow.
- Spend time together getting to know each other and building community with one another. This can best be done in a retreat setting by sharing prayer time and meal times as well as planning times.
- Share faith stories in whatever way seems appropriate and comfortable.
- Review all of the materials in the chosen module and begin to make some plans about how best to use this resource. If time permits, it may also be a good time to make plans for future modules. Be aware that new leadership may emerge during the coming year.
- Decide on a plan and delegate responsibilities for planning, leading sessions, and communicating.
- Meet with the entire group, share your plans, and get their input.
- Finalize the plan and begin.
- Be prepared to revise your plan if circumstances change.

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3. CORE COMPONENTS

Each session includes the same basic information. Optional activities and sections change as needed in response to the issue and themes. These components are:

- **Session design**. Three elements are essential for every session. 1) A beginning prayer, chosen from *The Book of Common Prayer*, is offered as a way to center the group's time together. 2) The heart of the session is the three themes and activities that help the participants to gain deeper understandings of the issue. 3) The dismissal brings everyone together as the time ends and sends them out to do God's work in the world.

- **Objective.** A learning objective is found at the top of page one of every session. The objective guides the team in determining what is to occur as a result of the time spent with this material.

- **Scripture.** With a note to "Begin here," youth are asked to look at passages from the Bible that relate to the issue. Three different pieces of Scripture provide three different views of the issue. Most sessions include both Old and New Testament references.

- **Commentary.** Each passage from the Bible is briefly explained in a paragraph following the biblical quotation. Leaders who wish to know more may explore larger works such as *The Interpreter's Bible*, a Bible commentary, or a Bible dictionary.

- **Personal Stories.** Except for the initial planning session, all of the sessions include a Personal Story. Typically it is a story of an experience that youth encounter as a part of their daily lives. In telling these stories to each other the youth will be able to examine their own experiences and be more aware of the feelings of others.

- **Questions.** Suggestions for questions to be used as discussion starters are offered throughout the sessions. An icon easily identifies the questions.

- **Skill Building.** Because a specific goal of these materials is to help youth recognize their strengths and improve their leadership skills, certain skills are emphasized in each session. These will be developed through the optional activities.

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- **Optional Activities.** A goal of the *Episcopal Curriculum for Youth* is to offer a wide range of options that allow flexibility within groups and meet the needs of different types of groups. Leadership teams are invited to use their own creativity in choosing other games or activities they enjoy. The following options will be available throughout various sessions:

1. **Creative activities** to stimulate the artistic talents of teens.

2. **Games** to build trust and skills as well as explore issues.

3. **Movies, TV Shows, and Print Media** that illustrate the theme presented in today's time.

4. **Literature**, books, and short stories, that develop the theme as well as those created by the individual members of a group.

5. **Music** from *The Hymnal 1982* and from contemporary and Christian resources relevant to the topic.

6. **Field trips** to places that provide an enhancement of the theme.

7. **Service projects** that arise from the themes to carry the mission of the church beyond the walls of the classroom or the church.

8. **Posters.** A set of six posters representative of the themes within each issue are provided separately. The posters are designed to stimulate thoughts, discussion, and reflection on the various concepts.

4. SAMPLE SESSION

After the leadership team has met and the planned study of the module, the group begins to meet. A model for a session might look something like this:

1. **Planning for a session.** The leadership team has selected Theme 2 as the way they wish to approach Session 2. One or two members of the group are assigned to be leaders. They prepare for the group to participate in several of the discussions and activities for Theme 2. Any necessary speakers or other outside arrangements are made in advance.

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2. **Begin with Prayer.** Starting together with prayer is a way to help the group focus their attention. A prayer from *The Book of Common Prayer* is printed above Theme 1. Leaders may use this prayer, choose another, or compose one of their own. The prayer can be said by one person, or everyone can pray together. This may also be a time for sharing of any concerns of those present or for those absent.

3. **Scripture.** These materials are unique because they look at issues through specific passages in the Bible. The leaders read the designated Scripture and use the questions to talk about the relationship of the Scripture to the theme.

4. **Activities.** The group participates in one or more of the activities furnished in the guide. The choice will depend on the interests of the group and the time frame of the gathering.

5. **Preparing for Next Time.** A few minutes before the end of the time, announce any coming events and give leaders for the next session an opportunity to give a preview.

6. **Dismissal.** Just as the start of time together needs prayer for focus, so does the closing. The participants share any concerns to be held in prayer during the coming days and close with the "Dismissal," also printed above the beginning of Theme 1.

5. SOME GUIDELINES FOR DISCUSSION

A key to the effectiveness of these materials is to help the group learn how to talk with one another about the issues that affect their lives and faith.

Sharing of individual stories. People are given the opportunity to share the things that are important in their own lives. This will become easier as the group members grow in trust for each other. Sometimes this may be difficult or impossible for an individual. This person needs to be allowed to pass if they wish.

Issues, themes, stories. There are many interesting topics and stories that serve as a "launching pad" for rich and deep discussion. Choose those that will engage those who participate.

Active learning. There are many opportunities for trips, visits, and other activities to bring great energy into your study. Your team can decide what works best for your group and plan times for these events to take place.

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Speakers and guests. There are many people in your community with fascinating stories. The team can find the right people who will have an influence on your group.

Statement to the church. Teens have valuable things to say about and to their church. This can be incorporated into the program around any issue that the members of your group feel moved to respond to.

Here are some simple guidelines that can be used to facilitate sharing and community building. It is a good idea to discuss these guidelines with your team and add or delete suggestions from your group.

GUIDELINES FOR DISCUSSION

1. Make and commitment to all sessions (continuity).

2. Include everyone, even yourself, in the conversation.

3. Be real—be honest.

4. Send "I" messages—share feelings.

5. Talk about your own experiences.

6. Listen with great respect.

7. Listen, understand, but do not fix.

8. Be specific.

9. Respect confidentiality.

10. Allow the Spirit, within and beyond, to work in this group.

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6. THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

The setting where your session takes place is crucial to the success of your program. In short, the less it is like a classroom the more you will be able to facilitate learning, sharing, and growth. Pay attention to the environment you are providing, as this will have a great impact on the learning process. Consider three possibilities to create the desired environment.

- **The youth room.** One good alternative is a room at the church designated for young people and arranged with comfortable chairs, couches, etc. This provides a comfortable and inviting atmosphere.

- **Meeting in a home.** Holding meetings at someone's home near the church can be a great asset. This provides a casual, comfortable setting that usually enhances the process. This may cause some problems but it is well worth investigating. Also, people may be more open to making their homes available if it is done on a rotating basis. Don't rule out this possibility without carefully considering it.

- **Gathering in a restaurant.** A restaurant can provide a wonderful opportunity for a meal, fellowship, and learning. Often young people who wouldn't come to the church will feel comfortable in this setting. Of course, this will raise some financial considerations, but these are not impossible. You could also consider meeting at a restaurant on an occasional basis as a way of promoting outreach and for celebration.

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For Members of the Leadership Team

A General Philosophy of a Teaching Ministry

God made all people with great intelligence, skills, talents, feelings, opinions, and ideas regardless of their age. All people are growing in their faith journey. Two key words in working with others are value and respect. Never assume that you know more than they do or that your or their experience in life gives either one more value. Instead, enter into a learning adventure, side by side. You will discover as much as you impart. You will be impacted as much as you impact others. Keep an open mind and heart to all that is said, felt, and shared; and experience God doing greater things than you could pray or ask for.

Who are Older Youth?

Volumes have been written on the lives of teens and adolescent development. The purpose here is to give the leadership team some keys about what young people are like. Youth who are on the leadership team may agree or disagree. A lively conversation about these issues will enhance the ability of the team to work together.

Characteristics of Older Youth:

- **THEY LIKE TO HAVE FUN**

  Fun is not the opposite of learning and should not be something to avoid. On the contrary, people learn best when they are having a good time. When they are having a good time, there is often chaos. Don't be afraid of a little commotion if most of the group is on task. Encourage each other to have fun in class and see how much you can learn.

- **THEY HAVE SKILLS, TALENTS, AND ENERGY**

  Teens are not empty vessels waiting to be filled up. They are people blessed with skills, talents, and intelligence. Draw upon the rich resources of the members of your group and know that there is much to offer, to share, and to teach to others. The energy of the group can deeply enhance the learning experience.

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- **THEY ARE PEOPLE IN TRANSITION**

Youth are in a transition stage of life. The essential element is change as a person moves from dependence to independence. The closer a person gets to graduation from high school, the more this reality will set in. Youth need freedom to make choices with adult support. Never underestimate the abilities of each other or the need for adult cooperation and support.

- **THEY ARE SELF-RELIANT AND ACCOUNTABLE**

Most youth want to be self-reliant. By this point they have had enough experiences to form their own opinions and be able to make their own decisions. Of course, like everyone else, they will both succeed and fail. Encourage the group to take responsibility for the choices they select and hold them accountable to the agreements they make. Remember that everyone deserves input on decisions that affect his or her life.

- **THEY LIKE MAKING CHOICES**

Youth can and do make good decisions. Our gift to others is to help them to develop their abilities to make good decisions and to treat them as capable human beings.

• **THEY NEED TO BE HEARD**

One of the best tools you can provide for members of the group are opportunities to speak out and be heard, and to listen to others with respect. It is important to set the example not by what you say but by what you do. Your ability to listen to others and respond to their ideas and comments will be a model for developing good listening skills. Being heard for even a moment can be a powerful experience. This is true for people of any age.

• **THEY WANT TO BE VALUED AND SIGNIFICANT**

How you treat the people in your group is much more important than what is taught. If all members feel important and significant, they are more likely to learn something. It is also crucial to pay attention to how the members of the group treat each other. The atmosphere of the classroom can inspire or destroy the whole experience. Encouraging all members of the group to treat themselves and others with extraordinary respect is one of the most important lessons to teach.

• **THEY ARE LOOKING FOR A FAITH OF THEIR OWN**

Teenagers are seeking their own opinions, values, and faith. Identity comes from becoming your own person. Youth often reject much of their parents' faith. This is an important sign that new values and a

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stronger faith are being formed. Embrace the searching process and affirm the importance of the ability to question, doubt, and think. Your response to doubts will encourage or discourage others' journeys to spiritual knowledge. You can't teach faith but you can grow together in your knowledge and love of the Lord.

- **RELATIONAL MINISTRY**

  This curriculum is based on building relationships in three ways. Be constantly aware of the importance of these three dynamics of relationships.

  1. The first, and most important, is the relationship between each person and God. This should be an ongoing focus in whatever is taught, discussed, or explored.
  2. This second is the relationship between young people and adults. The adult's role is not that of teacher but rather one of "mature friend." One-to-one relationships take on special significance in this model.
  3. The third is the peer relationship. How the members of the group treat each other enables or destroys the building of a caring community.

- **OWNERSHIP**

If youth are going to be truly involved in a program of learning, they must have a sense of ownership. The wise teen will learn how to share the program and build a sense of ownership together with the adults. This process can be improved and simplified by the formation of a team in the beginning with youth taking responsibility for leadership roles.

Who Are The Adults?

Adults who work with youth are more than teachers. To foster effective teaching and learning among youth, the Church needs adult leaders who are grounded in their own faith and identity as Christians. Effective leaders are excited about growing and learning and enjoy working with youth in a team relationship. They have high energy, genuine enthusiasm, and a passionate interest in youth.

Youth can have input into which adults are selected for the leadership team. Seek out people who care about youth, have a strong faith, and are committed to the program. Adults who want to be kids or who don't keep commitments are not effective over time. The following points should be carefully considered as leadership teams are formed.

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Characteristics of Effective Adult Leaders:

- **THEY ARE ROOTED IN THEIR FAITH AND COMMITTED TO JESUS CHRIST**

Who adults are speaks loudly to teens. They don't have to be biblical scholars or perfect Christians. It also doesn't mean that they no longer have any doubts or are at the end of their own spiritual journey. Good leaders have a strong relationship with God and are comfortable with their faith.

- **THEY ARE WILLING TO BE A PART OF A TEAM**

For some adults working with teenagers as they grow in the knowledge and love of the Lord is an overwhelming task. It is essential for teens to understand the sense of responsibility that comes with this task. Wise teens know that they are only part of a teaching team and that adults are accountable to other people in the church who may or may not care about the activities of young people. Adults need to be able to let go of their need to be in charge and still have the ability to use their gifts as part of the team.

- **THEY ARE FUN AND ENJOY BEING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE**

Adults should be able to relax and enjoy their time with youth. Effective adults know how to have fun and to share joy with young people without giving up expectations of them. Adults must find their own balance of fun and seriousness. Affirming joy and excitement with group, however, is essential for the adults' full participation.

- **THEY ARE MORE CONCERNED ABOUT PEOPLE THAN FACTS**

The *Episcopal Curriculum for Youth* provides an excellent base of information to learn more about God, Scripture, and the Church. The sessions incorporate this learning with the issues that Affect young people's lives. Effective adults are aware of issues that are unique to their groups and look for ways to include these ideas in the work of the group. Adults should give priority to what youth are thinking and feeling.

- **THEY HAVE A LONG-TERM COMMITMENT TO THE GROUP**

Adults are committed and consistent. Steadfastness of faith and commitment to the class will make a real difference in the long run. Leaders should focus on the overall success of the program and not on any one moment, hour, or week.

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A Final Word

Remember that this is a process of growing in the knowledge and love of the Lord. There will be ups and downs, successes and failures, joys and frustrations. Often you will never know the impact you have made on another person's life. So much happens intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually in individuals' lives that they themselves are not aware of the people who have had an impact on them. Trust in each other, trust in yourself and, most of all, trust in God.

For More Ideas

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What Do Others Believe?

Making Plans

Objective

Youth will be able to plan a study of different faiths that will help them to respect the dignity of every human being and to explore their own beliefs.

Personal Story

If you walked into my school, you might think you had accidentally visited a meeting of the United Nations. There are people of all races and religions. You could guess which part of the world they are from by their looks or their clothing.

Those at my school who practice Islam mostly trace their heritage to the Middle East. Many Muslim girls wear chadors (veils that wrap around the head) and long dresses that cover everything but their faces.

Keep walking through the halls, and you'll see several African-American students who wear traditional African clothing made from colorful fabric with bold designs. The Asian students represent countries from many places in the East. There is a large group of Korean students, as well as other Asians whose parents or grandparents came from Japan, China, Thailand, Vietnam, and India. The organization for Asian students is the largest group in the school.

It's hard to distinguish the Jewish students from the rest of the population, except for the boys from the Orthodox traditions who wear yarmulkes. Other faiths and cultures are apparent only when you get to know people well. Most people don't even know my best friend is Hispanic. And another friend can't play or practice soccer on Saturdays because he is a Mormon.

Discussions in social studies classes are always interesting because the student body is so diverse. I especially like classes where we discuss current events, even though we often disagree about politics and other issues. Sometimes I get so caught up in my own opinions, I don't listen to others—especially when I don't think they are listening to me.

If you closed your eyes in a hallway when classes were changing, you'd swear you were surrounded by any American teens. We may look different, but for the most part, we sound the same. The type of music we listen to may be most diverse thing about us. People who like hip hop, for example, can be Korean, African American, or anything.

I'm proud to go to this high school, and when I'm around people who don't go here I stick up for it. However, sometimes I wish we wouldn't separate into groups so much. Probably it's just easier to be around people who have similar backgrounds. Maybe if I understood people of different faiths and cultures I would feel more comfortable around them.

SESSION 1

Scripture

Romans 13:8-10

Skill Focus

Respect
Relationships

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Prayer
O God, you made us in your own image and redeemed us through Jesus your Son: Look with compassion on the whole human family; take away the arrogance and hatred which infect our hearts; break down the walls that separate us; unite us in bonds of love; and work through our struggle and confusion to accomplish your purposes on earth; that, in your good time, all nations and races may serve you in harmony around your heavenly throne; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

For the Human Family
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 815

Dismissal
Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

☐ Begin Here: Study Scripture

Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet"; and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, "Love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.

Romans 13:8-10

Commentary: In this passage, Paul helps the new converts in Rome understand how love fulfills the law. He tells them to pay their debts and that they are under no obligation except the responsibility to love. If individuals love their neighbor, then they will "strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being" (*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 305).

☐ Questions

- How does loving your neighbors lead to respecting their dignity?
- If people were able to love each other, would there be justice and peace in the world?
- How can you love someone you don't understand?
- What are concrete steps you could take to understand people of different faiths and cultures?

Point of Contact

Personal Story

In the Personal Story, the narrator describes the different kinds of people she encounters at her high school. Compare your experiences at school, in sports organizations, and in the community with the story.

- Do young people with similar backgrounds tend to stick together as groups in the narrator's school?
- How does Paul suggest you treat others?
- Do you interact with people of different faiths and cultures?
- How do you interact with people who are different?

Be aware of the diversity in your school, church, and community as you undertake this study. See if some of the stereotypes or feelings you have about a certain group of people change as you learn more about different faiths.

☐ Activities

Traits and Features

Compare traits and features of members in the group. For example:

- Clasp your hands—which thumb is on top?
- Fold your arms over your chest—which arm is on top?
- Eye color—what differences do you find?
- Earlobes—whose hang free, whose are connected?
- Dimples—who has one, two, or none?
- Put your hands side by side, palm up—do the little fingers bend away from each other?
- Tongue—can you curl yours?

Note the similarities and differences among participants in the group and make a chart. The differences are all genetic; there is not a right or wrong trait. Everyone in the group can probably find at least one trait in common with every other person. Each person is influenced by his or her heritage.

Religious Family Tree

Ask participants to each make a religious family tree that reflects his or her heritage. Think about the different churches or temples where your relatives worship. Make a list of all the places you can think of.

Share the lists with the group and make a table of all the religions that are represented in the families of the group.

- Did you find much diversity in the group?
- Which was the predominant religion?
- Were you surprised at the outcome?

Look at the list of religions that is included in this module in the Planning Reference Guide on p. 18. Are there other faiths you would like to add to the list based on your table?

Human Tic-Tac-Toe

Make a tic-tac-toe board with cells large enough to add names. In each cell, include a trait or religious belief (see below). Make a game for every participant, but put the items in different cells for each person. Ask each person to find someone in the group who matches the characteristics on his or her game sheet. That person then signs the sheet. The game is over when everyone gets three names in a row.

Family member attends other church	Brown eyes	Left-handed
Dimples	Protestant	Can curl tongue
Attends a suburban church	Right-handed	Gray eyes

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☐ Steps for Planning

The sessions in this module introduce some of the major world religions. In such a brief space, it is not possible to include all of the faiths, nor is it possible to describe completely the complexities and diversity of those that are included. The sessions point participants in a general direction to help them gain respect for different faiths and the people who practice them. A list of additional resources is included at the end of each session for further study.

The best way to learn about other faiths is either to talk to someone who practices another faith or to visit a service or worship space of another faith. Resource people in the community should be identified, and field trips need to be scheduled. For this reason, it is recommended that the planning session occur at least one month before the study actually begins.

This module only contains some of the faiths that are found in communities throughout the country. If participants identify other religions that they wish to study, such as Mormonism, Christian Science, or Unitarianism, include them by using the format suggested at the end of Session 9 on p. 50.

Finally, allow flexibility in your schedule. The information in this module provides a window that captures only a small part of each religion. Your group may want to look at certain areas in more depth. Additional resources are suggested for individuals or groups to learn more.

1. Pass out copies of the Planning Reference Guide on the following page to each participant. Take a few moments to describe the faiths that are included in this module. If you made the religious family tree described on the previous page, ask the group if they would like to add a faith that was identified in their families. Find out if others have suggestions for expanding the study and are willing to do some research to make that possible. Ask them to keep the questions at the top of the Planning Guide in mind as they look through the sessions.

2. Pass around a copy of the guide or tear out sessions in an extra guide for Sessions 2 through 8. Assign sessions to small groups or individuals to look at more closely. Give participants time to read the commentaries and activities in their assigned session. Find out if individuals in the group have specific knowledge or know a resource person from a certain faith. Start thinking about possible field trips and the availability of churches and temples in your community.

3. After discussing the different religions in this module and others that the group has identified, write on a piece of newsprint the sessions the group has selected to study. If you already know that you need to spend more than one or two meeting times on a session, make a notation on the newsprint. Next to each entry, write the names of participants who agree to be the leaders or coordinators for each week as well as resource people from your church and community. The youth coordinators will prepare activities and gather materials that are to be used. They will work with the adult mentors in planning and scheduling field trips and speakers. The coordinators may not actually lead a session, but will assume responsibility for making all the preparations.

4. Look at the resource posters and decide how each will be used.
   Poster 1: Protestantism
   Poster 2: Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy
   Poster 3: Judaism
   Poster 4: Islam
   Poster 5: Hinduism
   Poster 6: Buddhism

5. Distribute copies of the sessions to the participants who have agreed to be coordinators. Check the process to see if anyone feels that his or her ideas have been overlooked.
   - Do you agree with the decisions made so far?
   - If there are still disagreements, can we find a way to come to agreement?

6. Make a calendar of the sessions and faiths you selected on a grid of your own design. Before you schedule field trips and speakers, check church and school calendars for conflicts. If several group members attend the same school, for example, don't plan a trip the day after Homecoming. Make sure every participant has a copy of the calendar and post it in a central location.

7. Discuss the ground rules and common understandings of the group.
   - What are our expectations for attendance especially when a speaker is scheduled?
   - If coordinators get sick, who can they call?
   - Who can make changes in the schedule if necessary?
   - Should someone be in charge of calling participants to remind them about trips?
   - Who will be in charge of permission slips and transportation?

8. If the group wants to have a snack, decide who will be responsible for assigning and reminding people to bring in food. Make provisions for cleanup at the same time.

9. Measure how well the planning session went by asking the following questions:
   - Did everyone participate in the planning?
   - Did the group listen to each person?
   - Is everyone comfortable with the study plan?

10. Save time at the end of the unit to reflect on what you have learned and how you can put that knowledge into practice. Session 9 will help you do this.

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PLANNING REFERENCE GUIDE

What Do Others Believe?

Questions

- Are there other faiths or religions that you would like to study?
- Which activities do you like in each session?
- Do you know someone who practices any of the religions you plan to study?
- Which religions have worship spaces in your community?
- What do you want to know about each religion?

Faith	Aspects to Study	Field Trips	Resource People
Episcopal		(Cathedrals, diocesan headquarters)	
Protestantism		(Churches in your community)	
Roman Catholicism & Eastern Orthodoxy		(Churches in your community)	
Judaism		(Temples or synagogues)	
Islam		(Mosques in your vicinity)	
Hinduism		(Temples in your vicinity)	
Buddhism		(Temples in your vicinity)	

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What Do Others Believe?

Episcopal Church

SESSION 2

Objective
Youth will be able to describe the Episcopal faith and how it relates to them.

Personal Story

I'd been an Episcopalian all my life, but I really began to learn about being an Episcopalian in confirmation class. We learned how Episcopalians, like other Protestants, believe that the Bible is the only authority for our faith and that eternal life with God is a gift from God that cannot be earned or bought. Like Catholics, we believe that tradition is also very important. We honor saints and other people in the church, and celebrate the same sacraments that Catholics do, although we call some sacramental rites.

The thing that makes us different, though, is the way we use reason to understand scripture and tradition. We believe God gave us intelligence to figure things out. Together we can look at scripture to try to understand its meaning for us. Even Peter admitted that he had a hard time understanding everything Paul wrote. For example, my church works hard to welcome different people, regardless of race or culture or gender. I'm not sure that the Bible specifically tells us to do this, but Jesus seemed to welcome all the different people he came in contact with.

I'm also glad our Church ordains women as priests. For much of history, only men could be ordained. As society changed and women began taking leadership roles, it seemed the right time for women to be ordained to the priesthood.

I can't really tell you how the beliefs of Episcopalians are different from Methodists or Baptists or Presbyterians. I think a lot of them are similar. But I believe that our use of both tradition and the Bible make us different. I like hearing the liturgy and having communion every week. I would miss lighting the Pascal candle at Easter and the candles on the Advent wreath. The mystery of some of those traditions is kind of like my own faith—I can't put it into words sometimes.

I guess I wouldn't want us to use reason without considering scripture or tradition. That would just make us another New Age group. However, if we keep the three in constant tension and harmony, we will probably find that "middle way" that is the foundation of Episcopal faith.

Scripture
Luke 4:16-21
Wisdom of Solomon 7:15-16

Skill Focus
Ethics
Independence/Individuality

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Prayer
O God of truth and peace . . . Grant that we may maintain that middle way, not as a compromise for the sake of peace but as a comprehension for the sake of truth; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Collect for Richard Hooker
Lesser Feasts and Fasts, November 3

Dismissal
Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

Scripture

When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

Luke 4:16-21

May God grant me to speak with judgment, and to have thoughts worthy of what I have received; for he is the guide even of wisdom and the corrector of the wise. For both we and our words are in his hand, as are all understanding and skill in crafts.

Wisdom of Solomon 7:15-16

Episcopal Church

The Episcopal Church is part of a worldwide fellowship of self-governing churches called the Anglican Communion. All of these churches trace their origins to the reformation of the Church of England in the sixteenth century. Many of the traditions of faith found in *The Book of Common Prayer*, 1979, are shared with the Church of England and other Anglican churches throughout the world.

The first settlers that came to Jamestown in 1607 brought the teachings of the Church of England to the New World. Because the Church in the colonies was so closely linked to England, many of its leaders sided with the British during the Revolutionary War. When the war was over, the Church became independent of England, adopting the name of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America. In 1979 the name was officially changed to the Episcopal Church in the United States of America. The word "episcopal" comes from the Greek word *episkopoi*, which means governed by bishops.

The Church teaches that scripture was written by people and inspired by the Holy Spirit. Episcopalians believe that the Bible contains everything that is necessary for salvation. Over the centuries, the Church has continued to discover the teachings of God. Traditions, such as worship, doctrine, and the Nicene and Apostles' Creeds, are important parts of the Church today. Episcopalians also emphasize the use of reason to understand scripture and tradition.

The Episcopal Church is based on both sacraments and creeds. The Outline of the Faith defines sacraments as "outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual grace" (*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 857). Creeds "are statements of our basic beliefs about God" (BCP, p. 851). The Church uses the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed.

Among local churches, interpretations of Church doctrine may vary. However, an essential belief of the Episcopal Church is that God has three essential qualities that are reflected in the Holy Trinity: the Father or Creator who is infinite, good, and omnipotent; the Son or Redeemer who came in the person of Jesus Christ whose life, death, and resurrection freed humanity from sin and death; and the Holy Spirit or Sustainer expressed as God's love appearing within people in mysterious and unexpected ways.

The Church recognizes the sinfulness of all humanity and God's abiding love for all people. God's love became incarnate (given human form) through Jesus whose life, death, and resurrection affirms our salvation. God's love is celebrated with praise and thanksgiving in the liturgy and life of the Church.

The Church does not control the interpretation of scripture and practices of dioceses. Episcopalians are encouraged to make responsible decisions based on scripture, prayer, and the guidance of clergy and other devout people.

The Book of Common Prayer embodies the essence of the teachings of the Church. It contains liturgy (formats of religious services) for daily offices (for example, Morning Prayer), Holy Eucharist, Baptism, and the other rites, including Reconciliation, Healing, Confirmation, Marriage, and Ordination. The prayer book also has collected *Psalms*, an Outline of the Faith or Catechism, historical documents, and the lectionary or list of scripture passages to be read each day.

The central focus of the church is a liturgical worship style, with an emphasis on Eucharist. According to the Catechism, the mission of the Church "is to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ. . . . The Church pursues its mission as it prays and worships, proclaims the Gospel, and promotes justice, peace, and love" (*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 855).

☐ Questions

- How did Jesus proclaim his ministry in the passage from *Luke*? What importance did he place on scripture?
- How can God guide the use of reason according to the *Wisdom of Solomon*?
- Which Episcopal teaching is most important to you?

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- What are the three foundations of the Episcopal Church? Which is most important?
- How does your church pursue the mission of the Church described in the Catechism (BCP, p. 855)?

☐ Activities

Prayer Book Treasures

Plan a Treasure Hunt to explore *The Book of Common Prayer*. Make a list of ten excerpts or information from the prayer book for groups or individuals to locate. For example:

Order of Morning Prayer: Rite Two
Ordination of a priest
Three places where the Apostles' Creed is found
The Prayer attributed to St. Francis
Psalm 23
Definition of sin in the Catechism
Date of Easter in 2010
Scripture readings for the Sunday closest to your birthday
Scripture readings for Year B for the Feast of Pentecost
A collect for peace

Afterward, talk about the game.

- What did you discover while looking through the prayer book?
- What sections would you like to know more about?
- What surprised you?

The Episcopal Church does not have a confessional statement of specific beliefs like some other Protestant faiths have. The prayer book serves this purpose for Episcopalians. Find time during the course of this study to look at the prayer book more closely, especially if you are confused about the teachings of the Church.

Church Structure

The word "episcopal" comes from a Greek work that means governed by bishops. Find out about bishops in the Church by looking in *The Episcopal Church Annual* in the section entitled the Succession of American Bishops. **Hint:** Check with your church office for a recent copy of this book.

- Who was the first bishop in the United States?
- How many bishops have there been?
- How many bishops are needed for the consecration of a bishop? Who consecrated your bishop?
- How many women are bishops?
- How many presiding bishops are there? Who is the current presiding bishop?

CROSIER

The crosier is a sign of the office of a bishop and is usually in the shape of a shepherd's crook. It is carried by the bishop or the bishop's chaplain in procession and held by the bishop when pronouncing certain blessings. The staff represents the bishop's role as a shepherd or guide for the people.

In addition, learn about the diocese your church is in, the relationship of your church to the diocese, and the role of the national church. Interview people in your church who have ties to the diocese or invite them to meet with the group. If possible, meet in your church library or a place with church reference materials. In addition to questions you have, consider the following:

- What geographic area does your diocese cover?
- How many churches are in the diocese?
- Who is your bishop?
- Is there a suffragen or assistant bishop? What is the difference?
- What is your church's relationship to the diocese? Do any members serve on diocesan committees? What portion of your budget goes to the diocese?
- What kinds of programs or activities does the diocese sponsor?
- How does the diocese interact with the national church? How often does the national church meet? When and where will it meet next?
- How does the Protestant Episcopal Church connect to the Anglican Communion?
- Who is the Archbishop of Canterbury? What role does he play in the Anglican Communion?
- How often do the bishops of the worldwide Anglican Communion meet? Where do they meet?

Look at a map that shows the partner churches of the Anglican Communion (Resource Poster 6 in the Diversity module of this curriculum series). Select a church in another country and pray for it on a regular basis. Or, find out if your church or diocese has a relationship with another church or diocese in the Anglican Communion and pray for the people there.

ANGLICAN COMMUNION

Episcopalians are a part of a larger church called the Anglican Communion. Anglicans include about 80 million people in more than 450 dioceses in 164 countries. They come from more than 64,000 separate congregations organized as 28 independent, national or regional churches known as provinces. Anglicans represent a variety of races, languages, cultures, and political conditions. They are, however, bound together by loyalty to common traditions and mutual support.

- The term "Anglican Communion" was first coined in 1885.
- The fastest growing segment of the Anglican Communion is in Africa.
- The Archbishop of Canterbury serves the Anglican Church as spiritual leader.
- All active bishops of the Anglican Communion attend the Lambeth Conference held every ten years.

Celebrating the Seasons

One of the traditions of the Church is the celebration of the seasons (see box on the next page). Episcopalians share this tradition with some Protestant churches, the Catholic Church, and the Eastern Orthodox Church.

Identify the season you are in now and find out more about it. (**Hint:** Information about feast days and seasons can be found in the younger youth Leader's Guide entitled *The Episcopal Church Year* in this curriculum series.)

- Which feast days fall in this season?
- How will your church celebrate this season?
- What makes it different from other seasons?
- Which colors are connected to this season?

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SEASONS OF THE YEAR

Advent—The beginning of the Church year. Four weeks of waiting, love, and hope to prepare for the coming of the Christ child and for his second coming at the end of time.
Christmas—The twelve days of celebration of the Incarnation of Christ.
Epiphany—Emphasis on Christ's revelation as the Savior of the world. The season opens January 6 with the journey of the Magi to Bethlehem and ends with Jesus' transfiguration on the mountain top.
Lent—A season of penitence and fasting to prepare for the observation of the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus.
Easter—Focusing on the celebration of the risen Christ and his post-resurrection appearances.
Pentecost—The longest season of the year through summer and autumn until Advent. It focuses on the ministry of Jesus and the continuing work of Christians in spreading the gospel.

Design a special activity to mark or celebrate this season with the group or with others in the church. For example:

- Plan a series of parties during the twelve days of Christmas.
- Schedule a quiet day at your church or a nearby retreat during Lent.
- Have a birthday party for the children in the church for Pentecost.
- Gather enough greens, wire forms, and candles for families to make wreaths during Advent.
- Plan a community fast (see box) for one of the two fasting days in Lent (Ash Wednesday and Good Friday).
- Create a seasonal calendar for others in the church. (**Hint:** For ideas see Resource Poster No. 3 in the younger youth poster pack for *The Episcopal Church Year* in this curriculum series.)

Be aware of the changing seasons in the Episcopal Church during your study of other faiths. Look for different colors in the altar hangings and activities and celebrations that may be unique to your church.

FASTING

Fasting is a penitential practice designed to strengthen spiritual life by lessening the attraction to food or pleasure. The intended result is removing sinful desires that draw people away from the love of God. Episcopalians generally fast during the season of Lent; some may also fast during Advent. The Church gives no specific directions, although the calendar appoints two days for fasting: Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. Fasting is always accompanied by prayer and is only done in community, reflecting the Benedictine rule that follows Anglican devotional and liturgical life. Fasting does not necessarily mean abstaining from food completely.

Field Trip

Plan a field trip to your diocesan headquarters, an Episcopal cathedral, or another Episcopal church that has customs and traditions that are different from your church. If you visit the diocesan offices, use the questions from activity two to learn more about its activities. Find out about special programs that the diocese sponsors and how you could participate. For example, some dioceses operate services for the homeless. How could the group or individuals be a part of that effort?

If your church uses incense and bells, visit another that doesn't, and vice versa. Note the traditions that are unfamiliar and find out what they mean and why they are used.

Schedule a visit to an Episcopal cathedral if possible. Find out the differences between churches and cathedrals. Are the titles for the clergy different? What else can you find that is different?

FACTS

U.S. Churches	7,400
U.S. Membership	2.4 million
Dioceses	100

The Executive Council of the Episcopal Church, 1996

☐ Resources

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What Do Others Believe?

Protestantism

SESSION 3

Objective
Youth will be able to find similarities and differences between Episcopalian beliefs and what other Protestant churches emphasize.

Personal Story

Being a Southern Baptist takes up a lot of time. My Christian friends who belong to other denominations don't seem to spend as much time at church as my family does. On Sunday mornings we go to Sunday school and church, and at night we have Training Union and another church service. I sing in the youth choir that practices on Wednesdays after dinner in our church hall. There are times I would like to skip church, but for the most part, I don't mind all the activities.

My dad is a deacon at the church. Deacons are elected by the people of the church to be the lay leaders. They work with our pastor and the minister of education. We also have a minister of music and a youth director. The ministers were all ordained by the churches that they were members of before they went to seminary.

Baptist churches are very independent. While we are members of the Southern Baptist Convention, we are free to go our own way. In a way, the convention is like a confederation of churches. I'm glad we are not bound by decisions made by representatives to the Southern Baptist Convention because I don't agree with everything they do.

The church service is focused on the sermon, which is usually based on a scripture passage. Baptists don't use a preset list of scripture; our pastor selects one that complements the idea he wants to get across. (There are a few Southern Baptist pastors who are women, but most are still male.) The Lord's Supper (Eucharist) is not given every week. At our church we share the Lord's Supper once every three months at a Sunday evening service. We use grape juice and crackers, which are passed to the congregation who remain seated.

One of the most important things I am supposed to do as a Baptist is tell others about Jesus. I don't do a very good job. I can't imagine going up to a group of friends and talking about Jesus. After people invite Jesus into their hearts, they make a public declaration of their faith by coming forward at the end of a service. We end every church service with an invitation for people who have accepted Jesus as their savior to come to the front where the pastor is waiting. If they want to be a member of the church, they are then baptized. We have a baptismal pool behind the choir loft at the front of the church where people are immersed in the water by the pastor.

The best part of being at church is the music. On hymn night, when we sing requests from the congregation, the whole sanctuary fills with sound. Everyone joins in, and most people sing the different parts. My favorite songs often have an "echo" effect: the sopranos start out, and the basses and baritones answer. Heaven couldn't sound better!

Scripture
Psalm 119:105
Ephesians 2:8-10

Skill Focus
Forgiveness
Responsibility

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Prayer
Almighty Father, whose blessed Son before his passion prayed for his disciples that they might be one, as you and he are one: Grant that your Church, being bound together in love and obedience to you, may be united in one body by the one Spirit, that the world may believe in him whom you have sent, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

For the Unity of the Church
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 255

Dismissal
Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

Scripture

Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light to my path.

Psalm 119:105

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God—not the result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.

Ephesians 2:8-10

Protestantism

Although the beginning of Protestantism is often marked by the actions of Martin Luther in Germany, the movement actually began almost a century before. The early Protestants were primarily concerned with the emphasis of the Catholic Church on tradition at the expense of the Bible. At the same time, the printing press and new translations had made the Bible widely available to the masses. Some Protestants continue to believe the Bible literally and talk about its infallibility. Others believe the Bible is the final authority, but recognize many complexities within it.

Protestants remain focused on the written word of God. Teachings of the churches are spread through written and published sermons, prayers, theologies, and books. The center of Protestant theology lies in the gospels and their message of the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The gift of eternal life resulting from Jesus' resurrection comes only from the grace of God, not through good works or any other human endeavor. Protestants also ascribe to the "priesthood of the believer," or the ability of all people to approach God without a mediator.

Worship services in Protestant churches are usually more informal, and focus on the preached word rather than the Eucharist. Music is an important part of the service; everyone in the congregation participates in the singing of hymns. The two main rites of Protestant churches are baptism and the Lord's Supper. Through these sacraments believers make a personal response to their faith in God, his son Jesus, and the Holy Spirit.

Lutherans

Lutherans focus on both the word and sacrament. Like other Protestants, they believe the Bible to be the final authority. However, the celebration of the sacraments of baptism and Eucharist are also a very important part of their worship and theology. The founder of the church, Martin Luther, believed that these two were the only sacraments that have biblical basis.

The church follows Luther's teachings that the goodness of God, expressed by grace, is the only way to salvation. Lutherans also believe that a person who breaks one law is as culpable as a person who breaks many laws. Christ came to bring salvation because humans cannot earn it through their own acts.

Presbyterians

Presbyterians embrace the central doctrines of Protestantism, but place a special emphasis on the lordship and majesty of God. A major force in the development of the church was John Calvin, who insisted that major practices of the church have a direct basis in the Bible. Calvin's belief in God's sovereignty in creation and salvation led to his teachings about predestination, or the identity of those elected by God for salvation. Churches here and in Europe are divided in their interpretation of this issue.

The term "Presbyterianism" refers to a form of church governance in which authority is given to a presbytery, a regional organization of local churches. Decisions are made by representatives from the churches, made up of equal representatives of clergy and lay people. Because the Bible does not refer to bishops or the apostolic succession, Presbyterians do not have bishops. They believe that the entire community is responsible for the transmission of the gospel. Authority rests in groups of elected lay and ordained people instead of a single person. While Lutherans and Roman Catholics believe in the physical presence of Christ during Eucharist, Presbyterians believe in Christ's spiritual presence at the Lord's Supper that is experienced through faith.

Methodists

The Methodist church traces its beginnings to John Wesley, an Anglican priest in Britain. He stressed the freedom of human will that is possible through God's grace. In addition, Wesley believed that no matter how sinful a person might be, God's forgiveness is limitless.

While Wesley was studying for the ministry at Oxford, he formed a religious group of students. Because of their strict daily schedules, others gave them the sarcastic name "Methodists." Wesley, who remained an Anglican, did not encourage his followers to form a new church. However, in the eighteenth century, a Methodist Church was founded and the first bishop elected. Local churches are called "charges." A bishop appoints ministers, and each church elects its own ruling body. In practice, Methodists have very diverse beliefs and emphasize right living more than conformity to belief.

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Baptists and Independent Churches

Baptist churches are sometimes called "free" churches because the congregations are free associations of adult believers. Unlike Lutherans, Anglicans, Methodists, and Presbyterians who believe in infant baptism, Baptists believe in baptizing only those mature enough to profess belief for themselves. They also believe in the authority of the Bible, the right of individuals to interpret it on their own, and the complete separation of church and state.

Many Baptists and other independent churches trace their history to John the Baptist and his baptism of Jesus. The biblical accounts of the immersion of Jesus during baptism are emulated in baptisms performed by these churches. These churches deny that they are Protestant since they existed long before Martin Luther and the other reformers. Other churches trace their beginnings to the Anabaptist wing of the Reformation. Both groups, however, embrace many basic Protestant tenets.

JUSTIFICATION THROUGH GRACE

Protestants believe that there is only one way humans can reach a state of righteousness—through the gift of God's forgiveness of their sin. Forgiveness comes through faith in Christ and cannot be earned through good works or living a good life.

☐ Questions

- What does "word" refer to in the passage from *Psalm 119*? What is the key "word" for Protestant churches?
- What does grace mean for Protestants? (See box.) What does it mean for you?
- What does Paul say about earning your way into heaven in his letter to the Ephesians?
- How are different Protestant churches similar? How are they different?
- Are there similarities between Protestant beliefs and Episcopal beliefs?
- Which Protestant tenet is most important to you? Why?
- Which denomination is most similar to the Episcopal Church?

☐ Activities

From the Beginning

Learn how different Protestant denominations developed. The word "Protestant" comes from the word protest. Most denominations trace their origins to the sixteenth century when Martin Luther and others began to break from the Roman Catholic Church (see box on Martin Luther). Others, such as the Baptist and other independent churches, have other origins.

To begin your research, look at the lives of people who influenced Protestant denominations, such as:

Martin Luther
John Calvin
Richard Allen
John Wesley
George Fox
John Knox
Henry VIII of England
Roger Williams

MARTIN LUTHER

Martin Luther, the son of a German peasant who lived in the sixteenth century, changed the Christian world by questioning the practices of the Roman Catholic Church. The cornerstone of his protest was his belief in justification through grace. He dismissed practices not found in the Bible, such as celibacy for clergy, radical fasting, pilgrimages, and the rosary. Finally, he believed that the Bible, not the pope or tradition, was the final authority.

Note the significant differences in the way these people lived out their beliefs. For example, Quakers use silence as an integral part of worship and do not have ordained pastors or priests. Lutherans and Episcopalians have bishops, while Presbyterians and Baptists do not. Make a chart of the differences you find among the different denominations.

In addition, create a time line that shows the origins of Protestant denominations. Do all Protestant churches trace their beginnings to the Reformation? Look for similarities among the denominations that can be traced to their origins and backgrounds. Share your findings, including the chart and timeline, with another group in your church.

Christian Music

Listen to several artists who perform contemporary Christian music. Find music by the following groups or individuals or bring in your favorite Christian CDs or tapes:

Point of Grace
Michael Card
Michael W. Smith
Jars of Clay
Six Pence None the Richer

Listen to the messages in the songs you listen to. Can you figure out which tradition or denomination the lyrics come from? Do some of the words sound more familiar than others?

Write your own lyrics and compose your own music or set your words to a favorite tune. Your composition can be lyrical or be written like rap. Before you begin, decide what you want to include and how you want to express your faith. Perform your composition at an appropriate gathering at your church.

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Christian Symbols

Look at the symbols on Resource Poster No. 1 that are associated with the Christian faith. Find books from the library or search the Internet for other symbols that reflect Christian beliefs.

Make a display of Christian symbols for your meeting space or another area in your church. Use Resource Poster No. 1 for ideas or as a focal point. Put the poster in the center of a bulletin board and add new symbols and images you found around the poster. Or, create your own collage of Christian symbols. You may want to include an explanation of some or all of the symbols, especially those that others might not be familiar with.

PRIESTHOOD OF BELIEVERS

At the time of the reformation, the Catholic Church taught that the confession and absolution of sins could only made through an ordained priest. Confessions were also required before a person could receive Holy Communion. Because this belief comes from tradition instead of the Bible, Protestants did not adhere to it. Each believer can act as his or her own priest in confessing sins or petitioning God for forgiveness.

Going Out

Visit at least three different kinds of Protestant churches in addition to your own. Before you go, make up a list of architectural and decorative items to compare among the churches. For example:

Aisles—where are they located?
Where is the altar?
What do the crosses look like? Where are they located?
Where does the choir sit?
Are there any candles? Where are they located?
Is there any art on the walls?
Windows—are they decorative or clear?
Where is the lectern?
Is there a baptismal font or pool?
What do clergy wear at worship service?
What do choir members and others who have leadership roles wear?

Ask a member of the church you are visiting to explain some of the differences from your own church that you find. If you are able to attend worship services at any of the churches, compare and contrast similarities and differences you note.

- Did you experience something you would like to share with others at your church?
- Did the congregations make you feel welcome? How?
- Could you follow the service easily? Would people from these churches feel comfortable and welcome in your church?

FACTS

Membership in the United States

Lutherans	
Evangelical	5,200,000
Missouri Synod	2,600,000
Presbyterians	2,700,000
Methodists	8,700,000
Baptists	34,000,000

From the *1995 Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches*

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Loetscher, Lefferts A. *A Brief History of the Presbyterians.* Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1983.

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Note: The Baker Book House of Grand Rapids, Michigan, has a series of booklets by John H. Gerstner on:

- The Teachings of Christian Science
- The Teachings of Mormonism
- The Teachings of Jehovah's Witnesses
- The Teachings of Seventh-Day Adventism

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What Do Others Believe?

Roman Catholicism
Eastern Orthodoxy

Objective
Youth will be able to list the similarities and differences between Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy.

Personal Story

I was born a Catholic. In my house, going to Mass every week has never been an option. When I was in the second grade, I dressed up in a white dress with all my friends for our first communion. In the seventh grade, I went to confirmation classes for about eight weeks, attended a weekend retreat, and then was confirmed. These occasions are big deals in my family. My mom invited all the family and half the neighborhood to celebrate both occasions.

Going to Mass each week is an "obligation" for every Catholic. We believe God forgives our sins if we ask him, but we also must renew our faith by helping others and by receiving communion. When the priest consecrates the bread and wine, we believe they actually become the body and blood of Christ. This is a very sacred moment for Catholics. Usually I don't mind going to our church, but sometimes I resent having to miss something to go to church. This summer my younger sister and I played softball at tournaments every weekend in July. No one else on my team had to figure out how to get to Mass Saturday afternoon or Sunday. I either went to Mass straight from a game, sweaty and hot, or got up at the crack of dawn to go to an early Mass while my teammates slept.

Because I'm a Catholic, kids at school sometimes confront me with what they've heard Catholics believe. These beliefs are often in conflict with our culture and the things we see on television or read in the paper. It's not easy to stand up for my faith, especially when I'm singled out.

This fall my grandmother, whom I have always been very close to, had to go to the hospital. She is a very good person who is always doing things for others. She has volunteered at a homeless shelter for years, and at church dinners she is always in the kitchen giving orders while making everyone laugh. We found out she has cancer and would need to undergo a long, painful treatment.

I've been very angry about her illness. I don't understand why God would let this happen to such a good person. My grandmother asked me to say a Mass and a rosary for her. I don't think she could have asked me to do something that would have been more difficult. How could I approach God when I was so angry?

I couldn't refuse this one request, so I reluctantly went to church to offer a Mass for my grammy. Something happened during that service. The prayers I had often ignored spoke directly to me. I could even say the words without looking at the missal. As I went to communion at the altar, I could feel God's presence. I realized that the obligation of going to church had prepared me to face this difficult time.

My grandmother is doing better, but she still has bad days. I still get angry and even resentful, but I have discovered that the church is a place where I can find God.

SESSION 4

Scripture
James 1:22-25

Skill Focus
Conflict
Forgiveness

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Prayer
Gracious Father, we pray for thy holy Catholic Church. Fill it with all truth, in all truth with all peace. Where it is corrupt, purify it; where it is in error, direct it; where in any thing it is amiss, reform it. Where it is right, strengthen it; where it is in want, provide for it; where it is divided, reunite it; for the sake of Jesus Christ thy Son our Savior. *Amen.*

For the Church
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 816

Dismissal
Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

Scripture

But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves. For if any are hearers of the word and not doers, they are like those who look at themselves in a mirror; for they look at themselves and, on going away, immediately forget what they were like. But those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act—they will be blessed in their doing.
James 1:22-25

Catholicism and Orthodoxy

The word "catholic" was first used in about 100 CE to describe the Christian Church that was then a single entity. The term referred to the universal nature of the church, continuous with the past, and extending to all nations. A major division occurred in the eleventh century, and allegiances were divided between the leadership in Rome and the Patriarchs in Constantinople.

Roman Catholic Church

After the Church divided in 1054 CE, the term "catholic" was used most often to designate the church in the west under the leadership of the Holy See in Rome, or the Vatican. Since the sixteenth century, the name Roman Catholic has been used to denote the religious group that recognizes the pope's authority. The pope is believed to be the "Vicar of Christ" with jurisdiction over the entire Church.

The center of the Catholic belief is Jesus Christ, who commanded his apostles to teach the gospel. To ensure the continuation of their work, the apostles appointed other bishops to succeed them. Roman Catholics believe in the Trinity of God, made up of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

Catholicism teaches that Adam and Eve's banishment from the Garden of Eden for disobeying God—the original sin—separated humanity from God. However, this sin did not completely alienate humankind from their Maker. God's grace can fully justify each person and restore his or her relationship with God. Grace is conferred through the celebration of the seven sacraments. Catholics also teach that believers are responsible for living their faith through acts of charity and service to others. Through these acts, prayer, and the reception of the sacraments, God bestows his grace.

The Eucharist is the center of Mass and church life in general. During Mass, Christ becomes really present as the bread and wine that are consecrated by the priest to become the body and blood of Christ. This alteration of the elements (bread and wine) is called transubstantiation.

Baptism is also an important sacrament that results in the conferral of grace and freedom from the worst effects of original sin. Traditional congregations believe that an individual must be confirmed in the Catholic tradition before participating in the Eucharist.

Mary, the mother of Jesus, is a very important figure in the Roman Catholic faith. The Feast of the Immaculate Conception honors Mary, whom Catholics believe was born without the stain of original sin. The lives of other holy men and women are emphasized through the doctrines of the Communion of Saints, with prayers for the living and dead. Catholics also believe in the power of saints to intercede on their behalf.

Eastern Orthodoxy

The Great Schism occurred in 1054 CE. This was a division between the Roman Catholic Church, based in Rome, and the Orthodox Church, based in Constantinople (present-day Istanbul). The leaders of the Orthodox church are called patriarchs who are presided over by the Patriarch of Constantinople, considered the first among equals.

The term "orthodox" refers to the belief that the Eastern Church worships God correctly. While many of the teachings of other Christian traditions are similar to theirs, Orthodox Christians believe the principles of the twelve apostles have been preserved without error in the Orthodox Church.

Similar to Roman Catholics, the goal of Orthodox theology and worship is the mystical union of humankind with God. Theology goes beyond words and images and is sung and lived in the liturgy of the church. Liturgy is an act of the clergy and members of the church working together.

As in other Christian faiths, the Bible is seen as the testimony of God's truths. However, it is neither subordinate nor superior to tradition, a belief similar to Roman Catholicism. Holy Tradition, directed by the Holy Spirit, is held up as the continuing guide to the Church. Saints in the Church are also revered, often through the veneration of icons (see box).

Orthodox churches are both hierarchical and self-governing. They are called "Eastern" because they originated in countries in the eastern part of the Christian world. Despite their diverse cultures and languages, Orthodox beliefs and matters of faith are similar among different churches.

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☐ Questions

- How does the passage in *James* relate to what you learned about Roman Catholicism?
- What new information did you learn about Roman Catholics?
- What did you learn about Eastern Orthodoxy?
- Are there similarities between Catholic/Orthodox beliefs and Episcopal beliefs?
- How does the Catholic Church treat Mary, the mother of Jesus? Is this different from Episcopal teaching?
- What is a "mystical union" with God? What might it be like?

CATHOLIC

The term "catholic" means universal. Early Christians assumed that the gospel would be proclaimed throughout the world and that Christians would be found everywhere. While all Christians are part of the "catholic church" that worships Jesus as the risen son of God, specific believers are members of the Roman Catholic Church.

☐ Activities

Saints

The Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches have more saints than the Episcopal Church. Look at the "Calendar of the Church Year" at the front of *The Book of Common Prayer* beginning on p. 19 or at *Lesser Feasts and Fasts*. The names in bold type are apostles and disciples of Jesus who are in the Bible and recognized by the Church as saints. Others, such as Agnes, Absalom Jones, and John Donne, have been commemorated by the Church for their devotion and service to God and others. The Catholic and Eastern churches specifically designate people as saints who meet certain criteria. Three miracles must be attributed to these Christians after their death before the Church will consider them for canonized sainthood.

Find *Butler's Book of Saints* or another reference book about Catholic saints. Find the following:

The saint for your birthday or for your name
The patron saints for girls and for boys
The saints for specific occupations, such as carpentry
The saints for activities, such as sewing

Look at *Lesser Feasts and Fasts* or the calendar in the prayer book and compare the saints you find there with the saints in *Butler's*.

- Which saints are the same? Do we remember saints at the same times?
- Which saints are different?

Find out more about people commemorated in *Lesser Feasts and Fasts* or saints in *Butler's* that pique your interest. Prepare a presentation for another group in your church about saints in the Episcopal Church for All Saints' Day.

ICON

Used primarily in Eastern Orthodox churches, icons represent holy men and women who led godly lives and now lead others to God's presence. Icons are reminders that God became human in the person of Jesus Christ. Believers do not worship the icons themselves; icons are a focus for prayers to God.

Focusing on God

Find out how icons are made through research at a library or on the Internet. Learn how they are painted, the symbols that are often included, and how the eyes and other features are depicted. Bring in a book that shows different icons or look at icons in your church. Some in the group may be interested in visiting a nearby art museum or an Orthodox church to look at different icons from different periods and places.

Artists who create icons work in an atmosphere conducive to inner peace and concentration. Paintings are not subjective expressions by artists because images are tied so closely with tradition. Icons can be painted, carved in wood or stone, or made in fresco or mosaic. The most common method is classical painting with egg tempra on a wooden panel. Artists often describe their work as "writing" since the technique is similar to the discipline of calligraphy. Icons are never created in a lighthearted or simplistic manner; this would destroy the spiritual feeling and dignity.

The creation of an icon takes time, skill, spiritual awareness, and knowledge. However, participants can create an icon-like art object to help them focus on God. Identify a symbol, person, or place that can be a focus for your prayers to God. You may wish to use information you learned about icons in your object. For example, drawings on icons are two dimensional with no shading or shadows. Remember that icons are not idols to be worshipped, but tools that lead people closer to God.

Display the icons in your meeting space or in the church. Consider scheduling a day of prayer during Lent or Advent. Use the icons you made or help others make their own. Continue to use your personal icon as a way to focus your own prayers.

THE ROSARY

The rosary is a prayer that honors Mary, the mother of Jesus. A series of small and large beads on a chain with a crucifix are used to help keep track of the number of prayers recited. This is divided into five groups of ten beads, called decades, with a single bead set before each grouping. The rosary begins with the Apostle's Creed, and then for each decade, an event from the lives of Jesus or Mary is recalled. For each decade, a person says the Lord's Prayer (called the Our Father), ten Hail Marys (three sentences praising Mary and asking for her prayers for the petitioner), and Glory to the Father (similar to the response said after a canticle in Episcopal liturgy). The rosary is similar to prayer beads used by Buddhists and Muslims.

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Symbols

Look at Resource Poster No. 2. Identify each symbol and describe its importance to Catholicism or Eastern Orthodoxy.

- Do Episcopalians have similar symbols?
- Which ones could you find in your church? In other Episcopal churches?
- Which symbols do you want to know more about?

If you visit a Catholic or Eastern Orthodox church, take a list of the symbols depicted on the poster. See how many you can find in art, stained glass, or architecture.

Field Trip

Arrange a field trip to visit a Roman Catholic or Eastern Orthodox church. You do not necessarily need to attend a service, although you may wish to do so. Note the differences and similarities between the church you visit and your own. If you can go to both a Roman Catholic and an Eastern Orthodox church, see if you can find differences there as well.

Look particularly for the following:

- Paintings, statues, or icons
- Seating
- Placement of the altar
- Art medium—sculpture, mosaics, Stations of the Cross. Try to attend a Franciscan devotion of the stations observed in many Catholic churches on Fridays during Lent. Stations are often positioned on the walls of Catholic churches. People pray before these stations using special prayers and meditations.
- Baptismal font—where is it? What does it look like?
- Candles—where are they located? Are they burning? Light a candle (look for candles in front of statues or icons). The candle is a visible symbol of prayers. Asking a saint to pray on your behalf is similar to asking a friend or relative to pray for you.
- Crosses—what do they look like? How many different kinds do you see?
- Architecture
- Alcoves and confessionals

Afterward, talk about what the churches looked like. If possible, invite a member of the church you visited to answer questions you might have. If you do not attend worship, ask this person to describe a service. Identify the similarities and differences from your church.

Hint: If you attend a service at a Catholic or Eastern church, find out before you go about practices that may be different from those in your church. For example, many Episcopal churches invite all baptized believers to the Eucharist table. Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches allow only those confirmed in that faith to partake in the Eucharist. During communion, pray for Christian unity.

FACTS

Roman Catholic Church

Worldwide membership:	1,053,000,000*
U.S. membership	60,000,000

Eastern Orthodox Churches

Worldwide	223,513,000*
U.S. Membership:	
Antiochian	350,000
Carpatho-Russian	19,000
Greek	1,500,000
Romanian	65,000
Russian	600,000
Serbian	67,000
Ukrainian	5,000

*Estimate for 2000 from *Annual Statistical Table on Global Mission: 1999*, by David B. Barrett and Todd M. Johnson, International Bulletin of Missionary Research.

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What Do Others Believe?

Judaism

SESSION 5

Objective

Youth will be able to describe similarities in the histories of Judaism and Christianity.

Personal Story

When I first started going to Hebrew school in kindergarten, I became enveloped in a new world. There was a different language that I had to learn to be able to say prayers. The first thing I was taught was the most important prayer of the Jewish religion, the "sh'ma." In English: "Hear O Israel, the Lord is our G-d, the Lord alone." I learned that this was important because Jews believe in only one powerful, supreme being: G-d.

Later, when I was in the sixth grade, I started studying for my bat mitzvah which would lead to my becoming a Jewish adult. I had to go to synagogue every Friday night and Saturday morning on the Sabbath. As an adult, I could lead the whole prayer service in Hebrew and I could be called to read from the Torah.

Each week a new section of the Torah is read. There is also a corresponding section that is read from the Haftarah (a section from the Prophets). Once a year we reroll the Torah scroll back to the beginning and start reading the portions over again.

Worship services are usually led by a rabbi and a cantor, who sings the prayers. As a conservative Jew, I attend services on Friday nights that last about an hour and a half. Services on Saturday last about three hours.

The services have different sections. During the Sabbath, we welcome the Sabbath as if it were a bride and then thank G-d for the wonder of creation and for giving us a day of rest. We also remember the dead and have a chance to say personal prayers.

In the Jewish faith, the Sabbath day is supposed to be literally a day of rest. Cars are not supposed to be driven, no one is supposed to carry money. No one is supposed to do any work, including turning on a radio or television.

It is very hard to be an observant Jew and an American teenager. So many activities, such as going to the movies on Fridays, are things I'm not supposed to do. I have made choices about how observant I am going to be. But I know that I can always find G-d in the synagogue when I hear the beautiful sounds of prayer.

Scripture

Genesis 15:1-6
Psalm 119:33-34

Skill Focus

Influences
Relationships

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Prayer
Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine, O Lord, is the kingdom, and the supremacy as head over all. Exalt ye the Lord our God, and worship in his temple: holy is he. Exalt ye the Lord our God, and worship at his holy mount; for the Lord our God is holy.

Said before the reading of the Torah

Dismissal
Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

☐ Scripture

After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, "Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great." But Abram said, "O Lord God, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" And Abram said, "You have given me no offspring, and so a slave born in my house is to be my heir." But the word of the Lord came to him, "This man shall not be your heir; no one but your very own issue shall be your heir." He brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your descendants be." And he believed the Lord; and the Lord reckoned it to him as righteousness.

Genesis 15:1-6

Teach me, O Lord, the way of your statutes,
And I will observe it to the end.
Give me understanding, that I may keep your law
And observe it with my whole heart.

Psalm 119: 33-34

☐ Judaism

Judaism is the religion of the Jewish people expressed in legal and ethical norms, rituals, and beliefs. It includes the history of a community over several millennia. Today, people who follow the Jewish faith represent every race and most nations.

The Torah, the first five books of the Bible (*Genesis*, *Exodus*, *Leviticus*, *Numbers*, and *Deuteronomy*), is the foundation of Judaism. In the Torah is the story of God's relationship to the Jewish people. God made a covenant with the three patriarchs, including Abraham (see the scripture passage above), Isaac, and Jacob, whose name God changed to Israel. The ritual expression of this covenant was the circumcision of males. This act and the Jewish people's belief in only one God set them apart from other peoples and cultures.

An important part of the covenant relationship with God is the concept of being God's chosen people. Being chosen does not infer superiority or suffering. Nor does it imply that God has no interest in other people. The Bible, through the story of Noah, says that all humans have their own connection to God. The Talmud, classical rabbinical discussions, argues that humanity must follow seven commandments in order to maintain relationship with God. The chosen, or Jewish, people must follow 613 basic commandments found in the Torah. To be chosen means to have greater responsibilities and duties.

As part of God's covenant, Abraham's descendants were promised the land now called Israel in the Middle East. The Jewish people first occupied the Promised Land in about 1200 BCE when Joshua led the people from the wilderness. In about 70 CE, the Romans who had occupied the land for a number of years destroyed Jerusalem and the temple, the center of Jewish life. This began a time called the Diaspora, when the displaced Jewish people began migrating to other parts of the world.

Before the destruction of the temple, Judaism was formed through the ethical and moral teachings of prophets and by priests in Jerusalem. After the destruction, rabbis—teachers and scholars—became the religious leaders.

Among Jewish people there are some disagreements about the nature of God, the people of Israel, and the ethics of Judaism. These issues are not the primary differences that divide Jewish people into distinct movements. The three largest religious movements within Judaism are Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox. Theologically, Reform Judaism is more liberal, followed by Conservative, then Orthodox (both modern and traditional). The main differences among the groupings are ideas about the Bible and Jewish tradition. The more liberal movements also disagree about the way changes are made in Jewish law. Each group has tried to accommodate itself to social realities in America by changing liturgy, and, in some cases, theology.

Each movement uses Hebrew, the traditional language of Judaism, in varying degrees in celebrations and services. Each group has a version of a prayer book, and most books have translations of Hebrew material.

Reform Judaism

The Reform movement began about 200 years ago in Germany. It was influenced by changes and growth in the culture, scientific inquiry, and critical evaluation. Those in the Reform movement see Judaism as an ongoing process that grows out of the relationship between God and the Jewish people over history. They believe the Torah is divinely inspired and subject to individual interpretation. This has resulted in changes in ritual law and worship and the abandonment of dietary laws. Services are shorter in Reform temples, and families are encouraged to sit together instead of being segregated by gender. In addition, they stress the ethical and moral messages of the prophets in creating a just society.

Conservative Judaism

The Conservative movement was a response to the radicalism of the Reform groups. This movement emphasizes the positive historical elements of the Jewish tradition, emphasizing the people of Israel and modern Zionism. Those in the Conservative movement believe that the Torah as a

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whole is binding and that Jewish law is still authoritative. However, new ideas and practices have always influenced Judaism and should continue to do so.

Orthodox Judaism

The Orthodox movement seeks to preserve traditional Judaism. It teaches that the Torah was divinely revealed to Moses at Mount Sinai, and that the *halakha*, law established by or custom ratified by authoritative rabbis, is divinely guided. Laws in the Torah, even those counter to modern sensibilities, cannot be altered. Every aspect of an Orthodox Jew's life is governed by the commandments in the Torah. They are to study the Torah every day, observe the rituals and rules of the Sabbath, eat according to the dietary laws, and pray three times a day. The rules of segregation by gender is strictly observed in synagogues.

All branches of Judaism observe many of the same rituals, and all Jewish people worship the one true God. Just as Christians choose many different ways to worship the Son of God through Catholicism, Orthodoxy, or Protestantism, Jewish people find the place where they are most likely to find God.

☐ Questions

- What do the Jewish and Christian faiths share?
- What is the covenant between God and Abram described in the passage in *Genesis*?
- Covenants are an important part of Judaism. What role do covenants play in the Christian faith?
- According to *Psalm 119*, how are Jewish people supposed to follow God's laws?
- Which laws in the Torah do Christians try to follow?
- How would you describe your faith to a Jewish person?

TERMS

bar (bat) mitzvah: the occasion when a boy or girl reaches the age of religious majority and responsibility (thirteen for a boy; twelve years and a day for a girl).

mezuzah: the scroll and container affixed to the outside doorposts of homes. (The plural form is mezuzot.)

midrash: a study of the language, ideas, and narrative of the Torah.

Mishnah: ancient code of Jewish law that is the basis of the legal discussions of the Talmud.

Sh'ma: the fundamental statement of Judaism found in *Deuteronomy 6:4.*

Talmud: classical rabbinic discussions of the Mishnah.

Torah: the first five books of the bible, also known as the Five Books of Moses, or the Pentateuch.

☐ Activities

Jewish Customs

Look back at the Personal Story. The narrator talks about her bat mitzvah and how she prepared to become a Jewish adult. Interview a Jewish youth in your community who has recently had a bar or bat mitzvah. Ask them to describe the process, the requirements, and their feelings about this tradition. Possible questions are:

- How old were you when you began the process?
- Who is eligible for a bar or bat mitzvah?
- How long is the preparation?
- What were you expected to learn or do?
- Did you enjoy the preparation?
- What was the best part?

Compare the experience of the person you interviewed with the confirmation process at your church. Use the same questions in making the comparison.

Individually or in small groups select a Jewish holiday that interests you (see box). Find out about the customs and traditions of the holiday and report back to the rest of the group. Select one thing to do together based on your interests or the time of year. For example, cook something that is part of a Seder, play a Hanukkah game, build a Sukkot booth, or make Purim noisemakers for the telling of the story of Esther.

HOLY DAYS AND FESTIVALS

Rosh Hashanah—the Jewish religious New Year that also commemorates the creation of the world. It is a solemn day of reflection on the past year and hopes for the coming year. (September or October)

Yom Kippur—the Day of Atonement, the holiest day of the year. The day is devoted to the confession of sins and reconciliation with God. (ten days after Rosh Hashanah)

Sukkot—the Feast of Booths, or tabernacles. The eight-day festival celebrates the harvest. (October)

Hanukkah—the Festival of Lights, commemorating the victory in about 160 BCE of the Maccabees over the Syrians. (December)

Purim—a celebration of deliverance from destruction based on the *Book of Esther*. (February or March)

Pesach (Passover)—celebration of the freedom from slavery in Egypt. The celebration lasts from seven to eight days, initiated by the observance of a Seder. (March or April)

Shavuot—the Festival of Weeks, commemorating the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai, seven weeks after the Seder or the first day of Pesach. (May or June)

Learning the Sh'ma

Look up *Deuteronomy 6:4*, also known as the Sh'ma, and read it aloud. ("Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone.") The narrator of the Personal Story said that this was the first prayer she learned as a child in Hebrew

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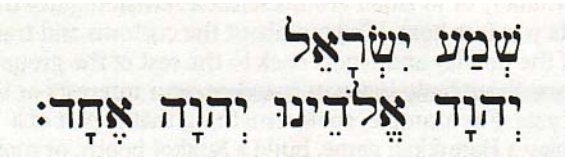
Below is a Hebrew translation of *Deuteronomy 6:4*. Read the verses that go with the Sh'ma in *Deuteronomy 6:1-9*. (The word sh'ma means hear.) In this daily prayer, Jewish people give thanks and praise to God who created the world and who actively guides daily events. God is not merely the Creator, but a purposeful Creator. This idea is also expressed by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount beginning in *Matthew 5*.

Because the Sh'ma is so important, it is written as a sacred activity by certain people. The words are copied only using feather quills on scrolls. Scrolls are often placed in mezuzot. To help them keep God's words, Jewish people attach mezuzot to exterior doorposts at the right side of the entrance of their homes. Interior doorways also often have a mezuzah.

Test your own skill at calligraphy using a feather quill. From a craft store, get several feathers for each person and some bottles of ink. Create a quill pen by carving or flattening the point of the feather. Select one or more Hebrew letters from the Sh'ma, or copy the first phrase, "Hear, O Israel." Because these words are sacred in the Jewish faith, it is not appropriate to copy the entire Sh'ma.



Worship in a Synagogue

Visit a synagogue for a Friday evening or Saturday service. The narrator of the Personal Story said that in her synagogue a rabbi led the service and a cantor sang the prayers. Note the differences and similarities of your worship experiences. Compare the symbols and images in Resource Poster No. 3 with those you see in the synagogue. **Hint:** Before you go, find out if there are any dress requirements for men and women. Writing and photography are not permitted on the Sabbath in most synagogues.

- How is the seating arranged?
- Where do people sit? Do women and men sit together?
- What is at the front of the synagogue?
- What strikes you as the most dominant feature of the worship area?
- The narrator of the Personal Story said the services have different sections. Could you distinguish different parts of the service?
- Did you find any of the symbols or images from the Resource Poster?

If possible, talk to a member of the synagogue or a rabbi after the service. Ask this person to explain parts of the service you didn't understand or symbols and traditions that were unfamiliar.

PRAYER BOOK

Most temples and synagogues use a *siddur*, or prayer book, that varies among and within the religious movements. Many congregations also use the *chumash*, the first five books of the Bible and traditional portions of the prophets.

DRESS

A small head covering, called a yarmulke or kippah, is required for men in all Orthodox and Conservative congregations and in some Reform temples. If a man does not bring one, they are available at the entry to the main sanctuary. The tallit, or prayer shawl, is worn by all Orthodox men, Conservative men and some women, and by some men and women in Reform congregations.

Women are expected to dress modestly, depending on the mores of the community. In Orthodox synagogues, clothing covers the arms, hems reach below the knees, and heads are covered by veils or hats. Purses are not carried since Jewish law prohibits labor, including carrying an object.

Movies

Watch a movie about Jewish people or history. For example, *The Chosen* is set in Brooklyn during and immediately after World War II. The story is about two Jewish teens who are confronted with different views of life and religious faith. One is the son of a revered Hassidic rabbi, and the other is the son of a secular scholar. Specifically watch the discussions the boys have as they try to discover their own identity. How many terms from the previous page did you hear?

The Prince of Egypt is an animated movie about the early history of the Jewish people. Do the depictions of Moses, Aaron, and the pharaoh match the stories in the Bible?

You may want to watch a movie about the Holocaust, an event that has shaped recent Jewish history, such as *Schindler's List* or *Life Is Beautiful*. Videos in which Holocaust survivors describe the horrors of that time are also available.

FACTS

Membership in the United States

Reform	2,000,000
Conservative	1,600,000
Orthodox	375,000*
Other	100,000

* Estimate

From *How to Be a Perfect Stranger*

☐ Resources

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What Do Others Believe?

Islam

Objective

Youth will be able to describe the major tenets of the Islamic faith and list similarities among the Islamic, Jewish, and Christian traditions.

Personal Story

Unlike many Muslims, I have two Caucasian-American parents who converted to Islam as adults. I was born a Muslim and spent most of my childhood around Muslims. I lived in an Islamic community until I was eight when we moved to Alexandria, Egypt. When I was twelve, we moved back to the States.

I go to a school where there are about a thousand kids and only one other Muslim beside myself. I have never had trouble fitting in, and many of my friends are willing to discuss religion and different beliefs. I have had periods when I thought that my religion was too demanding—having to pray five times a day and fasting sunrise to sunset for a month—but then I wonder how I would live without my faith and how lost I would feel. I realize that the demands of Islam are nothing compared to the demands of not having a belief.

One of the hardest parts of being a Muslim girl is dating. Though dating is prohibited, I still want a social life without running away from boys all the time. I have always had many male friends. I find it easier to talk to them about certain topics and often easier to get along with than girls. Some girls think I spend more time with their boyfriends than they do! I try to explain that the boys are simply my friends, but they think the only relationship between girls and boys must be romantic.

It is not as if hormones of Muslims disappear; we simply learn how to control them. I go out with my friends, but I tend to go in a group. There is nothing wrong with going to a movie with a bunch of friends. I also have very supportive parents who trust me to use my own judgment.

Sometimes I wonder if I had not been born a Muslim, would I want to become one now? I don't think I would have learned enough about Islam from just going to public schools. And listening to the news certainly wouldn't push me in that direction. Most stories depict all Muslims as terrorists willing to blow up anything.

I've found that it's often Muslim college students who contradict the negative view of Islam. They try to educate others and let them know that the people in the news are extremists who don't represent all Muslims.

Praying helps me deal with all the things I face as a Muslim and a teenager. It makes me more conscious of what is going on around me. If I didn't have my faith, I would be lost and bewildered by all the things that happen in the world.

From my beliefs as a Muslim, I know how the universe came to be and about Allah's wonderful mercy. I know that Allah knows everything that I do, so it's up to me to make the right choices. I also know what will happen when I die, which is a great relief.

Just as people everywhere are different, Muslims and their families differ. My family gave me a choice about covering my head—and I chose not to. Girls from other families may not have a choice. While I go with my friends to malls and the movies, many families don't allow their children to go out on a Friday night with their friends.

My parents and friends help me deal with my life as a Muslim American teenager. Although I have only a few Muslim friends my age, I love all my friends. They respect my religion and beliefs just as I respect theirs.

SESSION 6

Scripture

Genesis 16:10-12, 15-16

Skill Focus

Trust
Ethics

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Prayer

Eternal God in whose perfect kingdom no sword is drawn but the sword of righteousness, no strength known but the strength of love: So mightily spread abroad your Spirit, that all peoples may be gathered under the banner of the Prince of Peace, as children of one Father; to whom be dominion and glory, now and for ever. *Amen*.

For Peace
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 815

Dismissal

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

Scripture

The angel of the Lord also said to [Hagar], "I will so greatly multiply your offspring that they cannot be counted for multitude." And the angel of the Lord said to her,

"Now you have conceived and shall bear a son;
you shall call him Ishmael,
for the Lord has given heed to your affliction.
He shall be a wild ass of a man,
with his hand against everyone,
and everyone's hand against him;
and he shall live at odds with all his kin.". . .

Hagar bore Abram a son; and Abram named his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael. Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore him Ishmael.

Genesis 16:10-12, 15-16

Islam

The Arabic word for peace is *salam*, similar to the Hebrew word for peace, *shalom*. The word Islam comes from the same root as *salam*. It means to give your life to God and to try to live according to his will as expressed in the Qur'an, Islamic scripture. This leads to a peaceful and loving relationship between the Creator and his creatures. In Arabic, the language in which the Qur'an was revealed and is preserved, the name of God is Allah. Arab Christians, of whom there are many, also call God Allah. Allah, or God in English, is the same sole divinity worshiped by Jews, Christians, and Muslims, as followers of Islam are called.

The Arabs trace their ancestry to Ishmael, the son of Abraham and Hagar, his wife Sarah's maid (*Genesis 16* and *21*). Hagar and Ishmael were banished from the tribe because of Sarah's jealousy. They nearly perished in the desert, but God sent them an angel who gave them water. In the Bible, their story ends with Ishmael in the wilderness in God's care. The story is treated in detail in the Qur'an, which is considered by Muslims to be the revealed word of God. In the Qur'an, Hagar and Ishmael settled in a place that later became Mecca, in what is now Saudi Arabia. There Ishmael grew up and, with his father, Abraham, built the Ka'ba, a cubical stone building which is the oldest religious building still in use. Together they establish the religion of Abraham, but over the ages, the people turned to idolatry.

Idolatry prevailed in the region when Muhammad was born in 570 CE. Unlike Christ, whom Christians believe to be God, Muhammad was fully human, an Arab who was called by God to be the final prophet or "the seal of the prophets." When Muhammad was forty, the angel Gabriel appeared to him in a cave near Mecca and gave him the first revelation. His mission lasted about twenty-one years. Whenever Muslims say his name, they always add "peace be upon him" as a way of showing love and respect.

In addition to being a great spiritual example and teacher, Muhammad was also a successful military and political leader. A century after his death, the Islamic dominion extended from France to China. His life, sayings, and actions, called *hadith* in Arabic, are recorded in large collections. The Qur'an and hadith are the sources of Islamic theology.

The main doctrines of Islam are stated in the seven articles of faith:

1. There is only one God. He is described by ninety-nine names, each with a different attribute, such as the Almighty and the Compassionate. He created all existence from absolutely nothing and is constantly aware of and directing his creation. He is as close to each living thing as its own life's blood, and his mercy overpowers his wrath.
2. Angels are a part of God's creation, created from light. Gabriel, the leading angel, brought the revelations of the Qur'an to Muhammad directly from God over a period of 21 years.
3. The Torah of Moses, the Psalms of David, the Gospels of Jesus, and the Qur'an are all regarded by Muslims as holy revelation. For Muslims, however, the Qur'an is the authoritative source for their theology.
4. Throughout time, God has chosen many people to be prophets to guide humanity. Among the prophets were Adam, Noah, Enoch, Abraham, Lot, Moses, Aaron, Isaac, Jacob, Zakariya, John the Baptist, and Jesus. The Qur'an states that a prophet has been sent to each nation or people—as many as 25,000. Muhammad was the final one.
5. God will bring the world to a cataclysmic end, resulting in the Last Day.
6. Everything that happens to a person, good or bad, is a trial from God in preparation for the eternal hereafter.
7. All humans throughout time will be resurrected physically on the Last Day, the Day of Judgment. They will receive their reward: eternal life in heaven or torment in hell, according to God's justice and wisdom. Although believers such as Christians, Jews, and especially Muslims will be favored, virtuous people from all times and places will be saved, as God's mercy is vast.

Along with these doctrines, there are five principles that must be observed. These are called the five pillars of Islam:

1. To become a Muslim, a person must make a public declaration, a *shahada*: "I testify that there is not divinity except God, and I testify that Muhammad is the prophet of God." This phrase recurs constantly in Muslim worship.

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2. A Muslim must pray five times a day, alone or in a group, in a Mosque (the Muslim building used for worship) or outdoors. Muslims face the Ka'ba in Mecca while praying. The prayer consists of a series of postures and recitations and ends with the words, "Peace be upon you." The large congregational prayer is on Friday, just after noon. Informal prayers may follow formal prayers at any time.
3. Muslims pay a tax of 2.5 percent of their wealth, to be used for the poor and suffering. Voluntary charity is highly regarded as well.
4. Muslims fast from dawn to sundown on each day of the lunar month of Ramadan. During daylight, Muslims go about daily routines, emphasizing spiritual matters and totally abstaining from food, drink, smoking, and sex. Muslims regard this month as an especially blessed time. It is a big family and social event, marked by sumptuous meals after sundown. The month ends with the celebration called an *eid.*
5. Muslims are expected to make the pilgrimage to Mecca once during their lifetime, on the condition that they can afford the expense, are free from debt, and can leave their responsibilities. One month in the lunar calendar is designated as the proper time to undertake the pilgrimage, called *hajj* in Arabic. The hajj consists of a series of ancient rites, many harking back to Abraham and Ishmael. Today, about two million pilgrims come to Mecca for the hajj each year. Muslims around the world celebrate the Great Eid, which coincides with the completion of the rites of the hajj.

The religion of Islam takes two forms. Ninety percent of Muslims are called Sunnis, or followers of the way of Muhammad. Most of the rest adhere to one of the several branches of Shi'ism and are called Shi'is or Shi'ites. They began to break away from the main line of Sunni Muslims after the death of the Prophet. The majority wanted the leadership of the Muslim community (the *caliphate*) to be an elective office, awarded for merit, while a minority wanted Ali, Muhammad's cousin, to be the leader. Ali was eventually elected. People who wished the leadership to be hereditary became known as the Shi'at Ali, or Party of Ali, and developed a distinct theology. Today, Shi'is form a majority of the population in Iraq, Iran, Lebanon, and Bahrain. The differences between Sunni and Shi'i Muslims are mainly seen in minor rituals, legalities, and politics. Both follow some dietary restrictions, such as abstaining from pork and alcohol.

About one billion people in the world are Muslims today, and Islamic communities are quickly growing. Arabs are a minority of Muslims; Muslims can be found in every country and nearly every ethnic group.

Islam teaches people to develop a sensitive relationship with their Creator and love for the Prophet. It teaches people to acquire knowledge, to be useful citizens, to live in harmony with nature, to respect parents and the elderly, to love and protect the young, to be moderate, and to be truthful and honorable.

Muslims, like other people, often struggle to balance the duties they feel and the knowledge they acquire. Some embrace the ideal of an Islamic society where all decisions are made according to the will of God. Others believe that modern technology and individual taste and judgment deserve to be honored as well. All Muslims are confident that since Allah alone is God, life in the sight of Allah can be unified.

☐ Questions

- What do you think about when you hear the word Islam or Muslim? Did you read anything in the commentary that changed those thoughts?
- Reread the last paragraph of the commentary. Compare these statements to your understanding of the Christian faith. How are they similar? Where are the differences?
- Which article of faith surprised you the most?
- Which pillars of faith are similar to Christian practices?
- Read the story of Hagar and Ishmael in *Genesis 16* and *21.* Using a Bible concordance, find other references in *Genesis* to Ishmael. Other references to "Ishmaelites" are also found throughout the Old Testament.

☐ Activities

The Holy Qur'an

Compare stories about people who are in both the Bible and the Qur'an, considered by Muslims to be the revealed word of God. Most public libraries have English translations of the Qur'an. Look for a copy that includes the Arabic as well as English; many translations also have commentaries included on each page. Most translations also follow the traditional layout of the Qur'an. For example, page one is at the back of the book, so the reader goes from what we consider the back to the front. Hebrew scripture is also reversed.

THE VERSE OF THE THRONE

God, there is no god but Him,
the Living, the Eternal One.
Neither slumber nor sleep overtakes Him.
His is what the heavens and the earth contain.
Who can intercede with Him except by His permission?
He knows what is before and behind men.
They can grasp only that part of His knowledge which
He wills.
His throne is as vast as the heavens and the earth,
and the preservation of them both does not weary him.
He is the Exalted, the Immense One.

Qur'an 2:255

One translation describes the Qur'an as the textbook of Islam, comprising a complete code for Muslims to lead a chaste, abundant, and rewarding life in obedience to the commandments of Allah. The Holy Qur'an was revealed to Muhammad in Arabic. To help you compare stories, the following list gives the Arabic name in column one and the English equivalent in column two. Indexes of the Qur'an often use only the Arabic names, although the one you select may also have the English equivalents. (**Hint:** Look for the index at end of the Qur'an, often at what we consider the front of the book.)

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Allah	God
Adam	Adam
Ayyub	Job
Dawood	David
Ibrahim	Abraham
Injeel	Gospel
Ishaq	Isaac
Ismail	Ishmael
Isa	Jesus
Jalut	Goliath
Jibreel	Gabriel
Maryam	Mary
Masjid	Mosque
Musa	Moses
Nuh	Noah
Yahya	John the Baptist

To begin, compare the references to Adam in Qur'an 2:30-38 to the stories at the beginning of *Genesis* in the Bible. Next, read about Jesus as a righteous prophet in Qur'an 6:85; his birth in 3:35-37 and 19:22-33; described as an apostle in 5:75; and the description of Jesus' followers as having compassion and mercy in 57:27. Using the index, find other comparisons in the two books.

Islamic Art

Calligraphy and other art forms are important to Muslims. Learn how calligraphy is used in making intricate designs on tiles. Visit the Internet or your local library for information about Islamic design. Discuss the use of patterns and designs in the artwork.

Bring in enough white tiles for each person in the group. Using waterproof markers or paint, make your own designs on the tiles. Do not use human or animal figures. Mount tiles on a board and display the artwork in your meeting space.

As an alternative, bring in pens, ink, and paper for the group. Divide into four smaller groups or individually create patterns from the four main Islamic design groups: calligraphy, flowers, arabesques, and geometric shapes. Mount the designs on posterboard for a display. Look at Resource Poster No. 4 for ideas for displaying the designs, including the use of a border that repeats a design pattern.

If participants have a design program on their computers, encourage them to create more intricate designs. The designs could be repeated to make a border for the room.

ISLAMIC DESIGN

To discourage idolatry, Muslims do not allow human or animal figures to be painted. Instead, they decorate buildings and other objects with complicated patterns to remind people of Allah's creation. Today, these patterns can be found on tiles, fabric, carpets, pottery, and wallpaper. There are four main Islamic designs: calligraphy, flowers, arabesques, and geometric shapes. Islamic architecture usually includes domes, pillars, and many arches. Homes and other buildings often have open courtyards and gardens with many fountains.

Field Trip

If possible, visit a mosque in your community or nearby city. When you arrange the visit, ask for a tour guide who can point out special features of the mosque and answer your questions about Islam. Notice the artwork and the architecture. Compare the seating and other features to your own church.

- Which direction does the mosque face? Why?
- What kind of art is displayed, if any?
- Which architectural features are different from other churches?
- Look at Resource Poster No. 4 at the mosques featured there. Are they similar to the one you visited? What is different?

PRAYER BEADS

It is said that a Muslim will earn a place in heaven by saying one of the ninety-nine names of Allah for each of the prayer beads, as a form of worship. Each of the names has a meaning, such as The Guardian, the Exalting, and The Life-Giver. The beads are small, light, and easy to carry. They consist of either thirty-three beads divided into sections of eleven, or ninety-nine beads divided into sections of thirty-three. The dividing bead is a different shape from the others, often dome-shaped or flat.

☐ Resources

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Shabbas, Audrey and Ayad Al-Qazzaz, ed. *Arab World Notebook*. Berkeley, CA: Najda: Woman Concerned About the Middle East, 1989.

Zakaria, Rafiq. *Muhammad and the Qur'an*. London: Penquin Books, 1991. (Includes stories of the prophets, from Adam to Jesus.)

Video

The Message (available at video rental stores). Traces the adult life of Muhammad; reverent and completely acceptable to some Muslims, objectionable to others. This film is fairly long; you may want to watch only a portion of it.

The Wisdom of Faith with Huston Smith. A Bill Moyer Special, 1 hour. Distributed by Ecufilm.

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What Do Others Believe?

Hinduism

Objective

Youth will be able to state basic understandings of Hinduism and compare these to Christian beliefs.

Personal Story

We came to America in September when most of the festivals take place at home in India. Seeing people begin to prepare for the Christmas holidays made us think about our own Hindu festivals.

Dipawali, sometime also called Divali, is the New Year in Western India. It is the festival of lights. Just like at Christmas here, during Dipawali the schools are closed for about ten days. At Christmas, the houses in America are lit up with colorful lights, while at Dipawali, they are lit up with earthen lamps called "dias." Dipawali symbolizes the triumph of good over evil. It is a celebration of the return of King Rama to Ayodya after vanquishing Ravana and rescuing his wife.

Like most Indians festivals, the celebration of Dipawali begins in advance with "Garba." In Garba, people of all ages dress up in traditional embroidered clothes and dance from early in the evening until dawn. These dances continue until the actual day of Dipawali. On that day, everyone wears new clothes and people visit friends and relatives, feasting and exchanging gifts. People do "pooja," which means to worship the goddess Lakshmi who symbolizes wealth. Ganesh, the god of good fortune, is also worshipped. Afterward, everyone gets together and burns firecrackers.

Another festival that is very popular in all of India is "Holi," which is also the New Year in North India. Holi is the beginning of spring and symbolizes life in the air and new crops. People play with colored water and with dry colors. They visit their relatives and friends, embracing one another two or three times while wishing each other, "Happy Holi!"

During this time other celebrations are also held. During the Ganpathi Pooja, a statue of Ganesh is submerged into the sea. Utrayan is a festival of kites, and Rangoli is celebrated by making beautiful patterns filled with dry colors on the floor or the entrances of houses. For Rakshabandhan, sisters tie a "rakhi," a decorated silk thread, on their brothers' wrists and in return, the brothers promise to protect their sisters.

In marriages in India, fire known as "agni" plays a very important role. All the oaths taken by the bride and bridegroom are taken in front of the fire. The "saath phere," which are seven circles the two walk together during the wedding ceremony, are also taken around the fire.

The festivals and customs are not the only things we miss about India. India is the one of the few places where you can see many different technologies mixed together. On one side of a road, you may see a Mercedes, while on the other side you might see a bullock cart. It is also like a walking safari. All kinds of animals wander the roads, including cows, dogs, buffalo, monkeys, and elephants.

We also miss the temple bells ringing, the smell of food from the stalls along the roadsides, and the sight of so many people on the streets. Most of what we miss about India is the informality. You can visit a friend at any time or when you are lonely. We wish we could celebrate the festivals back in India and have the best of both worlds.

SESSION 7

Scripture

Psalm 102:25-27
Revelation 22:13

Skill Focus

Responsibility
Compassion

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Prayer

O God, who created all peoples in your image, we thank you for the wonderful diversity of races and cultures in this world. Enrich our lives by ever-widening circles of fellowship, and show us your presence in those who differ from us, until our knowledge of your love is made perfect in our love for all your children; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen*.

For the Diversity of Races and Cultures
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 840

Dismissal

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

Scripture

Long ago you laid the foundation of the earth,
and the heavens are the work of your hands.
They will perish, but you endure;
they will all wear out like a garment.
You change them like clothing,
and they pass away;
but you are the same, and your years have no end.

Psalm 102:25-27

I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.

Revelation 22:13

☐ Hinduism

At first glance, the stories, forms, and practices of Hinduism appear to be diametrically opposed to those of Christianity. Hinduism is not so much a religion as it is a way of life lived in all aspects of the culture and society of India. Indian culture and society are so synonymous with the realities of Hinduism that India itself is often called "Mother," the womb of Hinduism.

In Hindu culture, many ancient songs, poems, and fantastic myths enshrine the ultimate belief in Brahman, the one God and power of all that was, is, and will ever be. Brahman is also perceived in many forms that may be either difficult or easy to grasp in their individual aspects but which together comprise a oneness.

Faithful Hindus approach the mystery of Brahman through the Trimurthi, a triumvirate of primary gods. These gods, in their various forms, express Brahman's power to create, preserve, and destroy in order to recreate, and then again to preserve and destroy all forms of life as they cycle through existence. In epic stories of the cosmic battle of good against evil, good always triumphs while evil is vanquished.

Faithful Hindus worship as gods the various aspects of Brahman that are mythic in origin, fantastic in form, and described by amazing and imaginative stories. This is somewhat similar to the Christian reverence of saints whose struggles against evil and achievement of good deeds are also accompanied by embellished life stories.

In India, countless street shrines and home altars along with elaborate temples have been erected to both lesser and greater gods. Their divine attributes encourage strength and integrity to those who come to them in prayer, tribute, petition, and thanksgiving.

All Hindu philosophy and practice is rooted in the ancient Vedas, originally an oral tradition of sacred wisdom poetry of Persian-Aryan background that expresses insight into the human spiritual condition. Complex in scope, the Vedas are six times as long as the Bible. They are divided into four major books: the Rigveda of poetry, the Samaveda of songs, the Yajurveda of sacrificial texts, and the Atharvaveda of Atharvan, a priest of the fire ceremony.

The four books of the Vedas are further divided into more specific subsections or genres of material. They date back to at least 1500 BCE and were compiled as scripture in India by about 900 BCE. By that time, they were used exclusively by the Brahmins, cultic priests who ensured that the secret words and motions of the rituals and sacrifices were performed perfectly to maintain their effectiveness.

The most important of the Vedic material for developing Hinduism were the Upanishads, which are philosophical poems expressing respect for the ancient rites but daring to raise fundamental questions about what is lasting and real. The Upanishads identify and reveal the significance of three critical aspects: the Atman, the universal collective soul of all being; Brahman, the one divine source and power of all that was, is, and will be; and OM (Aum in Sanskrit), the meditative mantra that the faithful chant to find release from the anxiety of existence, awareness of the Atman, and mystic communion with Brahman.

The wisdom teachings of the Upanishads are fundamental to the development of various schools of Hinduism and also to Buddhism, which grew out of the promise of individual, non-cultic attainment of release from the cycles of life. The teachings of Hinduism are presented in the story forms that later became the hallmark of mature Hinduism.

The most famous stories, Mahabharata and the Ramayana, are complex epics beloved by Hindus for their illumination of the epic battles inherent in existence. In these stories, champion gods like Rama lead the way for all other seekers of the good. Sage teachers and other divine representatives meet one another in the context of extraordinary and fantastic adventures, and evil is always painstakingly vanquished. Goodness, love, and virtue always prevail, and cosmic wisdom is advanced.

With the revealed wisdom, all living creatures either advance or backslide through countless eons of life cycles and life forms. Finally, moksa, the release into eternity and infinite awareness, is achieved and all is brought together in Brahman.

☐ Questions

- Are the scripture passages for this session related in any way to Hindu beliefs?
- Compare the Hindu Trimurthi and the Christian Trinity.
- Where in the Bible can you find stories of the battle between good and evil? Does goodness always prevail?
- What aspects of Christian prayer are similar or different from the Hindu OM chant?

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CASTE SYSTEM

The caste system is the most determinative aspect of Hindu tradition and contemporary society. It began with the Hindu creation myth found in the ancient Rigveda. At the sacrifice of a cosmic human-shaped being called the Purusa, four castes sprang forth from its body. From the head came the Brahmins, from its arms came the Ksatriyas, from its thighs came the Vaisyas, and from its feet came the Sudras.

Brahmins traditionally were the keepers of the sacred rituals and words of the Vedas. People of all castes are required to honor them and give them gifts. The Ksatriyas are rulers and warriors who also receive benefits from the rest of society. The Vaisyas are merchants and shopkeepers, farmers and craftspeople. The Sudras are the landless menial laborers and servants who support the efforts of everyone else. Beneath all the castes are the caste-less ones, known as untouchables. Their bad karma from previous lives resulted in their being "cast out" of the system. These people, about a fourth of Hindus, have practically no rights at all. They are the ones who sweep the streets of refuse, carry sewage, and work with the dead. They are not allowed at public wells or anyplace where their presence might defile the cleanliness of the other castes. Recently the untouchables have chosen to call themselves "Dalits," or oppressed, to draw attention to the injustice of their social circumstances. Many converts to Christianity are Dalits.

The myth of Purusa makes its way into many other Hindu stories. It underscores the belief that the social divisions of Hinduism have their origins at the very beginning of all being and that they are the will of God. A person's birth caste, therefore, is the result of the accumulated karma of all past lives. Because of reincarnation and the power of karma, Hindus believe that they must live out their lives without expressing resentment, anger, or rebellion that would only accrue negative karma and make a future life even worse.

Fundamental issues of identity, opportunities in education, marriage, business, and electoral office, as well as access to mundane public services are determined on the basis of caste. Although democracy in India has opened access to higher levels of education for all people, the caste system maintains the status quo.

☐ Activities

Holi Festival

Holi, a beloved Hindu festival also known as the Festival of Color, is celebrated during the spring harvest in late February or early March. On the eve of Holi, Hindus celebrate by building bonfires to roast seasonal foods to eat. On the festival day, they wear old clothes and throw colored water at one another in a melee that for one day allows the proscribed social boundaries of sex, age, and caste to fall away. They eat favorite foods and tell stories about the triumph of good over evil.

Recreate a celebration based on Holi by planning an outing where the group can roast food over a campfire, tell Hindu stories you found in the library, and stage a riotous water fight. Among the stories you select (see Resource Poster No. 5 for ideas), be sure to include one about Vishnu, the preserver god of goodness and mercy who is one of the three gods of the Hindu Trimurthi. Include stories from the Bible that are similar to the Hindu stories you selected.

End the celebration with a multi-colored water fight. One of the reasons Hindus play with water in this way is to recreate the springtime frolic of Krishna and his consort Radha in the Yamuna River.

Using water pistols, water balloons, or buckets filled with brightly colored water, stage a water fight. See how many colors you can throw on each other. Remember, age and position are not barriers during this celebration. **Hint:** Use food coloring to make colored water. Remind participants to wear old clothing; if anyone does not want to be a part of the water fight, respect his or her wishes.

THE NATURE OF BRAHMAN

This is the truth:
As sparks fly from a large fire by the thousands,
So from the Imperishable, manifold beings are produced
Only to return.
The Great One is without form, like ether,
Within and without, unborn, breathless, mindless, pure,
It is higher than the Imperishable.
The Great One brings forth breath, mind, and all the senses,
Space, wind, light, water, and earth, who supports all.
Its head is fire, its eyes sun and moon, its ears space.
Its voice are the vedas, its breath the wind,
Its heart is the whole world.
Truly, this is the Inner Self of all.

Mundaka Upanishad, II.I.1-5

Chanting the OM Mantra

OM is the most famous and powerful of all Hindu mantras, a sound that embodies and conjures power. Hindus call OM an "all-word" that represents not only all the letters of the alphabet, but also the sound of all things. *OM* is sounded slowly at the beginning and the end of all scripture recitations. It is engraved at the beginning and end of all religious books, and it is engraved over the entrances to all religious and some domestic buildings. People often chant this mantra when they meditate in order to help them meet the eternity of all being.

Use this or another chant in a meditation individually or in a group. The chant does not need to be in unison. Sounds that are at variance are as natural as individual breathing patterns.

Sitting on the floor, cross your legs. Tuck your left foot up onto your right thigh, and your right foot up onto your left thigh. If you are unable to do this now, come as close as possible. Drop your arms forward naturally, with your elbows slightly bowed out and with your hands lightly cupped together, thumb to thumb. Or, stretch your hands forward to rest easily on your knees, palm side down. The objective is to be both comfortable and composed so you won't topple over. In this position, the body is in a stable pyramid shape. It will enable you to breathe with ease and be attentive to the rhythms of breath and heartbeat.

Being mindful of the natural rhythmic pattern of your breathing, introduce the mantra OM or another sound as you exhale your breath. Allow its sound to ride naturally on your breath as you exhale. Do not force the volume or length beyond what your breath can naturally handle to avoid creating disharmony in your breathing and anxiety in your

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mind. Continue sounding the mantra until you have feel peaceful and in unity with a higher order of being beyond yourself. Slowly discontinue the mantra while bringing your body and mind back to its usual state of attention.

- What did you feel when you were engaged with the mantra?
- Why do you think such exercise is important to Hindus? Are you aware of any close or approximate equivalent in the Christian tradition?
- As a Christian, can you find a word, a prayer, or a form of praying to find peace and union with God?

Field Trip

If a Hindu temple is located in or near your community, schedule a tour. Ask the person leading the tour to share his or her favorite Hindu stories. Suggest topics or gods that you want to know more about. (See Resource Poster No. 5.)

Or, watch a movie about the Hindu religion and culture. *Gandhi* tells the story of the Hindu who used peaceful means to bring independence and democracy to India. *A Passage to India* is about the British occupation of India and how they related to the people there. You may also want to watch films produced by Indians, such as *The Mahabharata* or *The Apu Trilogy* by Satyajit Ray that includes *Pather Panchali*, *Aparajito*, and *The World of Apu*.

TERMS

Atman: the immortal self, or soul of collective human being.
Benares/Varanasi: the most sacred city of the Hindus. Hindus believe it is important to visit the sacred city to bathe in the holy waters of the river Ganges by the first light of dawn.
Bhakti: a Sanskrit word meaning "love of God." In Hinduism thre are various types and levels of Bhakti, just as there are different meanings of love in Christianity.
The Bhagavad Gita: the most beloved of all Hindu literature.
Brahman: the eternal and absolute, one God & universal soul.
Brahma: the first of the three gods of the Hindu *Trimurthi*, the creator of the universe. Often depicted with four faces and four hands (Resource Poster No. 5).
Divali/Dipawali: the Hindu festival of lights.
Ganges River: the most sacred river in India, believed to have been flung to earth from the heavens.
Hanuman: the monkey god whose armies built a land bridge to Sri Lanka to defeat the evil Ravana.
Krishna: the eighth incarnation of Vishnu and the most beloved and revered god of Hinduism who embodies the essence of love.
Lakshmi: the consort of Vishnu, the goddess of fortune and happiness, and the symbol of beauty.
Moksa: release from the cycle of rebirth.
Rama: an incarnation of Vishnu who has the final victory of good over evil.
Siva or **Shiva**: the destroyer of ignorance known for kindness and friendliness.
Trimurthi: three gods in one image: *Brahma*, the creator; *Vishnu*, the preserver; and *Shiva*, the destroyer.
The Upanishads: the literary record of insights of human consciousness.
The Vedas: the most ancient scriptures of Hinduism and fundamental to the origins of Buddhist philosophy.
Vishnu: the sustainer god in the Trimurthi who assists humanity. His most important incarnation is the Krishna, the god of love.

SAVED BY VISHNU

In ancient times, the powerful King Hiranyakashup wanted to be a god, and so he commanded all people to worship him. But the king's son, Prahlad, would not, because he would only worship the Vishnu. The king vowed to kill his son.

First he threw Prahlad into a pit of poisonous snakes, but the prince miraculously survived. Next the king ordered a herd of elephants to stampede over the prince, but again the young man lived. Finally, the wicked king turned to his evil sister, Holika, who could not be burned by fire. So the king asked her to take Prahlad to the top of a huge bonfire where the prince would die but Holika would escape unharmed. Vishnu intervened, protecting the faithful prince so he escaped unscathed from the bonfire. The spell that had once protected Holika was broken, and she burned to death.

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What Do Others Believe?

Buddhism

Objective

Youth will be able to describe the basic understandings of Buddhism and contrast these with basic Christian beliefs.

Personal Story

I am a 17-year-old Burmese-American who arrived in the United States in 1992. I had no inkling of how it would be to live in America as a Buddhist. This inner fear had something to do with my Burmese-Buddhist cultural upbringing.

A Burmese boy or girl learns to imbibe Buddhism in the old-fashioned way—through full exposure to the religion with the cultural values and environment to buttress it. I have learned to revere what we call The Three Gems: Buddha, the Enlightened One; Dharma, His Teachings; and Sangha, the Buddhist Clergy. In addition, we include our parents and our teachers in the group of The Five Benefactors along with The Three Gems. It is a sin to be disrespectful to these exalted members of the Buddhist cultural society.

I was nurtured for the first ten years of my life in Burma to be a pious, obedient, and cultured young boy in an environment that promotes the understanding of Buddhist values. As a result, I have come to accept Buddhism not just as a religion, but as a way of life.

As far as my understanding of my faith goes, Buddhism teaches us to be self-reliant because it is only through a person's own endeavor that one can aspire and strive to be what one wants to be. This is where the Buddhist concept of Karma comes in. Karma means you will reap good results if you do good and bad results if you do bad. Control over one's destiny in this present life and hereafter is inherent in the psyche of a Buddhist.

We believe in cycles of birth, the "Samsara," or the thirty-one planes of existences including the human world we now live in. Buddhists do whatever they do with Samsara in mind. Karma and Samsara lead Buddhists to follow the three guiding principles of Buddhism: Dhana, giving; Sila, morality; and Bhavana, mindfulness or meditation.

In theory, a Buddhist would refrain from doing misdeeds and indulge in good deeds. Here the good acts of Dhana, Sila, and Bhavana come into full play. Through Dhana, we support the Buddhist clergy—the Sangha—our parents, the elders, and other people in need. Through Sila, we maintain our sense of rationality and morality. Through Bhavana, we maintain our awareness of the philosophical phase of Buddhism: the law of impermanence—everything we see, hear, touch, smell, sense, and taste is fleeting and transient; the law of misery—birth, disease, and death are part and parcel of a painful existence; and the law of non-self—we have no control over the reality of impermanence and misery.

When I was in Burma, I had to go through a phase of becoming a good Buddhist boy in a "novitiation" process. Every boy has to go into the Buddhist clergy for a short time at least as a novice. This has a two-fold purpose. It fulfills a good deed on the part of the parents, because putting a son into the Buddhist order gives him the highest position in the Buddhist society. It also gives a boy the opportunity to learn some portions of Buddhist scriptures and Buddhist cultural values and religious practices in a monastery under the guidance of the learned monks.

I must say that my initial fears of how I would fit in in America with my Buddhist background simply disappeared as time went on. I can go to Buddhist temples here in the United States—including Burmese ones—and mingle with my Buddhist friends for social and religious events. In short, I am thoroughly enjoying American democracy and religious tolerance in full measure.

SESSION 8

Scripture

Matthew 13:44
Luke 11:34-36

Skill Focus

Fairness
Compassion

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Prayer
Lord, make us instruments of your peace. Where there is hatred, let us sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is discord, union; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy. Grant that we may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. *Amen.*

A Prayer attributed to St. Francis
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 833

Dismissal
Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

☐ Scripture

The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

Matthew 13:44

Your eye is the lamp of your body. If your eye is healthy, your whole body is full of light; but if it is not healthy, your body is full of darkness. Therefore consider whether the light in you is not darkness. If then your whole body is full of light, with no part of it in darkness, it will be as full of light as when a lamp gives you light with its rays.

Luke 11:34-36

Buddhism

A telling story describes the responses of the spiritually enlightened founder of Buddhism, Prince Siddhartha Gautama Sakyamuni to questioners eager to know what he was. "Are you a God?" "No," he answered. "Are you an angel?" "No," he answered. "Are you a saint?" "No," he answered. "Then what are you?" "I am awake." Henceforth the prince was called the Buddha, which means literally, the "Awakened One."

Buddhism aspires to awaken its disciples to a state of enlightened bliss or perfected wisdom called "nirvana." Nirvana is not like some Christians imagine heaven to be; rather it is a state of being in the highest joy in which one is released from all the cares and attachments of the world that are created by an egotistical mind.

Buddhists follow the basic path set out for them by the Buddha, a man born into a princely family in what is now Nepal in about the year 563 BCE. Upon his birth, a holy man prophesied that he was destined to be a great ruler who would unify all the kingdoms of the world or a great spiritual leader who would save the world from its darkness. His father, hoping his son would be the ruler, protected him from troublesome aspects of the world and gave him anything he desired. As the young prince grew, he demonstrated his intellectual and athletic gifts, as well as his compassion.

The prince married and fathered a son before his mind filled with questions about the purpose of life and the true nature of the world. He requested permission to leave the palace grounds to explore the city. The king commanded that the city be cleansed of any sights that might move the young man to pursue a life of spiritual greatness.

Siddhartha, attended by a faithful servant, ventured beyond his world of luxury to explore the city. Despite the king's precautions, Siddhartha came upon four sights that changed his life: a wrinkled old man, a sick man lying by the side of the road, a corpse, and a monk. These introduced him to the realities of old age, disease, death, and renunciation of worldliness. His response was to leave behind everything to make his way as a monk on the path of renunciation. His goal was to find a way to the perfect freedom that is beyond the decay and death that he had experienced on the fateful road.

Once outside the palace walls, he stripped himself of his belongings, shaved his head, and dressed in the saffron-colored rags of executed convicts that had been discarded at a gravesite. From that time forward he owned nothing and ate only the food put into the begging bowl he carried with him. Saffron remains the primary color of Buddhist monks.

Siddhartha's first attempt at achieving perfect freedom was a rigid rule of life. After six years of wandering and self-denial, he was so starved that he lacked the energy even to meditate. He decided that such austerity hurt rather than helped his search, and he resolved to follow a "middle way" between the extremes of asceticism and sensuality. He sat down under a bodhi tree at Bodh Gaya near Benares in what is now India, and vowed to meditate without interruption until he found the way to the perfect freedom.

He did not rise until he had achieved the enlightenment he sought. It was difficult to resist the three temptations by the evil Mara. First Mara offered him any of Mara's beautiful daughters. Then Mara attacked Siddhartha's budding enlightenment with temptations of lust, doubt, cowardice, hypocrisy, and the desire for fame and honor. Lastly, Mara asked him who had given him the right to forsake his worldly confines. Siddhartha placed the palm of his hand on the earth, which rumbled with millions of voices crying out that he had come to rescue them from their sorrow. And Mara departed.

After the night of temptation passed, the bodhi tree burst into bloom and showered the victorious Siddhartha with thousands of new blossoms. Siddhartha was no longer a finite person who had been born into a luxurious palace; he had "awakened" to the freedom of enlightenment. He had become the "enlightened" or "awakened one"—the Buddha.

Mara returned one last time to tempt the Buddha with questions: "Did the Buddha really believe that others would be able to achieve what he had managed only with the most rigorous and disciplined meditation? Were they not happier living a common life of simple expectation? Was it worth giving up one's own perpetual freedom to reach back to help others?" The Buddha affirmed that indeed it was, even if only a few chose to follow him. Mara then departed. In compassion for others, he turned back to offer his discovery to the world.

He taught the law of the Dharma, or the way to enlightenment, to all who would choose it. He first summarized his observation of the human condition in the "Four Noble Truths:" 1. While everyone desires satisfaction, happiness, and harmony (sukha), the inevitable changes of life bring the opposites of suffering, dissatisfaction and sorrow

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(dukha). 2. The cause of suffering is selfish desire (trishna). 3. When selfish desires have been extinguished, suffering is transcended and there remains a state of freedom, joy, peace, and wakefulness (nirvana). 4. One can reach the non-suffering state of nirvana by following the "Eightfold Path:"

The "Eightfold Path" is 1. right understanding, or seeing life as it is; 2. right purpose, or wanting life as it is; 3. right speech, 4. right action, 5. right occupation, or living in harmony with the unity of everything that is; 6. right effort, 7. right attention, and 8. right meditation, or the capacity to pursue pure thoughts. Each of these is like a spoke of a great wheel that represents the universal law, or the "dharma."

Many became the Buddha's students using samadh*i* or the yogic practice of "mindful concentration." This is necessary to become arhats, disciples who have extinguished personal desire. Many were ordained, and wore the saffron robes of a bhikkhu or bhikshu, a Buddhist monk, and became members of the Sangha, a Buddhist community.

After some years, the Buddha returned to his childhood home to meet his father, wife, and son. Initially angry and anxious, they were transformed by his kindness and compassion (metta) and converted to the path of enlightenment. The Buddha established ordination to a life of disciplined meditation for both women and men, even though social traditions have since retracted women's rights to ordination.

Just as Jesus' teachings were grounded in the ideas and values of Hebrew scripture and tradition, so were the Buddha's teachings molded by ancient Persian- Indian ideas presented in the Vedas and the Upanishads. They are records of "things seen" in the realm of the world accessible only by meditation. As such, they are insights of human consciousness. The Buddha's spiritual heritage, from the Upanishads, says that everything in both the natural world and the world of human thought is ordered and governed by a universal law of unity--to which the individual is ultimately responsible in thought and action.

This understanding is also fundamental to Hinduism, the ancient parent religion of Buddhism. Hinduism and Buddhism share the belief that every human is inseparable from the unity of the whole being. However, Hindu belief has always been nurtured by religious rites performed by Brahmins. Buddhism teaches that the individual must deal with his or her own positive and negative karma, that unique and personal morality resulting from one's existential actions. This must be done alone, without the assistance of anyone or any ritual ceremony. If one chooses not to do this liberating work, the Buddhist believes this person is irrevocably bound by the illusions of the mind to samsara, the cycles of worldly existence. The Buddha promised to lead his disciples to a way of being that anyone could approach alone without a priest. The only assistance is in the disciple's confession of The Three Jewels which summarize the practice of Buddhism: "I take refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma and in the Sangha."

At the time of his death at age eighty, about 483 BCE, the Buddha assured his followers that he would always be with them because he lived forever in the Dharma that would never die. Many Buddha statues show him lying down on his right side with his left hand under his head because this is the position he took when he died and entered nirvana for the last time.

The community of monks, known as the Sangha, began to codify the Buddha's teachings. After the Buddha's death, his teachings of compassion and release from suffering spread throughout the world. As they spread, they naturally expanded in form and idea to accommodate local culture, ideas and traditions. In time, six major schools of Buddhism were established. These include the Hinayana, the Little Raft; Theravada; Mahayana, the Big Raft; Tibetan; Ch'an or Zen; and Vajrayana, the Diamond Way. Each of these schools developed its own distinguishing characteristics.

Buddhism continues to spread. Its basic values of compassion for all life and the injunction to do no harm, combined with the promise of release from suffering and the attainment of ultimate peace and joy through rigorous self-discipline, have invited many to follow the Buddha's path.

☐ Questions

- How would followers of Buddha describe the treasure mentioned in *Matthew*?
- How do Buddhist teachings about light compare to Jesus' use of light in *Luke*?
- Describe in your own words the Four Noble Truths or Virtues.
- What are the steps of the Eightfold Path?
- Are there any similarities between Buddhist and Christian beliefs? Explain.

☐ Activities

Yoga: The Lotus Position

Experiment with a yoga exercise. Sit on the floor and cross your legs. Tuck your left foot up onto your right thigh and your right foot onto the left thigh. If you are not limber enough to do this, come as close as possible. Drop your arms forward naturally with your elbows slightly bowed outwards and your hands lightly cupped together, thumb to thumb. Or, stretch your hands forward so they rest easily on your knees, palm side down. The object is not to be physically uncomfortable, but to be relaxed and composed so you won't topple over. This position will enable you to breathe with ease and to pay attention to the rhythms of your breath and heartbeat.

LOTUS

The lotus flower is as common in Asia as the rose in the West (see Resource Poster No. 6). It is a primary symbol that is represented frequently in Buddhist iconography. The flower represents the true nature of all being. Just as the root of the lotus is in the muck, the nature of all being is rooted in the dark world of cyclic existence. Yet out of the darkness, the blossom shoots upward into the air above. From the dark cycles, beings realize true destiny through enlightenment.

The flower is also connected to the legend that a lotus sprang up at the site of seven steps taken by Prince Siddhartha at his birth. This is why Buddha is often on a lotus throne with his legs in the yoga posture that is called the lotus position.

Close your eyes or focus them on the tip of your nose so other things will not distract you. Become aware of the

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patterns of your breathing in and breathing out, as if each breath is moving on an imaginary string threaded between your nose and your navel. Think about your breath, never letting it out of your consciousness. Already you may notice a change in your heartbeat. Greater attention to the state of your body and mind allows you to detach yourself from any anxiety. The cares of the world may seem distant at this point.

Continue doing yoga exercises at home or with others in the group. Videos and classes are available to help you use yoga to quiet your mind.

Art Forms

Explore different art forms directly or indirectly related to Buddhism by visiting a museum, a library, or the Internet. For example, look for examples of how Buddhist concepts can be used in designing gardens and homes. People can create an environment that enhances their spiritual journey through plants, colors, and interior design.

Read poetry by Americans and others that has been influenced by Buddhist thought in books such as *Beneath a Single Moon* (edited by Kent Johnson). Poetry has always been a part of this tradition dating back to the 2,500-year-old songs of the monks and nuns of India.

Compare the architecture of stupas (see box) throughout the world. Find examples of a pagoda in Burma and a ceddi in Thailand. The stupa can be a huge architectural structure or a miniature used for personal contemplation.

Find out how Ch'an or Zen Buddhism influenced painting, calligraphy, and pottery in Japan and China. Look for pictures of ceramics that were designed for both utility and contemplation. Form and colorful glazes appeal to the visual and tactile senses.

STUPA

The stupa is a common focal point in the design of Buddhist monasteries and temples throughout Asia (see Resource Poster No. 6). The architectural form originated in India as a burial mound. Others were built to enshrine holy Buddhist relics and have become holy sites for study and pilgrimages. Stupas were also built to memorialize important moments in the Buddha's life.

The basic stupa form, at first squat and rounded with spires, evolved into the pagoda. Pagodas, tall, lean, and comprised of many stories, borrowed some of the architectural forms of China. Wherever Buddhism spread, the stupa form took on aspects of local culture. In China and East Asia, the successive stories of pagodas represent the passage toward enlightenment.

Look for different representations of Buddha that have been influenced by different cultures. The supernatural effectiveness of the Buddha image depends on its adherence to ancient patterns. While Buddha images from different lands resemble each other, stylistic difference appear. Find examples of American images of Buddha, available in many stores.

At first Buddha was represented by symbols such as a footprint to indicate his presence. Without Buddhism, there would be very little Chinese sculpture in stone. At least two schools required the representation of Buddha in his past, present, and future forms, in addition to images of his attendants. The traditional stances, gestures, and symbolic stereotypes in Buddha images were derived from Indian origins. He is shown either standing or seated in the lotus position often in monastic robes.

Make a display of Buddha images you found along with other art forms to share with others in your church.

Videos

Several videos, available from rental outlets, illustrate different facets of Buddhist beliefs and the Asian cultures from which they grew. *The Scent of Green Papaya* (1993) is a story of a serving girl in Saigon and her struggle to survive. The film is in Vietnamese with English subtitles and is rated for more mature audiences. **Hint:** Session coordinators may want to preview videos before showing them to the group. Some parts may not be appropriate, or you may want to show a clip to make a certain point.

Watch *Seven Years in Tibet* (1998) and *Kundun* to learn about the Dalai Lama and his role in the Buddhist faith in Tibet. *Kundun* is about the family of the Dalai Lama, including his parents, four brothers, and two sisters. Each played a role in Tibet's resistance to Chinese occupation.

TERMS

Four Passing Sights: The street sights that showed Prince Siddhartha that the world was in need of redemption—a decrepit old man (old age), a badly diseased body (disease), a corpse (death), and a monk (renunciation of the world).
Middle Way: The disciplined path towards enlightenment charted between the worldly extremes of asceticism and sensual indulgence.
Bodhisattza: Wisdom, the primary attribute of enlightenment.
Nirvana: The state of enlightened wisdom and bliss. It comes after the fires of longing and attachment that bind a person to the cycle of mundane existence are extinguished
Karma: The consequence or energy created by action, particularly human thoughts, words, and deeds. May be positive or negative.
Dharma: The doctrine or path taught by the Buddha, often symbolized by a wheel.
Sangha: The community of Buddhist monks.
Three Jewels: The Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha—indispensable sources of Buddhist belief and practice.
Three Poisons: Delusion, craving, and hostility.

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What Do Others Believe?

Respecting Others

SESSION 9

Objective

Youth will be able to describe ways that understanding other faiths will help them respect the dignity of every human being.

Personal Story

Sometimes I wonder if humankind will ever be able to live in peace. I'm not sure we learn very much from our past mistakes. When we discuss current events in government class, there's often a story about one group of people trying to destroy another group. Often the reason the two groups can't get along is because they have different ethnic and religious backgrounds.

History is full of stories about wars fought in the name of faith. The Crusades during the Middle Ages have never made any sense to me. How could anyone use Christ as an excuse to go to war?

None of the major religions in the world call for killing innocent people. The laws in Judaism are pretty clear about treating others fairly, and Jesus certainly taught that we are to love our neighbors even if they are our enemies. Islam beliefs are clear about taking care of the weak and the poor. God doesn't need to be protected through the deaths of innocent people.

I see some of the same things happening at my school. The kids who are different because of the way they look or act often get teased all the time. I don't participate in the teasing, but I have to admit that I don't do much to stop it. I don't feel good about that, but I don't want them to turn on me.

Finding out more about people who are different from me makes it easier for me to like them. When I learned more about Islam, I began to see why girls keep their head covered and why families seem to be so close.

I don't think God wants us to use him as an excuse for violence or hurting other people. Learning to respect the beliefs of others breaks down some of the barriers between us. Maybe one day, I'll have the courage to do more than remain silent when someone is being teased for being different or believing something most of us don't understand.

Scripture

Romans 13:8-10

Skill Focus

Communication
Respect

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Prayer
Almighty God, kindle, we pray, in every heart the true love of peace, and guide with your wisdom those who take counsel for the nations of the earth, that in tranquillity your dominion may increase until the earth is filled with the knowledge of your love; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

For Peace
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 258

Dismissal
Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

☐ Begin Here: Remembering Scripture

Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet"; and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, "Love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.

Romans 13:8-10

Connect with the Personal Story

Read the Personal Story for this session. Have you ever had feelings similar to those the narrator has? Think about the people in your life at school, in your neighborhood, and the community. How many faiths do they represent? Identify one person who is different from you in his or her culture and beliefs. Find a way to learn more about this person. Is it easier to respect the dignity of someone you understand?

☐ Questions

- In the scripture passage, what is the meaning of love? How is that different from the way the word "love" is often used in our culture?
- Did you learn anything during this course of study that helped you love your neighbor? What was it?
- How is love for a neighbor expressed?
- Does loving someone mean that you have to agree with them?
- How can you love someone who doesn't believe in God and/or doesn't love you?
- The narrator in the Personal Story talked about the difficulty of defending an outsider from the taunts of classmates. What should you do in this situation?
- Where can you find the strength to stand up for someone you don't like?

☐ Individually

Working individually, find ways to respond to ideas you confronted in learning about what others believe. Share your ideas and record them on a piece of newsprint. Possible responses include:

- Write a personal story about being an Episcopalian. Before you begin, make a list of the most important aspects of the Episcopal Church from your viewpoint. Could someone distinguish your story from a story another Protestant might write? What makes Episcopalian beliefs different?
- Find out more about your religious inheritance by talking to family members (Session 1).
- Learn more about the saint designated for your birthday or name (Session 4).
- Compare verses of the Sh'ma in *Deuteronomy 6:1-9* with the Sermon on the Mount beginning at *Matthew 5:1* (Session 5). Note the similarities in the two passages.
- The lotus flower is a primary symbol of Buddhism (Session 8). What is the primary symbol of Christianity for you? Use this symbol as a focal point for a mediation. Sit in a lotus position if it is comfortable to do so.

☐ Group

Think about ways the group can respond to ideas and issues raised in your study of other faiths. Record your ideas on newsprint. Possible responses are:

- Make a presentation to another group in your church highlighting your study of other faiths. Use the Resource Posters in the presentation.
- Share with another group in the church the Jewish holiday you selected to celebrate in Session 5.
- Find out more about a church or diocese in the Anglican Communion in another part of the world (Session 2). Write up the information you learned about your diocese and send it to the diocese or church you want to learn about. Include questions you might have along with specific information about your own church.
- Instead of gathering statues of Buddha from different cultures as suggested in Session 8, find different images of Christ from other places and cultures throughout the world. Talk about the similarities and differences in the images.
- Write a prayer that reflects how learning about different faiths has helped you respect the dignity of others. For ideas, reread the prayer on this page, the prayer from Session 1 on p. 16, and the Prayer attributed to St. Francis on p. 44 (also on p. 833 of *The Book of Common Prayer*).

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☐ Celebrate

Celebrate the completion of your study of *What Do Others Believe?* with a specific activity. Think of something you want to do together or use one of the following suggestions:

Art

- Create a display or several displays about the faiths you selected to study. (These could be used for the Diversity Fair described under Community.) Include examples of poetry, architecture, painting, calligraphy, mosaics, music, and books. Write a brief description to go with each faith you choose to display. Exhibit the displays at a church gathering.
- Display the different images of Christ you found for the Group exercise described on the previous page. Identify the cultures and/or countries the images represent.
- Display the Resource Posters in your church. Create borders to tie them together that incorporate symbols of the different faiths.

Liturgy

- In a liturgy to celebrate the conclusions of your study, use the words of the Sh'ma in *Deuteronomy 6* and a portion of the Sermon on the Mount in *Matthew 5* as your scripture passages. Find hymns from *The Hymnal 1982* or other music with the themes from these passages.
- Use some of the Christian music you listened to in Session 3 in a worship service.
- If you wrote the prayer suggested on the previous page, incorporate it into a worship service.

Community

- Plan a Diversity Fair at your church. Using materials you collected and items you created, make up displays for each faith you selected to study. Invite resource people who helped you with your study to be on hand to answer questions or provide additional information.
- Play Human Tic-Tac-Toe at a church picnic or other gathering to encourage people to mingle (see Session 1). Make enough game sheets for each person using your own categories.
- Plan a celebration similar to the Hindu festival of Holi (Session 7). Invite all age groups to participate, but warn everyone to wear old clothes. Plan a menu with traditional Indian foods. Tell Bible stories about good and evil.

Fun

- Invite the resource people who helped you with your study to a dinner party to celebrate the completion of the module. Create a menu that reflects the cultures where certain faiths are dominant. For example, include Indian food to represent the Hindu faith, Chinese and Japanese dishes for Buddhism, mid-Eastern recipes for Islam, and maybe a Greek salad for Eastern Orthodox.
- Visit an art museum and look for the influences of different religions in art throughout history. Go to a restaurant afterward to celebrate the completion of the unit.

FOLLOW THROUGH

Individual Response: Ask God to help you to respect the dignity of others by honoring their religious views. Respecting another's faith does not mean that you have to agree with that person's views. It may, however, require you to learn more about that faith in order to understand your differences. If you decide to do something specific from the list on the previous page or your own ideas, write it down and keep it in a place where you will be reminded to do it. For example, if you want to find out more about your family's religious inheritance at the next family gathering, be sure to make a reminder for yourself. Think about the steps you need to take to accomplish whichever activity you have selected.

- Do you need help to complete this activity or to meet your goal?
- Can you identify someone in the group, the church, your school, or community who can help you?

Group Response: Review the list of ideas the group developed as ways to respond to your study of other faiths. Decide which ideas the group is most interested in. You may choose to undertake one longer project or select several short-term activities. Take into consideration other commitments individuals in the group may have. Talk about the tasks necessary to complete your project. Estimate how much time each task will take, and ask each participant to be responsible for seeing that it is done. If you decide to work on a project that involves others in the church or community, talk about how to get these people involved.

- What kind of activity did the group select?
- Can every person participate who wants to?
- Can you identify people outside the group who can help you finish the project?

Celebrate: Ask for volunteers to work on an appropriate liturgy response to your study of other faiths. Use the ideas on this page or develop your own. Select several people to put together displays or plan the Diversity Fair. Check the church calendar before you begin your plans for an appropriate date. If you decide to visit a museum, send out permission slips and find adult drivers. If you have a party, decide whether you want to have it at the church or in a home. Ask for volunteers to bring food or plan to meet earlier in the day to cook as a group. Don't forget to get volunteers to prepare for the party and clean up afterward.

- Does the celebration you selected include everyone in the group?
- Do you want to invite others who helped you in your study of other faiths?

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Learning About Other Faiths

It is not possible in one module to look at all the faiths from around the world or even in our own country. Groups may be interested in religions not covered in this guide. For example, you may live in an area that has been influenced by a particular religion. Or, there may be a church in your community you would like to know more about. Below are steps you can take to design your own study. These steps are based on the way this book was planned and researched.

1. **Research.** Look for information about the faith or religion you wish to study at libraries and on the Internet. Look for sources that are written from the perspective of people who practice that religion. It is completely acceptable to use sources written by people who do not practice the faith you wish to study, but don't limit yourself to these views.

2. **Source material.** If the faith or religion you wish to study is based on a particular book or other written material, try to get a copy. For example, the Torah is essential for the Jewish faith, as the Bible is for Christians and the Koran is for Muslims. Someone learning about the Episcopal Church would need to see *The Book of Common Prayer*. If you study the Mormon faith, you should read the work of Joseph Smith.

3. **Resource people.** Find out if people in your church have specific knowledge about the religion or faith you have selected. Ask them to look over your research and the materials you selected to read. Also ask them to help you identify someone who practices this faith to talk to the group or those doing the research.

4. **Write it down.** Prepare a summary of the information you have collected similar to the information provided in each session. Look for interesting facts that may not be central to the faith, but that you believe the group would be interested in learning.

5. **Check it out.** Ask a person who practices the faith or religion you are studying to read the summary you have written. Sometimes the way you say something is objectionable even if the basic information is correct. Be open to suggestions and the reader's reactions to your work.

6. **Talk to people your age.** If possible, identify people your age who practice the religion you are studying. Find out what they think are the most important aspects of their faith. Ask them to describe their favorite holidays or celebrations. Be ready to answer their questions about Christianity and the Episcopal Church.

7. **Visit a place of worship.** Find out if your group could tour the worship space of a group that practices the faith you are studying and/or attend a worship service. If you are invited to a service, ask your contact person about dress codes and any other information the group might need to know. If possible, schedule a brief meeting after the service with a person of that faith to answer questions that might have come up during your visit.

8. **Share your knowledge.** Find a way to share information you have learned with others in your church. Set up a display or make a presentation to another group.

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