



Faiths and Creeds

The list below is not meant to be an all encompassing description of various faiths/creeds. It is only meant to provide a basic overview.



Aboriginal Spirituality

Aboriginal peoples have very diverse cultures with differing beliefs, values and traditions. The beliefs of many Aboriginal peoples are based on a connection with nature, and the spiritual world to be connected to the physical world. Many Aboriginal people mark the changing of the seasons through celebrations and festivals.



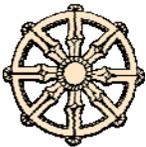
Atheism

Atheists do not believe in any spiritual being or higher power. Atheists believe that a fulfilling moral life can be led without the teachings of any God or religious scripture. There is no one ideology that all Atheists follow, and Atheists may have a wide degree of spiritual and ethical beliefs. The term 'Atheist' comes from the ancient Greek word 'atheos' which means 'godless', or the French term 'atheism' meaning 'one who denies or disbelieves the existence of god'. Many atheists do not like to use the word 'religion' to describe their belief or lack thereof.



Baha'i

One of the world's youngest major religions, Baha'i was founded in the 19th century by 'The Bab', who prophesized a future messenger from God - 'Baha'u'llah'. Baha'is believe in one God, and many prophets, and that Abraham, Moses, Zoroaster, Buddha, Krishna, Jesus and Mohammad are all messengers of one God, and are equally authentic. The Baha'i message is that all human beings belong to one race – the human race, and Baha'is accept the value of all religions, and teach world peace, democracy, civil rights, equal rights for women and the acceptance of scientific discoveries.



Buddhism

Buddhism focuses on spirituality and spiritual development. Buddhists do not believe in a relationship with a god, and instead strive to reach 'Enlightenment' by meditation, and developing wisdom and morality, while learning about the 'Four Noble Truths' (1. Life is Suffering, 2. Suffering is due to attachment, 3. Attachment can be overcome, and 4. There is a path for accomplishing this) and following 'The Eightfold Path' (right view, right aspiration, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration). They believe in karma and reincarnation. A 'Buddha' is one who has obtained Enlightenment.



Christianity

Christians believe in one God, his divinity and the Holy Trinity. God placed his son, Jesus Christ on earth to guide and teach people. Christians follow the 10 Commandments, and

believe that Jesus lived, was crucified, buried and was resurrected from the dead and ascended to heaven so that he could open the gates to those that believe in him and repent from their sins. There are many denominations of Christianity, including but not limited to Roman Catholic, Protestant, Anglican, Orthodox, Baptist, etc. There are approximately 2 billion Christians in the world.



Hinduism

Hinduism is the world's third largest religion, and one of the world's oldest religions. It is the predominant religion of South Asia. Hindus believe in Brahma, (Brahma, the creator, Vishnu the preserver and Shiva the destroyer and re-creator) as well as other deities, who are all manifestations of Brahma. Hindus believe in reincarnation and karma (the belief that action and deeds causes a cycle of cause and effect results). There are many 'denominations' of Hinduism, which include: Vaishnism, Shaivism, Smartism and Shaktism.



Islam

Islam is the second largest world religion. The term Islam means 'submission to God'. Muslims believe in one God (Allah), and His prophet Muhammad, who was the last, and the greatest of the prophets. The Islamic holy book is called the Qur'an and Muslims practice the Five Pillars of Islam: 1. To recite the shahadah (the creed), 2. To perform the salat (ritual prayer) five times a day. 3. To donate regularly to charity. 4. To fast during Ramadan. 5. Make at least one pilgrimage to Mecca (the holy land). There are two main denominations of Islam: Sunni and Shi'a.



Jainism

Jainism is an ancient religion originating in India. Jains believe in reincarnation and karma and follow five principles of living: 1. non-violence, 2. speaking only the truth, 3. not stealing, 4. sexual monogamy 5. detachment from material possessions. They believe that every living being has a soul, which has the potential to be a divine soul. The goal of Jainism is to achieve liberation for the soul from the detrimental effects of negative thoughts, actions and speech, and encourages the cultivation of one's personal wisdom and reliance on self control.

Jehovah's Witness

Jehovah's Witnesses are a Christian based denomination, and was founded in the late 19th century by Charles Taze Russell. They believe in one God, and the Bible is the Word of God. They do not celebrate Christmas or Easter as other Christian based faiths do. Jehovah's Witnesses are most known for their door-to-door preaching and by the belief in not accepting military vocations and blood transfusions. The religion is headed by the 'Governing Body', a group of men who have self professed that there are of an anointed class, which has hopes for a heavenly life.





Judaism

Judaism is an Abrahamic religion. It is the oldest monotheistic religions surviving today. . Jewish people believe in one omniscient and omnipotent God. Their history is traced back to Abraham, and believe Moses led their people out of slavery in Egypt The Torah is the main holy book, and includes God’s teaching, which guides Jewish people in how to live their lives. There are three major Jewish movements are: Orthodox Judaism, Conservative Judaism and Reform Judaism, each of which interprets Jewish law slightly differently.



Mormons

Mormonism originated in New York in the 1820’s by Joseph Smith Jr. Mormons believe in one God, and an afterlife, and classify themselves in with Christianity, and follow the Christian Old and New Testaments. They support traditional family values, and oppose what they feel falls outside of this. There are three main movements of Mormonism: Mainstream Mormonism, Mormon Fundamentalism and Liberal Reformist, which advocate significantly different views. Mainstream Mormonism is the most popular, and these Mormons belong to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.



Rastafarianism

Rastafarianism originates in Jamaica following the crowning of Haile Selassie in 1930. They believe he is a reincarnation of God (Christian Jesus or Jah), and proclaims Africa as the origin of Mankind. They believe in reincarnation, and follow some Christian Old Testament laws. People who follow the Rastafari movement are called Rastas. Marcus Garvey is considered a prophet, or as a second John the Baptist, and his views have helped shape the Rastafari movement.



Scientology

The Church of Scientology is a relatively new religion, only having been in practice for approximately 50 years. Scientology was founded by L. Ron Hubbard. Scientologists define Scientology as ‘the study of truth’. Scientologists believe that humans are spiritual beings who have more than one life. They believe people are inherently good, but that experiences lead them to evil. The ultimate goal of Scientology is to have a world without war or insanity, and where people are free to ‘rise to greater heights’ and prosper.



Shinto

Shinto means ‘The Way of the Gods’, and is a Japanese religion. Shinto has no god, but believe in spiritual beings called ‘Kami’. Rituals are often considered more important than belief, and teaches ethical practices, but there are no ‘commandments’ or specific rules to follow. Shinto does not have to be the only religion that a person belongs to. Many people who follow Shinto related practices also participate in Buddhist ancestor worship. There are many types of Shinto expression: Shrine Shinto, Imperial Shinto, Folk Shinto, Sect Shinto and Koshinto (Old Shinto).



Sikhism

The word Sikh means ‘learner of truth’ or ‘disciple’. Sikhism was founded by Guru Nanak Dev Ji. There were 9 Gurus that followed him, and led the Sikh movement. The term Guru means ‘teacher’. Sikhs believe in one God and feel it is important to live good lives, and do good deeds rather than simply perform rituals. They believe in karma, reincarnation and that everyone is equal in the eyes of God. The first holy book is called the Shri Guru Granth Sahib and the second is called the Dasam.



Taoism

Taoism or Daoism (‘the way’) originated in China. It embraces opposite forces in the world, and the balance that is needed between these forces (i.e. love – hate, male – female, light – dark, action – inaction). Taoists seek compassion, moderation and humility, which are considered the three jewels of the Tao; as well as harmony with nature. The Tao is not a god, and is not worshipped. There are three categories of Taoism : Philosophical Taoism, Religious Taoism and Folk Taoism.



Unitarianism

Unitarianism is a Christianity based religion. Unitarians have no standard set of beliefs; it is an open-minded faith that believes in religious freedom and inclusion. Diversity and social justice is valued. They believe in one God, with only one manifestation of this God (example – there is no holy trinity). Unitarians do not believe in the divinity of Jesus, instead believing that he was a great prophet of God.



Voudon

Voudon is an African based faith that originated in Haiti. Over 60 million people practice Voudon. The chief God is called Bondye, and there are many other spirits as well. They believe in an afterlife and demons, and ‘Loa’s’ (spirits), who protect from evil and bring health and good fortune. There is substantial diversity within those that believe in Voudon, and differing forms of Voudon exist in various geographical locations.



Wicca

Wicca is a relatively new Neopagan faith, based upon symbols, celebration dates, and deities of ancient Celtic societies. Many Wiccans believe in a God and Goddess, manifested in nature. Some Wiccans practice Magick, some do not. Wiccans seek reverence, honour, humility, strength, beauty, compassion, power and mirth. Wiccans often join a group, called a ‘coven’, or they can practice their religion individually. There are many different denominations of Wicca, including but not limited to: Gardnerian, Alexandrian, Cochrane’s Craft, Feri and Dianic.

Zoroastrian



Zoroastrianism was founded by Zarathushtra (or Zoroaster) in Ancient Iran. It is one of the oldest world religions. Zoroastrians believe in one God, the Creator ‘Ahura Mazda’. Fire is used as a symbol to represent Ahura Mazda’s light, purity and life sustaining. The most

important religious text is the Avesta, of which most has been lost. Zoroastrians believe that good deeds and good thoughts will ensure happiness and keep chaos minimized.

Note : We have tried to be as inclusive as possible in these brief descriptions. Should you be aware of important information that has been inadvertently omitted, please contact Robin Cawlishaw at rcawlishaw@lakeheadschoools.ca .