

Values in Harmony

THE PROMOTION OF GOOD COMMUNITY RELATIONS
DESCRIBED BY 11 RELIGIONS AND BELIEFS IN SCOTLAND





“Treat others as you would expect to be treated”

Values in Harmony

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FOREWORD

The promotion of good relations is something which is very close to my heart. Constructive dialogue and debate are tools we need to use to achieve a Scotland built on mutual trust, respect and understanding. Modern Scotland is a diverse multi-faith and belief and multi-cultural society. Everyone, regardless of background, needs to feel fully integrated into a society which we all share. In Scotland, everyone is welcome and no-one should be a stranger.

In celebrating difference we also recognise our shared humanity, a virtue which is clearly illustrated throughout 'Values in Harmony'. It is fascinating to read about the eleven religions and beliefs which are discussed in this document, particularly since most of the contributions come from individuals working at grassroots level within their communities. As such 'Values in Harmony' provides an unique insight into values ordinary individuals draw from their religion or belief.

It can be all too easy for communities to feel isolated from main stream society, particularly during times of economic strife, and I am delighted that the Equality and Human Rights Commission were able to fund the 'Values in Harmony' initiative as one of the many ways to help bring our diverse communities together. I believe that this document will be a valuable tool for the promotion of good relations between different communities in Scotland and commend it to anyone who is involved in developing constructive community dialogue. By working together we can make Scotland a safer and stronger place for all of our people and celebrate and embrace the diversity which makes us all modern Scots.

**FERGUS EWING, MSP,
Minister for Community Safety.**

**Edinburgh,
March 2009.**



INTRODUCTION

This Project was funded by the Equality and Human Rights Commission One Year Grants Scheme, and managed by the Scottish Inter Faith Council. It was carried out between April 2008 and March 2009.

AIM

The main aim of the Project was described in terms of an *OUTCOME* to be achieved:

To produce a resource of teachings, writings, and attitudes from the 10 major Religion and Belief communities in Scotland that will demonstrate their commonality in promoting “Good Relations” with each other; and to use this as a tool to raise awareness in *women and young people* of how their Religion or Belief can lead to increased community cohesion, integration, and harmony.

In practice it proved quite challenging to produce the document, and thus the second part of the Project’s outcome is still being carried out, with the two of five awareness-raising focus groups now held.

A secondary aim of the Project was to inform the debate that currently surrounds the future of *multiculturalism* and its failure to promote integration and cohesion in our nation. Whilst not purporting to be the magical answer to this complex problem, it is hoped that it will go some way to reassure communities and government that there *is* much that is positive in people from any faith or belief community sharing together. In this way, emphasis can be placed on what actually binds communities together rather than on the differences that divide them.

The unifying theme is that there is a commonality of core ethical and moral values shared by *all* of humankind, irrespective of any particular faith or belief. All of these values could be summed up by the principle known as the “Golden Rule”:

“Do not do to others as you would not have them do to you.”

Or, in the positive:

“Treat others as you would expect to be treated.”

TARGET AUDIENCE

The document should be of interest to the Scottish Government Equality Unit, those working across the equalities in both the Government and Non-Government sector, Faith and Belief organisations, the Scottish Inter Faith Council and other Inter Faith and Faith bodies, Chaplains, secondary schools, and any groups involved in raising awareness of the significance of faith and belief groups in society today.

METHODOLOGY

The unique significance of this document is the fact that with one exception, all the submissions were produced at the grassroots level by representatives from the different faith and belief communities. The religion of *Jainism* was also included, although membership is very small in

Scotland. Thus a working group of eleven lay representatives from each of the Baha'i Faith, Buddhism, Christianity, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Hinduism, Humanism, Islam, Jainism, Judaism, Paganism, and Sikhism were engaged to produce scriptures, readings, attitudes, and principles from their own tradition that demonstrated values to support the concept of the *Golden Rule*. These representatives came from communities in Eskdalemuir, Fife, Galashiels, Glasgow, Barrhead, and Alloa.

Values were chosen from: Love, Compassion, Respect, Justice, Mercy, Forgiveness, Humility, Respect for Community, Respect for Nature / Ecology, Concern for Other People, and any Codes of Ethical Conduct. Two joint evening working meetings were held, to confirm agreement with the direction of the Project, and, in particular, to ensure that there were no potentially "offending" quotes.

Each faith and belief representative also organised a Focus Group, ensuring the inclusion of women and young people (under the age of 30 years) at which their particular submission was critically commented upon with respect to their suitability for inclusion in the document. Opportunity was also taken to ask questions of, and make suggestions about, the aims and target audience of the Project. These focus groups were all a source of lively and informative discussion.

The amazing variety of faith and belief traditions that were seated round the discussion table was tribute alone to the concept that there is a commonality of core ethical and moral values that unite us. Eleven faiths and beliefs agreeing on the fundamental attitudes of good community relations was a unique experience in itself. The final production of this document reflects their dedication and commitment in working together to promote good community relations.

The MISSION STATEMENT of the Equality and Human Rights Commission is:

"To reduce inequality, eliminate discrimination, promote and protect human rights, and strengthen good relations,"

And thus its VALUES are:

"Equality, Human Rights, and Good Relations."

With respect to promoting "good community relations" the urgent need to do this is described in the following chapter, where the current context is examined. The theme is developed that good community relations can only be attained through a mutual understanding of the common ethical and moral values of the diverse faith and belief communities that make up our society in Scotland today.

"THE GOLDEN RULE"

It is difficult to be certain who first described the "Golden Rule", but one of the oldest references can be traced to the Greek philosopher Pittacus of Mytilene (640 – 568 BCE), whose favourite saying on life was *"Do not to your neighbour what you would take ill from him."*

The Chinese philosopher Confucius (551 – 479 BCE) was asked by one of his pupils if there was any one word that could guide a person throughout life. The Master replied:

“How about ‘shu’: never impose on others what you would not choose for yourself?”

The word *shu* means reciprocity – *“The practice of exchanging things with others for mutual benefit”* [Oxford English Dictionary]. This instruction can be found in all major religions and positive philosophies, and, as will be seen in the following chapter, can form the basis for a “Global Ethic.”

“The basis for such a Global Ethic has not to be created, for it already exists. There are core values and moral insights which are held in common across the different philosophical and religious traditions despite the variety and diversity of beliefs and practices.”¹

The document was launched at a Roundtable event in Glasgow March 2009 by Fergus Ewing, MSP, Minister for Community Safety. It was attended by representatives from the eleven faith and belief communities, the Scottish Inter Faith Council, the Equality and Human Rights Commission, and the Religion and Belief Strategy Working Group of the Scottish Government.

Sunset and trees - Stockxchange photos



PROMOTING “GOOD COMMUNITY RELATIONS” - THE CONTEXT

THE FAILURE OF MULTICULTURALISM

In his most recent book, *The Home That We Build Together*, the Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks stated:

*“Multiculturalism has run its course, and has not led to integration but segregation. It has allowed groups to live separately with no incentive to integrate.....Culture is fragmenting into non-communicating systems of belief in which civil discourse ends and reasoned argument becomes impossible.”*²

This view is reinforced by a timely publication from the Institute of Public Policy and Research, *Faith in the Nation*, which states:

*“What is actually being criticised is the idea and experience of cultural segregation, what has been termed ‘mosaic multiculturalism.’... ..This is the tendency to treat cultural and faith groups as static silos rather than dynamic communities.”*³

In a recent address to mark the fortieth anniversary of MP Enoch Powell’s inflammatory speech warning of the dangers of continual immigration, Trevor Phillips, Chair of the Equality and Human Rights Commission stated that

*“The fear that followed Powellism still stalks Britain.”*⁴

He expounded the Commission’s vision for a fresh approach to the concept of multiculturalism in twenty-first century Britain.

Since Enoch Powell’s day ethnic minority identity has undergone a subtle but profound change to *religious* identity, and, unlike ethnicities, religions are now global. Religion has emerged as the most powerful form of allegiance in the twenty-first century, more so than national identity. With the age of instant mass communication this has far-reaching consequences, for, as Sacks bluntly states:

*“The result is highly destabilising, especially in terms of the management of conflict.....for any clash anywhere in the world now has the potential to go global.”*⁵

One just has to think of the Danish cartoons to appreciate what he means.

Further evidence to support the notion that multiculturalism, as a means of “promoting good community relations” has failed comes from the Scottish Social Attitudes Survey 2006. Disturbingly this revealed that 50% of Scots felt that “...Scotland would lose its identity if more Muslims came to live here”, up from 38% in 2003. Also, 27% felt “Ethnic minorities take jobs away from others,” compared to 20% in the survey of 2002. The pattern would appear to be that discriminatory attitudes towards ethnic minorities have become more common in recent years, with discrimination being less about colour and more about creed.

TOWARDS A COMMONALITY OF VALUES

The key finding from the Cantle Report on the 2001 race riots in Northern England was of towns showing a “depth of polarisation” around segregated communities leading “parallel lives.”⁷ Ethnic and religious differences were being tolerated, but the many and rich commonalities of life shared together were largely ignored. Recognition of this clear failure of multiculturalism as an approach to promoting good community relations resulted in the production of a report from the English government’s new Commission on Integration and Community, entitled *Our Shared Future*. The Chair of the Commission, Darra Singh, firmly stated that:

“Our vision of society is one where people are committed to what we all have in common rather than obsessing with those things that make us different.”⁸

The executive summary emphasises the importance of *“articulating what binds communities together rather than what differences divide them.”⁹*

Arising from this report the government commissioned a consultation document *Face-to-Face and Side-to-Side: A Framework for Inter Faith Dialogue and Social Action*. This aimed to identify a framework that would not only strengthen inter faith relations, but also promote more positive relationships with wider civil society. “Face-to-Face” dialogue describes the dialogue which leads to a better understanding between different faith groups. “Side-by-Side” dialogue, however, involves collaborative social action not only between faith communities but also wider civil or secular society. One approach taken was to commit to work together for the “common good,” grounding this in identifying the

“...values and ideals we all share together: community, personal integrity, a sense of right and wrong, learning, wisdom, and love of truth, care and compassion, justice and peace, respect for one another, and for the earth and its creatures.”¹⁰

Thus it can be seen that these initiatives emphasised a move away from focussing on differences, to one affirming the commonality of various fundamental moral and ethical values. This *commonality of community values* has to be the bridge that all the different faith groups can share with secular society or ‘the non-faith community’.

A GLOBAL ETHIC

The Scottish Government Equality Unit has formed a Religion and Belief Strategy Framework Working Group, the aim being to provide a framework for constructive dialogue between the country’s faith and belief communities. This is felt to be

“...an essential part of building a Scotland where all people can exist co-harmoniously.”¹¹

One of the documents informing the Working Group is *A Call To Our Guiding Institutions*, presented by Professor Hans Kung at the 1999 World Parliament of Religions in Cape Town. This was a formal appeal from the World Parliament to the various governments of the world to apply the *Global Ethic*, signed by over 200 Religious and Spiritual leaders. Quoting Professor Kung on the “Global Ethic”:

“What then is the basis for a Global Ethic, shared by people of all great religions and ethical traditions? First, the principle of humanity: every human being – man or woman, white or coloured, rich or poor, young or old – must be treated humanely, more explicitly expressed in

the Golden Rule of reciprocity: 'What you do not wish done to yourself, do not do to others'."¹²

This principle is quite clearly *inclusive* irrespective of whether a person is religious or not. As Professor Kung repeatedly emphasises, this "Golden Rule" principle

*"...should be the irrevocable, unconditional norm for all areas of life, for families and communities, for races, nations, and religions."*¹³

In 2007 Anil Bhanot, General Secretary of the Hindu Council of the UK, wrote to all the Religious leaders in the nation, urging them to consider the Eastern philosophical-religious concept of "*dharma*" in an effort to heal their divisions and in-fighting. *Dharma*, as expressed by Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism, and Sikhism is *"....righteous duty to oneself, to others, and to God."*¹⁴ By "to others" is meant a completely open approach, to those of all faith or none. Similarly, in a message from the International Governing Council of the Baha'i Faith to the World's Religious Leaders in 2002 a call was made to move beyond the differences and strife between the Religions to promote the *"...harmonising of relationships."*¹⁵

UNITY WITHIN DIVERSITY

In 2007 the Inter Faith Network for the UK produced a visionary and inclusive document for discussion entitled *Faith, Citizenship, and Shared Life in Britain Today*. This was based on the understanding that,

*"Upholding and respecting the integrity of individual strands within our society and, at the same time, ensuring that there continues to be sufficient held in common within society for it not to fragment, is about seeking unity within diversity."*¹⁶

It further develops the idea of "unity" through the concept of a "shared journey" in life on this planet, which is a theme common to the mystical strands of all religions. It continues:

*"Unity among diverse people living within a single society is forged through joint participation, shared lives and experiences, and through developing common understandings of a shared journey".*¹⁷

Once again, the commitment is given that:

*"All our faiths do share the same profound values of personal integrity, care and compassion, justice and peace, respect, for one another, the pursuit of learning, wisdom, and the love of truth."*¹⁸

The document ends by stating that the UK Inter Faith Network not only commits to a better understanding between the faith communities, but also between them and wider society.

The *Humanist Society of Scotland* is one such representative of wider society, otherwise also known as *secular society* or the *non-religious community*. Humanists base their moral principles on a rational approach to life, underpinned by shared human values and respect for all others and, in particular, they lay great emphasis on the upholding of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights for all people everywhere. Thus, although not deriving their moral and ethical position from any "higher authority" such as God, by virtue of their common humanity Humanists share the same values in common with Faith communities that promote good relationships, and naturally this includes the *Golden Rule*.

For as one of the world's greatest contemporary Spiritual leaders, the Dalai Lama, has recently declared,

*“Whether a person practises religion or not, the spiritual qualities of love and compassion, patience, tolerance, forgiveness, humility and so on are indispensable.”*¹⁹

GOLDEN THREADS AND RULES FOR ALL

These “spiritual qualities” are surely the basis for our Global Ethic, summarised by the *Golden Rule*, and shared through our common humanity.

In his speech as the Chairman of the Equality and Human Rights Commission, Trevor Phillips, highlighted the concept of the shared values of humanity by stating:

*“We need some more fundamental agreement on common values. These, in my view, are best based on our Human Rights principles.”*²⁰

The Commission has also declared that Equality is the *golden thread* running through Human Rights, and Human Rights the *golden thread* running through Equality. It can also be said that common ethical and moral values, as shared by Humanity, are what hold these two concepts together. These common values are best summarized by the Golden Rule of *“Do to others as you would have them do to you.”*

However, it has been questioned whether a *purely* rights-based society, supported by equality legislation, can ultimately, of itself, promote good citizenship and community cohesion. Hence the significance of Article 29 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

“Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the full and free development of his personality is possible.”

As Sacks states, *“Rights depend upon law, and responsibilities on culture”*²¹

so if Article 29 is to be met, then our culture must be able to nurture the responsibilities and duties which are necessary to balance these rights.

THE CHALLENGE

The Equality and Human Rights Commission maintains that

“Human Rights reflect the essential values of fairness/justice, respect, dignity, and autonomy.”

Whilst no one can doubt the wisdom inherent in such a statement, the challenge must be **how can we enable our society to reflect these values?**

One approach is the concept of *Social Capital*, variously defined as “relationships of trust and goodwill which flow from a sense of shared identity and mutual responsibility”, or “the ‘social glue’ between people, organizations, and communities that enable them to work together to pursue shared objectives.” However, as Harvard political scientist Robert Putman²² described, there are two main types of Social Capital – “Bonding”, which is a relationship within a community, and “Bridging” which implies relationships extending across community divides. This *Bridging Capital* is the key to engaging different groups and communities to

work together out of a sense of shared interest or for their common good. Quoting from the previously mentioned document *Face-to-Face and Side-by-Side*:

*“The values recognized across a range of traditions, both religious and secular, provide a firm foundation from which bridging capital can grow and flourish.”*²³

Acceptance of this *commonality of values* summed up by the Golden Rule of simply *“treat others as you would be expected to be treated”* has to be the first step in the direction of mutual trust and understanding, from which unlimited “bridging social capital” can begin to grow.

The following quotes are taken from the submissions by the eleven different faith and belief communities in this document to illustrate this *commonality of values*:

“Bahá’í beliefs are expressed in their commitment to initiatives that promote unity and encourage social cohesion, work for which they have been praised by the UN and the United Kingdom government.” [Baha’i Faith].

“It is therefore considered wise to act in a selfless way with loving kindness, mindfulness, generosity and compassion towards all beings. This is the essence of Buddhist ethics.” [Buddhism].

“All of you, have unity of spirit, sympathy, love for one another, a tender heart, and a humble mind.” [Christianity].

“We find real happiness when we think outside of ourselves. That is true joy.” [Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints].

“We should all live together; work together and there should be no jealousy.” [Hinduism].

“Humanism is ethical. It affirms the worth, dignity and autonomy of the individualand Humanists have a duty of care to all of humanity, including future generations.” [Humanism].

“Behave politely to those who do not know you; forgive those who have oppressed you; give to those who have never given you anything; and make brothers of those who have denied their brotherhood with you.” [Islam].

“The essence of Jainism is concern for the welfare of every being in the whole universe. Each of these souls whatever form it may be in is considered of equal value and should be treated with respect and compassion.” [Jainism].

“What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbour: that is the whole Torah, and the rest is commentary.” [Judaism].

“Pagan ethics emphasise taking responsibility for one’s actions and trying to live in harmony with others, and with nature. This arises from our belief that everything is interconnected, and that everything affects everything else.” [Paganism].

“A Sikh undertakes social rights, responsibilities and duties; he expels all ego.” [Sikhism].

“Human Rights reflect the essential values of fairness/justice, respect, dignity, and autonomy”

Values in Harmony



THE BAHA'I FAITH



THE GOLDEN RULE:

“He must not wish for anyone that which he doth not wish for himself, nor speak that which he would not bear to hear spoken by another, nor yet desire for any soul that which he would not have desired for himself.”

(Baha'u'llah, *Gems of Divine Mysteries*, p. 62)

INTRODUCTION

The Bahá'í faith is the youngest and second most widespread of the world's religions. Founded in 1844 in Iran by the prophet/founder known as Bahá'u'lláh (Glory of God) 1817 -1892; the main teaching of the Bahá'í Faith is Unity. This can be seen in its core precepts; One God, One Mankind and the essential Oneness of Religion.

Oneness of God

“He is a true believer in Divine unity who,refuseth to allow any notion of multiplicity to becloud his conception of the singleness of God.”

(Baha'u'llah, *Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah*, p. 166)

Oneness of Mankind

“The most urgent requisite of mankind is the declaration of the oneness of the world of humanity”

(Abdu'l-Bahá, *Divine Philosophy*, p. 45)

Oneness of religion

“May fanaticism and religious bigotry be unknown, all humanity enter the bond of brotherhood, souls consort in perfect agreement, the nations of earth at last hoist the banner of truth and the religions of the world enter the divine temple of oneness, for the foundations of the heavenly religions are one reality”

(Compilations, *Baha'i World Faith*, p. 256)

Bahá'í beliefs are expressed in their commitment to initiatives that promote unity and encourage social cohesion, work for which they have been praised by the UN and the United Kingdom government.

Examples of this work are found in Bahá'í communities around the world and throughout its history. Today Bahá'ís host devotional meetings, community and personal spiritual development study circles for all ages, and diverse activities for children and young people. These activities are open for anyone to attend.

Baha'ís invite all who are serious about the unity of the world to look at the example of the international Bahá'í community that has been described as one of the most culturally and ethnically diverse organised bodies on the planet: a community that belies the widespread notion that unity is impossible and mankind is predisposed to division.

The Bahá'í view of religions is a positive one based on their true nature and purpose.

“..the purpose of religion is the acquisition of praiseworthy virtues, betterment of morals, spiritual development of mankind, the real life and divine bestowals. All the prophets have been the promoters of these principles; none of them has been the promoter of corruption, vice or evil. They have summoned mankind to all good. They have united people in the love

of God, invited them to the religions of the unity of mankind and exhorted them to amity and agreement”

(Abdu'l-Bahá, *Foundations of World Unity*, p. 15)

Love

“... Bahá'u'lláh taught, that Religion is the chief foundation of Love and Unity and the cause of Oneness.”

(Abdu'l-Bahá, *Abdu'l-Bahá in London*, p. 28)

Compassion

“Those virtues that befit his dignity are forbearance, mercy, compassion and loving-kindness towards all the peoples and kindreds of the earth.”

(Baha'u'llah, *Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah*, p. 215)

“..... consort with the people of religions with joy and fragrance”

(Compilations, *Baha'i World Faith*, p. 168)

Forgiveness

“We must look upon our enemies with a sin-covering eye and act with justice when confronted with any injustice whatsoever, forgive all, consider the whole of humanity as our own family, the whole earth as our own country”

(Abdu'l-Bahá, *Divine Philosophy*, p. 41)

Respect

“They must endeavour to consort in a friendly spirit with everyone, must follow moderation in their conduct, must have respect and consideration one for another and show loving-kindness and tender regard to all the peoples of the world.”

(Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 233)

Respect for other communities

“In this wondrous age, however, praised be God, the commandments of God are not delimited, not restricted to any one group of people, rather have all the friends been commanded to show forth fellowship and love, consideration and generosity and loving-kindness to every community on earth.”

(Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 20)

Active concern for human rights

“I hope that each one of you will become just, and direct your thoughts towards the unity of mankind; that you will never harm your neighbours nor speak ill of any one; that you will respect the rights of all men, and be more concerned for the interests of others than for your own.”

(Abdu'l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, p. 160)

“Take ye counsel together, and let your concern be only for that which profiteth mankind, and bettereth the condition thereof..”

(Baha'u'llah, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 62)

Respect for nature and the environment

“Therefore one must be very considerate towards animals and show greater kindness to them than to man. Educate the children in their infancy in such a way that they may become exceedingly kind and merciful to the animals.”

(Abdu'l-Bahá, *Baha'i World Faith - Abdu'l-Bahá Section*, p. 374)

“Say: Nature in its essence is the embodiment of My Name, the Maker, the Creator. Its manifestations are diversified, and in this diversity there are signs for men of discernment.

Nature is God's Will and is its expression in and through the contingent world."

(Baha'u'llah, *Tablets of Baha'u'llah*, p. 141)

Peace

"There is not one soul whose conscience does not testify that in this day there is no more important matter in the world than that of Universal Peace."

(Abdu'l-Bahá, *Tablet to the Hague*, p. 3)

Spiritual nature of man

"Man is, in reality, a spiritual being, and only when he lives in the spirit is he truly happy."

(Abdu'l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, p. 72)

Justice

"The best beloved of all things in My sight is Justice."

(Baha'u'llah, *The Arabic Hidden Words*)

Truthfulness

"Truthfulness is the foundation of all the virtues of the world of humanity."

(Baha'i Scriptures, p. 452)

Work

"Work done in the spirit of service is the highest form of worship."

(Abdu'l-Bahá, *Divine Philosophy*, p. 83)

Service

"This is worship: to serve mankind and to minister to the needs of the people."

(Abdu'l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, p. 176)

Equality of men and women

"The world of humanity has two wings -- one is women and the other men. Not until both wings are equally developed can the bird fly. Should one wing remain weak, flight is impossible."

(Abdu'l-Bahá, *Baha'i World Faith - Abdu'l-Bahá Section*, p. 288)

Universal Auxiliary language

"The use of an international auxiliary language will become a great means of dispelling the differences between nations"

(Compilations, *Baha'i Scriptures*, p. 278)

"...that this universal language may eliminate misunderstandings from among mankind."

(Compilations, *Baha'i World Faith*, p. 288)

Obedience to government and laws

".....the Bahá'ís are the well-wishers of the government, obedient to its laws and bearing love towards all peoples."

(Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 293)

World citizenship

"It is not for him to pride himself who loveth his own country, but rather for him who loveth the whole world. The earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens."

(Baha'u'llah, *Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah*, p. 250)

Spiritual consultation

"In this Cause consultation is of vital importance, but spiritual conference and not the mere voicing of personal views is intended."

.....consultation must have for its object the investigation of truth."

(Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 72)

Independent investigation of truth

“No man should follow blindly his ancestors and forefathers. Nay, each must see with his own eyes, hear with his own ears and investigate independently in order that he may find the truth.”
(Abdu'l-Bahá, *Divine Philosophy*, p. 24)

Prohibition on violence, and religious extremism

“Religious fanaticism and hatred are a world-devouring fire, whose violence none can quench.”
(Baha'u'llah, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 14)

Unity as an aim of religion

“Religion must be the cause of affection. It must be a joy-bringer. If it become the cause of difference, it were better to banish it. Should it become the source of hatred, or warfare, it were better that it should not exist. If a remedy produce added illness, it were far better to discard the remedy. A religion which does not conform with the postulates of science is merely superstition.”

(Abdu'l-Bahá, *Divine Philosophy*, p. 82)

“The fundamental purpose animating the Faith is to safeguard the interests and promote the unity of the human race, and to foster the spirit of love and fellowship amongst men. Suffer it not to become a source of dissension and discord, of hate and enmity.Whatsoever is raised on this foundation, the changes and chances of the world can never impair its strength,.....

Our hope is that the world's religious leaders and the rulers thereof will unitedly arise for the reformation of this age and the rehabilitation of its fortunes.”

(Baha'u'llah, *Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah*, p. 215)

Religious truth not absolute but relative

“The fundamental principle enunciated by Bahá'u'lláh, ...is that Religious truth is not absolute but relative, that Divine Revelation is a continuous and progressive process”

(Shoghi Effendi, Summary Statement - 1947, Special UN Committee on Palestine)

Discussing Values in Harmony in the Baha'i Faith focus group - Photo courtesy Carrie Varjavandi





Nine-pointed star



The Ringstone Symbol



The Greatest Name



*Bahá'í symbols, 'Abdu'l-Bahá being knighted, Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh, Portrait of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Shrine of the Báb, Bahá'í Temple India, Bahá'í diversity - Copyright Bahá'í International Community and Marco Abrar
www.bahaipictures.com*

GLOSSARY

Abdu'l-Bahá (1844 - 1921) The name by which Abbas Effendi the son of Bahá'u'lláh and His appointed successor, is commonly known. "Abdu'l-Bahá" means "Servant of Bahá".. He was the Head of the Bahá'í Faith, the authorized interpreter of Baha'u'llah's Writings, and the perfect exemplar of what a Bahá'í should be.

The Báb (1819 - 1850) Translates as, "the Gate." The title of Hájí Siyyid Mírzá Alí Muhammad Shirazi, the Prophet-Founder of the Bábí Faith and "Herald" of the Bahá'í Faith. His brief ministry ended with His public execution on July 9, 1850 in Tabríz, Persia.

Bahá'u'lláh (1817 - 1892) Translates as, "the Glory of God." The title of Mírzá Husayn Alí Nuri, The Prophet-Founder of the Bahá'í Faith. He spent His 40-year ministry in prison and in exile. In spite of great hardships and the opposition of the most powerful leader, He succeeded in spreading His message of unity and peace, dictating 100 volumes (which form the core of the Bahá'í Holy Writings), and proclaiming to the world's leaders calling them to reconcile their differences and establish true justice in the world.

Bahá'í Noun and adjective, A follower of Bahá'u'lláh. Anything closely associated with the Faith of Baha'u'llah.

Guardian The title of a post held by head of the Bahá'í Faith Shoghi Effendi (1896 - 1957) grandson of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. The Guardian was given the sole authority to interpret the Holy Writings.

Greatest Name (also "Most Great Name") Short for "The Greatest Name of God" said to be a mystery that would be revealed in the days of fulfillment of prophecy. Bahá'ís believe this name to be "Alláh-u-Abhá" ("God, the All-Glorious") . The title of Bahá'u'lláh, and various forms of it reflect the importance of this name. The most common are "Alláh-u-Abhá" and "Ya Bahá'u'l-Abhá" ("O Glory of the All-Glorious"). There are also several calligraphic expressions of the Greatest Name.

Local and National Spiritual Assemblies The annually elected bodies of nine adult Bahá'ís that administer the affairs of the Bahá'í Faith at the local or national level.

Manifestation of God A term used by Bahais to refer to divine the Messengers sent by God to reveal His teachings to humanity.

Progressive Revelation The Bahá'í belief that God has sent successive manifestations who bring new revelations in order to advance, renew and educate humanity.

Regional Council The Universal House of Justice created Regional Councils beginning in 1998 as an intermediate level of administration. In Scotland the Bahá'í Council is the highest authority under the National Spiritual Assembly of the UK.

Universal Auxillary Language Use of a language universally understood and additional to the native tongue, to enable better understanding and the promotion of unity among peoples.

Universal House of Justice The elected supreme governing body of the Bahá'í Faith.

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BUDDHISM



THE GOLDEN RULE:

“Never to do anything harmful but
To accomplish the very finest of virtues
And master one’s own mind:
This is the Teaching of the Buddha.”
(*Dhammapa* 14/183)

“Treat not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful”
(*Udana – Varga*, 5.18)

Buddhism emerged from the teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha, born as Prince Siddharta in 623 BCE in India. Buddhism flourished in India until the twelfth century CE and continued in exile as a series of distinct traditions in Eastern Asia thereafter: principally the Southern Buddhist traditions of Ceylon, Burma, Thailand and Laos (all mainly Theravada) and the Mahayana traditions of China, Japan, Tibet and Korea.

Prince Siddharta is seen as the crowning end-result of a long evolution of purification and meditation as “the bodhisattva”, lasting many hundreds of existences stretching over vast cosmic ages. These are recounted in the Jataka stories. Mahayana Buddhists see the Buddha as having attained enlightenment in the highest plane of existence then emanating on Earth to teach its timeless truths, appearing here like the reflection of the moon in water. Other traditions see the Earthly life of Siddhartha as his final existence during which he attains total enlightenment. For them, he is a real, if very extraordinary, human being.

They all tell of a prince who left royal life resolving to understand what causes suffering, how to free oneself from it and thereby discover life’s true meaning. He tested both self-indulgence and self-mortification to the limits, discarded both and found a “Middle Way” of profound realisation of the true nature of the mind, answering all his questions. This lasting awareness of ultimate truth is called ‘enlightenment’. He became known as the Buddha: the “Fully Awakened One”. He then spent 45 years teaching others how they too could attain freedom from suffering and lasting peace and happiness. He was a teacher rather than a saviour. His teachings—“dharma”—have three main aspects:

1. **Right Conduct**, based on respect for life, non-harm and the teachings of karma.
2. **Meditation**, making the mind stable, peaceful and insightful.
3. **Wisdom** into the Four Noble Truths about suffering, its causes, liberation and liberation’s causes.

Karma means action. Buddha taught that, besides their immediate effect, actions have very long-term repercussions for their doer, shaping that person’s future existences. Harmful actions produce future-life suffering for their doer. Helpful actions produce happiness. One reaps as one sows, with inevitable consequences for oneself, others and the environment. It is therefore considered wise to act in a selfless way with loving kindness, mindfulness, generosity and compassion towards all beings. People in community, or *sangha*, can do much to support each other in developing this understanding of how actions of body, speech and mind impact ourselves and other living beings.

This is the essence of Buddhist ethics. In practice they are based on avoiding the **Ten Non-Virtues** and cultivating the **Ten Virtues**:

1. “Not to kill but to save and nurture life.
2. Not to steal but to be generous.
3. To avoid sexual misconduct and practice purity (celibacy or fidelity).
4. Not to lie but to strive for the truth.
5. Not to speak in a way that creates discord but to use speech to foster harmony.
6. Not to speak abusively but to speak kindly.
7. Not to waste the gift of speech in chatter but to speak only meaningfully.
8. To shun malevolence and nurture love.
9. To shun greed and think generously and selflessly.
10. To remove delusions and learn the truth.”

(thar.pa.rin.po.che'i.rgyan)

The extensive Buddhist methods of **meditation** aim at **calming** the mind and achieving **insight** into how it functions, so as to master it. The meditation teachings, the great speciality of Buddhism, have been maintained as living lineages of expertise. They have given rise to Buddhism’s extensive psychological terminology.

Mindfulness, the foundation of Buddhist training, involves developing awareness of body, feelings, thoughts and the way life works. This awareness becomes the basis for being mindful of the Buddha’s teachings on such things as our worldly impurity, its sufferings, impermanence, and the “void” nature of all things. Mindful awareness makes for successful ethical action. This awareness, far from being negative or nihilistic, is a recognition of how things are, and it gives rise to understanding, compassion, and liberation from suffering.

*Whoever has been negligent but later become vigilant
Is like the Moon freed from clouds, lighting up the world.*

Dhammapada

Wisdom of the Four Truths mainly entails understanding “no self”, i.e. that notions of a lasting personal soul or a creator god are humanity’s mistaken interpretation of the true nature of consciousness. The Mahayana traditions extend this logic to the void nature of all things.

Respect for others and **generosity** towards them concerns not only other humans but all forms of conscious life. In our everyday world, that means respecting the lives of **animals** as well as **humans**, although actually Buddhism teaches there to be six main forms of life, living in parallel worlds: gods, demi-gods, humans, animals, spirits and hell-beings.

*A blade of grass, wrongly handled, will cut the hand.
The religiously life, wrongly lived, leads to hell.*

Dhammapada 22/6

Respect for life also means seeing others through long-term eyes believing in karma and reincarnation—eyes of past gratitude and future hope. Even the worst people should be seen through eyes of love. Buddhists are generally anti-abortion and anti-euthanasia. However, some say that the overall outcome—the greatest good or the least harm—are factors also to be considered.

Reincarnation is a central teaching. Some traditions stress both it and the vast cosmic image of six realms while others prefer to remain concentrated on this life and the present moment. Through **karma**, rebirth takes consciousness up and down, round and round, on a “wheel of life” known as **samsara** and famous for its suffering. Buddhism encourages us not just to see the superficial person of the present moment but to recognise the former friend and parent of past lives and the potential Buddha of some future life within the other person.

The **Impermanence** of people and things is also central to Buddhism. Learning to live with change, rather than in denial of it, is a basic aspect of Buddhist training.

*For lifetimes untold through samsara I've roamed
For the housebuilder seeking but failing to meet him.
How great is the pain ever new births to gain!
But now, builder, you're met; no more homes you'll erect.
For the rafters are fractured, the ridgepole is shattered.
My mind, in forsaking conditioned causation,
Through craving's destruction, has reached liberation.*

Dhammapada 11. 153-154

Love and **compassion** are valued by all Buddhists. Mahayana Buddhists place more insistence on them being an essential basis for all practice of Buddhism, as in the *Text Discussing Lokeshvara's Realization*:

Were there one thing, like all enlightened qualities in the palm of one's hand, what would it be? Great compassion!

Love and compassion need to be universal, rather than partial, and are taught alongside **impartiality** and **sympathetic joy**: a longing for others to attain spiritual emancipation. Love, compassion, sympathetic joy and impartiality are known as the Four Abodes of Purity or *Four Brahmaviharas*.

*May all beings be happy and create the causes of happiness.
May they all be free from suffering and the causes of suffering.
May they attain the lasting happiness beyond suffering.
May they attain impartial equanimity, beyond bias of friend and enemy.*

Traditional Buddhist prayer

Love is the topic of the first line and is defined through karma, cause and effect as: “The heartfelt wish to bring happiness to all other beings and to sow the seeds of future happiness”. The *Ornament of Mahayana Sutras* says:

A bodhisattva acts towards sentient beings as though they were an only child, with a loving kindness so great that it comes from the very marrow of the bones. (S)he thereby wishes to benefit them constantly.

Similarly, **compassion** (second line) is defined as “the heartfelt wish to alleviate the sufferings of all beings and to remove the causes of possible future sufferings”.

In Buddhism, **patience** and **tolerance** are covered by the topic of **forbearance** (*ksanti*). It is the remedy to anger, violence, aggression and frustration. It could be summed up as an inner

strength of loving wisdom that can cope with anything, without being upset by it.

There is no evil comparable to anger and nothing so difficult as to be forbearing. Therefore one should cultivate forbearance most earnestly using all sorts of means.

(Prajnaparamitasamcayagatha)

Forbearance uses all sorts of methods and reflections, some everyday and commonsense and some based in meditation, aiming to transform anger into wisdom in the instant.

We must to learn to cope well with difficult people and circumstances, the sufferings of body and mind and the difficulties involved in practising dharma.

(thar.pa.rin.po.che'i.rgyan)

Diminishing one's own aggression and seeking intelligent, peaceful solutions is seen as a grass roots way to a more enlightened society.

During his life, the Buddha made clear that the finest way in which one can serve others is by devoting life to **renunciation** and **contemplation**. Many thousands left their worldly lives and joined him. Buddhism has ever since had a strong monastic and contemplative heritage. Its monastic communities have been strong reminders that this life, this world and material gain are not everything. Respecting and supporting monks, nuns and monasteries is a major part of Buddhist life. Monastic institutions are seen as havens of peace and wisdom. This has changed somewhat in recent decades with the growth, especially in the West, of active lay Buddhists. The Buddha said:

Those who live alone and sleep alone, who travel alone and are never distressed—those who alone subdue themselves, find joy deep in the forests.

If you have no desire for sons, wealth or for estates—either for yourself or others—and desire no good fortune through wrong means, you are truly possessed of ethics, knowledge and the dharma.

(Dharmapada)

Issues of **Opportunity**

The Buddha is famous for, against much opposition, having allowed outcastes to join the Order and admitting women. This was revolutionary. Although historically Asian institutions were male-dominated, there have been equal opportunities for spiritual, if not hierarchical, progress because the potential for enlightenment transcends sex, race or social status:

The universal essence (dharmata) knows no differentiation

(Mahayanottaratantrashastra)

Today, outstanding equal rights issues are being addressed at the highest level.

Concern for other people:

*For conscious beings, poor and destitute, may I become a treasure ever plentiful.
For those ailing in the world, may I be a doctor, a nurse and the medication itself.
May I be a guard for the protectorless, a guide for those who journey on the road, a
lamp for those who long for light, and for all those that need a servant, a slave.
(from Santideva's "Bodhisattva's Way")*

Theravadan Buddhist Nuns - Courtesy Saranaloka



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CHRISTIANITY



THE GOLDEN RULE:

“Do to others as you would have them do to you” (Luke 6:31)

INTRODUCTION

CHRISTIANITY is monotheistic faith. Christians believe in One God, who is Love and who is Creator of All. This One God has revealed himself as the Holy Trinity: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. These are, each and together, the fullness of the One God. Human beings are created in the image of God and are called to love. Spirituality, faith and religious practice are ways which help us respond to God’s call to love.

Jesus Christ, the Son, on whose life and teaching the Christian religion is based, summed up his message in two commandments: ‘Love God’ and ‘Love your neighbour’ (Matthew 22:27-29; Mark 12:30-31). He also taught us how to pray to God, Our Father. (See text box: The Lord’s Prayer).

Jesus was a Jew who lived 2000 years ago. He was an itinerant teacher who preached and worked miracles around the Holy Land. He told people about the ‘Kingdom of God’. Because of his teaching he was killed by civil and religious authorities. Three days later, God the Father raised Jesus, the Son, from the dead. Jesus established a community of followers to take his message out to the whole world. Jesus assured his followers of the ongoing presence and power of the Holy Spirit.

The Lord’s Prayer

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive
those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours,
now and forever.
Amen

(ELLC – English Language Liturgical Consultation)

Today there are many different traditions and churches within Christianity. Regrettably, Christian history has suffered the scandal of division. Thankfully, today many Christians are actively seeking to work more and more closely together, to grow in love and respect for one another, and to learn from one another. The aim is to re-establish unity among all of Christ’s followers – a unity which encompasses the rich diversity found among our many and valued Christian traditions.



Some key values and practices in Christianity are: love, prayer, justice and peace, right living; and right relationships with God, with other people, and with all of creation. These values are shared by many people in our world. The majority of Christians seek to live in harmony with adherents of other faith traditions and philosophies. For the Christian, the reason and purpose of these values is centred in Jesus Christ, God who is Love.

Adjacent photo: Pilgrims gather outside Iona Abbey. Iona Abbey was founded in the 7th century by St. Columba. Today, Iona is a centre for pilgrimage for Christians of many diverse backgrounds. The Abbey was rebuilt in the 1930s by tradesmen and ministers working together under the guidance of George MacLeod, the founder of the ecumenical Iona Community. The Church is a living organism and work is still being done on this historic building - Courtesy Isabel Sarle

QUOTATIONS FROM THE NEW TESTAMENT OF THE CHRISTIAN SCRIPTURES, THE BIBLE:

Christians share the Hebrew Scriptures with our Jewish brothers and sisters. In the Christian Bible these books are called the Old Testament. The books of the New Testament tell the story of Jesus and the early Christian community.

In the following quotations, we offer references from the New Testament (New Revised Standard translation). These express some community values from a Christian perspective. In faith, we trust that these will resonate with the insights and values of other traditions.

Love

Jesus said: "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you..." (Matthew 5:43-44)

If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing. Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends. And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love. (extracts from 1 Corinthians 13)

Compassion

Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you. (Ephesians 4:32)

Finally, all of you, have unity of spirit, sympathy, love for one another, a tender heart, and a humble mind. (1 Peter 3:8)

Respect

Pay to all what is due them – taxes to whom taxes are due, revenue to whom revenue is due, respect to whom respect is due, honour to whom honour is due. (Romans 13:7)

Honour everyone. Love the family of believers. Fear God. Honour the emperor. (1 Peter 2:17)

Patience

Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. (Romans 12:12)

... lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love. (Ephesians 4:1-2)

And we urge you, beloved, to admonish the idlers, encourage the faint hearted, help the weak, be patient with all of them. (1 Thessalonians 5:14)





Forgiveness

Then Peter came and said to Jesus, "Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?" Jesus said to him, "Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times. (Matthew 18:21-22)

Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone; so that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. (Mark 11:25)

Humility

...to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarrelling, to be gentle, and to show every courtesy to everyone. (Titus 3:2)

Who is wise and understanding among you? Show by your good life that your works are done with gentleness born of wisdom. (James 3:13)

Mercy

Jesus said, "Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy." (Matthew 5:7)

... judgement will be without mercy to anyone who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgement. (James 2:13)

... keep yourselves in the love of God; look forward to the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. And have mercy on some who are wavering... (Jude 1:22)



Concern for other people

Jesus said, "... with the judgement you make you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get." (Matthew 7:2)

Do not seek your own advantage, but that of the other. (1 Corinthians 10:24)

Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus... (Philippians 2:3-5)

Equality in the sight of God

There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:28)

Ethical Living

Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. (Romans 12:16)

If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. (Romans 12:18)

Respect for community

Jesus said, "Do to others as you would have them do to you... Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back." (Luke 6:31,37-38)

But we appeal to you, brothers and sisters, to respect those who labour among you, and have charge of you in the Lord and admonish you; esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves. (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13)

Respect for nature and the environment

the earth and its fullness are the Lord's. (1 Corinthians 10:26)

... for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers--all things have been created through him and for him. (Colossians 1:16)

Codes of Conduct

Jesus answered, "The first [commandment] is, 'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." (Mark 12:29-31)

Jesus said, "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13:34-35)



Family Life

Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for a fish, will give a snake instead of a fish? Or if the child asks for an egg, will give a scorpion? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" (Luke 11:11-13)

Jesus said to them, "Whoever welcomes this child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me; for the least among all of you is the greatest." (Luke 9:48)

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THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS



THE GOLDEN RULE:

“Do unto others as ye would have them do unto ye,”. (Luke 6, v 31)

INTRODUCTION

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is a Christian faith with Jesus Christ at its head. We believe that the gospel, as preached by Jesus Christ in ancient times, is restored to the earth and continues to be directed by Him through a living prophet and twelve apostles through prophesy and revelation. Through modern-day revelation we have learned that there are three separate persons in the Godhead: the Father (God), the Son (Jesus Christ), and the Holy Ghost (the Spirit). We believe that a person can know the truth of anything by asking God in prayer. We believe that God as our loving Heavenly Father has always and will always continue to talk to His children.

We believe the Bible to be the word of God, and use both the Old and New Testaments. We also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God. The Book of Mormon is an additional testimony of Jesus Christ. It is an ancient record of His dealings with inhabitants of the Americas. The crowning event recorded in the Book of Mormon is the personal ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ among the people of this ancient world soon after his resurrection:

“Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold and one shepherd.”

John 10:16, New Testament

We believe that by having additional scriptures and using them together, our knowledge of the nature of God and His plan for us can be made clear:

“Know ye not that I, the Lord God, have created all men, and I remember those who are upon the isles of the sea...wherefore I speak the same words unto one nation like unto another. And when the two nations shall run together the testimony of the two nations shall run together also.”

2 Nephi 29:7-8, Book of Mormon

Love

Jesus Christ taught:

“And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.”

Luke 6: 31, New Testament

Within this one scripture, Christ tells us that we should be loving, compassionate, respectful and tolerant with each other. He was the perfect example. He forgave the sinner. He was humble and prayerful. He had mercy for the weak and the poor. He taught us not to judge. He had concern for the one.

Service

*“And behold, I tell you these things that ye may learn wisdom; that ye may learn that when ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God.”
Mosiah 2:17, Book of Mormon*

Service is offered to everyone regardless of religion, race or culture. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has been a major contributor in relief efforts to help people whose lives have been devastated by war or natural disaster. In addition we also contribute to and provide a number of relief and development projects for humanitarian purposes in local communities all over the world. This is often done in conjunction with other charities and local organisations.

The Relief Society of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the World YWCA – the two largest women’s organisations in the world – discussed the need to work together to provide relief to those in need. Dr. Musimbi Kanyoro, general secretary of the World YWCA in 2006 said that: “the two organizations are able to reach out to people regardless of the borders - it does not matter; it is the humanity that pulls us together.”

Of course service does not always have to be on such a grand scale. Members of our faith are encouraged to find opportunities to serve in their everyday lives:

*“We can’t do everything for everyone everywhere, but we can do something for someone somewhere”
Elder Richard L. Evans (1906–71) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles*

We take the counsel from James seriously when he says:

*“But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves”
James 1:22, New Testament*

The Family

The family has historically been viewed as the base unit of society. In response to the decline of the central role of the family in recent years, the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (made up of the Prophet and 2 counsellors from the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles) received revelation in the form of a declaration to the world to reaffirm the importance of the family.

“The family is central to the Creator’s plan for the eternal destiny of His children... Husband and wife have a solemn responsibility to love and care for each other and for their children. “Children are an heritage of the Lord.” (Psalms 127:3, Old Testament). Parents have a sacred duty to rear their children in love and righteousness, to provide for their physical and spiritual needs, to teach them to love and serve one another, to observe the commandments of God and to be law-abiding citizens wherever they live”

*The Family – a proclamation to the world (1995)
The First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*

Marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God. This relationship is sacred and is practiced monogamously.

“There therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh”

Genesis 2:24, Old Testament

We believe that families can be eternal. Members of our faith are invited to be sealed for time and all eternity to their spouses and children, ending the heartbreak of the words ‘till death do you part’.

Equality of men and women

Nothing has been revealed which suggests that to be a man rather than to be a woman is preferred in the sight of God, or that He places a higher value on sons than on daughters. All virtues listed in the scriptures – love, joy, peace, faith, godliness, charity – are shared by both men and women.

“ALL HUMAN BEINGS – male and female – are created in the image of God. Each is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and, as such, each has a divine nature and destiny. Gender is an essential characteristic of individual pre-mortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose... [in addition] fathers and mothers are obligated to help one another as equal partners.”

The Family – a proclamation to the world (1995)

The First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Talking specifically to the woman of the church the Prophet Gordon B. Hinckley said:

“You are daughters of the Almighty. Limitless is your potential. Magnificent is your future, if you will take control of it.”

Gordon B Hinckley, 2001 (1910-2008)

Education

“Seek ye diligently and teach one another words of wisdom: yea seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom, seek learning, even by study and also by faith”

Doctrine & Covenants 88:118

“It is so important that you young men and you young women get all the education that you can.”

Gordon B. Hinckley, 1999 (1910-2008)

Young or old, male or female, we are counselled to educate ourselves to the best of our abilities. To help those members of our faith in developing countries achieve the maximum education that they can, and break the cycle of poverty, the church announced the Perpetual Education Fund (PEF) in 2001. The PEF offers loans to those who otherwise would be unable to afford education. Once they graduate and have found employment the money is then paid back into the fund to support further people in accessing education.

Alongside formal education we are also encouraged to seek learning and truth wherever it is found. It is so important as, after we die, we are able to take the knowledge and intelligence with us.



TOP: Latter-day Saints relief work in action. LEFT: Family life is important with Latter-day Saints. RIGHT: Young people are strongly encouraged to study within Latter-day saints Institutions. - Courtesy of Latter-day Saints Photos

“Whatever principle of intelligence we attain unto in this life, it will rise with us in the resurrection. And if a person gains more knowledge and intelligence in this life through his diligence and obedience than another, he will have so much the advantage in the world to come”

Doctrine & Covenants 130:18-19

Community Relations

A respect for the diverse beliefs and unique contributions of all the world’s faiths is one of the hallmarks of our faith. From the earliest days of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the Prophet Joseph Smith (1805-1844) taught the principle of religious liberty and tolerance:

“We claim the privilege of worshipping Almighty God according to the dictates of our own conscience, and allow all men the same privilege, let them worship how, where, or what they may”

Articles of Faith 1:11

“I would encourage members of the Church wherever they may be to show kindness and respect for all people everywhere. The world in which we live is filled with diversity. We can and should demonstrate respect toward those whose beliefs differ from ours.”

*President Thomas S. Monson, Oct. 2008, Prophet of the
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*

Though the Church asserts its ecclesiastical independence and recognizes its doctrinal differences, this does not prevent it from partnering with other faiths in charitable projects. These efforts are based on universal values. A different interpretation of the atonement of Christ, for example, need not diminish the mandate of Christ to “love thy neighbour as thyself.” Therefore, it is necessary to maintain a separation between charitable efforts and doctrinal tenets, while at the same time sharing mutual concern for those in need.

People of good faith do not need to have the exact same beliefs in order to accomplish great things in the service of their fellow human beings.

“The Lord did not people the earth with a vibrant orchestra of personalities only to value the piccolos of the world. Every instrument is precious and adds to the complex beauty of the symphony. All of Heavenly Father’s children are different in some degree, yet each has his own beautiful sound that adds depth and richness to the whole”

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin (1917-2008) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

CONTACTS

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HINDUISM



THE GOLDEN RULE:

“This is the sum of duty: do not do to others what would cause pain if done to you,” (Mahabharata 5: 1517).

परोपकार पुण्याय पापाय परपीडनम् – लोकप्रिय निबन्धावली

PAROPAKAARA PUNNYAAYA PAAPAAYA PARPEEDANA

(Popular Nibandhawali)

The main essence of 18 PURANS is - ‘that good deed towards others is the biggest deed of all and to inflict pain to others is the biggest sin of all’
(Popular Nibandhawali)

HINDU FAITH – BACKGROUND & BELIEFS

According to the Vedic astrology book *Panchang*, life on earth began 1,955,885,105 years ago. The creation of the Vedas by Lord Brahma also took place at this time. The knowledge of the Vedas was imparted to sage Manu 5.32 million years ago by Lord Brahma himself. Later, the Sage Vyasa took this knowledge and divided it up into four parts which are now known as the Four Vedas.

Eshwar (God) created the world and is present in everything. According to scriptures there are three physical representations of this power – **Brahma** (The Creator), **Vishnu** (The Preserver) and **Mahesh** (Shiva - The Destroyer).

HINDU MYTHOLOGY

Hindus believe in reincarnation – the Soul is indestructible. At death, the body is destroyed, the soul leaves the body and, based on their Karma, it takes birth in another living form. God rewards or punishes a person according to his/her actions in life (= KARMA)
(Gita 4, Shlok 11)

Holy Scriptures

Hindu scriptures are the oldest historical written religious record. Written mainly in Sanskrit and Vedic Sanskrit script there are three main categories of the Holy Scriptures:

- 1. Shruti (“that which is heard”)** – consists of the four Vedas and Upanishads. The oldest holy text is **Rigveda** (Wisdom of the Verses), **Yajurveda** (Wisdom of Sacrificial Formulas), **Samaveda** (Wisdom of Chants), and **Ataravaveda** (Wisdom of Atharvan Priests). Portions of the Vedas containing the Hindu philosophy are called Upanishads.
- 2. Smriti (“that which is remembered”)** Dharma Shastras (legal and ethical texts).
- 3. Puranas** – Historical tales of God and Sages. Hindu epics: Ramayana and Mahabarata.

Bhagavad-Gita – The actual words of Lord Krishna. Contains all the main points of the holy scriptures.

Whenever there is a lot of evil on the Earth, the God and Goddess come down to Earth in a human form (Avtar). In these holy scriptures the main message is that every living being has a soul, so be nice to every living being and help humans (and non humans) as much as possible.

Photo from previous page: Hindu Mandir, La Belle Place, Glasgow - Courtesy Shobha Nagpal

WHAT IS THE HINDU WAY OF LIFE?

There are four **Purusharthas** and four **Ashrams** which sets individual objectives / goals and duties in human life.

PURUSHARTHAS –

Dharma (Duty),
Artha (Success),
Kama (Physical enjoyment),
Moksha (Salvation).

ASHRAMS –

Brahmachariya (Phase of learning & celibate life),
Grihastha (Householder life),
Vanaprastha (Hermitage),
Sannyasa (Renunciation).

SOME EXAMPLES OF CORE VALUES IN HINDU RELIGION:

धृति, क्षमा, दमो स्तेयं औचमिन्द्रिय निग्रह
धीर्विद्या सत्यमक्रोधो दशकं धर्मलक्षणम् – मनुस्मृति

DHRITI, KSHAMA, DAMOASTEYAM SHAUCHAMINDRIYA NIGRAH
DHEERVIDYA SATYAMAKRODHO DASHAKAM DHARMA LAKSHANAM (Manusmriti)

Patience, forgiveness, destruction of the evil, no stealing, self cleanness, wisdom, control on materialistic desires, education, honesty and anger control – these are ten signs of religion (Manusmriti)

Humanity / life

करुणा, प्रेम, सत्शिक्षा, नम्रता, समभावना
दया, समवेदना, भक्तिश्चा तौ मानव लक्षणम् – जनश्रुति

KARUNA, PREM, SATSHIKSHA, NAMRATA, SAMABHAAVANAA,
DAYAA, SAMVEDANAA, BHAKTISCHASHTAU MAANAV LAKSHANAM (Janshruti)

Kindness, Love, Good virtues, Politeness and Devotion, are all signs of humanity - Janshruti

ॐ ईशावास्यमिदं सर्वं यत्किंच जगत्यां जगत्
तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथा मा गृधः कस्यस्विद्धनम् – ऋक्ल यजुर्वेद अध्याय 40 मंत्र 1

OM EESHAAVAASYAMIDAM SARVAM YATKINCHA JAGATYAAM JAGAT
TENA TYAKTENA BHUNJEETHAA MAA GRIDHAH KASYASWIDDHANAM –
(Shukla Yajurveda, Chapter 40, Mantra 1)

“Whatever is visible in this world belongs to God and God is in everything. Therefore every individual should always give something and should not snatch anything from others” –
(Shukla Yajurveda, Chapter 40, Mantra 1)

HEALTHY THOUGHTS / KNOWLEDGE

अयं निजः परोवेति गणना लघुचेतसाम्
उदार चरितानांतु वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम् – हितोपदेश

AYAM NIJAH PAROVETI GADANA LAGHUCHETSAAM
UDAARA CHARITAANAANTU VASUDHAIVA KUTUMBKAM – (Hitopadesh)

“This is mine, this is yours – this type of thinking is a sign of ignorance. A kind, learned & wise man believes in and serves the whole world, maintaining **worldwide brotherhood**”
(Hitopadesh)

VEDAS

सहनाववतु सहनौ भुनुक्तु सहवीर्यं करवावहै
तेजस्विनावधीतमस्तु मा विद्वि ावहै –(1) कठोपनिषद्
(2)तृतीय वल्ली 19 लोक

SAHANAAVAVATU SAHANAU BHUNAKTU SAHAVIRYAM KARAVAAVAHAI
TEJASWINAAVADHEETAMASTU MA VIDWISHAAVAHAI – (1) Kathopanishad
(2)Tritiya Valli 19

Shlok

“We should all live together; work together and there should be no jealousy.”
(1) Kathopanishad (2)Tritiya Valli 19 Shlok

अहिंसा परमोधर्मः – जनश्रुति महाभारत आदिपर्व ;11 13द्
किसी की भी हिंसा न करना परम धर्म है

AHIMSAA PARAMODHARMAH – (Janshruti)
Ahimsa (non-injury) is the ultimate dharma (duty) (Janshruti (Mahabharat - Aadi Parva -
(11.13) (1))

मा मा हिंसी : – यजुर्वेद रुद्रा ठाध्यायी 6 8 मन्त्र
किसी को भी मत मारो – वेद

MA MA HINSEEH – “**Do not kill anyone**” (Yajurved Rudraashtaadhyayi , 6-8 Mantra)

ये यथा मां प्रपद्यन्ते तां स्तथैव भजाम्यहम् – गीता, अध्याय 4, श्लोक 11
जो जिस तरह का कर्म करता है, ईश्वर उसे उसी तरह का फल देता है

YE YATHAA MAAM PRAPADYANTE TAM STATHAIVA BHAJAAMYAHAM
(Gita - Chapter 4, Shlok 11)

God rewards or punishes a person according to his/her actions:
“As you sow so shall you reap,” (Gita - Chapter 4, Shlok 11)

वेद यज्ञ – अग्ने! नय सुपथा राये अस्मान् – जुक्ल यजुर्वेद अध्याय 4, मंत्र 20
हे अग्नि! हम सबको अच्छे रास्ते में ले चलो
Ved Yagyna – AGNE! NAYA SUPATHAA RAAYE – ASMAAN –

“O Fire God! Take us to the right path,”

(Shukla Yajurveda Chapter 40 Mantra 20)

All the above and many more virtues have been described in the Hindu scriptures again and again. These have been explained not once, not hundreds, but millions of times! A Hindu is encouraged to follow the above path “religiously.”

In relation to the above – Respect for the elders, affection, love and blessings for the younger, friendship between people of same age group, help and kindness towards the deprived, charity to the poor, good wishes to a happy person, respect and politeness towards old folks, duty towards family members, humanitarian attitude towards all humans, faith and devotion to God, respect for the authority and its rules and regulations, learning from wise people, respectful attitude and looking after parents and old folks, taking care of a sick person, kindness to animals and vegetation, following good virtues, giving up bad habits, no stealing, feeling happiness for others happiness, avoidance of jealousy, prayers to God every morning and evening along with continuation of daily duties - are **various virtues** described in the Hindu scriptures.

It is believed there are **14 different levels** living beings can go through; seven at the top towards righteousness and seven at the lower level. In the above equation the man is at the 8th level. As such the human is at the top amongst all living beings. Of the seven levels below, the example are - Ignorance, foolishness, illiteracy; ego, violence etc. Kindness, love, politeness, equality, forgiveness etc are at the upper level. Hinduism leads individuals to make an effort to move upwards which is the path of righteousness & moving downwards brings out the animal instinct; therefore this is not the correct path.

IMPORTANT HINDU SYMBOLS:



Lord GANESH has many attributes. He is known as Lord of Obstacles, for He removes obstacles from the path of righteousness. His name comes first and he is worshipped first according to Hindu Sanatan Dharm. He is in front of all Gods and Goddesses.



OM or **AUM** in one word is the symbol and summarises the total essence of Hinduism. Om represents the Hindu Trinity (Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva) and is also known to be the primordial sound from which this whole universe was created.



SWASTIKA – An ancient auspicious Hindu symbol. It has four arms drawing good luck from all the four corners. The Swastika is derived from Sanskrit word Swasti literally meaning ‘well being’. The symbol is extensively used in Hindu faith at auspicious occasions.



After the symbol ‘OM’ or ‘AUM’ and ‘SWASTIKA’, **Shri** is the most popular symbol used in Hinduism. **Shri** or **Sri** is also the sacred symbol of Lakshmi, the Hindu Goddess of wealth and prosperity. The symbol is therefore written at top of ledgers and documents.

If ‘OM’ is spiritual, Shri is both spiritual and materialistic. Shri is used to address Gods, elders, teachers, holy men and any individual.



SHIV LING: **Shiv Lingam** is the symbol of Lord Shiva. The cylindrical “Shivlinga” represents the whole universe, which expresses the deep mystery that Lord Shiva is supreme God (Par Brahm).



Kalash or **Kalasha** is a pot, having coconut circled by mango leaves or beetle leaves on top and is an important accompaniment in various rituals in Hindu religion. The Kalasha symbolically represents creation. The vacant pot, symbolizes earth, and the water filled symbolizes the primordial water from which life began on earth. Life began in water and nothing can exist in this world without water.



DIYA - In almost every Indian home a lamp is lit daily before the altar of the Lord. In some houses it is lit at dawn, in some, twice a day - at dawn and at dusk - and sometimes it is kept lit continuously (**Akhand Jot**). Light symbolises knowledge, as darkness ignorance. The Lord is the illuminator of all knowledge. Hence light is worshipped **as the Lord Himself**.



Tray demonstrating various items of symbolic importance to Hinduism - Courtesy Shobha Nagpal

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HUMANISM



**humanist
society
scotland**



***Humanism affirms that we can lead good lives
without recourse to religion or superstition***

In the Humanist life-stance, the **Golden Rule** is often simply expressed as :

“Treat others as you would wish to be treated”

It is not enough to love; we need also to be loved. Even to be loved is not enough; we need to be loved as we are, for ourselves, in ways that bring us joy. It is not sufficient to give; we need the joy of giving, giving to someone who receives with gladness and warmth. How wonderful does life become when all these needs are met!

Humanists base their **moral principles** on a rational approach to life, under-pinned by shared human values and respect for others, aimed at improving the quality of life, making it more equitable for all. For Humanists, it is important to make our one life as worthwhile and happy as possible for everyone.

Humanism focuses on human beings, offers an ethical approach to life and affirms confidence in humanity’s ability to solve problems, recognising that much of what happens in our world is what people cause to happen. To this end, humanists aim to co-operate with people of all faiths and none, to achieve a caring free society, but deplore any religious adherence that harms or disadvantages others.

Humanists assert that morality comes from our ability to see that there is general benefit when we behave well towards each other; an ability that is enhanced by personal responsibility, a caring and principled upbringing and education that always insists that we treat others with consideration and unselfishness.

Humanism provides a moral framework for a life free from superstition and supernatural beliefs, and holds that this life is the only one we have. Although Humanists robustly question the idea of any god or other power controlling our physical world, Humanism is more than just a simple denial of religious belief. Human rights law is important to all Humanist organisations throughout the world and they endorse the principles of humanitarian ideals that are enshrined in all such declarations, covenants and conventions, as well as the universal initiatives promoted by the United Nations for the peaceful co-habitation of all the world’s populations. Humanists demand equal opportunities for all, irrespective of age, disability, race, creed, gender or sexual orientation.

Photo from previous page: Hubble telescope image of the Universe - Courtesy Humanism Photos

It is the Humanist view that the study of life on our planet, and our relationship with it, can and does provide rational and acceptable answers to questions about our origins and existence.

Rites of Passage arise for all of us as we progress through life and one of the core functions of **The Humanist Society of Scotland** is to provide trained and experienced Celebrants for those who want a meaningful, non-religious way to mark life's special occasions. Our ceremonies include those for baby & child naming, coming-of-age, weddings, commitments/affirmations, partnerships, funerals and memorials which are entirely secular in content. Our aim is to always provide a ceremony which is highly personal, moving and memorable.

Within Scottish Society, and everywhere, we wish to support and provide a voice for those who share, or are attracted by our ethos.



Humanism is an international movement: The Humanist Declaration follows :

The Humanist Declaration

(As adopted at the World Humanist Congress in The Netherlands in 2002 CE)

Humanism, **the outcome of a long tradition of free thought, has inspired many of the world's great thinkers and creative artists and gave rise to science itself. The fundamentals of modern Humanism are as follows:**

1. Humanism . . . **is ethical**. It affirms the worth, dignity and autonomy of the individual and the right of every human being to the greatest possible freedom compatible with the rights of others. Humanists have a duty of care to all of humanity, including future generations. Humanists believe that morality is an intrinsic part of human nature based on understanding and a concern for others, needing no external sanction.
2. Humanism . . . **is rational**. It seeks to use science creatively, not destructively. Humanists believe that the solutions to the world's problems lie in thought and action rather than divine intervention. Humanism advocates the application of the methods of science and free inquiry to the problems of human welfare. But Humanists also believe that the application of science and technology must be tempered by human values. Science gives us the means, but human values must decide the ends.
3. Humanism . . . **supports democracy and human rights**. Humanism aims at the fullest possible development of every human being. It holds that democracy and human development are matters of right. The principles of democracy and human rights can be applied to many human relationships and are not restricted to methods of government.

4. Humanism . . . **insists that personal liberty must be combined with social responsibility.** Humanism ventures to build a world on the idea of the free person, responsible to society, and recognises our dependence on and responsibility for the natural world. Humanism is not dogmatic, imposing no creed upon its adherents. It is thus committed to education free from indoctrination.
5. Humanism . . . **is a response to the widespread demand for an alternative to dogmatic religion.** The world's major religions claim to be based on revelations fixed for all time, and many seek to impose their world-views on all of humanity. Humanism recognises that reliable knowledge of the world and ourselves arises through a continuing process of observation, evaluation and revision.
6. Humanism . . . **values artistic creativity and imagination** and recognises the transforming power of art. Humanism affirms the importance of literature, music, and the visual and performing arts for personal development and fulfilment.

Humanism . . . is a life-stance aiming at the maximum possible fulfillment through the cultivation of ethical and creative living, offering an ethical and rational means of addressing the challenges of our times. Humanism can be a way of life for everyone everywhere. Our primary task is to make human beings aware in the simplest terms of what Humanism can mean to them, and what it commits them to. By utilising free inquiry, the power of science and creative imagination for the furtherance of peace and in the service of compassion, we have confidence that we have the means to solve the problems that confront us all.



COMMUNITY:

There's a narrow strip of birch wood by a busy railway track
 Where the blackbirds sing superbly and the trains rush there and back
 As I wander in the birch wood with the burdens of the day
 'Til my peace of mind takes over and all burdens slip away.

There's a glory in that birch wood, seldom seen and seldom known
 To the folk who trundle to and fro for cash, they'll never own
 It's the glory of the sunshine and the glory of the rain
 The healing of the scars of life, the easing of our pain.

Tho' it's not the birch wood heals us, nor the sunshine, nor the rain
 Nor the blackbird singing blithely, nor the rushing of the train
 But the healing of community when wounds are deep and sore
 And the human hand of friendship and the warmth of love once more.

Anon



World scenes of life today; bees and flowers, child painting, global warming floods, the ozone hole - Courtesy Humanism Photos

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ISLAM



THE GOLDEN RULE:

“None of you truly believes until he wishes for his brother what he wishes for himself.”

From the sayings of the Prophet Muhammed, peace be upon him.

INTRODUCTION

Islam is the last of the monotheist religions. Muslims believe that there is only one God, the Arabic word for The One God is Allah. His attributes are many, such as the Compassionate, the Merciful, but there is none comparable to him. The word Islam derives from the word peace but it means submission to God.

Islam was revealed to humanity through the archangel Gabriel to the Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon be him) about 14 centuries ago. This revelation was recorded in Islam’s Holy Book, the Qur’an, which is the literal word of God and has not been changed over the centuries.

Muslims believe in the One God and his angels, messengers - including Abraham, Moses and Jesus -, scriptures, destiny, resurrection and in a life after death, where everyone is rewarded or punished for his actions in life.

Islam has five pillars that represent the foundation stones of Islamic worship. Worship in Islam covers every action in life and the aims of the pure acts of worship are to train a Muslim to be good in all aspects of life.

The five pillars are:

- The declaration of faith – belief in the Oneness of God and that Muhammad is his last messenger
- Performing five daily Prayers
- Fasting – for the lunar month of Ramadan from dawn until sunset
- Zakat – giving prescribed charity
- Hajj- pilgrimage to Makkah, at least once in life if one is able to

Islam is a complete way of life and the Qur’an along with the Prophet Muhammad’s actions and sayings –which have been recorded and are called the Hadith - give guidance and a high moral code of conduct for the behaviour of a Muslim. Every action should portray Islamic principles in everyday life: eating, dressing, speaking, working, travelling etc .

The following verses are examples of the Quranic teaching which emphasise the key aspects of Islam. The numbers at the end of a Quote denote the chapter and verses numbers of these excerpts from the meaning of the Qur’an.

It is not righteousness that you turn your faces towards East or West; but it is righteousness to believe in God, the Last Day, the Angels, the Books and the Messengers; to spend of your wealth, out of love for Him, for your kin, the orphans, the needy, the wayfarer, those who ask, and for the freeing of captives; to be steadfast in prayers, and practice regular charity; to fulfil the contracts which you made; and to be firm and patient in suffering and adversity and times of panic. Such are the people of truth, the God-conscious [2:177]

And vie with one another for forgiveness from your Lord and for a Paradise as vast as the heavens and the earth, which awaits the God-conscious, who spend in charity in time of plenty and in time of hardship, restrain their anger, and pardon their fellow men, for God loves those who do good. [3:133-134]

GOOD LIVING AND CHARACTER

Mohammed was the last Prophet sent by Allah to complete the message and, like all the prophets, to act as a Warner to the people of the consequences of their actions.

The Qur'an and Hadith give clear instructions on how to live well as a Muslim in order to please Allah.

In the Hadith, shameful deeds include the consumption of intoxicants, gambling of any kind, sexual relations outside marriage, cursing or using foul language. We are told to avoid using unkind words, useless talk, slander and detraction.

We sent you (Mohammad), but as a Mercy for all creations. [21.107]

Help one another in righteousness and piety, but do not help one another in sin and aggression [5:2]

Allah commands justice, the doing of good, and giving to kith and kin, and He forbids all shameful deeds, and injustice and rebellion: He instructs you, that ye may receive admonition. [16:90]

Keep up prayer and enjoin the good and forbid the evil, and bear patiently that which befalls you; surely these acts require courage; And do not turn your face away from people in contempt, nor go about in the land exulting overmuch; surely Allah does not love any self-conceited boaster; and be moderate in your pace and lower your voice; for the harshest of sounds, indeed, is the braying of the ass. [31:17-19]

O ye who believe! Let not a folk laugh at a folk who may be better than they are, nor let women laugh at women who may be better than they are; neither defame one another, nor insult one another by nicknames. Bad is the name of lewdness after faith. And whoso turns not in repentance, such are evil-doers. O you who believe! Avoid most of suspicion, for surely suspicion in some cases is a sin, and do not spy nor let some of you backbite the other [4:11-12].

MORAL BEHAVIOUR

It is not enough for a Muslim to have belief – they must take actions to demonstrate their belief. Muslims should have the intention to take these actions for the sake of Allah and to please Allah. The Prophet's life gives the perfect example to follow and to aspire to.

Allah stated that the Prophet is the example to follow and then praised him as: *Surely you conform yourself to sublime morality [68:4]*

The Prophet himself said: *Verily, I was only sent to perfect morals. Without morality, worship is no more than worthless habit: Verily, prayers restrain from shameful and unjust deeds. [29:45]*

Verily, whoever has a character of kindness will achieve the same level of righteousness as those who fast and engage in long prayer [Hadith]

PARENTS AND OTHER RELATIVES

A Muslim has clear duties to their family members. For example, you can see from the first quote below the high importance given to parents.

Your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him, and that you be kind to parents. Whether one or both of them attain old age in your lifetime, do not say to them a word of contempt nor repel them, but address them in terms of honour. And, out of kindness, lower to them the wing of humility and say: My Lord Bestow on them Your mercy, as they cherished me in childhood [17:23-24]

And render to the relatives their due rights, as to those in need, and to the traveller and do not squander your wealth wastefully [17:26]

WOMEN

As already stated, Muslims believe that all men and women are created equal. A Muslim woman has the same duties in her religion as a man.

Whoever does good, whether male or female, and is a believer, will enter Paradise [40:39]

Marriage is important in Islam, and helps both parties to follow their religious duties. The following quotes show what a Muslim woman has rights to expect as a wife.

And among His Signs is that He created for you mates from among yourselves, that ye may dwell in tranquillity with them, and He has put love and mercy between your hearts: verily in that are Signs for those who reflect. [30:21]

Women are the other half of men. (Hadith)

The most perfect in faith amongst you is the one who has best manners and kindest to his wife. (Hadith)

NEIGHBOURS AND COMMUNITY

Being a good neighbour, and an exemplary member of the community, is one of a Muslim's most important duties as can be seen from the following sayings of the Prophet:

Gabriel kept advising me to take good care of the neighbour until I thought he would make him my heir

He is not a believer whose neighbours are not safe from his injurious conduct.

He is not a believer who eats his fill when his neighbour beside him is hungry.

Behave politely to those who do not know you; forgive those who have oppressed you; give to those who have never given you anything; and make brothers of those who have denied their brotherhood with you.

CHARITY

Not only is charitable giving one of the pillars of Islam, but additional giving of charity is also encouraged as can be seen in the two quotations from the Qur'an listed above. A further Quranic verse and a hadith, which also show this, are:

The Believers are those who spend freely out of the gifts We have bestowed on them for sustenance. [8:4]

Allah sends two angels to every servant of His, and the angel says, O, Allah, reward those who spend their wealth for Your sake; and the other says, O Allah, punish those who are stingy [Hadith]

JUSTICE

As can be seen from the following verses, justice is an important concept in Islam

No bearer of burdens shall bear the burden of another: nor would We visit with Our Wrath until We had sent a messenger with warning [17.15]

O you who believe! stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to Allah, even as against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin, and whether it be rich or poor: for Allah can best protect both. Follow not your lusts lest you swerve, and if you distort justice or decline to do justice, verily Allah is well acquainted with all that ye do. [4.135]

O believers, be you securers of justice and witness for God. Let not your dislike of some people move you to act inequitably; act justly, that is nearer to piety and God-consciousness. [5:8]

And give full measure when you measure out, and weigh with a true balance; this is fair and better in the end [17:35]

EQUALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Muslims believe that all people are equal– the only thing which should distinguish them from each other is their piety.

O mankind! We created you from a male and female, and made you into nations and tribes, so that you may come to know one another. Truly, the most honoured of you in God's sight is the greatest of you in piety. [49:13].

Whoever does good, whether male or female, and is a believer, will enter Paradise [40:39]

All mankind is from Adam and Eve, an Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab nor a non-Arab has any superiority over an Arab; also a white has no superiority over a black nor does a black have any superiority over a white except by piety and good actions. [Hadith].



Central Mosque, Glasgow - Courtesy Salah Beltagui. A group of young Muslim women - Flickr Photos. The Hajj at Night - Flickr Photos.

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Islam on line.

GLOSSARY

Allah: The Arabic name for the creator of the Universe is ALLAH. He is the only deity to be worshiped. His beautiful names, attributes are many such as: the Merciful, the Beneficent, the Knowledgeable, the Protector, the Mighty, the Provider, the Exalted etc

Hadith: Reports on the sayings and the actions of Prophet Muhammad are called Hadith. Authentic Hadith are collected in books such as Al-Bukhari. The Sirah, is the record of the life of the prophet and it is the reference example that Muslims follow in their life.

Hajj: Hajj means the performance of pilgrimage to Makkah. It is one of the five pillars of Islam. A Muslim is to perform Hajj at least once in his/her life, if means and health allow.

Islam: Islam is the submission to the will of ALLAH, the Creator of the Universe. To be a Muslim a person has to testify that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is His last Messenger. The goal of life, as addressed in the Qur'an, is to live according to what Allah has created us for, which is to worship Allah, and to obey his commandments in this life to gain his pleasure and paradise. Islam is the last and final religion to all mankind.

Qur'an: The holy book of Islam that was revealed unto Muhammad from Allah through the angel Gabriel over a period of 23 years. There is only one authentic text of the Qur'an and it is in Arabic. The Qur'an is the ultimate source of guidance for people in all aspects of their spiritual and material lives.

Salah: Salah is the spiritual relationship and communication between the creature and his Creator. Salah is to be performed with mental concentration, verbal communication, vocal recitation and physical movement to attain the spiritual uplift, peace, harmony, and concord.

Fasting or Sawm: is to abstain of food and drink and sexual relations, from dawn to sunset for one lunar month, Ramadhan. The traveller, the sick and infirm are exempt.

Zakah: One of the five pillars of Islam is Zakah, which means purification of one's wealth. It is paid mainly to the poor and the needy. For example, it is 2.5% of savings above a certain level.

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JAINISM



THE GOLDEN RULE:

“One should treat all creatures in the world as one would like to be treated.”
(Mahavira, Sutrakritanga)

“In happiness and suffering, in joy and grief, we should regard all creatures as we regard our own self”
(Mahavira, Sutrakritanga)

“Ahimsa Parmo dharam -
Do not injure any and do good to all that you can.”

“Karma -- Future of man is in his own hand;
So live and let live.”

Jainism is the oldest religion in the world. It believes a cyclical nature of the universe. Thus a universe without beginning, without end and without creator. There are twenty-four Tirthankars. Lord Rishabhdev was the first Tirthankar (MAKER OF THE FORD). Lord Mahavira is the last twenty-fourth Tirthankar of this era. He was born in Bihar in 599 to 527 BC. Lord Mahavira is not the founder of Jainism but he explained the code of conducts and implemented daily rites for his followers. He felt such changes are essential for proper religious practice. The present Jain scriptures reflect only his teachings.

Jainism recognises the fundamental natural phenomenon of *mutual dependence* which forms the basis of modern day particle physics and deep ecology. Life is viewed as a gift of togetherness, accommodation, and assistance in a universe teeming with interdependent constituents. Jainism is nature in purest and truest form.

Jainism lays heavy emphasis on non-violence. “Ahimsa Parmo Dharm” is the main teaching of Jainism. The aim of nonviolence is to convert your approach to win over their mind and heart and persuade them that your point of view is right. An important element is often to make sure that the opponent is given a face saving way of changing their mind. Non violence is a power which can be wielded equally by all children young men and women or grown up people, provided they have a living faith in the God of love and therefore have equal love for all mankind. When non violence is accepted as the way of life it must pervade the whole being little or large, human being or nature. Non violence is the soul force or the power of Godhead within us.

The Main Teachings of Jainism:

1. **Non violence.** Not to kill but to save & nurture life.
2. **Non stealing.** Not to steal but to be generous.
3. **Truthfulness.** Not to lie but to strive for truth.
4. **Chastity** (Bhramcharaya). To avoid sexual misconduct & practice purity.
5. Not to speak abusively but to **speak kindly**
6. Aprigraha - **no possession of anything**

Photo from previous page: The God Mahaveer, The Hindu Mandir, La Belle Place, Glasgow - Courtesy Shobha Nagpal



Various Jain Images and Symbols - Jain Photos

The essence of Jainism is **concern for the welfare** of every being in the whole universe and for the health of the universe itself. Jains believe that animals and plants as well as human beings contain living souls. Each of these souls, whatever form it may be in, is considered of equal value and should be treated with respect and compassion.

Jainism promotes socialism, economic stability and welfare in the world.

The guiding principle of Jainism is 'Do not injure any and do good to all that you can'.

The main mantra is:

“Namo arihantanam (I bow to the human beings ,God men);

Namo siddhayanam (I bow to the Sidhas - liberated bodiless souls, God);

Namo aayariyanam (I bow to the Acharyas - the master and heads of the congregation);

Namo uvajjhaayaanam (I bow to the Upadhyayas - the spiritual teachers);

Namo loe sav va saahunam (I bow to the Spiritual practitioners in the Universe);

Eso panch namo karo (This five fold obeisance Mantra);

Savva poa va panasano (Destroys all sins and abstricles);

Manglanam cha savvesim (and of all auspicious repetitions);

Pdhamam havai manglam(is the first and foremost).”

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JUDAISM



THE GOLDEN RULE:

“What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbour: that is the whole Torah, and the rest is commentary.”

Hillel, Talmud Shabbat 31a

SUMMARY OF JUDAISM:

The earliest of the three major monotheistic religions, Judaism believes in an incorporeal God who is the universal creator of all that exists.

Judaism believes in freedom of choice. Actions are seen as more important than personal beliefs, and Judaism does not distinguish between the status of ethical and ritual obligations, seeing both as mandated by God.

Judaism does not seek converts, believing that non-Jews should follow their own path. Tradition identifies 613 commandments in the Torah for Jews; of these only 7 apply to non-Jews, including obligations relating to social justice, sexual morality, and animal welfare.

The Jewish Scriptures, written in Hebrew, consist of the Torah (Five Books of Moses), the *Prophets*, and the *Holy Writings*.

Despite their shared belief, the ethnic origins of Jews are diverse. Three principal groupings are recognised:

- *Sephardim* – of medieval Iberian origin, although the term is often used to include those of other Mediterranean, Arabian and North African origin, and, more loosely the
- *Eastern Communities* - whose origins are in Asia or the Arabian Peninsula, including smaller groups such as the Jews of Ethiopia, and the Bnei Menashe from Tibet and Burma, and the Cochin Jews of south India;
- *Ashkenazim* - whose ancestry is in Central and Eastern Europe and Russia.

Although there are more Sephardic than Askenazi Jews in Israel, the reverse is the case worldwide.

Cutting across these ethnic groups are distinct denominations with different understandings of the status of the Torah and of Jewish law:

- *Orthodox*: Orthodox Jews believe that God revealed both the text and oral interpretation of the Torah to Moses and has communicated with the Jewish people through inspired prophets, as recorded in the Hebrew Scriptures.
- *Reform*: rejects much orthodox practice while seeking to retain some of the underlying teachings. Unlike Orthodox movements it allows women to be ordained as rabbis, and men and women may mix in the synagogue.
- *Conservative* (in UK “*Masorti*”, meaning ‘Traditional’): began as a Counter-movement to Reform Judaism in the USA. Based on a more liberal understanding of traditional texts, it retains most orthodox practice.
- *Liberal*: views the Torah as a product of its time and so subject to change, rather than as the literal word of God. Liberal Jews attach less significance to traditional codes for dress and diet but regard them as a matter of choice.

Photo from previous page: Orthodox Jewish boy and girl - Judaim Photos

QUOTES FROM JEWISH SCRIPTURE AND TEACHINGS THAT PROMOTE “COMMUNITY VALUES”

Do not judge another person until you have stood in his place.

Hillel, Pirke Avot 2:5

If I am not for myself, who is for me?

And being only for myself, what am I?

And if not now, when?

Hillel, Pirke Avot 1:14

When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corner of your field, nor shall you gather the gleanings; you shall leave them for the poor and for the stranger.

Deuteronomy 13:22

For this commandment which I command you this day is not too hard for you, nor is it far off. It is not in heaven that you should say “who shall go up to heaven to bring it to us?” ... nor is it beyond the sea that you should say “who shall go over the sea to bring it to us? It is very close to you, in your mouth and in your heart so that you may do it.”

Deuteronomy 30:11-14

See, I have set before you this day life and death, the blessing and the curse; therefore choose life, that you may live, you and your children; to love the Lrd your Gd, to listen to His voice, and to cling to him.

Deuteronomy 30:10

I will say of Gd “He is my refuge and my fortress, my Gd, I will trust in Him.”

Psalms 91

We make a mistake when we think religion is only about believing. It’s also about belonging; and belonging is about community, that delicate yet powerful network of relationships where we learn moral literacy – by being there for other people when they need us, knowing that they’ll be there for us when we need them.

Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, “Thought for the Day”, 19-6-2000 (published in “From Optimism to Hope, pub: Continuum)

Does prayer make a difference? I think it does. It may seem an absurdly fragile thing when set against daisy-cutter bombs, laser-guided missiles and the whole complex technology of modern warfare. And yet I wonder whether it isn’t sometimes the strongest thing there is. Power grows from the barrel of a gun but peace is born in the human heart; and it makes all the difference whether we believe the universe is blind, a place where power rules and only the strongest survive, or whether when we open our hearts, we hear the voice of the creator saying, “you are all My children, and even your enemies carry the trace of my presence, the mark of my image”.

Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, “Thought for the Day”, 21-3-2003 (published in “From Optimism to Hope”, pub: Continuum)

Those who survive a tragedy such as the Holocaust cannot keep silent, but must do everything in their power to testify to the fact that life is the gift of Gd, and that it is sacred...Wherever there is oppression or hunger or brutalisation, regardless of colour or creed, I consider it is morally my territory and their cause is my cause. Bigots, racists and fanatics are my personal

enemies and I intend to do battle with them until they become civilised, decent people, if needs be for the rest of my life. Time is short and the task is urgent. Evil is real. So is good. There is a choice. And we are not so much chosen as choosers. Life is holy. All life. Mine and yours. And that of those who came before us and the life of those after us.

Rabbi Hugo Gryn, "Chasing Shadows"; pub: Viking Books

Once you have distanced yourself from anger, the quality of humility will enter your heart. This quality is the finest of all admirable traits, as it is written: "On the heels of humility comes the fear of Gd" (*Proverbs 22:4*) ... When your actions display genuine humility, when you stand meekly before man, and fearfully before Gd, when you stand wary of sin, then the spirit of Gd's presence, and the splendour of His glory will rest on you.

Rabbi Moses Ben Nachman

Who is wise? He who learns from everyone.

Who is strong? He who can control his passions.

Who is rich? He who is happy with his lot.

Who is honoured? He who honours others.

Ben Zoma, Pirke Avot, 4:1

Love of all creatures is also love of Gd, for whoever loves Gd loves all the works that He has made. When one loves Gd, it is impossible not to love His creatures. The opposite is also true. If one hates the creatures, it is impossible to love Gd Who created them.

Maharal of Prague, Nesivos Olam

The Rabbis taught that there are three ways in which is kindness greater charity. Charity is done with money; kindness can be either with one's person or one's money. Charity is for the poor; kindness can be done for either the poor or the rich. Charity is for the living; kindness can be done for the living or the dead

Talmud: Sukkah 49b

There is nothing so whole as a broken heart.

Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kotzk

If I am I because I am I,
and you are you because you are you,
then I am and you are.

But if I am I because you are you,
and you are you because I am I,
then I am not and you are not.

Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kotzk

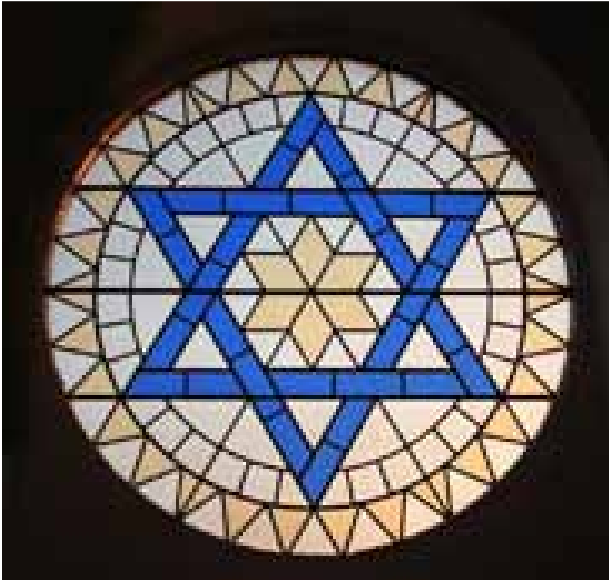
While the sage, Honi, was walking along a road, he saw a man planting a carob tree. Honi asked him, "How long will it take for this tree to bear fruit?"

"Seventy years," replied the man.

Honi then asked, "Are you so healthy a man that you expect to live that length of time and eat its fruit?"

The man answered, "I found a fruitful world because my ancestors planted it for me. Likewise I am planting for my children."

Talmud, Taanit 23a



Various Jewish symbols - Judaism Photos. Salisbury Synagogue, Edinburgh (left) - Courtesy of Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation. Bevis Marks Synagogue, City of London (right) - Courtesy Phil Walker

Seeing, on a dark night, a blind man carrying a torch, I asked him why he carried it. He replied “so long as the torch is in my hand, people see me and save me from pits and thorns”.

Talmud, Megillah

He who occupies himself with the needs of the community is as though he occupies himself with Torah.

Talmud, Berachot

A man should always be in the habit of saying “whatever Gd did was for the best.”

Talmud, Berachot

For everything there is a season and a time for every purpose under the heavens:

A time to be born and a time to die;

a time to plant

a time to pluck out that which is planted;

a time to kill and a time to heal;

a time to break down, and a time to build up;

a time to weep and a time to laugh;

a time to mourn and a time to dance;

a time to cast stones away and a time to gather stones together;

a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing;

a time to get and a time to lose;

a time to keep and a time to discard;

a time to rend and a time to sew;

a time to be silent and a time to speak;

a time to love and a time to hate;

a time of war and a time of peace.

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

Whoever saves one life, it is as if he had saved the entire world.

Talmud, Sanhedrin 37a

Do not withhold good from its rightful recipient when you have the power to do it. Do not tell your neighbour “leave and come back – tomorrow I will give it to you”, when you already have it to give.

Proverbs 3:27-28

The whole world is a narrow bridge; the important thing is not to be afraid.

Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav

The world is enabled to continue on account of three things: justice, truth, and peace.

Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel: Pirke Avot 1:18

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PAGANISM



THE GOLDEN RULE:

“Do not to your neighbour what you would take ill from him”

Pittacus of Mytilene (640 – 568 BCE)

INTRODUCTION

Paganism has its roots in the indigenous, pre-Christian religions of Europe, evolved and adapted to the circumstances of modern life. It is a very diverse religion and includes a number of interrelated Traditions such as Druidry, Heathenry, Shamanism and Wicca amongst others.

Pagans believe divinity is manifest within nature and takes many forms, finding expression as Goddesses as well as Gods. Goddess-worship is one of the primary characteristics of Paganism, which strongly emphasises equality of the sexes.

Pagans believe that nature is sacred and that the natural cycles of birth, growth and death observed in the world around us carry profoundly spiritual meaning. Human beings are seen as part of nature, woven into the great web of life along with other animals, trees, stones, plants and everything else that is of this earth. Most Pagans believe in some form of reincarnation, regarding death as a transition within a continuing process of existence. In Paganism, spiritual truths find expression in mythopoeic and symbolic forms rather than through doctrine, and reflect a synergy of polytheistic, pantheistic and animistic understandings of the divine.

Pagans do not believe in trying to convert others to their beliefs and accept that it is natural for different people to experience spiritual matters in different ways. They thus tend to be very tolerant of other life-affirming religions.

Pagan ethics emphasise taking responsibility for ones actions and trying to live in harmony with others, and with nature. This arises from our belief that everything is interconnected, and that everything affects everything else. Many Pagans summarise this attitude as *‘If it harm none, do what you will’*.

Pagan worship seeks to honour the divine powers and bring the participants into harmony with them, to celebrate the turning of the seasons, and to mark the transitions of human life with appropriate rites of passage.

Paganism has no buildings dedicated as places of public worship. Instead Pagans hold their ceremonies in woods, on hilltops, along the seashore, at standing stones, in parks, gardens and private homes.

Paganism is primarily an experiential rather than a doctrinal religion. It therefore has no universally authoritative sacred texts or devotional literature. The following quotations, both ancient and modern, are thus illustrative of modern Pagan attitudes & beliefs rather than the source of these attitudes and beliefs.

Love

“For mine is the ecstasy of the spirit,
And mine also is joy on earth;
For my law is love unto all beings. “

Wiccan Charge of the Goddess (contemporary Pagan)

Photo from previous page: The beauty of Nature's wilderness - Pagan photos

“Love connects, love transforms.”

Miriam Simos ('Starhawk') (1982)

Compassion

“Scoff not at guests nor to the gate chase them,
But relieve the lonely and wretched,”

The Havamal, 135. (pre-8th C. CE)

Respect

“All the good are friends of one another.”

Zeno of Citium (334 – 262 BCE)

Tolerance

“We gaze up at the same stars, the sky covers us all, the same universe encompasses us. What does it matter what practical system we adopt in our search for the truth? Not by one avenue only can we arrive at so tremendous a secret.”

Quintus Aurelius Symmachus; Relationes, 384 CE

Humility

“We have two ears and one mouth, so we should listen more than we speak”

Zeno of Citium (334 – 262 BCE)

Negation of selfish desires

“Never value anything as profitable to yourself which shall compel you to break your promise, to lose your self-respect, to hate any man, to suspect, to curse, to act the hypocrite,....”

Marcus Aurelius; Meditations, (167 CE)

Concern for other people

“Forbear to speak evil not only of your friends but of your enemies”

Pittacus of Mytilene (640 – 568 BCE)

“The wise man who has become accustomed to necessities knows better how to share with others than to take from them,....”

Epicurus (341 - 270 BCE)

“..to care for all men is according to man's nature;..”

Marcus Aurelius (Meditations, 167 CE)

Equality of men and women

“Paganism teaches that both women and men, girls and boys, Goddess and God are equally valuable and necessary to a balanced and whole society....”

Vivianne Crowley, (1996)

Ethical living

“Cultivate truth, good faith, experience, cleverness, sociability and industry”

Pittacus of Mytilene (640 – 568 BCE)

“It is impossible to live a pleasant life without living wisely and well and justly,..”

Epicurus (341 – 270 BCE)

“He often acts unjustly who does not do a certain thing; not only he who does a certain thing.”

Marcus Aurelius; Meditations, (167 CE)

“Drink your mead, but in moderation.
Talk sense or be silent:
No man is called discourteous who goes
To bed at an early hour.”

The Havamal, 19. (pre-8th C. CE)

“Keep pure your highest ideals;
Strive ever towards them,
Let nothing stop you or turn you aside.”

Wiccan Charge of the Goddess (contemporary Pagan)

Respect for community

“Cherish those near to you, never be
The first to break with a friend:
Care eats him who can no longer
Open his heart to another.”

The Havamal, 135. (pre-8th C. CE)

“Community counters estrangement – it reconnects us with others and with the natural community that surrounds and sustains us.”

Miriam Simos ('Starhawk') (1982)

“At one level we need to know that we are unique, separate beings while at another level we need to know that we are one with all beings.”

Philip Carr Gomm (1991)

Respect for nature and the environment

“The chief good is to live according to Nature, which is to live according to virtue, for nature leads us to this point”

Zeno of Citium (334 – 262 BCE)

“I am Nature, the Universal Mother, mistress of all the elements, primordial child of time, sovereign of all things spiritual, Queen of the dead, Queen also of the immortals, the single manifestation of all gods and goddesses that are.....”

Apuleius of Madaura, Metamorphoses (2nd C CE)

“It is well that each should learn the mother-song of his land at the cradle-place of his birth.”

William Sharp ('Fiona MacLeod') (1904)

“I who am the beauty of the green earth,
And the white moon among the stars,
And the mystery of the waters,
And the desire of the heart of man.
Call unto thy soul, arise, and come unto me.
For I am the soul of Nature,
Who gives life to the Universe.
From me all things proceed,
And unto me all things must return;”

Wiccan Charge of the Goddess (contemporary Pagan)

“Love for and Kinship with Nature. Reverence for the life force and its ever-renewing cycles of life and death.”

First Principle of The Pagan Federation (Scotland)

“And perhaps, as you say those familiar names and feel the earth and air, the moon appears a bit closer, and perhaps the wind rustling the leaves suddenly seems in rhythm with your own breathing. Or perhaps the chant seems louder and all the other sounds far away. Or perhaps the woods seem strangely noisy. Or unspeakably still. And perhaps the clear line that separates you from bird and tree and small lizards seems to melt. Whatever else, your relationship to the world of living nature changes.”

Margot Adler (1979)

“And She who came out of the coldness of the North, the Goddess of the Sea, I heard her voice upon the waves and within the silence that rings with sound. And still if I do not know the answer to a thing, I will go and sit by the edge of the sea and the answer will come to me, brought in upon the waves.”

Vivianne Crowley (1994)

Codes of conduct

“An it harm none, do what you will.”

The Wiccan Rede (contemporary Pagan)

“No formula, whether complex or simple, can cover all situations. The more we try to create codes which will cover all eventualities, the more mechanical and unrealistic our ideas of morality become. Simple precepts provide a moral guide to which we can turn and then make the best judgements we can. The emphasis in modern Paganism is not on obeying complex sets of laws which we must then feel guilty about breaking, but on teaching ourselves to be in tune with the Divine centre of all things, and so to make moral judgements on the basis of what is eternal and abides.”

Vivianne Crowley (1994)

Justice

“Natural justice is a pledge of reciprocal benefit, to prevent one from harming or being harmed by another.”

Epicurus (341 – 270 BCE)

“The best way of avenging yourself is not to become like the wrongdoer.”

Marcus Aurelius (Meditations, 167 CE)

“Grant, O Spirit, Thy protection;
And in protection, strength;
And in strength, understanding;
And in understanding, knowledge;
And in knowledge, the knowledge of justice;
And in the knowledge of justice, the love of it;
And in that love, the love of all existences;
And in that love of all existences, the love of Spirit and all Goodness.”

The Druid's Prayer (contemporary Pagan)

GLOSSARY

Animistic

Arising from the belief that all living beings and, to an extent, all natural objects and phenomena, possess an indwelling spirit or have spiritual aspects.

Doctrinal

Derived from sacred texts.

Experiential

Derived from experience.

Mythopoeic

Literally 'relating to the creation of myths' but to many Pagans, a creative process of ritual meditation on traditional myths through which the deeper levels of our minds and bodies can come to instinctive understandings of religious truths, which cannot be fully expressed through language. Myths do not define truths, they allude to, hint at, and suggest, deeper meanings than the conscious mind can reach.

Pantheistic

Arising from the belief that nature is divine.

Polytheistic

Arising from the belief that there are many Gods and Goddesses, and many forms of divinity.

Synergy

A combination of distinct understandings or beliefs in which the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.



Sacred Earth

To nearly all Pagans, the living Earth itself is a very visible and tangible manifestation of divinity. Most Pagans do not believe that human beings are set above, or apart, from the rest of this living world. The life in us is, in essence, the same as the life in the animals and plants with whom we share the Earth. And life is sacred. To most Pagans, the four traditional elements of Earth, Air, Fire and Water, often associated with the four directions of North, East, South and West and with many other correspondences, form part of our understanding of sacred space. The four photographs which illustrate this section do not depict Pagan symbols per se. They provide examples of how a great many Pagans perceive sacred symbolism – in this case, the four elements - as both embedded and embodied in the landscape around us:



Earth: Castlelaw in the snow;
photo Louise Park



Water: (The Minch; photo
Fiona McAllister)



Air: (Trees in the wind at Easter
Aquorthies; photo Fiona McAllister)



Fire: (Midsummer sunrise at Easter
Aquorthies; photo Fiona McAllister)

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SIKHISM



“As one sows, so he shall reap”

(Japji Sahib, Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji)



Sri Harmander Sahib (The Golden Temple) and Sri Akal Takhat in Amritsar, Panjab, India. The Centre of the Sikh Religious Affairs.

Summary

A Sikh is expected to undertake honest productive **work**, **meditate** daily and **share** wealth with the needy. A Sikh's life is a journey of evolution that passes through five stages of awakening of inner self. Attainment of spiritual peace comes with devotion and deeper understanding of **love, compassion, truth/reality, contentment and humility.**

“There is only One Father of us all, and we are all His children. Recognise all human races as one.”

These core virtues are achievable only if one is devoid of **anger, lust, greed, material possessions and ego.** By accepting the Khalsa Panth and its Code of Conduct a Sikh openly declares his/her intention to follow the religious way of life as scribed by the Gurus in the Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji (Amrit Bani).

Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji

“There is but One God. He belongs to everyone” (SGGS - Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji, p1, 658). Waheguru has created all humans equal. Waheguru is our Mother and Father and we His children. There is none high or low by right of birth, sex, status and wealth (SGGS, p 97). In Japji Sahib Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji's **golden rule the central principle** of Sikhism is embedded within the “**Mool Mantra**”, that is:

ੴ ਸਤਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਕਰਤਾ ਪੁਰਖੁ ਨਿਰਭਉ ਨਿਰਵੈਰੁ ਅਕਾਲ ਮੂਰਤਿ ਅਜੂਨੀ ਸੈਭੰ ਗੁਰ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ॥

<i>Ik Onkaar</i>	<i>There is only one God</i>
<i>Sat Naam</i>	<i>His Name is Truth</i>
<i>Karta Purkh</i>	<i>He is the Creator</i>
<i>Nir Bhau</i>	<i>He is without fear</i>
<i>Nir Vair</i>	<i>He is without hate</i>
<i>Akal Moorat</i>	<i>He is beyond time (Immortal)</i>
<i>Ajooni</i>	<i>He is beyond birth and death</i>
<i>Saibhang</i>	<i>He is self-existent</i>
<i>Gur Parsaad</i>	<i>He is realised by the Guru's grace. (SGGS, p1)</i>

In Sikhism the **golden rule** is the Mool Mantra; its comprehension leads the faithful to attain virtues outlined in the summary.

Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji, The Founding Father of Sikhism ***Place of Origin: Panjab, Northern India***



A Sikh (disciple) follows the Guru by living a life of **humility, empathy, love, compassion, justice and equality**. Waheguru cares for His creation and is accessible to all; man's soul is a part of the Immortal One, however, one must shed one's ego (Haumai). If the mind is impure, it cannot achieve Divinity. Guru Nanak Sahib says:

“Truth is no doubt great, but greater still is the truthful living.”

Sikh's golden rule says that the development of character is the only foundation on which a Sikh can truly be Guru's disciple. By conquering the **five sins**, that is: lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride, one begins life's journey as a good Sikh. Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji revealed that only good deeds would save a soul on the Judgment day.

Nam-Simran (prayers) is mandatory for a Sikh. Waheguru says that the Guru seeks the dust of the feet of those who remember the Nam and make others remember it; as we think, so we become. All names for Waheguru are equal and embroidered with diamonds of diversity.

Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji founded the institutions of **Sangat and Pangat**, i.e. to sit, eat and pray together. SGGS tells us Waheguru loves believers and non-believers equally; all people are born blessed. Our mission in life is to accept His Will and thus realize Him.

“The air is the Guru, water is our father and great earth is our mother. Days and nights are our male and female nurses in whose lap the entire world plays.” (Jap Ji Sahib, SGGS).

The reality is that the world is like a garden of flowers where life is always in blossom. It is duty of a human being to keep its fragrance evergreen. God is the Creator of the universe; human body is a microcosm, while the universe a macrocosm.

The Sikh faith is built on pillars of **love and respect** for all. In so doing: do not be proud; seek His Sanctuary, and accept His Will; dedicate your soul, body and whole being to Him; thus you shall receive the Blessed Vision of Waheguru.

Virtues

The Sikh philosophy defines five virtues: Sat (**Truth**), Santokh (**Contentment**), Daya (**Compassion**), Nimrata (**Humility**) and Pyaar (**Love**). SGGS teaches us to develop compassion for all God’s creation –

“Keep your heart content and cherish compassion for all beings; this way alone can your holy vow be fulfilled” (SGGS, p 299).

A Gurmukh focuses his mind on God at all times; while a Manmukh strives for the five sins.

Compassion is a virtue of the mind while Contentment an acceptance of adversity and good fortunes. By accepting Waheguru’s Hukam (Will) we nurture **humility and empathy**. In contrast, self-centeredness (Haumai) leads the soul away from Waheguru. Not everyone will achieve the virtuous qualities in the present life; with Nam-Simran Waheguru helps develop these in us all. Humility requires us to overlook deficiency in others.

“My mind is imbued with the Lord’s Love; it is dyed a deep crimson. Truth and charity my white clothes.” (SGGS, p 16); “Attuned to the Love of the One, there is no sorrow or suffering” (SGGS, p 45),

when one loves the Lord, all their sorrows and suffering are removed.

Evils

The five evils (Panj Vikar) create weakness in humans, placing obstacles in the pursuit of moral and spiritual journey. These evils are: **lust** (Kam), **rage and anger** (Krodh), **greed** (Lobh), emotional **attachment** (Moh) and **Ego** (Ahankar). Sin (Pap), infirmity (Dokh), and defilement (Kilbikh) are evils that do not affect those able to conquer haumai. Overcoming haumai is facilitated by company of saints (sant and sadh). A Gurmukh learns to discard cruelty, material attachment, greed and anger, the four rivers of fire (SGGS, p 147). These must be destroyed with five instruments, ie contentment, charity, kindness, positive attitude, humility.

*“To make our family (the human race) happier is to learn and practice to control Kam, Krodh, Lobh, Moh and Hankar in our lives. By controlling Kam one becomes a virtuous person, controlling Krodh one becomes a fighter to fight only against injustice, controlling Lobh one acquires the quality of contentment, Controlling Moh one learns to practice True love and by controlling Hankar one acquires the quality of **self esteem with humility**” (SGGS, p 433).*

RIGHTS, RESPONSIBILITIES AND DUTIES

A Sikh's life passes through the following five stages: Dharam Khand – undertaking of **social rights, responsibilities and duties**; Gian Khand – attaining **knowledge and awareness** through spiritual consciousness; Saram Khand – with spiritual strength **shedding of ego**, that is, without discipline the experience is a mere emotion, a nostalgic remembrance; Karam Khand – **ending practice of duality** in life and achieving divine grace; Sach Khand - is the abode of the Nirankar the Formless One and it is the final state of **human consciousness**. When the mind learns to stand still it will enter the Divine Portal to face the Waheguru. The following is not the golden rule but the spirit of its message is universal among all faiths and beliefs:

“I am a stranger to no one, and no one is a stranger to me. Indeed, I am a friend to all,” (Sri Guru Granth Sahib, 1299).

To promote the acceptance of **human equality while promoting diversity** Guru Angad Dev Ji established a community kitchen where all sit together and shared food from the same kitchen. Emperor Humayun was refused audience until he agreed to eat food among the congregation.

“They look upon all with equality, and recognize the Supreme Soul, the Lord, pervading among all. Those who sing the Praises of the Lord, Har, Har, obtain the supreme status; they are the most exalted and acclaimed people” (SGGS, p 446).

In practice this involves doing **community service** (Seva). Seva is dignity in labour through Kirat Karni (**honest earnings / work**); Naam Japna (**prayers**); sharing one's earnings (**Vand Chhakna**). The first of these is considered to be the most important as it can be freely given without any material cost;

“Cursed are the hands and feet that do not engage in seva” (Bhai Gurdas Ji, Varan, 27.1).

Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji The Khalsa Panth and the Code of Conduct



Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji's message of **unity, equality and diversity** was seeded in the **Khalsa Panth** (1699); physically symbolised by **Panj Kakars**: hair (Kesh) for saintliness; cutting hair is desecration of Waheguru's birth gift; Comb (Kanga) for the care of hair; Kachha (Bermuda shorts is a variation of) for chastity and prudence; Sword (Kirpan) an emblem of courage, worn (not carried) for the protection of the defenceless; Steel bracelet (Kara) represents restraint, gentility and infinity; reminding us that we are bound by the SGGS scriptures.

When initiating into the Khalsa Panth (**Universal Brotherhood**) a Sikh vows not to: steal, plunder, gamble or exploit the poor; commit adultery; use intoxicants and tobacco; commit any religious offense (Kurahit) such as the removal of hair; eating Halal meat. The Code of Conduct of a Khalsa includes religious and social rights. The religious rights are scribed in the SGGS. With every individual right comes **community obligations**; thus providing a mechanism for 'checks and balances'. Prohibition on the misuse of religious offerings and charitable donations weans the Khalsa from kurahit (misdeeds).

A Sikh's individual ethics and duties were framed by the Gurus in the concept of **Dharamsal**, that is, space needed for performance of obligations to: oneself, family, society, country and humanity. In Sikh jurisprudence rights and wrongs for the society are considered as a whole. From the choices at hand a Sikh must employ his intellect for the benefit of an individual as well as the society by the directions provided in the SGGS. The Gurus emphasized the use of reasoning in demolishing social ills and abuses.

Guru Nanak Dev Ji believed that divinity should be equally accessible to the ordinary man, woman and child. This principle is symbolized by the Khanda:

The **Khanda** is the insignia (emblem) of the Sikhs; its name is derived from the double edged sword at the heart of the insignia:



GLOSSARY

Dharamsal - the basic principles by which a Sikh lives his/her life, that is, according to one's duties and responsibilities

Gurdwara - literally means the gateway through which the Guru could be reached.

Gurus - in Sikhism the religious and spiritual leaders, that is, the ten Gurus and now the Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji.

Kakar or 5-K's - a Sikh vows to adopt the five kakars during the amrit paan ceremony. The five kakars are: Kesh (hair), Kanga (comb), Kaccha (long under-shorts), Kirpan (sword), Kara (steel bracelet).

Khalsa - is the name given, originally by Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji, to all Sikhs who have been initiated (baptised) into the Khalsa Panth (universal brotherhood) with the ceremony known as Amrit Paan.

Khand - in Sikhism there are five stages in the development of the human consciousness. Each stages is attained by spiritual development of the person.

Khanda - is the emblem of the Sikh faith, symbolised by the central position of the double edged sword.

Mool Mantra - the fundamental and the golden principle of Sikhism.

Pangat - is the principle of recognition of the not so well-off members of society as equal to oneself and also to have empathy with them.

Panjabi - the language spoken by most people in Panjab in Northern India.

Sadh - is a person who believes in and has adopted to live life as a faithful disciple of the Guru.

Sangat - to be in the company of honourable, honest and civilised group of people.

Sanskrit - an ancient Indo-Aryan language that is the classical language of India and of Hinduism.

Sant - is a person who has attained an inner peace by living life as commanded by the Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji.

Scripture - Many religions and spiritual movements believe that their sacred texts (or scriptures) are the “Word of God”, often feeling that the texts are wholly divine or spiritually inspired in origin.



A collage of Sikhism - Sikh photos

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For www based searches:

www.gurbani.org

www.sikhism.com

www.globalsikhstudies.net

www.sgpc.net

CONCLUSION

It is hoped that this collection of scriptures, teachings, attitudes, and principles produced by grassroots representatives from eleven of Scotland's faith and belief communities will contribute to the ongoing debate about how to promote good community relations. The *fact* of a multi-faith and belief culture in Scotland today does not necessarily mean communities are living together harmoniously in it. Attitudes such as the increase in Islamophobia and anti-Semitism are all part of a feeling of estrangement that faith communities in general, and ethnic minority faiths in particular, are feeling today.

It is only by ultimately understanding the simple concept of the Golden Rule that we shall ever be able to make progress in the realm of better community relations. Karen Armstrong, one of the world's foremost commentators and writers on religious affairs, states in *The Great Transformation – The World in the Time of Buddha, Socrates, Confucius, and Jeremiah*,

*“All the sages [Buddha, Socrates, Confucius, and Jeremiah] preached a spirituality of empathy and compassion; they insisted that people must abandon their egotism and greed, their violence and unkindness. Further, you must not confine your benevolence to only your own people: your concern must somehow extend to the whole world.”*²⁴

With inequality widening not only in this country but also internationally and the economic meltdown exposing a global corruption of basic ethical values, we certainly need to “abandon egotism and greed” as the sages suggested above and behave more with “kindness and generosity.”

These thoughts were echoed in Trevor Phillips' previously referred to speech, when he reasoned....

*“If we cannot get along with our neighbours we have no hope of taking the concerted action we need to reverse climate change. There's just no mileage in talking about car pools if you loathe your neighbours so much that you can't bear to share a car ride with them.”*²⁵

That is why we must welcome the Scottish Government's *Religion and Belief Strategy Framework Working Group*, as we are all represented in various ways by this approach. As part of our common humanity, we must strive to follow the Golden Rule, irrespective of our Religion or Belief, and thus work together towards the *common* good. This we can do, knowing that whatever our colour or creed, we all share the same core common core ethical and moral values. All the contributors have worked hard together in the production of Values in Harmony to demonstrate this.”

Therefore, in conclusion, we echo the words of Karen Armstrong:

*“As far as these sages were concerned, respect for the sacred rights of all beings – not orthodox belief – was religion. If people behaved with kindness and generosity towards their fellow human beings, they could save the world.”*²⁶

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS OF *VALUES IN HARMONY*

The second planned outcome of this Project was “...to use this as a tool to raise awareness in women and young people of how their Religion or Belief can lead to increased community cohesion, integration, and harmony.” This was achieved in two ways. Firstly, at the focus groups to discuss each Religion and Belief’s particular submission, it was noted that 68% of attendees stated they knew the Golden Rule was common to all Religions. But when they were asked if they were aware that it was also common to non-Religious people, i.e. secular Humanism, this figure fell to 47%.

Secondly, at the time of final printing two out of five planned focus groups had been held with HNC classes in Forth Valley College to try to meet this outcome. They were a mixture of men and women under the age of thirty years. No one had heard of the “Golden Rule” and most people felt that Religion did not promote harmony. This demonstrated a clear need for raising awareness and challenging stereotypes in young people who are not actively following *any* particular Religion or Belief.

However, the remit of this Project was not to take awareness raising any further than the focus groups. In order to take it further, approaches should be made at both the national and local levels. Nationally, the Scottish Government’s Religion and Belief Strategy Framework Working Party should ensure it is fully engaging with all representatives of the Religion and Belief communities. They should also actively promote the previously described “side-by-side” dialogue community engagement, as we all share common values. Similarly, as a *National* organisation the Scottish Inter Faith Council should be more inclusive in its promotion of Inter Faith dialogue. The EHRC’s single strand lead in Religion and Belief could also play a key role in supporting work in these two areas.

Locally, notwithstanding the need to respect differences, Religion and Belief communities should be raising awareness of their shared commonality. As the photo in the Humanist section suggests, we are all together on this one planet and need to look after it. Perhaps any planned community action could be considered as part of the previously mentioned “side-by-side” dialogue, and thus involve people from different communities, both faith and non-faith. Again, Inter Faith activities should be more inclusive of all Faith groups.

One obvious way to use this document as a tool to “promote good community relations” would be to develop it further into a practical training resource. In this way key groups could be targeted in order to raise awareness of this commonality they all share together. One example could be an invitation to speak at Religious and Moral Education (RME) classes held in secondary schools. Evidence above from the two focus groups in Forth Valley College suggests there is such a need in young people.

“Be the change you want to see in the world” said Ghandi, one of the greatest believers in the universality of the Golden Rule. We would do well to remember these words first for ourselves, before undertaking any community-based awareness raising.

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Poppies and daisies - Stockxchange Photos



ADDITIONAL GLOSSARY

BELIEF

A strongly held personal conviction or understanding that something is true, without necessarily any proof or evidence for it.

DISCRIMINATION

Treating someone less favourably or more unfairly than others, simply on the basis of their particular age, disability, ethnicity, gender, religion, or sexual orientation, for example.

DIVERSITY

The recognition and valuing of difference in its broadest sense. It is about creating a culture and practices that recognize, respect, value and harness difference for the benefit of all in a community or society.

EQUALITY

The creation of a fairer society where everyone can participate and has the opportunity to fulfil their potential. It is mostly supported by robust legislation designed to address unfair discrimination based on membership of a particular group. It should also result in equality of opportunity.

FAITH

A specific system of *religious belief*.

HUMAN RIGHTS

The basic rights and freedoms to which all humans are entitled – the universal human needs that bind us all together. They are based upon the core principles of dignity, equality, fairness and respect, and were first comprehensively described in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948*. These are now incorporated into law, with the *Human Rights Act of Parliament 1998*.

Equality has been described as the “*golden thread*” that runs through Human Rights, and vice versa.

REINCARNATION

The belief held by some religions that after death the soul is reborn in another body.

RELIGION

The sharing with like-minded people in rites, rituals, teachings, and sacred scriptures as a way of reverencing, worshipping, and following a belief in a supernatural force (“God,” “the Ultimate,” etc). This is how some people choose to express their own *spirituality*.

SPIRITUALITY

This is what gives our life meaning and purpose and connects us with the rest of humanity and creation. It involves the recognition and meeting of certain basic needs in all people:

To be loved and give love, to feel valued and wanted, to have self esteem, reassurance, peace, happiness, to be able to deal with guilt and be forgiven....to mention a few.

These are all positive values that contribute towards the greater good of Humanity, and thus enable people to feel a connection with others. By using this definition, we are all *Spiritual Beings* and appreciation of this fact should help us to understand that we all share common core values in promoting good community relations.

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This project was the result of a twelve month collaboration between the nineteen individuals described below. In addition, they were supported in their work by a total of ninetyeight members of their respective faith and belief communities in the focus groups. In this way it is true to describe this document as representative of the core common values from these diverse faith and belief communities in Scotland that should “***promote good community relations.***”

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Values in Harmony

