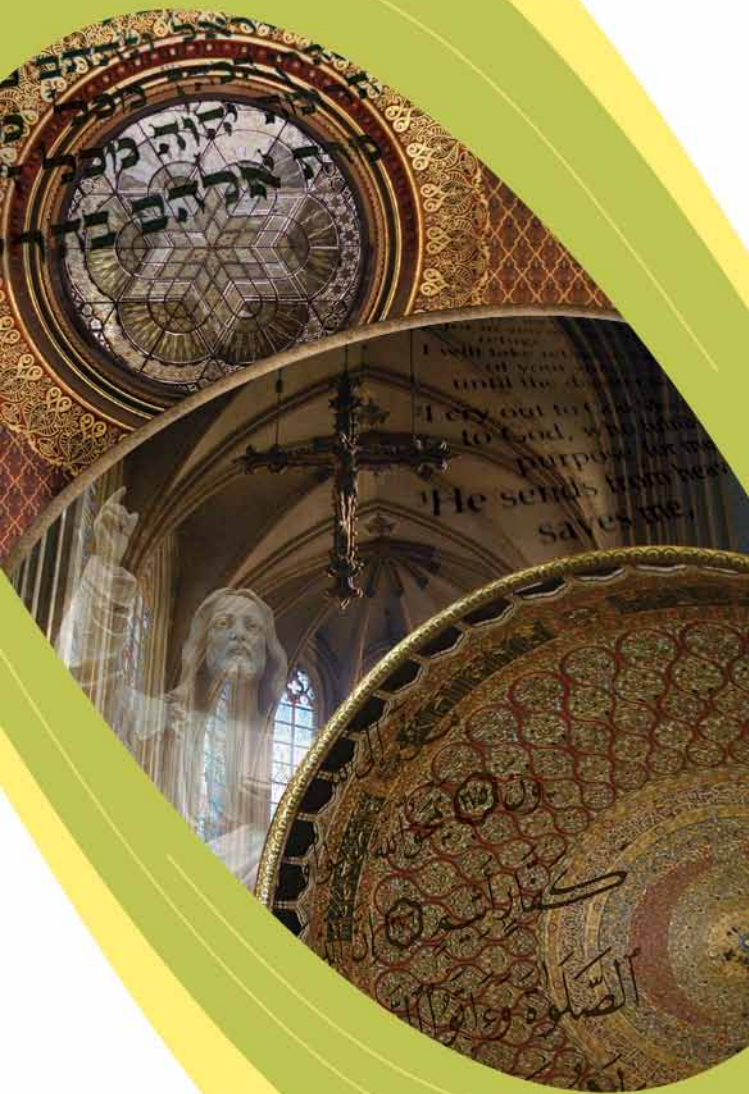




# JCMA

Jewish Christian Muslim  
Association of Australia



**A COMPARATIVE GUIDE**  
To Judaism, Christianity and Islam




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## ORIGINS




### What does the name mean?

-  Israel (Yisra'el) is the name for the Jewish people. It means 'one who struggles with God' - life is a continual struggle to know what God wants us to do, to achieve our potential and to make the world better for all people.
-  Christian is a kind of nickname which means 'follower of the Christ' (the Greek word for messiah or the anointed one).
-  'Islam' means "willing submission" to God's will. It comes from the Arabic root s-l-m, from which the word salaam or "peace" is also derived (The Hebrew word for peace, shalom, has the same root).



### To where do we trace our faith back?

-  Abraham realised there was only One God (about 4000 years ago). Revelation of Torah at Mount Sinai (about 3500 years ago). Core values come from these two events. Practices developed over centuries, and continue to adapt and adjust to this day.
-  Christianity is based on the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Abraham is considered a forefather to Christians - in a faith sense.
-  Muhammad, the final Prophet of Islam is considered the Seal of a line of Prophets including Jesus and tracing back to Abraham, who is revered as the father of the three monotheistic religions. It is usual when mentioning Muhammed or any prophets to say 'Peace be upon him' but for space and simplicity it has been omitted in this booklet.

### Key people

-  Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Sarah, Rebekka, Rachel and Leah, Moses (descended from Abraham's son Isaac), Rabbis of 2000 years ago. Maimonides, 800 years ago.
-  Jesus, Mary (the mother of Jesus), the 12 Apostles (the followers of Jesus), St Paul, and the early Saints.
-  The Prophet Muhammad and his Companions, such as Abu Bakr, Ali and Aisha. Abraham, Jesus, Mary, and the other prophets. The founders of the four schools of Islamic law.

### Key Book(s) & Texts

-  Hebrew Bible (Torah), The Talmud (about 1500 years ago), Mishneh Torah (800 years ago), The Shulkhan Arukh (450 years ago).
-  The Hebrew Bible with the addition of the Gospels ('good news') of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John and the letters of the apostles sent to the traditions of Christianity they established.

- ☾ The Qur'an and its many interpretations and commentaries, The Hadith (teachings and sayings of the prophet Muhammad of which there are various collections). The numerous scholarly works which analyse and derive principles from these.

## Prophets

- ✳️ Moses, Samuel, Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Micah, Habakuk, Zephania, Haggai, Zacharia, Malakhi.
- ✚ All of the Jewish prophets and John the Baptist are recognised as forerunners to the Christian faith, and tend to be treated equally.
- ☾ Muhammad, Jesus, the prophets of the Hebrew bible, and many thousands of other unnamed prophets, are all given the same respect.

## Final prophets?

- ✳️ Malakhi (about 2400 years ago) is believed by Jews to be the final prophet.
- ✚ All the Jewish prophets are valued, but Jesus is considered the fulfilment of the prophetic tradition.
- ☾ Muhammad is in a line of prophets since Adam and is believed by Muslims to be the final messenger.

## After the final prophets?

- ✳️ Anyone after Malakhi is not considered by Judaism to be a prophet (so Jesus and Muhammad are not considered as prophets), though there is little doubt that they existed as gifted and charismatic teachers and leaders. Since Malakhi, 'God's will' has been determined through Torah interpretation and commentary.
- ✚ The Council of Nicea over 1500 years ago fixed the Christian scriptures: anyone after this is not recognised, so Muhammad and Baha`ullah (Bahai faith) may be considered as great teachers but not prophets.
- ☾ Anyone after Muhammad is not considered a prophet, so for example Baha`ullah (Bahai faith) is considered as a teacher but not a prophet.

## About Jesus

- ✳️ Jesus is not part of Jewish belief. It is probable that he existed and was a Jewish teacher, clearly very knowledgeable about his traditions. Much of what he teaches (such as Love your neighbour as yourself) comes from Jewish tradition.
- ✚ Christians teach that there is only one God, but that there is also a `threeness' in this unity which they call 'Trinity': Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Jesus is `God the Son' and is both fully divine and fully human.

- ☾ Muslims revere Jesus to be a prophet of God who was born miraculously from the Virgin Mary. A chapter of the Qur'an is named "Mary". However Muslims don't believe he is God and/or the Son of God. Muslims do believe in the second coming of Jesus.

## Holy land(s) / places

- ✳️ Israel (where the ancestors of the Jewish people lived from 4000 years ago and where Judaism developed), and especially Jerusalem (which was the capital from 3000 years ago and where the Temple was built).
- ✚ Jerusalem, and other pilgrimage sites where significant Christians have lived or worked. For example Rome, (where many Christians were martyred in the Colosseum), or Istanbul.
- ☾ Mecca (in modern-day Saudi Arabia), Medina (also in Saudi Arabia), Jerusalem (in Israel/Palestine).

## Pilgrimage

- ✳️ When the Temple was standing (until almost 2000 years ago), Jews would take offerings to Jerusalem three times a year. It is no longer obligated, but it is very special to visit Israel, and as the journey is today relatively quick and easy, some Jews go every year or two.
- ✚ Pilgrimage sites can be to either significant Churches or significant places where Jesus, or the Saints, have walked or lived (e.g. Via Dolorosa in Jerusalem, or Lourdes in France).
- ☾ The fifth pillar of Islam is for all able-bodied Muslims to try to make the pilgrimage to the Ka'ba (a shrine to the One God believed to have been built by Abraham and Ishmael) in the holy city of Mecca, at least once in their lifetime.  
Men and women all wear simple white clothes so as not to differentiate between rich and poor. Over two million people attend annually.

## Legal system

- ✳️ Called 'halakha' (the way), an all-encompassing set of principles, rules and guidelines for living.  
**Less orthodox:** May concentrate more on ethical (behaviour) than ritual laws.  
**More orthodox:** Follow laws for every aspect of life. (The modern State of Israel uses a sophisticated legal structure which has aspects of Jewish, Turkish and British law).
- ✚ Some traditions of Christianity are governed by official codes of Canon Law but generally Christian behaviour is regulated by theological and philosophical considerations, including the 10 commandments given to Moses and interpreted by Jesus.

- Called 'Sharia' (the way) referring to an all-encompassing set of principles, rules and guidelines for living. These cover ritual worship as well as eating, marriage, and commerce. The objective is to help every aspect of life become an act of worship.

## CURRENT DATA

### How many in Australia (approx)

- 97,000 Jews live in Australia.
- 13 million Christians live in Australia.
- 476,000 Muslims live in Australia.

*Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing, 2011*

### How many Worldwide

- There are 14,641,000 (15 million) Jews across the world.
- There are 2,292,454,000 (2.3 billion) Christians across the world.
- There are 1,549,444,000 (1.5 billion) Muslims across the world.

*Atlas of Global Christianity (Todd M. Johnson & Kenneth R. Ross (eds), Edinburgh University Press, 2009).*

## BELIEFS

### Revelation?

- Less orthodox:** Humans were inspired by God to write their story of 'How does God want us to live?' This is the Torah (the 'Five Books of Moses', Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy).  
**More orthodox:** God dictated the Torah to Moses on top of Mount Sinai. The text is said to be unchanged.
- Christians say that Jesus is 'the Word of God' made flesh, and that God is revealed in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, such that Jesus is the 'image of the unseen God'. Christians also recognise God's revelation to the Jewish people through their prophets.
- Muslims believe the Qur'an to be the exact words revealed by God through the angel Gabriel to Muhammad. There are 114 chapters and over 6,000 verses, which many Muslims have committed to memory. The text is unchanged and in its original form as revealed 1400 years ago.

### Day of Judgement?

- Yes (in some sense). God will ask 'Why did we not live up to our potential?' All are accountable. All will be judged for their actions in this world and either rewarded or

punished. It is a central Jewish belief that God is merciful and compassionate, but also just.

- Yes. Because God is just, Jesus envisaged a day when good and evil in the world would come under God's judgement. But this judgement is prefigured in the death of Jesus himself, which is also a source of God's forgiveness – a key Christian teaching.
- Yes. All shall be judged for their actions and intentions in this world and either rewarded or punished according to their piety. All will be accountable to God on the Day of Judgement. It is a central Muslim belief that God is merciful and compassionate, but also just.

### Life after death

- Less orthodox:** Perhaps the soul lives on, but not physical resurrection.  
**More orthodox:** Yes, assumed for the soul, until the Messiah comes (see Messiah), when many think that the bodies of the dead will be brought back to life. However the matter is open to speculation.
- Christians believe that the resurrection of Jesus has destroyed the power of death. Christians enjoy eternal life as a gift from God here and now – and after death they look forward to the resurrection of the dead and life forever in the presence of God.
- Yes - for eternity. The hereafter is an infinite existence whereas this world is finite and temporary.

### Heaven

- Less orthodox:** Perhaps - we will find out!  
**More orthodox:** Yes
- Christians believe that in Christ and through the gift of God's Spirit, they meet and live with God here and now. Nevertheless, they also look forward to the time when they will enter fully into the presence of God and see God 'face to face'. This is what Christians mean when they speak of 'heaven'.
- Yes. Imagery in the Qur'an is of eternal gardens, streams, and shade, but Muslims are reminded not to take this literally but as an indication of a reality we cannot yet comprehend. We believe that only God decides who will enter heaven.

### Hell

- Perhaps – or perhaps just nothing - not a very fully developed idea. The Jewish emphasis is on living this life in the best way we can.

✚ Just as 'heaven' is being in the presence of God, so 'hell' is being cut off from God's presence. It is possible that people experience this even in this life.

☾ Yes. The imagery is of a fire and suffering, but we are taught to take this as only an indication of a reality we cannot yet comprehend.

## Messiah

✚ **All Jews:** No Messiah has yet come to the world.

**Less orthodox:** May not accept the idea of the messiah as an individual.

**More orthodox:** Yes, God will send the Messiah, descended from King David, announced by Elijah the prophet, to bring about the Messianic Times.

(Note: some people call themselves Messianic Jews - they accept Jesus was the Messiah. They therefore cannot be considered as Jews.)

✚ Yes, Jesus of Galilee (which is in Northern Israel) is called 'the Christ' which means 'anointed' - after the Jewish custom to anoint Kings and priests. Christians believe that Jesus was 'anointed' in both senses - that he was the Messiah who will return to bring the reign of God and the fullness of life to all believers.

☾ Yes Jesus is referred to as the Messiah in the Qur'an. Muslims believe that when he returns, he will invite all humanity to his original message, which is the core message of Islam.

## Messianic Time

✚ **Less orthodox:** Reject bodily resurrection. Our task is to move the world, bit by bit towards a time of perfection (human progress).

**More orthodox:** Yes, believe in physical resurrection of the body in the 'Time of Eternal Perfection'.

✚ Jesus announced the coming of the 'kingdom' or the reign of God. It is present now in the world, as a seed which is growing, and will be fully revealed in the final judgement and resurrection.

☾ Unknown. However many Muslims believe we are (relatively) close to the end of the world.

## All-Powerful God?

✚ **Less orthodox:** Maybe not - perhaps God has chosen not to be 'all powerful'. Otherwise all tragedies must be 'God's fault'. Instead, humans and God work in partnership.

**More orthodox:** Yes, God is omnipotent (all powerful).

✚ Some Christians believe in an all-powerful God and one who intervenes by actions. Others, while confessing that God is constant in love and care, do not believe in specific interventions.

☾ Muslims believe in a God with certain attributes including ultimate power over all that happens and God's ultimate will that determines everything, without denying humans free will.

## One All-knowing God?

✚ Yes. God is everywhere and is aware of all things.

✚ Yes, God is everywhere and is aware of all things.

☾ Yes. God knows all things, everywhere and at all times.

## Do you have to believe in God?

✚ No. A Jew is a Jew if born as a Jew or converted to Judaism. Judaism is a people and culture as well as a religion. A 'religious' Jew believes in God.

✚ Yes, Christians believe and trust in God as revealed by Jesus. The whole Christian life is defined by this faith.

☾ Yes. Faith in God is the first & fundamental aspect of being a Muslim.

## COMMUNICATING WITH GOD

### Most Common Names for God

✚ YHVH (when we see this most holy name written in Hebrew we say 'Adonai', though some reserve 'Adonai' only for prayer and say Adoshem or Hashem (the name) instead when not praying. El (same root as Allah), Elohim, HaMakom (the Place), Tzur HaOlamim (Rock of the Universe), Rakhmim (Compassionate One) and many others.

✚ Christians call their One God: The Lord (from Hebrew Adonai and Greek Kyrios). They name the One Triune: 'The Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit'. There are some churches today which also use non gender specific names for God.

☾ "Allah" means "the God" in Arabic. (Millions of Arab and some Indonesian Christians also use the word "Allah" to denote God). There are 99 'Beautiful Names' describing aspects of God, such as "the All-Merciful" and "the All-Compassionate". Allah has the same root as El (Jewish).

## Prayer

✚ **All religious Jews:** Regular blessings.

**Less orthodox:** Prayer services weekly or less.

**More orthodox:** Three times/day, evening, morning and afternoon.

✚ Christians are encouraged to pray unceasingly (St Paul) but morning and night are the usual favourites.

☾ At least five times a day – dawn, midday, afternoon, sunset, and night. Muslims are also encouraged to practise “Remembrance of God” unceasingly.

## Where?

✡ Jews can pray anywhere suitable, i.e. at home, at work, but it is preferable with the community (with 10 people) where possible.

✚ Christians can pray anywhere, i.e. at church, at home, at work. Jesus promised that he would be wherever ‘two or three are gathered in his name’ – but Christians believe that the presence of God is also with us when we are on our own.

☾ Muslims can pray anywhere clean, i.e. at home, at work, or in a mosque. Muslims are encouraged to pray together when possible.

## Language of prayer

✡ **Less orthodox:** Hebrew, a bit of Aramaic (the language of Israel at the time of the Rabbis, 2000 years ago) and the vernacular (language of the country, e.g. English).

**More orthodox:** Hebrew, a bit of Aramaic.

✚ Some traditions of Christianity use ancient languages such as Greek. More commonly today the common language of the individual or community is used.

☾ Arabic. Arabic is a Semitic language closely related to Hebrew and Aramaic. The Qur’an has been preserved in its original Arabic to prevent the dilution of its meaning through translation. Muslims can also say personal prayers in their own language.

## Singing and Music

✡ All use singing and chanting as well as reading in services. A ‘khazzan’ sometimes leads the service.

**Less orthodox:** May have a female ‘khazzan’, a mixed choir, and use musical instruments such as an organ.

**More orthodox:** Do not use instruments on Sabbaths and festivals, and the most orthodox believe women’s voices should not be heard by men.

✚ Singing and music are important in Christian worship and many worship services will be completely sung or chanted.

☾ Muslims are encouraged to read the Qur’an “beautifully” and those who can recite it and the Call to Prayer

melodiously are accorded high respect. Musical instruments are accepted by most Muslims, although by some only in a limited form. Different cultures around the world have their own forms of music.

## Prayer direction

✡ Jerusalem (facing north-west from Australia, east from Europe).

✚ Traditionally oriented toward the east (the rising sun as symbol of the resurrection) but commonly today no particular orientation.

☾ Mecca (facing north-west from Australia, south-east from Europe).

## Prayer clothing

✡ The Torah instructs us to put fringes on our clothes. **Less orthodox:** Men wear a ‘tallit’ (prayer shawl with fringes) during daytime services and generally cover heads in formal services. Women can also do so.

**More orthodox:** Men (only) wear a vest with fringes and a head covering (yarmulke or kippah) at all times, and a ‘tallit’ during daytime services.

✚ None, except the priest who may have a plain or more ornate gown. In some traditions, different colours are worn at different seasons. It is traditional for males to uncover the head on entering a church, and some traditions expect a woman to cover her head when entering a church.

☾ Normal everyday clothing that is non-revealing. Females cover all parts of their body except their face and hands. Males will wear long trousers, and will often wear some kind of head covering when entering the mosque. It is important that any clothing should be clean.

## CALENDAR

### Day starts

✡ Nightfall – so Shabbat (the Sabbath) starts on Friday evening and finishes on Saturday evening, and all festivals start in the evening.

✚ The Liturgical day begins at nightfall the day before e.g. Christmas Eve and the Easter Vigil are the start of the next day’s festival.

☾ Sunset – so festivals start from the evening.

### Calendar type

✡ Luni-solar. Every Hebrew month starts at the new moon, but 12 lunar months are slightly shorter than a solar year. Therefore, a leap-month is added every two or three

years to keep the festivals in time with the solar cycle – so Passover for example is always in the springtime (of the northern hemisphere where the land of Israel is located, where Judaism developed).

✚ Solar, with Lunar impact. Some festivals always fall in the same season of the year (e.g. Christmas is midwinter in the Northern hemisphere but midsummer in the southern) – but even here the Eastern Orthodox Churches continue to follow the Julian Calendar so their Christmas is 13 days later. Other festivals are also dependent on the Lunar cycles e.g. the date for Easter is determined by the Lunar cycle. Other festivals are also dependent on the Lunar cycle.

☾ Lunar. Every month starts at the new moon. There are 12 lunar months, and the year is around 10 days shorter than a solar year. Therefore, the festivals move earlier each solar year. Every 30 years (about 1 generation) a Muslim living in one place will have fasted Ramadan in all four seasons, including winter (when the fast is short), and summer (when it is long!).

## Main Festivals/Holy Days of the year

✚ **Rosh Hashanah (New Year):** The Shofar (Ram's horn) is blown. It reminds us of when Abraham sacrificed a ram in place of his son Isaac (the Muslim version says his other son Ishma'el). The sound is a call to the heart to repent.

**Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement):** A 25 hour fast with services all day, to review our lives and improve ourselves.

**Sukkot:** A week-long harvest festival, also marking the 40 years that the Israelites wandered in the Sinai desert.

**Simkhat Torah:** Rejoicing in completing the annual reading from the Torah and starting it from the beginning again.

**Hanukah:** A more minor eight day festival marking the re-dedication of the Temple in Jerusalem around 2300 years ago, and Jewish survival.

**Tu Bishvat (15th day of month of Sh'vat):** Also more minor – New Year for Trees. Today it is taking on a renewed importance as the festival of the Environment for some Jews.

**Purim:** Another more minor festival where we read the Scroll of Esther and celebrate the foiling of a plan to massacre the Jews of Persia (Iran).

**Pesakh (Passover):** A week-long harvest festival, also celebrating the Israelite exodus from Egyptian slavery (perhaps 3300 years ago). Unleavened bread (Matzah) is eaten.

**Yom HaShoah (Holocaust Day):** Quite a recent introduction to remember the Holocaust where about

6,000,000 Jews were killed in Europe in the 1940s.

**Yom HaAztma'ut (Independence Day):** Also a relatively recent festival which celebrates the re-establishment of a Jewish state, Israel, after 1900 years, in 1948.

**Shavu'ot (Weeks):** Comes seven weeks after Pesakh (Passover) starts. It is a harvest festival which also celebrates the giving of the Torah.

**Tisha B'Av (the Ninth day of the month of Av):** We mark all the tragedies that have happened to the Jewish people over the centuries.

✚ Not all Christian traditions formally observe a 'Christian calendar' but the main Festivals are observed by all. The Christian year begins with **Advent** (four Sundays leading up to Christmas). Christmas covers a 12 day period which is followed by **Epiphany** (when Jesus appeared to the gentiles). The Epiphany season lasts until **Ash Wednesday** which commences the season of **Lent** (40 days to Holy Week) and that week includes the important days of **Palm Sunday, Monday, Thursday, Good Friday, Easter Eve and Easter Day**. In the Orthodox Tradition, a 50-day preparation time is observed.

The Easter season lasts 50 days until **Pentecost (Ascension Day)**, where Jesus returned to heaven, is 40 days after Easter Sunday) 10 days after Ascension, Pentecost Sunday is celebrated, followed by a 'non-festival' period lasting until the Feast of Christ the King where the liturgical year begins again.

During the year other special feasts including **Trinity Sunday** (Sunday after Pentecost), Saints Days (e.g. St Mark, St Paul, St John); days noting the Virgin Mary; and events that highlight the life of Jesus (i.e. the transfiguration).

Other feasts include **All Saints** (which remembers all Christians now in Heaven); All Hallows (which remembers all dead people – the popular American feast of Halloween); and **St Michael and All Angels**, a feast celebrating the role of angels in our lives.

☾ During the entire month of **Ramadan**, Muslims should abstain from dawn to dusk, from food, drink and marital contact – for self-purification. It is also a time to purify thoughts and to focus on being kind to others and for spiritual reflection, so Muslims should try especially hard not to commit any bad deeds such as lying, backbiting or cheating.

**Eid ul-Fitr:** The festival of the return to *fitra* (our original, sinless state). A four day festival at the end of the holy fasting month of Ramadan.


**Eid ul-Adha:** The festival of the sacrifice. A four day festival commemorating the sacrifice that Abraham was commanded to make of his son Ishmael as a test


of his and Ishmael's faith. God substituted a ram when Abraham passed the test, and Muslims now slaughter a sheep or cow following Abraham's tradition, and give the meat to the poor and needy.


There are some lesser festivals which not all Muslims observe, such as the **Birthday of the Prophet**. One tradition is that only festivals which existed at the time of Muhammad should be celebrated.

## RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS


### Community Centre


 Synagogue (a Greek word. In Hebrew there are three terms for the three main uses – house of assembly, house of prayer and house of study).


 The Church Building – remembering that 'church' also means the people who gather together in the building (the community).

 Mosque (Arabic masjid – place of prostration). Essentially a prayer hall for collective prayers, and a focal point for the community.


### In the Community Centre


 An 'Ark' (holy cupboard) containing the Torah scrolls, in the wall which faces Jerusalem, a 'Ner Tamid' (everlasting light) which reminds us of God's continual presence, prayer and other books (Jews are called 'The People of the Book'), a low platform (bimah) from which the service is led.


 There are differences between the different Christian traditions. Most will have a place for people to sit or stand and a place at the front for the clergy (sanctuary). In the sanctuary there will be a table (altar) and a place for reading the Scriptures and preaching (lectern or pulpit). There will also be a bowl or pool of water (font) for baptism in the church.

 In the mosque there is a mihrab or prayer niche, which points towards Mecca, and from which the service is led. On Fridays, a sermon is delivered from a minbar (similar to a pulpit). No pews – often lines marking the floor indicating where people should stand and sit.


### School

 Education is highly valued and children should be taught to swim (for safety) and educated about their faith and the world. Most synagogues have a Sunday School, but many Jewish communities also have one or more Jewish Day Schools. Melbourne has seven. Most also teach about other faiths and beliefs. An institution for adult Jewish study is called a 'Yeshiva'.

 Christians have a long tradition of involvement in education. The home is the primary place for learning the faith, but many churches offer primary and secondary schooling. Most churches have 'Sunday Schools' or programs for teaching the faith to children, conducted before, during or after the regular worship services


 Education is highly valued, as the very first verse revealed in the Qur'an instructed Muhammad to "Read". The modern university system began in Cairo over a thousand years ago. In Australia there are around 30 Islamic schools, which follow the Australian curriculum with additional religious classes. However Muslims need not necessarily attend an Islamic school.


### Cemetery

 Every community has a cemetery. A Jew's remains should be buried as soon as possible in consecrated ground, facing Jerusalem. In Israel, only a white shroud is used. A flat or upright headstone is erected. Visitors place stones on the grave. Flowers are not usually used at Jewish funerals.


**Less orthodox:** Will also perform cremations, and the ashes can be buried in the cemetery, and a headstone, rose bush or other memorial can be positioned. Reject the idea of physical resurrection.

**More orthodox:** Will not allow cremation as it is felt disrespectful to the body and prevents its physical resurrection.

 Christian burial practices grew out of Jewish custom – especially in relation to the sanctity of the body – emphasising the traditional aspect of the hope of bodily resurrection. Due to modern regulations, few churches have cemeteries within their grounds as was once common, although with the rise in popularity of cremation (once forbidden to Christians) many churches now have gardens of remembrance where the ashes of the deceased are interred. Christians regard the departed faithful as continuing members of the community.

 A Muslim must be buried in the ground (soil) as soon as possible. An official cemetery is the ideal location. The body is wrapped in a white shroud (no coffin) and is laid to rest on its side, facing towards Mecca.

### Home

 The home is a focus of the Jewish people. Shabbat and festivals are welcomed there, children are raised in a 'Jewish environment', hospitality is encouraged. Study is part of life so there are many books/CDs, DVDs etc. The home should have a 'Mezuzah' scroll on the doorpost.



Love and respect for parents and children are essential values. Hospitality is an important element in Judaism.

✚ The home is regarded as the 'domestic church'. Parents are primarily responsible for the Christian upbringing of their children. Marriage and the family are highly honoured and valued by Christians.

☾ The home is important for the upbringing of the family and should be a loving and spiritual environment. The parents should strive to be good role models for their children. Conversely, parents – especially mothers – are to be especially honoured by their children. A well-known saying of the Prophet Muhammad is that "Heaven lies at the feet of mothers." Hospitality is also a strong virtue in Islam.

## Religious leaders

✚ The Rabbi is usually selected by the community because of their learning, experience, charisma and reputation.

**Less orthodox:** Rabbis may be women as well as men.

**More orthodox:** Only men may be Rabbis and lead the community. Different groups of Rabbis may select their own leaders. In Israel, there are two 'Chief Rabbis', though not all Rabbis or Jews accept either as their authority! Teachers of Judaism should have a high value in the Jewish community.

✚ There is great variety in models of leadership among Christians. Traditional churches have three levels of ordination: deacon, priest and bishop. Other churches have a single office of 'the minister' or 'the pastor'. Some also have the lay-office of 'elder'. Traditionally, only males were allowed to be ordained, although some churches today also ordain women clergy. Almost all churches prepare their leaders with rigorous academic and pastoral training.

☾ An Imam is the leader of the congregational prayer, but this is not necessarily an official position – anyone who leads the prayer is the imam for that prayer. Women cannot lead men in prayer, though they can lead other women. Sheikh is an Arabic word meaning "older man" and is often used for male scholars or religious leaders. It is not an official position. Different cultures have different names – such as hoca in Turkish, and kiai in Indonesian. Women can be religious scholars.

A Mufti is one qualified to give legal opinions about matters of Islamic law. In a majority-Muslim country, a Mufti may be appointed by the government for a particular area or the whole country. A Mufti does not necessarily have spiritual authority.

In Sunni Islam there is no clergy or spiritual hierarchy. Shi'ia Muslims (comprising about 15% of all Muslims) give Imams and Ayatollahs a special status.

## Community leaders

✚ There are also many lay leaders who organise events (such as security) in the community, and who represent the Jewish community to the wider community. In Australia there are state bodies such as the Jewish Community Council of Victoria, as well as a federal body. We also have people and organisations helping and supporting Israel and educating the Jewish and wider community about Israel.

✚ Today, in almost all the churches, male and female people (non-clergy) exercise leadership in a variety of significant ways. Christians teach that the Holy Spirit gives 'gifts' to each individual which are to be used for the service of all in the community – the wider community, their own church community and also in inter-church bodies like the Victorian Council of Churches and the National Council of Churches in Australia.

☾ Men and women with leadership qualities can become leaders in social community affairs. In Australia there are state-wide bodies representing many Muslims, such as the Islamic Council of Victoria, as well as a federal body, the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils. These bodies are not religious bodies and have no spiritual authority.

## Membership

✚ Jewish people generally pay an annual membership to a synagogue to pay the Rabbi, building maintenance and other costs, and some of this also goes to support the communal organisations. Special arrangements are always made for those who can't afford to pay the full amount, or anything at all.

They may also belong to other organisations such as the Jewish Museum, and may support some important charitable institutions such as Jewish Care, even though they don't have official membership.

✚ Different churches determine official membership in different ways. Most accept baptism (immersion in water) as the real entry point into the community. Membership may also be determined by public confession of faith. Some memberships are more formal and require official entry on a register, others are more informal and are determined by geography (e.g. living within the boundaries of a 'parish') or ethnicity (e.g. most Greeks belong to the Greek Orthodox Church). Fees are not usually charged, although members have

responsibility to support the community—sometimes ‘tithing’ (giving 10% of one’s income) to the church.

- ☪ Muslims do not need to belong to any particular mosque or congregation, though in Australia many Muslims still associate with a mosque community that has particular ethnic origins. Some Muslims have formed mosque associations which do have formal membership, but it is not required by the faith.

Whether or not someone is recognised as a Muslim is an issue between themselves and God and cannot be decided by any other groups or individuals.

## KEY VALUES

### Honesty and Integrity

- ✡ We derive our values from how we learn or imagine God would act. Therefore absolute honesty and integrity are key demands for a good Jewish life. We should always be trustworthy. A good reputation is the most precious gift.
- ✚ Truth or truthfulness is a virtue which consists in showing oneself true in deeds and truthful in words and actions. Jesus called himself ‘The Truth’ and Christians are expected to be honest and trustworthy.
- ☪ Truthfulness and honesty are essential qualities of a practising Muslim. The prophet Muhammad stated “The truthful are associated with the prophets and the saints.” The Prophet himself was known as “The Trustworthy” even before his period of prophethood.

### Helping Others

- ✡ Tzedakah (righteousness). We have an obligation to help others, however poor we may be ourselves. The highest level is to help someone get a job so that they become self-sufficient (and to do it so you never know who they are and they never know who you are).
- ✚ Charity is essential to Christianity. Christians cannot truly claim to love God whom they cannot see if they do not show practical love for their neighbour whom they can see. Jesus taught that our neighbour is any person in need of our help. Christians should show charity to members of their own faith, but also to all people regardless of their religious belief, without expecting anything in return.
- ☪ Muslims are urged to help people as often as possible, regardless of their religion. The prophet Muhammad stated “God will help His servant as long as God’s servant helps others.”

## Justice

- ✡ Any society should have a robust and accessible system of justice, which does not favour the rich or poor and is independent and incorruptible. In Israel, the Supreme Court quite often overturns or refers back Government decisions.
- ✚ Justice is an important concept in Christian teaching, and it is expected that the country in which one lives will also uphold justice. It is not just a legal system, however, as justice should include equity and fairness in social relationships.
- ☪ Justice is one of the highest virtues of Islam, as it is one of the attributes of God. The Quran (4:135) commands to “stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to God”: The Prophet was called “The Trustworthy”. Islamic Law and teachings place great emphasis on the right of all people to justice and respect, regardless of their religion.

## Peace

- ✡ Judaism is a peace-loving religion (‘Seek peace and pursue it’), but not at any price. Sometimes, Judaism has had to fight for what it believes (for example against the Greeks, the Romans, the Nazis and over the past sixty years for the continued existence of the State of Israel). Peace is Shalom, the same as the Arabic ‘Salam’, and we often welcome each other with ‘Shalom Aleikhem’ – peace be with you – which is the same as the Christians, and the Muslim ‘As-Salamu Alaikum’.
- ✚ Jesus came to bring peace, but ‘not as the world gives’. By his death, Jesus made peace between human beings and God, and taught that people should live in peace (and this includes observing the notion of ‘justice’ in personal relationships). Peace is not simply the absence of war, but a society and relationships where justice is a prevailing concept. Christianity has a strong tradition of pacifism, but also a traditional teaching that sometimes war is ‘just’. As in Judaism and Islam, Christians use the greeting ‘Peace be with you’.
- ☪ The word Islam is derived from a root meaning peace, i.e. salaam (the same as the Hebrew ‘Shalom’). The common greeting of Muslims is “As-Salamu Alaikum” meaning ‘peace be upon you’. A prayer frequently recited by Muslims reads “O God, You are peace, and from You is peace, so give us life with/in Peace, God, and enter us into the Garden, the Place of Peace.”  
Islam also has a complex set of principles that govern conduct of states and individuals in handling of disputes and issues of self-defence. War or fighting is permissible only under circumstances such as the defence of a land or its people. Aggression is not permitted. Individuals

are not allowed to take the law into their own hands and must follow strict guidelines which protect the environment, non-combatants, places of worship etc. at all times.

## Hospitality

✡ Abraham and Sarah are our models of hospitality. Like them, we should always be aware of strangers and the hungry and be generous with what God has given us. In particular, people should be invited to share the Shabbat meal, the Passover Seder, and the other festive meals.

✚ Jesus showed solidarity with outcasts and 'sinners' by eating with them. He often described the Kingdom of Heaven as a banquet, and made a meal (the Eucharist) a central act of the church. Thus sharing food together has an important role in Christianity. The Christian Scriptures teach: 'Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares' (Hebrews 13:2).

☾ The prophet Muhammad being the example for Muslims to follow, has many teachings with regards to hospitality and looking after the poor, hungry and strangers.

## Fasting

✡ Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement) - 25 hour fast from food, drink and sex to 'afflict the soul', to pray all day without distraction.

**More orthodox:** Also fast on other days such as Tisha B'Av (the Ninth day of the month of Av).

✚ Christians fast as an accompaniment to prayer and as an act of repentance. While some Christian traditions and religious groups still have strict fasting rules, most Christians, if they practise fasting at all today, do so as an act of personal spirituality. Traditional fast days are Wednesday and Friday, the days of Advent and Lent, and above all, Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. Some traditions also require fasting before receiving the Eucharist. Fasting comes in two forms: a reduction of the amount of food and drink, or refraining from certain foods and drinks.

☾ The Month of Ramadan - daily abstinence from dawn to dusk, from food, drink and marital contact - for self purification. Also a time to purify our thoughts and to focus on being kind to others and for spiritual reflection.

## LIFE CYCLE

### Birth-related rituals

✡ Circumcision (boys - their foreskin is removed in a tiny operation at eight days old). This is said to be a 'sign of the Covenant between a Jew and God', but is perhaps also for hygiene reasons. The baby is blessed and given his Hebrew name (every Jew has a Hebrew as well as a regular name).

**Less orthodox:** Baby naming - male and female babies are brought to the synagogue service and they are blessed and named.

**More orthodox:** The boy is named at the circumcision, a girl's Hebrew name is announced in the synagogue with a blessing.

✚ Baptism (or Christening) is traditionally associated with birth, although strictly it is the first rite of initiation into Christianity and is done at whatever age someone becomes a Christian. Some Christians delay baptism until the age of reason has been attained. Baptism involves the application of water to the candidate (sometimes by immersion, sometimes by pouring) 'in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit'. Generally infants are baptised only when their parents are practising Christians. 'God-parents' are sponsors assigned at the time of baptism to aid the parents in the Christian upbringing of their children.

☾ Prayers are said at birth when many Muslim parents read the Call to Prayer very gently into the newborn baby's ear.

Baby naming or aqiqa - family and friends of the new baby gather together and prayers and blessings are recited.

Circumcision is practised for boys, preferably at an early age. A few cultures (Christian, Muslim and Animist) practise female 'circumcision' but this is NOT an Islamic practice and Islamic law forbids the unnecessary harming of any person.

### Adolescence

✡ Bar Mitzvah. When a boy is 13, he can participate in the religious service and so he is 'called up' to read from the Torah and other parts (in Hebrew).

**Less orthodox:** Treat boys and girls (and men and women) equally, so girls celebrate Bat Mitzvah when they are 13 in exactly the same way as boys.

**More orthodox:** A girl is considered mature at 12. She may be part of a group celebration on a Sunday. Women reading from the Torah is becoming more acceptable in some places.

In most orthodox circles, females are not called to read from the Torah.

**+** Confirmation is one of the rites of initiation in the Christian church, but its practice and theology varies greatly. It signifies maturing in the Christian faith and the special gift of the Holy Spirit for Christian living. It often signifies joining a particular Christian denomination. For those baptised as infants, it is often conducted at adolescence following a period of 'catechisation' (teaching the faith). Adult converts are usually catechised before baptism and confirmed at the same time as baptism. In the Eastern churches, confirmation is called 'Chrismation' and is conducted at the same time as baptism, even for infants.

**☾** There are no specific religious rituals required. Different Muslim cultures around the world, however, often have particular customs for the stages of life that are accepted as not contradicting Islam.

Children are encouraged to learn to recite the Qur'an from an early age, and when a child first finishes reciting the Qur'an from start to finish, a celebration is often held.

## Marriage

**✡** Marriage (to other Jews) is encouraged in Judaism and celibacy is discouraged.

A Jewish wedding can only be between two Jews. It is under a khuppa (canopy) in the presence of family and friends (including two formal 'witnesses'), and God. Blessings are said, and a document is signed (ketubah) and finally a glass is broken.

**Less orthodox:** Interpret the broken glass as a reminder of sadness, which, like happiness, is a part of life, and also of the fragility of marriage.

**More orthodox:** See it as a reminder of the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, almost 2000 years ago.

A woman can only have one husband but technically a man can have multiple wives. However this was ruled out for most Jews 1000 years ago and today is very rare.

**+** Christianity from the beginning has practised monogamy as a sign of the fidelity between Christ and his 'bride', the Church. Traditionally Christians have regarded marriage as a 'sacrament', that is, a rite of the church, although many Christians today see marriage as a rite of the state which the Church blesses and

supports with prayer. Therefore 'civil celebrations' are regarded differently by different Christian traditions. The 'celebrants' of marriage are the husband and wife who freely consent and promise themselves to each other for life in the presence of God and witnesses. Marriage is a public—not a private—matter and is governed by law.

**☾** Marriage in Islam is greatly encouraged and celibacy is discouraged.

Marriage is considered the ideal state, and Islamic principles on relationships between the sexes reflect this. Muslims are not permitted physical contact outside a lawful marriage, which has the effect of protecting, strengthening and increasing the value and importance of marriage itself.

There are several conditions of marriage:

1. Both parties consent.
2. The woman is given a dowry/gift by the husband, and
3. There are witnesses and the marriage is publicised.

Some Muslims have written marriage contracts.

The Qur'an describes spouses as being garments for one another, and speaks of the love and affection that God has created between husband and wife.

## Divorce

**✡** Whilst doing everything possible to keep a marriage together, as long as it is not harmful, Judaism has always acknowledged that sometimes marriages do not work. Since the marriage was commenced with a religious procedure, there is another religious procedure, and a document to mark the end to a marriage, called a 'Get', after which the two of them are free to marry again.

**+** Since Christian marriage has been modelled on the relationship between Christ and the Church, Christian doctrine teaches that marriage is a relationship entered into for life. Jesus taught 'What God has joined together, human beings should not divide.' However, in recent times many Christian traditions have recognised civil divorce as also signifying the end of marriage in the sight of the church, and have allowed divorced couples to remarry.

**☾** Divorce is permissible but only as a last resort. Families are urged to work together to reconcile the parties, and if necessary to appoint an arbiter in a dispute.

## Death

**✡** The body is ritually washed and prepared in a white shroud. All are considered equal in death so only plain wooden coffins are used (in Israel, coffins are not used), and buried facing the site of the Temple in Jerusalem.

There are generally evening prayers in the home for one or more nights of the first week.

**Less orthodox:** Often burial, as quickly as possible, and within a few days. They also allow cremation as they do not believe the body will be needed for resurrection.

**More orthodox:** Allow burial only, within 24 hours if possible. The mourners tear a garment (symbolic of the torn heart), cover the mirrors, and 'sit shiva', staying at home for the first week whilst people visit.

**+** Christians may consider that their traditional rituals at the time of death have been overtaken by the modern funeral industry. Nevertheless, a pattern remains. Approaching the time of death, the pastor or priest will be called to lead the dying and their family in prayer, with anointing or commendation to God depending on tradition. After death, the minister plans the funeral service with the family of the deceased. The funeral usually takes place several days after the death, and is followed immediately by the burial or cremation. New rites for the placing of the ashes some time after a cremation have been devised in recent times.

**☾** The body is ritually washed and prepared for burial in white sheets and not in a coffin.

Burial should be performed as soon as possible.

The body must be buried lying on its side and facing the direction of the Holy Kaba in the city of Mecca.

Prayers are said.

Death is seen as a natural part of life and should be accepted as God's will.

## COMMON OBSERVANCES

### Food

**✡** Most Jews are aware of the food laws, which come from various different places and periods, and keep them to some extent, the most orthodox keeping them all at all times. They are known as 'kosher' which actually means 'suitable' (and can refer to anything suitable to use, such as a Torah scroll).

There are comprehensive lists of prohibited animals such as pigs, carrion and shellfish. Permitted animals should be killed in a particular way (shekhita) which is supposed to be quick and painless.

Any blood should be drained out (similar to Muslim Halal food laws). Also milk and meat products should not be cooked or eaten in the same meal. Cutlery and crockery should not have been used for anything unkosher. Therefore a strictly orthodox person can only eat in a

kosher home or kosher restaurant. Many people change all their utensils entirely for Passover to avoid any yeast products.

**+** Many Christians do have food laws—pertaining especially to times of abstinence or fasting—but there are no foods that are on the Christian's permanent 'forbidden' list. Some Christians have promoted 'temperance', i.e. abstinence from alcohol, but this is usually on the moral grounds of the Christian abhorrence of drunkenness.

**☾** Most foods are permissible (halal) with the exception of a few, notably pork/ham/bacon, carnivorous animals, carrion, blood, and alcohol. These are deemed 'haram' (prohibited).

Animals (other than fish) must be slaughtered by a Muslim who is to invoke a prayer seeking Allah's permission to take the life of the animal, face it towards the Kaba in Mecca and kill it with a sharp knife in a quick and painless manner. The blood should be allowed to drain out. The process is similar to Jewish 'Kosher' and indeed Muslims can eat kosher meat.

There is also a general Islamic principle that animals should be treated with care and respect during their life-time.

### Clothing

**✡** **Less orthodox:** No specific rules or styles.

**More orthodox:** Emphasise modesty and do not show below their necks, or upper arms or legs. Particular mixtures of linen and wool are prohibited.

**Ultra-orthodox:** Dress in the style of 17th century Poland, with black coats and fur hats and boots.

**+** Beyond the promotion of modesty in dress, Christians have no dress laws. Particular groups of people within the churches (for instance, clergy, nuns, monks) may adopt particular easily identified forms of dress. Ritual clothing (vestments) are often worn by those celebrating the liturgy.

**☾** Ordinary everyday clothing that is modest and not revealing. Many adult women cover their hair with what is called the 'hijab' and also cover all parts of the body except their face and hands. Men wear trousers rather than shorts.

### Hair

**✡** **Less orthodox:** No specific rules or styles.

**More orthodox:** Men consider there are limitations on shaving and cutting hair, so they often have beards and sidecurls. Children's hair is not cut until they are three so young children have long hair and sidecurls. Married

women do not show their natural hair, and cover it with a scarf or with a wig.

✚ Traditionally, it was regarded as inappropriate for a woman to shave her head or for men to wear long hair (probably respecting gender distinctions), but little attention is given to this today. In the past (but rarely today) male Christian religious groups practised 'tonsure', or the shaving of their head, as a sign of their vows.

☾ Men are encouraged to keep their hair neat and tidy. Many women wear a 'hijab' to cover their hair. Pilgrims to Mecca are not supposed to cut their hair or nails until they have completed the Hajj (pilgrimage).

## Special day of the week

✚ Shabbat (Friday evening to Saturday evening). All should try not to work, and to mark and celebrate with their family and community, and with God.

**Less orthodox:** Positive aspects such as attendance at services are important. Concerns like turning lights on, avoiding use of money or driving are less significant.

**More orthodox:** No money is used, no food is cooked, no fires should be lit - hence no lights or electrical appliances used or vehicle driven as they may make a spark.

✚ Sabbath (the Hebrew word Shabbat - rest). Christians observe Sunday as their day of worship, in commemoration of the resurrection of Jesus on the first day of the week (the 'eighth day' or the first day of the 'new creation'). Unnecessary work or sport is discouraged, especially if it takes priority over attendance at worship, which in some traditions is compulsory.

☾ Friday (jum'a or congregation) is the holy day of the week for Muslims due to a special noon prayer that is said in the mosque. Muslims try to get to the mosque for the prayer and the Friday sermon or teaching. Although men and women can attend, only men are required to.

In many countries where the majority are Muslim, Friday is a weekly holiday.

## Other prohibitions

✚ We should not do anything to mark or harm our bodies. Therefore smoking should no longer be allowed and dangerous drugs are prohibited. More orthodox will not have tattoos, or pierce their ears, noses or other parts. Excessive alcohol (except on

the Festival of Purim) is prohibited. Sex outside marriage or with a person married to someone else is discouraged or prohibited.

**More orthodox:** Reject homosexuality.

✚ Christians are currently involved in internal debates on many ethical issues. The traditional total prohibition of some practices is today being challenged. Many of these controversial issues are about sexual ethics or bioethics, such as homosexuality, abortion, euthanasia, contraception, etc.

☾ Prohibitions (haram) are things that are considered damaging for the individual and for society as a whole; gambling, alcohol, sex outside marriage, drugs and various food items.

Muslims are also not allowed to harm or disfigure themselves (most would say plastic surgery and tattoos are forbidden), or other people, animals or the environment.



**JCMA**  
Jewish Christian Muslim  
Association of Australia



## Who are we?

Established in 2003, The Jewish Christian Muslim Association (JCMA) of Australia is a Victorian based organisation established to provide opportunities for people of each of the three faiths to explore interfaith dialogue through meeting and discussion in a modern Australian and international context.

Meeting and learning from Jews, Christians and Muslims together, leads to a fuller understanding of other faiths and perhaps in turn of our own.

The three peak bodies of our faiths, the Jewish Community Council of Victoria, the Victorian Council of Churches and the Islamic Council of Victoria are our sponsors.

## Sponsoring organisations

- Jewish Community Council of Victoria (JCCV)  
P: 9272 5566
- Victorian Council of Churches (VCC)  
P: 9650 4511
- Islamic Council of Victoria (ICV)  
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