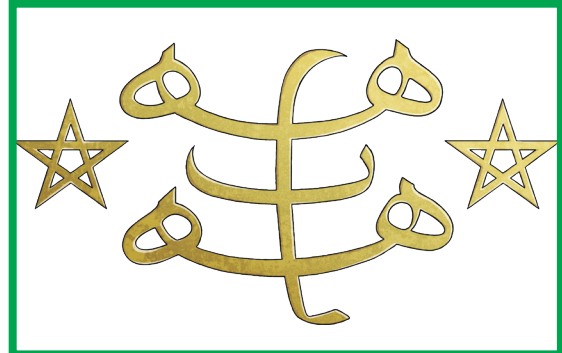


# World Religion Day

World Religion Day is an annual event celebrated on the third Sunday in January. It was initiated by followers of the Bahá'í faith.

The Bahá'í faith was founded in 1863 in Iran by the prophet founder, Bahá'u'lláh. Bahá'ís believe in equality - that no one should be treated differently because of their creed (beliefs or faith), colour, age, race, gender or religion.

They also believe that despite there being differences, all religions have common values. They believe there is one God known by various forms in all religions, e.g. Buddha, Moses, Jesus and Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and the difference between the religions is due to the way people think about God.



**The Bahá'í ringstone symbol represents people connecting with God.**

With the philosophy (a belief or attitude that guides the way one behaves) of the Bahá'í faith in mind, the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States announced the institution of World Religion Day in 1949 and the first World Religion Day was honoured in 1950.

On this day, every year, the intention was that all religions were celebrated, and their similarities respected and appreciated.

Subsequently, World Religion Day moved on from being strictly a Bahá'í celebration and is now recognised as a wider celebration of inter-faith harmony and understanding.

## **What Happens on World Religion Day?**

World Religion Day invites members of all religious groups from across the globe to learn about other faiths and their followers. Many people, including faith leaders, will attend special services which focus on promoting inter-faith understanding and harmony and encourage people to appreciate that all religions have a common spiritual goal.

## The Six Main Religions

The six most widely practised religions worldwide are Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Judaism, Hinduism and Sikhism. Nearly seventy-five percent of the population practices one of these six religions.

A message of peace and love towards others is at the heart of all these major world religions. This is called **The Golden Rule**. It is the belief that you should treat others as you would like to be treated yourself, and it is found in one form or another in every major religion.

Here is what the six main religions say about kindness, respect and equality:

### Sikhism

- I am a stranger to no one and no one is a stranger to me. I am a friend to all.
- Everyone is equal in God's eyes everyone should be treated equally.

### Christianity

- In everything, do to others as you would have them do to you.
- To love God and look after one another.

### Hinduism

- This is the sum of duty; do not do to others what would cause pain if done to you.
- One should not behave towards others in a way that is disagreeable to oneself.

### Buddhism

- Treat not others in ways that you would find hurtful.
- Buddhists have a promise called the bodhisattva vow, which is the commitment to put others before oneself.

### Judaism

- What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbour.
- You shall love your neighbour as yourself.

### Islam

- Not one of you truly believes until you wish for others what you wish for yourself.
- Kindness is the pearl of a heart. Without it, the heart is just an empty shell.

### Religion and Conflict

Sometimes deeply held beliefs can lead to clashes and throughout history many conflicts and wars have been initiated by disputes over religion. However, for many people religion can be a power for peace.

Most religions encourage forgiveness and discourage people from taking revenge on those who have wronged them.



The Christian preacher, Dr Martin Luther King, publicly shared Jesus' message that you should love everyone, including your enemies. He led the movement for black people to be given equal rights in the USA, without the use of violence.

### World Religion Day Aims

World Religion Day seeks to overcome historical differences between religious groups. It focuses on respecting other religions; celebrating their similarities and reflecting on the universal message of the six main religions: to treat each other with respect and understanding and show how we can come together to create a better world for everyone.

**My religion is simple. My religion is kindness.**  
- Dalai Lama (Buddhist spiritual leader)

