

# Religion



Learning

## Faith and Form

Duration: 14 Minutes

The program focuses on learning about religions and learning from religions.

A multi-faith panel answer searching questions from a group of 15 and 16-year-old students on the relationship between the spiritual and the physical. The panel includes; Frank Hibbert, a Catholic pilgrimage leader; Razwan Ul-Haq, a Sufi Muslim whose spirituality is informed by his meditation and religious art; and Peter MacLeod-Miller, an Anglican who has worked in a variety of locations around the world.

## Faith in Action series

01.  
The Strength to Quit  
Duration: 14 Minutes

The Strength to Quit – Combating Drug Addiction Through Faith (UK)

There is a major drug problem in the UK. How should it be tackled and how should the addicts be treated? This program tells the story of Simon, a former drug addict who managed to beat the habit through contact with the Nehemiah Project: a group based in London that seeks to rehabilitate addicts through religious faith and example. Simon talks about his former life of drug addiction and crime, the vulnerabilities he felt growing up and about how he has managed to put all that behind him since becoming a Christian. He is now a youth worker, advising young people with a similar background to his own, and he also attends church with his wife Madeleine.

02.  
With Hope and Help  
Duration: 14 Minutes

With Hope and Help – Monks Combating AIDS (Thailand)

Thailand has the highest rate of HIV infection in Asia. Already there are half a million AIDS orphans. This program looks at the work of the Sangha Metta Project, which, guided by Buddhist beliefs about relieving suffering, trains Buddhist monks to educate people to help prevent the spread of HIV and AIDS. The project also helps those who are already infected with the disease. In Thailand monks are respected and can act and speak with authority, so people follow their advice. The program follows two monks, Phra Duangsit and Phra Suwit. They are working in communities in Northern Thailand that are badly affected by AIDS, and helping to spread the word about prevention. They are upfront, open and frank about their faith and about the issues they are dealing with.

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<p>03. Sacred Nature Duration: 14 Minutes</p>	<p>Sacred Nature – Protecting the Environment (India)</p> <p>India faces growing pressures on the environment, with widespread pollution and many wildlife species facing extinction. This program follows the story of Hindu campaigner Himanshu Prem, who promotes the cause of saving India's environment through Hinduism's traditional belief in the sanctity of life and the celebration of the sacred in nature and nature imagery in religion. He works in places as diverse as the slums of Bombay and in India's strained wildlife reserves, taking groups of people to places of environmental interest, including Gir, where he guides a group of students to see the world's last remaining population of Asiatic lions.</p>
<p>04. The Perfect Baby? Duration: 14 Minutes</p>	<p>The Perfect Baby? – The Right to Birth – Even of the 'Abnormal' (UK)</p> <p>Screening while a woman is pregnant can now detect many abnormalities in an embryo, which is putting increasing pressure on those women to abort the less than perfect baby. The debate between those who say that where embryos have abnormalities the pregnancy should be terminated, and those who say doctors are intervening too much, is topical. This program looks at an investigation by a young ordinand, Joanna Jepson, who meets medical experts, parents and campaigners from both sides of the debate. These people include a woman who knew her baby would be born with disabilities but who decided nevertheless to go ahead with the birth, and a spokesperson for the disabled who says that they too have a right to be born. These are personal stories, not just statistics.</p>
<p>05. Peace Warriors Duration: 14 Minutes</p>	<p>Peace Warriors – Combating Religious Intolerance (India)</p> <p>There have been a series of violent clashes between Hindu groups and Islamic groups in Gujarat in recent years. This program follows two young peace workers in this part of India who are bringing practical help to the victims of violence and trying to reconcile Hindus and Muslims. Their work is motivated by the peaceful tenets that underpin each faith, as they explain. The program interviews some people who have suffered in the recent conflicts, but who still hope for peace. A model section of the community that did not riot is explored, and observations made about the factors that can contribute to community cohesion. Spokespeople from both faiths explain that those who practice violence are damaging the very religion they profess to defend.</p>
<p><b>Hindu Spiritual Pathways</b></p>	
<p>Hindu Spiritual Pathways Duration: 14 Minutes</p>	<p>This program provides a useful introduction to Hindu beliefs and practices.</p> <p>Four young Hindus share their understanding of what their religion means to them. They quiz four Hindu experts, including Jay Lakhani from the Hindu council of Brent, on the four pathways to God, reflecting on which pathway best suits their personalities.</p>

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## Worlds Of Faith series

01.

Hinduism - Elephant God

Duration: 14 Minutes

India is a vast country with over a billion inhabitants. It has many languages and many religions. Mumbai is the new name for Bombay. It's the city that reflects India's vast population and many religions. We follow Gauri and Ajit as they prepare to celebrate one of the many festivals of Hinduism, Ganesh Chaturti. The school closes and the town is given over to festival time. In Hinduism the distinction between the animal and the human world is not so obvious as in the West, so it does not seem odd that Ganesh, the god, should have an elephant's head. In fact, Ganesh is the symbol of good fortune and the story of how he got his head is retold at this time. He is the god of intelligence, which may be connected with the traditional wisdom of the elephant.

Hindus believe in one supreme being who can be worshipped in many forms. So although there are many gods in Hinduism each one can act as a focus for the supreme being or God. Each Hindu can choose the focus he or she likes best. In this festival the image of Ganesh is treated with reverence and worshipped along with his mother, Parvati. Hinduism also asserts that God is in everyone – this is the soul or Atman – and can never be destroyed. When someone dies they are born again and the Atman simply has a new body. Of course if you live a good life you may have a better rebirth; a bad life may give you a more difficult time. This law of responsibility for your future is called Karma.

At the end of the festival, Ganesh is carried to the sea and immersed in the waves, but the presence of Ganesh is still felt among the worshippers.

02.

Judaism - Bar Mitzvah Boys

Duration: 14 Minutes

Aaron and Avi are both orthodox Jews living in Jerusalem. We follow them as they prepare to go through the Bar Mitzvah ceremony, when Jewish boys 3come of age.

The Bar Mitzvah is one of the most important occasions in the life of a Jewish boy. At the age of 13 he becomes a full member of the Jewish community. In the months leading up to the ceremony he will rehearse his reading of the Torah. When the day comes he will publicly accept the full responsibility of living according to the Jewish religion. It is a very special occasion, for the whole Synagogue community focuses upon him and he moves from being a child into an adult. In Orthodox Synagogues the men take the central role in worship so the prayers are led by a male rabbi; girls have no corresponding ceremony. However, in Reform Synagogues men and women worship together; there are male and female rabbis and in these Synagogues there will be a Bat Mitzvah the name of the equivalent ceremony for girls. It is a day of pride pride of the parents in the coming of age of a child, pride of the child in becoming an adult, and pride of the Jewish community that another person has accepted the full public responsibility of being a Jew.

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03.  
Buddhism - Making of a Monk  
Duration: 14 Minutes

This program follows Tanan, a 16-year-old, who six years ago became a novice monk. He is learning about the monastic way of life and carries out traditional rituals such as the alms round, meditation, and reading the Dhamma (teachings of the Buddha).  
We see him in a monastery studying in a computer class. Buddhism plays a central part in the life of virtually every Thai person. Many boys will become monks for a short time, perhaps a few months, in order for their parents to acquire merit. Then some of them will leave and perhaps return to the monastery much later in life. To be a monk is an honoured position and everyone treats monks with great respect, even though like Tanan a monk may be only 16 and a novice. Today monks are concerned with the world and the way human beings care for their world. Some monks have formed an organisation to try to stop logging companies from destroying their forest and have started tree-planting schemes.

04.  
Roman Catholicism - Flowers of May  
Duration: 14 Minutes

The scene is set in Comiguin in the central Philippines. The Spanish colonised the Philippines in the sixteenth century and brought Roman Catholicism with them. The program looks at the Flores de Mayo ('Flowers of May') festival which honours the Virgin Mary, the mother of Jesus. Roman Catholicism in the Philippines emphasises the importance of the saints, the Virgin, and respect for the Pope, the leader of the Roman Catholic Church, but it does not rest entirely on tradition. Jill, the 15-year-old girl at the centre of the program, makes it clear that a personal commitment to Jesus is a very important part of her life. We see her at Youth for Christ, a Catholic organisation reminiscent of the US 'gospel' churches. We see Jill at mass and watch her use the rosary beads. The festival is at its height and children are dressed in white, wear angels' wings and carry flowers. All this life and colour is matched by the stark tragedy of the eruption of volcanoes and the destruction of a town in 1971. The islanders mark the place with sculptures representing the 14 Stations of the Cross. This is to represent the suffering of Jesus on his way to his crucifixion. The suffering of the people helps them share in the suffering of Jesus.

05.  
Russian Orthodox - Russian Rites  
Duration: 14 Minutes

The program follows Leila, a 17-year-old Russian girl, as she worships in church and at home. Leila talks about the importance of her faith and the way in which the political reforms in Russia have in recent years allowed people to openly practise their faith. The distinctive style of the Russian Orthodox Church is explained and Leila is seen confessing her sins to the priest before receiving the bread and wine.  
We watch the baptism of a small baby and the 'confirmation', or chrismation, which follows immediately. The Orthodox Church uses icons (sacred images of revered Christians) as a means to deepen the faith of the faithful and as a focus for worship; we see how they are used both in church and at home. The believers cross themselves regularly at certain points in the service and on entry into the church, but if you look carefully you will see they cross themselves differently from Anglicans and Roman Catholics. The form of the Russian Orthodox Cross, too, is different from those usually seen in Western churches.  
The Orthodox Churches separated from the Western Church nearly 1000 years ago and, while they share the same essential beliefs, many of the rituals are different from those used in other Christian denominations.

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<p>06. Pentecostalism - Caribbean Christmas Duration: 14 Minutes</p>	<p>The Pentecostal Church has been the fastest-growing Christian church in the late twentieth century. The name 'Pentecostal' takes its name from the Christian festival of Pentecost (Whit Sunday) when, 40 days after the death and resurrection of Jesus, the Holy Spirit came upon his disciples. We follow Nicole, who lives in Barbados. She is 17 and became a Christian some years ago, although her family were not Christian. She is an active member of her church, the Abundant Life Assembly, and we see her rehearsing for the Christmas concert. She also joins in a gospel choir and a service in Bridgetown, the capital of Barbados. The style of the service is very different from, say, the services found in the many Anglican churches in Barbados. Nicole tells us why she feels the Pentecostal movement meets her needs. Baptism is very important; it is total immersion and symbolises the death of sin and the rising, cleansed, to a new life. People who are baptised must, like Nicole, be old enough to make that commitment themselves. Music is also a powerful element in the services; we see how the choir and the congregation join together and sing.</p>
<p>07. Islam - Sacrifice to Allah Duration: 14 Minutes</p>	<p>This is the celebration of Id-ul-Adha, one of the most important Muslim festivals. We follow the preparation and process of the festival through the eyes of Sharif Monsour and his family as they approach the celebration. It is a time for families to come together and to rekindle relationships, for a 'family' in Egypt includes not only brothers, sisters, aunts and uncles but friends and neighbours too. The day begins with prayer. This is a special day, which marks the climax of Hajj – the period of pilgrimage. A sheep is sacrificed, the needs of the poor are remembered and the ideal of self-sacrifice is in the hearts of all. Islam teaches people to follow Shari'ah – Islamic law based upon the Qur'an – to believe that God (Allah) is One, and that all people are equal (but different) in the eyes of Allah. Id-ul-Adha is a time to sacrifice all to God and to celebrate within the community of Islam.</p>
<p>08. Sikhism - The Golden Temple Duration: 14 Minutes</p>	<p>Fifteen-year-old Harsimran goes into the heart of the Sikh world, the Golden Temple in Amritsar. Through her eyes we learn about the Sikh religion and attend a wedding ceremony taking place on the eve of the celebration of the birthday of Guru Nanak.</p> <p>Guru Nanak is the first Guru, or teacher, and founder of the Sikh religion. Each year on his birthday the Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikh holy book, is read. The streets in the Sikhs' central city, Amritsar, are decorated with flags, flowers and lights. Amritsar is the home of the Harimandir, the Golden Temple, the most important shrine in Sikhism.</p> <p>In the Gurdwara, the Sikh place of worship, great importance is placed on eating and drinking together in the Langar, the communal room. To eat and drink together is a measure of the equality of all Sikhs and the importance they place on being a member of the community.</p> <p>The Amrit ceremony is where a Sikh becomes a full member of the community; men take the name 'Singh', meaning lion, and women the name 'Kaur', meaning princess. The ceremony is not only an initiation ceremony for the person but is a remembrance of the foundation of the Khalsa – the Sikh Community of the Pure – by Guru Gobind Singh.</p>

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09.  
Animism - Living in the Dreamtime  
Duration: 14 Minutes

Apaak and Lazurus are two Aboriginal brothers who write and perform songs that celebrate their culture and the environment they grew up in. The Aboriginal culture is one of the oldest on earth and, in recent times, has come face to face with the modern technological world. The Aborigines have to balance their beliefs and practices handed down from 'Beyond Time' with modern issues and attitudes. The land and its living creatures are the foundation for Blekbala's music, but more than just the music, for understanding life itself. The 'Dreamtime' is beyond modern concepts of time. The world was created in 'Dreamtime' by a rainbow serpent and the whole earth has a sacred quality. Some land is particularly sacred, and this is now protected by law. The spirit of the land is expressed in the belief that all creation is divided into two categories – 'dour' and 'yiddisha' – and plant, animal and human all relate to one of these. As a human you have strong links with the whole of creation and you have to take care of those things to which you are related. The rituals are performed to ensure that power and fertility will continue – they release the energy of the 'Dreamtime'.

Aborigines are concerned that the economic interests of many Australians will affect their land and their culture, so they need to ensure that the traditional teaching is handed on.

10.  
Faith in the Future  
Duration: 14 Minutes

Fiona is a 'born again' Christian who lives in Gillington in Bradford, Yorkshire. It is an area where Muslims, Sikhs and Christians live close together. Bradford has many Muslims among its population. The program follows a Muslim boy, Murad, who attends a Christian independent school. Murad and Fiona both read their holy books, the Qur'an and the Bible respectively, for support and guidance. Murad says that 'religion is a total way of life'. Some pupils from a nearby school go to the Inter-faith Centre to find out more about one another's religion. There is a discussion about prayer between a Muslim boy and a Christian girl. The action moves to an Anglican church where Murad and his father join with members of other faiths and of no faith to support the homeless.

After helping out, three of the young people talk about inter-faith relations. One comments that the prejudice of some older people causes problems and it is up to the younger people to get together and make a difference. The program ends on a positive note with the belief that things will get better – put your differences behind you and 'get together with other people'!