

Ministry of
JUSTICE

National Offender
Management Service

Chaplaincy



A GUIDE TO RELIGIOUS PRACTICE IN PRISON



BUDDHISM



CHRISTIANITY



HINDUISM



ISLAM



JUDAISM



SIKHISM

A Guide to Religious Practice in Prison

HR Directorate, Learning and Development Group, Chaplaincy HQ and
NOMS Faith Advisers

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Prison Service Equal Opportunities Statement

“HM Prison Service has a responsibility to provide an environment that enables employees to work with confidence whatever their gender, race, sexual orientation, faith, age or disability.

Every employee has a personal and professional responsibility to maintain the standards of behaviour that enables HMPS to meet its commitment to them, to those committed to its care by the courts, and to the public that it serves.”

Prison Service Race Equality Statement (PSO 2800)

“The Prison Service has a positive duty, and is committed, to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination;
- promote equality of opportunity;
- promote good relations between people of different racial groups.

Unlawful discrimination on the basis of colour, race, nationality, ethnic or national origins, or religion is prohibited, as is any racially abusive or insulting language or behaviour on the part of any member of staff, prisoner or visitor.

Action will be taken against anyone who contravenes this policy statement.”

Prison Service Order on Religion (4550)

“The Prison Service recognises and respects the right of prisoners to practise their religion.”

NOMS Chaplaincy Statement of Purpose

“NOMS Chaplaincy is committed to serving the needs of prisoners, staff and religious traditions by engaging all human experience. We will work collaboratively, respecting the integrity of each tradition and discipline.

We believe that faith and the search for meaning directs and inspires life, and are committed to providing sacred spaces and dedicated teams to deepen and enrich human experience. By celebrating the goodness of life and exploring the human condition we aim to cultivate in each individual a responsibility for contributing to the common good. We will contribute to the care of prisoners to enable them to lead law-abiding and useful lives in custody and after release.”



Introduction

This Guide will help you to deal with the faith needs of the increasingly diverse and varied prison population. Its aim is to highlight best practice and potential for action at key points of the prison experience.

Your general responsibility is to facilitate appropriate religious practice and to be aware of the issues that are important to prisoners and colleagues of all faiths, and those of no faith.

Good professional standards and an awareness of the differing needs of individuals can help to reduce anxiety and tension and make the workplace safer for everyone.

This guide has brief notes on the major world faiths, with key areas of belief for each.

The guide then gives advice on the factors you may need to consider on a faith basis during a prisoner's sentence – for example on reception or during a cell search. Guidance is focused on those areas in which misunderstandings are most likely to occur, or where accuracy is most needed.

It is not possible to cover every religious issue in this guide. If you are uncertain how to proceed you should ask senior colleagues, your Chaplaincy team members, or the prisoner. This should help you to identify what the issue or problem might be and then take appropriate action to avoid or resolve it.

Not all faiths are yet recognised by the Prison Service but in general terms the Service aims to facilitate as many religious or cultural requirements as possible within the limits of the regime.

For more information see:

- Chaplaincy HQ intranet site
- PSO 4550 - Religion manual
- Standard 51- Religion
- PSO 4250 - Physical Education
- PSO 5000 - Prison Catering Services
- PSO 2800 - Race Equality
- National Security Framework
- Safer Custody Website
- Standard 20 - Handling a Death in Custody
- PSO 2710 - Deaths in Custody
- Annual Guidance for Ramadhan and Eid via the Quantum homepage
- Annual PSI on Religious Festival dates

Your establishment will shortly be issued with some further training materials concerning religious practice. Contact your Training department for details.

Buddhism

Buddhism is what we call the original teachings and discipline established by the Buddha as well as the family of separate but related movements that have grown out of those early beginnings and spread in a vast and complex diversity of forms throughout the world.

- The Buddha is the One Who Knows or the Enlightened One and is the title assumed by the former Prince following his Enlightenment at the age of 35.
- The Buddha lived and taught in Northern Central India about 2,600 years ago.
- What the Buddha taught addresses the problem of suffering by explaining its cause, its ending and the way to end it.
- That path or middle way is a training in the gradual perfection of virtue, meditation and wisdom.
- Buddhist morality is underpinned by the principle of harmlessness and for the laity is expressed through the Five Precepts that enjoin a person to abstain from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, untruthfulness and taking alcohol and drugs.
- Buddhism is a non-theistic religion that has no God, creator or saviour.
- Nor is it a belief system, dogma or faith-based religion (generally Buddhists would not refer to it as a faith) but instead invites one to come and see and know for oneself.
- The Buddha taught that there is no self or soul, rather we and all phenomena arise dependent on causes and conditions and are without any abiding self, soul or substance.
- Much is made of merit, the doing of good deeds and the development of generosity, loving-kindness, compassion, non-attachment, truthfulness and patience.
- Dependent on the intention, actions have results and it is how one has lived this life that after death conditions rebirth.



Christianity

Christianity is based on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ as foretold in the Jewish Scriptures and recorded in the writings of the New Testament. Together, these form the Christian 'Bible'. The original form of the Christian Church has divided into various Churches. Most share all or some of the beliefs outlined below. Christianity is one of the three world faiths (with Judaism and Islam) which regard Abraham as a common ancestor. All three share a belief that there is one God.



- Jesus was born on earth, the son of Mary by the power of God, and brought up in Nazareth, in present day Israel/Palestine. It is believed that as the Son of God, Jesus was both human and divine, the Living Word of God.
- Jesus began teaching and healing throughout Israel when aged 30. His teachings were so radical that he shocked and alienated the religious authorities and the ruling power, the Roman Empire. He turned much conventional wisdom on its head, telling people to love their enemies and do good to those who hated them.
- He taught that God loves humanity unconditionally, even those who rebel against him. His call was to repent and be born again, living a new life empowered by the Holy Spirit, in the knowledge and experience of God's love and Forgiveness.
- Jesus taught that the greatest commandment or law of Christian living was to love God with all your heart, soul, and mind. Another commandment was to love your neighbour as yourself. These two commandments summed up all the teaching that had gone before.
- His teaching had a strong bias towards the poor and oppressed.
- Christians believe their Holy Book, the Bible, was inspired by God and contains essential guidance for salvation and daily living.
- Christians believe that Jesus Christ was put to death on the Cross that he rose again three days later, and that by his death and resurrection, Jesus offers forgiveness of sins and eternal life. The day of his Resurrection is celebrated every year (Easter). After his Resurrection, he appeared to his disciples for 40 days, and then returned to his Father in Heaven (the Ascension). After the Ascension he sent the Holy Spirit to the disciples (Pentecost).
- Christians believe that by following the teachings of Jesus Christ and allowing him to be in the heart of their lives they too will be raised from the dead and have a new body in a new Creation, to live with God eternally.
- Almost all Christians identify baptism with water, in the name of the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit (the Trinity), as the means by which they receive the life of God and become members of the Body of Christ. Churches are communities of believing Christians.

A sacred act of worship has its origins in the Last Supper; a meal that Jesus shared with his friends the night before his Crucifixion. Christians have different understandings of what happened at this meal. Some believe he changed the bread and wine into himself. Others believe the bread and wine remained as symbols of himself. Differences of belief are reflected in the varieties of services based on the Last Supper. These services are known as The Lord's Supper, Holy Communion, the Eucharist, or The Mass. All believers feel they draw close to Jesus in a special way during these Services.



Hinduism

Hinduism is one of the names given to a religious and spiritual heritage which originated in India. It is the oldest of the existing faiths in our world. Hindus do not call their religion by any specific name. Instead followers refer to their tradition as 'Sanatana Dharma' meaning a 'perennial righteous conduct'.

It has no single source, but numerous prophets and holy books that are still evolving. Among their scriptures, the Vedas are the oldest and are the earliest among the revelations in the world.



Hindus believe in one God or Goddess and recognise the many names and forms of the One God at the same time. Every soul is basically immortal and potentially divine.

Among the characteristics of the lifestyle of a devout Hindu is the observation of the manifold paths, for example:

- The path of discharging one's duties without ego or Karma Marga. Here the seeker of spirituality retains the purity of the soul, remaining unattached to the consequences of their actions, or by renouncing all desires.
- The path of devotion or Bhakti in which the devotee surrenders totally to God seeking the divine guidance alone without interference in His will.
- The path of knowledge or Jnana Yoga. By this intellectual and precise analysis the wise seeker discards inferior aspirations and approaches only the Spirit of the Absolute.

Hindus are encouraged to live by the following principles of virtuous behaviour:

- Forgiveness, generosity and love even to those who are hostile (Udarata)
- Control over Desires like the love of money, or restraint of emotions like anger which prevent Contentedness (Sharma)
- Honesty
- Cleanliness/Purity in body (actions), mind (thought), speech and spirit,(Shuchi)
- Quest for Higher Knowledge/truthfulness and simplicity (Jnana and Vairagya)
- Non violence and reverence to all faiths, and sympathy to all creatures (Kshama)

Islam

Islam means peace and *submission* and a person who submits to the Will of the Creator is called a *Muslim*. The core of Islam is the belief in the Unity/Oneness of Allah (God) and that God sent a series of prophets to guide mankind throughout history, beginning with Adam and including Abraham, Moses, Joseph, David, Jesus and culminating in Muhammad, peace be upon them all. All the Prophets were the best and most beautiful examples of piety, humanity, and compassion.



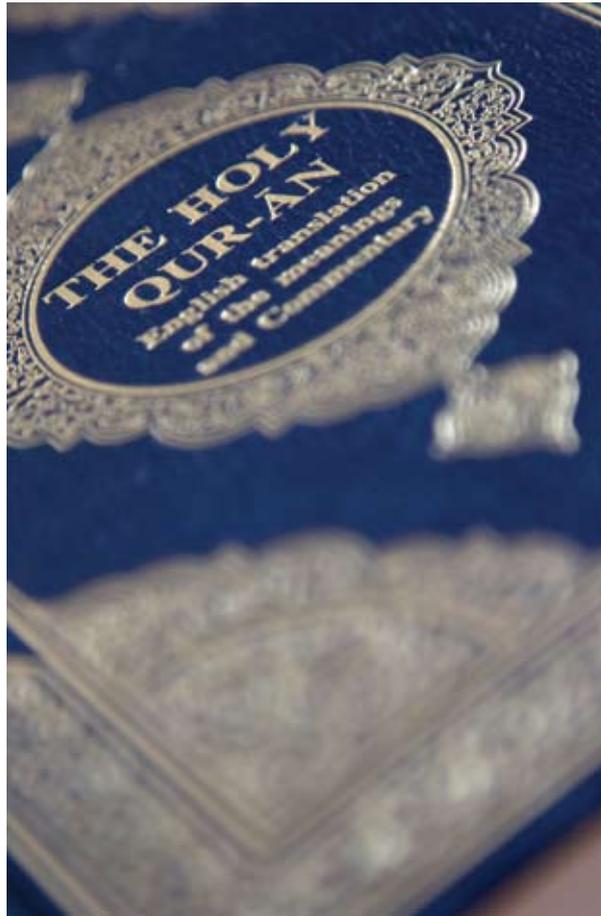
Muslims are expected to enjoin good and forbid evil to the best of their ability. Islam has its primary source of teaching and law in the Qur'an (the final revelation and direct word from God revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him)). A second source of Islamic teaching and law is the Hadith or Sunnah. These are sayings, actions and approvals of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh).

Islam has five pillars (or core beliefs/practices). They are:

- **Shahadah:** sincere faith from the heart and verbal testimony that there is none worthy of worship except God and that Muhammad (pbuh) is His final Messenger.
- **Salah:** five daily prayers performed at 1) daybreak, 2) noon, 3) late afternoon, 4) sunset and 5) late evening. Obligatory ritual washing precedes prayer. Preferably prayers will be performed in congregation led by the Imam, but when this is not possible a Muslim can pray almost anywhere, wherever it is clean and dignified. During prayer, Muslims face towards Makkah (in Saudi Arabia). Friday is the main day of gathering for Muslims and therefore the Friday noon prayer, also known as '*Salat al-Jumu'ah*' is obligatory upon every adult male Muslim.
- **Sawm:** fasting during the month of Ramadhan. Muslims abstain from food, drink, smoking and sexual relations from predawn till sunset, to attain piety and become better God-fearing people. Children, the elderly, women during menstruation and those with some medical conditions are exempt from the rigours of fasting. The Islamic calendar is based on the lunar year, hence the start date of Muslim festivals including the holy month of Ramadhan falls about 11/12 days earlier each year.
- **Zakah:** an annual 2.5% obligatory charitable contribution from one's surplus assets that is to be used primarily for the poor and needy.
- **Hajj:** pilgrimage to Makkah. All Muslims who can afford it must make this pilgrimage at least once in a lifetime. Muslims visit sacred sites and perform rituals in and around Makkah and Madinah (in Saudi Arabia).

Muslims are only allowed to eat Halal food. "*Halal*" is defined as that which is permissible under Islamic Law. In the context of meat it means those animals which are permitted to be eaten and which have been slaughtered according to Islamic guidelines.

Islam is not only a religion, but a complete way of life. Many Muslims teach each other about their faith and its practices. Muslims believe every action will be judged by its intention and all are recorded by angels: hence the aim in life is to worship God, love His creation, do as much good as possible, prevent harm, and continually pray for the Grace of God both for this life on Earth and the afterlife from the Day of Judgement.



Judaism

Judaism is a faith that unites all Jews throughout the world.

Notwithstanding their diverse customs and traditions which are influenced by the social and cultural backgrounds of the countries of their birth, they have a common bond that binds them together – the Torah (The Five Books of Moses).

The main beliefs and principles of authentic Judaism can be summarised as:

- God is One.
- God created the world as is recorded in the first chapter of Genesis.
- God gave the Torah to the Jewish people to study and to uphold.
- the Jewish religion is based on the laws contained in the Torah as expounded in the Oral Law (Talmud) and Codes of Jewish Law.
- the Sabbath and festivals are days of holiness when all weekday activity is forbidden.
- the Jewish dietary laws are a major aspect of Judaism and must be strictly observed.
- marriage is a holy act and sexual relations outside marriage are strictly forbidden.
- the law of the land is sacrosanct and Jews must at all times be law-abiding citizens and must train their children accordingly.
- acting with kindness, compassion and respect towards all people, particularly the elderly and vulnerable, regardless of their cultural, religious or ethnic origin is a strict requirement of Judaism.
- this world is a preliminary to the hereafter and that all good deeds performed whilst on earth will ultimately be rewarded by God.



Sikhism

Sikhism began in the Punjab area of India. It is a way of life based on the teaching of the Ten Gurus during the period 1469-1708. A Sikh is one who is a disciple of the Ten Gurus, who believes in one God, the Guru Granth Sahib (the Sikh Holy book) and who does not believe in any other religion or rituals.

The main Sikh beliefs are:

- Belief in one God, the Creator of all that exists, who is beyond form, gender and time.
- Our human responsibility to appreciate, cherish and preserve the wonder of God's Creation.
- The equality of all human beings, with emphasis on the dignity and full equality of women. This includes the right of women to lead worship.
- Tolerance and respect for other ways of life as exemplified by Guru Teg Bahadur who gave his life defending the right to worship of Hindus against Mughal persecution.
- Living in a balanced way through meditation and reflection on holy teachings, earning by honest effort and sharing your good fortune with others.
- Putting others before self.
- Gurmukh (ethical) living.
- Seva (service) to wider society.
- A readiness at all times to stand up against injustice or the abuse of human rights.
- Equanimity in good and difficult times.



Practising Sikhs, male and female, are encouraged to wear the Five Ks (Panj Kakar), the symbols of the faith.

The Five Ks are:

1. **Kesh**, the uncut hair, (worn with the turban which is a unitary emblem of the Sikh faith) symbolising spirituality and obedience.
2. **Kangha** or comb to keep the hair clean and neat and a reminder of the importance of cleanliness.
3. **Kara**, a metal bracelet worn on the right wrist, symbolising oneness and the unbreakable.
4. **Kacha** or **Kacchera**, shorts, underclothing symbolising morality, and suitable clothing for an active life.
5. **Kirpan**, a small sword and an emblem of power and dignity-symbolising self respect, fearlessness and a responsibility to protect the weak and vulnerable.

General principles

When questions or issues about religious practice arise you should consider:

- Is there already a way of dealing with this – national or local protocols – or is it covered in PSO 4550 - Religion?
- Is it reasonable?
- Will it interfere with, or divert resources from, delivering the rest of the regime or cause disruption to other prisoners?
- Is it fair, both to the prisoner making the request and other prisoners?
- Will security be compromised? *Security takes priority over all other issues, but is not just a convenient “catch all” to refuse any inconvenient requests.*
- Will it set a difficult precedent, or be hard to provide consistently if too many people want the same thing and there is insufficient staff, time or resources?
- If for any reason you cannot allow a request, you should be able to explain why not, and be willing to explain this to the prisoner. People usually respond without difficulty if they understand why something is, or is not, possible.
- Religion arouses strong feelings amongst all believers and you should take care to deal sensitively with any concerns or issues that arise. Bear in mind that offenders are allowed to practise their faith in accordance with the PSO, but should not be allowed to use their faith to obtain unfair advantages for themselves.

Reception

- On Reception, it is important to correctly identify and record the faith tradition or Christian denomination the prisoner wants to be registered as. Cards and charts with religious symbols should be on display, or available, for non-English speakers to be able to indicate their faith.
- Chaplains should have access to all new receptions within 24 hours of their arrival, both to ensure the welfare of the prisoners, but also to clarify or check the faith tradition of the prisoner’s registration.
- The prisoner’s religion should be recorded on P-Nomis (or local equivalent) and on the F2050 Inmate’s Core Record.
- If you have to provide late meals for new receptions it is important to have vegetarian, kosher, halal and non-halal food available to cover all faith requirements.
- There are protocols for appropriate **searching procedures** for new receptions. Some faiths and cultures are acutely sensitive to the requirement to be modest and not to display their nakedness in front of others. Individuals being searched should not be completely naked at any time. See National Security Framework Function 3 for more details.



- Male prisoners with a religious or cultural objection to being rubdown searched by a female member of staff should be searched by a male. Female prisoners should always be searched by female staff.
- Many individuals find it helpful to have their faith artefacts with them, or readily accessible. This can be a source of comfort and confidence to help them settle into prison life more calmly. PSO 4550 Religion Manual (Chapter 1 appendix 4) lists the artefacts permitted in possession for each faith. Prisoners may have other religious artefacts if the Governor and the relevant Chaplain agree they are not a threat to good order and discipline. **If in doubt, ask.** If an artefact is refused or withdrawn, the prisoner should be told why.

Changes in religious registration

- Prisoners have the right to change their religious registration and there should be no obstruction or delay in registering a change.
- Register changes on the form available from Chaplains and in PSO 4550. The Chaplains of both faiths should be informed of the change within 7 days.
- P-Nomis and the F2050 must be updated to reflect the change and the prisoner informed in writing that the change has been made.

If a prisoner's religious registration is found to be incorrect on the Reception visit, the duty Chaplain may initiate a change.

Cell sharing risk assessment

- Consider whether or not it would be helpful for those with a common faith to share cells, if space is available. Prisoners often appreciate a cell mate with the same faith so that they can pray or meditate together.
- Remember there are other issues to be taken into account on the cell sharing risk assessment. Religion is only one factor.



Cell searching

- Prisoners should be asked to point out their religious objects before a search.
- Religious artefacts should be removed from the cell before the search, and searched separately. The prisoner may assist with this. Clear plastic pouches should be used to cover books and artefacts to prevent direct contact by dogs.
- In many faiths the artefacts and holy books should not be touched by believers without first ritually washing. Therefore, staff should remember the need for both appropriate care and protective coverings.
- Religious artefacts should not be touched with dirty hands, and clean gloves may be worn by officers conducting a search. Religious objects should not be placed on the floor or with dirty clothes. Religious images and statues, especially of the Buddha, should be handled with respect and never held by the head.
- Prisoners are **not allowed** to wear the Kirpan (small knife) in the prison, they may have a representation of the Kirpan inlaid in metal on their comb.
- The Sikh Chaplain is **allowed** to carry a small Kirpan, secured to the body beneath his clothing. Gate staff should confirm with him that it is being carried when he enters and leaves the prison.
- If the Sikh Chaplain has to be searched, he should be able to remove and replace the Kirpan himself in privacy. It should not be handled by anyone other than the Sikh Chaplain.
- Using dogs – in some faiths, including Islam, items such as clothing, bedding and religious artefacts (including the Qur'an) are rendered unclean if dog hair or saliva comes into contact with them. If a dog touches a prisoner they may wish to make ritual ablutions, which must be allowed. Clothing or bedding should be changed if it is been in contact with a dog.
- Individuals being searched should not be completely naked at any time and there are formal protocols for searching to be found in the National Security Framework for guidance on this issue.



Searching visitors

- The searching policy should be displayed in the visits area and in the Visitor Centre, so that all visitors know what to expect.
- All religious headwear, including veils and turbans, can be searched by a hand-held metal detector. Removal of a visitor's religious headwear (e.g. because of suspicion of concealed items or to confirm their identity) must be done in privacy and the presence of appropriate male or female staff. This applies especially for Sikh turbans (they are a mark of honour and to disrespect the turban is to disrespect the faith) and the veils and face coverings of some Muslim women. The visitor must be allowed to remove and replace the headwear themselves, and given the opportunity to use a mirror to replace it when the searching is complete.
- Ensure that drug dogs do not touch a visitor whose beliefs may make this offensive to them. A cloth or bed sheet may be offered to visitors to place around their legs to avoid direct contact with the dog.
- Small replicas of the Sikh Kirpan may be made available at the gate or the Visitor Centre, and the Kirpan itself stored carefully in a suitable place during the visit. It should not be handled by anyone other than the visitor.
- Male visitors or Chaplains with a religious or cultural objection to being rub down searched or wanded by a female officer should be searched/wanded by a male.

Dress

- Many faiths have requirements for modesty in dress. These should be respected.
- All prisoners should normally be allowed to wear religious or cultural headwear, always in cell or at corporate worship (e.g. Sikh Turban, Jewish skull caps, Orthodox Jewish women may wear wigs or head coverings, Muslim caps, Muslim women's headscarves, Rastafarian hats, etc).
- Some faith groups require particular items for wearing during worship and prayer. Pagans may wear a hoodless robe, Muslims a prayer cap, Jews may use a prayer shawl, and tefillin (small square boxes containing words from the Torah strapped around the head and arm). PSO 4550 provides detailed guidance on this.
- Specific items of 'jewellery' or other artefacts and symbols with religious meaning are allowed, e.g. the cross for Christians, an amulet, or other religious symbol on a chain or fine cord round the neck, and threads and bracelets such as the Sikh Kara (metal bracelet) or the Pentacle ring or necklace worn by some Pagans. They should be small, and prisoners should be advised not to have items of any great monetary value with them, even if they do have a religious significance. Details are in PSO 4550 Chapter 1 Appendix 4.
- Shoes are removed for worship and meditation by Buddhists, Muslims, Sikhs, Hindus and by members of some Pagan traditions.
- If other issues are raised regarding clothing for religious reasons, you should check with your Chaplaincy team.



Physical education

Physical education staff must support the inclusion, and diverse needs, of all prisoners.

PSO 4250 Physical Education Equal Opportunities Policy Statement refers to the issues that need to be considered.

Food

With multiple choice menus the selection of food should be straightforward.

- Observant Jews, Muslims, Rastafarians and some others do not eat pork under any circumstances.
- Observant Jews and Muslims will only eat meat that has been slaughtered according to their faith requirements, either kosher or halal. It is important not to contaminate kosher or halal food with other food, either in the kitchen or on the hotplate in the servery. PSO 5000 – Catering covers this in more detail.
- Jewish prisoners generally have one kosher meal daily, bought into the prison by the kitchen. Only those Jewish prisoners confirmed by the Rabbi to be strictly observant are provided with two kosher meals per day. Otherwise Jewish prisoners eat vegetarian meals the rest of the time, as there are very strict rules about kitchen practice concerning meat and dairy products.
- Halal food is usually prepared in prison kitchens. In prisons with several Muslim prisoners it is good practice for some of them to work in the kitchens and on the servery.
- Sikhs, and some other faiths, will not eat halal or kosher meat.
- All Hindus, and some Sikhs, will not eat beef. Many will be vegetarian or vegan.
- Many Buddhists will be either vegetarian or vegan. There are some Chinese Buddhists who will eat meat but not beef.
- Many Hindus will not eat eggs, onions or garlic.
- Prisoners who are members of the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints (Mormon) do not drink tea, coffee, or any drink containing caffeine. They can be given hot chocolate or other alternatives outlined in PSO 5000, as a substitute.
- Food also plays a significant role in many faith celebrations and establishments have a responsibility to ensure equality of practice between faith traditions.

Prayer and worship

- Most faiths require that their members pray regularly, normally several times a day. Many will need to wash first, even for private prayer.
- All prisoners are entitled to a minimum of an hour a week for corporate worship. Chaplains have the responsibility to lead this, usually with staff present.
- In the absence of a minority faith Chaplain local arrangements should be made in consultation with the Security manager for small groups of minority faith prisoners to meet supervised by other members of the Chaplaincy team.
- There will be other acts of worship possible during the week, but each faith should have the minimum allowed on a regular basis, with special arrangements made for holy days. See PSO 4550 and the annual update of religious festivals for details.

- The largest gatherings for collective public worship are likely to be on Sundays for Christians and Fridays for Muslims, with other faith groups meeting on different days during the week. Check your local variations.
- All areas used for corporate worship should be treated with respect. Searching of worship spaces should be done with sensitivity and care. Timing is important. Too close to the worship time and it could be unnecessarily intrusive or perceived as provocative by prisoners.
- Staff should not walk on Muslim prayer mats, or in front of the direction of prayer for any faith, unless absolutely necessary for security and safety.
- Incense and candles can be used for group worship. Also, some Jewish women may wish to light candles for the Sabbath (Friday evening). This may be possible locally, under supervision, in the multi-faith room. Avoid smoke detectors.
- Small quantities of incense (as sticks or cones with a holder or plate) can be in possession in cell for the needs of individual worship. Several faiths use incense as a part of prayer. The PSO 4550 has details and the Chaplaincy team will be able to advise.
- Almost all faiths use beads as an aid to prayer or meditation and there are different numbers and arrangements of beads according to faith practice. Prisoners are allowed to have prayer beads or rosary beads in their possession.
- The Chaplain leading the service is in charge, and would normally be the one to direct the behaviour of prisoners. Officers must be present and have the discretion to remove or control prisoners for security or safety reasons. Officers must take care not to talk loudly, rattle keys, or use radios without earpieces during services.
- Wine is used in worship by many Christians, Jews and some Pagan traditions. The wine should be bought and stored securely and only used under the Chaplain's supervision. The Chaplains may not bring in the wine themselves.
- Muslims have very specific obligatory times laid down for prayer. They are expected to pray five times a day, including midday. Their main corporate worship service of the week is Friday prayers, which take place at midday. The exact times of prayer vary according to the time of the year and Muslims may need to be allowed to pray in spaces in workshops, Visits or Education classes on other days, during the core day.
- If there are too many worshipers for the space available, a local arrangement needs to be made to accommodate them. A risk assessment should be done and staff allocated for their supervision.



- There is particular value for the building up of the faith community if prisoners are able to pray with others. Meeting daily for prayer or meditation is common in several faith traditions. This is more difficult in a prison context, for reasons of space, safety and supervision, but could be attempted if local conditions allow.
- Prisoners could meet in their cells in twos or threes for prayers or meditation during association time, depending on the maximum number allowed locally in a cell for any other activity. This procedure should be applied consistently.
- You should know if a prisoner is praying in their cell, and not disturb them unless it is essential. Some prisoners will not respond whilst praying. Be aware that the prayer space being used is, for the time of the prayer, a holy space and not to be walked over. Pagan rites may require the space to be ritually cleansed before beginning, and the intervention of a third party before the end of the rite may cause distress.
- Larger gatherings for worship or prayer should take place only by prior arrangement and with a Chaplain present. This will help prevent other prisoners from feeling intimidated, public space being monopolised, and the regime from being disrupted.
- Sikh Chaplains may regularly bring Prasad (a sweetmeat) into the prison that has been blessed in the local Gurdwara. The consumption of this food is part of the worship. The food will be in small quantities and consumed within the worship time. If Prasad is to be brought in, the Gate and other staff must be informed.
- Ritual washing is an important part of much faith practice. Multi-faith rooms and Muslim prayer rooms should be supplied with facilities for washing. Muslim prisoners praying elsewhere, e.g. in workshops, need to be able to wash beforehand. In some faiths, performing ablutions (washing) is an essential preparation for prayer.
- Faith education and study classes arranged and led by Chaplains, should be encouraged. Prisoners are not cleared to teach classes in prisons and should not be allowed to do so. However, normally informal guidance on a one to one basis should be allowed unless there are specific security concerns relating to the individuals involved which suggest this is not appropriate.



Festivals and celebrations

- Many religious festivals do not have a fixed date. An annual Notice to Staff gives the main religious festivals and their dates.
- Prisoners should not be expected to work on major festivals and Holy days. Special worship will be arranged, for example Holy Week for Christians and Eid for Muslims. See PSO 4550 for details.
- Local arrangements are made for the keeping of major festivals. Establishments should ensure equitable provision across the faiths for food on religious festivals. The PSOs on Religion and Catering, and the annual PSI on Religious festivals give more information.
- Major Christian festivals tend to coincide with bank holidays, when staffing and other resources are low. Some flexibility is needed when deciding dates for celebrations.
- It is good practice to facilitate the making of phone calls and visits for those celebrating major festivals away from their families.
- Ramadhan, the month of fasting, is a major Islamic religious event lasting a month and culminating with the feast of Eid al-Fitr.
- Muslim prisoners are required to fast all day during Ramadhan. They eat and drink only after sunset and before dawn. This has major implications for the regime, for MDT, and for meals. Detailed instructions are in the PSOs on Religion, Catering, Drugs Testing and Physical Education. For local arrangements, speak to your Muslim Chaplain who will be able to provide information and advice based on the annual guidance notes.
- The feast of Eid al-Fitr follows the ending of Ramadhan. There are prayers and often a meal, eaten together marking the end of Ramadhan.
- Other faiths have a variety of traditions of fasting. If you are concerned that prisoners are not eating, ask them if they are fasting and how long they expect to fast for. All concerns about fasting should be checked with Chaplains.



Touch and gender

- It may not be the custom in some cultures to shake hands as a greeting, especially with women. Do not expect an automatic response if you offer a hand. Do not take it as an insult if there is no response.
- In some cultures it may be unacceptable for a man to be alone in the room with a woman to whom he is not related. You may need to have someone with you, even in a professional context.
- Be aware that physical contact – even as an attempt at comfort – may be seen as offensive. Avoid contact, as the possibility for misunderstanding may lead to allegations being made against you or other staff.
- Some casual forms of address like “dear” or “love” do not translate as you might expect, and may cause offence.
- Check with people how they wish to be addressed. If in doubt, use the formal style of address.

Death of a relative

- Many prisons use their Chaplains to break the news of the relative's death to the prisoner.
- Keep the Chaplain informed about funeral arrangements and the progress of the application to attend the funeral.
- In some traditions the funeral takes place as soon as the hospital has released the body. The applications for releasing prisoners to attend the funeral should be processed very quickly to allow for this.
- Usually, subject to a satisfactory risk assessment, prisoners are allowed to go to the funerals of their parents, partners and children. Attending other funerals may be permitted, depending on local circumstances and procedures. When a prisoner is not allowed to attend a funeral they may wish to pay their own respects as near the time to the funeral as possible by spending time in chapel.
- In many cultures and faith traditions, the eldest son has particular responsibilities at a funeral. You should attempt to facilitate these wherever possible in order to prevent later distress or depression. Check with the relevant faith Chaplain to see if there are such special requirements.
- Some faiths have a specific period of mourning following a death in the family. For example, Jews keep a seven day period of mourning called 'shiva', and Hindus may fast until after the funeral has taken place.
- Following a funeral it is the tradition in a number of faiths to wash. Prisoners should be allowed to shower if they request it.



Death in custody

- All deaths in prison have to be reported to the Coroner's office. This may have implications on how they are dealt with and impact on the rituals of faith communities. The faith of the deceased or dying person should be checked as soon as possible and the appropriate Chaplain contacted.
- Prisoners of all faiths who are seriously ill or dying, either in the Health Care Centre or an outside hospital, should be allowed to have their faith Chaplain present to perform any necessary prayers or rituals, including anointing, both before death and at the time of death. It is important to facilitate the presence of the Chaplain and to maintain close contacts with the Chaplain.
- Different faith communities have different practices for dealing with dead bodies. Whenever possible, the body should be dealt with in accordance with the faith of the deceased. It should remain untouched as far as possible, until the Chaplain and/or the family are present. Chaplains can advise on specific procedures.
- The faith Chaplain and the Coroner's Officer should be informed of the faith of the prisoner, so their procedures can be tailored to deal with the requirements of the relevant faith.

- Religious items should not be removed from the body of a deceased prisoner. The Police will remove anything they regard as potential evidence.
- The Chaplain should be able to say prayers as close to the body as possible, without disturbing any evidence, before the body is removed for the post mortem. Some traditions require that the Chaplain anoint or bless the body as soon as possible after death.
- The Chaplain may arrange an appropriate memorial service or prayers for prisoners who wish to remember the deceased person.



In conclusion

In a document of this length it is not possible to cover every single aspect of faith practice. If you have a query ask your Chaplaincy Team in the first instance, and senior managers in your establishment, check the relevant PSOs. Chaplaincy HQ staff and Faith Advisers are also available for guidance regarding faith practice, as necessary.