

# HONORING OUR NEIGHBOR'S FAITH (Robert Buckley Farlee, Beth Ann Gaede, eds)

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## Judaism

### Table of Comparison

	Judaism	Lutherans
Teachings	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Believe the everlasting covenant between God and Israel is rooted in God's love. The Torah reveals God's will for the people and is obeyed by the people in faith as their part in the covenant.</li> <li>2. Accept the Torah is the complete guide for Jewish life. This may refer to all Jewish writings, the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament), or the Pentateuch (first five books of the Bible).</li> <li>3. Teach that beings are created good and in the likeness of God. They are able to fulfill God's will by living according to the Torah. Sin is a human action that violates God's will.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Believe that since humanity rebelled against God, God sent Jesus into the world to establish a new covenant, so all people might believe and be saved.</li> <li>2. Accept the Bible (Old and New Testaments) as the written witness to God's revelation of saving action through Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the key to interpreting the Bible.</li> <li>3. Teach that beings were created good and in the likeness of God but are by nature sinful as a consequence of the fall. Sin is a condition that can be overcome only through Jesus Christ.</li> </ol>
Type of Worship	Worship is centered in the home and synagogue. The synagogue is a place of prayer, learning, and social activity.	Worship is centered in the church. The church defines itself as the community where the gospel is proclaimed and the sacraments administered.
Governance	Reform congregations are autonomous; Conservative and Orthodox congregations are subject to the rules and principles of their movements. Congregations are led by an ordained rabbi(s) and an elected board of laypeople.	Interdependent congregational, regional, national, and global expressions of the church are characterized by democratic decision making, strong ecumenical relationships, elected leadership, and an ordained ministry.
Statistics*	<div> <div>Union for Reform Judaism</div> <div>Membership288,580</div> </div> <div> <div>Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America</div> <div>Membership256,303</div> </div> <div> <div>United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism</div> <div>Membership200,683</div> </div> <div> <div>Jewish Reconstructionist Federation</div> <div>Membership16,774</div> </div>	<div> <div>Houses of worship</div> <div>834</div> </div> <div> <div>Houses of worship</div> <div>1,915</div> </div> <div> <div>Houses of worship</div> <div>599</div> </div> <div> <div>Houses of worship</div> <div>98</div> </div>

\*Figures estimated and reported by Steven M. Cohen and Jonathon Ament in 2010 ARDA Jewish Congregation Data, Association of Religion Data Archives (ARDA), <http://www.bjpa.org/Publications/details.cfm?PublicationID=21934>.

## Table of Comparison

	<i>Muslims</i>	<i>Lutherans</i>
Teachings	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Believe that God (Allah) is one.</li> <li>2. Believe that revelations to a number of God's prophets, including Jesus, culminated in those to the prophet Muhammad.</li> <li>3. See Islam as a total way of life.</li> <li>4. Look to the Qur'an (the words of God through Gabriel to Muhammad) as the primary source for faith and practice.</li> <li>5. Try to live according to the five Pillars of Faith.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Believe in the triune God—one God in three persons.</li> <li>2. Believe that Jesus is the Son of God, that his life, death, and resurrection completed God's work of our salvation.</li> <li>3. See people as instruments of God in the world, not separate from it.</li> <li>4. Look to the Bible—Old and New Testaments—as the only written word of God.</li> <li>5. Have no comparable framework, but look to teachings such as the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount.</li> </ol>
Type of Worship	Congregational prayer held on Friday, during which men and women assemble separately for prayer and hear a sermon by the imam.	Liturgical form typically includes hymns, prayers, readings, sermon, and holy communion based on ecumenical patterns.
Governance	Local Islamic communities led by imams. Explicit rules in Qur'an guide community life.	Interdependent congregational, regional, national, and global expressions of the church are characterized by democratic decision making, strong ecumenical relationships, elected leadership, and an ordained ministry.
Statistics*	<p>Membership: 2,600,000</p> <p>Congregations: 2,106</p>	

\*From *The American Mosque 2011: Basic Characteristics of the American Mosque, Attitudes of Mosque Leaders—Report Number 1 from the US Mosque Study 2011* by Ihsan Bagby (Council on American-Islamic Relations, 2011)

## Buddhism

Table of Comparison

	<i>Buddhists</i>	<i>Lutherans</i>
Teachings	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Understand “God” as ultimate reality, the All. Not concerned with how the universe was created.</li> <li>2. See the goal of Buddhism as enlightenment (perfect understanding of reality, which leads to compassion for all beings) and Nirvana (cessation of suffering).</li> <li>3. Believe in the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path, but are encouraged to test teachings against their own experience.</li> <li>4. Believe all people have a Buddha-nature, the potential to become a buddha or bodhisattva (like Gautama Buddha or Jesus).</li> <li>5. Believe in karma, the law of cause and effect. Many Buddhists also believe in reincarnation.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Believe in a personal, triune God—Father (creator), Son (redeemer), Holy Spirit (sanctifier).</li> <li>2. See Christian life as living in God’s grace and loving God and others.</li> <li>3. Believe God’s will is revealed in the scriptures in law and gospel; though interpreted in everyday living, these teachings are unchanging.</li> <li>4. Believe Jesus is the unique Son of God; we are encouraged to imitate his faithfulness. Our salvation was won through his death and resurrection.</li> <li>5. Teach that although humans have freedom to disobey God and their actions have effects, all is under the umbrella of God’s law and grace. Each human has one earthly life.</li> </ol>
Type of Worship	Varies according to sect. Most common elements are chanting, an incense offering, silent meditation, and a talk by a priest or monk.	Liturgical pattern based on tradition of the Western church.
Governance	Varies. Some Buddhist sects are directed by teachers; others are less hierarchical.	Interdependent congregational, regional, national, and global expressions of the church are characterized by democratic decision making, strong ecumenical relationships, elected leadership, and an ordained ministry.
Statistics	Membership: 991,683 Congregations: 2,854	

## Unitarianism

### Table of Comparison

	<i>Unitarian Universalists</i>	<i>Lutherans</i>
Teachings	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Believe the Bible is a book written by humans that must be understood in its historical context.</li><li>2. Reject creeds as a violation of reason, conscience, and experience.</li><li>3. Affirm the unity of God.</li><li>4. View Jesus as a great teacher and example, not a person of the Trinity.</li><li>5. Teach salvation by character: "You will know them by their fruits" (Matthew 7:16).</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Believe the Bible is the written witness to God's revelation of saving action through Jesus Christ.</li><li>2. Accept creeds as summaries of Christian truth.</li><li>3. Affirm the unity of the triune God.</li><li>4. Believe Jesus is both divine and human in nature, the second person of the Trinity, our Savior.</li><li>5. Teach salvation by grace through faith, a gift of God: "The one who is righteous will live by faith" (Romans 1:17b).</li></ol>
Type of Worship	Worship is more a celebration of the present than a memorial to the past. Historical and experimental forms are intermixed.	Worship is a celebration of God's grace and a confession of faith. Liturgical forms are used to glorify and thank God.
Governance	Freedom of individual conscience is secured in the independence of local congregations. Continental body is a democratic association of local churches and fellowships.	Interdependent congregational, regional, national, and global expressions of the church are characterized by democratic decision making, strong ecumenical relationships, elected leadership, and an ordained ministry.
Statistics	Membership: 211,606 Congregations: 1,022	



## CONTENTS

Introduction .....	4
1. African American Methodist Churches .....	7
2. Assemblies of God .....	10
3. Baptist Churches .....	13
4. Buddhism .....	17
5. Christian and Missionary Alliance .....	23
6. Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) .....	25
7. Church of Christ, Scientist .....	29
8. Church of God .....	32
9. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints .....	34
10. Church of the Brethren .....	38
11. Church of the Nazarene .....	40
12. Eastern Orthodox Church .....	42
13. Episcopal Church .....	47
14. Evangelical Covenant Church .....	52
15. Evangelical Free Church .....	55
16. Evangelical Lutheran Church in America .....	58
17. Hinduism (Vedanta) .....	62
18. Islam .....	67
19. Jehovah's Witnesses .....	72
20. Judaism .....	76
21. Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod .....	82
22. Mennonite Church .....	86
23. Methodist Church .....	89
24. Moravian Church .....	94
25. Presbyterian Church .....	98
26. Reformed Church in America .....	103
27. Religious Society of Friends .....	105
28. Roman Catholic Church .....	109
29. Salvation Army .....	114
30. Seventh-day Adventist Church .....	117
31. Unitarian Universalist Association .....	120
32. United Church of Christ .....	124

***A note about this resource:***

The tables compare the faith tradition and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)'s core teachings, type of worship, and governance. Following the table are statistics for the number of members and congregations. Readers should keep in mind that the statistics do not offer apples-to-apples comparisons between faith communities, because traditions and even individual congregations do not count members the same way. ELCA congregations, for example, count all who have been received as members of the congregation through baptism or affirmation of baptism. But some congregations carefully distinguish between "active" and "inactive" members (those who do and do not worship or make a donation of record), while others are less rigorous about who is kept on membership rolls. In traditions such as the Assemblies of God, many people hesitate to become a member of a congregation until they no longer have any doubts about their relationship with God, and a person might worship regularly with a congregation for years without ever becoming a member. Other traditions, such as Jewish synagogues and Hindu temples, identify as members those who have paid annual (or, in some communities, lifetime) dues.

Unless otherwise noted, statistics used in this resource are from the U.S. Religion Census 1952 to 2010, sponsored by the Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies ([www.rcms2010.org/compare.php](http://www.rcms2010.org/compare.php)). Other websites offer additional resources for faith community leaders and information about the location, characteristics, and activities of congregations.

*Honoring our Neighbor's Faith* has been designed primarily for adult study groups in Evangelical Lutheran Church in America congregations. Groups are encouraged to use this resource as best fits their circumstances.

