



Glossary of Faith Terms Related to Philanthropy and Service

Most terms have been adapted from *The International Dictionary of Religion*,
Richard Kennedy, 1984, Crossroad Publishing Company, New York

Abraham (Christianity, Judaism, Islam) one of the founding fathers of Judaism, Islam and Christianity (The Abrahamic faiths). Abraham was willing to sacrifice his own son to show faith and loyalty in God. God's first covenant with the Jews was made with Abraham.

Ahimsa (Jainism, Buddhism, Hinduism) nonviolence; interpreted as "not harming any living creature." For Buddhists, ahimsa is an expression of unconditional love for living things.

Allah (Islam) "Supreme God" in Arabic

Alms (Islam) the donation of gifts, usually money, to the poor

Arhats (Buddhism) Buddhist saints, first disciples of Lord Buddha

Articles of Faith (Baha'i) formal creeds that attempt to outline the Baha'is theology of religion

Atman (Hinduism) what Hindus call the part of the soul that is reborn

Awake! (Jehovah's Witness) Biblical literature (magazine) often given away to nonbelievers, especially door-to-door

Baha'iha'u'llah (Baha'i) founder of the Baha'i faith

Baptizing (Christianity) the ritual through which one becomes a member of the church; usually involves water to symbolize removal of original sin

Baha'isilica (Christianity) any large Christian church, which is rectangular and has a broad nave (central isle) flanked by colonnaded aisles

Bhagavad Gita (Hinduism) literally "the Song of the Lord;" one of the most important dialogues in Hindu literature regarding spiritual guidance and devotion

Bible (Christianity, Judaism, Islam) a sacred book in two parts, the Old Testament and the New Testament; The Old Testament is the sacred book of Judaism (also known as the Torah), and the New Testament contains writing from the followers of Jesus.

Buddha (Buddhism) The founder of Buddhism; formerly known as Siddhartha Gautama

Cathedral (Christianity) church in which a bishop's throne sits

Ch'i (Taoism) literally meaning "breath;" the life flow and energy within all things



Church (Christianity) a building used for worship and community activity; a collective term to describe the worldwide community of Christians

Commandments, The Ten (Christianity, Judaism) the moral commandments given to Moses by God; a renewal of the covenant between God and the Jews

Dalai Lama (Buddhism) leader of Tibetan Buddhists; believed to be the reincarnation of previous Dalai Lamas and the compassionate Lord Buddha

Denomination a branch or distinct subgroup in a religious tradition; most often used in describing branches of Christianity

Derasar (Sikhism, Jainism) temple for Jains; usually composed of white, high-quality marble

Dharma (Hinduism, Buddhism) For Hindus, dharma pertains to duties that, if fulfilled, result in getting closer to union with God. For Buddhists, dharma refers to the teachings of Lord Buddha.

DigamBaha'ir (Jainism) literally "sky clad;" refers to a sect of Jainism monks that practice total nudity

Disciple (Christianity) one who follows the teachings of a religious leader; in Christianity, Christ's first followers

Divine Principle (Unificationism) sacred writings combining elements of Christianity, Buddhism, Islam and Taoism; preaches a unification of the world under a messiah; written by Reverend Sun Myung Moon

Eightfold Path (Buddhism) delineates the proper way to live and achieve enlightenment; right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration

Feng Shui (Taoism) Chinese art of arranging the human environment with nature to produce harmony and fortune

Five Ks (Sikhism) five outward features that distinguish members of the Sikh brotherhood: uncut hair, a ceremonial short sword, a metal bracelet, a special undergarment and a comb.

Five Pillars (Islam) five requirements of Islam that each Muslim must follow: announcing Allah as the only God, praying five times a day in the direction of Mecca, giving alms, fasting during the holy month of Ramadan, and making a pilgrimage to Mecca at least once during one's lifetime.

Four Noble Truths (Buddhism) the truths accepted by Buddhists as a premise for starting the journey toward enlightenment: life is suffering, there is a cause for suffering (i.e., desire), suffering will end, and the way to escape suffering is through the Eightfold Path delineated by the Lord Buddha



Gurdwara (Sikhism) Sikh community center used for worship and gatherings; contains a temple, a communal kitchen and accommodation for travelers needing shelter

Guru (Hinduism, Sikhism) In Hinduism, gurus are teachers and guides who help followers achieve union with God. In Buddhism, the term refers to the first ten leaders of the religion and the book that replaced those leaders' authority.

Guru Granth Sahib (Sikhism) the sacred book of Sikhs, containing devotional poems and hymns written by six of the original gurus

Guru Nanak (Sikhism) founder of the Sikh faith

Halal (Islam) denotes something as "fit" because ritual has been observed, especially in relation to food

Hebrew (Judaism) people of Israel or language or Israel

Imam (Islam) Islamic prayer leader in a mosque

Jesus Christ (Christianity) the son of God, the messiah; worshipped by Christians; part of the Holy Trinity; His crucifixion and resurrection are taken to be a sacrifice for the sins of humanity. His life and teachings are recorded in the New Testament of the Bible.

Jihad (Islam) "striving" to spread Islamic faith, or internal struggle to maintain faith and worship Allah properly

Jina (Jainism) literally, "conqueror;" any of the twenty-four omniscient spiritual teachers

Jiva (Jainism) soul

Karma (Hinduism, Buddhism) Sanskrit word literally means "action" or "deed;" the good or bad actions Hindus carry with their atman, affecting their rebirth

Kitab-i-Aqdas (Baha'i) scriptures of the Baha'i faith.

Kosher (Judaism) food permitted by the Jewish dietary law and the proper way of preparing such food

Lakshmi (Hinduism) goddess of wealth, beauty and good luck

Langar (Sikhism) communal kitchen at a Sikh Gurdwara

Lent (Christianity) the forty days and forty nights leading up to Christ's Crucifixion and Resurrection; a time to abstain from something material in order to focus on reflection and prayer

Mashriqul Adkar (Baha'i) house of worship in the Baha'i religion; a loving association among the friends in every locality, by worship as a community and the holding of regular meetings for worship open to all



Mecca (Islam) Located in present day Saudi Arabia, Mecca is the birthplace of Mohammad and the most sacred city in Islam. During daily prayer, Muslims are to face the Ka'ba shrine in Mecca.

Messiah (Christianity, Judaism) Jews believe that God will send a person to come to earth and lead His people as their king on an earthly paradise free from evil. Christians believe that Jesus was the messiah who saved humanity from their sins through his death.

Middle Path (Buddhism) the way to enlightenment according to the Buddha, which avoids the two extremes of asceticism and sensuality

Mohabharanta (Hinduism) one of the two major Sanskrit epics of India

Mohammad (Islam) the founder of Islam, considered by followers to be the last and greatest prophet of Allah.

Moksha (Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism) Sanskrit word meaning “liberation;” attained through accumulating good karma or through meditation; an end to the cycles of death and rebirth, a total communion with God; For Jains, it is a revelation of the soul’s true nature.

Mormon the commonly misused term to describe members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter day Saints

Mosque (Islam) meeting place for prayer and worship

New Testament (Christianity) the second part of the *Bible* including works written by Jesus’ disciples, stories of Jesus’ works, and a description of the apocalypse

Nirvana (Buddhism) Sanskrit word meaning “extinction;” a common term for enlightenment (the goal of Buddhism); refers to the end of the cycle of death and rebirth

Old Testament (Christianity, Judaism) the first part of the *Bible*; contains the history of the Jews and the covenant. In Judaism, it is separated into books on law, prophets, and the Torah.

Passover (Christianity, Judaism) commemorates the exodus and freedom of the Hebrews from the Pharaoh of ancient Egypt; During the seven days, Jews are to abstain from eating leavened bread. This holiday promotes reflection on God and freedom.

Puja (Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism,) worship or prayer

Puranas (Hinduism) stories that make up the Hindu scriptures

Qur’an (Islam) sacred book of Islam; Allah’s word as revealed to Mohammad

Ramayana (Hinduism) epic poem and scripture



Rabbi (Judaism) "teacher;" a Jewish minister who leads worship

Red Sea (Christianity, Judaism) a body of water located between Asia and Africa; In an Old Testament story of the *Bible*, Moses parted the Red Sea, using the power of God, to allow the Israelites to walk through the middle of it and escape out of Egypt.

Sabbath (Judaism) the weekly day of rest observed by Jews; begins at dusk on Friday and ends at dusk on Saturday

Santana dharma (Hinduism) the original name of what is more popularly called Hinduism

Shabbat (Judaism) the weekly day of rest observed by Jews, runs from dusk on Friday until dusk on Saturday (also known as Sabbath)

Shi'a or Shi'ites (Islam) minority branches of Islam

Svetambara (Islam) one of the two main sects of Jainism

Siddhanta (Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism) a tenet; a line of theological development; a meaning or decision made firm by scripture and reasoning

Sin disobedience to the revealed word of God or the gods.

Sufism (Islam) Islamic mystical movement

Sunni (Islam) a majority branch of Islam

Synagogue (Judaism) a building Jews use for worship and religious instruction

Tao (Taoism) the way of the universe, everything and nothing

Tao Te Ching (Taoism) the classic text of Taoist thought, written by Lao Tzu

Tattvartha Sutra (Jainism) text that brings together different elements of the Jainism path

Temples (Jainism) a building used for religious or spiritual activities

Terefah (Judaism) opposite of kosher; unfit; food or food-related item not sanctioned or prepared in accord to the Jewish dietary laws

Theravada (Buddhism) a form of Buddhism; scriptures of Buddhism written in 535 BCE

Tirthankar (Jainism) teacher

Torah (Judaism) literally "the teaching;" the sacred book of Judaism; also part of the Old Testament

Trinity (Christianity) the union of three aspects of God: The father, the son and the holy spirit

Tripitaka (Buddhism) scriptures of Buddhists, written 535 BCE



Umasvati (Jainism) the writer of the Jainism text *Tattvartha Sutra*

Ummah (Islam) Islamic community

Unitarian Universalists members of a liberal religion rooted in Jewish and Christian traditions; members believe religion is found within the individual and not in a book or creed

Upanishads (Hinduism) a group of Hindu scriptures concerned with the nature of human awareness

Vedas (Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism) ancient scriptures of India that make up the basis for the Vedic faiths

Waheguru (Sikhism) God

The Watchtower (Jehovah's Witness) most widely circulated magazine in the world; religious publication of the Jehovah's Witnesses

Yang (Taoism) active male force half of the Chinese theory of harmonious opposites

Yarmulke (Judaism) a skull cap worn by Jewish men in reverence to God

Yin (Taoism) passive female force half of the Chinese theory of harmonious opposites

Zion (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter day Saints) a new Jerusalem