

FAITH

+ FREEDOM

religion in the usa





“Grandfather Great Spirit

All over the world the faces of  
living ones are alike...

Look upon your children that  
they may

Face the winds and walk the good  
road to the Day of Quiet.

Grandfather Great Spirit

Fill us with the Light

Give us the strength to understand,  
and the eyes to see.

Teach us to walk the soft Earth  
as relatives to all that live.”

NATIVE AMERICAN  
(SIOUX) PRAYER





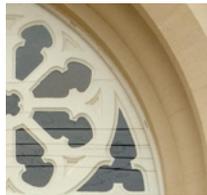
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Varied and vibrant

✦ Gregory A. Smith



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✦ Gregory A. Smith is author of the *U.S. Religious Landscape Study* and associate director of research at Pew Research Center.

GREEK ORTHODOX  
DENVER,  
COLORADO



FIRST BAPTIST  
LOS ANGELES,  
CALIFORNIA



CONGREGATIONAL  
PEACHAM,  
VERMONT



PRESBYTERIAN  
JACKSONVILLE,  
OREGON



LUTHERAN  
LIHUE, KAUAI,  
HAWAII



TEMPLE BAPTIST  
BOSTON,  
MASSACHUSETTS



JEWISH  
SAVANNAH,  
GEORGIA



UNITED  
METHODIST  
MILLERSVILLE,  
MARYLAND



CATHOLIC  
TUCSON,  
ARIZONA

CATHOLIC MISSION  
SALINAS,  
NEW MEXICO



EPISCOPAL  
MOOSE,  
WYOMING



HINDU  
CHICAGO,  
ILLINOIS



MUSLIM  
PLANO,  
TEXAS



QUAKER  
PHILADELPHIA,  
PENNSYLVANIA



AFRICAN METHODIST  
EPISCOPAL  
VICKSBURG,  
MISSISSIPPI



RUSSIAN  
ORTHODOX  
NINILCHIK,  
ALASKA



UNITARIAN  
UNIVERSALIST  
MADISON,  
WISCONSIN



MORMON  
SALT LAKE CITY,  
UTAH



IN HONORABLE MEMORY OF  
LEWIS CRAIG  
JOHN WOLLER, JR.  
JAMES CHILES  
MEMBERS OF THE  
PROFESSORS OF CHR.  
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN  
THESE MEMBERS OF THE  
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN  
THE BIRTH OF THE ARTS IN  
THE WORLD OF THE ARTS  
IN THE WORLD OF THE ARTS  
IN THE WORLD OF THE ARTS

1900



# Varied and vibrant

BY GREGORY A. SMITH

“The Religion then of every man must be left to the conviction and conscience of every man; and it is the right of every man to exercise it as these may dictate.”

— JAMES MADISON  
1785

The United States is, by and large, a nation of believers. Nine in 10 Americans say they believe in God. Most Americans—56 percent—say they pray every day.

And about half of the U.S. public says that religion is very important in their lives and that they attend religious services at least once or twice a month.

Although many Americans are deeply religious, others are not so devout. And the religious composition of the country is changing in some important ways. While most people in the United States continue to identify themselves, religiously, as Christians, increasing numbers of Americans say they have no particular religion at all, and about one in 20 identify with non-Christian religions.

THE BAPTIST CHURCH  
IN FREDERICKSBURG,  
VIRGINIA, LEFT, FIRST  
BUILT IN 1804, WAS  
RESTORED AFTER THE  
CIVIL WAR.



LIGHTED CANDLES, ABOVE, SYMBOLIZE HOPE AMONG RELIGIOUS AND NON-RELIGIOUS AMERICANS ALIKE.

Surveys show that the Christian share of the U.S. population has ticked downward in recent years, while the share of Americans who say they have no religion has grown.

○ **Most Americans are Christians**

Seventy-one percent of American adults describe themselves as Christians, according to the Pew Research Center’s 2014 *U.S. Religious Landscape Study*, a major survey of a nationally representative group of more than 35,000 people. Christianity in the United States is itself quite diverse. Slightly less than half of Americans—47 percent—are Protestant Christians, including 25 percent who identify with evangelical Protestant denominations. These tend to stress that personal acceptance of Jesus Christ is

NINE IN 10 AMERICANS BELIEVE IN A HIGHER POWER, BUT ONLY A SLIM MAJORITY BELIEVE IN GOD AS DESCRIBED IN THE BIBLE.

—PEW RESEARCH CENTER

the only way to salvation and emphasize the need to bring other people to the faith. Fifteen percent identify with mainline Protestant denominations, which tend to have a less exclusionary view of salvation and to emphasize the need for social reform. Seven percent identify with historically black Protestant denominations, which have been shaped uniquely by the experiences of slavery and discrimination that put their religious beliefs and practices in a special context. Roughly one in five Americans—about 21 percent—are Catholic. Mormons make up 2 percent of the U.S. population, while Jehovah’s Witnesses and Orthodox Christians each account for roughly 1 percent. In addition, there are a variety of other Christian groups represented in smaller numbers in the United States.

○ **“Nones” and non-Christians**

After Christians, the next largest religious group in the U.S.—the religiously unaffiliated, also commonly referred to as the religious “nones”—is not really a religious group at all. Instead, religious “nones” are those people who describe themselves, religiously, as atheist, agnostic, or “nothing in particular.”

Atheists deny a god exists, while agnostics neither deny nor affirm belief in a god. Currently, “nones” make up 23 percent of the U.S. population, including 3 percent who describe themselves as atheists, 4 percent who identify as agnostics and 16 percent who say their religion is “nothing in particular.”

Overall, 6 percent of American adults identify with religious faiths other than Christianity. The largest of these is Judaism; Jews make up 2 percent of the U.S. population. Muslims, Buddhists and Hindus each account for roughly 1 percent of the American public. Members of other religions, including Sikhs, Unitarians, Pagans, Wiccans, Native Americans, Bahá’ís, Jains, Rastafarians, Zoroastrians, Confucians, Shintos, and Druze, are represented in even smaller percentages.

### ○ **America’s religious trends**

The numbers of Americans identifying with evangelical Protestantism and with the historically black Protestant tradition have been stable throughout the recent changes in the religious landscape.

Whether these trends will continue is difficult to say. On the one hand, the growth of the religious “nones” has been driven largely by generational replacement. Simply put, young adults have come of age with far lower levels of attachment to organized religion as compared to their parents and grandparents before them. The high rate of disaffiliation from religion among young adults suggests that the religious “nones” may well be positioned for continued growth in the years ahead.

On the other hand, surveys also clearly show that it is quite common for Americans to switch from one religion to another—including from having no religion to identifying with a faith. If significant numbers of those raised without a religion grow up to identify as Christians or Jews or members of other religions as adults, it could limit the future growth of the “nones.” Other factors, like immigration—which in recent decades has added millions of Latino Christians to the U.S. population, along with smaller numbers of non-Christians, including Muslims and Hindus—could also play a role in the religious trajectory of the United States. §

ST. BARTHOLOMEW’S  
EPISCOPAL CHURCH  
IN HIGH SPRINGS,  
FLORIDA, BELOW,  
WAS REBUILT  
AFTER A  
DESTRUCTIVE  
STORM IN 1896.





LA IGLESIA DE  
SAN JUAN-BAUTISTA  
1887

## A place of religion

“Religion is a matter which lies solely between Man and his God, that he owes account to none other for his faith or his worship...thus building a wall of separation between Church and State.”

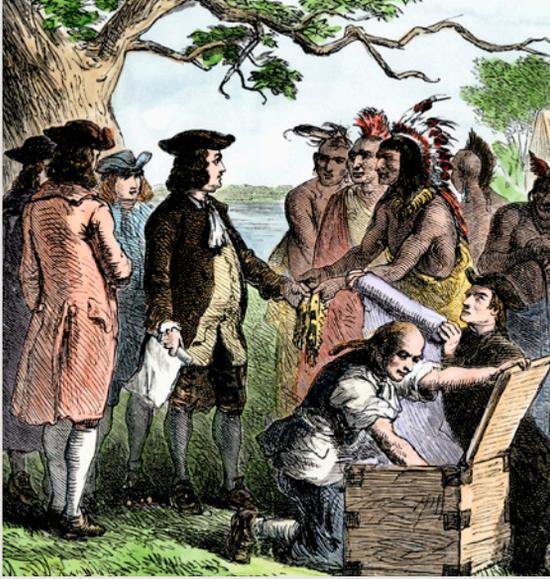
— THOMAS JEFFERSON  
1802

When the first European explorers crossed the seas to North America, the continent was already rich in spiritual traditions. Indigenous peoples had populated the Americas for at least 17,000 years.

Native American Indian tribes inhabited mountains, deserts and plains from coast to coast, their spiritual practices linked to the lands where they lived.

Archaeology tells us something about early Native American religious practices, as do the accounts of Europeans who recorded their encounters with Native peoples. Some tribal traditions survive to this day. Each tribe—and there were more than 500 of them—had different rituals specific to its community.

THE ADOBE SAN  
JUAN MISSION  
CHURCH, LEFT,  
BUILT IN 1887,  
IS STILL IN USE  
IN LINCOLN,  
NEW MEXICO.



WILLIAM PENN, ABOVE, SEALS A 1683 TREATY WITH THE LENAPE INDIANS IN THE PENNSYLVANIA QUAKER COLONY.

BELOW, GEORGE WASHINGTON HOLDS THE U.S. CONSTITUTION AT THE 1787 CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION.



AS EUROPEAN COLONISTS' NUMBERS GREW, SO DID THE PRESENCE OF THEIR RELIGIONS. CHRISTIANS OFTEN PROSELYTIZED THE INDIGENOUS POPULATIONS.

A common thread among tribes was respect for the natural world and a lack of separation between the spiritual and material — what anthropologists call animism.

○ **Colonists bring Christianity**

European settlers changed Native life and practices. As colonists' numbers grew, beginning in the 17th century, so did the presence of their religions. Christians often proselytized the indigenous populations. Some Native Americans converted to Christianity. Others strove to preserve ancient practices. A few visionary indigenous prophets introduced new beliefs in the 18th and 19th centuries in response to growing European influence.

Christian Protestant groups were among the first to arrive. The Pilgrims and Puritans fled religious persecution in England. Dutch traders and farmers introduced the Dutch Reformed Church. The French and other Europeans brought Catholicism. In the southeast United States — and on the other side of the continent in California and southwest states — Spanish armies and colonists imposed their Catholic religion upon indigenous peoples.

## ○ A heterogeneous mix

Once established, various Christian sects jostled and sometimes fought with each other. Colonies were dominated by particular sects. For a while, Quakers, also dissenters who broke with the established Church of England, were harassed as much in the American colonies as they were in England. Because of this, Quaker William Penn founded Pennsylvania in 1681 as a place of religious freedom for Quakers and others.

Although the Christian faith predominated among the colonists, the first Jewish synagogue was dedicated in Newport, Rhode Island, in 1763.

The nation's founders sought to preserve this flourishing religious diversity and guard against the establishment of a single, official religion.

In 1791, the U.S. Constitution was amended to state, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." This act distinguished the young nation from countries in Europe and elsewhere that decreed an official state religion.

The First Amendment assured religious pluralism, creating a country where a spectrum of religious beliefs are respected, and where people are free to practice the religion of their choice—or no religion at all. §

THE NATION'S FOUNDERS SOUGHT TO PRESERVE RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY AND GUARD AGAINST THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A SINGLE, OFFICIAL RELIGION.

"EVEN IN THE SLIGHTEST BREEZE YOU CAN HEAR THE VOICE OF THE COTTONWOOD TREE; THIS...IS ITS PRAYER TO THE GREAT SPIRIT, FOR NOT ONLY MEN, BUT ALL THINGS AND ALL BEINGS PRAY TO HIM CONTINUALLY IN DIFFERENT WAYS."

—BLACK ELK



OGLALA SIOUX HOLY MAN BLACK ELK (1863–1950) WAS AN INFLUENTIAL NATIVE VISIONARY AND DEVOUT CATHOLIC. THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH NOMINATED HIM FOR SAINTHOOD

IN 2016 FOR HIS MISSIONARY WORK. IF CANONIZED, HE WILL BE THE SECOND NATIVE SAINT—KATERI TEKAKWITHA BEING THE FIRST.



## ANCIENT SOUTHWEST RITUAL SITES DOT THE SOUTHWEST

Ancestral Pueblo tribes, forebears of Hopis, Zunis and others, built sophisticated adobe and cliff dwellings in the Southwest. They abandoned their cities in Colorado and New Mexico c. 12th-13th centuries. At Newspaper Rock—or *Tse' Hane*, "rock that tells a story," in Navajo—generations etched animals, humans, hunting scenes and abstract designs into weathered sandstone, right. The petroglyph, in Utah, is at least 2,000 years old.



A CEREMONIAL KIVA, TOP, AT THE AZTEC RUINS NATIONAL MONUMENT IN NEW MEXICO WAS BUILT BY ANCESTRAL PUEBLOANS BETWEEN 1100 AND 1600 C.E.

RIGHT, SAN AGUSTÍN DE LA ISLETA MISSION IN NEW MEXICO IS A CATHOLIC CHURCH BUILT BY SPANISH FRANCISCAN MISSIONARIES C. 1613.

A 1908 PHOTO BY EDWARD S. CURTIS, BELOW, SHOWS AN APSAROKE (CROW) TRIBAL TOBACCO CEREMONY, MONTANA.



## NATIVE CEREMONIES ARE ROOTED IN NATURE

Tobacco is sacred to many Native tribes. Believed to link the human and spirit worlds, it is offered in rituals and when sealing treaties. Tribal ceremonies include dances linked to nature, such as the Grass Dance, Sun Dance and Rain Dance. Christians seeking to convert Indians built mission churches and schools. Still, many tribes retained their ceremonies despite conversion.





## SPANISH MISSIONS CAME WITH THE CONQUISTADORS

The Spanish were the first Christian missionaries in the Americas, establishing churches in the lands discovered by 16th-century explorers. Mexico, California, the Southwest and Florida are dotted with missions. The San Miguel Mission in Santa Fe, New Mexico, was built around 1610. The 21 California missions extend 600 miles up the coast from San Diego to Sonoma.

## THE FIRST JEWISH SYNAGOGUE WAS FOUNDED IN 1763

The first Jewish temple on U.S. soil was the Touro Synagogue. After a 1790 visit, George Washington wrote to the congregation, promising religious tolerance in the new republic “which gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance, requires only that they who live under its protection should demean themselves as good citizens.” His letter is read publicly there each year.

THE CITY OF SAN FRANCISCO WAS NAMED AFTER MISSION SAN FRANCISCO DE ASÍS, ABOVE. THE CHURCH WAS FOUNDED IN 1776. RIGHT, THE TOURO SYNAGOGUE IN RHODE ISLAND IS STILL OPEN.





## PROTESTANTS FIRST SETTLED ON THE EAST COAST

The first brick church built by English settlers was in Jamestown, Virginia, in 1647. Dutch, Anglican, Presbyterian and Quaker houses of worship also date back to the 1600s. The Anglican Old North Church in Boston figured in American Revolutionary history as a signal tower. Revolutionaries were warned of the British advance before the first battle of the war.

## THE EARLIEST KNOWN MOSQUE WAS ON THE PRAIRIE

Muslims arrived in North America with early explorers, but not in significant numbers until the early 20th century. The first mosque, right, was erected in 1929 by Lebanese and Syrian immigrants in Ross, North Dakota. The next oldest "Mother Mosque" in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, was completed in 1934.

CHRIST CHURCH,  
OR THE "OLD  
NORTH CHURCH,"  
ABOVE, IN BOSTON,  
WAS FOUNDED  
IN 1723.





## Religious communities

“My religion encompasses all religions. I believe in God, I believe in the universe. I believe you are god, I believe I am god; I believe the earth is god and the universe is god. We’re all god.”

— RAY BRADBURY  
INTERVIEW, *TIME*  
2010

Americans are a religious people who express their faith in many ways. Their religious observances are formal or informal, public or private.

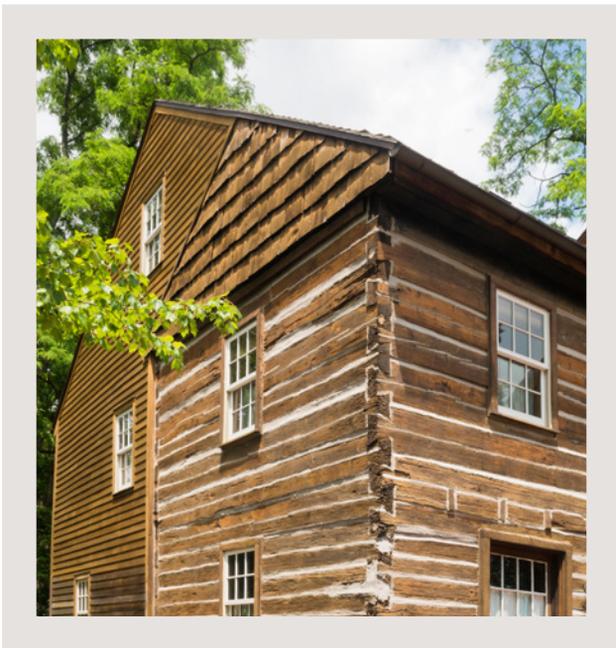
Many Americans belong to congregations and attend their churches, synagogues, mosques or other houses of worship daily, weekly or just occasionally.

Others, with no specific religious beliefs, join meditation groups or remain spiritual privately, living principled lives. Some express their principles by helping less fortunate individuals.

Christianity remains the predominant U.S. religion. Today, there are more than 900 denominations across the country.

All of the globally important non-Christian faiths have a robust presence in the United States: Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Judaism and Sikhism, among others.

LEFT, THE “BRICK MEETING HOUSE” IN BURLINGTON, VERMONT, BUILT IN 1816, IS NOW THE FIRST UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST SOCIETY OF BURLINGTON.



THIS LOG CABIN, ABOVE, WAS PART OF NEW HARMONY, INDIANA, A TOWN BUILT BY UTOPIAN RELIGIOUS GROUPS BETWEEN 1814–1827.

BELOW, ONE OF THE LAST SHAKERS DEMONSTRATES A CHEESE PRESS IN 1962 AT SABBATHDAY LAKE, MAINE. ELEGANT SHAKER FURNITURE IS PRIZED.



○ **Religions made in America**

Americans have put their imprint upon some Christian sects — Baptists and Methodists, to name two — that were transplanted from Europe.

Americans also started new religions. Some of these drew large followings and survive today. Others did not.

Homegrown religions that prospered include Mormonism — formally called the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints — Unitarian Universalism, the African Methodist Episcopal Church, Seventh-Day Adventists and the Jehovah’s Witnesses.

Utopian religions such as the Shakers and the Harmonists came and went. German immigrants belonging to a strict Lutheran sect founded the Amana Colonies in Iowa on a utopian model. Amana survived into modern times, and became renowned for handicrafts, fabrics and ultimately for manufacturing Amana refrigerators.

Evangelicalism, Pentecostalism and Charismatic Christianity are Christian denominations that were popularized in America. A denomination is a group of congregations that adheres to similar beliefs and practices. In the 20th century, some of these evolved into “megachurches” that convene services in vast arenas. Congregations range in size, some reaching 40,000 members. A significant percentage of American mainstream Christians today are Protestant.

Catholic and Orthodox Christians account for about 23 percent of the American Christian mainstream.

## ○ Black churches

Beginning in the late 1700s, former slaves excluded from early white churches established congregations of their own. Peter Durrett, a Baptist preacher, founded the oldest black church c. 1790. Today, denominations including the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the National Baptist Convention and other black churches thrive.

## ○ Non-Christian faiths

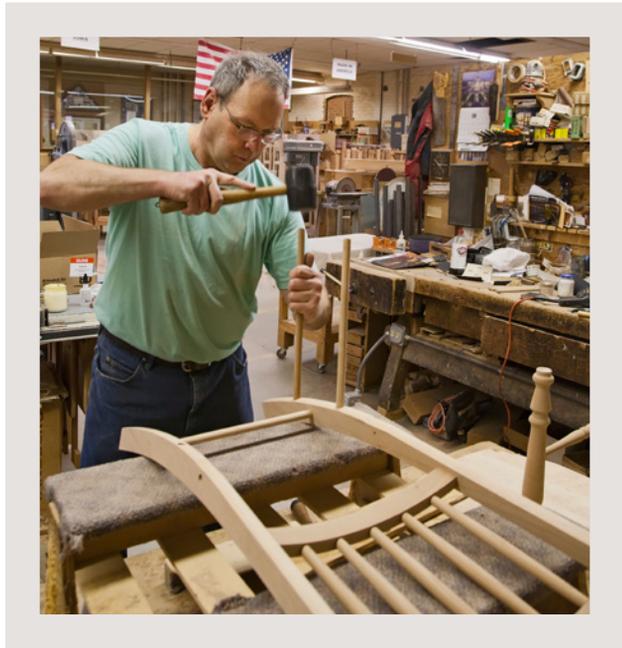
Jewish synagogues, dating from colonial times, now grace most American cities and towns. All branches of Judaism, from Orthodox to Reform, are represented.

Islam also had an early presence in the United States, but the first American mosque was not built until the early 20th century.

In recent decades, Asian religions gained American followers. Buddhist teachers from China, Japan and Korea immigrated to or visited the United States, attracting adherents. Hindu gurus established ashrams to teach ancient yoga techniques, and Hindu immigrants built temples.

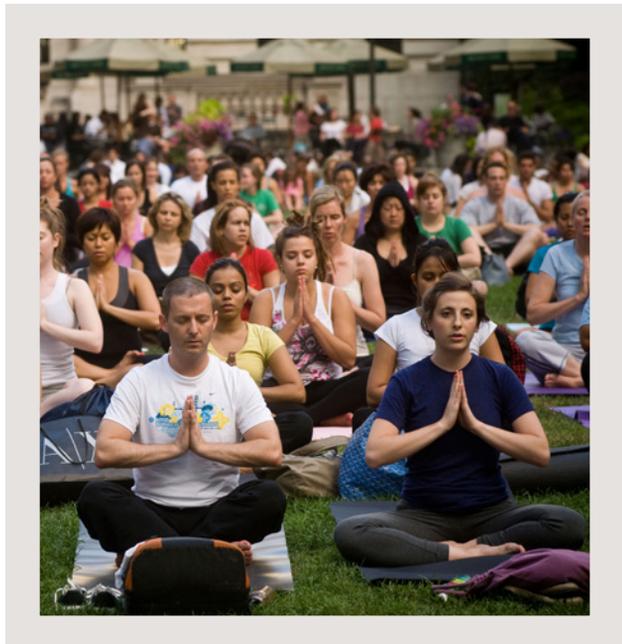
The first Sikhs came to the United States in the late 19th century. Members of this monotheistic religion eventually built Sikh temples, or *gurdwaras*, all over the country.

Particularly in the late 20th century, “New Age” practices emerged. They focus on mindfulness, meditation, spirituality and humanism. These often appeal to people not affiliated with any religion—a growing segment of Americans. §



AN AMANA COLONIES CRAFTSMAN, ABOVE, ASSEMBLES A CHAIR. AMANA MADE FURNITURE, CLOCKS AND REFRIGERATORS.

BELOW, PEOPLE PARTICIPATE IN A YOGA CLASS IN BRYANT PARK, NEW YORK CITY.







## SUNDAYS ARE SOCIAL OCCASIONS

Meeting the pastor and other churchgoers on the church steps after services is a longstanding tradition that builds community. Churches across the country with large Latino congregations, like St. Francis de Sales Catholic Church in Miami Beach, Florida, left, offer masses in English and Spanish.

## CHRISTIANS CELEBRATE RITES OF PASSAGE

Baptism is the first religious ritual encountered by many Christians. It's how they become official members of a faith. Roman Catholics, Orthodox Christians and others observe as many as seven such rites of passage. Right, teenagers participate in the "affirmation of baptism," or confirmation rite, at St. Martin's Evangelical Lutheran Church in Austin, Texas.

ST. PAUL'S  
EPISCOPAL  
CATHEDRAL, LEFT,  
ORIGINALLY  
ESTABLISHED IN  
1817, OPENED IN  
BUFFALO, NEW  
YORK, IN 1890.





## U.S. ORTHODOX CHURCHES OFTEN REFLECT COUNTRY ORIGINS

Most Orthodox Christian churches in the United States are Eastern Orthodox—including Russian, Syrian, Greek and the Orthodox Church in America. Today, the Eastern Orthodox Church is one of the three main Christian groups in America, along with Catholics and Protestants, and has more than 200 million followers worldwide.

## EASTERN ORTHODOX CHURCHES ARE RICH IN TRADITION

Eastern Orthodox churches in America maintain rituals observed in the early church, including the use of icons. These works of art—depicting Christ, his mother Mary and the saints—are focal points for devotion. Monastic life for men and women is valued. There are about 100 Orthodox monasteries in the United States. Right, altar boys assist on Easter at Annunciation Greek Orthodox Cathedral in Chicago.

ST. ANDREW'S, IN ST. PETERSBURG, FLORIDA, ABOVE, IS ONE OF AT LEAST 50 U.S. RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCHES.





## MORMONISM IS A HOMEGROWN FAITH

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, whose members are called Mormons, was founded by Joseph Smith in 1830. The group moved west from New York because of persecution. Smith was killed, and his successor, Brigham Young, led the Mormons to a haven in Utah. The Mormon Tabernacle Choir, resident at the Salt Lake City Temple, is famous worldwide.

## UNITARIANS EMBRACE MANY BELIEFS

Founded as a progressive Christian religion, Unitarian Universalism now embraces Western and Eastern faiths. With inclusive beliefs, there is no shared creed beyond a “covenant” that supports “the free and responsible search for truth and meaning.” Right, a child is baptized at Unity Church in St. Paul, Minnesota.

THE MORMON  
TABERNACLE,  
ABOVE, IN  
SALT LAKE CITY,  
IS THE CHIEF  
SANCTUARY  
OF THE FAITH.





## METHODISM WAS ADOPTED EARLY IN AMERICA

Methodism began with two English brothers, John and Charles Wesley, as Anglican missionaries to Georgia colony in the 1730s. After returning to England, they started the reformist Methodist church, which gained colonial followers. Methodism grew thanks to 18th- and 19th-century revival movements, and is the largest mainline Protestant denomination. Mainline churches include Presbyterians and Episcopalians, among others.



PASTORS HAVE GREETED PEOPLE AT THE MULBERRY STREET UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF MACON, GEORGIA, TOP, SINCE 1826.

BODIE, CALIFORNIA, ONCE A GOLD RUSH BOOMTOWN, IS NOW A GHOST TOWN, BUT THE OLD METHODIST CHURCH, ABOVE, STILL STANDS.

THE FIRST INDIAN BAPTIST CHURCH IN TAOS, NEW MEXICO, BELOW, IS A SMALL CONGREGATION.



## BAPTISTS ARRIVED IN THE COLONIAL ERA

Roger Williams, founder of Rhode Island as a place of religious freedom, established the first American Baptist Church there in 1638. Baptists are Congregational—each church is autonomous. There are about 5,000 Baptist churches in the United States. Below, the First Baptist Church in Ocala, Florida, has more than a thousand members and a large choir that fills the church with song.







## AFRICAN-AMERICAN CHURCHES ARE HISTORICALLY UNIQUE

Blacks freed from slavery established the first black Christian churches. Segregation prevented them from worshiping in most white churches. Today, while some churches are predominantly African American, such as the African Methodist Episcopal and the National Baptist Convention, churches are no longer segregated. African Americans attend services of all faiths.

## SPIRITED SINGING AND PREACHING DISTINGUISH BLACK CHURCHES

Black churches are known for lively inspirational music. Gospel singers start young, like these teenagers in the choir of Mount Olivet Baptist Church, in St. Paul, Minnesota, above. Aretha Franklin, Tina Turner, Usher and John Legend all started singing in their church choirs. At right, congregants meet and greet outside their church in St. Paul.

PARISHIONERS  
GATHER OUTSIDE  
EMANUEL AFRICAN  
METHODIST  
EPISCOPAL  
CHURCH, LEFT,  
IN CHARLESTON,  
SOUTH CAROLINA.





## JEWISH SYNAGOGUES ARE PLACES TO HONOR GOD

Congregation Beth Israel in Berkeley, California, top, is a Modern Orthodox synagogue dating to 1915, when Berkeley Jews met for services in homes. U.S. congregations represent the Orthodox, Reform, Conservative and Reconstructionist branches of Judaism, and some Hasidic rabbis have substantial followings. There are approximately 5 million observant and non-observant Jewish Americans, according to the Pew Research Center.



A RABBI AT THE TOBIN BRIDGE CHABAD IN EVERETT, MASSACHUSETTS, ABOVE, SAYS MORNING PRAYERS.

MEN PRAY ON THE MUSLIM FEAST OF EID AL-FITR, BELOW, OUTSIDE A MOSQUE IN BROOKLYN, NEW YORK.



## MUSLIMS ANSWER THE CALL TO PRAYER

Mosques, or masjids, were built well after Muslim immigrants arrived in the United States. Group observances at first were held in homes or organized in rented venues by Muslim societies until mosques were built in the 20th century. The Islamic Center of Greater Toledo, Ohio, below, is one of 10 in the city. It was built in the 1970s, when its congregation outgrew the original downtown mosque.





## SOME CHRISTIANS ARE OUT OF THE MAINSTREAM

The Jehovah's Witnesses began in the United States in the late 19th century. They espouse beliefs that counter much of the conventional Christian doctrine. They are known for door-to-door proselytizing and passing out Bible-based magazines, such as *The Watchtower*. Out-of-the-mainstream churches make up about 3 percent of U.S. Christians.

## THE SOCIETY OF FRIENDS MAKE PEACE

Also known as Quakers, the Society of Friends arose in England in the 17th century. Quakers thrived in the American colonies, despite persecution by other Christians. Inward-looking and contemplative, from the outset Quakers opposed war and slavery. They remain dedicated to social justice. Right, a Quaker Meeting for Worship at the Sandy Spring, Maryland, Friends meeting house ends with a handshake.

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES, ABOVE, DISTRIBUTE BIBLES AND OTHER LITERATURE IN HONOLULU.





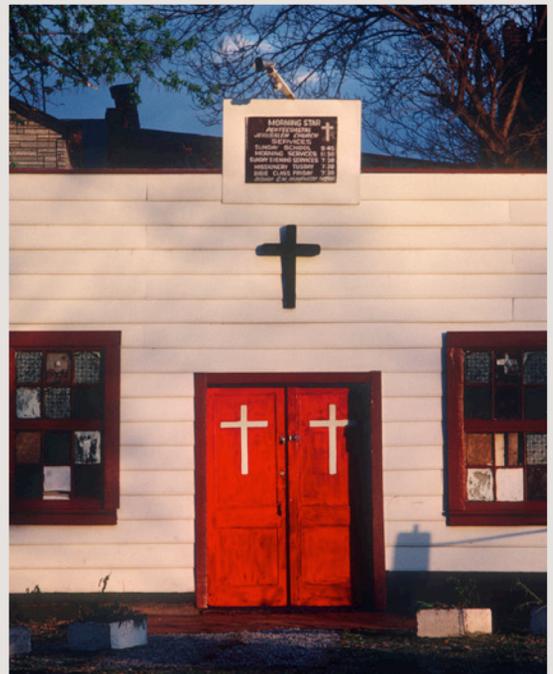
## THE GREAT AWAKENINGS BROUGHT REVIVALISM

Christian revivalism was a hallmark of 18th- and 19th-century America. The First Great Awakening began in Britain but came to the colonies with Methodism and other evangelical faiths. The Second Great Awakening saw Christian revival meetings in towns and cities across the country. A resurgence of evangelism came after World War II. The late Billy Graham, left, was one of its most visible exponents.

## STOREFRONT CHURCHES UPLIFT URBAN NEIGHBORHOODS

Urban neighborhoods have long been uplifted by storefront churches—small Christian congregations that repurpose commercial spaces. Familiar with the needs of the community, these grass-roots churches benefit neighborhoods by running food and clothing drives, or giving job skills training along with spiritual counsel. There are also storefront mosques and Hindu and Buddhist temples.

MORNING STAR  
PENTECOSTAL  
JERUSALEM  
CHURCH IN  
PETERSBURG,  
VIRGINIA, RIGHT,  
IS A SMALL-TOWN  
STOREFRONT  
CHURCH.





## BUDDHISTS OF EVERY TRADITION MEDITATE HERE

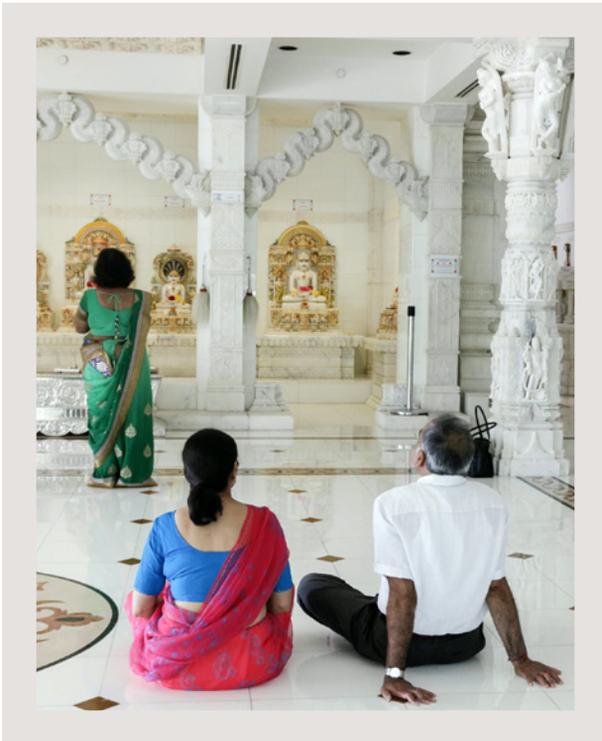
Buddhism became one of America's fastest-growing religions after the influx of Chinese, Japanese and Tibetan Buddhist teachers in the 20th century. Vietnamese and Korean immigrants established temples. Japanese Zen masters started zendos for meditation. Nichiren became popular. All forms of Buddhism now attract many non-Asian practitioners in the United States.

## PHILOSOPHIES OF PERSIA PROSPER ON NEW SOIL

Ancient Zoroastrianism is practiced today in the United States, although Shi'a Islam predominates among modern Iranian Americans. The Islamic Center in Dearborn, Michigan, is the oldest U.S. Shi'a mosque. American Sufis embrace mystical Sufism. And the Bahá'í faith has a following large enough to support the Bahá'í House of Worship for North America, right, located near Chicago.

A VIETNAMESE BUDDHIST PRIEST, ABOVE, JOINS TWO OTHER MEN FOR PRAYER AT A HOME IN SANTA ANA, CALIFORNIA.





## RELIGIONS FROM INDIA PIQUED EARLY INTEREST

Hindu philosophy attracted 19th-century Transcendentalists before Hindus brought the religion to America. Jainism and Sikhism also crossed the seas, attracting non-Asian followers. Left, devotees enjoy moments of reflection at the Jain Center of Southern California in Buena Park.

## AS MORE HINDUS ARRIVED, TEMPLES WERE BUILT

Swami Vivekananda and Paramahansa Yogananda were the first Hindu gurus to popularize Hindu philosophy in America in the early 20th century. Decades later, as more Hindus immigrated, more temples were built—some as grand as those found in India.

RIGHT, HINDUS, PERFORM A *HAWAN*, OR FIRE PUJA, TO CELEBRATE DIWALI IN QUEENS, NEW YORK.





## Education and religion

“The purpose of education is to show a person how to define himself authentically and spontaneously in relation to his world—not to impose a prefabricated definition of the world.”

— THOMAS MERTON, PHILOSOPHER  
*LOVE AND LIVING*  
1979

Religious-affiliated education is as old as the United States. Early colonists relied on the Bible for instruction, much of which took place in the home.

Schools were not common in colonial times. What schools existed taught religious lessons and values, not academic knowledge.

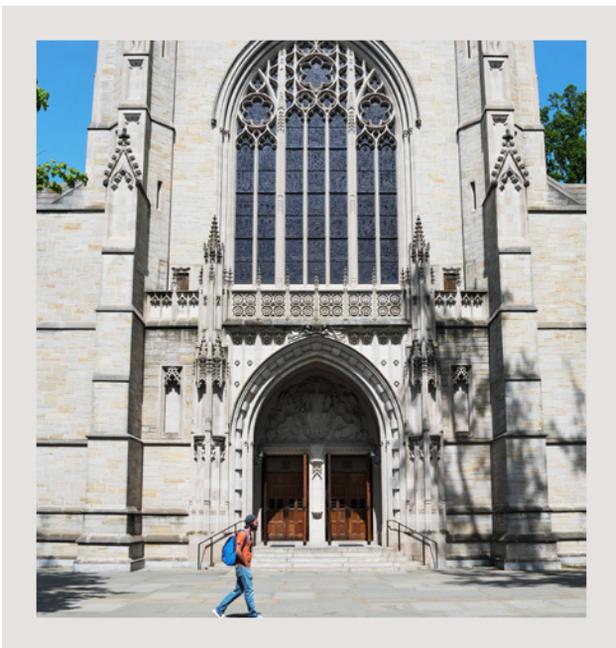
Puritan leaders in the Massachusetts Bay Colony—founded in 1620—decreed that children learn to read the Bible. They were taught either by parents or teachers appointed by community leaders. Even when publicly-funded schools that taught reading, writing and arithmetic emerged, prayers and Bible-reading reflecting a Protestant Christian outlook were also part of class.

HEALY HALL,  
LEFT, IS THE  
MAIN RECEPTION  
CENTER OF  
GEORGETOWN  
UNIVERSITY IN  
WASHINGTON.



ABOVE, BOSTON LATIN SCHOOL WAS THE FIRST U.S. PUBLIC SCHOOL.

BELOW, THE PRINCETON UNIVERSITY CHAPEL, COMPLETED IN 1928, REPLACED AN EARLIER STRUCTURE DESTROYED BY FIRE.



GOVERNMENT NEUTRALITY IN MATTERS OF FAITH IS THE BASIS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN THE UNITED STATES.

○ **Emergence of publicly-funded schools**

George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, among other founders, supported public education as a safeguard of America’s hard-won democracy. The first and oldest public school in the United States was the Boston Latin School, founded in 1635. It still graduates students today.

As the number of Catholic and Jewish immigrants grew, publicly-funded schools became more secularized.

Public schools educated growing numbers of young Americans, but citizens remained free to send their children—usually sons—to schools run by religious denominations. Catholics frequently built parish—or parochial—schools. Other religions followed suit, establishing schools that reflected their values.

Today, many congregations offer supplementary religious instruction for students who attend public school. Churches hold “Sunday school” or catechism classes. Mosques and synagogues offer similar opportunities for Muslim and Jewish Americans.

Several esteemed American universities began as religious colleges. Among the oldest is Princeton University, founded in 1746. It was originally

intended to train Presbyterian clergy. Georgetown University, founded in 1789, established by Jesuits, is the oldest Catholic university in the United States. Some universities retain close ties to their founding denominations; others have loosened those ties over the years.

### ○ Education, religion and the law

The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, adopted in 1791, states, “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.”

These two clauses prevent the government from supporting or establishing a religion and from interfering in the private practice of religion. This government neutrality in matters of faith is the basis of religious freedom and, many argue, religious vitality in the United States.

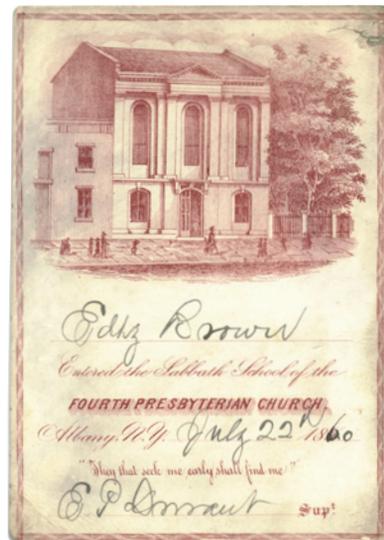
Originally, the First Amendment religious freedom clauses applied only to the federal government. However, in the 1940s, the Supreme Court ruled that they also apply to state and local governments.

Because local governments typically run America’s public schools, the issue of prayer in those schools requires the courts to balance the right to practice one’s faith against the constitutional prohibition of a state religion. The courts generally have held that states may not require students to recite a prayer, even a non-denominational one composed by state officials. Students, however,

may voluntarily pray, alone or in groups, so long as they don’t compel others to join the prayer or disrupt the school.

The public schools reflect the nation. In some schools, most students practice one religion. In others, students follow many faiths, or none at all.

Americans—and the courts—have become more sensitive to how practices, once common in public schools, might appear to increasingly-diverse communities. Not all Americans are Christians, and growing numbers are not religious at all. §

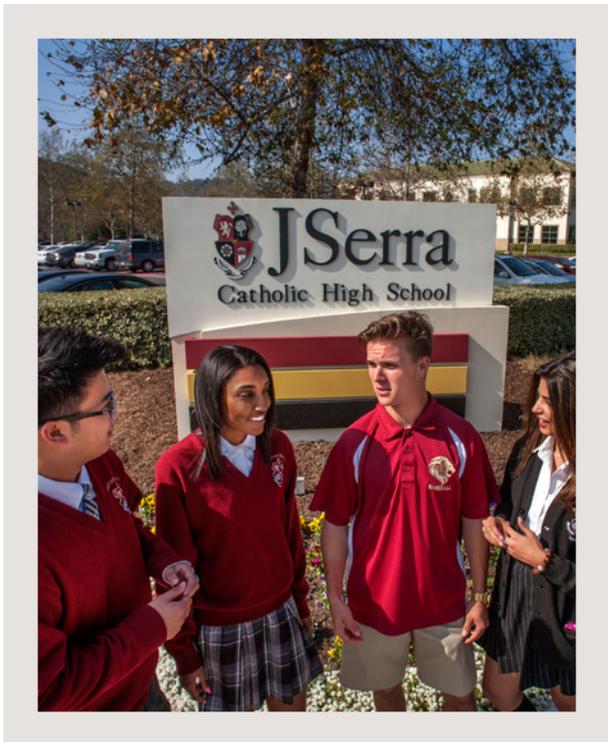


AN 1865 CHURCH DIRECTORY FROM THE OLD FOURTH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH—WHOSE SABBATH SCHOOL CARD IS ABOVE—

RECORDS 15 PROTESTANT, SEVEN CATHOLIC AND THREE JEWISH CONGREGATIONS IN ALBANY, NEW YORK.

## EDUCATION OFTEN COMBINES RELIGION AND GENERAL STUDIES

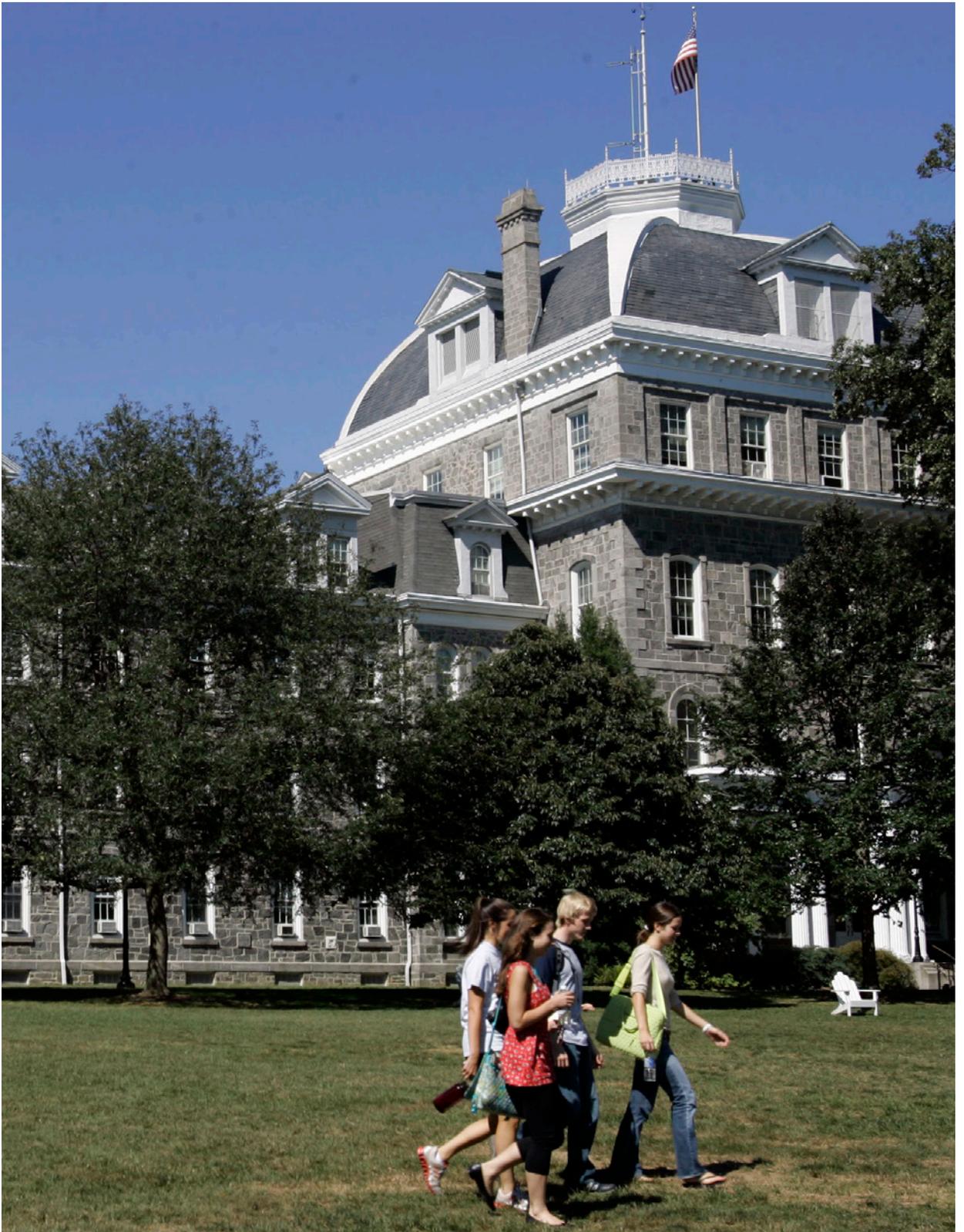
Jewish day schools and academies across the United States inculcate religious values while offering general education. American Catholic schools have a long history of educating children from kindergarten through college. A group of students, below, socialize at JSerra Catholic High School in San Juan Capistrano, California.



## MANY DISTINGUISHED UNIVERSITIES HAVE RELIGIOUS ROOTS

Swarthmore College in Pennsylvania, opposite, was established by Quakers. Classes began in 1869. It was one of the earliest coeducational institutions in the United States. Parrish Hall has been Swarthmore's hub since its beginning.

HEBREW IS TAUGHT TO THIRD-GRADERS AT ILAN RAMON DAY SCHOOL, ABOVE, IN AGOURA, CALIFORNIA.





## KOREAN-AMERICAN CHURCHES PROMOTE EDUCATION

Besides Bible school, Korean-American churches may offer classes on Korean language and culture. Services are held in Korean and English. Korean Christian colleges such as Oikos University aim to prepare students for community service. Asian-American churches are a fast-growing segment of U.S. Christianity.

## AMERICAN BUDDHISM IS ON THE RISE

Buddhist teaching centers thrive in American towns and in rural settings conducive to contemplation. Buddhism became so popular that Naropa University was founded on Buddhist principles and accredited in 1986. It draws students of Eastern philosophy, psychology and the arts. Buddhist practices such as meditation are part of the curricula. A meditation class is in session, right, at Naropa's Boulder, Colorado, campus.

THE VENTURA KOREAN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, ABOVE, IS A GATHERING PLACE IN OXNARD, CALIFORNIA.





## MUSLIM SCHOOLS OFFER FORMAL EDUCATION AT ALL LEVELS

Girls from the coeducational Razi School in Queens, New York, attend the annual Muslim Day Parade in New York City, left. The Muslim school offers classes from preschool through high school. And there are several Islamic colleges in the United States, notably Zaytuna College in Berkeley, California, a liberal arts school that, in 2015, became the nation's first accredited Muslim college.

## AMISH ATTEND MIXED-GRADE, ONE-ROOM SCHOOLHOUSES

Amish are recognizable by their distinctive old-fashioned dress and lifestyle. Although some Amish children attend public schools, in rural areas they usually go to private one-room schoolhouses. Amish typically do not attend school past eighth grade. By law, religious minorities may remove their children from state-mandated schooling after eighth grade for religious reasons.

AMISH CHILDREN  
PLAY VOLLEYBALL  
AT A ONE-ROOM  
SCHOOLHOUSE  
IN PENNSYLVANIA,  
RIGHT.





## The common good

“Let...individuals make the most of what God has given them, have their neighbors do the same, and then do all they can to serve each other. It is a good thing to be dependent on each other for something; it makes us civil and peaceable.”

— SOJOURNER TRUTH  
c. 1867

Interfaith cooperation is integral to American religious life. People from various faiths often unite to help the less fortunate in their communities.

Working side-by-side, they learn about different beliefs and gain respect for the people who hold them.

While individual churches, Jewish synagogues and other faith-based or secular organizations offer programs for neighbors in need, they also participate in multifaith collaborations.

Interfaith groups run local food pantries to feed the poor. They support shelters for the homeless and for women and children escaping domestic violence. They contribute to humanitarian aid at home and around the world.

LEFT, MORMONS FROM KANSAS HELP CLEAN UP JOPLIN, MISSOURI, AFTER A DEVASTATING 2011 TORNADO.



TEENAGERS PACK GROCERIES, ABOVE, AT A ROTARY-CLUB-SPONSORED SOUP KITCHEN IN PORTLAND, MAINE.

BELOW, A SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH MEMBER BRIGHTENS THE SIDEWALK WITH FLOWERS IN HARLEM, NEW YORK CITY.



They work with religious leaders to end conflicts and bring peace where there is war and civil unrest.

Interfaith community outreach programs may include providing vocational training and jobs, counseling for adults, or programs for children and the elderly. Interfaith teams travel to assist in disaster relief efforts. Interfaith groups also promote respect for others' beliefs.

An example is Interfaith Action of Central Texas (iACT), which “cultivates peace and respect through interfaith dialogue, service and celebration.” Its calendar of events includes Christian holidays, Buddha’s birthday and breaking the Ramadan fast. The group helps refugees in the area. An iACT housing program recruits volunteer contractors and others willing to repair and remodel homes for people who cannot afford it. The group sponsors monthly discussions and a program that allows people to experience worship and celebrations of various faiths.

Interfaith Action of Evanston, Illinois, staffs soup kitchens, centers for the homeless and winter warming centers—it gets very cold in Illinois. Its “Producemobile” brings fresh fruit and vegetables to urban areas lacking produce markets.

The San Fernando Valley Interfaith Council and its affiliated groups provide similar services. Such interfaith outreach is replicated throughout America.

People unaffiliated with any religion, who are humanitarians wanting to volunteer for community service, may join such programs—or start new ones. Secular charities such as Rotary, Doctors Without Borders, Foundation Beyond Belief and Kiva are vehicles for

those who want to make a difference outside of a religious context.

The American Red Cross, a leading secular organization, attracts religious and non-religious volunteers when there is need. It also liaises with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies when aid is required outside the United States, particularly in conflict zones.

### ○ Support for social justice

Interfaith cooperation on social justice causes, historically, has created transformational movements in the United States. Activists of different faiths, working together non-violently, helped pave the way for the abolition of slavery in the late 19th century and civil rights victories for minorities during the mid-20th century.

Christian preachers, Jewish rabbis and Roman Catholic priests literally linked arms in support of Baptist pastor Martin Luther King Jr., the preeminent leader of the Civil Rights Movement. Many congregants followed their example.

Interfaith groups also work for world peace. The Tanenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding, for example, pursues efforts at home and internationally to create “a safer, more equitable world for people of all belief systems.” Conflict resolution and combatting extremism are among its priorities.

People of different faiths or no faith working for the common good have woven the unique tapestry that is the American religious landscape, making major contributions to democracy in the process. §



A VOLUNTEER FROM CALIFORNIA'S MARIN INTERFAITH COUNCIL, ABOVE, REPAIRS DAMAGE IN LOUISIANA AFTER HURRICANE KATRINA.

BELOW, VOLUNTEERS AT ST. STEPHEN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN FLORIDA WORK AT AN AIDS FUND-RAISING EVENT.





## COMMUNITY SERVICE COMES IN MANY FORMS

Feeding the poor, stocking food pantries, or planting and maintaining urban gardens are ways people work together for the common good.

They organize coat drives in the winter or hold athletic events that raise money and awareness about the homeless or other issues.

## COMPASSIONATE OUTREACH INVOLVES EVERYBODY

Muslims, Jews, Christians and others often join forces for good works. They gain an understanding of each other while fulfilling charitable obligations—something all religions encourage. Right, Jewish and Muslim women prepare Christmas meals for the homeless in Oak Park, Michigan.

ABOVE,  
VOLUNTEERS  
PLANT SPINACH  
IN IRVINE,  
CALIFORNIA,  
FOR USE IN  
SHELTERS AND  
FOOD BANKS.





## FAITH GROUPS HELP PEOPLE AROUND THE WORLD, TOO

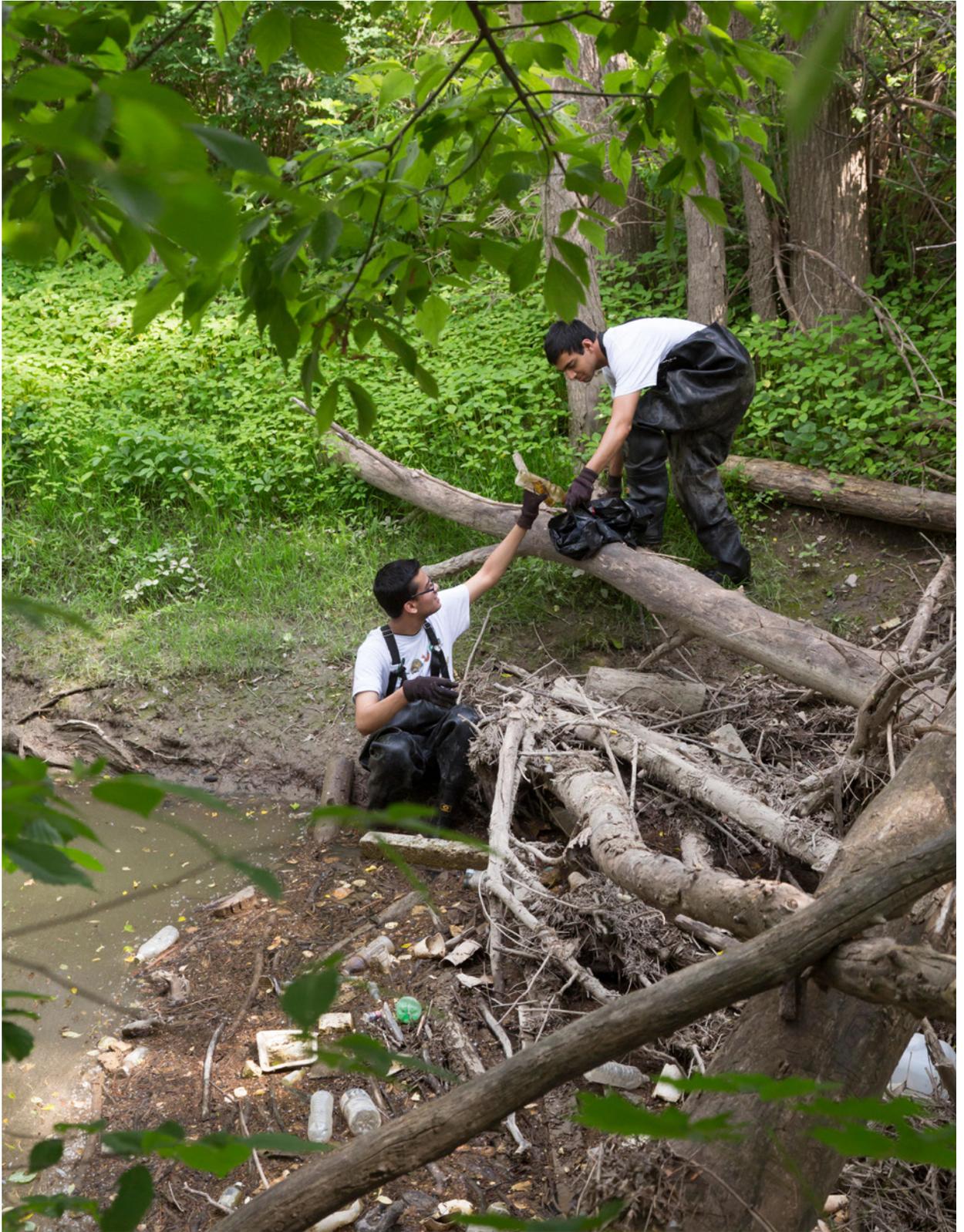
U.S. faith-based groups are on the ground in many countries, responding to crises or rendering ongoing nutritional or medical aid. World Vision is one such organization. World Vision's 6K walk for clean water in Seattle, right, drew nearly 50,000 participants to raise money for the cause. Some walkers carried full containers to emphasize the daily burden of fetching water in parts of the world where it is not readily available.

ABOVE, DONORS AT ST. PATRICK'S CATHEDRAL IN NEW YORK CITY GIVE TO THE "FEEDING OUR NEIGHBORS" INTERFAITH FOOD DRIVE.

## MULTIFAITH EFFORTS FOR CHARITY ARE CREATIVE

Annual interfaith fundraising events can unite communities. They also harness talent. The InterFaith Conference of Metropolitan Washington's annual fundraising concert showcases area performers. Local artisans donate bowls for Empty Bowls events around the country, which help the hungry. People pay for soup and take home the bowl.







## WEEKEND FUN CAN MEAN WORK FOR GOOD CAUSES

Volunteering for community service is a virtue learned young, whether it is in a religious context or a secular one, such as the Girl Scouts or school activities. Religious and non-religious people alike support worthy causes. Left, young people clear trash with HandsOn Miami Beach Clean-up, a community service that appeals to those who wish to help.

## HELPING OTHERS FOR MORE THAN A CENTURY

Red Cross volunteers come from all backgrounds. Blood drives, like this one for Japanese earthquake victims, right, in Garden City, New York, are typical Red Cross activities. Volunteers aid, worldwide, in emergencies and war zones. Founder Clara Barton bravely delivered aid to soldiers during the U.S. Civil War. She started the Red Cross in 1881, inspired by the Swiss Red Cross.

LEFT, MEMBERS OF THE CANTON, MICHIGAN, HINDU TEMPLE ASSIST AN ANNUAL CLEAN-UP EFFORT AT A CREEK THAT FEEDS THE NEARBY ROUGE RIVER.





## SKILLED AND UNSKILLED CONSTRUCTION WORKERS WANTED

Religious or not, Americans volunteer where they are needed. Nonprofit organizations such as U.S.-based Habitat for Humanity, a Christian organization open to all regardless of religious faith, attract people who want to help the less fortunate. This can mean rebuilding basic shelter after storms, or bringing affordable housing to low-income neighborhoods.



TOP, HABITAT FOR HUMANITY VOLUNTEERS FRAME A HOUSE IN DETROIT, MICHIGAN.

A WOMAN TRIMS DRYWALL, ABOVE, FOR A HABITAT FOR HUMANITY PROJECT IN AUSTIN, TEXAS.

SALVATION ARMY  
DISASTER SERVICE,  
BELOW, FEEDS  
FLORIDA RESIDENTS  
AFTER HURRICANE  
IRMA IN 2017.

## WHEN THERE IS NEED, HELP APPEARS

The Salvation Army is an international evangelical Christian movement that aids in disaster relief without discrimination. It operates homeless shelters and soup kitchens across the country, serving the Gospel along with the soup. Salvation Army thrift stores employ the unemployed and raise funds for its work. Below, in Portland, Oregon, families in need wait for food boxes from charitable groups.





## INTERFAITH ACTION EXTENDS TO SOCIAL JUSTICE

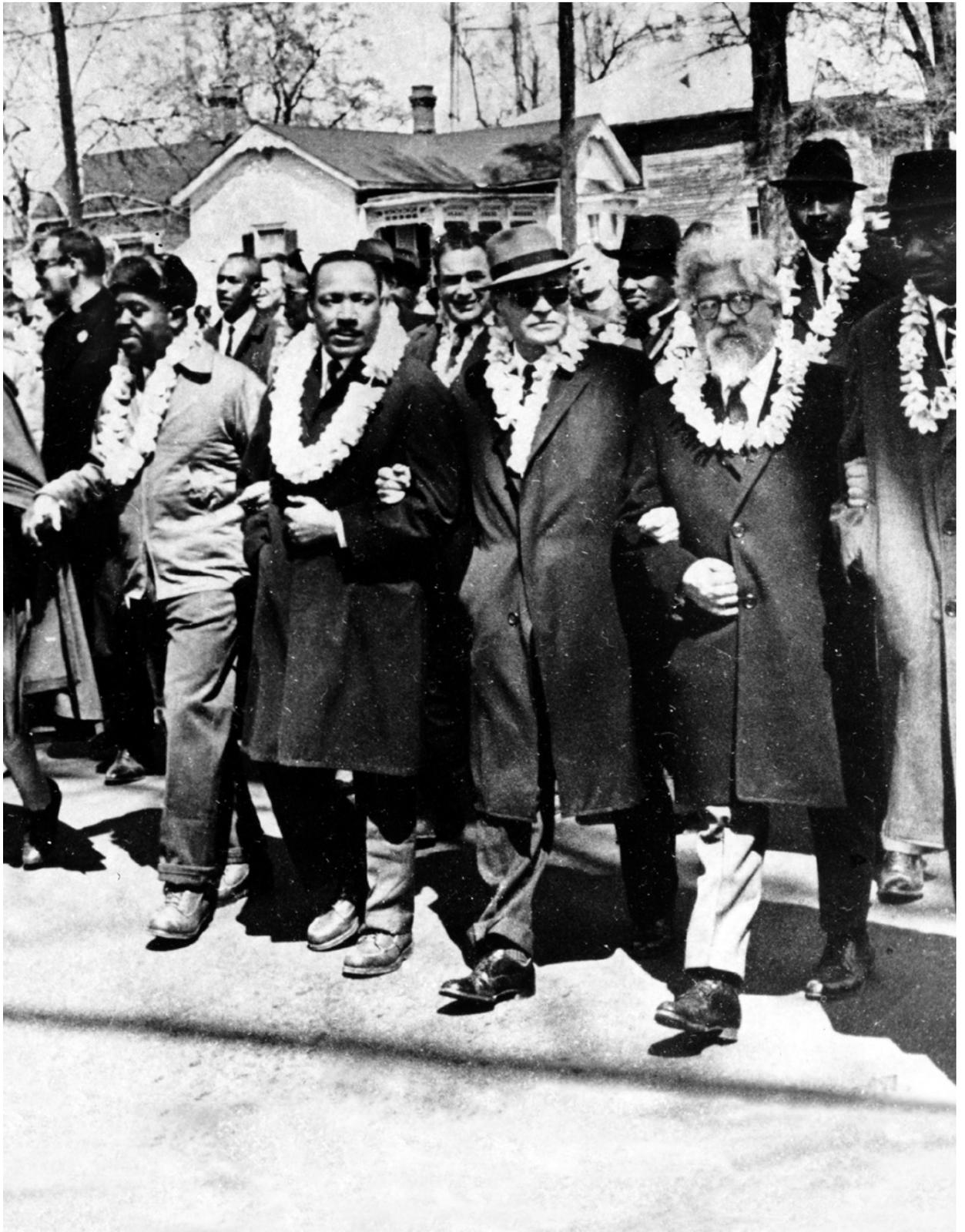
Faith groups were powerful forces in the Civil Rights Movement. Catholic, Protestant and Jewish leaders marched side-by-side, risking physical harm. Rabbi Abraham Heschel, who marched with Martin Luther King Jr. in Selma, Alabama, in 1965 said, "Our march was worship. I felt my legs were praying." Opposite, Heschel, far right, with King and other leaders at one of the Selma marches to demand voting rights.

## MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.'S DREAM

King envisioned a day "when all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual, 'Free at last, free at last, thank God Almighty, we are free at last.'" He spoke these words during his "I Have a Dream" speech at the 1963 March on Washington. King was pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, Georgia, right.

ABOVE, AN INTERFAITH VIGIL IS HELD AT ST. FRANCIS DE SALES CHURCH IN MIAMI BEACH, FLORIDA.







## COORDINATING COMMUNITY ACTION

Interfaith groups in Hawaii collaborate to provide needed services in their communities. One of them, Faith Action for Community Equity, sponsored an interfaith service at Honolulu's Central Union Church that opened with prayers from Buddhist monks, right.

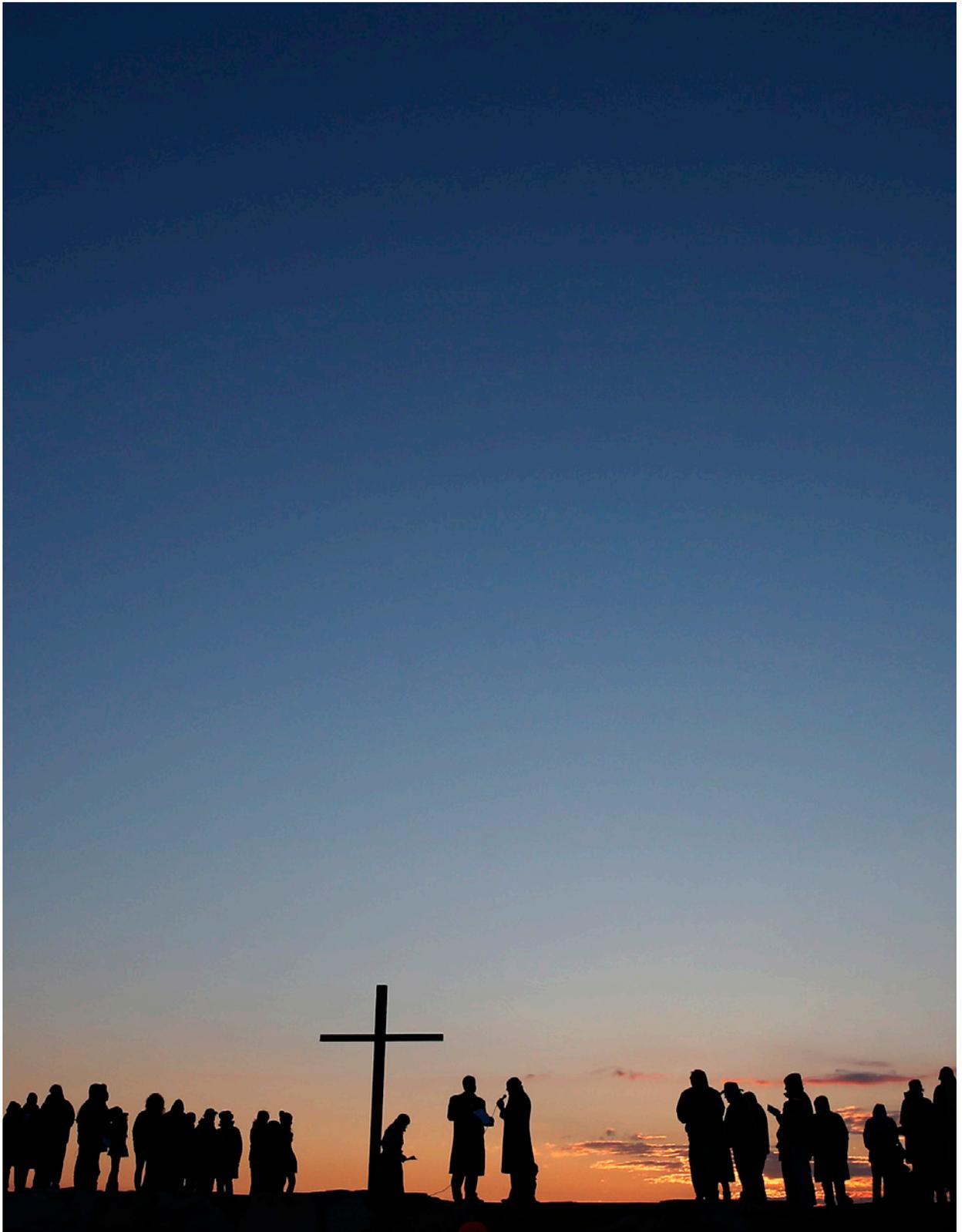
ABOVE,  
VOLUNTEERS  
IN BALDWIN,  
LOUISIANA,  
PACK SCHOOL  
KITS FOR  
DISASTER  
VICTIMS.

## GROUPS LEND A HELPING HAND

The Grammy Award-winning Brooklyn Tabernacle Choir members are baptized "born again" Christians from different backgrounds and denominations. Opposite, choir members lead a march on the Brooklyn Bridge to raise money for Haiti earthquake relief.







## Celebrations and culture

“Blessed is the season  
which engages the  
whole world in a  
conspiracy of love!”

— HAMILTON WRIGHT MABIE  
*MY STUDY FIRE*  
1890

Religious holidays signal fun, good food and celebration. Holidays preserve important traditions and history for younger generations.

Every holiday has a story. Those stories inspire writers, musicians, and visual and performing artists, who offer holiday-themed works that have universal appeal. In American cities and towns, Nativity pageants mark Christians’ celebration of Christmas. Likewise — although they are fewer in number — Krishna Leela plays recount the birth story of that beloved Hindu god during August or September each year.

Rosh Hashanah and Passover are probably the best-known Jewish holidays. Because Hanukkah, the Festival of Lights, falls close to Christmas, colorful Christmas lights are interspersed with blue Hanukkah lights in some neighborhoods.

LEFT, PEOPLE  
GATHER FOR  
AN EASTER  
SUNRISE SERVICE  
IN SCITUATE,  
MASSACHUSETTS.



THANKSGIVING DINNER, ABOVE, IS SERVED BY BROADWAY COMMUNITY, INC., AT THE BROADWAY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN NEW YORK CITY.

BELOW, AN ADVENT WREATH ADORNS ST. CECILIA'S CATHOLIC CHURCH IN TUSTIN, CALIFORNIA.



AMERICANS EMBRACE HOLIDAYS AND TRADITIONAL FOODS OF MANY CULTURES.

Thanksgiving is not a religious feast, but it is often observed by giving thanks to God for an abundant harvest and other blessings before family and friends dig into a delicious meal. It is an inclusive holiday. The first Thanksgiving meal was a harvest celebration shared by the native Wampanoag tribe with members of the Plymouth Colony in Massachusetts, people of different cultures and religious beliefs.

In a way, Thanksgiving foreshadowed the religious pluralism enjoyed in the United States today.

○ **Celebrations are for sharing**

Americans embrace holidays and traditional foods of many cultures. Chinese New Year, for instance, is an occasion that gives everyone a reason to converge. It is an ancient observance for Taoists, Buddhists and Confucians, who honor ancestors and family as they prepare for a new beginning with purification, prayer and offerings. Many Americans enjoy the fireworks, auspicious foods and dragon dances that are part of Chinese New Year celebrations.

Islamic centers across the country often open their doors to non-Muslims during the fasting month of Ramadan for the evening iftar meal, or at Ramadan's conclusion, for the important feast Eid al-Fitr.

Besides Krishna's birthday, Hindus celebrate Holi, Durga Puja and Diwali with as much enthusiasm in the United States as in India. American Sikhs mark Guru Nanak's birthday and Baisakhi, the spring festival, with parades, bhangra dances and other events from New York to California.

The ancient Persian spring feast of Nowruz is celebrated with special foods by Iranian Americans and others with roots in Asia and Eastern Europe. While it's a largely secular celebration, it is a holiday to Bahá'ís and some Muslim sects.

○ **Many holiday traditions enrich the United States**

Holiday celebrations are times to share. Homes and religious institutions typically invite those outside their faith to join in festivities. Although Mardi Gras is a carnival that marks the beginning of the Christian fasting month of Lent that precedes Easter, all are welcome to attend it—most famously in New Orleans, Louisiana.

These religious and cultural traditions enrich Americans spiritually and help people appreciate different faiths. When minds and hearts meet in a place of common ground, it fosters understanding, compassion and kindness, strengthening American society. §



BLESSED PALMS, ABOVE, ARE WOVEN INTO SIMPLE CROSSES OR MORE ELABORATE FIGURES FOR THE CHRISTIAN HOLY DAY PALM SUNDAY.

BELOW, LAS POSADAS, A HISPANIC CHRISTMAS TRADITION, IS OBSERVED IN NEW MEXICO. IT REENACTS MARY AND JOSEPH'S TRIP TO BETHLEHEM.







## CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS ARE CULTURAL

Most Christians observe the birth of Jesus on Christmas. Thanks to holiday customs brought by immigrants from around the world, Americans have many ways to celebrate. Families prepare special food—from Polish pierogi to Mexican tamales. Catholics go to midnight mass, honoring the belief that Jesus was born at night. Left, a Christmas procession enlivens St. John's Episcopal Church in North Haven, Connecticut.

## LIGHTS AND PAGEANTRY

Nativity scenes at churches and in neighborhoods are common sights during Christmas. The life-sized display at the Church of the Little Flower in Coral Gables, Florida, right, is one example. At home, people often hang lights and decorate Christmas trees.

LEFT, FINAL TOUCHES ARE MADE ON A PENTECOST BANNER AT THE ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH IN FERNDALE, MICHIGAN.





## JEWISH HOLIDAYS KEEP HISTORY ALIVE

Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, and Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, are the “high holidays” of Judaism. Others, such as Passover and Hanukkah, mark events in Jewish history. Top, a man blows a shofar, or ram’s horn, during Yom Kippur at Temple Etz Chaim, Thousand Oaks, California.



THE PASSOVER MEAL,  
ABOVE, INCLUDES  
SYMBOLIC FOODS:  
WINE, BITTER

HERBS, MATZO,  
AND HAROSET,  
A FRUIT AND  
NUT MIXTURE.

SIKHS PRAY,  
BELOW, ON THE  
SPRING HOLIDAY  
BAISAKHI IN  
LOS ANGELES.



## SIKHS CELEBRATE THE ARRIVAL OF SPRING

The monotheistic Sikh religion came to America with migrants from India's Punjab in the early 20th century. Spring is important to all farmers, and Sikhs, historically, have worked the land. Baisakhi is the Sikh spring holiday, celebrated with parades and prayer at the temple, or *gurdwara*. Sikhism holds men and women equal and emphasizes good works. Below, a young Sikh performs the martial *gatka*, or sword dance, on Baisakhi in Los Angeles.





## RAMADAN CONCLUDES WITH A FEAST

After observing Ramadan, the month-long period of fasting, prayer and good works, Muslims worldwide celebrate on Eid al-Fitr. People wear their best clothes to pray at the mosque, then they enjoy a special meal with friends and family. Left, a brother and sister prepare for a traditional Eid meal in Brooklyn, New York.

## KWANZAA HONORS AFRICAN HERITAGE

Kwanzaa began in 1966 in the United States. It is a week-long observance during which African Americans focus on their distinct cultural heritage. Kwanzaa is a Swahili word meaning “first fruits” of harvest.

RIGHT, A BOY LIGHTS CANDLES DURING A KWANZAA CEREMONY IN MARYLAND.





## BUDDHISTS MARK HOLY DAYS WITH RITUALS AND GOOD DEEDS

Chief Buddhist holidays recall events in Buddha's life: Wesak, his birthday; Bodhi Day, his enlightenment; and Parinirvana, his achievement of Nirvana. Buddhists also celebrate spring and harvest festivals and the Lunar New Year with prayer and festivities. Left, a Buddhist child floats flowers on a pond during Loy Krathong at a Thai temple near Homestead, Florida.

## HINDUS HAVE LOTS OF HOLIDAYS

The most important feasts on the Hindu calendar revolve around gods, goddesses and nature. Holi, the festival of colors, comes in early spring. Krishna Jayanti is the god Krishna's birthday. The goddess Kali is honored during Durga Puja. Gods Shiva and Ganesh have their feast days. Many other holidays are celebrated in U.S. Hindu temples.

RIGHT, HINDUS IN ARCADIA, CALIFORNIA, PLAY WITH COLORS ON THE SPRING FESTIVAL, HOLI.





## ENTER DRAGONS AND LIONS

Chinese New Year falls on the Lunar New Year, a religious holiday for Buddhists and Taoists. It is a time to perform purification rituals, sweep bad luck out of houses, and drive away demons with firecrackers. People pray for a happy year ahead. Dragon and lion dances, like those in Los Angeles, top, help usher in good luck for the coming year.



LIGHTING CANDLES ON LUNAR NEW YEAR IS AN AUSPICIOUS ACT, PERFORMED AT THE HSI LAI

BUDDHIST TEMPLE, ABOVE, IN HACIENDA HEIGHTS, CALIFORNIA.

A GROTTTO, BELOW,  
IS DEDICATED  
TO A SAINT AT EL  
SANTUARIO DE  
CHIMAYO NEAR SANTA  
FE, NEW MEXICO.



## THE UNITED STATES IS A PLURALISTIC PLACE

From the beginning, the United States has been religiously diverse. The American religious landscape filled out over centuries. Today, the country is unique not so much in the multiplicity of faiths, but in Americans' characteristic efforts to understand, accept and bridge differences to achieve a harmonious society. Below, El Santuario de Chimayo, built by Spanish settlers in 1813, has a reputation for miracles of healing.



LUTHERAN  
SHEPHERDSTOWN,  
WEST VIRGINIA



PENTECOSTAL  
WASHINGTON,  
DISTRICT  
OF COLUMBIA



INDIAN MISSION  
CLARKDALE,  
ARIZONA



UNITED METHODIST  
HUNTSVILLE,  
ALABAMA



SEVENTH-DAY  
ADVENTIST  
WASHINGTON,  
NEW HAMPSHIRE



ANGLICAN  
NEW YORK CITY,  
NEW YORK



SIKH  
YUBA CITY,  
CALIFORNIA



CHURCH OF GOD  
TURNER,  
OREGON



CATHOLIC  
BATON ROUGE,  
LOUISIANA

BUDDHIST  
LOCKE,  
CALIFORNIA



CONGREGATIONAL  
MIAMI,  
FLORIDA



SOUTHERN BAPTIST  
CHARLESTON,  
SOUTH CAROLINA



UNITARIAN  
UNIVERSALIST  
BREWSTER,  
MASSACHUSETTS



PRESBYTERIAN  
INTERIOR,  
SOUTH DAKOTA



MENNONITE  
HARRISONBURG,  
VIRGINIA



SHINTO  
HONOLULU, OAHU,  
HAWAII



BETHEL BAPTIST  
DETROIT,  
MICHIGAN



METHODIST  
LOS ANGELES,  
CALIFORNIA

“God, give us grace  
to accept with serenity  
the things that cannot be changed,  
courage to change the things  
which should be changed,  
and the wisdom to distinguish  
the one from the other.

Living one day at a time,  
Enjoying one moment at a time...  
So that I may be reasonably happy  
in this life,  
And supremely happy with You  
forever in the next.”

REINHOLD NIEBUHR  
AMERICAN THEOLOGIAN  
SERENITY PRAYER, C.1942

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