**THE AMERICAN LEGION**

**DEPARTMENT OF MINNESOTA**

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**CHAPLAIN RESOURCE GUIDE**



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20 12th St W Rm 300A

St Paul MN 55155-2000

Phone: (651) 291-1800

Toll Free: (866) 259-9163

Email:department@mnlegion.org Web:[www.mnlegion.org](http://www.mnlegion.org)

**Mission of The American Legion**

*To enhance the well-being of America's veterans, their families, our military, and our communities by our devotion to mutual helpfulness.*

National American Legion Mission Statement, adopted October 2020



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**Introduction and Acknowledgment****s**

From its inception, The American Legion has recognized that an effective Chaplain is integral to the organization and members as purpose and meaning making in life guide individuals through difficult experiences; connect us together and, focus our intentions, and give life to the words of our mission.

American culture evidences a variety of cultures, faith’s, ethnicities residing alongside one another to pursue life, liberty and engage in the pursuit of happiness. The First Amendment of our United States Constitution includes, what is called, the Free Exercise Clause, “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof;…” ( <https://constitution.congress.gov/constitution/amendment-1/>). Religion is a set of beliefs, practices, values organized into a doctrine for a person to practice with like-minded people and individually with reverence for supernatural power(s) that are regarded as the creator of our universe. Each person is comprised of a physical, psychological and spiritual self and innately express who they are from these identifiers. The soul and spirit of a person is the seat of meaning making, purpose, and values of what is right or wrong.

The American Legion’s membership is comprised of active duty and veteran military members who are familiar, vaguely or intimately with the role and purpose of the Chaplain. *The American Legion’s Officer Guide and Manual of Ceremonies* (OG&MC) is a vital tool for how to do specific spiritual-focused services within the organization and in community. Please refer to the updated version of OG&MC to assist. The Department of Defense increased the number of accepting endorsing agencies of different religious denominations fitting the required criteria of what is a religion to 221 (<https://religionnews.com/2017/04/21/defense-department-expands-its-list-of-recognized-religions/>).

* 2009 The DoD issued DoDI 1300.17, which established policy for accommodating religious practices in the military.
* 2014 The DoD updated DoDI 1300.17 to reflect changes to its policy on religious accommodations.
* 2020 The DoD updated DoDI 1300.17 to further the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment. (<https://www.esd.whs.mil/Portals/54/Documents/DD/issuances/dodi/130017p.pdf>)

The American Legion is not a religious organization. It was federally chartered on September 16,1919 through an Act of the 66th Congress as a federal corporation of wartime veterans. Those who are members of The American Legion are afforded the same guarantee that the First Amendment guarantees by virtue of being federally chartered. The role of the Chaplain is one that acknowledges and brings forth the human spiritual capacity and desire to make meaning of our lives and recognize the supernatural powers we live within that remain outside of human control. This Chaplain resource guide is a tool to assist Chaplain’s throughout The American Legion Department of Minnesota in their role of ensuring the spiritual life is recognized, nurtured and honored.

**Chaplaincy**

**Name**

Chaplains comprise a unique kind of spiritual tending to those within their scope of care. Historically and continuing into the present day, Chaplains are to be spiritually minded individuals who do not represent a specific religious affiliated congregation, mosque, synagogue, parish, or church. They accepted etymology comes from the Latin: cappella which means to cover as in a hood. In France in the 4th century A.D., St. Martin is said to have torn his cape in half to give one side to a beggar. He experienced a mystical experience of seeing in a dream Jesus Christ by which he became Christian the following day. His cloak became the cappella that was then carried into battle signifying the “presence of God”.

In the United States Armed Forces and in specific organizations such as hospitals, prisons, and facilities where whole person care is part of the mission such as in recovery centers, skilled nursing facilities, hospices Chaplains are a part of the leadership team with oversight of religious and spiritual care.

Chaplains in the military are religiously ordained/commissioned and are ecclesiastically endorsed through their specific faith group endorser. Chaplains in hospitals, prisons, workplace environments usually require the same type of education and endorsement to verify ability, competence to spiritual, religious and spiritual care.

**Qualifications of a Chaplain**

Chaplains in The American Legion are not required to be ordained. At the very onset of The American Legion, the actionable philosophy of “no rank amongst us” has been carried out through all leadership roles, including the Chaplain. This marker allows Legionnaires to 1. Grow into the roles, 2. Develop within each role 3. Learn about the role and 4. Represent the democratic governmental organization through their actions, with probably many more additional reasons as evidenced in the Constitution and By-laws at a Post, District, County or Department.

The National American Legion Constitution allows for the role of a Chaplain in a Department. Article VIII, Section 2 states that a Department, “…may have a Chaplain and such other officers as the Department may determine”. The National American Legion By-Laws, Article II, Section 6 defines the role of the National Chaplain, “…shall perform such divine and nonsectarian services as may be necessary, adhering to such ceremonial rituals as my be recommended by National Headquarters from time to time.”

Character is a presiding factor for all roles including the Chaplain role. The Officer’s Guide and Manual of Ceremonies is a reliable source as a marker for the type of character to represent The American Legion in the organization and as a community leader. Trust, integrity, reliability, honesty are the character threads for all leaders. In addition, the ability to be unbiased to personality, maintain clear representation of the Preamble, Mission, Constitution and By-laws of The American Legion and maintain confidence. Be prepared for a prayer as required and requested. The following are a few of the recommended qualifications for a Chaplain to evidence:

1. Know the resources such as suicide prevention hot-line, local Emergency Rooms, County Veteran Service Office’s, Workforce locations and the various Service Officer’s of The American Legion.
2. While in their official role in The American Legion Chaplains are to be nonsectarian and be able to preside over events, programs and services in an interfaith capacity recognizing and respecting each Legionnaires specific spiritual and faith preference. The American Legion captures the supernatural power of deity as God.
3. Chaplains are to remain neutral when helping others to settle disputes.
4. Never political while in the office and role as an American Legion Chaplain.
5. Other character traits that enhance the role of The American Legion Chaplain is if they evidence a spiritual maturity and maintain a positive attitude
6. Is aware of the resources available and able to provide them to Legionnaires requesting such, willing to serve where there is a sensitive need such as a death, illness, family concerns.
7. Chaplains need to be able to practice confidentiality. One exception is if there is an immediate threat to life, property as these need to be reported immediately to those able to intercept.
8. Chaplains recognized the power of the spoken and written word they convey to encourage personal and collective moral and spiritual growth, reminding all God as the source of rights and privileges.
9. Is the Chaplain willing to hold the position? No one should be appointed/elected against his/her will. The Chaplain position is not one to hold simply to fill a spot on the roster.
10. Finally,the Chaplain should seek to model matters in an ethical and moral way. Remember, the Chaplain’s actions, words can adversely affect The American Legion.

**Duties of a Chaplain**

The position of Chaplain is not a required position for The American Legion to be a service organization. However, it remains a respected position carrying with it duties and opportunities to bring people to God and to nourish the spirit for all Legionnaires to carry out the mission with mutual helpfulness. This respect of the office of Chaplain is innate to the organization. The respect of the person who holds the title starts anew with each new person carrying out the role of the Chaplain. The character of the person to be trusted to be a spiritual guide without prejudice towards a specific religion is earned through words and actions.

The Department of Minnesota Outline of Authorization provides the Department Chaplain’s responsibilities (<https://mnlegion.org/post-resources/>). The Department Chaplain holds the office for one year and cannot hold it consecutively for the next year. The National Chaplain is appointed. Department, area, district, and post chaplains are either elected or appointed in keeping with specific constitutions and by-laws. The responsibility of a Chaplain at district and post parallels many of the same responsibilities. The OG&MC describes more fully the responsibilities and basic qualifications. Please refer to this important manual for many of the opportunities for the Chaplain to preside over events are present and give instructions on how to conduct the event.

The best tools available to a Chaplain are 1. Capacity to listen and 2. Ability to provide resources upon request or with permission. Chaplains are connectors. Connecting to spiritual strengths, connecting to material resources, connecting one to their specific faith group (if they practice a specific faith). Chaplains are the individuals to direct the mind to the greater good of service with the values that better one another and ourselves.

Chaplains need to be notified when there is a death, illness or a special concern of a Legionnaire within the scope of their care (Post, District, Department).

Chaplains should make attempts to develop a collegial relationship with other Chaplains for support, sharing resources and camaraderie.

Chaplains should speak of deity, supernatural power, god, gods as God. Other names of God may be specifically defined via the faith group and unknown to another.

**Awards**

Recognizing good works in The American Legion is a practice on focusing how individuals, posts, Legionnaires exhibit our Preamble in action.

**Preamble**

***FOR GOD AND COUNTRY WE ASSOCIATE OURSELVES TOGETHER***

***FOR THE FOLLOWING PURPOSES:***

*To uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States of America;*

*To maintain law and order;*

*To foster and perpetuate a one hundred percent Americanism;*

*To preserve the memories and incidents of our associations in all wars;*

*To inculcate a sense of individual obligation to the community, state and nation;*

*To combat the autocracy of both the classes and the masses;*

*To make right the master of might;*

*To promote peace and goodwill on earth;*

*To safeguard and transmit to posterity the principles of justice, freedom and democracy;*

*To consecrate and sanctify our comradeship by our devotion to mutual helpfulness.*

The Department of Minnesota has *The Father L.J. Fortin Trophy* award. The deadline for submissions from a post is June 15 of each year for possible award recognition at the annual Department Convention. Information for this award is given to the Post Adjutant each year. This award is given to a post for their participation in emphasizing their dedication to God. The dedication can be through programs, events, and services.

The American Legion National has many awards that are awarded annually to a variety of people, organizations and departments. The American Legion’s *Trophies, Awards & Ceremonials Manual* is provided to our National Executive Committee representative and Alternate by the Internal Affairs Commission. A few that are relevant for the Chaplain to be aware of for possible submission is:

 *Enhance the Lives of Disabled Persons Award*

 *National Employer of Older Worker Award*

 *Distinguished Public Service Award*

 *National Commander’s Blood Donor Awards*

 *William F. Lenker National Service Trophy*

Chaplains, familiarize yourself with the criteria for each award and collaborate with the leadership if there is an individual, business, organization identified as a consideration for these awards/trophies.

**Budget**

1. **Department**

One of your first duties will be to complete the budget request for the following year. This is submitted to the Dept of MN Comptroller. The Chaplain budget is determined, and Chaplain is notified of the budget. The budget is used to complete your role. For example, to purchase cards to send and flowers for Chaplain led events.

The Department Convention Memorial Service also has a Chaplain budget to cover costs of the Memorial Service. This joint Memorial service is provided by the Chaplains of the Dept of MN Auxiliary and Son’s of The American Legion. The Department Chaplain provides oversight, coordinates with participation if a guest speaker is not providing the message. A per diem for mileage for the guest speaker can be paid for out of the budget, but keep in mind total cost.

Mileage reimbursed when called to Department for required Department Executive Committee presence. The Chaplain provides invocation and benediction at these meetings. Chaplains can participate if there is a spiritual,/ethical component that is to be addressed during the discussion period of the meeting.

You are part of the budget process not only for the Department but also its corporations. You are a part of the Department Executive Committee with voting rights during your term in office.

1. **District**

Chaplains at the District are usually paid a stipend for required presence travel and visits. If the District has a yearly Chaplain Budget, you will follow the same guidelines as the Department.

1. **Post**

Chaplains at a Post are not usually reimbursed for any expenses while there might be a line item for funeral expenses, covering the drape for deceased Legionnaires and any services the Post conducts/provides over the course of a budget year. This is specific to each Post.

**Calendar of Events:**

The Department of Minnesota’s Administrative Manual (<https://mnlegion.org/post-resources/>) is formatted by months. It is a very useful tool for Chaplains to pattern verbal and written messages and programs after. There are specific cultural and military specific holidays and observances to be considered:

**January** New Year’s Day

 Vietnam War ceasefire January 27

**February** *Americanism Month*

 Four Chaplain’s Day (a CPR event to be noted) First Sunday

 President’s Day Third Monday

**March** American Legion Birthday (do Buddy Check) March 15

**April** *Children & Youth Month*

 Holy Season

**May** Mother’s Day Second Sunday

 Armed Forces Day Third Saturday

 Memorial Day Last Monday

**June** D-Day (disambiguation day, WWII Normandy landings) June 6

 Flag Day June 14

 Father’s Day Third Sunday

**July** Independence Day July 4

 Korean War Armistice July 27

**August** The American Legion National Convention

**September** V-J Day (Victory over Japan) September 2

 Prisoner of War/Missing in Action (POW/MIA) Day 3rd Friday

 Labor Day First Monday

 Citizenship Day/Constitution Day September 17

**October**

**November** Election Day Tuesday after first Monday

 Veterans Day (do Buddy Check) November 11

 American Education Week

 Family Week Week of Thanksgiving

 Thanksgiving Fourth Thursday

**December** Pearl Harbor Day December 7

 Holy Season

**Prayers**

Chaplains provide the Invocation and Benediction at:

1. All Meetings of The American Legion
2. Conventions of The American Legion
3. Invitation accepted Community Events
4. Community Programs Veteran-centric such as Memorial Day, Veterans Day
5. The National American Legion Chaplain can be invited to provide Invocation at the opening session in The United States Congress (The Federal Government requires Chaplain’s to be ordained by an endorsing organization.).

Invoking the name of God as the supernatural source to which the prayer is directed is acceptable. The American Legion is NOT a religious organization. When wearing The American Legion uniform respect for everyone’s specific practiced/observed spiritual walk, religious group is to be observed. The American Legion remains committed to its mission to “enhance the well-being of America’s veterans, their families, our military, and our communities by devotion to mutual helpfulness”

Emblem Sales carries a variety of items specific to the Chaplain. Prayer books available are smaller in size to accommodate stowing in a cover carrier, back pocket or in a uniform jacket pocket.

<https://emblem.legion.org/>

<https://emblem.legion.org/Chaplain/products/1195/>

**Programs/Services**

1. Funerals, Memorial services, Celebration of Life services can be officiated by a Chaplain of the American Legion.
	1. Payment for services such as an honorarium from the deceased estate, when provided by a Chaplain in uniform is to be submitted to the Treasurer of the Post, District, County or Department the Chaplain is representing. The best case is to have the check or payment sent directly to Post, District or Department Adjutant or Treasurer.
	2. Chaplains can provide religious specific language, prayers of deceased religious/spiritual group, if they are comfortable providing such service. The Chaplain needs to be able to perform the requested service, if not a reference is appropriate, or a collaborative service could be provided.
	3. These services are for the living amongst us. A Chaplain’s words, tone and delivery affect the grieving process. Selection of music, message and prayers are to honor the deceased, the occasion and to assist those present in remembering with peace.
	4. Most services are about 30 minutes. 45 minutes is probably the longest you would want to structure a service as the purpose is to grieve, remember and honor in community. It can also stir up memories, emotions for some that would prefer privacy to emote.
	5. The following can be used as a pattern to build a Memorial, Funeral, Celebration of life service from. Family, friends and Legionnaires participating will also participate in the structure of the service most times.

*Welcome*

*\*Post Colors*

*Invocation*

*\*Pledge of Allegiance*

*Music*

*Reading of Spiritual/Faith group writings*

*Lighting of Candle of Remembrance*

*Memorial Prayer*

*Memorial Message*

*Music*

*Presentation of Memorial Wreath (Optional)*

*\*Taps*

*Hymn/Music*

*Benediction*

\*Retirement of Colors

\*Indicates Audience stands

* 1. Four Chaplain’s Sunday. Since the sinking of the USAT DORCHESTER, on February 3,1943 and the four Chaplains: Alexander D. Goode (Jewish), George L. Fox (Methodist), Johhny P. Washington (Roman Catholic) and Clark V. Poling (Dutch Reformed) actions of giving up their life jackets, remaining on the sinking steamer ship and death we continue remember the heroic sacrifice these Chaplains evidenced through a Memorial Service.

There are a multitude of resources available as Four Chaplain’s Sunday is not only an Armed Forces, American Legion commemorative service but an American one as these Chaplains evidenced non-sectarian faith strength through their collaborative selfless actions.

<https://www.legion.org/information-center/in-the-media/publications/media-communications>

<https://emblem.legion.org/Chaplain/products/1195/>

* 1. The Officer’s Guide and Manual of Ceremonies provides exhaustive instruction on how the Chaplain and other Legionnaires conduct the established services, meetings and events.

**Reports**

1**. Consolidated Post Report (CPR)**

There are a few opportunities in the report for Chaplains to add their activities. The Chaplain is responsible for ensuring the work and activities involved in are annotated on the CPR.

1. Americanism – National Day of Prayer, Flag Day, Four Chaplain Sunday, Community Service, Veterans Day, Memorial Day. At any of these events the Chaplain can provide Invocation and Benediction. Ensure it is annotated on the CPR
2. Children and Youth – Health and Child Safety, National Family Week, April is Children and Youth month and Volunteer Appreciation month. Ensure Chaplain participation is annotated.
3. Internal Affairs & Membership – *Buddy Check* week. This is a great opportunity for the Chaplain to be the lead and organize these phone calls, visits.
4. Veteran Affairs and Rehabilitation – *Be The One* program participation. This is a program the Chaplain can participate in training, work with the Post Service Officer to be the point of contact for resources and assistance.
5. Veterans Employment and Education – Homeless Veterans chairperson and *Homeless Veterans Outreach Award*. The Chaplain can help, be involved or be the chairperson for this program and award.
6. **Monthly Report**

Post, District meetings are opportunities for the Chaplain to provide a report of activities such as number of events attended in uniform; visits (respect confidentiality unless at Post level where shut-in visits assist members in knowing who they can also visit), participation in any of the CPR reportable programs, events.

1. **Annual Report**

The Department Chaplain is required to provide an annual report published annually, usually at the Department Convention. This is a consolidated report of activities and events participated while in this role.

**Visiting a Legionnaire &/or Family Member(s)**

Visiting a Legionnaire or family member during times of grief, illness or concern is best provided with permission. It is best to prepare for a visit, if possible, by gathering resources that might come in assistance. These are:

* + - * 1. Telephone 988 for all suicide related concerns. Call it first to familiarize yourself with the process. Let the person know you are trying the number out for if/when you need to call.
				2. Grief resources – pamphlets, counselors, grief groups.
				3. Family members. Who is the point of contact or the lead in arranging the service?
				4. Fellow Legionnaires. Being a member of The American Legion is a commitment, and passion fueled. Many stories and experiences are available to be shared. Remember to inquire of the relationship and listen to the stories for there is purpose and meaning-making in them.

**Types of Contacts**

There are opportunities in the yearly calendar for Chaplain initiated contacts for support, for relationship building. Buddy Checks, Shut-ins, members who are not well known at the post, hospitalizations, deaths in family, moves, promotions, demotions. Really, any reason a Chaplain wants to send a thoughtful message of encouragement, acknowledgment is a good time.

1. Cards. Handwritten and legible cards are preferred due to the time and thought needed to send. People appreciate them.
2. Telephone Calls. These are an assumptive interruption on people’s days that can be appreciated. Remember people are busy or might be involved and not able to respond to the telephone call. If the person does not answer, leave a message with a return number.
3. Text, e-mail. This is the preferred mode of communication for many in the 21st century. These allow for the recipient to respond when available. They also transmit the same message of concern, well-wishes.

The following is Frank Grittner’s ‘Cheat Sheet’ for when he was the 6th District Chaplain:

**According to the Officer’s Guide**

***Chaplain***

*The chaplain need not necessarily be a clergyman, but must be a person capable of moral and intellectual leadership and one who gives dignity and respect to the office. The chaplain should be in close touch with the commander and other post officers, and should attend all meetings of the post executive committee. The leadership in many post activities belongs by right to the chaplain, and when this office is filled by the right person, the post’s usefulness to the community greatly increases.*

*The Manual of Ceremonies (see page 35) gives an important place to the chaplain in the conduct of meetings, the observance of patriotic occasions, funeral services and dedication ceremonies. At all these events, the chaplain is the moral leader.*

*The chaplain should work with the post historian on grave registration work and inspire the post to decorate veteran graves, especially on Memorial Day. Besides officiating at post members’ funerals when requested, the chaplain can serve their bereaved families. The chaplain may also chair the post’s Veterans Administration Voluntary Services (VAVS) Committee, which coordinates volunteer work at nearby VA facilities. The American Legion Chaplain’s Handbook, available online and through department headquarters, offers guidance for the post chaplain and religious emphasis committee.*

**In reality:**

Chaplain insures that a prayer is offered at the opening of Post meetings, meals, and events.

Chaplain should be informed of any Sick Call or TAPS.

* Visit any members in hospital or at home when possible
* Should convey condolences of the Post to family of deceased members
* Officiate funerals, interment ceremonies, celebrations of life when requested
	+ Encourage the reading of the meaning of the folds of the flag when Honor Guard is asked to fold a flag at an event.
* Report TAPS to District Chaplain and Department Newsletter editor for publishing

As it states in the Officer’s Guide – The chaplain is the “moral leader” of the Post. The Chaplain should be the one to remind members and officers that the beginning of the Preamble to the Constitution of The American Legion states “For God and Country. . . “

Should have a copy of the Chaplains Prayer Book

Remember, The American Legion is a non-denominational and non-sectarian organization.

* The Chaplain should tend to ALL members.
* If you don’t know the proper procedures, etc. of the beliefs of a particular veteran, find someone who does.

**Religions/Spiritual Tradtions**

**Definition of Religion**

Today, the internet provides information for one to learn from. It is said the world is now at our fingertips. There are websites providing relevant information to assist in learning about realities beyond our own experience. One website, <https://www.learnreligions.com/> provides this for those interested in the many types of religions, spiritual groups individuals adhere to. This Resource Guide will avail the top five religions and the major spiritual traditions practiced in Minnesota (<https://www.pewresearch.org/religious-landscape-study/state/minnesota/>)

The Department of Defense defines religion as “A personal set or institutionalized system of attitudes, moral or ethical beliefs, and practices held with the strength of traditional views, characterized by ardor and faith and generally evidenced through specific observances.”. The link: <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/tr/pdf/ADA592763.pdf> provides one military Chaplain’s explanation of the continuing conversation of how military members are able to practice their religion.

Religious liberty is the right to practice a religion or no religion at all and is protected by our U.S. Constitution. (<https://www.esd.whs.mil/Portals/54/Documents/DD/issuances/dodi/130017p.pdf>)

The American Legion is comprised of veterans and active-duty personnel (The American Legion Auxiliary is not germane to this resource guide). Outside of the Armed Forces, the definition of a religion becomes more subjective. Pew Research is of great assistance in that it surveys and tracks how people interact with religion, faith, spirituality individually and collectively. The numbers indicate that the growing group, as of 2023-24 is the ‘Religiously Unaffiliated’ at 29%.

Persons interact with who they are spiritually through organized religion or through individual spiritual practices. The Chaplain in The American Legion is to provide non-religious spiritual prayers, words and presence. Holding to one’s own religion and holding the office of an American Legion Chaplain can be challenging as The American Legion Chaplain is non-sectarian and is not to engage in proselytizing while in uniform. Spiritual, ethical or moral growth for each Legionnaire is the intent of The American Legion Chaplain.

It is to be noted that there are three major religions practiced: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Each of these is regarded as one of the three Abrahamic religions as the origin of each stems from Abraham and God’s dispensations as revealed in the Judaic scriptures. Within each of the major religions there are branches, divisions, sects created by geography, family, preference and culture.

There are many other religions such as Buddhism, Hinduism, Mormons, Jehovah Witnesses, Sikh, Sufism which are individual spiritual practices. Religions differ from a spiritual practice in that a religion usually has a collective historical doctrine to which believers/adherents observe and learn from for spiritual development as well an understanding of what is the meaning of life, purpose for everyone and if there is an afterlife.

The following is a brief overview of major religions/faith practices in the state of Minnesota. The list or identified religions, spiritual practices offered in this Resource Guide is not exhaustive. For further information, use the links provided.

Religions

1. Buddhism

Founder: Siddhartha Gautama (Buddha)

When: About 2,500 years ago, India

What: Methods to reach full potential through self-discovery and personal enlightenment. The tenets of the 4 Noble Truths. 1. True Problems, 2.True Cause of Problems, 3. True Stopping of Problems, and 4. True Path of Mind are the guides for individuals to attain their potential.

Worship: Self-actualization and Buddha founder. Mantra’s, chants are prevalent to assist in worship, practice.

Holy Days: Varies depending on type of Buddhism practices as well as year observed.

<https://faithinspires.org/buddhist-holidays/>

<https://studybuddhism.com/en/essentials/what-is/what-is-buddhism>

<https://religionsmn.carleton.edu/exhibits/show/wattmunisotaram/introduction>

<https://factsanddetails.com/asian/cat64/Buddhist_Worship_Temples_Practice_and_Customs/entry-8589.html>

1. Christianity/Catholic

Founder: Catholic teachings are traced to the teaching of Jesus Christ

When: around 30 C.E. (common era).

What: A monotheistic faith with God as creator and Jesus Christ as the third element (Holy Spirit is the other) of God. Practitioners prescribe sacramental life in which prominence is given to the Bible, traditions, Mother Virgin Mary, the Pope, saints and papacy.

Worship: Triune God, God/Jesus Christ/Holy Spirit, individually and collectively.

Holy Days: Varies depending on liturgical year. Major holy days are Christmas and Easter.

<https://mycatholic.life/liturgy/>

<https://www.learnreligions.com/catholicism-beliefs-and-practices-3897877>

1. Christianity/Protestant

Founder: Believers in Jesus Christ as the Chosen Savior. Teaching traced back to Jesus Christ’s teachings. Martin Luther, founder of Protestant Reformation.

When: 1517, Martin Luther’s *95 Theses*

What: Monotheistic faith of the triune God/Jesus Christ/Holy Spirit. Differs from the practice of Catholicism in the absence of practice of sacraments. Believers differ from Catholicism by defining each individual communes Triune directly with the triune God.

Worship: God, God/Jesus Christ/Holy Spirit individually and collectively.

Holy Days: Varies, depending on year. Major holy days are Christmas and Easter.

<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Martin-Luther>

<https://www.learnreligions.com/christianity-definitions-4684882>

1. Hinduism

Founder: No identified founder or time when it originated.

When: around 3300 B.C. (Before Christ)

What: Monotheistic, polytheistic, henotheistic, pantheistic and/or atheistic. Adherents follow the Vedas (scriptures) to follow the eternal order (*Sanatan Dharma*)

Worship: God/the Divine

Holy Days: Seasonal observation in alignment with different deities

<https://www.diversityresources.com/hinduism-holy-days-religious-observances-calendar/>

1. Islam

Founder: Muhammed

When: 7th Century C.E.

What: Monotheistic faith of Allah with adherents called Muslims. Believers prescribe to the Quran for historical teaching, present day practice.

Worship: Allah. Prophet Muhammed is revered as last prophet. There are five pillars/basic tenets: 1. professing one’s faith; 2. praying five times a day; 3. giving zakat or donating a certain portion of one’s wealth; 4. fasting during Ramadan; and 5. making a pilgrimage to Mecca in Saudi Arabia.

Holy Days: Follows the Lunar calendar. Ramadan is a month-long observance of fasting and prayer.

<https://faithinspires.org/>

<https://theguibordcenter.org/faiths/islam/muslim-holy-observances/>

1. Judaism

Founder: Teachings go back to Abraham as founder, one of the three patriarchs to which God established a covenant with.

When: around 2000 B.C., oldest monotheistic religion.

What: Monotheistic faith of God, Books containing history, belief, practices are Torah (Five books of Pentateuch) and Talmud (Misnah/oral law, commentary and evolving document). Life-centered.

Worship: God, individually or collectively. Covenantal relationship with God identifies adherents and structures their faith practice, communities, identity.

Holy Days: A lunisolar calendar is followed to observe religious holy days and rituals.

<https://minndakjcrc.org/>

<https://mnjcf.org/>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/zbm8jty/revision/2>

Spiritual Traditions

Two are identified for the Department of Minnesota. Written and approved doctrine is not primal for a tradition as social and cultural indicators determine how and what the spiritual practices entails.

1. Indigenous Cultures

Founder: Integral to Indigenous communities, framing lifestyles.

When: unknown as spirituality is part of the balance of living.

What: Spiritual Leaders//Shamans provide guidance, instruction. Nature, community, family are common sacred threads.

Worship: Monotheistic, polytheistic, shamanistic, henotheistic, animistic, pantheistic

Holy Days: Rituals and ceremonies are observed at life cycle and transitions such as birth, puberty, death, marriage.

<https://www.nativehistory.info/indigenous-spirituality-beliefs-sacred-traditions/>

<https://slife.org/native-american-religions/>

1. Wiccan (Pagan tradition)

Founder: Gerald Brosseau Gardner (1884-1964)

When: 1950’s

What: Earth-centered. Present day Wiccan’s evolved out of pagan, witchcraft practices of European, North African, and Western Asian origins.

Worship: Dualistic – God and Goddess (male and female). Movement as there is not a centralized governing body.

Holy Days: Lunar cycles, Rituals

<https://wiccaliving.com/what-is-wicca/>

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Wicca>

**Resources**

Department of Minnesota Outline of Authorization, <https://mnlegion.org/post-resources/>

National American Legion Officer’s Guide and Manual of Ceremonies

National American Legion Chaplain Manual, not available through National American Legion, available here for reference) <https://mnlegion.org/post-resources/>

The American Legion Buddy Check information, <https://www.legion.org/advocacy/be-the-one/buddy-check>

The American Legion *BeThe One* program, <https://www.legion.org/advocacy/be-the-one>

University of Minnesota’s Earl E. Bakken For Spirituality & Healing Center, <https://csh.umn.edu/>

