

The Good in Religion

Aims:

Young people may be confronted with media stereotypes of religion as a cause of conflict and division. These resources aim to provide a counter balance by highlighting some of the good work done by religious people and organisations.

The resources focus on respected religious figures and on charitable works carried out by different religious organisations. They consider the ways in which religious values might motivate people, but also highlight the fact that religion is not the only force that motivates and inspires people. Secular values underpin many charitable organisations too.

This resource is particularly targeted at Religious Education for Key Stage 4. The new Framework for Religious Education asks that students 'expand and balance their evaluations of the impact of religions on individuals, communities and societies, locally, nationally and globally'. It would also be useful for Citizenship curriculum requirement 1.b), where students should be taught about the diversity of religious and ethnic identities in the UK.

Contents:

- **Guess the hero:** An activity highlighting outstanding figures from different religions. Young people guess their identity.
- **In the neighbourhood:** Case studies of local charity projects, with a summary of how their work is motivated by religious values. This includes related discussion activities.
- **International development:** Links for globally focussed religious and secular organisations and related activities.

Activity one: Guess the hero

Time: 20 minutes

Materials: PowerPoint presentation, handout

This simple activity draws attention to some key historical figures and their different religious backgrounds. It works well as a PowerPoint presentation, but we have also attached a word version as an alternative.

Method:

- Ask each young person to write down the following names:

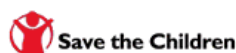
Malcolm X
Anne Frank
Mahatma Ghandi

Alija Izetbegovic
Dalai Lama
Martin Luther King

Oscar Schindler
Mother Theresa
Desmond Tutu

- Go through the PowerPoint presentation reading out the facts one by one. The young people should shout out, as soon as they can guess who the religious hero is. Perhaps give a prize to those who guess first. You can use this activity to prompt a more general discussion about these people's lives.
- After the quiz, challenge the young people to identify which of the people in 'Guess the hero' said the statements listed in the handout below.

PARTNER ORGANISATIONS:



DIVERSITY AND DIALOGUE.

- Discuss what the quotations mean in more detail and ask the young people which they most identify with.

Answers:

1. Anne Frank
2. Dalai Lama
3. Martin Luther King
4. Malcolm X
5. Mahatma Gandhi

Handout: Quotations

1. The best remedy for those who are afraid, lonely or unhappy is to go outside, somewhere where they can be quiet, alone with the heavens, nature and God. Because only then does one feel that all is as it should be.

2. The most important thing is to look at the purpose of religion and not at the details... I believe that all the major religions of the world can contribute to world peace and work together for the benefit of humanity.

3. I have a dream that my four children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character... With this faith we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day.

4. My dearest friends have come to include all kinds -- some Christians, Jews, Buddhists, Hindus, agnostics, and even atheists! I have friends who are called capitalists, Socialists, and Communists! Some of my friends are moderates, conservatives, extremists -- some are even Uncle Toms! My friends today are black, brown, red, yellow, and white!

5. Religion is one tree with many branches. As branches, you may say, religions are many, but as tree, religion is only one.

PARTNER ORGANISATIONS:



Activity two: In the neighbourhood

Time: 45 minutes

Materials: copies of the case studies and worksheet

The following case studies give examples of charitable works undertaken by different religious organisations at a grassroots level. This is an extremely small selection of projects and religious organisations work on a much wider range of issues. However, it is useful starting point.

Method:

- Ask the young people to read through these case studies and choose the five projects that most appeal to them.
- Ask them to fill in the worksheet below, answering the following questions for each:

1) What issue does the project address? (*Eg. homelessness, asylum seekers, teenage advice or the environment.*)

2) What is the religious basis of the organisation?

3) How is this work motivated by their religious values?

Issue	Religion	Religious motivation
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		

- As a class, discuss the issues chosen by the different charities and the differences and similarities in their motivations.
- Ask the young people to look again at their list of issues. Are these the issues that they think are the most important to address in their own local area? If they were to start up a charity, which issue would they try to address and why?
- Is religion the only force that motivates people to do good works? What might inspire a non-religious person?

PARTNER ORGANISATIONS:



Extension activity:

Ask the young people to find out about religious, or secular, charities operating in their local area. Ask them to contact people at these charities to find out more and to ask them what motivates them to do what they do. Perhaps the speakers could be invited to present their work in a school assembly.

Local case studies

BUDDHISM

1. The Buddhist Hospice Trust

The Buddhist Hospice Trust aims to offer support and friendship to those who are seriously ill, dying or who have lost close family and friends. It co-ordinates a network of volunteers, who provide compassionate care and companionship to people who get in touch or who are recommended by family or friends. It works with both Buddhists and non-Buddhists. The Trust also offers informal support and information to people who want to understand Buddhist approaches to living and dying, or who need advice over an urgent or worrying situation.

<http://www.buddhishospice.org.uk/index.htm>

Religious Motivation:

When asked to explain his religion, the Dalai Lama smiled and replied "My religion is kindness"

CHRISTIANITY

2. Enabling Christians in Serving Refugees (ECSR)

This organisation helps asylum seekers and refugees. It supports and encourages Christians who are running practical projects in their local areas. For example, it supports the International Care Network. They help asylum seekers and refugees to resettle in this country by providing a welcome centre, English teaching, accommodation and social events. ECSR provides a network which links up similar support and befriending projects for asylum seekers and refugees across the UK.

<http://ecsr.org.uk/cm/info@int-care.net>

Religious motivation:

ECSR wants to support Christians to express God's love in practical and informed ways. It is based on the idea that Christians in the UK should put Matthew 25:35 into practice and welcome the 'strangers' living in their communities, *'For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me.'*

PARTNER ORGANISATIONS:



3. Christian Ecology Link

This organisation is for Christians who care about the environment and it raises awareness of green issues among Christian people and churches. It acts as a pressure group, providing information for local groups and lobbying for a greener approach. For example, it runs a campaign called Operation Noah, which involves churches and Christians in tackling climate change. It also co-ordinates a campaign for 'LOAF' food, which means locally-produced, organically grown, animal friendly and fairly traded.

<http://www.christian-ecology.org.uk>

Religious motivation:

To safeguard God's Creation for future generations and all living beings and to show Christians how this responsibility relates to their faith.

HINDUISM

4. Project YES (Youth Engagement Services)

Project YES works with Hindu youth to empower and encourage them to become active citizens of Britain. Services offered under Project YES include training workshops and counselling services for young offenders, mentoring programmes, career advice and interactive team-building workshops. The project, which is run by the Hindu Forum of Britain and the Metropolitan Police Hindu Association, will host a major conference in 2006 on 'Youth and Community Safety'.

<http://www.hinduforum.org/>

Religious Motivation

Hinduism seeks to promote human harmony, which it encourages through the concept of seva/ sewa the ancient word for service.

JAINISM

5. Young Jains

The Young Jains organisation is involved in work with Crisis, the homeless charity. Every year a group donate their time, to assist with the Crisis Open Christmas event. This event is held over a period of one week over the Christmas vacation, with the aim of providing shelter, food and various other services to those without homes of their own. During the Crisis Open Christmas event, Young Jains arranges for a large volunteer team to take on a number of "shifts", over several days. The volunteers will either be involved with general tasks, or specialised tasks such as medicine, hair dressing or dentistry.

<http://www.youngjains.org.uk/services/index.htm>

Religious motivation:

This event fits in very closely with one of the principles of the Jain religion - seva, or selfless service. Through this, a Jain tries to improve the life of other living beings without the expectation of receiving anything in return. This principle forms a part of a wider core principle of Ahimsa that all Jains try to live their lives by. In a nutshell, this translates to non-violence, but may also be described as the "reverence for all life". Jains believe that all life forms (be it humans, animals or plants) are equal, and are thus to be respected equally.

PARTNER ORGANISATIONS:



JUDAISM

6. Jewish Council for Racial Equality (JCORE)

This organisation aims to combat racism and build a just and harmonious multicultural society, especially among young people. It raises awareness and promotes active involvement in the Jewish community and works with other ethnic minority communities and refugee organisations who are campaigning for the rights of asylum seekers. It also provides support for children and young people asylum seekers that arrive alone and co-ordinates projects that help refugee doctors re-qualify.

<http://www.jcore.org.uk/>

Religious motivation

JCORE make a link between the strong emphasis Judaism places on 'helping the stranger' and modern issues of combating racism and helping modern 'strangers' - asylum seekers, refugees and immigrants. For example, the Torah (the Jewish holy book) says 36 times that Jews should care for the stranger in their community, as it says: "*When a stranger resides with you in your land, you shall not wrong him*" (Leviticus 19:33). Furthermore, the historical persecution and Jewish experiences of seeking refuge are sought to remind Jewish people of their obligations to others.

7. Jewish Blind and Disabled

Jewish Blind & Disabled is the only Jewish charity providing care and assisted living for people of all ages with physical disabilities or vision impairment.

The charity has seven assisted living projects with accommodation for around 350 Jewish people. These offer secure, independent living and as much or as little support as they need. A Jewish environment is as important to the charity's tenants as to non-disabled Jewish people, and it believes that disabled people should have as much access to Jewish cultural life as the wider community. Like many faith-based charities, Jewish Blind & Disabled's services are provided in a specific context - in this case observing Jewish festivals and respecting Jewish customs and traditions.

<http://www.jbd.org/>

Religious motivation:

'Tzedakah' is the common word used for giving to charity. However, charity is not seen as a generous act, rather an act of justice and performance of a duty. Tzedakah requires the donor to share his or her compassion and empathy along with money.

PARTNER ORGANISATIONS:



ISLAM

8. Muslim Youth Helpline

Muslim Youth Helpline (MYH) is a registered charity that provides faith and culturally sensitive support services to Muslim youth in the UK. The main service is a free and confidential counseling service available nationally via the telephone, email and internet. The Helpline service also offers a face to face befriending service across Greater London.

The service uses volunteers trained in basic counseling skills. The majority of its Helpline workers are under the age of 25 years and are drawn from across ethnically diverse Muslim communities in the UK. In October 2004, MYH launched muslimyouth.net, an online support and information service for Muslim youth. The site is designed to be safe space for young Muslims to discuss and debate the issues that affect their lives.

<http://www.myh.org.uk/>

Religious motivation

"God will make happy on the Day of Judgement the person who has removed the grief from the heart of a believer." Imam Ali Al-Ridha

9. Lancashire Council of Mosques

This council runs a number of projects including the Fathers' project and the Parent Support project. The Fathers' project runs events to encourage fathers and male carers to enjoy and spend time with their children and asks them to talk about health and education issues. The Parent Support Project works with parents who may find it difficult to access support and information about issues that affect the lives of their children. This includes parents of disabled children, parents of children experiencing drug or alcohol abuse, parents of children of poor health, or those with mental health problems, challenging behaviour or poor academic achievement. Parents who are themselves disabled, experiencing drug or alcohol abuse, poor health, and mental health are also supported.

http://www.lancashiremosques.com/discovery_muslims_in_britain.asp

Religious motivation

A motivation for the Parent Support project stems from a hadith stating '*... if one smoothes the way for one who is destitute, Allah will smooth the way for him in this world and the next, ...*' The Fathers' Project also finds motivation in the teachings of the holy Quran, which highlights that fathers should be positive role models to their children.

PARTNER ORGANISATIONS:



SIKHISM

10. Friends of Slough

This voluntary group started by Sikhs, but including volunteers of all faiths, provides free meals on the first Saturday of every month to homeless people in Slough. The group also distributes second hand furniture to people who have recently been homeless but have now found housing. The furniture was donated by a local hotel and is given to people who are struggling to afford furniture.

Religious motivation:

The group's work comes from the Sikh tradition of Langar (the free kitchen) in every Gurdwara, and the belief of sharing food to combat poverty.

11. Sikh Helpline

This is a confidential telephone counselling and inquiry services for young Sikhs giving advice regarding Sikhism, bullying and racism, addictions and other issues. It is run by trained professional councillors and all advice is given anonymously. They have just set up an internet forum where young Sikhs can talk about issues that are affecting them. These include addictions and problems at school, as well as questions about the religion.

<http://www.sikhhelpline.com/>

Religious motivation:

Charity is a very important part of Sikh teachings because equality and compassion are essential for a spiritual life. All religions and all nations must be helped to live a good and peaceful life.

'A place in God's court can only be attained if we do service to others in this world.' (Guru Granth Sahib 26)

PARTNER ORGANISATIONS:



Activity three: International development

Time: 45 minutes

Materials: computers with access to the internet, international development agencies handout

Many charities in Britain support people in other countries too. This includes emergency support for people affected by natural disasters such as the Tsunami or those living in areas of conflict such as the Darfur area of Sudan. Many organisations also work with local people in less developed countries on longer-term projects. These might build up skills and local businesses or set up good quality health care, education and other public services.

Method:

- Give out the handout which contains the names and websites of international development charities, see below. Ask the young people to choose three organisations, one secular and two religious.
- Ask the young people to research these organisations using the internet. They should find out the information needed to complete the table below.

Organisation	Mission statement	Details of two projects that the organisation runs overseas

- If the young people have trouble finding the organisation's Mission statement, then ask them to write their own brief summary of the organisation's aims, as detailed on their website.

PARTNER ORGANISATIONS:



- Ask the young people to compare their findings in pairs. They should think about the following questions:
 - 1) Are there any similarities in the projects that the organisations are running? What are the differences?
 - 2) How do you think religion influences the work of the faith-based organisations? (For example, do they work through mosques or churches in other countries? Do they just work with people from their own religion? Is it their faith that motivates them to carry on?)
 - 3) Could you find the values base for the secular organisations? What do you think motivates them?
 - 4) Do all of the organisations have the same goals?

International development charities

Here are the website links for some of the biggest international development charities, run by different faith-based and secular organisations. Choose three of these organisations, one secular and two religious, to research on the internet.

Bahai:

Bahá'í Agency for Social and Economic Development
www.baseduk.org.uk

Christian:

Christian Aid
www.christian-aid.org.uk

World Vision
www.worldvision.org.uk

Catholic Agency For Overseas Development (CAFOD)
www.cafod.org.uk

Tear Fund
www.tearfund.org

Hindu:

Sewa International
www.sewainternational.com

Jewish:

World Jewish Relief
www.wjr.org.uk

Tzedek
www.tzedek.org.uk

Muslim:

Muslim Aid
www.muslimaid.org

Islamic Relief
www.islamic-relief.com

Muslim Hands

www.muslimhands.org

Sikh:

Khalsa Aid
www.khalsaaid.org

PARTNER ORGANISATIONS:



DIVERSITY AND DIALOGUE.

Secular:

Oxfam

<http://www.oxfam.org.uk>

Save the Children

<http://www.savethechildren.org.uk>

Action Aid

www.actionaid.org

PARTNER ORGANISATIONS:

