

Interfaith Reflections

Winter 2005

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What is the Most Popular Religion in the World?

The Most Popular Religion

According to *Adherents.com*, the first writers to divide the world into "world religions" were Christians. Originally, Christians, Jews and Pagans were the three religions recognized.

As Western awareness of Eastern history and philosophy increased, the development of Islam and other religions were placed on the list.

During the 1800s, religion scholars recognized Judaism, Islam, Christianity, Hinduism and Buddhism as the major religions of the world. These religions continue to be considered the "Big Five", and are most often covered in world religion books.

The Breakdown

(According to *Adherents.com*)

As of September 2002, the most popular single religion is Islam, with 1.3 billion adherents. Catholicism, Hinduism, Protestantism and Buddhism make up the the top five. However, there are almost two billion Christians in the world, which are divided into several subsets of Christianity.

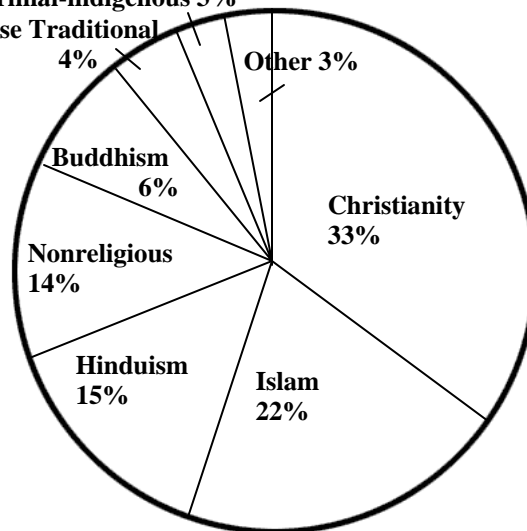
The Up and Coming Religion

The American Religious Identification Survey (ARIS), identifies Wicca as the fastest growing religion in the United States. The ARIS was last conducted in 2001 and included telephone interviews of 50,281 persons who were 18 years of age or older.

According to *religioustolerance.org*, Wicca is one of many earth-based religions. The various traditions of Wicca represent parts

of the Pagan or Neopagan group of earth-based religions. Wicca was founded in the 1940s by Gerald Gardner, a British civil servant.

Primal-indigenous 3%
Chinese Traditional 4%



The Celtic Connection, the largest Wiccan Web site, described Wicca as, "a very peaceful, harmonious and balanced way of thinking and life which promotes oneness with the divine and all which exists."

Many Wiccans believe in a deity that is largely unknowable, sometimes called "The All" or "The One." However, Wiccans believe that they can comprehend the male and female aspects of the deity, whom they call the God and the Goddess.

To learn more about Wiccan, visit: <http://www.wicca.com/celtic/wicca/wicca.htm> or cantonareapagans.org.

Words to Live By

Ability is what you're capable of doing. Motivation determines what you do. Attitude determines how well you do it.

~Lee Holz

If you treat every situation as a life-and-death matter, you'll die a lot of times.

~Dean Smith

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Interfaith Reflections

Preschool Director Has Her Dream Job



Name: Marcia Sprout

Job: Director of the Interfaith Campus Preschool and Childcare Center

How long have you been with Interfaith?

"I started at the preschool in 1984. I have been the director since 1986."

What do you find rewarding about your job?

"Everything. The families share everything with me and it allows me to be helpful. Many parents are single, have four kids, work and are going back to school. They inspire me everyday."

What are your hobbies?

"I like to walk and read books about how to be organized. My biggest goal is to get organized."

Are you a morning or night person?

"Whatever I have to be. I get up early, get my coffee right away, and stay up fairly late."

If you could travel anywhere, what would be your destination?

"Italy or Alaska."

"I realized I can be a missionary right here. It is like God gave me the preschool and the opportunity to impact the lives of children."

Do you have a favorite television show?

"It used to be *Fear Factor*, but the show has gotten so gross. I quit watching it a month ago. Lately, I've been getting into the *Apprentice*."

What is your dream job?

"Just being at the preschool. When I was young, I wanted to be a missionary for the poor, bloated-belly children I would see on television. Then, I realized I can be a missionary right here. It is like God gave me the preschool and the opportunity to impact the lives of children."

Do you believe in love at first sight?

"When my first daughter was born, I loved her at first sight. That's when I knew that kind of love is possible."

What is your biggest fear?

"Mice. I think that fear started when I was four-years-old. One day, my mom and sister started screaming and running around. They jumped up on the kitchen table. I followed quickly after them. From my view atop the table, I saw the mouse scurrying across the floor. Ever since, I've been afraid of mice."

What is your biggest pet peeve?

"I get annoyed when people are continuously late."

Have you read any good books lately?

"Right now I'm reading *The Purpose Driven Life* by Rick Warren."

How have children changed over the years?

"I think children today are showing less and less respect. I think many parents feel guilty because they don't spend much time with their children. That guilt makes parents not want to be the disciplinary figure when they finally get time with their children."



Interfaith Reflections

Tom Says...

Throughout history, Emperors, Popes, Bishops, Kings and Presidents have used the “purity” of religious beliefs or “moral values” as rationale to suppress and convert populations, whether for religious or political motivations. This behavior is rarely effective in the long run, is usually based on selective scriptural “proof texting,” and is not consistent with the “fullness” of the beliefs of the religious faith(s) being cited.

The following byline and quote appeared in the Feb. 8, 2005 issue of *The Christian Century*.

“Reformation, Islamic Style: Mohsen Kadivar, a reformist cleric in Iran who has served time in prison for his beliefs, is sometimes referred to as the Martin Luther or John Calvin of Islam. He argues that Muslims have to coexist with other faiths, and says Islam does not condone religious coercion, citing Koranic texts to make his point: ‘Duress is not permissible in religion, as the path has become clear from falsehood to light, therefore anyone that takes the idols as tyranny and starts to have faith in God, has truly found a support that is never separated from him.’ Kadivar believes that ‘faith is strengthened by reason and principles. That which is created for force and pressure is only a superficial idea and no more than that’ (Current History, January).”

I have a handout that contains scriptures from seven major religions of the world— Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Sikh and Baha’i. Each scripture reflects the one fundamental precept of most religions of the world: The Golden Rule – “What is hateful to you, do not to your fellow men.” (The Talmud)

“Faith is strengthened by reason and principles. That which is created for force and pressure is only a superficial idea and no more than that.” This is an important lesson that can be gleaned from the civil and women’s rights struggles which we reflect on as an educational community. We “reflect” on the history of human behavior, current and ancient, in order to learn about ourselves and what motivates us to “treat others as we would want to be treated,” or to seek to suppress and control them.

I want to choose the path of openness and reason, to celebrate and affirm the diversity of God’s creation, the diverse way in which God has been revealed to different peoples. I want my faith to be informed by the lessons of those who sought to follow the “golden rule.” I want to progress in my understanding of others, not build a wall around my life and world out of fear, nor use my faith to suppress and control others. “I want”.... but which path will I choose? Which path will you choose?

“I want to progress in my understanding of others, not build a wall around my life and world out of fear, nor use my faith to suppress and control others.”

Calendar of Events

March 7 — Wellness Series: Surviving Oppositional Defiant Disorders In Teens	Main Hall Auditorium 7 - 9 p.m. Free
March 14 —Soups On... Stress & the Young Child	
March 29 —Soups On... Divorce	SSCT, Room #204 1:00 p.m. Free
April 4 — Wellness Series: The Ties That Bond, Attachment Issues In Foster Care and Adoption	Main Hall Auditorium 7 - 9 p.m. Free
April 11 —Soups On... Zoroastrianism	SSCT, Room B230 11-Noon, Free
April 21 — 20th Annual Evening of Jazz (FREE to KSC & SSCT Students)	Conference Center 6:30-10:45 p.m.
April 25 —Soups On... Wicca	SSCT, Room G100 1-2:15 pm, Free
April 25 —Soups On... Wicca	SSCT, Room B110 2:15-3:15 Free
April 25 — Wellness Series: Communication Skills Continued	Main Hall Auditorium 7 - 9 p.m. Free

Rev. Thomas. L. Douce, Executive Director

Carol Nagi, Interfaith Campus Minister at SSCT

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Interfaith Campus Ministry, founded in 1967, serves the spiritual needs of the students, faculty, staff and administration of the Kent State University Stark campus and Stark State College of Technology. Promoting acceptance of diverse faiths traditions and cultures, Interfaith provides a faith-based atmosphere where people can explore and grow in their own beliefs while developing an appreciation for the beliefs of others. For more information about Interfaith Campus Ministry visit www.stark.kent.edu/interfaith.

WATCH FOR MORE INFORMATION ON INTERFAITH'S 20TH ANNUAL EVENING OF JAZZ

THURSDAY, APRIL 21, 2005 6:30—10:45 P.M.

**PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION &
CONFERENCE CENTER
TIMKEN GREAT HALL**

**KSC & SSCT STUDENTS — FREE
ADULTS: \$20; SENIOR CITIZENS \$18;
AREA STUDENTS \$5**

**PLAYING: N.E. OHIO JAZZ ENSEMBLES—
JACK HALKIDES, RICHARD SCHER-
MESSER, AND BEV BLASS—AND KENT STARK'S OWN
JAZZ SOCIETY**



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